

## **WORLD JERSEY CATTLE BUREAU TOUR 2016**

### **IRELAND – UNITED KINGDOM – JERSEY**

**By Jenny Frigot**

The World Jersey Cattle Bureau meetings and tour began in Dublin on Friday June 3<sup>rd</sup> and a group of us enjoyed our first lunch at O’Neills, a traditional Irish pub in Suffolk Street in Dublin’s centre and across the road from the famous Molly Malone statue. We stayed at the Clayton Airport Hotel and later enjoyed an informal dinner there where the delegates were welcomed by Derrick Frigot, President of the World Jersey Cattle Bureau and Kevin Brady, Chairman of the Jersey Cattle Society of Ireland.

The tour began next day with a visit to Moorepark Research Centre in Fermoy, County Cork where we were introduced to the interesting programme they are conducting on the study of pasture and how to improve it to develop greater productivity and profitability from grazing, through soil fertility management. They are beginning to conduct experiments with cross bred and Jerseys to find the most profitable cattle for the grazing conditions prevailing in Ireland. During the afternoon we drove to Renny Farm in Ballyhooly where we were hosted by Kevin and Margaret Twomey. They milk over 300 cross bred Jerseys using the Moorepark grazing system and as a result are turning over a decent profit.

On day three we had a most interesting visit to the Irish National Stud where we admired their top stallion, Invincible Spirit, which commands 120,000 euro for one cover. We also visited the paddock where their retired steeple chaser geldings grazed amidst the buttercups and opposite them were a few miniature Falabellas, a rare Argentinian breed. That evening we were taken to The Merry Ploughboy, the only pub in Ireland owned and managed by traditional musicians where we enjoyed great music and good food.

The following day we enjoyed a coach tour of Dublin with a step on guide and on the way visited Phoenix Park sprawling over 1750 acres. Most of us clambered up the little hill on top of which stood the massive Papal cross. On September 29<sup>th</sup> 1979 it was here that Pope Paul II offered mass to a crowd of 1,000,000 people. Driving alongside the River Liffey we saw both the replica of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Jeanie Johnston Tall Ship which, during the potato famine, transported Irish immigrants to America and we also saw a replica of one of the so called “coffin boats” when on one journey 300 people got on it and only 4 people got off. These boats which took four weeks to complete their journey were always followed by sharks. After the tour we stopped at a Rugby club to eat a packed lunch. There was a shortage of tables and chairs and we soon discovered why. Someone in the vicinity had passed away and the furniture had been borrowed for the wake! From here we headed to the farm of Cormac Quinn of Beechdale Jerseys at Castleblayney in County Monaghan. In 2011 Cormac was milking thirty Holstein Friesians and receiving well below average milk prices. After visiting Ben Tyrell’s herd he was very impressed with his results and so in 2012

he imported twelve in-calf Jersey heifers from Denmark and hasn't looked back since. He currently milks eighty cows on seventeen hectares of land. By next year he hopes to be milking 100% Jerseys. His cows have fresh grass in their diet for 300 days of the year. Later that day, back at the hotel, we were treated to A Taste of Ireland dinner and enjoyed listening to the keynote Irish speaker Paddy Walsh speaking mainly about health and nutrition in cattle, as well as humans. He suggested that we all consume whey as it is considered a very good product for slowing down the progression of old age.

Next morning we awoke to a drizzly overcast day and were driven to Alltech's European Headquarters where their core business is to provide natural solutions, information and support to all sectors of the animal nutrition industry worldwide. We listened to talks from Kevin Tuck the Managing Director and April Higgins who as Technical Adviser visits farms and helps the farmers to reach targets of productivity and profitability by looking at the diets of their cows. Lunch on the farm was then kindly hosted by Alltech which was established in 1980. After lunch we paid a visit to Ben Tyrell's Woodtown Jersey herd, one of the oldest established herds in Ireland founded by his well respected grandfather Garrett Tyrell at Woodtown, Kildalkey, Co. Meath in 1955. Garrett was President of the UK Jersey Society in 1977 and was also Chairman of the World Jersey Cattle Bureau. We were given a talk by Mike Brady who is the Premier Independent Agricultural Consultant in Ireland, followed by Joris Somers from UCD Veterinary College who, having monitored Ben's farm's performance over a number of years, compared the herd's fertility and health to a group of other herds he had been following. Our day ended with just over a two hour drive to Belfast where we stayed at the Wellington Park Hotel in the heart of the city.

