

60 YEARS GROWING

Guy St. John Williams

Michael Vincent O'Brien, born on Good Friday 1917, was the junior member of the original twelve 'subscribers' to the Irish Race Horse Trainers' Association, incorporated in Foster Place, Dublin, on Monday, 5 September 1950. That was a blank day in the Irish racing calendar, as was Monday 10 July, the occasion on which the founding 12 inscribed their signatures to the original draft.

The 'Objects for which the Association was established' numbered nineteen in all, of which the fourth on that lengthy, somewhat aspirational list constituted the nub of the matter. "To consider all questions affecting the interests of the profession and to initiate and watch over and if necessary to petition Dail Eireann or promote deputations in relating to matters affecting the profession and to procure changes of laws or regulations affecting the profession and the promotion of improvements in matters relating thereto."

To cut through all that obfuscation, the primary objective of this new association was to lobby the Department of Agriculture for the necessary licence to import Canadian oats. In an era when Ireland had turned its back on the outside world in an effort to develop a self-sufficient domestic economy, a tariff system made all but essential imports either prohibitively expensive or simply unobtainable. The Irish Race Horse Trainers' Association had no desire to denigrate Irish cereal growers. Rather was this lobby movement intended to emphasise the impossibility of producing oats of sufficient quality in our 'temperate' climate.

The founding 12 in the order in which their signatures were appended were: M. C. Collins, Conyngham Lodge, The Curragh; M. V. O'Brien, Churchtown, Mallow; Charles A. Rogers, Balfstown, Mulhuddart; Darby Rogers, Crotanstown, The Curragh; W. J. Byrne, Castle Park, Castleknock; D. L. Moore, Fairymore, Ratoath; H. M. Hartigan, Melitta, Kildare; Gerald Wellesley, Clonbarron, Athboy; P. Sleator, Grange Con, Co Wicklow; E. M. Quirke, Mountjoy Lodge, Kildare;

D. J. Morgan, Kellsboro House, Newbridge, and Cecil Brabazon, Rangers Lodge, Curragh Camp.

An unpublished biography of Gerald Wellesley – *Damn the Consequences!* – alludes to his inclusion. "In some ways it seems strange that Ginger Wellesley should have been inducted when one P. J. Prendergast was not. Moreover, Ginger had never evinced any feelings of solidarity with his fellow practitioners and it must be assumed that his recruitment owed much to his lineage and connections. Ironically, the only one of his colleagues to gain Ginger's admiration and a measure of his affection was the said 'Darkie' Prendergast. Indeed, Ginger had played his part in setting up Darkie's crucial first winner, Sprattstown. Refusing the rookie trainer's request for a 'mixed' gallop, Ginger instead made his own trial riders available, with the desired result."

As mentioned, Vincent O'Brien, the junior member was born on 9 April 1917 and had long outlived his fellow signatories when dying on 1 June 2009. How did his fellow signatories fare out in the longevity stakes? Michael Collins (5 June 1896–13 May, 1961), Charlie 'Romeo' Rogers (1899–July 1971), Darby Rogers (d. 20 November 1970), W. J. 'Rasher' Byrne (1899–1982), Dan Moore (29 October 1910–15 June 1980), Hubert Hartigan (1882–24 March 1955), Hon Gerald 'Ginger' Wellesley (8 August, 1907–25 December, 1981), Paddy Sleator (1910–19 June 1996), Martin Quirke (1900–19 October 1989), Danny Morgan (17 April 1912–May 1984), Cecil Brabazon (1885–August 1972).

To younger members of the IRTA many of these founders are little more than names in history. So thumbnail sketches may perhaps be of interest.

MICHAEL C. COLLINS



Michael C. Collins was leading Irish trainer 1941-1943 and in 1945 when training principally for Joe McGrath. Of his five Irish classic winners the outstanding performer was Windsor Slipper, unbeaten winner of the 1942 Irish Triple Crown.

CHARLIE ROGERS



Charlie Rogers saddled three winners at the 1946 Cheltenham Festival for Hon Dorothy Paget his principal patron, who dubbed the only man who could manage her 'Romeo'. Though never Irish champion trainer, he saddled the greatest number of winners on four occasions in the 1940s. His sole Irish classic success was with Water Street in the 1944 Irish St Leger.

DARBY ROGERS



Darby Rogers took over his father J. T. Rogers' successful Crotanstown stable sending out 8 Irish classic winners, notably Bright News (Irish Derby 1946). Heron Bridge, his personal favourite, was a dual winner of the Irish Champion Stakes, which Darby won 8½ times between its inception in 1946 and 1955.



W. J. BYRNE



W. J. 'Rasher' Byrne trained in the Phoenix Park, specialising in handicap coups, viz: Splendour (1946 Irish Cambridgeshire) and Abeltai (1964 Irish Cesarewitch). Rare overseas ventures yielded Royal Ascot success with Marshall Ney (1954 Jersey Stakes) and Abeltai (1965 Newbury Autumn Cup).

