

INTERVIEW JIM DREAPER

# 'I was very lucky. But it was a burden knowing what you had to live up to'

Alan Sweetman talks to the veteran after 50 years in the family business



PATRICK McCANNI/RACINGPOST.COM/PHOTOS

**T**RADITION runs deep in Irish jump racing. Nothing is more redolent of that tradition than the Dreaper family and Greenogue, a farm on the border of County Meath and County Dublin, where Tom Dreaper began to train in 1931 and where his son Jim took over the licence 50 years ago in January 1972.

The Dreaper name carries more than its association with the great steeplechasers – the peerless three-time Cheltenham Gold Cup winner Arkle, not to mention his brilliant contemporary Flyingbolt and the likes of Prince Regent and Fortria. It is also imbued with a reputation for integrity and decency, for humility in victory and grace in defeat.

And Greenogue is much more than a farm and a racing stable. In 1945 it became the family home of Tom Dreaper and his wife Betty, who raised three children, Jim and his sisters Eva and Valerie. In 1974 Jim married Patricia, a constant source of support to her trainer husband as her mother-in-law had been in her time. In a neat symmetrical touch, the couple became the proud parents of two daughters Lynsey and Shona, and a son Thomas.

For tradition to flourish, you need continuity and a handing down of experience and expertise from one generation to the next. Jim Dreaper, a five-time Irish champion jumps trainer, retains a youthful energy and appearance and is still going strong, with retirement certainly not on the agenda even as he approaches his 71st birthday this month, yet he is quick to acknowledge the assistance provided by his son.

"Thomas does the real work these days," he says in the straightforward way that has characterised a career inevitably shaped by the exploits and temperament of his father, a man who combined a natural dignity with a ready wit and innate wisdom. Dreaper, intelligent and insightful, inherited those qualities.

Some things have not changed at Greenogue. Even in the halcyon days, the yard never housed more than 30-something horses and Dreaper now supervises a

relatively small string as well as operating a working farm.

"The training of horses means there are constraints on land use, but we're fortunate to own some lovely Meath acres. And I'm a farmer, just like my father was. Every Wednesday he would go to the cattle sales at Hanlon's Corner in Dublin. He was a great judge of all livestock."

Tradition is all very fine but times change. Although it would not have been Dreaper's style to attempt to turn Greenogue into one of the super-stables that now dominate the jumping landscape, he is not resistant to progress. For example, these days the famous grass gallops are open to other trainers.

Dreaper says: "Every yard in the country has access to all-weather facilities, and that has made things a lot easier for people. But there are precious few places where you can gallop jumpers on grass so that they get a feel of what deep ground is like. We provide that facility as well as a set of brush fences, which aren't that common nowadays. We have people coming from far and wide."

The venture has opened up a new revenue stream, with Gordon Elliott one of many trainers who regularly bring horses to Greenogue and the gallops proving especially popular with point-to-point handlers. Beyond the commercial aspect, Dreaper takes pleasure from this evolution, a shared contribution by him and his son to the family heritage.

He admits that his own inheritance was a double-edged sword.

"I was very lucky. Of course I was. It was handed to me on a plate. I took over good horses and inherited a wonderful staff, many of whom had been with my father for a long time. I'm sure they sometimes looked at the young fellow and wondered what was going on. I was incredibly privileged. But it was a burden too, knowing what you had to try to live up to."

To the credit of all concerned, the transition was seamless. Within a week of taking over, the 20-year-old amateur rider, narrowly denied by John Cook on Specify when partnering Black Secret for his father in the previous year's Grand National, had his first

success, Straight Fort, in the Express Chase at Sandown. In February he sent over Good Review to become the first Irish-trained winner of the Schweppes Gold Trophy.

By the end of 1972, he had retained the Irish jump trainers' title which his father had won in ten of the previous 11 seasons. He held it for five consecutive seasons.

