

NMRC AGM AGENDA & MINUTES MONDAY 27th JANUARY 2025

Phil Evans (PE) opened the meeting and also thanked Andy White (AW) for setting up the online meeting and all other committee members for their input over the last 12 months. Also taking part from the committee were Helen Goodwill, Ken Unsworth, Dave Bates, Richard Mattinson, Michael Wheeler, Mark Banks, Gordon Armistead, Andy White, Judith Bradley & Charles Rear. Keith Dodd also joined the meeting.

We then went on to run through the main agenda as follows:

Membership Report

Helen Goodwill (HG) advised that the 'paper based' numbers were 39 (at 42 in 2024, 47 in 2023, 53 in 2022 down from 73 in 2019). The number of printed magazines were reduced in 2023 with 'friends' of the club moved to online versions whilst past/present committee members now pay £6pa to receive a printed copy instead of the usual £12pa.

The bulk of the membership is now 'free online' with the current list showing 493 subscribers at present (from 453 in 2024, 407 in 2023, 368 in 2022, 330 in 2021 & 175 in 2019). All get advised when the new magazine is produced (via Mailchimp) although opening rate of the e mails is usually only 60%. This may be due to some e mails being treated as 'spam' even though delivered via Mailchimp – there is a complicated process to 'tweak' settings to reduce the risk of 'spam' rejections although it is too technical for me!

Around 10 names were removed from the mailing list during the past year where either their e mails 'bounced' or they 'unsubscribed' or in some cases we were notified that members had died.

Our Facebook followers currently stand at 583 (was 506 in 2024, 456 in 2023, 404 in 2022, 367 in 2021 & 275 in 2020) although some of these are fully registered members (about a third) albeit unclear why some join Facebook but then do not register as free members.

Thankfully the number of 'dodgy' members on Facebook has reduced in 2024 and if anyone joins merely to advertise their own websites etc then we should restrict their ability to post messages in future.

As a general rule we should only allow FB members to share details of their own websites etc if there is a reciprocal arrangement or they are sharing a 'not for profit' event.

If committee members using Facebook can visit the club page as often as they can and leave comments etc (not just likes) I am sure this will help stimulate further growth of this membership platform.

The club also has plenty of Twitter (X) followers albeit most seem interested mainly in the UAE Racing scene and this forum generates relatively little activity regards the UK operations of the club. Carl will continue to share NMRC news on this forum from time to time.

In summary, whilst further growth in free members and other 'followers' is pleasing, the actual involvement in club activities is generally not increasing. See later comments.

Magazine Report

Ken has sent in his income/expenditure for the last year and will share this with the meeting now.....

From these figures we can see the expected cost of the printed magazine for the next 12m will be around £400 – exactly the same sum as transferred from the subs account to the main (general) account last Autumn. This is largely due to bulk buying of stamps at 75p (price now 85p).

Once the stock of stamps is used (about 10m supply remains) the cost will rise to 85p and assuming other costs remain the same then the 2026 total cost will rise to £426pa and we shall probably need to raise these (printed magazine) subs to £13/14pa in March 2026 if we are to cover the magazine costs in full.

If there is talk of a further stamp price rise (usually in April/October) this year we shall buy in another 12m supply for 2026.

A sum of £151 was sent to Ken in January to cover print costs etc over the course of 2025.

Treasurers Report

Richard Mattison kindly compiled the club's accounts for the last two years.

For the year ending 30/11/23 these show a surplus of £146 but for the year ending 30/11/24 a loss of £109.

However, since the last AGM the club's main bank balance has fallen by just under £200. Nearly £90 of this was the loss on the Cheltenham Preview Night in 2024 and £60 was an advert in Rebecca Menzies Open Day brochure last September so for 'normal activities' we probably lost around £50 last year.

We have moved a substantial chunk of reserves (£5,000) onto a 95-day deposit account (in Sept 2023) which is currently paying interest of around £180pa.

In terms of future income, the club has the bank interest, paper magazine subs and some stable visit donations (the latter two are usually fairly neutral).

As expenses in 2025 it will have website related costs (domain names), stationery, some prizes, trophy engraving and stable visit gifts.

With interest rates still likely to fall in 2025 our main income stream will start to fall away in the not-too-distant future and rather than starting to use up our reserves (which would arguably be the beginning of the end for the club) I propose a few changes as follows:

1. Scrap one of the two domain names (keeping the original one as this is used by most people). Saves about £18pa.
2. Engraving costs to be covered by competition entry fees in future e.g. entry fees £600, engraving costs £15 so prize fund then £585. Mark Banks has offered to cover the Alex Bird trophy engraving in 2025. However, there is no more room for additional engraving in 2026.
3. Stable visits – retain say 20% of donations to cover club costs e.g. Donations received say £100, club retains £20 and stable given £80.

Membership Fees

These comments apply to the 'paper' list only.

Despite the rising inflation in 2023/24 the club should be able to hold 'printed magazine' membership fees at £12 for one more year.

It is likely that a rise of at least £1 will be required in 2026.

Stable Visits

We managed two visits in 2024 – Tjade Collier & Susan Corbett. We were in the course of arranging a third visit to Stella Barclay in the autumn when the sad news of Paul Clarkson's death was announced, so naturally we dropped that plan immediately.

