

# Solpoll Successes Nationwide

By Rodney Magowan



WORLD class stockmanship, endless enthusiasm and a continuous commitment to breeding cattle best suited to the needs of commercial beef producers - just some of the reasons why the McMordie family of Ballygowan, Co Down have enjoyed success with their Solpoll Pedigree Herefords for over 60 years.

However John McMordie says winning the UK Herd of the Year Award for the first time by any Northern Ireland breeder made 2014 a very special year.

Erstwhile Society President, John farms in partnership with son William and with the enthusiastic support of wife Helen, younger son Andrew and daughter Jennifer. Though Andrew and Jennifer have busy off farm careers both retain that McMordie love of good livestock.

UK Hereford Herd of the Year Judge, John Giffin of Petworth, West Sussex praised the consistency of Solpoll Herefords noting that all 45 cows in the herd were bred to rear good calves. They were not carrying too much weight, had a good milk supply and udders that give calves easy access to teats.

Praise indeed, as John Giffin has judged beef breeds at numerous events across the UK, including the RASE Burke Trophy, and as far afield as South Africa and Australia.

Commenting, John McMordie affirmed that, "Our aim is to breed stock that does the job from calf to carvery. Cattle that catch the eye of pedigree and commercial breeder's alike in the show and sale rings, but above all help a commercial herd show a profit. That means siring calves that get up, survive and thrive with a most marvellous ability to cost effectively produce high value beef from grass.

"Our sole enterprise is breeding pedigree cattle and most of our customers are dairy and suckler herd owners, who come back time and again to buy a bull in our yard. Indeed it is not unknown for yet another Solpoll bull to be bought by the second or third generation of the same farming family."

Having come in the top three of the UK Herd of the Year event twice - taking the ultimate award clearly delighted the McMordies. John remarking that since William returned from college to the family farm the pace of progress in breeding and marketing Solpoll stock has increased.

The words Solpoll and McMordie have long been synonymous with Herefords bred to breed commercial cattle that return a profit. However, the younger generation has proved very adept at using new technology to draw in new customers from

further afield. Andrew ensuring that the Solpoll website [www.solpollherefords.co.uk](http://www.solpollherefords.co.uk) and Facebook are kept right up to date with news from the farm, including all important Breedplan figures - no wonder Solpoll bulls and females sell so well not only at Society sales, but privately onto farms as far south as Dorset.

## Heifers



Cows & calves

In 2013 John and William sold 12 heifers onto mainland UK farms as well as a cow with calf at foot. Other cattle from the McMordie farm have gone to breeders in the Irish Republic and with exports in the past having taken Solpoll genetics into herds as far afield as Denmark and Spain. That AI stations turn to Solpoll Herefords when seeking a bull is another affirmation of the standard reached.

"Ever since my Grandfather Eric founded the herd in 1953 and used Canadian bloodlines we have tried to look beyond this small province, both for genetics that take our herd forward and for extra customers," William added.

"Now, thanks to websites, Facebook and emails it is getting easier to build on the good name our herd has built up thanks to the efforts of my Father and Grandfather. Sitting at home hundreds of miles away our potential customers can access pictures, breeding details and figures for all stock coming up for sale here. Demand for semen proving especially brisk."

Yet back home on the family farm amidst the lush rolling hills of Co. Down John and William know that the key to continued success is traditional good stockmanship.

"Ours is a typical Northern Ireland farm with a modest acreage compared to most elsewhere in the British Isles," John noted.

"That means we cannot run huge numbers of stock, but instead must make a living from relatively small numbers of very high quality cattle. In 2014, by November, we had sold 23 bulls for breeding to average £3,280, with 17 of these being sold privately.

"So standing still is never an option as success depends on being in the top rank of breeders yet being grounded in the commercial world. That is keeping a firm eye on the needs of those, who buy bulls to produce beef primarily from grass.

## Panmure 1 Henry



Panmure 1 Henry

"This has been demonstrated by our latest stock bull Panmure 1 Henry. His progeny has lived up to our expectations, this year siring the NI Pair of the Year, NI National Show Calf Champion, NI Calf Show Female Champion and the Best Autumn born Bull & Heifer Calves in the Herd's Competition. "Henry's" first 5 sons sold privately averaged £4,480.

"Unless a pedigree breed really does the job in the ever changing commercial arena then it is doomed to become the equivalent of fancy fowl, irrelevant to mainstream farming.

"With this in mind we have again looked further afield with William bringing some Canadian breeding into the herd just as we did back in the late 70s.

"Yes, 2014 was a wonderful year for our Solpoll Herd, but the years to come for Herefords will be even better. Slowly but surely farmers, processors and consumers are seeing an ever larger role for this brilliant British breed. Cattle famed as world beaters at turning forage into beef to leave farmers with profit



Solpoll 1 Kentucky Kid



Solpoll 1 Klinsmann

in their pockets and consumers with the right taste on their palates!"

## 2014 Solpoll Successes

UK Herd of the Year

Solpoll 1 Gilbert UK Sire of the Year

His daughter Dendor 1 Molly 41st UK Female of the Year

Solpoll 1 Dynamite NI Sire of the Year

Numerous successes at shows and sales, including the Royal Ulster Supreme Championship.

