

BRIAN GRASSICK APPRECIATION

Dedicated to his family and his work

Leo Powell recalls the life and career of Brian Grassick

THE bloodstock industry is in mourning following the death on Thursday morning of the hugely respected bloodstock agent Brian Grassick. He lost a courageous fight against cancer at the age of 54.

While best known internationally as an agent, Brian was also a leading breeder, sales consignor and consultant and numbered many of the world's best farms among his clients.

From one of the best known families in the bloodstock and racing world, his career was always destined to be with horses. While involved with the family business – his father Christy was a successful jockey and trainer, numbering the speed king and Royal Ascot winner Godswalk and the Cheltenham Festival winner Noble Life among the many leading winners he trained – his first job was with the BBA Ireland in Lansdowne Road where he worked with the legendary Tom Cooper, a man who was his mentor and whom he greatly admired.

Always closely identified with the agency, he spent 17 years there before setting up his own company in 1991. This he did with his wife Sheila and the couple built a business that enjoyed great success.

Principled

A highly principled individual, Brian with Sheila also set up Newtown Stud outside Naas in 1996 and they board mares there for many leading breeders. These include Mrs Ling Tsui, with whom he enjoyed a great relationship and whose Sunderland Holdings own the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe winner Urban Sea, the dam of luminaries such as Galileo, Black Sam Bellamy, My Typhoon and this year's leading classic hope See The Stars. Among the Tsui mares at Newtown is Epping, the dam of the St Leger runner-up The Last Drop, and Sassenach, dam of the 2008 stakes winner Dress Rehearsal.

On the racing front, Brian bought many top class winners. These included the Poule d'Essai des Poulains and Irish 2000 Guineas winner Bachir (31,000gns), the Grade 1 Flower Bowl Invitational Stakes winner Dimitrova and the Group 1 Prix du Cadran winner San Sebastian (32,000gns). The latter was twice a winner at Royal Ascot when trained by Brian's brother Michael.

He purchased the 2008 King's Stand Stakes winner Equiano privately and the son of Acclamation landed the sprint feature for James Acheson on his first outing for his new owner.

Exceptionally well-versed on pedigrees, Brian consolidated a huge reputation gained during this time with BBA Ireland and his advice led to the acquisition



• Brian Grassick with his wife Sheila at the Curragh

of a number of mares who later went on to produce Group 1 winners. These included the dams of 2000 St Leger winner Millenary and the previous year's Moyglare Stud Stakes winner Preseli for Neil Jones' Abergwaun Farms and the dam of 1998 Prix Vermeille winner Leggera, later to finish second



• Equiano

in the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe.

Brian also bought the dams of Ransom O'War, Germany's Horse of the Year and winner of the Group 1 Dallmayr Preis and runner up in the German Derby, and the 2001 Grade 1 Jim Dandy Stakes winner Scorpion. The last named was bred by

Shirley Taylor's W Lazy T Farm and Brian also advised the farm on the breeding of last year's Great Voltigeur Stakes winner Centennial. Centennial's dam Lurina boards at Newtown Stud.

The E.P. Taylor Stakes winner Fly For Avie was bred by Brian Grassick Bloodstock. He bought the dam carrying the future Grade 1 winner and then sold the mare on to one of his clients, Major Pradeep Mehra who owns the Usha Stud in India, for what Brian said was "not a huge profit."

On the stallion front, Brian also played a pivotal role in the purchase of Invincible Spirit for the Irish National Stud.

Many within the industry were to benefit from Brian's wisdom and advice over the years and until his untimely death he served on the boards of Goffs Bloodstock Sales Limited and the insurers Lycetts (Ireland) Limited.

All of Brian's four brothers are deeply involved in the

“ They talk of his professionalism, dedication, knowledge and integrity

industry. In addition to Michael, they are Coolmore Stud manager Christy, Ronan who owns a transport business and Martin, manager of the Marquesa de Moratalla's Childwick Bury Stud.

In recent months Brian and Sheila's daughter Cathy was appointed to the board of the bloodstock agency, while Sally Ann is also involved with horses and currently is based in France. Their son Mark is a journalist and lives in London.

Many tributes have been paid to Brian and, universally, they talk of his professionalism,

dedication, knowledge and integrity. Add to this his great sense of fun, his competitiveness and his utter dedication to his family and you will begin to get a picture of a special human being.

His love of Sheila and his family was paramount and anyone who was fortunate to call him a friend was blessed. His passing leaves a major gap in the lives of many, but especially of those closest to him.

Brian is survived by Sheila, Cathy, Mark, Sally Ann and his adored granddaughter Jennifer, his parents Alice and Christy, his brothers, sisters Kathleen, Carol and Sally Ann and by his extended family and friends.

His race is run. Brian's funeral mass takes place today at noon in St Peter's Church, Two-Mile-House, Naas, followed by burial in the adjoining cemetery. The family has requested no flowers but ask for donations in lieu to St Brigid's Hospice, The Curragh or St Francis Hospice, Raheny.