

# Racin'



Issue 349

February/March 2018

## 2018 MEMBERSHIP NEWS

It's that time of year when we remind members that, for most of you, subs are due on 1<sup>st</sup> March. For members who have recently joined, 5year or life members this will not apply.

If you already pay by bankers order, no action is required unless you want to change the format of how you receive your copy of Racin'.

If you receive this magazine in the post, then the address label will have a pink dot on it if your subs are due in March.

Membership forms are also enclosed with the postal version of Racin' ~ please feel free to pass onto a friend if you do not need to use it!!



Above, **George Wheeler** ~ founder of Jockeypedia. See pages 10-11 for full story.

Below, **Stewart Copeland** is under Brian Goodwill's spotlight in this issue of Racin'



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## NRC FORTHCOMING EVENTS

### MONDAY MARCH 5<sup>TH</sup> – CHELTENHAM PREVIEW AT HAYDOCK PARK

Ticket prices are held at £10 again with a top panel of guests also invited!

See page 3 for further details.

### WEDNESDAY APRIL 11<sup>TH</sup> – AINTREE PREVIEW AT TETLEY CLUB, W'TON

We are moving this year's event to the Tetley Club in Warrington. Panel guests for this event to be announced on the NRC website in due course and in the next issue of Racin'

Entry to this event will be £5 (including sandwiches) ~ 2018 e-vouchers can be used for this event.

## COMPETITION NEWS & RESULTS

### NRC's 2017 XMAS QUIZ RESULT

Some excellent scores seen with three perfect scores of 20/20 from **Denise Williams, Andy White & Mike Campbell** who will each receive a prize for their efforts.

Next best scores came from Keith Wood & Anthony Jones (19) and Harold Heys (18).

The questions that caught some out were:

- Idaho & Highland Reel were two brothers which did battle in the 2017 Coronation Cup at Epsom
- The Pie (not The Piebald) was the disqualified GN winner in National Velvet.
- York (not Pontefract) was used as the venue for Denton airport in ITV's 'Frost'.
- Bruce Hobbs (not Jack Berry) trained at Palace House stables.

### 59's DRAW RESULTS UPDATE

The latest '59's' winners are as follows – winners receive the monthly £50 prize unless we have a 'roll over'!

The winners are based on the bonus ball drawn on the first Saturday UK Lotto draw each month.

**(Roll over prize £100) Dec 2<sup>nd</sup> ~ 52 ~ Charles Rear from Sale.**

**Jan 6<sup>th</sup> ~ 50 ~ Julie Dawson from Merseyside.**

If anyone else wants to join in we currently have numbers 18-54-57-58 available! The last three winning numbers were all 50+ so now seems a good time to join!

Please contact Phil Evans (see contacts list on last page) if you wish enter – it costs £12 for 12 monthly draws!

### SATURDAY NAPS NH TIPPING COMP

Round 1 was won by **Alan Spencer** from Northwich with **Floss Howes** from Chester the runner up. Congratulations to both.

In Round 2 the leaders are as below with one week left in this round:

Tot	Name & Entry No.
21	Charles Rear 62
19	Phil Evans 24
16.5	Simon Clark 48
15.63	Diane Bates 68
15	Gordon Armistead 17
11	Dave Edge 32
10.75	Guy Weaver 38
9.75	Maureen Dawson 03
7	Les Taylor 80
6.57	Andy Condon 85
6	Alan Spencer 30
4	Eunice Flynn 21

In the seasonal competition Simon Clark on 24.75pts currently leads from Alan Spencer on 22.25pts.

The Satnaps prize fund has again topped £1000.

# **CHELTEHAM PREVIEW NIGHT**

**Monday March 5<sup>th</sup> – 7.30pm  
Haydock Park Racecourse**

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**PANEL GUESTS INCLUDE:**

**WARREN GREATREX (TRAINER)**

**BRIAN HUGHES (JOCKEY)**

**ANDY GIBSON (CHELTENHAM TRAIL)**

**& COMPERE GARETH LEONARD (SIS)**

**TICKETS £10 ~ IJF RAFFLE  
CASH BAR & FOOD AVAILABLE**

Copies of both the Racing Post & Weatherbys festival guides can be pre-ordered at £6

Books can also be ordered by members unable to attend by adding £2 to cover p&p.

Postal requests for tickets/books can be sent to NRC at 53 Dalebrook Rd, Sale, M33 3LB. If you prefer to send a bank payment, please e mail [info@northernracingclub.com](mailto:info@northernracingclub.com)

## **SPECIAL N.R.C. MEMBERS OFFER**

Buy 2 tickets and receive a free Racing Post/Weatherbys Guide.

Buy 4 tickets and receive a free NRC membership in 2018.



STAR SPORTS SPONSOR THIS EVENT

# RACING SPOTLIGHT – STEWART COPELAND

Compiled by Brian Goodwill

## WHAT FIRST SPARKED YOUR INTEREST IN RACING?

My Dad. We both loved sport and Dad would always make watching the Grand National one of the fun events of the year. At far too young an age - I'm being responsible Dad now - I started betting and going to the races with him, and I never looked back. When I twigged I could make more money on the horses than a doing a paper round, studying the racing form became a necessity.

## WHO WERE YOUR FIRST RACING HEROES ~ BOTH EQUINE AND HUMAN?

In human terms, Joe Mercer. Just simply a tremendous jockey, style and class in abundance. In equine terms it would be a close call between Red Rum and Birds Nest, marginally the latter if I have to choose. In an era of great hurdlers, he was the biggest character of all in my opinion. His brilliance was only matched by his quirky nature, and his often underdog tag against some of his more illustrious contemporaries appealed to me as well. The latter might explain why I chose to support Man City despite living a good deal closer to Old Trafford....who's smiling now, though!

