

Registration

Pre-booking is essential as places are limited.

Book _____ member(s) at €80 each. Total: € _____

Book _____ non member(s) at €160 each. Total: € _____

Cheque enclosed: €

ATTENDING DELEGATE CONTACT DETAILS

NAME (DELEGATE 1): _____

ADDRESS: _____

TELEPHONE: _____

EMAIL: _____

NAME (DELEGATE 2): _____

NAME (DELEGATE 3): _____

NAME (DELEGATE 4): _____

NAME (DELEGATE 5): _____

TO REGISTER

- a) Make a prepaid booking online www.irishgrassland.ie
- b) Post this prepaid booking form and your cheque to:
Discounted Registration, IGA, Cookstown, Kells, Co. Meath
- c) Calling the office on 087 9626483

DISCUSSION GROUP DEAL

(for groups of 10+ members):

€80 per head for discussion groups of 10+ members who book and prepay in one payment in full before Monday 1st July
(strictly no late applications accepted after this special offer date).

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Michael Gunn
GUNN DAIRY



Irish Grassland Association

DAIRY SUMMER TOUR

Tuesday 9th July 2024

Laois

Registration at Midlands Park Hotel, Laois



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IGA DAIRY SUMMER TOUR

Come on our bus tour and visit
two top class farms in Laois

Registration Location

Midlands Park Hotel, Laois R32 KV20

Why not take the train to Portlaoise? 

Programme for the day

9.20am	Registration and breakfast rolls with tea and coffee at Midlands Park Hotel
10.00am	Depart by bus Morning: Visit Farm A Lunch Afternoon: Visit Farm B
4.00pm	Arrive back at Midlands Park Hotel

Booking event tickets is essential as bus spaces are
limited. You can purchase tickets online

www.irishgrassland.ie or call 087 9626483.

Accommodation always books out very early so we urge
you to act very quickly and secure your b+b immediately.

MIDLANDS PARK

HOTEL
B&B RATES

€55pps quad | €69pps triple

€95pps twin | €159 single

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Roy & Trevor
Cobbe

The Cobbes' are managing this 120 spring calving, grass based, cow herd on a total land block of 81 ha. The milking platform consists of 43 ha and is stocked at 2.7 LU/ha. Young stock and silage are managed on supporting blocks of land. Trevor came home farming full-time almost 15 years ago to a herd of 40 dairy cows operating as a mixed farm. The herd has grown and developed since then with a critical focus on herd performance through breeding improvements with a strong focus on EBI. Current EBI of the herd is €235 with a fertility value of €125 (top 2% of herds) and a milk figure of €49. In 2023 the herd

supplied 543 kg/MS/cow which due to the difficult year experienced by many, and was a 6% drop on the 578 kg/cow supplied in 2022. Fat and Protein in 2023 were 4.48% and 3.55% respectively with an average SCC of 129K. Fertility performance of the herd was excellent with textbook KPI's of 90% calved in 6 weeks and a 366 day calving interval. Meal input to the herd was approximately 1.1 t/cow. Trevor has a very clear focus when it comes to breeding management and attention to detail. The EBI of the calves born in 2024 was €292 with significant improvements in % fat & protein whilst raising fertility to €125 and milk to €81. Roy & Trevor will discuss the progress in their herd, the suitability of the cow type to their system while optimising output and stocking rate to drive the technical efficiency and financial sustainability of the business.

Trevor has clear discipline when it comes to grassland management. This starts with a farm walk every 5 days from late March on. This allows both Trevor and Roy to make the right grazing decisions for the week ahead and have an effective plan for keeping quality grass in front of cows throughout the season. They invested in LESS slurry spreading equipment a number of years ago and this combined with clover inclusion to reseed has allowed them to better manage available slurry and reduce their chemical nitrogen usage. This has been assisted through regular soil sampling, a liming programme and addressing P & K where needed. PastureBase records show 15.2 t/DM/ha grown in 2023.

Increasing the herd from 40 to 120 cows has required investment and development in key areas of: grazing infrastructure (paddock system and farm roadways), additional animal housing and slurry storage and calf rearing. This investment has been clearly planned and carried out on a phased basis. The final piece of the jigsaw now is the upgrading of the milking facilities. In 1994 Roy installed a 4-unit parlour for the 40 cows he was milking at that time. Since then, he added an additional 2 units, and they now have a 6 unit double-up system. Milking time in spring was taking up to 5 hours with both Roy and Trevor in the pit. On the day of the event we will present a financial appraisal of the options that are available to Trevor and Roy. Our audience will have a unique opportunity to participate in the decision-making process, weighing up the pros and cons of the various milking systems and how they might best suit the running of the farm and the longer-term labour needs of the partnership.

The Cobbe family's success is a testament to the power of intergenerational collaboration. They exemplify what is possible within a family partnership structure when the pre-existing solid foundation laid by one generation gives the next an excellent opportunity to grow and develop the business. Clear and open communication, compromise when needed and a clear set of objectives have led to a sustainable business for two farm families into the future. We look forward to hearing their story in July



Bruce Thompson

Bruce operates a grass based, spring calving herd of 275 cross-bred cows. Bruce is an 8th generation dairy farmer and a 2020 Nuffield Scholar. He is married to Laura and they have two young children, Keelin and Cooper. Leaving secondary school in 2001 in very different economic times, he studied engineering before returning home to help his father, Ian, on the home farm through a difficult TB breakdown. Since then they have leased land and housing facilities, purchased quota and grown the herd steadily to the 275 cows that will be milked for 2024. Total land area farmed is 250 Ha with 100Ha on the milking block. The 12 unit herring-bone parlour was upgraded to a 40 bail rotary parlour in 2018 around the time when the decision was taken to incorporate Jersey genetics to the mainly British Friesian herd.

The Herd EBI currently stands at €233 with milk at €77 and fertility at €101. Physical performance of the herd in 2023 was 461 kgs/MS per cow delivered on 1.1T meal per cow at 4.95% fat and 3.71% protein and an average SCC of 128K. 310 cows were carried on the 100ha block in 2023 but Bruce has taken the decision that 275 cows is a more appropriate stocking level for his system in 2024. 2023 Fertility performance checked all the relevant KPI's : 86% calved in 6 weeks with a 362 day calving interval. In 2023 PastureBase grass recordings show 14.1T/DM/ha grown.

Key areas for focus at the event will be:

- Development of the farm business since Bruce took over
- Grassland management & Breeding and Performance goals for the herd
- Farm Labour management – People & effective communications
- Biodiversity – Space for Nature within a profitable system.

Bruce has 2 full-time members of staff, Nick and David. In order to effectively manage and prioritise day to day and seasonal tasks, Bruce is very keen to assess and adopt any technology that can streamline the labour input to the farm. Bruce and his team take advantage of phone apps which allows all rosters to be shared and responsibility for tasks to be clear. Bruce has installed heat detection collars and converted the calf feeding system to reduce the amount of time needed to train young calves. As part of his farming practices Bruce focuses heavily on what he can do for wildlife and enhancing habitats on the farm. In 2020 he undertook a Nuffield Scholarship focussing on the plight of the dung beetle. By reducing anthelmintic use he has not only helped build a thriving dung beetle population but also reduced costs. Bruce is recognised as a strong advocate and champion for biodiversity within a commercial farming system. In 2023 Bruce was conferred an Ambassador as part of the Farming for Nature network. The aims of the organisation are to promote and work with farmers to enhance the natural health of the countryside. Bruce stands as a testament to the impact an individual can have in adopting sustainable practices into profitable farming operations.