



Con McGarry from Co. Roscommon



Con McGarry with Clifton Taff 221711 – at the Gilpa trial near Aberystwyth in 2002

Con first ran for Ireland in the International with Ben 193623 after they took the Reserve Irish National Championship in 1994. The following year, he ran Lyn 199839 and then competed four times in a row with his well-known Gyp 222570 (1997, 1999, 2000 & 2002). A winning combination, they also gained twelfth place in the World Trial final in Bala in 2002. Con also reached the semi-final of the World Trial with the tricoloured rough-coated Clifton Taff 221711. This year, Con McGarry was the highest scoring Irish man with Clifton Taff, achieving sixth position in the Supreme.

Clifton Taff's pedigree speaks for itself. He is by Vic Morris's Mac 183767 and out of Mrs N. Harrison's Sally 177236, being a litter brother to Jim Cropper's Clifton Coon who is now in America. Vic Morris won the

English National with Mac at Gloucester in 1994, narrowly missing the Supreme International title at Monymusk the same year to take the Reserve Championship. They were also English team members in 1993 and 1997, in 1997 winning both the English and International Driving Championships. Home-bred, Mac has an illustrious pedigree, he was sired by W.D. Jones's Mac 116944 with lines going back to L.R. Suter's Chip 29946, E.W. Edward's Jaff 72449, and Jock Richardson's Mirk 52844, J. Murray's Glen 47241 and H.G. Jones's Bwlch Taff 113243, the latter three all being by Wiston Cap 31154.

On Taff's dam's side, her sire is J.M. Perrings's Dryden Spam 112653, 1985 Reserve English National Champion, and same way bred as Bobby Dalziel's 1986 Scottish National Champion Dryden Joe 104626. Their lines go back to R. Fortune's Glen 75630 and J. Gilchrist's Spot 24981. On Sally's dam's side is T,T, McKnight's Mirk 28776, John Thomas's Don 108889 and Dick Nicholl's Moss 41957.



Clifton Taff was bought as a young dog, at five and a half months old, from Willie Lee in Lancashire. *“I liked things about him – his nice temperament, not much eye, he moves freely on his sheep. He turned out excellent in a short space of time. He was very easy to train and a very natural outrunner. He could pick up sheep, whatever type they were; he has a very careful way of working sheep. If they were flighty, he would stay off and be careful. If they were heavy, he would move up close and push on. It’s a good quality to have in a dog. He’s seven years old now and has been an excellent open dog for me; he wins four to five open trials a year. Like his sire, he works on his feet, is a very good outrunner, and he always takes time to listen when things get difficult.*

“In the International at Stranraer, Taff ran very well in the qualifying trial, we were about eighth. He did an exceptionally good outrun, a perfect pear to the right-hand side, dead to twelve o’clock. He had a clean lift and the fetch was good until, at the last minute, the sheep tried to move to the right. But he was in a good position to run them into the gates. The driving was good. The sheep were difficult on the Friday when we ran, particularly in the close work. They took quite a while to settle in the shedding ring. The shed was ok, and the pen, but the time was up for the single.

“In the Supreme, I couldn’t expect him to go any better. He did an excellent outrun, widening as he went out. As he passed the place where the sheep had been on the Friday, he started to look in, a couple of widening commands got him across the road. He then went well behind his sheep. The fetch was good with a good line to the gates. When I asked him to go back, he paused for a second, then he went back excellently to the left hand side. I saw him look both ways at one point so I blew him to slow down and asked him in a little to get him on track for, what I thought, was a perfect outrun. We had a good second fetch, keeping the sheep on line to the hurdle. The drive was excellent, though the sheep were very difficult, running into each other and jostling. I found it difficult to get them apart; they were very un-cooperative on the Saturday afternoon. We got down to three sheep before the time was up.”