## YOU WORKED AT TIMEFORM, WHO WERE YOUR CONTEMPORARIES?

I was lucky to work there in an era with some brilliant people, still many of them friends to this day. Far too many to mention here, apart from Martin Greenwood who works as a BHA handicapper like myself. Hard to believe it's nearly thirty years since our paths crossed, which leads me to believe I must have done something seriously bad in a past life....(he's a top bloke, really!)

## YOUR JOB FORBIDS YOU FROM BETTING ON RACING ~ ANY STORIES FROM YOUR EARLY PUNTING DAYS?

Lots but I'll narrow them down to a couple. I would often put on 2p Lucky 15s and insist my Dad collect any winnings, no matter how small. I think the day he collected 4p off a bet for me was more than a tad embarrassing for him...my cry it was better in my pocket than the bookies didn't make the situation any more comfortable for him. Then there was the day I played golf in the morning before heading off to Haydock in the afternoon. Walking on to the 18th green a £10 note fluttered towards me so I did the only sensible thing in that situation and shoved it in my pocket. Next stop was the Sandy Lane Stakes and snaffling a bit of 13/2 on Posada with my ill-gotten gain, which approximately 75 seconds later was suddenly worth £75...nothing ventured, nothing gained as they say.

## WHICH HORSES DO YOU CURRENTLY HANDICAP?

At present I'm assessing the sprinters, both on Turf and AW. I prefer the Flat to the jumps from a work perspective, and back in the days at Timeform I was responsible for the sprinters/milers also.

## WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO ANY YOUNGSTERS WANTING TO BECOME HANDICAPPERS?

Learn a trade instead... on a serious note, don't spread yourself too thin. Pick a division of horses to concentrate on and specialize. The key is getting to know the horses really well, and most importantly, use your eyes not your ears.

## YOUR FAVOURITE RACECOURSE AND WHY?

It's a close call because I have lots of happy memories at the likes of Haydock and Chester. However these days I would plump for York as the facilities are top class and the racing even better.

## WHAT GOLDEN RULE OF ADVICE WOULD YOU PASS ON TO PUNTERS?

Like the tip for a handicapper, use your eyes not your ears, and believe in your own viewpoint more than anything.

# GORDON ARMISTEAD'S RACING DIARY

## Friday December 15th Cheltenham

Aintree festival bumper winner Lalor was well backed and a short price for the two mile novice hurdle even though he had looked paceless in his two hurdle runs to date. It was the same today as he travelled up well and was then left easily behind by Western Ryder who had finished third in that Aintree bumper and was giving away a penalty. The race was run at a crawl for the first mile so the form may not be solid but the winner has a nice turn of pace which will always be handy. Lalor will need a fast run two miles or a trip but for now he has things to prove.

The staying handicap chase was moderate for the prize money and Robinsfirth jumped better than on his first two starts to beat four characters you wouldn't trust very much. He will have to step up in class which might be beyond him. Wotzizname again started favourite but even back in his English points he had four second places from his five completions and this was another step backwards.

More of That added the class to the Cross Country race but he appears to have nowhere to go after trailing and pulling up here. Down the field Tiger Roll had a nice wander around without any of his usual aids which will no doubt be back on come Festival time.

## Saturday December 16th Cheltenham

While Apple's Shakira easily justified favouritism in the juvenile hurdle Movewiththetimes in the two four novice chase never looked likely to do the same. This was probably worse than his earlier efforts and overall the race was hard to rate but winner Kalondra looks plenty high enough off 147.

Gino Trail has calmed down a bit before his races but still gives it his all during the race and a super jump at the last sealed an all the way success in the two mile handicap chase. Runner up Dun Doran has now started favourite on five of his last eight starts and won once and lacks the pace to win at two miles.

Leaving aside the sad end of Starchitect it was good to see a northern stable win a big handicap like The Caspian Caviar Handicap Chase. Nicky Richards has done wonders with Guitar Pete who had looked a sour individual in his final couple of years in Ireland. Runner up Clan des Obeaux had been set a really hard task under top weight and was soon in trouble with early mistakes and did well to get involved. His three best runs have been left handed but on flat tracks. Ballyalton was outpaced and now looks to need three miles and the SkyBet Chase at Doncaster would look the race.

A dreadful renewal of the three mile Grade 2 novice hurdle with only the four runners two of which were beaten over fifty lengths. Winner Kilbricken Storm was stepping up a mile in trip and might be good but this told up little. Melon was made favourite for the International Hurdle in spite of having lots to find on the ratings. He pulled too hard but probably ran his best race but as we know The New One and My Tent or Yours (getting six pounds here) won't win a normal Champion Hurdle then neither should he. The New One took his winning to over £1 Million here and it is hard to think of a horse that has run so consistently over such a long period.

Momella gave another boost to the On The Blind Side from in taking a very competitive mares two four handicap hurdle.

## Saturday December 23rd Haydock Park

Testify out jumped his rivals in the three runner two mile novice chase and that will help him when he has to go up in class and back up in distance. How good he is we will have to see.

Cap Soleil was a supposed superstar after following her three bumper wins with an easy success in the novice hurdle but she came down to earth with a bump next time and struggled here in the two four listed mares hurdle to beat the 125 rated Angels Antics and a Willie Mullins tenth string in Court Artist. Fourth home Molly the Dolly is a big sort and will surely be better over fences.