Not many peaks had been left unconquered by the stable. Yet in March 1975, a month before his father's death, the young Dreaper put his distinctive stamp on affairs when winning three races at a Cheltenham Festival run in bottomless conditions, so bad that racing was abandoned after Tommy Carberry had partnered Ten Up to give Greenogue its sixth Gold Cup.

Champion Chase success was nothing new at Greenogue either. Lough Inagh was the yard's seventh winner since 1960, but there was novelty attached to the victory of subsequent three-time Irish Grand National winner Brown Lad in the Lloyds Banks Hurdle, now known as the Stayers' Hurdle.

Dreaper looks back on Brown Lad with particular affection.

"The Irish Grand National was always an important race for us. My father won it ten times and Fairyhouse is our local track. I won it first in 1974 with Colebridge, and then Brown Lad won it the next two years with Tommy Carberry riding. He missed the 1977 race because of leg trouble but we got him back to win it again as a 12-year-old in 1978, carrying 12st 2lb and ridden by Gerry Dowd, a local lad from Dunshaughlin who worked in the yard. That was a great day."

**P**HILOSOPHICAL by nature, Dreaper does not typically indulge in regrets, but memories of those early days stir one minor twinge.

"I never got experience in another yard. It was just the way it happened. My father's health wasn't the best in his latter years. In hindsight, it would have been good to see how things were done elsewhere."

When the time came, Dreaper encouraged his own son, Thomas, to take the opportunity to spread his wings. "He started with Robert Alner and then went to Ferdy Murphy. He learned a lot from them, and he had great respect for Malcolm Jefferson who was a big help to him."

Indeed, the young Dreaper spent five seasons in Britain between 2003 and 2008, riding 83 winners there with a seasonal best of 30 in 2006-07. His father still marvels at his dedication, adding: "He's 6ft 3in tall so every day started in the sauna, but he enjoyed his riding days and made good contacts across the water."

One might be forgiven for

thinking that Dreaper was not short on contacts when he took over in 1972. He inherited an impressive portfolio of owners, aristocrats including Arkle's owner, Anne, Duchess of Westminster, major landowners, men of high military rank and bankers including Colonel Sir John Thompson, who would later marry his widowed mother.

The problem was that many of them were getting on in years, much closer to his father's vintage than to his own.

Not only had Tom Dreaper employed legendary patience with his young horses, he had also seldom failed to convince his loyal and trusting owners that this was the best policy.

Dreaper observes: "My father's owners were generally well-off and could afford to be patient. It was a sport for them. Most of them only had a couple of horses, and my father deliberately kept things small. Even the Duchess only had a total of 20-something horses in the yard over all the years."

As times changed, new owners usually wanted a quick return or were interested in setting horses up for a gamble, never part of the agenda for the stable in days ancient or modern.

The type of horse changed too. The big, strapping chasers of the past were now few and far between, although one such horse emerged in the early months of 1987 when Carvill's Hill won bumpers at Leopardstown and Punchestown. He was a big, raw horse, a typical Dreaper type.

Irish jump racing was at a low ebb at that time, the deaths of Dawn Run and Buck House having left a massive void. The Roselier gelding was soon talked about as a Gold Cup horse, acquiring that most blasphemous of descriptions as 'the new Arkle'. Doubts began to set in when he fell in the Denny Gold Medal Chase at Leopardstown's Christmas meeting in 1988, but in February 1989 he got a confidence-boosting win in the Red Mills at Gowran Park and ten days later he won the Vincent O'Brien Irish Gold Cup by 15 lengths.

Although Dreaper had tried to dampen the hype, a Gold Cup bid was irresistible and Carvill's Hill lined up against the great Desert Orchid at Cheltenham. When he fell at the seventh fence, it was the beginning of the end of the great dream.



Flagbearer: Merry Gale was an 18-time winner, including victories at the top level, for Jim Dreaper

"When I look back it's the biggest disappointment of my career that we never really managed to teach him to jump," says Dreaper. "He developed his own method and because he was so powerful and had such a massive cruising speed, he often got away with it. He had a problem with his lower back and when you stood behind him you could see the muscle wastage."

