



CONNEMARA PONY BREEDERS' SOCIETY
CUMANN LUCHT CAPAILLÍNÍ CHONAMARA

100 YEARS
1923-2023

ANNUAL SHOW 2023
15TH TO 18TH AUGUST

One hundred years on.....

Founded in 1923, the Connemara Pony Breeders' Society is very proud to commemorate its one hundredth year. It acknowledges the foresight of the first council to preserve and improve this unique native pony, and recognises the contribution the breed has made to the economy and development of Connemara, a coastal region of harsh rugged landscape and inclement weather. Today the Society has daughter societies in seventeen countries across the world, indicating the popularity and wide ranging ability of this very special adaptable pony breed.



Members of the first elected Council of the Connemara Pony Breeders' Society: Back: Bartley O'Sullivan, Michael O'Malley, Willie Roe; Middle: Mr Wallace, Josie Mongan, Tim Cotter, Tommy Kelly; Front: Tom Lyons, Mr Prendergast, Father White, Christy Kerin

How much credit HUMANS can take for the development of the Connemara is debatable. Over centuries, it evolved as naturally as other wild species have grown and changed. Had it any foresight, this little pony might have chosen a friendlier native land other than Connemara, the western-most part of Ireland that juts into the Atlantic Ocean. But then it would not have been a Connemara, for the breed is the product of its environment.

DISTINCT and sturdy physical qualities evolved over generations on this extremely harsh and rocky seacoast, exposed to fierce storms and seemingly never-ending wet weather. Constant moisture is hard for equines to tolerate, and here, if it is not actively raining or snowing, sea-spray dashes up and around, or a thick Irish mist descends.

CONNEMARAS learned to eat whatever the land offered – heather, gorse, seaweed, scant grass, and a pony might travel miles in search of a day's rations. This made for a varied diet that all the conditions in the world could not equal.

A SELF-RELIANT ANIMAL developed that could fend for itself. It became a breed that developed magnificent bone and rock hard hooves. It was nimble and surefooted. And the population of the area recognised the pony's potential to work the land, transport peat, carry produce to market and the family to chapel. It was invaluable to the needs and requirements of the local people becoming a tough and willing type, today very popular in the modern equine community.



'Founder of the breed' is attributed to Michael O'Malley as it was he who in 1912 brought the pony to the attention of the world.

But it was not until **1923** a public meeting was held on December 12th in a local Oughterard under the auspices of the Galway County Committee of Agriculture and the Department of Lands and Agriculture, to form a society for the preservation and improvement of the Connemara pony. Concluding that best results were likely using carefully selected

ponies from native stock, large numbers of which were still to be found in Connemara. It was unanimously agreed to form the Connemara Pony Breeders' Society. Their task 'to attempt to foster and develop, on systematic lines, a native breed which had existed for centuries, the merits of which were recognised not only in Ireland but outside it'.

FIRST INSPECTIONS were held in April the following year at eleven locations throughout the county including the CPBS first Annual Show at Roundstone on 15th August. A total of 339 mares presented at inspections: 75 passed; of 50 stallions presented, six passed, with the comment:

'In making our selections we endeavour to adhere to the type of pony which made the breed famous in the past, that is a deep-bodied animal, short-backed and well ribbed up, standing on short legs, having good bone, sloping shoulders and well balanced neck and head. The ideal height we regard as ranging from 13 to 14 hands and the average height of the selected ponies is about 13 hands 2 inches.'

Particular attention was paid to action and selected ponies had free, easy and true movement.

'Mounted on short, stout, or fine legs. I consider that fine legs are characteristic of the old type. You will get one pure Connemara pony with a rather big coarse head and stout

legs, and another that is not a whit more impure, with a small fine head, and fine legs, the reason being that the former retains the characteristics of the small wiry female ancestor that lived in a wild state on our mountains before 1833; while the latter retains the characteristics of the male ancestor, one of those lovely creatures of the Arabian family introduced by Colonel Martin in about 1883, when the much thought of Connemara Pony was first got by the infusion of the Arab blood into the native breed.' (Quote by Michael O'Malley credited with saving the breed)

On height, he said that liberal feeding of a pure Connemara pony that was accustomed to living in a harsh mountain environment tended to result in the pony overgrowing 14 hands, which at the time was suggested as a maximum height for a Connemara pony.