Everything looked right for Three Faces West in the Tommy Whittle except the Hobbs stable being right out of form. We will never know if he could have defied that as his jumping which is usually an asset let him down and he fell a mile out. Captain Redbeard saw the trip out well for a good win and a return for the Peter Marsh would seem logical as the going suited and it won't be getting any better this winter.

## **Saturday December 30th Haydock Park**

Four previous winners in the two mile novice hurdle in which Waterlord made all and saw his rivals off easily. He won his bumpers on summer good ground but handles this mud well and a return for a better novice at the January meeting here would make sense.

Top Ville Ben had been on my radar since he ran at Wetherby in October. I didn't think three miles on heavy was what he wanted but a twenty nine length win says otherwise. What the handicapper will make of it we will see but a literal interpretation will make it hard in the future.

A poor field for The Last Fling with the top weight thirteen pounds below the race ceiling. The fact that Emperor's Choice was favourite having run appallingly in all outings in the last two years and that he managed to win says it all.

The one horse to take from the meeting is Swing Hard third in the two four handicap chase on his first run of the season. I will be looking for him over the same distance at one of the early 2018 Wetherby meetings.

Air Navigator got himself well worked up before the bumper but won a moderate race easily enough. He looked like a break would do him good and maybe a couple of hurdle in the spring before chasing next autumn.

I didn't have a bet at Haydock but Newbury provided me with a double I really didn't want. At Aintree in November Ut Majeur Aulmes at 10/1 under Richard Johnson managed to snatch defeat when it looked impossible and was matched at Betfair's minimum price of 1.01. At Newbury today 11/1 shot Theligny managed to get turned over by Brave Eagle who was matched at the maximum of 1000/1 on the machine. Some curses were issued.

## **Monday January 1st Cheltenham**

The New Year got off to a better start with Boyhood at 15/2 seeing off some in form rivals in the three mile handicap hurdle. He hung both ways on the run in as he has done before but looks progressive. Runner up Red Rising has not had many runs since beating Testify in his Irish point but is a nice sort who will jump fences.

The listed two four novice hurdle had some decent sorts in it. Winner Tikkabar is a strong sort and won this without jumping a hurdle properly. He will struggle in better races jumping like this but could be the sort who will jump fences better next season. Runner up Ainchea never looked like winning but with the stable not having winners he ran well and could be the best of these in time. Aye Aye Charlie in fourth is improving with his races.

A good field for the Dipper Novice Chase and although Yanworth won he has yet to convince me as a chaser. He still jumped several fences slowly and then threatened to down tools on the run in. Not for the first time he looked like some form of headgear might not go amiss. Sixing Tennessee is getting his jumping together but Willoughby Court was a disappointment in third. Ballyandy after three months off made several small mistakes.

In the Relkeel Hurdle and back on a track he does well at Whistlestone turned the tables on Colin's Sister from their previous meetings this season with Colin's Sister probably also below her best. The staying hurdle picture is up in the air at the present and both will no doubt renew rivalry in the Cleeve Hurdle in January. Old Guard looked on edge before the race and after a few quick runs might have had enough for now having earned his keep for the year already. An impressive performance in the listed junior bumper as Acey Milan made all. Cue Card is the only four year old to win the Champion Bumper in the last twenty years but there will be worse candidates.

You will not see a better display of jumping than Vyta Du Roc put on in the staying handicap chase. He had an easy time in front against some less than willing opponents but this might just get him into the National where he will find it much tougher.

## **Saturday 13th January Warwick.**

This meeting is usually run on very heavy going so it was a surprise to see that it was only just on the soft side of good. The ground certainly did for the chances of many in the Classic Chase as they simply could not go the pace set by the blinkered and seemingly reformed Milansbar. Having sulked and looked totally uninterested so far this season he jumped out made most and had he had it won a long way out under Bryony Frost. It was a long way off the best renewal of the race (the top weight was only rated 139) and he will be lucky if he gets raised enough to get a run in the National. The only runner who might be of interest next time is fourth home Crosspark who pulled too hard early in the race and patently didn't stay. He was off 136 here and if the handicapper would drop him a pound he can win a 0-135 over an easy three miles.

Two recent winners of the Grade 2 Leamington Hurdle have gone on to win what is once again the Ballymore Hurdle at the festival but I would doubt if Mr Whipped will do the double. He is a nice enough sort but he was pulling himself up in front and hanging after the last which is not a good sign. Runner up Paisley Park also hung after the last and didn't look an easy sort to deal with. Third home Knight in Dubai has won a two five but upped in class seemed to find it too far while the opposite was true of Chooseyourweapon who looks to need a trip and also another year to strengthen up.

I had doubts about the trip for Black Ivory in the Pertemps qualifier but he saw the three one out well and is a rapid improver. He will need another win to raise his mark to get into the final but could well be capable of achieving that. The Organist received a very uninspired ride back in fifth and her mark of 139 would probably be high enough already to make the final.

Ms Parois winner of the three mile listed novice chase is a big girl and a rapidly improving chaser. She could win a decent staying handicap off something in the low 140's if connections go that way. Runner up Duel at Dawn is a bit one paced and looks like he needs extreme distances as does third home Big River who also needs to jump better.

The field for the newcomer's bumper looked a moderate bunch. Thebanneringrebel had the race won half a mile out and won by twelve lengths but that may say more about the opposition than him but we shall see.

