

The Connemara Pony Breeders' Society Annual Christmas Show

By Fiona Grimes

The Connemara Pony Breeders' Society held its Fifth Annual Christmas Show on Sunday, December 9th at Creagh Equestrian Centre, Ballinasloe. Despite the previous night's strong winds and heavy rain the show kicked off at 10am sharp with indoor show jumping for 70cm, 80cm and 90cm and finished with a nail-biting 1m speed class. The course designed by Damien Carey was inviting for both pony and rider with a mixture of fillers and bending lines.

The 70cm class, kindly sponsored by Ballinasloe Credit Union, was divided between five clear rounds. Fortruane Bramble Earl ridden by Donna Murray, Cashelbay Kate (Michael Harty), Knockmoy Colleen (Eimear Nee), Eoin's Lady (Amber Rima) and Carra Dancer (Karen Fox) sharing a prize fund of €170. *Some of the winners 70cm class below.*



The 80cm class sponsored by Gullane's Hotel & Conference Centre saw twenty-eight competitors with a handful going through against the clock. Eleven-year-old Cadhla Cunningham from Cong, Co. Mayo riding her nineteen-year-old 136cm Milford Lad had the quickest time to secure first place (€100), Cashelbay Kate ridden by Michael Harty took second (€50) and Kinamara Bobby ridden by Ciara Shanley was in third (€20). *Pictured below some from the 80cm class.*



The 90cm class, sponsored by Joe Murray Feeds, saw over thirty ponies and riders go through the ring and with the tightest of margins, Cadhla Cunningham and her faithful friend Milford Lad secured first place (€120), second prize (€50) was awarded to Ballyowen Belle Amie ridden by Sarah O'Donnell and third prize (€30) went to Glenford Ruby ridden by Lorna O'Callaghan. *90cm class below*



The show jumping concluded with the 1m speed class and demonstrated some great riding skill. The track was built so that riders could really go for it against the clock to secure a top three placing.

There could only be one winner and this went to Talitha Diamond and Sea Storm (pictured below) with a first prize of €200 kindly sponsored by Horse Sport Ireland and Finbar Ward and a beautiful embroidered rug sponsored by Arden Equestrian. Second place went to Ballyowen Belle Amie ridden by Sarah O'Donnell, leaving Glenford Ruby ridden by Lorna O'Callaghan in third.



During the changeover to the in-hand classes Santa arrived on his four-legged friend, Finn, to visit all the boys and girls and take a few last minute orders for the coming 'big day'.

Excited children collected wonderful selection boxes from Santa, kindly donated by SuperValu, Clifden and a Christmas raffle took place with lots of great prizes all kindly donated by many generous people.

The In-hand classes started a little later than expected and commenced with the *Irish Dragoon* Colt Foal Class kindly sponsored by Blakehill Connemara Ponies. A total of eight colts paraded in the indoor area under the watchful eyes of the two judges, Ms Grace Maxell Murphy and Ms Cathy Stuffle. Each foal was scrutinised in great detail before a final decision was made. Best Colt Foal went to Jack and Bernard Keaney's homebred Murvey Jordan (Glencarrig Knight x Murvey Rianna) pictured below, with a prize of €120 and a rug sponsored by Arden Equestrian, second prize and €70 went to Gerry Martyn's colt Cregduff Mainliner (Drumbad Fletcher Moss x Cregduff Queen) and the third place with €50 was awarded to Lorcan Glynn's dun colt Plunkett Starry (Lightening Star x Carranurlaur Lass).

Next into the ring were ten quality filly foals parading with their handlers in the *Eileen Alanna* class. The judges' decision was final and without little hesitation Eabha Mullen's homebred filly, Gurteen Eabha (Glencarrig Knight x Gurteen Kate) class kindly sponsored by Kinamara Stud was crowned the winner and was awarded a prize of €120 along with a beautiful embroidered rug sponsored by Arden Equestrian pictured below. Tom Clancy's filly Killour Lee (Dooneen Supermatch x Lough Mask Lee) took second place and Val Noone's homebred Crusheen Daras Nancy (Gurteen Dara x Crusheen Gipsy) came third.



The final class of the evening was the Registered Connemara Mare Class of Four Years and Over generously sponsored by Horse Sport Ireland. A total of five mares presented and the winning place was given to Peter O'Malley's Glenlo Lady (Laerkens Cascade Dawn x Lady Windsor) along with the late Eamonn McDonagh's Cup, pictured below being presented by Betty McDonagh. In second place was Alaoise Halpin's mare, Kilrock Cashel and third went to Paddy Kearns new mare, Rossmore Pride.



We would like to thank all our sponsors for your generous support in making this show possible and to all our exhibitors for making the time to support our annual Christmas Show - without you, there would be no show. A special thank you to the Carey family who saw us all generously sustained with festive flare throughout the day.

Sponsors: *The Carey Family and Creagh Equestrian Centre, Ballinasloe Credit Union, Gullane's Hotel Ballinasloe, Joe Murray Feeds, Horse Sport Ireland, Blakehill Connemara Ponies, Kinamara Stud, Supervalu Clifden, Finbar Ward, Arden Equestrian, Kieran Egan, TRI Equestrian, Andrew & Lindsay Robinson and Joan Collins (SW Meath Hunt).*

The Connemara Pony Breeders' Society committee would like to wish you all a very Happy Christmas and peaceful New Year.