Clifton Taff 221711, Dog, Rough, B,W&T, born 03-09-1995, Cl6 = 0.20% (low, out-cross), owner: C.McGarry
 2003 IntSu 6th, 2003 I.Nat 6th

Parents	Grand-Parents	G.G.-Parents	G.G.G.-Parents	G.G.G.G.-Parents
Mac 183767	Mac 116944 Wm D.Jones	Tweed 92886 T.W.Japp	Chip 70366 T.W.Japp Val 86525 T.W.Japp Mirk 62844 G.Lloyd 1975 S.Nat 1st, 1970 IntQ 1st June 88004 T.J.Jones	Chip 29648 L.R.Suter, 1968 W.Nat 2nd Tena 64183 J.R.Thomas Robbie 38315 T.J.Wierks Queen 78958 T.W.Japp Wiston Cap 31184 J.R.Richardson, 1965 IntSu 1st Leslie 23601 J.McDonald Moss 72131 R.E.Nichols Toss 57887 J.J.Nichols Glen 47341 J.Murray, 1971 IntSu 1st Nell 63695 R.P.McInally Spot 47304 A.Gillespie Joanna 61041 J.K.Dancer Jeff 73449 E.W.Edwards, 1976 & 1981 IntBr 2nd Tess 95686 T.W.Japp Bwitch Taff 113243 H.G.Jones, 1962 IntSu 2nd Joy 88786 G.Wright Cap 62841 A.M.C.Rogerson Leslie 80521 T.T.McKnight Drift 61202 T.T.McKnight, 1971 S.Br 2nd Shell 68768 T.T.McKnight Bob 12684 J.A.S.Gichrist, 1903 S.Br 2nd Wiston Nan II 9896 P.M.Heburn Spot 28069 G.Wm.Young, 1969 IntSh 1st Phil 24883 P.M.G.Heburn Moss 77473 Wm.W.McConnell Fly 74537 J.F.Brownlie Mirk 26776 J.C.Hestick, 1971 S.Nat 1st Nell 22932 J.M.E.Jack Don 108889 J.R.Thomas, 1984 E.Nat 2nd Jess 98818 C.Bright Moss 41957 R.E.Nichols, 1972 W.Nat 1st Nell 38432 R.G.Evans
V.Morris 1994 IntSu 2nd 1994 E.Nat 1st 1997 E.Br 1st 1997 IntDr 1st	Fly 155789 V.Morris	Bill 133431 V.Morris Jill 145619 V.Morris	Glen 108508 T.E.Thomas Sue 90000 W.Cadwallader Roy 196785 C.V.D.Harley Sue 137500 E.I.Jones Cap 67230 T.T.McKnight Shell 68768 T.T.McKnight Spot 24981 J.Gichrist 1995 IntSu 2nd, 1965/66 S.Nat 1st Chris 60920 A.D.MacGregor Jim 96950 J.M.E.Jack Nell 60038 A.M.McMillan Rodnay 122905 R.E.Nichols Queen 82060 J.J.Nichols	
Sally 177236	Dryden Spam 112653 J.M.Parrings 1985 E.Nat 2nd	Glen 76630 R.Fortune Dryden Queen 70345 A.D.MacGregor		
Mrs.N.A.Harrison	Tess 155989 L.N.Harrison	Nap 107731 S.Hodgkinson Fan 136124 W.R.Ormiston		

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Do you see any similarities between Taff and his offspring?

“Most Taff dogs I would know at a glance, they have the same approach to sheep, they like to stay on their feet and don’t get flustered easily. They have the ability to read sheep and work accordingly.”

When asked how the trialling was going, Con modestly lets on that, just that day, he had won the double gather final at Ireland’s four province trial that day in County Down, with Gyp. This annual trial moves around Ireland, the best dogs over the year competing, five from each of the provinces of Ulster (north), Munster (south),

Leinster (east) and Connaught (west). The open trials in Eire usually have additional classes, according to demand, an intermediate class and a novice class. The intermediate class consists of an outrun, lift and fetch, a full drive element and a pen, dogs getting knocked out of this class by winning two intermediate classes or a first, second or third in an open. The novice class has an OLF, one drive hurdle and a pen, dogs get knocked out of this class by winning an intermediate or a novice class. There aren’t any novice or intermediate trials on their own, there is always an open class.



