



The History of the Irish Draught in North America

Chapter Two: My History with PRIDE OF ERIN "A Goddess" - a friend's description of her

By Anthea McLauchlan



This was the advert in "The Scottish Farmer" magazine which caught my eye in March of 1988.



This is what I saw when I got to the West coast of Scotland, and I thought that I had made a wasted journey! However when she was brought out of the stable I saw that she was not really a heavy draught horse, but a quality substantial horse. Her conformation was correct and there was an unexpected lightness to her movement. I bought her before you could say St. Patrick!

She had been brought over from Ireland a year previously by a reputable horse dealer and purchased by the current owner. She had no papers. The owner had named her Pride of Erin and so she remained.

I immediately contacted the Irish Draught Horse Society of Great Britain to inquire about RID stallions in Scotland. There were only two; Ballynoe's Lad a bay, and Paddy's Pride a grey. I went to see both and decided on Paddy's Pride.

Erin caught in foal first time, but ended up staying at the stud all summer as I was unwell, and we only had very rich grazing available that year, which would have required more work to monitor her grass input!

I registered her for the annual Broodmare Inspections in the autumn, and despite much investigation I could not trace any papers for her. The loss of papers was common in Britain in those days with horses were brought over from Ireland, as breeding lines were not considered important.

The Inspectors really liked her and recommended that she be given Grade B, the highest grade they were able to allocate without papers.

The British grading system was then Grade A (RID) to D.

One thing I discovered about Erin was that she had some bad experiences at some point in her past. As I got to know her and gain her trust I promised her that I would never sell her.

1989 started badly. On 7 January Erin aborted. The filly foal was deformed. Both Erin and I was devastated. I wondered whether Erin had some major problem with breeding. I went further afield to England and to the bay RID stallion Colman, and sent Erin there as they also used a very well respected breeding vet John Newcombe. I did not trailer her down as it was along way (by British standards) and I was not up to it healthwise either. I booked her with a livestock transport company who took her and brought her back. After that experience Erin always looked at big livestock transport vehicles with a very worried look on her face.

May 11th 1990, Macs Colmerin (Merry) was bom. A lovely healthy bay filly. The name was created from a mix of "Erin" and "Colman". "Macs" was the name we used for all of our foals. It was derived from M and ACS - Michael (He That Was my husband) and Anthea Catherine

Stuart. (I still use it even though Michael and are no longer together as the M also stands for McLauchlan!)

A Scottish Irish Draught group had become active and needed support so we took Erin and Merry to their shows to give support. I had never done showing before and so it was a new experience. At Perth Agricultural Show, in a large class of pure and part bred ID broodmares, Erin came 4th. The highest placed pure bred broodmare stood 3rd and was a barren mare, Meisha, who belonged to a good friend of mine. Merry was the highest placed pure bred foal, coming 2nd in the foal class.

At the end of summer we went to the Scottish ID Breed Show. Erin came 2nd to Meisha who went on to win the ID Championship. Merry won her foal class!

The final outing in 1990 was to the autumn Broodmare Inspections where my friend Meisha was Graded B, with the same lack of papers holding back RID, and Erin and Merry received a Hornby Broodmare Award.



Having decided not to tempt Providence by trying Paddy's Pride again, I looked around for another stallion. I would have sent her back to Colman but he died in early 1991. I decided that I did not want to put Erin through the trauma of traveling a long distance if possible. I chose Silver Jasper, a grey who stood in Devon, and by the same sire as Paddy's Pride, Kilmore Heather. Devon was about as far away from Scotland as you could get and still be on land, but he was available by

AI with chilled semen. These were the dark ages in the science of AI with horses, frozen semen had not even been tried successfully yet. Silver Jasper was collected early one morning and the semen put on the train in Devon. It arrived at our local station at 6pm. My vet had never performed AI with horses, only with cattle. We poured over the instructions that came with the semen and had a go! Erin caught first time!!

Mac Silverin was born 18 May 1991. A large grey colt.

I was not doing too well with my health and decided to give myself and Erin a year off from breeding. I could not cope with showing all of them that year and so I took Merry (now a yearling) on her own to Perth Agricultural Show. We won our youngstock class. In the Championship we were in the presence of last year's Perth Champion; and Meisha, the 1990 Scottish Champion and who had already won the ID Championship at The Border Union Show that year. We won!!