**D**REAPER was a model of dignity when the horse was transferred to Martin Pipe's yard and "rebuilt", as his new trainer attested, by equine physiotherapist Mary Bromiley, before giving perhaps the greatest individual performance over fences since Arkle in winning the Welsh National by 20 lengths from the subsequent Grand National winner Party Politics, who was receiving 19lb.

"There was no bitterness. I always wished Martin Pipe and the horse well. I was just sorry we hadn't managed to get the best out of him, that's all."

Merry Gale kept the flag flying, winning 18 races including a six-race winning sequence as a novice, culminating in a brilliant victory in the Heineken Gold Cup at Punchestown. He was a dual winner of the race now known as the John Durkan Memorial at Punchestown and a 15-length winner of the Martell Cup at Aintree in 1995.

"We sourced Merry Gale from the great Tom Costello, a master at producing young horses. He was a lovely horse for a wonderful owner, Herb Stanley. Unfortunately, he was a nightmare to train. But for his problems he could have been very good."

Unfortunately, in the same month as Merry Gale's Aintree win, Dreaper's other outstanding horse in the 1990s, Harcon - a big, plain horse, another in the stable's traditional mould - suffered what was in effect a career-ending injury at Punchestown, having had what seemed like only a temporary blip for a horse just reaching maturity

when second to Brief Gale in the Sun Alliance Chase at Cheltenham.

Since that pair, there has been just one more Grade 1 victory, with Notre Pere in December 2007 a year before he made history as the first Irish-trained winner of the Welsh National. However, Ann and Alan Potts continued to provide great support, including the Midlands National winner Goonyella, until their deaths in 2017.

"Alan was a great supporter of Irish racing in general, and we had a good association with him in his later years. He put a lot of money into it and liked getting results. He used to say that he didn't pay to have horses in training, he paid to have his horses run."

Dreaper accepts this as the modern way, although not all the changes during his 50 years as a trainer have pleased him.

"There are some things I think we've lost. Many of the great horses of the past proved their ability in handicaps, giving away huge amounts of weight. More even than his

Gold Cup wins, that was the measure of Arkle's greatness. There are too many race conditions these days, good horses can avoid each other too readily. That's a pity."

Understandably, then, Dreaper holds Desert Orchid in high regard "for his great versatility and for the regularity with which he showed top-class form", although when asked to nominate the best staying chaser since Arkle he is in the Kauto Star camp.

**W**HEN it comes to assessing the best jockeys of his time,

he prefers to rely on his own direct experience in singling out Tommy Carberry for the highest praise.

"Tommy was a wonderful jockey," he says. "Of course I was young and inexperienced when he was riding for me, but I never felt I had to give him any instructions. He rode by instinct, and more often than not he got it right. Like all the really great jockeys, he could handle the pressure on the big occasion."

Dreaper has always maintained a healthy balance in his life. The family has always been a close-knit one and he is equally proud of

each of his three children; while Thomas assists at Greenogue, Lynsey runs a successful dog-walking business in the area having worked as a translator and journalist, and Shona has been part of the Punchestown team for 14 years after working for Horse Racing Ireland.

He is also a sports fan with an eclectic interest, embracing Meath Gaelic football teams ("the ladies gave us something to cheer last year"), Test cricket ("I've always loved the game, but not so much the shortened versions") and Tottenham Hotspur FC, an enduring passion through decades of mixed fortune.

But how does he view his life in racing?

"Well, I'm never going to say I've loved every minute of it. If you train racehorses, every day brings you something to worry about. You'll have a lot of disappointing days, and it won't always be the horse's fault.

"My father used to say that every time you get a good horse, however well he does, there's always something you could have done better. But, like him, I try not to get excited about the horses and I don't get depressed."

