

Basil Samuel

D. T.
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BASIL SAMMUEL, who has died aged 75, was one of the property developers responsible for changing the face of the City and West End of London in the boom years after the 1939-45 War with such developments as the present-day post office in Trafalgar Square.

With his brother, Howard, Samuel built up a small property portfolio in the West End by the outbreak of the war, and they resumed their partnership when he returned with the rank of captain.

Their first big success came with the development of Camomile Street in the City, which they followed with the development of Castlewood House in New Oxford Street, a project carried out with their cousin, the late Lord Samuel of Wych Cross.

In 1957 the brothers brought their various property interests together to form Great Portland Estates, which two years later obtained a Stock Exchange listing with properties valued at £5.5 million and estimated profits of £205,000.

Success followed success, with such schemes as 300,000 sq ft of offices and shops in Old Street, and 100,000 sq ft in Park Crescent, behind a reproduction of John Nash's terrace of 1812. By 1982 the the company was worth £5,000 million.

Like other successful property men of the period Samuel became a prominent figure on the Turf and bred a number of high-class horses — including Auroy, which in 1960 came third in the 2,000 Guineas and fourth in the Derby. He had another third in the 2,000 Guineas with the Tisted-bred Celtic Song, and other successful horses bred by him included Mallard Song and Romper.

Samuel and his wife also owned some good horses. The Fulke Walwyn-trained Some Alibi, for example, was an excellent chaser; his wife's Brown Chamberlain, was runner up in the 1974 Cheltenham Gold Cup; and they had some useful winners on the flat.

Basil Samuel was born in 1912 and gained his early experience with the estate agents J Trevor & Sons before going into partnership with his brother in 1934.

Apart from the Turf, Samuel's great enthusiasm was for shooting and when he became too frail to go out himself he still invited friends to shoot over his land and welcomed them to tea. Modest and unassuming, and with a highly individual sense of humour, he gave substantial sums to charity, particularly to medical causes; he was a governor of the London Hospital.

He is survived by his widow and three daughters.