



London 2012 >> Preview

Team Transatlantic

In the second part of a London Olympics breeding preview, Susan Finnerty spoke with the breeders of the Irish-bred horses nominated on both the Canadian and American eventing teams

ADRIAN BOURKE

"I AM simply an amateur in the horse breeding business. All the skill in breeding Ringwood Magister is due to Lily McGowan, a wonderful West of Ireland lady," emphasises Adrian Bourke who, despite graciously downplaying his part in breeding the handsome 11-year-old grey, is delighted to hear that Magister and Tiana Coudray have secured a place on the American eventing team.

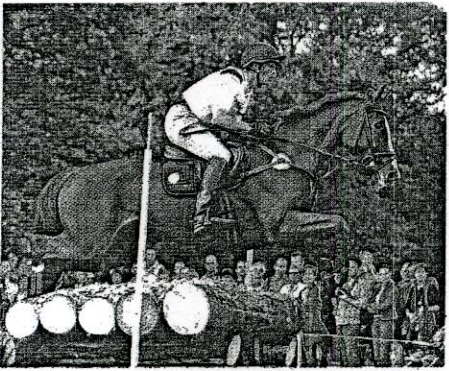
It took some determination for the 24-year-old Californian to sell her other horses, which helped fund last year's move to England where she is now based near Badminton with Nick Gauntlett. However, her faith in Finian, yet another top horse sourced through Clare Ryan, paid off when the pair's fifth place at the final American trial at Barbury Castle last weekend saw them secure her Olympic goal. And while the pair's form appears to be peaking at the right time for London, the prospect of the World Equestrian Games two years away looks another distinct possibility.

An interesting trend from the Irish-bred Olympic-bound event horse's stories so far is how most of the breeders own just a handful of mares each. Adrian Bourke only owned one when Ringwood Magister was foaled. This was Cloonkeen View, "a mare with a fantastic temperament, she was very easy to handle" by the Irish Draught sire Carrabawn View and out of a Samiel dam. She was kept on the "good limestone land" around his home, Castlehill House which stands "under the shadow of the Nephin mountains".

Acting upon Lily's wise advice, they chose Master Imp as the covering sire and making that 360-mile round trip to Slyguff to see the iconic Master Imp, who looks set to have the most Irish-bred offspring on London eventing teams, ranks as a particular highlight for the Ballina



Ringwood Magister was bred by Adrian Bourke



Mr Medicott, bred by Donal Geaney, will attend his second Olympic Games

solicitor. Sold as a three-year-old to Joe Sharkey, who in turn sold him to Peter Leonard, Ringwood Magister's progress has been closely followed by his proud Mayo connections. "I'll be watching like a hawk now I know he's going to London. I'm thrilled for the horse and everyone involved with him and may they all have the best of luck," said Adrian who disclosed that his late father, Aubrey, was an avid reader of *The Irish Field*, adding: "It was standard reading in our house. We all had a good schooling in horses growing up including my sister Mary, (later Robinson) who I can still see in my mind's eye on

her pony". She became Ireland's first lady President and now her brother has also joined the history books by breeding another London Olympics prospect.

DONAL GEANEY

The clash of the London Olympics with the Irish Pony Club Festival will cause a dilemma for Donal Geaney, the Kingdom branch's District Commissioner whose three sons, Dan, Jack and Conor, are keen mounted games fans. His late father, also Donal, bred Mr Medicott who now faces his second Olympic challenge with Karen

O'Connor after winning team gold for his former German rider, Frank Ostholt, at Hong Kong.

Sadly, Donal senior, a Castleisland General Practitioner passed away in 2006.

"He would have been so proud to have seen that horse at the Olympics," says his widow, Margaret, the driving force behind the family-run Crag Cave, one of Kerry's premier tourist attractions. In fact, Crag Cave was Mr Medicott's original name. Donal recalls how he and two fellow employees went to visit another show cave in Germany, only to discover they were two hours away from Ostholt's yard. "So we hired a car and drove there. Frank had great fun trying to pronounce Slieveuachra when he showed us the horse's passport!"

Slieveuachra was the Edmund Burke mare Donal competed around the Munster area. "She wouldn't have had the biggest jump in the world but there was something very nice about her and her back breeding," which includes sharing Supreme Rock's grand-dam Golden Brief, notes Geaney.

"It was my father's idea to use Cruising but she was a hard mare to get in foal. She never bred a filly or I'd have kept one," he adds.

The resultant foal, Crag Cave, was broken in by Sean Shaughnessy from Askeaton and sent to Francis Connors who suggested that the horse

may be more suitable as an eventer.

"Linda Fehey did some more flatwork with him and then we decided to cut our losses and sold him at Goresbridge. He was a five-year-old at that stage. The next I heard about him was when a neighbour rang to say there was a list of Irish-breds going to the Hong Kong Olympics in *The Farmers Journal* and he recognised the breeding. The whole thing is fantastic and it's almost surreal."

Although London tickets are like proverbial gold dust, Donal would love to go to the Olympics to see the horse perform, although he's anxious to avoid disappointing his team. "There's great camaraderie within the Pony Club and I won't let them down". Barnadown, which hosts this year's Festival, may consider installing a grant TV screen instead.

MICHAEL HOGAN

Kilrodan Abbot's breeder will certainly remember his youngest daughter, Michaela's birthday, as the keen young eventer shares the date as the arrival of Kilrodan Abbot.

"The mare foaled in the morning and then my wife Emily had Michaela the same day," recalls Michael Hogan, a dairy farmer from Lorrha, on the Galway-Tipperary border.

He rates dairy farming as a safer enterprise than horses, saying: "Horses can be hit and miss, they're more a hobby and selling horses has changed so much. I never had to leave the yard before to sell a horse; you'd always have lads calling to see what you had."

One of those callers was a neighbour, John Craig, who bought Kilrodan Abbot as a foal. Produced by Frances Younghusband, the Clover Brigade gelding was also selected for the Irish team for the 2006 young event horse

world championships in Le Lions D'Angers. Now ridden by his Canadian amateur owner Peter Barry the popular pair finished 11th at the Rolex Kentucky in May, before clinching their team place at the final Canadian trial at Bromont.

"If things go according to plan, I'd like to go to London but this weather isn't helping," says Michael who still retains a Coevers Diamond Boy half-sister to Kilrodan Abbot amongst the 12 horses on the farm. "She has a foal at foot by Coolcaum Hill. Liam O'Meara's Mr Coolcaum who did very well in the Grand Prix spring league is by him also."

Gentle Lassie, the dam of Eddie (as Kilrodan Abbot is known to his considerable fan club) was by Phillip Heenan's ISH stallion, Leabeg.

"She was out of a thoroughbred mare by Golden Love, which is where all the blood comes from and Gentle Lassie also bred another good horse by Carrabawn View, called Lissinard Ben who jumped on the American Grand Prix circuit. Lady Brigade, a full-sister of Kilrodan Abbot, bred Galway Brigade (by Ramon), who jumped in the 1.40m Grand Prix league," he adds.

The home-bred Clover Brigade stood with his owner Willie Walsh in nearby Borisokane before the horse's later move to Switzerland and return to Ireland. Another Clover Brigade mare bred by Michael was Flying Brigade, who produced the Coevers Diamond Boy-sired Man O'The Match. Originally produced at pre-novice level by Trish Ryan, he was later sold to the States, where he is campaigned by Arden Wildasin and was re-named Totally Awesome Bosco. "Kilrodan Abbot and Bosco were third and fourth at the same event once," notes Michael who tracks all his horses' progress.

Now all he needs is a spare London ticket.

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