That's been the Dreaper way for 90-odd years, and that's the way life goes on at Greenogue.

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## THE COMMENT PAGE

# Revolution needed to stop Irish Derby decline – so make it a mile and a quarter

**H**ERE'S a question. What's the link between the Dubai Duty Free Irish Derby, the Hyland Racecolours Toorak Handicap, the Clark Stakes Presented by Norton Healthcare and the Kikuka-Sho? Think about it, while I quote HRI chief executive Suzanne Eade, who invoked an oft-repeated mantra when addressing a parliamentary committee last week: "Ireland is a global leader in horseracing and breeding."

In many respects, it's a justifiable boast. And timely, one might think, in the build-up to Ireland's 'premier Classic', a race with a wonderful history and a distinguished roll of honour, hosted by a splendid racecourse lately redeveloped at a cost of €81.2 million.

Many of us have known the Irish Derby as a sporting and social highlight of the Irish summer. That was then. Now, it is an increasingly inconsequential event in the hierarchy of major races.

We know that because the answer to my question is that the 2021 Irish Derby occupied joint-94th position in the 2021 Longines worldwide rankings, sharing that place with, among others, the 25th-ranked Australian race, the 18th-ranked US race, and the 11th-ranked Japanese race, that country's version of the St Leger incidentally.

Sixty years ago the first running of the 1866-inaugurated Irish Derby under the Sweeps banner steered the race out of a domestic backwater into the mainstream of international racing.

The glories of the Sweeps era are illustrated by the dual Derby exploits of Santa Claus, Nijinsky, Grundy, The Minstrel, Shirley Heights, Troy and Shergar.

Perhaps the race sometimes felt like an act of coronation for an Epsom-derived heir presumptive, but it had status, distinction and prestige. The Sweeps sponsorship drew outstanding Derby winners to the Curragh, one of whom, Sir Ivor, was famously beaten by the Lester

ALAN SWEETMAN

## The Thursday column



Piggott-ridden Ribero in 1968.

Gradually the excitement and glamour ebbed away, although the allure of the race remained powerful for major international owners and leading European trainers.

The advent of the Budweiser sponsorship in 1986 drew the two strands together again. Mike Roarty and his team introduced some American razzmatazz and Irish Derby day was rejuvenated.

It was an occasion for everyone. It was a seasonal highlight for regular racegoers, an abundant and thriving species at a time when the sport still enjoyed a high profile in the weekend entertainment listings. The metropolitan socialites turned out in force, well-heeled, expensively hatted. Kildare locals, proud of an event that put their county on the map, mixed with the once-a-year trippers, busloads from pubs and clubs all over Ireland, trainloads too, all cheerfully knocking back pints of the sponsor's brew.

Sometimes we moaned about the export of the big prize, by which criterion an imperious St Jovite in 1992 was

the only bright spot between Law Society in 1985 and shock 1996 winner Zagreb. Yet the race grew in stature through the 1990s and there was even a heady period when it threatened to usurp the Epsom prototype, hailed by the cognoscenti as a more meaningful test of midsummer form at a fairer track.

It became a key race in assessing the relative merits of the Derby and Prix du Jockey-Club. In beating the subsequent Arc winner Suave Dancer in 1991, Generous established that tone. Two years later Commander In Chief triumphed over Hernando. In 1995 Andre Fabre's Winged Love emphatically reversed Chantilly form with Celtic Swing.

**T**he decade ended with Chantilly winners Dream Well and Montjeu (*below*) doubling up at the Curragh, while the next five years gave us five home-trained winners, including two of outstanding merit in Sinndar and Galileo.

That's the nostalgia bit. The modern-day reality is stark. In the past ten years the Irish Derby has attracted a paltry 13 overseas challengers: a dozen from Britain and one from France. Of the 13, three came for the 2018 race, another three last year.