DAN MOORE



Dan Moore, Irish champion jockey in 1940 and multiple NH champion, focused on the Cheltenham Festival, netting 13 winners. L'Escargot, his outstanding horse, won the Cheltenham Gold Cup (1970-1971), becoming only the second Gold Cup winner to achieve Grand National honours (1975). The latter provided some compensation for the National Dan always believed he won, on Royal Danieli in 1938.

HUBERT HARTIGAN



Hubert Hartigan, leading trainer in Ireland 1946-1948, saddled 13 Irish classic winners, 7 of those in the 1000 Guineas. A renowned raconteur, Hubert and stable jockey Joe Canty shared a love of gambling and the

good life, preferably in Monte Carlo. Zita Hartigan, the well known equine artist and sculptor is his daughter.

GERALD WELLESLEY



Gerald 'Ginger' Wellesley made his name with two-year-olds, successful in the Phoenix '1500' with His Reverence (1933), Dancing Comet (1935) and Enchantress (1940). He also won the 1941 Irish 1000 Guineas and Oaks with Uvira and became the first Irish-based trainer for the Aga Khan and his son Aly Khan. 'Toby', his estranged first wife, enjoyed multiple Irish classic success as a trainer, though not, of course, in her own name.

PADDY SLEATOR



Paddy Sleator, champion Irish amateur in 1934, 1937 and 1938, became leading Irish trainer in 1958, in addition to sending out the greatest number of winners each year 1955-1961. Besides riding Reviewer to victory in the 1934 Galway Plate, Paddy went on to saddle no fewer than 9 winners of the Ballybrit centrepiece. The 1960 Champion Hurdle with Another Flash was the highlight of his Cheltenham Festival winners. His Irish Cesarewitch hat trick (1957 - 1959) led to a change in Turf Club rules, whereby bumper form no longer qualified horses for flat handicap marks. Paddy's subsequent English campaign with a satellite stable led to similar rule amendments in Britain.

MARTIN QUIRKE



Martin Quirke set a longstanding record when Irish champion jockey in 1923 with 86 winners. He rode 9 Irish classic winners before retiring to train in Mountjoy Lodge in 1947, where future Irish champion Liam Ward was apprenticed to him. He added to his Irish classic tally when saddling Jack Ketch to win the 1957 Irish 2000 Guineas, as did his son Stephen with Atherstone Wood (1967) and Mistigo (1968).

DANNY MORGAN



Danny Morgan, from a famous Waterford racing tribe encompassing Morgans, Murphys and Widgers, rode for three British monarchs, successful for two of them. He later won the 1938 Cheltenham Gold Cup on Morse Code, the first and only horse to defeat the mighty Golden Miller at Cheltenham. Twenty-one years later he returned to Cheltenham to win the Gold Cup as a trainer with Roddy Owen.

CECIL BRABAZON



Cecil Brabazon, champion amateur in Ireland 1920 and 1923, became Irish champion trainer in 1940 when training his third Irish National



winner – Jack Chaucer. His outstanding flat horse was Beau Sabreur, winner of the 1948 Irish 2000 Guineas and St Leger and subsequently the first Irish-trained runner in the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe. His son Aubrey, Irish champion jockey in 1946, is forever associated with Cottage Rake's Cheltenham Gold Cup hat trick (1948 – 1950), trained by one Vincent O'Brien.

VINCENT O'BRIEN



Vincent O'Brien, leading trainer in Ireland 13 times between 1959 and 1989 and twice British champion under both codes, amassed 27 Irish classics, 16 English classics, 23 Cheltenham Festival winners and 25 Royal Ascot winners, plus countless feature races further afield between saddling his first winner (Oversway) in May 1943 and his last (Mysterious Ways) in September 1994. As to his best horse – you choose.

Names, Addresses and Description of Subscribers	
M. C. COLLINS, Conyngham Lodge, Curragh <i>Trainer</i>	
M. V. O'BRIEN, Churchtown, Mallow <i>Trainer</i>	
CHARLES A. ROGERS, Balfstown, Mulhuddart, Co. Dublin <i>Trainer</i>	
DARBY ROGERS, Crotanstown, The Curragh <i>Trainer</i>	
W. J. BYRNE, Castle Park, Castleknock <i>Trainer</i>	
D. L. MOORE, Fairyhouse, Ratoath <i>Trainer</i>	
H. M. HARTIGAN, Melitta, Kildare <i>Trainer</i>	
GERALD WELLESLEY, Clonbarron, Athboy <i>Trainer</i>	
P. SLEATOR, Grange Con, Co. Wicklow <i>Trainer</i>	
E. M. QUIRKE, Mountjoy Lodge, Kildare <i>Trainer</i>	
D. J. MORGAN, Kellsboro House, Newbridge <i>Trainer</i>	
CECIL BRABAZON, Rangers Lodge, Curragh Camp <i>Trainer</i>	
Dated this 10th day of July, 1950.	
Witness to the above signatures :-	
T. F. McKEEVER, <i>Solicitor,</i> 6 Foster Place, Dublin.	
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