

THE WHITEBRED SHORTHORN

*Where
breeds
have
sub-divisions,
these
are
also
included*



Progenitor of the Blue-Grey

In the north-west of England during the 19th century a distinctive type of Shorthorn began to emerge which became known as the Cumberland Shorthorn - the type of Shorthorn which, because of its geographic proximity, had the greatest input into the breed in Ireland.

However, around the turn of the century, within Cumberland itself and over the border in Scotland, another distinctive type emerged - the Cumberland White - later known as the Whitebred Shorthorn. Crossed on the Galloway (its near neighbour in south-west Scotland) the Cumberland White produced the renowned 'Blue-Grey' and suckled weanlings of this type soon became very popular along the Scottish-English border. David Hall from Larriston, was one of the first to sell Blue-Greys at his local mart in Newcastleton (Roxburgshire) - beginning a trend which led to the establishment of Newcastleton as the sales centre for Blue-Greys.

The Blue-Grey, in combining the hardiness of the Galloway and the beefing qualities of the Shorthorn, rapidly established itself as an excellent suckling cow and such was the demand that marts were soon holding special sales for them. The prowess of the Whitebred bull crossing the Galloway also extended to the Highland to produce the Cross-Highlander.

In its early days the Whitebred was a type within the Coates Herd-Book but during the early 1960s, some breeders became concerned at maintaining its identity and this concern led to the formation of The Whitebred Shorthorn Association on March 12th 1962. Since then, the breed, with its own herd-book, has remained entirely separate from other Shorthorns. However, all has not been plain sailing. The initial enthusiasm waned and by 2004 numbers had become so low that the Rare Breeds Survival Trust placed the Whitebred on its watch list as a 'Critical Breed' (its most endangered category) with less than 150 breeding cows.

Today the Whitebred is primarily a producer of bulls for crossing on hill breeds. The number of registered breeding cows has recovered to around 315 and expansion continues, with the majority of cattle located in the breed's original homeland along the Scottish-English border.

Ireland's only herd belongs to Thomas and Kate Madden from Glenarm (Antrim) who imported their first cow in 2011.

Right : Thomas and Kate Madden's herd.

*Left, from the top :
A Whitebred Shorthorn cow;
A bunch of Cross-Highlander heifers;
A pair of Blue-Grey cows with their
Charolais-cross calves.*