### **Saturday 20th January Haydock Park**

The case for The Dutchman in the Peter Marsh based on his second to Sam Spinner here in November looked a bit thin. The seventeen lengths he was beaten that day could have been doubled and he along with those that finished just behind him have been beaten long distances since. The Tizzard stable was also out of form and their two previous runners on the card had been well beaten. But win he did after always being up with the pace and he will evidently go up in distance next time out in the Eider. He has been turned over plenty of times when starting favourite and looks a hard horse to take a liking too. The extra trip just seemed to find out Captain Redbeard while the trip was probably too short for Hainan who also might like not being hassled for the lead. I had a fancy for Irish runner Fine Rightly at a big price and he travelled well into the race and certainly looked like he would be involved in the finish two out but stopped to a walk in a couple of strides.

No doubt about the biggest cheer of the day which was reserved for The New One as he put his head down and battled back to get the better of Ch'tibello in the Champion Hurdle Trial. On a rough count I have been on course for over half his runs and you know what you are going to get every time. The staying hurdlers hardly look a great bunch so perhaps he can go close at Cheltenham but I fancy the trip will just be beyond him.

They were a decent bunch in the Grade 2 Rossington Main Hurdle. David Bass on First Flow was not going to let Will Kennedy dictate it on Waterlord and sent his mount on halfway down the back straight. He was never in danger after and should make a good novice chaser next season and he might be finished for this term as he is said to be very much ground dependent. Runner up Midnight Shadow is a typical tough sort from the Sue Smith yard who will win plenty for them over time. I liked third home Lisdoonvarna Lad as an individual and he looked a real chasing sort who will be better next season. The Tizzard runner Lostintranslation dropped away tamely and I fancy he will be better than this on faster ground come the spring time.

Joke Dancer won the two mile handicap hurdle off top weight rated only 115 but he looked a nicer horse than that rating and the Smith stable will find handicaps both over hurdles and fences for him in the next couple of years.

### **Saturday January 27th Cheltenham**

Apple's Shakira maintained her unbeaten record in the Triumph Hurdle Trail but was given a much harder time of it by Look My Way than in her previous runs. In the end she went away from the last hurdle as she stays the trip well and like her sister Apple's Jade will stay further. The fact that the third home Ulysses had been beaten in a seller on his previous start hardly gives the race much depth. From the parade ring the Philip Hobbs runner Elixir de Nutz looked a decent sort but with the stable totally out of form he ran a shocker.

The New One apart, Nigel Twiston-Davis is another trainer out of form and Ballyandy barely well a stride in the two five novice handicap chase and jumped very poorly. The other joint favourite Sizing Tennessee from another yard whose runners are mostly underperforming never really looked happy and stopped quickly in the straight. The winner Mister Whitaker is an improver but I am not sure this race was great form.

Frodon was my only bet on the day at Cheltenham with the drop in trip and ground looking ideal but I didn't think he would demolish the field in the two five handicap chase quite like he did. The Bryony Frost bandwagon continues and her quite

style just seems to get horses jumping. Frodon will get a rating hike into the 160's so it will be graded chases for him now. Runner up Shantou Flyer looks held by the handicapper while it looks like they need to try something different with King's Odyssey and a step up in trip might help.

Question marks against all the runners in the Cotswold Chase especially favourite Bristol de Mai. He didn't look great beforehand, his jumping was moderate and he never looked happy, but as mentioned his stable is not in form. Connections are evidently now thinking of the National rather than the Gold Cup but he doesn't appeal in any way for that. Winner Definitely Red ran out a good winner and another big race for a northern stable. He doesn't appeal to me as a Gold Cup winner but a lot worse horses have run into a place. American was back to form but with him being ground dependent the rain will determine his targets. The Last Samurai ran an excellent National trial and will have place prospects again there. The feature beforehand was the strange gamble on Singlefarmpayment from 33/1 into 15/2. The horse just looks a head case fretting away and sweating before his races and not settling in them and his jumping is getting worse. This gamble was not the worst of the day however as the 13/8 L'Ami Serge in the SkyBet Chase takes that prize but at least it meant I got a decent price for my old favourite Wakanda.

A good looking field for the Grade 2 Ballymore Hurdle Trial but the heavy ground seemed to find out a few. Winner Santini is a big chasing sort who will stay three miles in time and runner up Black Op is probably even bigger and another that should make up into a staying chaser next season. It was a long way back to Aye Aye Charlie who was outpaced the whole race but plodded on. Slate House travelled well for a long way but needs better ground while the winner's stable mate Pacific de Baune looked all at sea on the heavy ground. Favourite Mulcahys Hill is another difficult sort and this might have come too quickly after a hard race in the Challow Hurdle.

Finian's Oscar was back over hurdles and up to three miles for the Cleeve Hurdle but never looked happy at any stage and the excuse would be the ground rather than the distance but this was poor. Agrapart got his revenge on Wholestone from New Years Day over the extra distance but is another who is ground dependent and the stayers hurdle looks off the agenda. Wholestone, the only Twiston-Davis runner on the day to run up to form, is looking like a horse that is better at up to two six and will be outstayed at this trip if it becomes a battle. It is beginning to look like a wasted season for The Worlds End as he doesn't look up to it in these graded hurdles and hopefully he will make up for it over fences next season.

## NOW AVAILABLE – RACING SYSTEMS ONLINE FROM NRC

By Phil Evans

If you prefer to study the form of all races in depth before having a flutter then this will not be of interest to you!

However, if you like following 'statistical systems' to find winners this may well be right up your street.

Since January 2018 I have been releasing figures compiled over the last four years to help identify where and when to bet based on certain criteria.

For example you will be able to identify which courses are best for following horses wearing blinkers/hoods for the first time and where it is best to follow horses returning after a long layoff.

Needless to say for flat races you will be able to identify which courses are best to take heed of the draw – all based on a level stakes profit basis. It will also show you where it is fairly safe to assume there is no draw bias. The stats will even show where a certain stall is worth following in races!