We began the following day with a real treat for some of us, a visit to Bushmills Irish Whisky Distillery where, after a very interesting tour, our party was given the opportunity to sample the quality Irish product and very tasty it was too. Leaving the distillery behind we continued our journey to another icon – the Giants Causeway in County Antrim which has been designated a World Heritage site since 1965. This was an incredulous site to see as it was made up of 40,000 or so basalt columns of almost identical sized stones stacked up one on top of the other, most of which are of a hexagonal shape and form stepping stones. It didn't seem possible that these columns had been formed by ancient volcanic eruptions as they were too perfect. A deep sea mist somewhat spoiled what should have been a spectacular North Antrim coastal drive, but it did eventually clear and became really warm when we stopped off for ice creams. The roads were narrow in this area and sheep and beef cattle grazed in the lush green fields and on the hillsides. Little farms and cottages were scattered about and the mist rolled in and out as we drove through natural and unspoilt moorland. We soon reached a small town named Ballypatrick which is the nearest point to Scotland and then we drove through Ballypatrick forest. Finally the sun really came out as we drove through the very pretty scenery of rolling hills and meadows with their little dry stone walls, intermittingly running along the edge of the Irish sea.

In Belfast the next day, we were taken on a very interesting tour of the city and were driven down both the Falls road, synonymous with the Republican community and the Shankill road which is predominantly Loyalist and separated from the Falls road by Peace Lines. In both of the roads we were shown all the murals of resistance including a big mural painted by Bobby Sands the political prisoner. We ended our city tour by driving past Belfast's Parliament Building known as Stormont. It was an impressive building built of white Portland stone standing at the end of an avenue lined with Lime trees. It was opened by the Prince of Wales in 1933. After dropping off our city guide Emily we made our way on to the Clondeboye Estate in Bangor, County Down for lunch served in the banqueting hall, followed by an extensive tour of the estate. Clondeboye which covers 2000 acres is owned by the Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava and managed by Mark Logan. They have 60 Holsteins and 30 Jerseys and also own a rare breed of 16 Irish Moiled cattle. Whilst one group of our party went to learn about the estate's anaerobic digester, another group were shown around the extensive gardens by Fergus Thomson the gardener.

Our final day in Northern Ireland began with one group of the delegates visiting a nearby market and the remainder visiting the Titanic Experience a short distance from Belfast's city centre. It is housed inside an iconic six floor building containing nine galleries. This proved a very worthwhile visit which depicted the conception and construction of the ship and allowed us to get an impression of what the cabins were like inside. The whole experience really brought history to life. Our next stop of the day was to see the Potterswalls herd of Ashley Fleming and his family. He has a fantastically good herd in a farm perched on top of a hill surrounded by magnificent rural views. After the drive back to Belfast we ended the day with a great meal at our hotel and were entertained by a comedian, a male singer, a group of young Irish dancers and a talented man who sang and played the fiddle.

We had a very early start this morning as we were travelling on the Stena Line ferry to Scotland. After a very smooth crossing we landed at Cairnryan and re-boarded our coaches to drive to the city of Dunblane where we checked into the Double Tree Hydro Hotel, a very impressive building built in 1878 set in lovely grounds and perched on top of a hill. Whilst many people attended the first Bureau meeting at the hotel, others enjoyed a visit to Stirling Castle. Stirling is known as The Brooch of Scotland as it is said to clasp the Highlands and the Lowlands together. Our last stop of the day was at Robert Graham and his family's farm Boquham Home Farm at Kippen in Stirling. They had set up a large marquee where they served us with dinner followed by the Graham's Gold Top Invitational Auction sale, much anticipated by our group. Taking part were bidders from nine countries and topping the sale was Rapidbay-UK Grandest Rumour selling for 5,500 guineas. A display of Scottish dancing completed a great evening.

Next day began with an early morning World Jersey meeting followed by the European Jersey Forum which held a Jersey classification workshop. Those of us who didn't want to attend the meeting took the opportunity to take a bus tour of Edinburgh in the pouring rain.

Our coach was waiting for us when we got off the bus and we were driven east of Edinburgh to the farm of Gordon Hastie and family to see his Alderston herd, where we were soon joined by the delegates who had attended the meetings. The herd was established in 1961 with just 40 Jersey cows and they now have 340 supplying milk to Graham's family dairy. At dinner that evening Gebhard Rehberg was presented by the Bureau with a Certificate of Achievement in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the Jersey breed in Germany.

