

Inspection Tour 2009

Inspections were held in Canada from October 12 – 17, 2009. By the numbers, 17 horses were signed up for inspection (though not all were actually presented). 11 horses were approved.



Myrddincroft RiRa Q (Giggs)

They are:

- Annika Q 2003 mare Riverman (HOLS) x Lahorna Queen (ISH)
- Anything You Can Do 2006 Mare Bien Mallin Drogheda Red Hand (ACPS) x Beeston Bowhill (RID)
- Busby's Babe Q 2001 mare VIP (KWPN) x Lahorna Queen
- Ciccia Bella 2003 mare Balhinrobe Pearl (ID) x CL Ebony Eagle (APHA)
- Fiddlehead Liffey 1996 mare The Irish Rover (RID) x Tinajero's Girl (TB)
- Fourwinds Glenowen
- Fourwinds Sylvan River 2006 mare Garryowen of Suma (RID) x River Run (RID)
- Myrddincroft Ri Ra Q 2002 Stallion Riverman(HOLS) x Lahorna Queen (ISH)
- Padi's Granite Summit 2006 Mountain Pearl (RID) x Shuttlewood Rose (RID)
- Ruaille Buaille Q 2002 gelding Riverman (HOLS) x Lahorna Queen (ISH)
- Windfield Belle of the Ball 2005 mare Snowford Bellman (RID) x Ginger's Beauty (RID)

Congratulations to the owners and breeders!!

The inspections were conducted by Dr Charlotte Moore and Michael Kirwan. Helen Troughton (Ballinteggart stud) joined the group as a guest, and kindly agreed to be put to work, acting as scribe to Michael and Charlotte through the actual inspections. Thanks also to Agriculture Canada for providing partial funding.

Our schedule was punishing, with us travelling literally from one ocean to the other in the space of 5 days. Inspections were held in River John, Nova Scotia, London Ontario, Freelton Ontario and Langley British Columbia. Many thanks to our kind hosts, Katharine Locke in Nova Scotia, Vicki Edgar in London, Barb Bowen in Freelton and Memory Lane Warmbloods in Langley BC. A special thanks also to Evert and Eleanor Vandeborn for hosting us in their home. Eleanor was particularly kind, showing us some of their standarbreds and her stunning garden.



Greg Mangan and Lahorna Queen

The tour started in London Ontario, at Myrddin Croft Equestrian Centre. It was a pleasure to see members Barbara Elliot, Elizabeth Bellavance and Keith Douglas in attendance. The special attraction for the day was meeting Gregory Mangan and Lahorna Queen (Queenie), who jumped for Ireland, and were alternates for the Irish team at the Barcelona Olympics. Queenie is now 27, and is the dam of the horses inspected. (Of course she had to roll for her picture!!!) It was interesting to note how she passed her kind eye to every last of her offspring seen. Congratulations to Greg and Natasha Mangan and Vicki Edgar, who share ownership of their horses approved.

The next stop was River John, at Katharine Locke's farm. For those who don't know, Katharine has a stunningly beautiful farm on Northumberland Strait. Katharine brought together members and friends to view the inspections and to talk about Irish horses; congratulations to Katharine, Emelie Murphy and Anna Dawson whose horses were all inspected and approved.



Pearl Drop RID (left) and River Run RID (right)

A seminar on conformation was also held in River John. Katharine Locke kindly stood up her two RID broodmares, River Run (Qual) and Pearl Drop both showing key traits of the Irish Draught horse, but each having quite different conformation. Michael and Charlotte used the two mares as examples to talk about what makes an Irish Draught, how to evaluate the conformation of a horse – its head, neck, body, front and hind ends, legs and feet – and finally, how to pick stallions to improve on conformation.



L-R: Dr Charlotte Moore, Pearl Drop RID, Anna Dawson, Michael Kirwan, (unknown), Helen Troughton

The session finished up with a question and answer period. The take away message from the entire talk was that given that no horse is perfect (from a conformational perspective!), as breeders we need to be honest in evaluation of our broodmares. We need to clearly understand their strengths and be extremely careful to pick stallions that are as good or better in the mare's strong areas, and that provide improvements in areas where her conformation is not as strong.

The next stop was Freelon Ontario. It wouldn't be an inspection tour without a stop at Orchard Park Stables! Once again, Barbara Elliott came to watch (I am sure she was enjoying watching, knowing she didn't have any responsibilities!!!).

Congratulations to Marcia Turner on the approval of her stunning and sparkling-clean gelding, Padi's Granite Summit. A special thanks to Martha Denver for handling Liam with such professionalism and for trailering such a distance to attend. After inspections we convened to the Coachman's Inn for lunch and more spirited discussion on strengths and improvements of many of the different lines of the Irish Draught.

The last stop of the inspection tour was in Langley British Columbia, where Tara Evans and Duncan Kerfoot presented horses. It was an absolute pleasure to have so many members in attendance: Jennifer Brownlow, Anthea McLaughan, Duncan and Lesley Kerfoot, Nikko Konyk, Denise Taylor and others. Congratulations to Tara for having the best turned out animals and the most professional handling in the 2009 tour; your animals sparkled and you truly presented them to their best advantage. Congratulations to both Duncan and Tara on the approval of their horses.



Ciccia Bella

Over the week the inspectors found they were repeating a few comments. I too found I was saying a few things over and over again, so here is some food for thought for members, particularly for those planning to present horses for inspection in the future:

- 1) Inspections are about suitability for breeding Irish, and not necessarily about suitability for competition.

When inspectors look at your horse, they are evaluating its breeding potential. They are looking at its conformation, development and temperament, and thinking about what would/could be passed on to future generations. So when your horse passes inspection, the judges are essentially saying that “This animal is likely to pass on the traits we like to see in an Irish Draught or in an Irish sport horse”. If your horse does not pass inspection, it is still entirely possible the animal will be successful in competition - and we hope it is. The horse has only been judged to not be likely to pass on traits that are desirable for Irish horses and/or as being likely to pass on traits that are not desirable for Irish horses.

2) Inspections are about what is seen on that day

Inspectors judge based on what is in front of them, on that day at that time. They have very little “wiggle room” when it comes to deciding what a horse may become or what it is ‘normally’.

So to the handlers: We all know that many a horse has both ‘frog’ and its ‘prince’ moments: be sure the inspectors do not see the frog! Teach the horse to stand up properly; inspectors are looking for symmetry, straightness in limb, and correct angulation in shoulder, haunches and hocks. Standing a horse incorrectly will cause your horse to lose points.

One of the biggest compliments an Irishman can give a horse is that it has “a nice step”. The breed standard calls for “Action: Smooth and free but without exaggeration and not heavy or ponderous. Walk and trot to be straight and true with good flexion in the hocks and freedom of the shoulders”. So make sure your horse is active and lively in the walk and in the trot – show the inspectors AIR under the horse’s feet!



Padi's Granite Summit showing “a nice step”

3) Breeding is about matching the best to the best and hoping for the best.

If we are serious about breeding horses, then we need to be sure we are constantly breeding for improvement. This means making sure that the stock we own (usually a mare) should only be bred if s/he has a relatively large number of very good characteristics and relatively small number of not very good characteristics (“breed the best”).

The next part is that the stallion (or mare) we choose to match with our horse should share as many of our horse’s good characteristics as possible, and improve on our horse’s) not very good characteristics (“to the best”).

Of course there are no guarantees in breeding... so even by adopting this strategy, we still need to hope for the best.