Trainer Traits stats are also recorded and once you see them you may change your mind about following trainers with strong records (3+ wins in last 10 years) at Cheltenham!

Where trainers have won races once/twice before in the last 10 years the stats will also show which courses are best to follow trainer patterns.

Stats will also show courses where it is best to follow beaten favourites and also previous course winners.

You will need to view the stats online and download data in 'open office' format (available free to download).

# Point to Point News

by Rory Alkin

The point to point season will get much busier over the next couple of months and with an early Easter this year; there are meetings all over the country to suit your location. The first Yorkshire meeting of 2018 took place at Mick Easterby's farm in Sheriff Hutton and it turned out to be a great day's racing with 85 runners contesting the seven race card. The meeting is held by the Yorkshire Area Committee in aid of the Yorkshire Air Ambulance and significant five figure sums have been donated in each of the past five years. There were a few excellent performances by horses that will prove worthy of following throughout the season.

**Grandturgeon** ridden by Alex Edwards and trained by Phil Rowley won a division of the Conditions race in fine style for the second year running and recently followed up in a fair hunter chase at Warwick, which was his first attempt in that sphere. The eleven year old is still qualified for novice hunter chases and is a likely type to win them before the ground gets quicker. His shrewd connections have always been careful to only run him when the ground is good or softer. The John Corbett Cup is a championship race for novice hunters at Stratford in June and this would be a sensible target if the going is suitable.

The other division was won by **Dance of Time** and is trained by Helena Reveley the granddaughter of the late Mary Reveley. The horse had won two bumpers five years ago and in his first season pointing last year, he was runner-up twice and won three of the five points he contested. This is a likely type to win plenty more throughout the season including a hunter chase if tried in that grade.

One horse who created a big impression and will be going places is the seven year old **Sir Lonica** who trounced a field of fifteen maidens by 25 lengths and finished full of running in the testing going, despite making a mistake at the second last. The horse is trained, by Justin Landy a farrier for Mark Johnson's Middleham stable, for a syndicate. The winner had only raced three times previously in Irish points having been placed in the last two he contested in December 2016. He looks to have plenty of potential wherever he runs next.

One horse I'm really looking forward to following is **Garde Ville** an eight year old who was impressive in his first pointing season last year graduating from maiden to open class. He is trained in North Wales by Tish Rigby and is due to run at the first of two fixtures at Bangor on Dee on 18<sup>th</sup> February. The intention is to then run him in a hunter chase and he should cope well in that sphere especially on a galloping track where staying is at a premium.

Another horse that is likely to show to good effect in hunter chases is the ex-Paul Nicholls trained **Caid du Berlais**, now in the hands of Rose Loxton who is an assistant trainer at Ditcheat. He was previously a good handicap chaser and rated 149 in his prime. Still only aged 9, the gelding has already won two Ladies points impressively ridden by Harriet Tucker and should prove to be a hard horse to beat in points and hunter chases.



# George, the Wheeler Dealer of Jockeypedia

By HAROLD HEYS

JOCKEYPEDIA, a collection of British jockey biographies, first went on-line early in the early summer of 2013. It listed just 95 riders. Today, not five years on, that number has risen to well over 2,500.

It's a brilliant source of information and is the result of the vision and determination of one man – George Wheeler, a chap who can look back on a variety of colourful jobs which have always been wrapped up one way or another with horse racing. George has been involved in most things. He was born in Guildford, Surrey, and had a few years in the North, running a pub in Todmorden on the Lancashire-Yorkshire border. He now lives in Wimborne, Dorset.

Stepping out from the Jockeypedia pages on the Internet are individuals who chose a precarious and often soul-destroying way of life in order to live out their dream of being a jockey. His admiration for them knows no bounds.

George told me: "In that first week, I had 18 unique visitors and was thrilled to bits. Then, as the numbers increased, so the emails started arriving and for the first time I realised the extraordinary range of Jockeypedia. People were writing in from America, Australia, France and Spain. I've even had emails from Azerbaijan".

"I just wish I could have started it years ago as a young man but, of course, the Internet wasn't about then. I'm happy to include any jockey, whether they've ridden a winner or not. Most stable lads have great stories to tell and they're the characters I love to hear from.

"What I've learnt from the biographies I've written is that a jockey's lot is the ultimate labour of love. Few seem to even clear their expenses, yet all risk their necks every time they climb on board."

Jockeypedia includes the geniuses – the obsessed, single-minded group of individuals for whom second place was never enough. Fred Archer, Steve Donoghue, Lester Piggott and Tony McCoy among them. But there's also the many hundreds of journeymen jockeys who scarcely managed to make ends meet yet, such was their love of the profession, they would have chosen no other.

There's the drunks and cheats and the chancers – and the plain unlucky: the youngsters who suffered life-changing injuries or even death in pursuit of their goal.

Jockeypedia goes back to the year 1713 with the birth of the one-eyed Leonard Jewison who went on to become one of the greatest jockeys of that century. Just about every jockey of note since then has been listed, with – where possible – a photo and full biography.

There are also some autobiographies. Many jockeys have written their own stories and, together with rare memorabilia, have sent them in for inclusion. George is quick to thank the many individuals who have helped him along the way. A few years ago I wrote a feature for Racin' magazine on George Formby. And, of course, I sent it on to George who did a brilliant job dressing it up with some great photos.

Jockeypedia features an "It Happened Today" column which gives jockeys birthdays/deaths and other events which occurred on a particular day.

At least one new jockey is added every day and there's a free service which will send out any racecard since 1880 on request. Old racecards over the years are also featured on a daily basis. There are no adverts on the site, nor do you need to log in. Just type Jockeypedia into your search field to open up centuries of racing information and folklore.