Forgettable winners have outnumbered the memorable, with any genuine stars sent off at odds to reflect a paucity of opposition. Camelot was 1-5 in 2012, Australia

1-8 in 2014, with Harzand at least a more backable 4-6 in 2016.

By and large we can attribute the fall-off in international participation to the dominance assumed by Ballydoyle and Coolmore in the mile-and-a-half division from the late 1990s onwards, although that was not the only factor. Aidan O'Brien's seven in a row between 2006 and 2012 took place in the aftermath of a 2005 move by the French, changing the distance to the Prix du Jockey-Club in response to evolving fashions in the breeding industry.

These days, a stand-alone Irish Derby winner is an unappealing stallion prospect in commercial terms.

An Irish-trained Epsom winner may not damage his reputation by taking in the race as a lap of honour but there is no longer any incentive for a British-trained winner to travel to the Curragh, while the French just stay at home.

On Saturday the Derby third takes on an Oaks winner. I've read it described as "a mouthwatering prospect". I guess it would be if you hadn't had a drink for a while.

What's the solution? In a letter to the Irish Field this year, BBA Ireland director Patrick Cooper made a radical proposal to halt the race's slide into insignificance.

Cooper suggested taking a leaf out of the French book. Reduce the distance to ten furlongs. With that single action, you tempt the Derby winner to drop in trip to enhance his appeal as a putative stallion, you encourage the various Guineas winners and other high-class milers to have a go, you offer the Classic generation an alternative to the Eclipse, and you attract the French again.

Now you have a proper mid-season championship race, one you can market. Sweeps and Budweiser did it before, making the Irish Derby a genuinely significant horse race with a proper sense of occasion. It can be done. In fact, it must be done; joint-94th is not good enough for a global leader.



*'Saturday has been described as "a mouthwatering prospect". I guess it would be if you hadn't had a drink for a while'*

## POSTCARD FROM NEWMARKET

David Milnes



## Prescott helps solve mystery of Limekilns

**I**F YOU want to know about something historic in Newmarket, just ask Sir Mark Prescott. The Limekilns, a 200-acre pristine turf facility, has been part of Jockey Club Estates for well over a century, before which it formed part of the Chippenham Park estate which still stands today around four miles away.

The Limekilns has hosted many giants of the turf in that time, but it has always puzzled me how it got its name.

Prescott duly delivered after I had exhausted all attempts to find the reason, given there were no clues to be had either in print or out of it. It turns out I was looking in the wrong place.

The master of Heath House reveals: "The clumps of trees on the edge of the gallop and on Waterhall are where the lime kilns were. If you look inside the circles of trees there are craters where the brick-built structures were and they lit the fires at the bottom of the stack to turn the chalk into lime. If you look closely you can still come across some brickwork remains today."

These stacks, dating back to the 18th and 19th centuries, regularly got up to 800C to produce quicklime that could be used as building mortar, and were often built seven at a time, which would tally with the number of sites dotted about. The paths that were used to connect them are still used by dog walkers to this day.

Prescott adds: "There's an area of the Bury Hills gallop nearby which has always known as the Chalk Pits and that is where they extracted most of the lime to put into the kilns. They would not have had much transport in those days which is why the kilns are quite close by."

"I suspect they would have put the trees around them to keep animals off as in those days the Limekilns was part of Chippenham Park estate and I would imagine they would have had sheep, etc, grazing on it."

"Interestingly, the ground has been untouched by a plough for centuries which is why the turf rides so well. Some say it rides a bit different to another former part of the estate known as Railwayland but that may be because it was ploughed up and planted with carrots during World War II."

The next time you hear of a horse burning up the Limekilns, you'll know just how apt a turn of phrase it is.

## Letters to the editor

Email editor@racingpost.com

### Jumps boys need a break

RACING is getting itself in a muddle of its own making with the debate over how or why 250-300 races should be trimmed from the programme.

The solution is so simple as to be blindingly obvious. It is high time to go back to the days when the jumps season had a six-week break in the summer.

