



JOHNSTONRACING

A limited-cost introduction to racehorse ownership The Kingsley Park Partnerships

Join our record-breaking team

Contact our team by phone on 01969 622237
or by E-mail at partners@johnston.racing

www.johnston.racing

John Barson 1927 - 2024

ALL AT Kingsley Park were saddened to learn of the death on February 25 of John Barson, a long-standing owner with Johnston Racing, at the age of 97.

John was a fantastic supporter of the yard over many years and loved his racing. His distinctive colours of black, yellow and orange, have been carried by some great horses at Kingsley Park. In 2009 he enjoyed success at Royal Ascot when his Drill Sergeant won the Duke of Edinburgh Stakes, beating stablemate Record Breaker in a thrilling race.

Other horses he had in the yard included Chilly Filly and Lyn Valley. But John will forever be associated with that great stable favourite, Watersmeet. A handsome grey, Watersmeet won no fewer than 15 races for John and was part of a stellar day in Johnston Racing history in April 2019, when he landed the All-Weather Marathon Championship at Lingfield on the same day that Matterhorn ran away with the All-Weather Middle Distance Championship.

Lingfield now has a bar named after Watersmeet.

John, who lived in Oakham, Rutland, founded and ran Burley Appliances, a leading manufacturer and supplier of electric and gas fires. He will be sorely missed, and those at the yard who knew him send condolences to his wife, Dorothy, daughter Jane and son Steve.

Jane said her father, who spent his childhood in Leicestershire, had always loved horses and worked at a riding stable near Leicester as a boy. He hunted a little in his earlier years but didn't have a full season until he was 60. He got into racing when he hung up his hunting boots to give him

something to do. He started with jumpers but later switched to the Flat, having his biggest successes with horses trained by Mark Johnston.

Deirdre Johnston said: 'I have had many enjoyable days at the races with John, who loved racing and his horses.'

'I have also had many a happy supper with John and Dorothy, their daughter Jane and her husband Steve, either out in a pub near their home or at Jane's house, where she cooked for us all. After one such evening during Burghley Horse Trials, John drove me the following morning to Leicester airport so that I could continue my journey to Ascot and saddle our runners there. He was a really lovely man. We will all miss him.'

As a young man John spent 20 years working for two of Britain's largest electrical appliance manufacturers, but in 1975 he decided to strike out on his own in the same field, creating Burley Appliances. At that time, the company consisted of John, a garage and a few components.

FOR the grand sum of £5, John commissioned three wrought-iron basket designs. It took him all day to assemble his first electric fire, but the next day he drove into Leicester with his fire and sold it. Things looked promising, but he realised production would have to speed up if the family were not to face starvation!

The first of several turning points came when John visited the electrical buyer at Harrods. Returning with an order for 12 fires, there was no looking back. John took on his first employee and found a bigger garage. His son and daughter also later joined the company, of which John was chairman until he retired. ■



John Barson with Drill Sergeant after his win at Beverley