



compiled by Leo Powell

Charlie Haughey and Equestrian

Changing the Face of Ireland's Breeding Industry

Ireland has a well-deserved reputation as a leader in the global business of thoroughbred breeding and racing. That good name has grown exponentially in the last half a century or so, and Charlie Haughey's foresight had a large part to play in that growth. In 1968, as Minister for Finance, he introduced a tax exemption for stallion fees in the Finance Act, gaining cross party support for the bill. This action had the effect of making Ireland the place to stand some of the best racehorses in the world, and for some four decades Ireland became the destination of choice for stallion owners.

The spin off was that the world's most influential breeders bought substantial stud farms in Ireland, the best broodmares in the world were sent to Ireland to be covered, and many of the best racehorses in the world carry the IRE suffix in their name. The tax exemption contributed to a burgeoning stallion business in Ireland, with John Magnier's Coolmore Stud becoming a world leader, and Sheikh Mohammed choosing Ireland as home to many of his best sires at Kildangan Stud.



The decision to introduce the stallion fee exemption was made following strong lobbying by Captain Tim Rogers, owner at the time of Ireland's pre-eminent stallion farm, Airlie Stud.

The seismic effect of the tax exemption legislation can never be underestimated. Coolmore Stud supremo John Magnier is under no illusion as to its positive influence. "One can't escape the farsighted vision of introducing the stallion tax exemption and the impact on Ireland, and how it helped to attract investment which led to the establishment of a world leading industry here where only a cottage industry existed before."

Charles Haughey's View of the Industry

In a wide-ranging debate in DáilÉireann in 1976, Charlie Haughey spoke about the bloodstock industry in Ireland, and the Irish National Stud, and showed his passion

for the industry. The following are some extracts from his contributions, many of which reveal great foresight.

"The introduction of this legislation presents us with the opportunity of looking at one of our very important national institutions and examining its performance, considering its policies and looking at the contribution it is making to agriculture in the first instance and to the economy in general.

"I suppose it is not necessary to emphasise the fundamental national importance of our bloodstock breeding industry. The Minister very succinctly mentioned that importance but I think it is important that I and my colleagues should take the opportunity to re-emphasise to all concerned the fundamentally important place our bloodstock breeding industry occupies in the economy. It is a very important industry from the point of view of the contribution it makes in a material sense to our agricultural output, in the contribution it makes to employment.

"Bloodstock breeding provides first-class employment in many areas where it would be impossible to provide employment of a similar calibre in any other way. A well-managed and well-run stud farm is the equivalent of a reasonably sized factory as regards employment but the contribution bloodstock breeding makes does not stop there. It enhances our countryside in many ways; it can and should be a very valuable element in our tourist industry. It can make a very important contribution to the general status of the country internationally; it can make a valuable contribution to our balance of payments and it is a necessary basis for our racing industry, which is also a great employer, and in addition, it is a very considerable tourist attraction. It would be impossible to over-emphasise its importance in our national affairs."

"I want to reiterate my belief in the important role that the National Stud can play in our bloodstock breeding industry, in our racing industry, and indeed in the entire field of the Irish horse.

"I am going to be egotistical enough to quote something I said when I was establishing the survey team on the horse-breeding industry when I was Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries. I said to the team at the first meeting: 'I believe we should concentrate on what we are good at, and nobody has ever questioned our ability to breed and raise good horses of every kind'.

"Even though I said that myself, I think it is a very sound statement. In this country we have to undertake many forms of economic activity, some of which we are at a considerable and natural disadvantage in undertaking, but this is something that does not apply in the horse industry. We should aim to make Ireland the premier bloodstock-breeding country in the world. That should be our target in so far as bloodstock breeding is concerned. We have everything that is necessary to achieve that target. We have all the necessary ingredients, all the natural advantages, the climate, the soil, the tradition, the accumulated knowledge, the experience, the basic structure, and the people. We have everything available to us that can ensure that we do become the bloodstock centre of the world. That is what I want to see established as firm Government policy.

"That brings me, then, to the role that the National Stud might play in that situation. It seems to me that in developing our bloodstock breeding industry and our horse industry in general there are three separate aspects to be considered. First of all there is the question of producing the animals, the horses, the yearlings. Then there is the question of selling them at the best possible advantage, and there is the whole area of racing, because the racing industry in this country is an integral, necessary part of our bloodstock breeding industry. It is essential on the one hand that we breed the horses to race and secondly that we have a completely adequate racing structure to provide the necessary outlet for the horses that we breed. So I would look at our bloodstock breeding industry under those three separate headings: production, selling and racing.

The Killanin Report

A seminal piece of work for the Irish thoroughbred racing and breeding sectors was The Commission of Inquiry into the Thoroughbred Horse Breeding Industry, more commonly referred to as The Killanin Report.

It was published in July, 1986, almost four years after it was commissioned by the Minister for Agriculture Brian Lenihan during Charles Haughey's term of office as Taoiseach. The report was presented to Mr Lenihan's successor Austin Deasy and brought to the Oireachtas by Minister Michael O'Kennedy.

The Commission was chaired by Lord Killanin who in 1950 was appointed president of the Olympic Council of Ireland, a position he held until 1973. He was elected a member of the International Olympic Committee in 1952, becoming president in 1972, a position he retained until his retirement in 1980.