The nursery trials run all winter, from October to February, the rules being a little different to parts of the U.K. There are three classes, ‘A’ being for dogs under three years of age on the 1st October that year that have won a prize, even an open prize. ‘B’ is for dogs again under three on the 1st October that year that haven’t won anything. There is a special class, devised to encourage inexperienced handlers, a ‘farmers’ class, for want of a more appropriate name, it is not just for farmers but any handler who has never won a prize. The course is smaller, and there is no age limit on the handler or the dog, and the dog can have won prizes. In the Nursery Final in February in Eire, ten dogs from each of the three provinces of Leinster (east), Connaught (west) and Munster (south) compete. At lunch time, a competition is held between dogs from the farmers class, two from each of the three provinces. The trials are designed to ensure that inexperienced handlers can run all year round to gain experience, and experienced handlers run young dogs in the winter and any others the rest of the year. A dog that takes more than three years to be ready would go straight into the novice classes.



Con has made a name for himself in the Irish Brace trials. He won the Irish National Brace Championship in 1997, 1998, reserve in 2000, with Di 219496 and Gyp 222570, two bitches that are the same way bred. They were the Reserve International Brace Champions in 2000. *“If you are going to run brace, you want two dogs that compliment each other, that aren’t of a jealous nature, and that are of very good temperament. If the pair are natural outrunners, in brace work, that’s a good help. Brace is an extension of running singles, very dependent upon control. If you’ve little control in the singles, there’s no point in going brace running.”*

When asked how he got started in trialling, Con said that he went to an agricultural show in 1988 on a wet day and there was a sheepdog trial. He thought that he could have a go at that and by 1989, Con was trialling. He had a good farm dog, a bitch called Lassie that he got from a neighbour, she was well bred, from Lionel Pennefather’s breeding, but unregistered. She was too old to start trialling so Con bought a couple of pups, hitting the jackpot with a young pup that he saw and liked, called Scot 181372, who ran well in the nurseries for him. *“I won 5-6 nurseries on the trot with Scot, and quite a few opens when he was a young dog. His outrunning was not so good, especially on a big field. I didn’t have the knowledge or experience to teach him to outrun properly. He was a very good dog on sheep, not always right at the end of the outrun, but once on sheep, he did nothing wrong. He was bred by George Flanagan of Ballytaunis in Co. Mayo. Scot was the sire of Ben*

193623 who got to the International, out of Cranagh Floss V 184925”. Con learnt much from Dan Moran and Noel Egan, who live local to him in Roscommon *“we used to run dogs together so I picked up a lot from them”.* Con is a prominent member of the Connaught sheepdog trial association. Acknowledging that there are far too few sheepdog training clinics in Ireland, Con has had good experiences taking clinics and judging abroad, sharing his knowledge with collie enthusiasts eager to learn. He has been to Sweden, the Netherlands and America and, in May, he is going to Germany and Sweden. *“I find on the Continent, people are very enthusiastic about the clinics, they make big efforts to ask questions, to listen to the finer details. They try to take a lot away with them from the clinics. In the States too, they are more enthusiastic than they would be in Ireland. You have to be on your toes, judging too, you need to keep a good account of what you’re doing as people will ask questions later and expect you to remember their dogs. They also have some good dogs out there.”*



Dan 255212 - 2004 Irish National Champion

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Asked about local working dogs in Ireland, other than registered border collies, Con remembers there being good working dogs on farms in Ireland when he was a boy. They worked by barking and were ordinary common dogs known as collies, rather than border collies. Many of them are brown, both the sable and red colours, and there's still quite a few of that type about. Over the years, there has probably been mixing of bloodlines as the imported border collie gained in popularity for working stock.



Con running Tip & Megan in the International Brace in 2013

Con is a farmer on 120 acres of lowland which is flat, managing 30 suckler cows, Simmental/Limousin crosses, and 150 ewes. *“They are Suffolk crosses and Texel crosses, sometimes we run them with a continental ram to put a bit of life into them. The land is very good for fattening stock in the summer but the soil is heavy and not suitable for overwintering heavy stock. The sheep do well.”* Con was born in Co. Roscommon, just a few miles from where he lives now at Ballyglass, Ballinagare near Castlerea. When he was sixteen, Con went to Manchester to work as a plumber for many years. He wanted to learn a trade and ran his own business from 1969 until 1982. Con married his wife, Kathleen, in Manchester in 1973, she is from Cavan, one of the counties in the northern province of Ulster. In 1982, they went home to Ireland on holiday and saw a farm for sale that they liked and bought it. It was in a nice quiet area with good land and they were looking to the future. Taking their three young children with them, Paul (now 29), Cornelius (23) and Sean (22), another son Brian (19) was born in Ireland. All have helped out on the farm, Sean being the most interested in running dogs. He has run at trials but time does not allow too much trialling at present as he is finishing a plumbing apprenticeship. *“Gerald Hopkins, an apprentice carpenter, finds himself in the same position. There is also Michelle McGoldrick, the only female handler trialling in Ireland, she*