STUD BOOK

- Primary function to maintain the stud book for the breed for the 32 counties
 - Encapsulates the breed standard and rules for the parent society and all societies worldwide
 - Continuous record since 1923
 - Twenty-one volumes in hardback and digital records.
- Volume 1 published in 1926. Volume 21 published in 1999 with breeding stallion numbers standing at 1,043 and breeding mares 11,621. Today (2022) the total numbers recorded stand at **0000 and 00000** respectively.

CONNEMARA PONY STUD BOOK.

Introduction to Volume I.

The history of the development and improvement in all classes of live stock has shown, that the careful recording of pedigrees is the most effective way in which progress can be made. The Arab, the Thoroughbred and all the well known breeds of horses and ponies owe their pre-eminence and value to the fact that the history and breeding of each individual animal can be traced back for generations.

The publication of a Connemara Pony Stud book is an attempt to foster and develop, on systematic lines, a native breed which has existed for centuries, the merits of which are recognised not only in Ireland but outside it.

In Connemara, unlike many other pony breeding localities, breeding mares work throughout the year; consequently a form of natural selection for utility purposes is continually at work. Awkward, ill-tempered,

As was noted in the Foreword to that first studbook which lists 9 stallions and 93 mares:

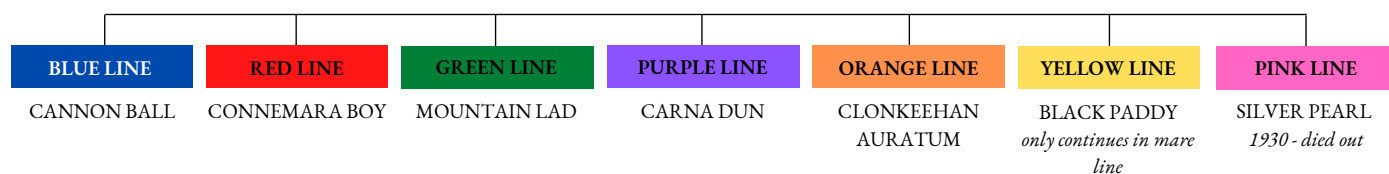
'The beneficial influence of pony blood in the grading up of saddle and harness horses has been recognised by breeders in every country. It has always been a source of such qualities as staying powers, intelligence, soundness and hardiness of constitution. The general distribution of the Connemara pony throughout Ireland, which has been going on for many years, has undoubtedly affected beneficially the Irish horse breeding industry. Many well-known Irish hunters and show-yard jumpers, and even steeplechasers owe their remarkable characteristics to an outcross of Connemara blood.'

Written almost 100 years ago, these sentiments still can be said to apply today. Continued careful selection and intelligent breeding of the Connemara pony, fostering a breed of ponies suitable for general utility purposes, and with its natural agility, the past 100 years has brought the pony to the fore in the international performance field with the production of high class riding animals suitable in every sphere of equestrianism.

Outside thoroughbred, Arab and Draught blood had been introduced at times to invigorate the breeding lines with varying degrees of success. In 1964 the Studbook was closed.

INSPECTIONS continue to be integral to the monitoring and safe-guarding of the breed.

Five recognized stallion lines of the original seven continue to ensure the versatility and viability of the Connemara ponies future:



Breed Standard

Type: Compact, well-balanced pony with good depth and substance and good heart room, standing on short legs, covering a lot of ground, good temperament, hardiness, staying power, intelligence, soundness, surefootedness, with athletic ability;

Height: 128cm to 148cm inclusive;

Colour: Grey, black, bay, brown, dun (may also be known as buckskin), palomino, dark-eyed cream, blue-eyed cream, and occasional roan or chestnut;

Head: Well-balanced head of medium length with good width between large kindly eyes, pony ears, well-defined cheekbone, jaw relatively deep but not coarse;

Front: Well set onto neck, crest should not be over developed, neck not set on too low, good length of rein, well-defined withers, good sloping shoulders;

Body: Body should be deep, with strong back, some length permissible, but should be well ribbed up with strong loins;

Limbs: Good length and strength in forearm, well-defined knees and short cannon with flat bone measuring 18cm to 21cm, elbows should be free, pasterns of medium length, feet well-shaped, of medium size, hard and level;

