



## NEVILLE EAGER'S ASCOT OUTING

THERE WAS significant success in Royal Ascot last week for the syndicate owners of a horse called *Crystal Black*, which is trained by **Ger Keane** and managed to land the £110,000 Duke of Edinburgh Stakes. Ridden to victory by the trainer's son, **Colin Keane**, the six-year-old is owned by the Wear a Pink Ribbon Syndicate and has won five of her last six starts.

Formerly trained by **Dermot Weld** for his once primary patron, **Eva-Maria Bucher-Haefner's** Moyglare Stud Farm, *Crystal Black* changed hands for £35,000 at Tattersalls October Horses in Training Sale in 2022.

The syndicate is made up of pals **Neville Eager**, **Herbie Stephenson**, **Conor**

**Duffy** and **Tom Fallon**, who celebrated with abandon in the packed winners' enclosure.

The green-and-white silks are for Donard Football Club in Co Wicklow, while the lads threw in the orange hat to reflect Neville's Church of Ireland background.

The syndicate members had major success previously with globe-trotting superstar mare *True Self* (which won almost €1m) and formed the Wear a Pink Ribbon Syndicate to raise funds for cancer awareness in honour of their late friend, Breda Miley.

*True Self* ran under the Three Mile House Partnership, in which Duffy and Stephenson were also shareholders alongside Eager. Among the **Willie Mullins**-trained runner's most notable wins was the £1/2m Neom Turf Cup in Riyadh in 2021 and the Group 3 Queen Elizabeth Stakes in Melbourne in 2019 and 2020.

Wicklow-based Eager's company is called Ardglan Construction, where his 50% partner is **Patrick Flynn**. This company was sitting on

accumulated profits of €440,000 at the end of March last year.

A more recent vehicle incorporated by Eager is Gowran Ventures Ltd, where his partner is Carlow legal eagle and investor **Victor Clarke** of Clarke Jeffers Solicitors. The latter's stake in

Gowran is held through a company called Deeprock Asset Management, where the shareholder is listed as Clarke's wife, **Linda Fowley**.

Rather more interesting is the fact that Victor (who describes himself as "a solutions man") reached the

geographic North Pole in 2014 and a year later the intrepid lawyer made it to the top of Mount Elbrus, the highest mountain in Russia and Europe.

## SUCCEEDING MARY KEANE AT THE NGI

NEXT MONTH marks the end of **Mary Keane's** terms as chairwoman of the National

Gallery of Ireland (NGI). The vacancy should not take long to fill given that arts and culture minister **Catherine Martin** recently filled three seats on the board, so already has a name in the bag for the fourth seat. The new director, however, will not necessarily take the chair as that position is outside the remit of the minister.

The appointment of three directors in April was relatively prompt and contrasted with Martin's previous *laissez faire* approach. For example, the last time there were vacancies at the gallery, she waited well over a year before filling the four empty seats. Indeed, it took her eight months to even get around to advertising for expressions of interest.

This time around, the vacancies related to the exit of "accountant, poet and performer" **Gary Jermyn**; PR high-flyer **Jacqueline Hall**; and former communications head honcho at An Post, **Barney Whelan**, all three of whom had previously been reappointed and whose terms ended last November.

The advert published last year sought expressions of interest for four vacancies rather than three, which presumably was to cover the ending next week



Neville Eager

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of Keane's 10-year stint on the board (six of them as chairwoman).

The ad noted that PR/communications was one of the four areas the minister sought to have covered by the new arrivals, along with HR/employee relations, climate and sustainable transition, and legal. As a result, Martin has installed sustainability academic **Ciarán O'Carroll**, 'HR leader' **Caroline Grant**, and solicitor and former McCann Fitzgerald partner **Terence McCrann**.

This means that when former Law Society senior suit Keane steps down next week, her place will be filled by someone with PR skills. This does not mean that the new chair will be a spinner, as the position will be filled by a board election, not by the minister.

There has been a tendency in recent years on Merrion Square to opt for a legal eagle, which may suggest that McCrann is a strong contender.

Another name with legal credentials is criminal defence solicitor

**John O'Doherty** of KOD Lyons. He also chairs the Law Society's criminal law committee as well as the NGI's development committee. Moreover, JOD was elected as vice-chair of the gallery at the end of last year.

O'Doherty was first appointed to the board back in September 2019, so his term of office will expire in a couple of months, although he may well be reappointed, which has tended to be the preferred approach of Martin.

Former *Irish Times* chairman **Dan Flinter** (now *in situ* as chair of the Irish National Stud) is the other NGI ministerial nominee whose terms expires this year.

## DEEP D4 PROPERTY POCKETS

DEVELOPER **Joe O'Reilly** must be delighted with the *Irish Times* giving a plug to his swanky Lansdowne Place apartment

scheme in Ballsbridge. The paper reported that a three-bed penthouse has been sold to an Irish buyer for €6.6m, according to the Property Price Register (PPR). Happily, there was no room to mention issues of concern elsewhere in the eye-wateringly expensive development.

The PPR lists the sale price of No 21 The Templeton as €5.8m but adding the VAT payable on new builds brings the price to a hefty €6.6m. The penthouse is on the seventh floor of The Templeton, one of the blocks that make up Lansdowne Place.

A glance through the PPR reveals that in recent weeks the most expensive sales in the area have come almost exclusively from O'Reilly's scheme, with (non-penthouse) apartments in The Harvey and The Nicholson blocks fetching €1.6m-€1.7m each (pre-VAT).

While Lansdowne Place is clearly greatly sought after by those with deep pockets who like the prime location, a 24-hour concierge service and access to a fancy gym (sorry "fitness suite

and wellness centre"), some residents claim to have had a less-than-satisfactory experience.

In 2022, a group of owners initiated High Court proceedings against the O'Reilly vehicle behind the development,

claiming that the temperature regularly reaches a high of around 30 degrees, irrespective of the outdoor temperature or the time of day or night. The residents were seeking an undertaking to carry out remedial works and court filings show at least some of the actions

are still active.

Among those who have sued are Wexford moneybags **Michael Stafford**, 'executive coach' **Aideen O'Byrne** (formerly of Leeson Park), Senator Windows chairman **Noel McSweeney** and Limerick developer **Rudi Butler**.



Mary Keane



Lansdowne Place

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