



Daytime Round Up

Thursday 5th October

Welsh ponies dominate on day two of Horse of the Year Show

Day two of Horse of the Year Show (HOYS) opened with Claire Oliver clinching the **Hamilton Tarmac Small Show Hunter of the Year Championship** for the second year running, aboard her very smart Irish Draught, Shanbally Legacy. The 11-year-old Chestnut gelding is by Pride of Meath out of Kiltomas Lass.

An emotional Claire said: "He just loved it in there and gave the judge the most amazing ride. Both judges just said to me 'he's a true small hunter; a miniature middleweight'."

At home 'Lego' loves hacking and jumping and he also hunted last season. "I don't overshadow him," explained Claire. "I just pick a few shows. He's a real happy horse."

"We've had a wonderful partnership throughout the year. To come back and win again is the icing on the cake."

"We'll show him again next season and try and win it [the HOYS Championship] three times in a row!"

Reserve Champion was Vicky Smith's Irish Sport Horse, Irish Invention.

From early doors until mid-afternoon, an impressive field of Mountain & Moorland Working Hunter ponies put their best foot forward over David Cole's testing track in the **Thor Atkinson Steel Fabrications Ltd. Mountain & Moorland Working Hunter Pony of the Year Championship** in the TopSpec Arena. A big, inviting course required courage and focus from each combination, from the testing double early on to the bold finish over the stone bridge.

First and second placed competitors from each of the five sections were invited to the Andrews Bowen International Arena for the overall Championship where it was the Welsh ponies who stole the show, with all but two coming forward being Welsh bred including every winner.

Fiona Aston's eight-year-old Welsh Section A gelding, Delami Bravado (Benny) was crowned overall Champion with her 13-year-old son Ollie Rowlands in the saddle, following a win in the **122cm section**. The pony, who is by Dukeshill Dotcom out of Brynrodyn Blodwen, held his own in a very strong field in the afternoon performance.

Fiona bought Benny in lockdown. As a key worker, and with the children at home during the pandemic, she was looking for a little project to keep them busy. Benny came to them having never jumped before and Ollie, who was only 10 at the time, has taught him to jump and brought him on.

“He’s completely home produced,” said Fiona. “Ollie spent the whole summer just playing with him and getting to know him. He said to me, ‘mummy do you think Benny could ever get to HOYS?’ They were fourth here last year with one fence down”.

Benny also won this year’s Premier Amateur League for the respective class, which recognised the consistency in HOYS qualifiers of the eligible amateur and home produced combinations

A delighted Ollie said: “It’s unreal... just the wildest of dreams come true!”

Ashley Bird’s Welsh Section D Stallion, Gwerniago Gethin, stood Reserve Champion. Ashley bought the pony as a three-year-old from here in Birmingham, and has won the **143cm section** and stood Reserve Champion in 2016, 2017 and now 2023, making it a hat trick!

“He’s the pony of a lifetime,” said Ashley. “I’ll never get anything like him ever again.”

“He was a bit rough and ready when I bought him... I was going to get him for flats but he didn’t really get big enough, so I thought let’s see if he jumps - and he loves it! He jumps like a stag. He gives everything at a show.”

The winner of the **Junior 122cm section** was Bianca Mortimer’s 13-year-old Welsh Section A gelding Templeddruid Carob (Admiral) ridden by her daughter Millie on their first time here at HOYS. Admiral is entirely home produced and was a carriage driving pony before turning his hoof to what has proven to be a very successful year in working hunter classes.

It’s proving to be a busy week for show producer Kirsty Aird who has six horses and ponies here this week across the M&Ms and working hunters - all making their HOYS debuts. Her first red rosette came from a win in the **133cm section** with Caroline Casey’s striking Chestnut Welsh Section C, Llanidan Bonheddwr. Kirsty has been riding the 11-year-old gelding since March and has spent time letting him see some tracks and gaining experience this season.

“I’m absolutely delighted,” she said. “He was a bit like a rabbit in headlights to start with but he really took everything on board... and tried his heart out.

“It was a good up-to-height track, so you needed something that was careful but enjoying its job.”

Dycott Welsh King (King) concluded the string of Welsh pony victories in the **Exceeding 143cm section**. Anna Chaplin and Ross Keys have had the Welsh Section D since a five-year-old and this is his seventh year at HOYS. With three thirds and various placings, the win has, until now, eluded them.

Anna does a lot of work at home with King and Ross jumps him in the ring. "He's very easy in many ways and very tricky in many others!" she said. "He's incredibly intelligent."

Ross added: "The tougher the course, the better he goes. The crowd also gets him going - he loves the applause."