

# A Tradition in Breeding at Tullaghansleek

by Michael Slavin



Drive past the beautiful old limestone walls and an ancient royal mound along the avenue to Tullaghansleek Stud and you know you are in a place tradition was king. The metal sign at the main gate reads Established 1867. And when you meet Tim and Finola Carey you will be assured that their family of seven are the seventh generation of Carey's on this 200 acre Westmeath farm. On the living room mantle is a stud notice dated 1887 stating that covering charges for "Gentlemen and Substantial Farmers" was £2-0-0 while there was a reduced rate for "Small Farms" of £1 - 10s.

Down the years the Carey's of Tullaghansleek have stood Thoroughbred, Irish Draught and Connemara stallions of quality. In more recent times there have been the likes of Euphemism, Blue Cliff, Golden Cliff, New Frontier all of which were made available for non-thoroughbred mares.

Currently on the stud's roster are three Thoroughbreds Golden Lariat(Pr. Prospector/Sadler's Wells), Retirement Plan(Monsun/Dansili) and Shadow Gate(White Muzzle/Sunday Silence); two Irish Draught Fintan Himself(Uibh Fhaili/Colman) and Carrickcottage Star(Carrickrock Close

Shave/Huntingfield Rebel) plus two Connemaras Gwennic de Goariva and Drimcong Cave.

Of the Thoroughbreds Shadow Gate is designated for non - thoroughbred service. "A good model and athletic type" Tim notes of him. "We like to serve a right good model of a mare but they are missing right now", When Tim emphasises right good model you know first of all that he is Westmeath born and bred and also that he is heart and soul an Irish horse man.

During his showing career to date Tim has won Dublin and All Ireland young horse and



Tim Carey with a daughter to Golden Lariat owned by Paddy McMahon of Shinrone with her Fintan Himself(ID) foal.

mare championships. During one particular season he recorded no fewer than 35 championship titles with Golden Optimist by Euphemism. Tim is a sound judge and with beautifully easy enthusiasm he exclaims “I just love judging a nice young horse”.

As to the mares he says that what you really need is one that will breed a lightweight or middleweight champion at Dublin. “That young horse can then go on to be a nice athletic world class show jumper, eventer or show horse”.

Tullaghansleek Stud’s top Thoroughbred stallion Golden Lariat has indeed bred a Dublin lightweight champion. But here is the rub! He has become so popular as sire of winning point – to – pointers that he can now command a service fee in the region of 2,000. Nearly 100% of his runners have been winners and some of his progeny have been sold at Goffs Punchestown Sale for over 100,000. Thus, this season Golden Lariat will be ‘restricted’ in terms of non – thoroughbred coverings.

At length Tim will discuss this dilemma. “Perhaps because it is part of our tradition and

I just do not know any better, we will always stand a thoroughbred for the non – thoroughbred mare but to be frank it is just not profitable”, he says sadly. So here are the facts. In the thoroughbred world the breeding is now concentrated on speed so a good strong National Hunt type sire is hard to find. If one is found, it will cost over the 100,000 mark, too much for the non – thoroughbred market where average covering fees are in the 450 Euro range. On top of that, Tim notes that in trying to buy this kind of horse you are up against very deep pockets from the Middle East.

During our visit, as an illustration of what could be missed, Tim and Finola along with two of their very enthusiastic daughters, Claire and Susan brought out Golden Lariat – a superb athletic looking horse. Then they presented one of his daughters – a lovely mare owned by Paddy McNamara of Shinrone, County Offaly who is a former Limerick Lady and Limerick Matron winner and is a real solid beauty.

So is there a solution to the dilemma that the kind of quality Thoroughbred needed for the

Irish Sport Horse Industry being priced out of that market? Would some form of subsidy for buying TB stallions for the industry work?

Very quickly Tim answers, “Between 30,000 and 70,000 Euro would be needed but since it would be giving preferential treatment I do not think it would be allowed under EU regulations. So what about doing a Dick Jennings? Back in the seventies, under the old Bord na gCapall Dick bought good sires like Bahrain and placed them at studs around the country. “Yes” said Tim, “that might work” but did not seem quite sure. So for now at least, the Irish Sport Horse industry’s need for a fruitful input of good solid Thoroughbred blood into the system is going to depend on people like the Carey’s who follow a long standing tradition in supporting the non – thoroughbred world because they just love to see a really nice young horse that could win the lightweight or middleweight championship at Dublin and go on from there to be what we all hope for – a world class Irish bred.



*Seventh generation members of the Carey family Susan and Claire with the Thoroughbred Stallion Golden Lariat.*