

## **Raheen a family-run, hands-on stud**

Mention 'Raheen' to anyone involved with thoroughbred horses in England and they'll immediately know what you're talking about. Well, okay, maybe they'd be under the impression that you are, in fact, referring to a stallion of the same name that stands at the uniquely named Nant Loyw Stud in Ammanford, Carmathenshire rather than a stud farm on Queensland's Darling Downs. To make your conversation with this hypothetical person even more interesting, the UK Raheen is by Danzig ex Belle De Jour – but not the Belle de Jour that won more than \$3 million in prize money and was owned and raced by (amongst others) John Singleton and Australia's ex-prime minister Bob Hawke.

Confused? Good – so am I. So let's forget about baffling everyone in Carmathenshire for the moment and focus instead on the Raheen Stud that we are all more familiar with.

Raheen Stud is situated in the Gladfield Valley, near Warwick. It was founded in 1957 when its first mare – Blue Halo – was purchased for 1000 guineas from another Queensland thoroughbred institution – Lyndhurst Stud. Over the years the farm has expanded to 1700 acres, its rich soils enjoying the additional water supply offered by the Glengallen Creek that cuts through the property. The Stud produces its own fodder and hay and the horses are always grazed on green feed: a mix of clover, lucerne and rye (a matter of some significance given the drought afflicted landscape that highlights the Downs at present).

Raheen is owned and run by the Nolans: Basil, his wife Diane, plus two of their six children, Basil [Jnr.] and Tim. Revealing how ingrained the horse industry is in the Nolan family I ask Tim how old he was when he first started handling the stallions. He looks perplexed. "I don't honestly know," he says finally.

2004 has been a year of some significance for the Stud. It prepared and sold (as agent) the \$180,000 Commands/Snippets Charm colt at the Magic Millions sale (the price being Raheen's highest ever at auction). A few months later it retired the stallion whose success had well and truly put it on the map – Crown Jester. And at around the same time, it announced that Shovhog would join its 2004 stallion line-up.

Basil and Diane state without hesitation that their biggest contribution to the industry so far has been managing the stud career of Crown Jester - the son of Baguette out of the Wilkes mare (and champion 2 year old filly of 1971) Anjudy. Sire of 13 stakes winners and 13 stakes placed performers, Crown Jester produced Rory's Jester in his first crop - a horse that would go on to become one of Australia's most consistent colonial sires (and broodmare sires). Crown Jester also produced Guineas (undefeated in his first seven starts and winner of the 1997 G1 Golden Slipper). A year later, at the age of 16 and from just 39 mares served, Crown Jester produced three stakes performers - Manana, Pepinello and Medals.

Basil hopes that Shovhog will pick up where Crown Jester left off. "If we can get him firing it's an opportunity to really allow the stud to go ahead as well," he says. "A lot of mares from outside the State are coming to him."

Shovhog was the one of the leading 2 year olds of the 1997/8 racing year. His earnings of \$652,096 included a second in the G1 Golden Slipper Stakes, two G2 seconds (Blue Diamond Prelude and Illawarra Classic), a G1 third (AJC Sires Produce Stakes) and a G1 fourth (Blue Diamond Stakes). As a three year old he won convincingly at two metropolitan meetings then skipped away from his opposition in the G3 Brian Crowley Stakes to win by six lengths.

A well bred colt, his dam - Startling Lass - was placed in the Golden Slipper, Blue Diamond Stakes and Silver Slipper Stakes and she is a full sister to the Blue Diamond winner Midnight Fever. Startling Lass has also produced the million dollar yearling and stakes winning full sister to Shovhog - Shovoff, as well as the stakes placed Mustabshir.

At stud Shovhog has produced a number of winners including Uber (winner of the G3 CRC Black Opal Stakes) and Harley Ma (winner of the listed SAJC Morphettville Guineas). Starting the 2004/5 season in fine style his daughter Junebug (ex Light Me Up) ran second in Sydney's first 2 year old fillies race - the listed Gimcrack Stakes on 2 October.