So who is George Wheeler? Well, there's an interesting article on him by Chris Pitt on the jockey web site. He was brought up in Chertsey on the banks of the Thames. His first day's racing was to Royal Ascot in 1956. He took the day off school and rode there on his bike. He's now in his mid-70s.

He took bets at a factory where he worked and remembers clearly 2,000 Guineas day in 1961. He and a pal stood every bet – and there were a lot of them. Rockavon won at 66-1 and was a skinner. He moved to London where he rented a flat in the city for a fiver a week and worked for a bookie in Soho. He then acted as a DJ in a pub across from the Ritz – topless dancers were a big attraction – and later moved north where, as well as being a landlord, he had a thriving video business, shooting weddings and football matches.

Ever restless, he moved to the Costa del Sol and spent a few years there before coming back to England where he decided, as retirement neared, to research and write about jockeys as a hobby. The rest, as they say...

His favourite line in all the many thousands of words which followed? He didn't hesitate. Charlie Trigg summed up riding best when, having broken his duck in 1902, dismounted and said: "Nobody but an apprentice who has done it will ever know what it's like to ride that first winner. No words can explain it. You walk on air. You do not care what happens. You have ridden a winner and nothing on earth can ever take that away from you."

Trigg had another memorable "race" a few years later. He was riding in Austria when the Great War was about to kick off. He was away to a flying start after a tip from a chap in the Diplomatic Service and made it back to England the evening before war was declared.

George Wheeler wasn't daft enough to have a crack at a jockey's life, but he knows all about hundreds who have done so. Jockeypedia - look it up!



Jockey Charlie Trigg

# ALEX BIRD TIPPING CHALLENGE 2018

The Alex Bird Trophy, the competition to find the Northern Racing Club Champion Tipster for 2018 gets underway with the Cheltenham Festival.

The format of the Competition again covers **all** races on each day of the meetings covered with just the first four days at Royal Ascot.

1. The days covered at the meetings will be as follows:

Cheltenham - All 4 days; Aintree - All 3 days; Ascot - First 4 days; York - All 4 days.

2. The points scored will be based the winner and placed horses (2nd/3rd/4th depending on number of runners) with potential bonus points added based on the starting price of the winning horse. Precise scoring details are set out in the full rules (available from John Boswell).

3. The overall winner and therefore the Champion Tipster will be decided on the total for all 4 rounds and receives the coveted Alex Bird trophy for a period of 12 months.

4. Entry Fees in 2018 are the same as last year, namely £10 for all 4 rounds, or £5 for the first/last 2 rounds.

5. Cash prizes will now be awarded to the overall winner and the winner of the four rounds. The latter is guaranteed as a minimum of £100 with round prizes guaranteed as a minimum of £50 with the actual prizes confirmed once the number of entries is confirmed.

We hope that this will appeal to loyal members of previous years and to new contestants alike. In due course, your feedback will be welcome. In the meantime, we look forward to your entries and wish everyone the best of good tipping fortune.

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## ALEX BIRD COMPETITION 2018 – ENTRY FORM

Name.....Address.....

.....

.....

Phone/E Mail.....

Please return to John Boswell at 15 Barford Close, Ainsdale, Southport, PR8 2RS.

Please also enclose your entry fee of £5/10 per entry (cheques payable to NRC please).

To claim your e-voucher for £5 please e mail [info@northernracingclub.com](mailto:info@northernracingclub.com) before entering.

We regret that Paypal no longer allow us to collect entry fees for our competitions – to make an online banking payments instead, please contact Phil Evans (see contacts list) for further details.

# RACING IN MUMBAI ~ EXOTIC YET FAMILIAR

By Jane Maggs

Mumbai Racecourse is named after Mahalakshmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity. She presides over the racecourse from her temple in the grounds, where victorious trainers and jockeys give thanks after races.

The first races were held in the nearby Byculla area of Bombay in 1798, but the present racecourse, surprisingly, was not of British construction. In the 1880's The Royal Western India Turf Club was given a Rs.4,000,000 loan by the textile magnate Sir Cusrow N. Wadia to build the racecourse on what was presumably an auspicious site near Mahalakshmi's temple, on low-lying land facing the sea. The mill owner and philanthropist went to Melbourne himself to obtain the blueprint for Caulfield, of which Mahalakshmi is a mirror image. Racing commenced on the 2400m flat oval in 1883.

Sir Cusrow created a beautiful racecourse, elegant and spacious; in fact a masterpiece of site planning. Today it is surrounded by tower blocks on two sides; the sea with the famous tomb of Haji Ali on its tidal causeway on another; the equally famous Dhobi Ghat where Mumbai's laundry is hand washed and hung out to dry on another corner and behind the entrance the genteel decay of Byculla. It is 225 acres of green amidst Mumbai's teeming madness and is considered one of the finest tracks in Asia.

Racing takes place from November until April and the five Classics are all run here. The Indian Derby is on the first Sunday in February and is India's richest and greatest race. After April, when the heat is too great to race at sea level, horses move to Hyderabad or Bangalore for monsoon racing, or more likely up to Pune for the summer and the first part of the wet season. Many of India's leading stud farms are based at Pune with its more equitable climate. I went to an early January meeting just 4 weeks before the Indian Derby. The day's feature race, the Grade 2 Ramniwas Ramnaraian Ruia Gold Cup, worth Rs.990,000 (£9,900) to the winner, is a recognised Derby Trial. It was, however, considered something of a jinx race this century as no winner had gone on to win the Derby since the turn of the millennium.