I knew Erin was not happy traveling, so what did I do? In April 1992 I put her on a plane! She went with Merry and Max as I sent my Irish Draught family ahead of me to Canada when we emigrated!! I was keeping my promise to Erin. My sister, Nicky who lived in Canada, met them at Vancouver Airport and took photos. I wept when I saw them, Erin had lost so much weight. However she settled down and was nice and round as ever by the time we arrived in July.

In 1993 I researched the status of pure bred Irish Draughts in North America, as I was developing withdrawal symptoms and feeling very isolated. That was how and why the IDHS(NA) started!

There were two ID stallions in the whole of North America and they were only available live cover. Co Down Sam in MI and Augustus Grange in MO. Silver Granite had been in AZ and when I eventually managed to contact his owner, I discovered that the stallion had left the previous day on his way back to Ireland! I was stuck, and I really only wanted to bred pure bred IDs.

I took Erin, Merry and Max to the 126th Saanich Agricultural Show and entered them in the Sport Horse classes as representatives of the Irish "Warmblood". An attempt to introduce the public to the breed, on Vancouver Island anyway!

In 1994 I collected semen from Max before having him cut as there were still so few IDs in NA. He had remained entire until that time as Ms temperament had been so good.

In 1995 the IDHS(NA) held a "Stallion Parade" on St Patrick's Day at White House stables. Max and Snowford O'Donnell were displayed.

Erin was also brought out and shown to the public. (Merry by this time was training to be an eventer in the Interior of BC).

Snowford O'Donnell was a 1991 brown/black colt was imported from England to WA in 1993. I contacted the owners and he came up to Canada to be backed by my sister Nicky. We stood him here for two years. In 1995 the first mare he ever covered in his life was Erin. Also in 1995 I saw a video that Kitty Olivito had taken of various IDs in Ireland. I would see a mare that looked like Erin. The owner would say it was a Ben Purple mare. Another Erin lookalike and another Ben Purple mare. After seeing the third one I was certain I had at long last discovered who Erin's sire was!! Bloodtyping proved this to be the case!!

April 14th 1996 Macs Sno'Derin (Derry) was born. Another grey colt. 1996 was also the year of the first IDHS(NA) Annual Breed Show and Inspections. Ireland, our parent Society sent over Fintan Flannelly to officiate. We had a small group of pure and part bred IDs from BC and WA displayed, and a dedicated core of ID enthusiasts attended.

At these Inspections Pride of Erin was upgraded to RID with the new information regarding her sire. (She also placed first in the pure bred ID class, and took the overall Supreme Championship.)

That year I was unsuccessful in getting Erin in foal to Flagmount King with frozen semen imported from Ireland.

1997. Erin was shouting to me that she wanted another foal. In the summers she always had what I called her "unicorn" look, a lovely sheen to her coat and a magical glow. She was knickering gently to every foal she saw. I tried frozen semen again. 71-days time I tried a different vet and with stallion Touch of the Blues.

May 26 1998 Macs Blue Erin born.

I knew that my health was continuing in a downward spiral and that my foaling days were over. I sent Erin and The Kid to my friends Lesley and Duncan Kerfoot in Alberta (and arrived myself a couple of days after their arrival for the regular IDHS(NA) Spruce Meadows stand). She had not liked the trip, but recovered quickly. Lesley and Duncan wanted a pure bred colt and so I loaned them Erin to give them a chance to breed one.

During her non breeding times I would ride Erin whenever I had the energy. She was as good as gold with novices riders, but she would often look at me with slightly disgusted look at being asked to do such lovely work!

With "good" riders she took a different approach. If they took a superior approach to her, thinking that she was just a hairy mare, she soon changed that. She would carefully tip them off, and when they remounted they had a new respect!

After my first stroke, my right side did not seem to fit a saddle and stirrup in the same way it had. I found riding Erin bareback was wonderful, her conformation placed me just right and it was easy to stay there, with a little help from her mane...

1999 Erin did not get in foal to Mountain Pearl, and the vets in Alberta said that her breeding days were over. Lesley and Duncan went to England and bought their own in foal pure bred mare with colt foal at foot.

Erin loves the foothills of Alberta, roaming the big hilly fields. She played aunt to an orphaned 4 month old ID sport horse foal in 2000. I see her whenever I go and visit, and she tells me that she is happy there and not too bothered about the idea of coming back to the Island were the fields are small. She is spending her retirement there

So that is my story so far. I kept my promise to Erin and I have not sold her.