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won the Young Handlers at Chatsworth in 1996. The boys keep a close eye on Michelle, I'm sure it is just to see if she makes any mistakes. Michael Gallagher and Steven O' Donnell are also very good. Peter Morgan spoke for himself last year at Stranraer when he won the Young Handlers class. And then of course there is Martin Feeney, a handler mature beyond his tender years, he has been a team member six times. He won the Young Handlers at Monymusk in 1994, has represented Ireland on One Man and His Dog, and has won just about every trial Ireland has to offer. In my view, he is a very good handler, of course Martin didn't take this art from the wind, his father Eugene has been one of Ireland's best handlers. We hope to see a lot of this group over the coming years."

What do you like in a dog?

"I like to see a dog keen and on its work, he must have a good temperament and be prepared to take orders. If a dog has a sulk or is reluctant to move when asked, he won't give his best."

How do you pick out a young dog as being special?

"It's difficult to know in the beginning. Ones that start the best, don't always turn out the best. It's a process of working with them for a while, seeing how much they are prepared to give and how much they are prepared to take. Gradually, you work out which ones suit you the best, and which ones will suit someone else. I would expect to have a dog sussed out in three months of training."

Do you prefer to rear your dogs, or see a dog that you like and buy it?

"If I like a dog, I would buy it. I prefer to rear my own pups. A lot of what I buy in are what I have sold as pups. I do train dogs for other people. I tend to take them when they are a year old or close to a year."

How long do you give them?

"I give a dog two weeks. If he doesn't want to work, or shows ill temper, he goes home. The reason he goes home is that I couldn't guarantee he would change and the owner would be paying for a dog that doesn't move on. For farmwork, I would usually have a dog ready in five to seven weeks. It takes a bit longer for a potential trial dog, I would like to have him for ten weeks, but as a rule I don't keep them that long. Some people give you a dog on a piece of string without nothing done and in four weeks they ring you and ask if you are done."

How do you widen a dog's experience from the basic training?

"Once the basics are done correctly, then it is time to do some flock work, letting the dog run freely and think for himself. This doesn't mean letting him go out of control. At the first sign of the dog not listening to commands or boring on with little regard for you, then it is time to go back to a smaller area and reinstall the stop, there are no quick fixes for this."

What do you like to achieve with the dogs you have in for training?

"For farmwork, the basics, a good stop to voice, a gather of about 200 yards. I like the dog to be able to drive with the handler, and to come off the sheep easy, and not to go until asked. For trialling, the dogs have to be running out well on both sides, flanking off sheep, on all his commands, driving away from the handler and under very good control."



Your own dogs, what do you have for trialling?

“I keep two top dogs for work and trialling, and something for the brace, you can’t keep too many on. Gyp and Taff are my open dogs. Coming along for the opens I have Dan 255212 and Ballyglass Nell, both are fully pointed for the National already. Dan is three, he has the same sire as Gyp, Ben 193623, and is out of Connie 230641 who is by Clifton Taff. Ballyglass Nell is two, she is by Taff and out of Gyp. Gyp is now pairing with Dan for the brace.”

It’s good to gain an insight into one of Ireland’s leading triallers, a man who has an open-minded outlook on life and recognises that the world changes and that you need to embrace those changes, making the most of the opportunities that present themselves. As a director on the council, Con is actively involved in many of the I.S.D.S. current matters. His main focus at the moment is the forthcoming World Trial in 2005 to be held inland from Dublin *“I would like to see it run well and be a great success for the society”*.



The Irish Qualifiers at the 2018 Deerplay Hill Trial - Martin O Malley, Con McGarry, Barra O Brien and Ned O Keefe