



UACHTARÁN NA hÉIREANN
PRESIDENT OF IRELAND

**Message from President Michael D. Higgins
At the Presentation of the Hall of Fame Award
to the Irish National Stud**

Saturday, 30th January, 2021

Ba mhaith liom comhghairdeas a dhéanamh leis an Ghraí Náisiúnta, ar ócáid a insealbhú i nDámhachtain na Laochra an Chumann Thógálaithe Capaill Folaíochta na hÉireann.

May I send my congratulations to the Irish National Stud who are being inducted into the Irish Thoroughbred Breeders' Association's Hall of Fame.

May I thank Shane O'Dwyer of the Irish Thoroughbred Breeders' Association for the invitation to join you and to bestow this award on such a worthy winner. Unfortunately, the most recent restrictions relating to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis necessitates that my words be conveyed to you in writing rather than in person or by camera.

The Irish National Stud is being given this award in recognition of its longstanding and valuable contribution to the thoroughbred industry over the decades, and for the contribution that it continues to make – from the breeding of stallions to the world-renowned thoroughbred breeding course. In addition to all this, the stud makes a unique contribution as a national tourist attraction which draws thousands of visitors annually.

The Irish racing and breeding sector is recognised internationally, and for some time, as one with a proud tradition of excellence. This is an indigenous and mostly rural industry that makes a valuable contribution to the social, economic and cultural fabric of this country. The National Stud was established under the National Stud Act (1945) some 75 years ago and remains fully owned by the Irish Government today, facts which recognise the importance of the industry from the earliest days of the State.

Today Ireland is the largest breeder of thoroughbreds in Europe, and the third-largest in the world. There are over 6,000 registered breeders in Ireland with some of the most globally successful breeders choosing to base their operations here. The industry generates over €1 billion annually to the Irish economy, and provides direct employment to approximately 14,000 people.

This industry is, thus, a key part of our country's economic activity. Racehorse owners are an important support to much direct economic activity through the many breeding and training operations that exist throughout the country.

/...

The industry is of course more than mere economic activity, and it should not be the sole means by which we judge the value of the horse-breeding industry and everything in relation to training and preparation that is so well-lodged to our culture and our communities. The horse, and everything to do with matters equine, have a special place in Irish life and culture. A love of horses, their breeding and training, are an integral part of Ireland's identity and of our reputation abroad. Across the world, Irish breeders, trainers, racehorse-owners and jockeys command the highest respect amongst their counterparts. That international reputation also helps attract many tourists to our shores every year.

As to the National Stud, to which I look forward to visiting when circumstances allow, I was delighted as President to reintroduce the President's colours. Sabina and I fondly recall our visit to the Irish National Stud in February 2014 when we were warmly welcomed by all of the team there. Among the many highlights were a tour of the beautiful Japanese Gardens whose beauty shone through the mist and the rain that day. During the tour of the Japanese Gardens, Sabina and I were treated to a performance of extracts from the Mikado.

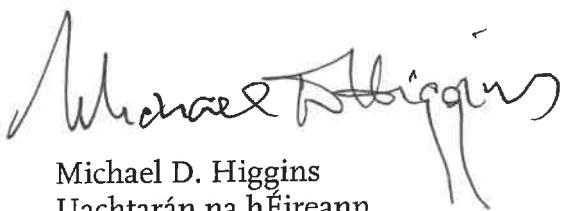
We then strolled through the Sun Chariot yard to the Stallion Boxes taking in a visit to the Horse Museum along our way. I was impressed by the great condition of the Stud's resident retirees and had the pleasure to meet students of the Stud Management Course before taking in the relatively recent addition, St Fiachra's Garden, at which Sabina and I were treated to a raw recital of the John O'Donohue poem "To Learn from Animal Being" by Mary Linehan with musical accompaniment from Conor Mahony.

The natural elements described in the piece were evident in the natural beauty of St Fiachra's Garden. While the rain had stopped by this time, the waterfall was still in full flow, and it was a most enchanting experience demonstrating the beauty of the Stud's indigenous garden. The National Stud is an Irish jewel and should be high on the list of places to visit by locals and overseas visitors alike.

Mar fhocail scoir ba mhaith liom gach rath a ghuí ar an nGraí Náisiúnta agus í ag déanamh obair mhór, obair ilghnéitheach, obair a gcuidíonn le sochaí, cultúr agus geilleagar na hÉireann.

May I conclude by wishing the National Stud continued success as it carries on making such a valuable and multifaceted contribution to Irish society, Irish culture and our economy.

Beir beannacht



Michael D. Higgins
Uachtarán na hÉireann
President of Ireland