

# In the Klarion Spotlight



## THIS MONTH: MJR travelling manager Calvin McCormack

**A** NATIVE of Clane, just south of Dublin, Calvin McCormack was destined for a career in the racing industry from a young age. At the earliest opportunity he joined Jim Bolger as an apprentice, and when he decided his future lay over the jumps he made a wise decision in crossing the Irish Sea to join Mary Reveley's yard at Saltdun. In 1997/8, Calvin landed the 'Likely Lad Award' as the leading conditional rider in the North, and he was soon clocking up 400 rides a year. A broken wrist interrupted his climb up the ladder for five

months, and, with shocking luck, he then broke the same wrist on his first ride back from injury at Huntingdon. Calvin took himself off to the States, where he excelled in riding the tight, turning courses in Maryland and Virginia, but once again injury intervened, with damage to his femur and a bad shoulder injury effectively forcing his return to Britain. Mark is delighted that he has joined the MJR staff and that we benefit from the wide experience he has gained on both sides of the Pond.

**Date and place of birth:** February 27, 1974, at Clane, County Kildare, Ireland.

**Spouse/partner:** Paula Muir.

**Children (with ages):** I have a son, Sean, aged 9, and a daughter, Alex, aged 8.

**How, and when, were you introduced to horseracing?** Both my parents were in the horse racing industry and I learned to ride when I was just three or four. I did a lot of hunting and eventing in my teenage years. I left home when I was 16 and went to work for Jim Bolger as an apprentice jockey. I moved to England when I was 21 to join Mary Reveley's stable in my quest to become a jump jockey, rode in England for 12 years then moved to America, where I rode over jumps for 7 years. I retired from being a jump jockey at 35 due to too many injuries, and went to work with my good friends, Tony and Rose Dobbin, at their jumps yard for two years.

**And to MJR?** Well, I saw a job advertisement on MJR's website for Travelling Manager and decided to apply for it. I got an interview for the job which, in turn, led to me starting at Mark Johnston Racing in June 2012.

**If you could choose any other career, what would it be?** I wouldn't have mind-

ed being a footballer, as they make loads of money!

**Where do you live and what took you to that area?** I live in one of the cottages at Park Farm, and it was the job that brought me to the area.

**What was your most exciting racing moment?** My most exciting racing moments were riding the Grand National course and winning a grade 2 race over jumps in America, at Nashville, Tennessee. I rode for trainer Richard Valentine's Whitewood Farm and the winner was called Understood.

**What is the best horse you have been associated with?** The talented chaser, Grey Abbey.

**And the best MJR horse, if different from above?** I was involved in the breaking of Bow Creek.

**The best race you have won and what it meant to you personally?** The Grade 2 race I won on Understood at Nashville; I won it four days after my son was born.

**Choose one race to have replayed on TV.** I love the champion two-mile chasers so a race with Viking Flagship or Direct Route would suit me.

**The race you would most like to win.** I would have loved to win the Grand National as it's a great test for both the jockey and the horse.

**What is your favourite holiday destination?** Florida.

**Place/s you most want to visit?** I'd love to visit Australia and New Zealand.

**What is your favourite sport outside racing?** My favourite sport outside racing is rugby.

**Other recreations?** I like to play golf, when I can.

**Favourite Racecourse? Why?** Cheltenham. When you are lucky enough to be riding there, the atmosphere is electric and second to none.

**Least favourite? Why?** Bath. Frankly, because it is in the middle of nowhere and the staff canteen food served there is not the best.

**What is the last film you saw and film you would most recommend?** The last film I saw was a horror/thriller film called 'Ouija.' It was scary. A film I would recommend is Spielberg's 2002 film 'Catch Me If You Can', starring Tom Hanks and Leonardo di Caprio.

**Last book you read and book you would most recommend?** 'Stone Cold' by C J Box. I don't get the chance to read very much so I wouldn't want to make any recommendations.

**Favourite TV programme?** I love 'Get In!' on At The Races.

**What schools did you attend?** Clane High School.

**What were your best, and worst, subjects at school?** My best subject was sport - I played Gaelic football and hurling. My worst was German.

**Are you superstitious?** No.

**Lucky number?** 7.

**Two people you would most like to be seated next to at a dinner party?** Brendan O'Carroll, perhaps better known as Agnes Brown in 'Mrs Brown's Boys' and the great Sir Peter O'Sullivan.

**Do you have any pet hates?** Yes, lazy people.

**Favourite actress?** Cameron Diaz.

**Favourite actor?** Tom Hanks.

**Favourite author?** The American author C J Box.

**Favourite singer/band?** Mumford & Sons.

**What pets do you have?** None.

**What kind of car do you drive?** Volkswagen Passat TDI.

**What cd/s do you currently have in your car?** Cds by Mumford & Sons, Paolo Nutini and The Dubliners.

**What station is your radio tuned to?** Smooth.

**What would be your 6 desert island discs and one possession you would like to have on your island?** The best of Mumford & Sons, the Pogues, Paolo Nutini, Christy Moore, The Dubliners and Robbie Williams. The possession would be a perennial supply of 'Guinness'.

**A restaurant that you would recommend.** The Wensleydale Heifer.

**What would you choose as your last meal?** Fillet steak and chips, served with a peppercorn sauce.

**What is your favourite drink?** Guinness, but only when I go to Ireland.

**Who has had the biggest influence on your life?** My parents.

**What was the best advice you were ever given?** It would definitely be to 'keep your head down and work hard.'

**Tell us something about yourself that we probably don't know.** While riding in America, I rode for the celebrated film actor, Robert Duvall.

**Do you have any regrets or things you would like to have done differently?** I think that life is far too short for regrets.

**Do you have a racing hero, human or equine?** Several. As my racing heroes I would choose Mick Kinane among flat jockeys, and for my jump jockey it would have to be AP McCoy. My equine hero would have to be Shergar.

**And, finally, how many winners did you ride?** I rode 156 winners over jumps, and was champion jockey in Virginia.

*Calvin rode 156 winners over jumps*