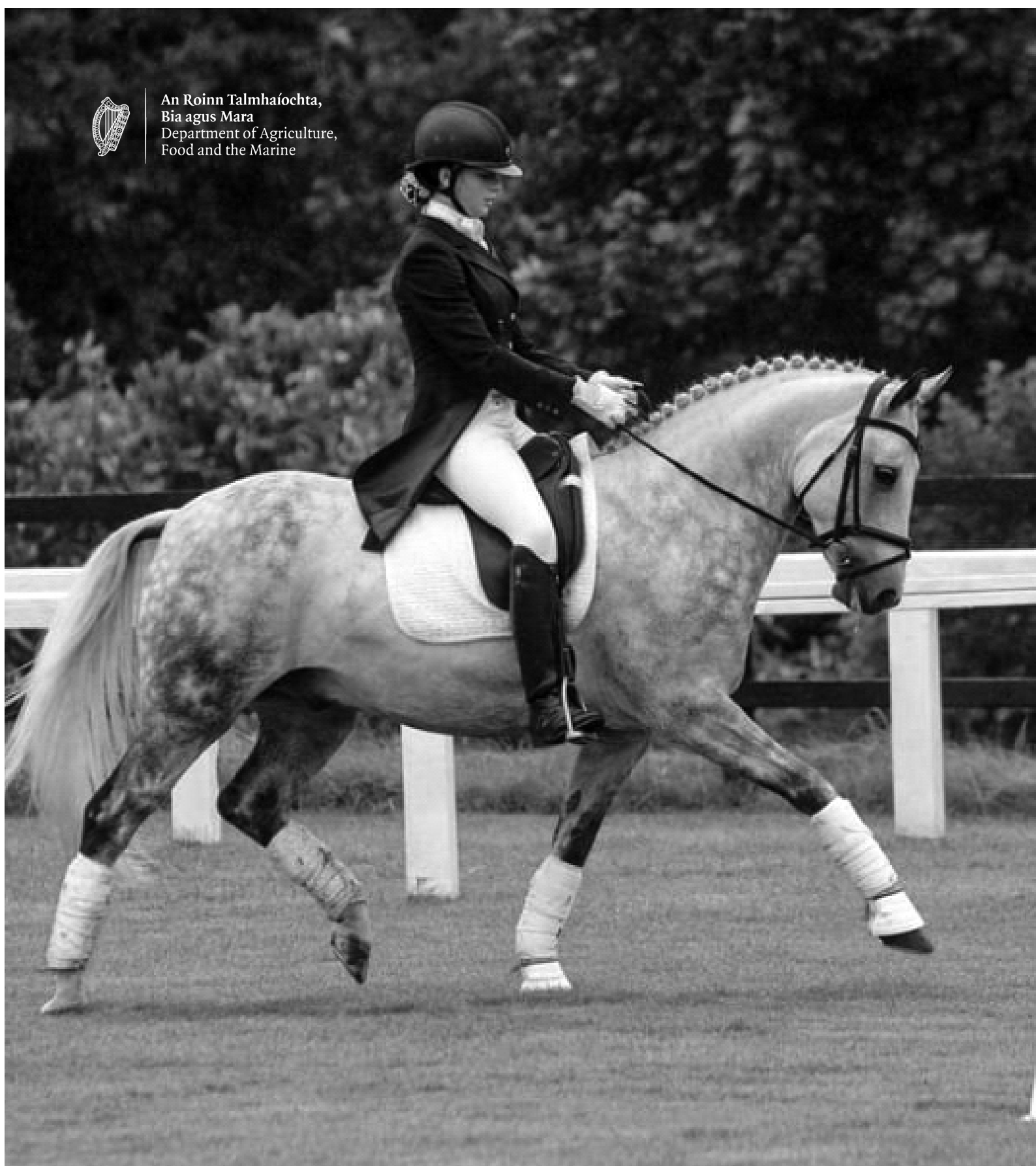
Hind: Strong, muscular with some length, well-developed second thigh (gaskin) and strong low-set hocks;

Movement: Free, easy and true, without undue knee action, but active and covering the ground.





An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara
Department of Agriculture,
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CONNEMARA PONY BREEDERS' SOCIETY

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