The jockeys would get a chance to recharge their batteries, while trainers, having given their horses a good break, would be itching to get back into action. The highly possible upshot being bigger, more competitive fields on resumption.

Quod erat demonstrandum, as my old Latin master used to say.

Steve Simpson  
Preston

### New racetimes don't work

I AM beginning to find this switch to greyhound-style racetimes for the horses really annoying.

On a busy day, racetimes of 2.07, 2.38, 3.03, 4.19 are totally pointless as virtually no race goes off on time nowadays anyway.

Before anybody says it is to avoid clashes, just refer back to the

Derby at the start of the month. The biggest race of the season had to share the screen on Racing TV with a race at Listowel.

With the plethora of racing nowadays, clashes are inevitable, so let's try and keep things simple and just get back to the old traditional racetimes.

Glyn Linder  
Norwich

## THE COMMENT PAGE



# The whole of horseracing mourns Jack – he will never be forgotten

SAM HENDRY

Another view



## Whip warning as riders fall foul of German inflexibility

I HAVE never been to Baden-Baden but by all accounts it seems like a lovely place to visit. My colleague Scott Burton described it as “one of the most charming places in Europe to watch horseracing”, and he and other visitors would presumably be keen to make a return journey.

However, in less of a hurry to retrace their steps might be jockeys Ross Coakley, Frankie Dettori and Tadhg O’Shea, all of whom left with hefty bans after falling foul of Germany’s strict whip rules.

Dettori can have little complaints after exceeding the maximum number of strikes on Torquator Tasso, but Coakley and O’Shea both felt aggrieved about their suspensions of 23 and 14 days.

Germany’s measures permit for the whip to be used five times in a race and bans are swiftly dished out for anyone going over the limit in any capacity. The use of the whip down the shoulder with hands on the rein is also classed as a strike.

It is on the latter point where Coakley and O’Shea fell foul, and, in the case of O’Shea in particular, it seems there was no flexibility allowed.

Race-riding is not always clear-cut and O’Shea insisted he had only struck Ekleel Athbah on the shoulder for corrective purposes after some barging in running.

When jockeys are on the receiving end of such a ban, it immediately creates headlines with little room to provide wider context. The impression given to the wider world is that a rider has mistreated their horse, but this can be misleading and can obviously taint their reputation.

If, as O’Shea says, he was taking preventative measures for the safety of himself and his fellow riders, then surely that should be taken into account.

From a British perspective this is relevant given the impending implementation of the recommendations from the whip review means a high scrutiny will be placed on these issues in the coming months.

The new rules, initially at least, will be less tough than those in Germany, yet it would be no surprise if moves were made down the line to tighten them further.

The authorities must be careful not to fully follow the lead of other nations – instead they must ensure common sense is applied in certain instances. If we were to go too far, it would only create more disharmony and mistrust.

A ONE-OF-A-KIND child who touched all our lives in the best way possible – he will be forever present in our lives.

An unimaginable tragedy, inexpressible grief. No words. What can one possibly say about the accident at Glenbeigh that claimed the life of 13-year-old Jack de Bromhead?

No words. But Heather and Henry de Bromhead, in the depths of their agony, somehow found words and expressed their heartfelt love for their son Jack most beautifully and movingly.

He was an amazing son who told us he loved us every day . . . Not only the perfect, funny, loving son but also an incredible loving brother to our beautiful daughters, his twin sister Mia and his little sister, Georgia. He always had their back and was fiercely loyal and kind.

A sense of shock has enveloped the world of Irish racing and its tight-knit pony racing satellite, and has rippled out into the wider community. I heard the murmur of chat on the sidelines at my own little boy’s sporting activity on Monday. Hushed tones of horror, incomprehension and sympathy. I’m sure it was the same the length and breadth of Ireland, and far beyond.

Pain and sadness were etched on the faces of the jockeys who lined up in silent tribute in the parade ring at Galway on Monday afternoon.