By offering places to annual members of some courses (close to the stable locations) we saw an upturn in numbers attending in 2024. For the spring visit there was an issue regarding some 'guest members' avoiding leaving donations so for the autumn visit we made pre-payment of 'donations' a requirement when booking.

For the latter visit we also trialled a new 'donations' schedule to encourage greater numbers: £5 for one person, £8 for two people, £10 for three/four people. The thinking behind this was that if friends/couples/families are going racing together then they take in the stable visit 'on the way' then not all in the group may be truly interested in the visit so a sliding scale should make this more attractive to such groups.

Initial plans are to arrange two/three visits across our region in spring 2025 and one in the autumn.

Phil/Dave to start seeking visits asap so we can hold in say April/May/June ideally with a nearby race meetings to attend post visit.

Competition News

Whilst Mark Banks/Mike Wheater have worked really hard to get 'Alex Bird' entries up again in 2023/2024 the two other competitions have 'flatlined'. Notwithstanding the growing membership numbers the 'new faces' entering Satnaps/Heritage Handicaps have been fairly small.

Mark has also managed to get the Racing Post to sponsor the 'Alex Bird' this year with a winner's prize being an 'Ultimate RP Membership' worth nearly £500.

The 'Alex Bird' competition will have the 3-day Newmarket Guineas weekend as the third leg this year with the others made up of Cheltenham, Aintree and Royal Ascot.

If any non-members join competitions in future can we please remember to enrol the people involved as 'club members' and if 'on-line' tell them that memberships must not be cancelled during the term of the competition.

As alluded to earlier it is proposed that engraving costs are covered from the entry fees in future.

It may also be worth competition organisers reviewing the entry fees for their competitions this year – all currently at £10pa.

When Satnaps was launched in 1997 it cost £10 (then 4 rounds) and it has never gone up! Using an RPI calculator the equivalent entry fee should today be £26 but I am thinking more of £12 (equivalent to £4 a round) next time.

Alex Bird was originally £5 a round (£20pa) but after the preview night boom in the 1980's fell away it was simplified to £10pa (all 4 rounds) so maybe a rise to £12pa can be justified. The flat rounds were always less well supported when paying 'per round' and it was not until fairly recently that the seasonal prizes were created. Indeed we did trial NH/Flat rounds only for a while with this option no longer available.

The Heritage Handicap Competition is the newest of the three and has less prizes to distribute so arguably £10 is still the right amount?

Starting in 2025, the 'wooden-spoon' winners of Alex Bird, Satnaps+ & Heritage Handicaps will all be given a 'free entry' in the current years competition.

PE also advised that he will run the Grand National sweepstake again in 2025 after the good entries seen in recent years. However, as field now cut to 34 runners the entry fee will again be £6 in 2025. Hopefully Andy will be able to help run the online draw again. Whilst GN 'reserves' are again possible in 2025; these have to be declared by 1pm on the Friday so should not have any real impact on the draw with everyone getting a horse (non-runners get a refund) and prizes for the first four horses to finish.

Due to a few non-renewals and some member's deaths we currently have five numbers available for the 59's draw if anyone would like to take a number? Costs £1pm with £50 monthly prize.

Cheltenham Preview Event 2025

The live preview event numbers fell by around 50% last year to around 35-40 and as a result we suffered a financial loss of around £90 on the event. I decided then that I would 'retire' from arranging live preview events and cancelled the Aintree 'live' preview (to save embarrassment) which was always less popular despite Aintree being 'down the road'.

Many factors were to blame: Trying to re-kindle interest after the two years break due to covid; Loss of event sponsor and move from Haydock; Ever increasing number of similar events with direct competition seen in Warrington; Much smaller budget for guest speakers.

I have however contacted Gordon who is happy to join in a series of four short online evening previews before each day of the festival. I shall also have lots of statistics to hand. Martin Unsworth (son of Ken) has also volunteered to be on the panel. However, with no fees to pay the panel members this is very much a 'freebie' for the club to help raise money for the IJF. Will confirm start times later – probably 7pm to avoid clashes with any football on TV.

I will set up a 'just giving' page for the IJF and seek donations of min £5 to cover the four short previews. Once donations confirmed members will be sent the zoom meeting codes.

Hexham have also kindly donated two pairs of tickets which we can use as part of this fundraiser.

Paul Fergusson has kindly arranged a members discount code for this year's Weatherbys Guide.

I shall also share details of a few live preview events in our region from 'friends' of the club and hope to get a few of their 'top tips' in return.

Other Events in 2025

Any other ideas welcome plus volunteers to arrange events.

Deputising Cover for Key Roles

Andy White (AW) can now access the website builder & Judith Bradley (JB) is now acting as a Facebook supervisor. Although CR did not join the meeting is he still available to act as Deputy Treasurer should Richard no longer want to continue in that role.

Any Other Business

Keith Dodd raised some interesting points on the night and has been following these up subsequent to the meeting. Initially Keith has offered to set up a WhatsApp group for the club and details will be shared online and in the magazine. Please join the group asap as there is already a lot of content being added by Keith.

Another idea Keith is progressing is a 'club badge' to wear when out racing. Probably costing around £2pp (plus postage) if at least 50 ordered.

Here is an initial 'mock up' of a badge albeit design may later vary:



Keith also mentioned about interviews with racing folk and I will share this with Brian to see if this could fit in with his articles.

Election of 2025 Committee

The existing committee was re-elected en bloc and a place has been offered and accepted to Keith Dodd .