Shovhog's breeding difficulties have been the subject of some comment but the challenge they present don't seem to worry Basil.

“Crown Jester was also difficult [re covering]” Basil says musingly as the retired stallion arrives in the recently developed parade ring with a distinct spring to his 26 year old step and a trumpeting whinny to the mares over the fence. No doubt Crown Jester's 'difficulties' played some part in his changes of address before moving permanently to Raheen. It certainly didn't stop him from producing a number of exceptional race horses; for breeders – it's reassuring to know that Shovhog will be handled by a stud manager who has dealt with such issues before.

Raheen also stands the unraced Anglia (by Octagonal) who hails from a strong female line. Out of English Wonder (by Twig Moss) who won ten races including the G1 SAJC Derby, Anglia is a 5/8ths brother to Dr Grace (12 wins [including four G1's] and more than \$2.7m in prize money) and Asia (SAJC Australasian Oaks G1). Anglia has proven popular at stud, covering 99 mares in 2002 and 118 in 2003.

It's rare to find a stud that doesn't stand a son of Danehill these days and Raheen is no exception – standing two. Oarsman was unplaced from just three starts but is extremely well bred being out of an English stakes placed mare, the great grand daughter of Malindi who is none other than the sister to Nasrullah. Oarsman's family includes Danewin, Commands, and, interestingly (considering the other son of Danehill on the property), Shovhog.

Another Raheen incumbent with a Woodlands connection is Dodge (Canny Lad ex Damzelle), a G1 winner of both the AJC Epsom Handicap and the QTC Queensland Derby (plus victories at the G3 and listed level and just shy of a million dollars in prize money). He is currently serving his sixth book of mares. From his first crop to race he produced the well performed Dodging (who equaled the track record for 1200 metres at Eagle Farm) and the G2 placed Dodgem. Dodge's 2004 book includes (not surprisingly) Dodging and Dodgem's dams as well Bravisa (who scored 6 wins, multiple placings, and a fourth in the listed Gold Coast Stakes).

Raheen has a longstanding relationship with Woodlands Stud in NSW, standing a number of horses who have carried the Ingham's silks including Sanction (sire of the G3 winning Shaded [who raced in Hong Kong as Supreme Goliath] and a horse as famous

for his stature as his ability – the almost 18 hh hand Holy Roller who won 12 of his 25 starts, more than \$320,000, and the unusual distinction of having his own web page (<http://www.users.bigpond.com/rod.hoare/roller.htm>) as well as the previously mentioned Crown Jester and Dodge.

The stud has witnessed many changes in the industry over the past four decades. Basil and Diane took time to comment on a couple of issues that will, no doubt, have been discussed by many other breeders in recent months.

“People are really diversifying these days,” Diane says. “Instead of a whole draft by one sire they have a lot of foals by all different sires.” She reflects positively on the introduction of the QTIS scheme and says it has done a lot to boost the Queensland Industry. “It does mean a lot of people are now breeding for speed,” she says. “But it has definitely increased our return on the yearlings.”

“Yes, a lot more people are sending their mares South this year” Basil admits when I pose the thorny question. “It’s certainly more competitive these days. But it’s not doom and gloom. It’s added a whole new dimension with the big studs involved though.”

I ask them what their biggest challenge is but, in a sense, it’s a rhetorical question. The Magic Millions bloodstock team is due at any moment to inspect horses for the 2005 sales, Basil has responded to eight phone calls since I walked in the front door, Tim has been sent to fetch the stallions to parade for us, and Basil wants to show us the yearlings. This is after a night that saw three foals born.

“We’re very hands on,” Diane explains, glancing at the front paddock where a heavily pregnant mare stretches as if to ease the position of her unborn foal. “We have additional staff but prefer to do it ourselves as then we know it is done properly.”

Her comment is not overly surprising for a family-run business but to put it in perspective it’s worth noting that Basil and Diane will foal no less than 150 mares this year. It’s a level of personal attention that not too many Studs can offer.

“We love it,” she says. “It just means we have to go with the sun.”

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