I had planned to spend the meeting on the Members Lawn where the beautiful people of Mumbai hang out, but my companion was not wearing a tie and try as we might, no tie meant no entry to the Members'. We were discreetly ushered to the First Enclosure.

There are a lot of people in India and there are a lot of people wanting whatever work is available. However, India is also very high-tech when it chooses, but of course high-tech tends to mean fewer jobs. What happens therefore, is a delightful amalgam of old and new stitched together and enhanced by the Indian love of inordinate quantities of paperwork presumably inherited from British civil servants posted to the sub-continent.

The racecourse is a prime example of this. First we were directed to a normal-looking window to buy our entrance tickets (Rs.20, just 20p-it's Rs.160 to get on the Members' Lawn I'll have you know). Next we were accosted by numerous people waving what turned out to be rather excellent racecard/formguides printed in very tiny print on very flimsy paper for another Rs.20. At the entrance barrier a pair of charming old gadgies took our tickets and waved us through. A third charming gadgie gave us a green plastic token. A fourth person directed us to walk through an airport-security style arch. A fifth person directed us to an automatic barrier of the type used on the London Underground and opened by posting the green token into a slot. Having successfully passed through the entire range of human and mechanical security gates we then had to surrender our mobile phones in exchange for a paper ticket which I placed in my shoulder bag. You can keep your phone with you on payment of Rs.3,150 if you are a bookmaker and Rs.6,300 if you are a normal person. I don't suppose anyone in the First Enclosure would have anywhere near Rs.6,300, although all had mobile phones.

The course is absolutely wonderful. A tree-lined promenade leads from the entrance to the betting area and grandstand. Possibly the only difference between now and 1883 is the plethora of big screens, including one in the parade ring. Probably not the greatest idea as the cheering from the paddock at the finish to a race in

Hyderabad got all the parading unraced two-year-olds into a terrible tizzy. The grandstand is the original, painted green and white and preserved as a 'heritage structure of India'. Are you listening, development-mad British racecourses? Underneath the grandstand is a vast and wonderfully gloomy bar done out in very dark woods and ceiling fans. Charming old beer wallahs and tea wallahs are in constant circulation. Seated around tables are groups of old geezers, comfortably the same the world over, with complex permutations of Tote bets carefully written out in pencil to be **dictated** to the two Tote attendants at either end of the bar. These gentlemen sat at completely open wooden desks with a keyboard. They typed in the bets (minimum Rs.10-yes you've got it, 10p) and produced a printed-out till receipt. The money was placed into an old-fashioned unlocked heavy wooden drawer, looking suspiciously like it too was of 1883 vintage. If you were lucky enough to win you presented your till receipt, the details were typed in, the receipt's receipt was printed out and the two were solemnly stapled together and placed in the same ancient drawer from which your money was counted.

The loos really have to have their own special mention. Actually having public lavatories is a rare occurrence in India, having nice vintage ones is extraordinary.

At the main ranks of Tote windows on the course each individual station was set in a little mesh cubicle with a gate at the back. At intervals a tiffin wallah would pass along the backs of these cubicles with a huge tray and pass delicious-looking snacks through each of these gates to the Tote operative inside.

For some inexplicable reason I was expecting a Tote monopoly, even though I had read about racing in the 1970's and 80's and the karma attached to race fixing. I had also read 'Shantaram', a must-read book about an Australian ex con working for the infamous Bombay Mafia in the 1980's. However I was still surprised and delighted to find on-course bookmakers. Even more surprising is that there are off-course betting outlets. Even more surprising is the number of outlets. For Mumbai, a city of approximately 20 million people, there are..... five. Pune has six.

The on-course bookmakers are set in a ring, each in their own white-painted mesh cage. The odds are chalked up by hand and the bets entered manually into massive bound ledgers so loved by anyone in India with anything that has to be recorded. Placing a bet (minimum Rs.100) with the on-course bookies is a rather thrilling experience similar to entering a bear pit or the original New York Stock Exchange. You, the punters, are all jammed into the centre of this ring scanning the boards for changing prices. When a particularly attractive price is chalked up the entire mass surges towards that bookmaker as you fight to thrust your rupee notes into a bookie's hands at the same time screaming your selection as you try to be heard above the deafening background din whilst simultaneously trying to stand your ground and not simply be pushed past the bookmaker by the crush of enthusiastic gamblers.

They say that gambling is serious karma, that it permanently devastates your mind. They say that it is one of the three things that cannot ordinarily be atoned for karmically in one lifetime. The other two are too awful to mention.

And now to the runners and riders. Of the horses, not one entry on that day looked to me to come from an Indian-bred sire and many of the dams also appeared to be imported. I picked a Brave Act gelding called Guns N Roses in the first as it was a mile race and it led from start to finish. I then told my companion to pick the horse with the leading trainer/jockey combination P. Scroff/Trevor Patel in the second and that came in too.

Be Safe, the hot favourite for the Grade 2 Ruia Gold Cup had won the 2,000 Guineas the previous December and had won 7 of his 8 races as a 2 and 3 year old. Horses contest the Indian Guineas in December as 3 year olds and then the Derby and Oaks as 4 year olds as the year has turned. The racing press considered he had been 'hooked' at worst or monumentally badly ridden at least in the only race he had lost.

He won as he liked by 5 1/2 lengths and set a new course record for the 2000m. For the record, four weeks later he beat the jinx and won India's richest race, the McDowell Signature Indian Derby, worth Rs.16,218,675 to the winner, by 4 ½ lengths, also in track record time.