The Commission and its three-sub-committees held 154 meetings, and the 200-page report contained 123 recommendations. The main recommendation of the Commission was the establishment of a Thoroughbred Industry Board to replace the Racing Board. The new Board, it was suggested, would have responsibility for all areas of racing except those relating to the making and administering of the rules of racing. This far-sighted recommendation predates the establishment of Horse Racing Ireland's forerunner, the Irish Horseracing Authority, by a decade.

Helping the Sport Horse Sector

Bord na gCapall (The Irish Horse Board) was established by way of the Horse Industry Bill, 1970, at a time when the industry was in great difficulty. The genesis of the legislation arose from a special committee set up by the then Minister for Agriculture and Food in 1966, Charles Haughey, to look into the sector and identify its needs.

Speaking in Seanad Éireann in 1989 at the second stage of the Bord na gCapall (Dissolution) Bill, 1988, Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture and Food, Joe Walsh spoke as follows about the impact of Bord na gCapall:

"In 1966 a survey team established by the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries [Charles Haughey] recommended the establishment of an Irish Horse Board to co-

ordinate the activities of the various associations dealing with equestrian matters and to set up a national training centre for riders and instructors. As a result Bord na gCapall was established under the Horse Industry Act, 1970, in order to promote and develop the non-thoroughbred horse industry and to advise the Minister on matters relating to breeding, sale and export of horses.

"One of the Bord's earliest achievements was the setting up of a farriery apprenticeship scheme under which over 70 young people became qualified farriers. The Irish Thoroughbred Breeders' Association and other interests have now organised a new farriery apprenticeship scheme. This is a welcome development which, I hope, can be further developed to meet the demands of both the thoroughbred and non-thoroughbred horse industries. Under the Bord's tutelage a number of people were prepared for and passed their equestrian science examination. This function has now been taken over by Teagasc.

"The Bord's most important and significant achievement was the foundation of the Irish Horse Register in 1974. This incorporated the approval of stallions for breeding and was essential for maintaining the high standard of the Irish sport horse. During the Bord's existence the number of sport horses increased by 50% - from 21,000 to 34,000 - and the value of exports reached £3 million."

Abbeville was home to Mr Haughey until his death in 2006. He continued to take a keen interest in breeding throughout his later years, principally through broodmares he had in partnership with his daughter Eimear at Abbeville and Meadow Court Studs.

Tributes Paid on the Death of Charles J Haughey

John Magnier, Coolmore Stud

"We would like to express our condolences to the family and friends of Charles Haughey on their sad loss. It is widely recognised that the transformation of Irish bloodstock breeding from a cottage industry in 1969 to a world-class one today can be largely attributed to his far-sightedness and strategic thinking.

"The introduction of a tax exemption on stallion fees enabled Ireland to build on its natural attributes and to stand the best stallions rather than exporting them, benefiting the rural economy and associated businesses.

"Through its introduction, Charles Haughey created something out of nothing, and at no cost. His legacy to Ireland will be fully appreciated by future generations and history will be kind to the man."

Brian Kavanagh, Chief Executive, Horse Racing Ireland

"Throughout his career Charlie Haughey could only be described as a true friend of Irish racing. His innovative approach to the breeding industry through the introduction of progressive tax policies has stood the test of time and has been the cornerstone of the recent worldwide success of Irish racing and breeding.

"Mr Haughey had a deep love and understanding of the industry and enjoyed considerable success as both an owner and breeder, most notably through Flashing Steel (Irish Grand National 1995), Vulforo (Powers Gold Cup 1973) and Aristocracy (Phoenix Park International Stakes 1977).

Irish Thoroughbred Breeders' Association

"The Council and staff of the ITBA were deeply saddened to hear of the death of former Taoiseach Charles Haughey. Mr Haughey was a keen horseman, owner and breeder who had a great understanding and appreciation for our industry and the people who work in it.

"His innovative thinking in relation to the introduction of the Stallion Tax Exemption was instrumental in placing Ireland at the forefront of international racing and breeding today.

Leo Powell, Managing Editor, The Irish Field

"Former Taoiseach Charles J Haughey was laid to rest in Dublin yesterday following a state funeral. Aged 80 years, he had been ill for some time and died at his home in Kinsealy on Tuesday morning.

"Mr Haughey was a keen horseman, riding to hounds with a certain style and panache. He also established a successful stud farm, enjoyed memorable moments as an owner and was, through his association with Captain Tim Rogers, the architect of Ireland's emergence as a thoroughbred superpower.

"On the greater political front, Charles Haughey was one of the most influential figures in the history of the Irish state. His far-sightedness marked him out during his terms in office and many policies implemented by him had far-reaching effects. One only has to point to the financial services centre, the redevelopment of the city centre in the capital, and the flourishing of the arts sector as some of the embodiments of his vision.

"The thoroughbred industry has good reason to remember Charles Haughey well and with appreciation. His introduction of the stallion tax exemption in 1968 laid the foundation for what has become one of the world's greatest bloodstock centres. It must have been with some sadness that Mr Haughey saw, in recent times, the intervention by Europe change a regime that was the envy of the other major thoroughbred producing countries.

"Hopefully the introduction of an effective replacement for this visionary concept will be a fitting testimonial in due course.

"In recognition of his role in the development of a strong breeding sector, the Irish Thoroughbred Breeders' Association bestowed the Roll of Honour on Charles Haughey a decade ago. The industry, in a small but symbolically significant way, was saying thanks.

made to archaeology.