The following day we paid a very interesting visit to Graham's Dairies at Airthrey Kerse. The business was founded in 1939 by Mr. Robert Graham with a nucleus of 12 cows which he milked by hand and then delivered the milk in a pony and cart to the Bridge of Allan. Grahams is Scotland's largest independent dairy and is run by the third generation of the family. The company now supplies all of Scotland with its award winning products. Continuing on our way that morning, we made our way down to the English Lake District, stopping for an hour's break on the way at Gretna Green in Dumfries and Galloway on the Scottish border. Gretna Green has been famous for its "Runaway Marriages" since 1754 when the underage marriage act came into force in England. Travelling via Carlisle and Keswick we reached the Low Wood Bay Hotel overlooking Lake Windermere.

Up early once more, we all set off for our boat trip on Ullswater Lake to Abbott Lodge farm, Clifton, near Penrith in Cumbria to see the herd of Steven and Claire Bland. The drive down was immensely enjoyable as we drove through the beautiful fells with their attractive little grey stoned houses and farms surrounded by dry stoned walls. Our driver skilfully negotiated the narrow roads and all was well until an impatient young driver decided to overtake us at one of the narrowest points. Our driver remained calm and the young man was very apologetic for being so reckless, but he did take his wing mirror off and the bus lost its indicator and was very scratched. Arriving at the Blands, many of us made straight for Claire's Ice-Cream Parlour, struggling to make a choice from the many delicious flavours. Lunch tables had been set up in the farmyard and we were privileged to meet Jim Lowther the aristocratic owner of the farm of which Steven is his tenant. He expressed his hope that we would have time to visit Lowther Castle which is part of his estate. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed walking amongst Steven's impressive and well managed herd. As there was a bit of time to spare, it was decided that we should take up Jim Lowther's offer and with Steven on board the coach acting as our guide everyone went to have a look at the magnificent castle which is set amidst the 22,000 acres of the estate which included the fells and lakes. We ended the tour by driving through the quaint Lowther village where the servants lived in the 1800's. Heading back to our hotel we made a stop at Lake Windermere where some of us visited the delightful Beatrix Potter experience and relived our childhood.

Leaving the lakes behind, we travelled down to an area near Carnforth in Lancashire via Morecambe Bay and on to Bayview Jerseys, home of the herd of the Pye family, Geoff, Debs, Matt and Sarah. This herd was only established in 2004 and numbers 260 outstanding animals which are housed all year round. The Pye family had prepared 40 cows in show

condition for viewing and these were exhibited in a separate barn. The quality of the animals impressed everyone. Local Radio had been invited and after a very good lunch they interviewed several delegates. The Carden Park Hotel was to be our home for the next three nights. It is set in Carden Park, one of Cheshire's Country Estates.

Early morning meetings followed the next day for some people on the tour and the remainder of us enjoyed the rather later than usual start of the day's tours. First stop was at Baddington Farm near Nantwich in Cheshire, the home of the Patten family. We were welcomed to the farm by Will Patten and were introduced to his Mum Gillian and his sisters, but sadly his Dad Brian couldn't be with us as he was seriously ill in a Hospice. Knowing this in advance, our two coaches made a collection for the Hospice which totalled over £200. The family had organized a couple of judging competitions for the tour party with Steve McCarthy acting as master judge. Firstly a class of six in milk heifers and then after a very tasty barbeque a second class of yearling heifers. Unfortunately the weather was very unkind that day and the heavy rain prevented many from taking part, however the rain did ease later which enabled the tour party to see the rest of the herd. Very sadly Will's Dad passed away a few days later.

The final day of the UK leg of the tour had arrived and we were driven to the beautiful city of Chester. Our drivers parked the coaches in a large carpark and everyone walked in "a crocodile" to the city hall where we were met by the Cogent team who were a major sponsor of the trip and we were given a history of the company and a presentation of how they visualised their way forward. We were welcomed to the historic hall by the city's Deputy Lord Mayor Razia Daniels who hailed from Tanganyika. Chester is enchanting and totally unspoiled with most of the buildings built in a Tudor style. After a buffet lunch two young farmers, Helen Stanier (Greyleys Jerseys) and Andrew Reader (Barnowl Jerseys), spoke on the subject of "The Jersey Breed is my Future". The tour party walked back through the city to the two coaches and our final stop of the day was at the extensive Grosvenor estate owned by the Duke of Westminster. One stop was at the Cogent Breeding's bull stud where some of the Jersey bulls were shown to us, and we also visited the Duke's Lea Manor Farm to see this state of the art facilities and its leading 500-cow Holstein herd. Here we enjoyed an early hog roast which was hosted by Cogent and we returned to our hotel at 6.30pm.

