

TELDEL

The club has 4-legged members from such far flung pastures as Belgium and France but Teldel must surely have travelled the furthest, both in miles and in life, to join us in the Letterkenny Riding Club.

He was foaled in Canada, a son of the 1988 American champion sprinter and Breeders Cup Sprint winner, Gulch. His dam was a similarly blue-blooded thoroughbred and her colt, named Kawasir, was intended for the top. Sold to England and trained initially by PT Walwyn, he started his racing career as a 2 year-old ridden by Brian Rouse in the 7 furlong 3.00 race at Lingfield on September 8, 1992. He finished 11th. As a 3- and 4-year-old Teldel (Kawasir) moved to trainer CP Haslam. In total, he raced 13 times, finished 3rd on one occasion and amassed £974 in prize money — hardly a princely sum even in 1994 when he was last seen running under Turf Club rules.

Like so many horses that didn't quite make the grade, Teldel ended up on the flapping circuit, in Scotland. (Flapping is non-Turf-Club-regulated horse and pony racing.)

Meanwhile, as Teldel's star was on the wane, Marina was at college in Belfast studying art. She had ridden horses from an early age and had bought, trained and ridden her own flappers since she was a teenager. By the time she was in her final years at college, she had achieved everything she wanted to achieve in flapping (including winning the Dingle Derby) and had hung up her boots.



Doing what makes both Marina and Teldel happiest: hunter trialling.

TELDEL, *contd.*

In 1995 she decided at short notice to travel to Dingle for the annual “Cheltenham of flapping” to keep her old mentor Brian Byrne company following the tragic death of their mutual friend, Roger Sylvia. Marina being Marina, she picked up several rides, including a valued one on the then champion flapper, Mr Chips. But it was as she was sitting on the Main Street in Dingle that a horse in Curran’s yard caught her eye. He was loose in the yard and Marina was captivated by his sheer presence and his athletic beauty. The horse turned out of course to be Teldel, over from Scotland for a raid on the top Irish showing prizes. The rest, as they say, is history.

Marina got the ride on him in two races at the festival (the first time the Scottish owners had ever legged up a female rider), finishing 2nd on the Saturday and 1st on Sunday. She subsequently travelled to Scotland several times to ride him on his own adopted turf until, in 1997, in partnership with Gareth Godfrey, she bought Teldel out of the yard in Haywick.

True to her word, Marina was finished with flapping. Together with Teldel, she broadened her equestrian horizons and gave everything a go. Her first experiment was going hunting at a meet in Castlefinn. She had never hunted before, never even jumped a crosspole, and Teldel was every bit as much a virgin. Over the 13 years since, they’ve together done everything from hunting to showing and from hunt chasing to show jumping. Coached and encouraged by Mary Finneran and Drew Blaney, the partnership gradually learned the ropes and progressed as far as the Main Arena at the RDS. Over the years Teldel has won or been placed multiple times in just about every discipline he has been asked to tackle.



Showing in the Riding Horse class at the Dublin Horse Show.

TELDEL, *contd.*

Now, at the age of 20, Marina wonders how much longer is left for Teldel. Perhaps she should ask him what he thinks?



Left: **At the Killultagh Hunt Chase and, right, out with the Donegal Harriers.**



Showing under side-saddle at the RDS (no, that's not Marina on board!)