Tribute to Ian Olding

Ian always loved horses. Born in North Belfast in February 1962, Ian and his brother Gary went to school at Belfast Royal Academy, but it wasn’t long before they moved to Carrickfergus. His father, Fred, was a Captain in the Navy, and his mum Jess was from Liverpool, so, as Gary explains: “Horses were not in the genes, but he was bonkers about them!

“He loved just being around horses. When he left school, he started out as a chef, but it just wasn’t him; horses and teaching people to event was his life. When he left Northern Ireland, it was almost as if he was running off to the circus! He just wanted to go eventing.

“We are all in deep shock and we are at a loss as to what to do without him. Ian will be very sadly missed by mum and dad, myself, my wife Lyn and his three nephews. Our only consolation was that he died doing something he loved.”

For the last four years, Ian was based at Somerford Park Farm in Sandbach, Cheshire. Equestrian centre owner Debbie King says: “Ian will be sorely missed here – he was such a bright light. He was part of Somerford’s ‘fixtures and fittings.’ He ran a really successful business here and had a yard of talented horses. He had so many faithful clients, not just here in Cheshire, but all over the country. Teaching was his passion and he has helped many riders achieve their dreams.

“Ian was always entertaining and had the ability to make you smile; he was so enthusiastic. He had the knack of walking into a room and creating a party!

Ian always had time for people; he was a very sociable person with lots of contacts. He was direct but never held a grudge, which was something I always admired. He really was a one-off.”

Several of Ian’s horses have the Gran prefix and it all started with Sue Kirkpatrick’s horse, Gran-Kiki, or ‘Alfie’, as he was known. Ian had ridden Gran-Kiki up to 3-Star International level during their six-year partnership, and completed Boekelo last October.

Sue says: “I first met Ian when he came to teach in the Isle of Man. People here are just devastated as he touched so many lives. He was such a character and always was the life and soul. I owned Alfie with him since he started at pre-novice, and I have enjoyed sharing the ups and downs of Ian taking him to Advanced. It was his dream to ride at 4* level and he and Alfie qualified for Badminton this year.”

Chris Shaw, British Eventing Regional Director says: “Ian rode three horses for me during his time in this country. I became able to call him a friend and know him as someone who would always help others whenever and wherever he could.

“When arriving in Cheshire from Ireland, he very soon became a popular figure on the eventing scene. Over the years, his trademark humour and the fun he brought with him were well known. He was sure to lift any dampened spirits and he always had a word for everyone he met.

“He lived for horses. He lived for competition. He was respected for his ability to ride to a fence.

“Ian lived life for the moment, to the full, and with an independent energy and an amazing joie de vivre. I am very glad that he did.

“We had some rare old times. I will remember him and miss him - as we all will.”

British Eventing has launched a full investigation into the tragedy and is liaising with the Health and Safety Executive, the Police and the Organisers.

Ian will return home to Carrickfergus where he will be cremated. Gary has asked for family flowers only, but donations can be made in Ian’s name to the Mark Davies Injured Riders Fund. Gary would also like to thank Ian’s friends for the many messages of sympathy they have received.
Individual Donations in Ian's name can be made by cheque to The Mark Davies Injured Riders Fund (MDIRF) and sent to:

MDIRF
Lancrow Farmhouse
Penpillick Hill
Cornwall
PL24 2SA

Or telephone MDIRF on 01726-813156