It was time to leave the UK behind and the following morning the group split up and flew out of Liverpool, Birmingham and Manchester airports to the Island of Jersey. Some of the party were booked in at the Hotel de France and the remainder checked in at the Grand Hotel. After a brief rest the delegates were welcomed to Jersey by Ian Mitchell, President of the Royal Jersey Agricultural and Horticultural Society and James Godfrey the Chief Executive Officer and then the delegates were all presented with commemorative plates celebrating 150 years of the Jersey Herd Book. The whole group then walked down to West Centre to admire the sculpture of a group of four life sized bronze cattle around a drinking

trough which was the project for The Year of the Jersey. It was unveiled on September 29<sup>th</sup> 2001.

Most of the first full day on the island was spent at the Summer show held at the Royal Jersey showground in the parish of Trinity. There was a big turnout of show cattle and the classes were judged by Mr. Herby Lutz of the USA. The winner of the Grand Champion title was Cottage Sultan's Iben, a three year old owned by Vicky Huelin. Later that afternoon, after a tour of the North-East coast of the island, the delegates visited the Roseland herd at Cowley Farm, the farm of Andrew and Loraine le Gallais. Andrew is the current chairman of the Jersey Milk Marketing Board and milks 220 cows. That evening, following a tour of the gardens and farming museum of Samares Manor, the home of Seigneur Vincent Obbard, we all enjoyed dinner in the beautiful herb garden.

On the second day the delegates were split into two groups with alternating visits to both Trinity Manor Farm and the Jersey Dairy. Trinity Manor farm which comprises of 150 acres of land is owned by Paul and Pam Bell and it has been in existence since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. They now use international genetics and hope in the future to be able to export some of those great genetics through embryo transfer. A visit to Lodge Farm, home of the Houzé family followed and they kindly hosted our lunch that was overseen by Annette. The "Prides" herd is owned and managed by Paul and his daughter Becky and Paul is currently Vice President of the RJA&HS. Back on the bus and the group went to see the Cottage Farm herd owned by Vicky Huelin who is the proud breeder of the Summer show's Grand Champion. As the island is so small there was still time enough to visit Richard Smith at Laugée farm. This was a small herd farmed in the old traditional way and the visit was much enjoyed by the visitors. That evening everyone visited La Ferme at St. Martin, the home of the Perchard family and had the opportunity to view the 240-cow Ansom herd. The evening was rounded off on the farm with a magnificent meal of lobsters and meats served with the famous Jersey Royal potatoes. Entertainment was provided by L'Assemblee d'Jerriais choir singing in Jersey French, the local patois and a lovely filmed tribute was given by the family to their late mother Anne.

The final morning included visits to the recently enlarged Le Maistre family's younger Westlands herd which is run by Phil and Philip le Maistre, a visit to John and Sarah le Feuvre's Elite 120-cow herd at Les Augerez in the parish of St. Peter, the Le Boutillier family's Woodland's herd and Ricky Leith's Chalet herd, both with 200-plus-cow herds. Lunch that day was held in glorious sunshine at Corbiere Phare hotel overlooking the sea and Corbiere lighthouse.

The visit to Jersey culminated with the "Jersey Jewels" Auction Sale run by guest auctioneer Mr. Mark Davis. This heralded an exciting evening of entertainment at the Royal Jersey showground. Six heifers and five milking heifers were sold for an average of £2,185. Top price of the sale was made by Ansom Egalitarian Cybernaut from the Perchard family. This five month old heifer was sold for £3,675 to Blanc Pignon Dairy farm. The final event of the

visit to Jersey that evening was the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration dinner which began with pre-dinner welcome drinks accompanied by entertainment from the Band of the Island of Jersey. During the meal we were treated to the lovely warm voice of Adria Godfrey, wife of James and her Latin/Jazz band Alegria and then Ian Mitchell, the President of the RJA&HS thanked everyone for coming to join in with the celebrations. Derrick Frigot then thanked Ian as President of the Society for hosting the previous four days and presented him with a plaque on behalf of the World Jersey Cattle Bureau delegates. He also presented Andrew Le Gallais with a World Jersey Cattle Bureau Certificate of Achievement in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the Island of Jersey's Dairy Industry. Philip le Brocq then made a short speech and proposed a toast to the Jersey Herd Book. To round off the evening there was dancing to the Badlabecques band headed by singer-songwriter Kit Ashton. They performed both English and Jèrriais traditional folk songs. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the evening and thought it was a fitting end to a wonderful tour.