No horses left Knockeen for the west on Monday, but you know that the life of a training stable has to go on. Horses have to be fed, watered and exercised. You can scarcely imagine the void left behind at Knockeen. This ever-active, ever-cheerful boy, taken from the midst of an environment that is both a loving, nurturing home and a bustling, thriving workplace.

## ALAN SWEETMAN

### The Wednesday column



Jack has lived so many more years than the thirteen – he filled every moment of his days, always busy, forever curious, grasping at life and new interests.

Jack’s parents paint a vivid picture that tallies with little glimpses we have witnessed. Most poignantly now, we recall an interview with RTE’s Brian Gleeson at PuncHESTOWN.

At the time, it was deeply engaging. Now it is laced with an overwhelming sense of sadness and loss.

Jack, smiling, grinning, laughing, neither shy nor over-confident, natural and down-to-earth, an unmistakably pleasant youngster, a credit to his family, talking about the brilliant Honeysuckle’s little quirks and characteristics with a lively sense of humour and fun.

He had an over-brimming heart of loyalty, empathy, patience, pluck, courage, and how he made us laugh!

The organisers of Irish pony racing have acted quickly and wisely in announcing the suspension of the rest of the season.

Not only right and proper as a mark of respect to Jack and his grieving family and friends, it’s the most appropriate response with regard to the emotional and mental welfare of Jack’s riding colleagues.

It would have been unthinkable for the sport to expect its young participants to embrace a ‘show-must-go-on’ mentality in the weeks

ahead. It’s reassuring to hear that HRI and IHRB have put counselling services in place for Jack’s fellow riders and friends.

He made so many friends wherever he went and they felt his special, unique and loyal touch on their lives, too. We ask that they please celebrate and love him as we know he would have wished.

The organisers and followers of Irish pony racing are justifiably proud of the sport’s significance as a pathway to the professional ranks.

At the same time, many of its volunteer organisers are motivated by the enthusiasm of their children and are keenly aware of parental responsibilities.

FIRST and foremost, this is a family tragedy. But like any accident, it has a wider context. It raises thorny questions about how pony racing fits into the overall fabric of the Irish racing world. That is a discussion for another day, but what more fitting memorial could there be to Jack than the emergence of something that will benefit the young riders of the future?

The memory of Jack will stay with his pony racing colleagues for the rest of their lives. They will remember him with affection, yet the sense of regret and loss will never be far away when his name is mentioned. The words of his parents will forever ring true.

Jack, you will be with us always at home in your family and friends’ hearts. Always present, always cherished, with so many memories from your packed, extraordinary life.

Only last Saturday morning, I had cause to remember Michael Teelin, a young rider who died half a century ago.

Teelin was a native of my hometown of Kells. From the early days of his apprenticeship with Clem Magnier, he was tipped for stardom, a brilliant natural horseman with a strength in the saddle that belied his physique. He weighed in at 6st 7lb when winning the 1968 Irish Cesarewitch on 100-1 chance Arctic Serenade.

At the end of the 1971 season, on the very day that 20-year-old Teelin was crowned apprentice champion, he suffered fatal injuries in a fall in the Leopardstown November Handicap.

The people of Kells were proud of a popular youngster who came from a family of ten. One of the most enduring memories of my childhood is of struggling to find a vantage point among the hundreds of mourners lining the streets for his funeral procession.

Teelin’s sad fate came to mind after noting the name of a race title on last Saturday’s Navan card, an apprentice handicap run in memory of PF ‘Mutt’ Conlin, champion apprentice in Ireland in 1949 and 1950. In May 1952, aged 20, he was killed in a fall at Kilbeggan.

And then in the evening the desperate news emerged from Rossbeigh Strand, Jack de Bromhead’s name added to a sad litany. He won’t be forgotten, 50 years from now, 70 years from now, he will be remembered.

Always cherished, always loved, frozen in time with a beautiful young soul.