When the day's racing was over I reached into my shoulder bag for the ticket to redeem the mobile phones. It was gone. It had obviously come out of my bag with the rupee notes; someone would have picked it up and claimed the phones! Mine didn't matter, but my companion was a sports film maker with the fanciest phone going, full of pictures and contacts and... and he'd only landed in India the night before. OMG. Unbelievably he remembered the number on the ticket. We went to the correct window for that ticket number. Some lovely and delightful person had picked up the ticket and handed it in without requesting the phones in return. The relief on my part was not shared by the authorities who regarded it as A Very Serious Matter. We were escorted to the Racecourse Police. An extremely stern moustachioed policeman in a braid-covered uniform interviewed us. To prove ownership, the policeman requested the number of my companion's device so that he could ring it. However, when he realised he would have to dial an English number he went off the idea and instead requested details of the photographs on the phone. He grudgingly decided we were bona fide and out came the massive ledger. We both had to write a signed and dated declaration that we had received the telephones and we were free to go.

In conclusion I would say that my afternoon at Mahalakshmi racecourse was among my most enjoyable day's racing ever. Mumbai can be a bewildering and rather intimidating place, not in a dangerous way, but just in the effort of moving in a hot climate amongst a vast mass of people who live their lives on the streets, getting by in imaginative and inventive ways. Dairy cows being milked on roundabouts, washing hanging in the street trees around the Taj Mahal Hotel, bullock carts on flyovers and the great mass of traffic, the marvellous scary intricate dance of all the traffic. The races, needless to say, were heaving with people, but because the layout is so spacious and well-designed and because, as a racegoer, you understand the rhythm and flow of the crowd as it moves from parade ring, to Tote or bookies, to big screens or grandstand and back again it was a haven of familiarity in the midst of the great overwhelming city outside.

Next issue: What became of Be Safe and his family

## JOHN PINFOLD'S NEW BOOK ON THE HISTORY OF HAYDOCK PARK

We are delighted to have John as a member of NRC. Many members will know John through his books about Aintree Racecourse, The Tophams and the Grand National.

John's latest challenge is to write another book covering the history of Haydock Park.

Although John will have access to many old records from the course, he would be interested in any old stories or photographs etc. These can be sent via e mail to [jb13@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:jb13@tiscali.co.uk)

In particular any interesting stories about Sydney Sandon, touts, bookies or criminal activities!

John's other books are still available at all good book shops and possibly even on Amazon!



# FOREWARNING AND THE STAYING RACING CLUB JANUARY UPDATE

Forewarning commenced his racing career in rather stunning fashion. On his first ever racecourse gallop back in October he was supposed to go 2 miles with the other unraced three year olds.

Finding them a bit slow he decided to motor home behind a smart bumper horse and her galloping companion who turned out to be Dubawi Fifty in his final prep before the Cesarewitch.

His first race was a 3yo bumper at Market Rasen on October 21<sup>st</sup>. He travelled down from Northumberland in most relaxed fashion and enjoyed every second of his day out. To everyone's astonishment he almost won at 50/1. Normal Norman had been laid out for the race and Forewarning nearly spoiled his party, only going down by a head and trying all the way to the line. We all nearly died of excitement. Even the Market Rasen management were hugging everybody.

Just under 4 weeks later he went to Ayr on desperate ground. The horsebox was badly held up on the way and he did not enjoy himself at all. He still managed to finish third but his head was up at the end. After that experience he had a short break, but unfortunately a minor back problem then put him on the easy list for a week and after that the ground froze, so that was that for 2017.



All dressed up and raring to go at Musselburgh

So now he is a very handsome 4 year old and has to run in the 4-6 y.o. bumpers with an 11lb weight allowance against monster six year olds. He had a go against them at Musselburgh on January 19<sup>th</sup> on soft ground. He was quivering with anticipation in the saddling box beforehand, he really does like going racing. However he is a galloper and the tight track and stop-start nature of the race did not play to his strengths. He tried hard to go with them and in the end was still galloping when others had had enough. He came back not even blowing.

As I write he is raring to go again. The plan is to run next in the all weather bumper at Newcastle on Eider Chase day unless ground conditions improve considerably. This will be his fourth and final bumper. He can jump so he will be out over hurdles before long, probably over 2 ½ miles on a stiffer galloping track. His hurdles schooling has had to go on hold due to the frozen ground. I would like to give him a sneaky try in the stayers' series at Pontefract over the summer as well.

There are still some subscriptions available, starting at £50 per month and going up in multiples of £50. We will try to send him to easily-accessible tracks, not in the far north of the British Isles.

If anyone would like to visit Girsonfield or would be interested in joining Staying Racing, please contact me by email at [wildandfruitful@gmail.com](mailto:wildandfruitful@gmail.com) or by phone on 016973 44304. Jane Maggs

## ALTERNATE CHELTENHAM PREVIEW NIGHTS

Although we wrote to a number of the racecourses who have supported NRC's winter tipping competition, to see if they would like details of their preview nights including in this month's issue of Racin', only Bangor on Dee (Chester) bothered to reply to us!

Ideally we would like all NRC members to attend our own version at Haydock Park, but due to work/travel issues we appreciate that not everyone can make it! So here are the details if you are available on 6<sup>th</sup> March.



### CHELTENHAM PREVIEW EVENING

at Chester Racecourse

Discounted tickets for 2018 Chester/Bangor-on-Dee Members

**Tuesday 6 March at 7.30pm**

In aid of North West Air Ambulance Charity

**Secure your place by calling the Chester  
Racecourse Box Office on 01244 304 600**

# NORTHERN RACING CLUB COMMITTEE/OFFICIALS 2018/19

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*Next copy deadline for Racin' will be Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> March*