

# Racin'



Issue 363

June/July 2020

## RACING SET TO RETURN ON MONDAY JUNE 1ST

As racing enthusiasts, it is great news that in most of the UK racing is scheduled to resume 'behind closed doors'. A week later racing in Ireland is also scheduled to re-start on a similar footing.

Unlike many other sports racing seems more adaptable to being run without spectators so hopefully this will fill the void seen for the last few months.

Assuming there are no last-minute problems with the resumption, the club will also be running its usual 'Heritage Handicaps' competition over the summer months as well as Round 2 of this year's 'Alex Bird' competition covering the Royal Ascot meeting. Fuller details on pages 2 & 3.

## CORONAVIRUS & NMRC

In the last two months the Covid19 crisis will have affected some members more than others and if you have been directly affected by the loss of a loved one our heartfelt sympathies are sent to you at this difficult time.

There are many other ways in which members may have been affected with employment uncertainties, reduced incomes, loss of holidays etc amongst them. For club members Ray & Kath Squire it was postponing their wedding from June until October!

In the overall scheme of things, following horse racing may seem to be an irrelevance at present. However, its limited return, scheduled for early June, is surely an indication that we are starting on the long path to recovery both as a sport and as a nation.

With mass gatherings unlikely to return until there is a vaccine available, actually visiting a racecourse as a spectator is still some way off.

Indeed, with member's safety our priority, the club has decided to cancel all remaining 'social gatherings' such as stable visits, club meetings etc for the rest of this year. Where possible, it is hoped that the cancelled events can be re-scheduled in 2021 if it is then safe to do so. It may well be possible to arrange some 'virtual' preview events in the autumn via zoom (or similar) if there is sufficient demand. If you think this is worth pursuing, please email the club at [info@northernracingclub.com](mailto:info@northernracingclub.com) to register an interest.

We shall however be able to run competitions during the rest of 2020 so please do join in these if you can. 'Alex Bird' round two will cover Royal Ascot this year and our 'Heritage Handicaps' challenge will start in mid-June, all being well.

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# COMPETITION NEWS & RESULTS

## 59's DRAW RESULTS UPDATE

The latest '59's' winners are as follows:

**April 4th - 25 – Martin Baggott (Marple, Stockport)**

**May 2<sup>nd</sup> – 47 – Maureen Dawson (Waterloo, Liverpool)**

Both win the usual £50pm prize. The winning number is determined by the 'bonus ball' drawn in the UK Lottery on the first Saturday of the month.

Thanks to all who continue to support the draw. All numbers are currently allocated.

## SATURDAY NAPS COMPETITION 2019/20

With the cancellation of racing in late March we never got to complete Round 4, with two weeks remaining. As such the decision has been taken to use the final scores at the end of week 18 to determine the prize winners. This means that **Brian James (Warrington) & Ian Hazel (Rugby)** will share the £100 'winners prize' with **Carol Evans (Sale)** taking the pair of badges prize.

Name & Entry No.	R4
Brian James 22	10
Ian Hazel 83	10
Carol Evans 107	8

In the seasonal challenge we have four prizes to award.

In first place was **Paul Middleton (Durham)** who wins a £150 cash prize plus £100 of 'Betfred' vouchers.

Our runner up this year was **Floss Howes (Chester)** who wins £70 and a pair of badges.

In third place was **Martin Withinshaw (Chepstow)** who receives a £30 prize and a pair of badges.

**Ted Halewood (Waterloo)** was our last 'placed' entrant in fourth spot and receives a pair of badges.

Tot	Name & Entry No.
23	Paul Middleton 101
19.4	Floss Howes 36
14.16	Martin Withinshaw 09
13.37	Ted Halewood 02

All winners will be contacted regarding their prizes in the near future. Thanks again to all who entered last winter and our sponsors!

## ALEX BIRD CHALLENGE 2020

It is now hoped that Royal Ascot will be run in June and whilst the race structures may change, and field sizes will be reduced, this should still be a welcome summer racing festival to enjoy, even without spectators and reduced prize money.

Once the meeting gets the final 'green light' Michael Wheeler will contact all entrants directly regarding making their entries.

It is hoped that York in August will still be run as the third round this year and a NH replacement for Aintree (possibly Cheltenham in November) will make up the final round this year.

## HERITAGE HANDICAPS CHALLENGE 2020

As usual it is being run by Helen Goodwill and you can find the full entry details on page 3 of this edition of Racin' magazine.

# HERITAGE HANDICAPS CHALLENGE 2020

The Heritage Handicap Competition is back for another season, a challenge for all flat racing fans. It will run throughout the main flat season starting on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> June and hopefully ending at Ascot in October on Champions Day. This will be for a maximum of 20 Saturdays.

This year, due to the Covid19 issues, we shall need to be more flexible regarding the races chosen each Saturday given the expected changes to the racing calendar. However, the organiser will try to select the highest profile handicap race in UK/Eire each Saturday and will e mail/text details to the entrants in good time each week.

Entrants can select three horses which they think will win or be placed. Points will be awarded as per the Tote dividend (win and place). The number of places to be determined by the Tote pool place dividends for each of the selected races. If you select more than one placed horse, you will score the points gained from all placed horses. A league table will be compiled with the total points scored.

To add a bit of extra skill, those who successfully pick the exacta and trifecta of any particular race will go into another league. This will be run separately to the main league.

The prize money will be divided as follows: 80% of the entry fees will go into the main competition with 20% being given to the winner of the exacta/trifecta league. If nobody selects an exacta/trifecta throughout the whole season, the prize money for that league will be given to the Injured Jockeys Fund.

It costs just £10 to enter with all entry fees added to the prize fund. If you wish to send entry fee electronically please e mail [info@northernracingclub.com](mailto:info@northernracingclub.com) for details. To enter by post please complete the slip below and return to Helen Goodwill, North & Midlands Racing Club, 124 Lindsell Rd, Altrincham, Cheshire. WA14 5NZ.

Selections are accepted via text, email or answer phone. Each initial entry will be acknowledged and an entry number allocated. If entrants also require a paper copy of the rules please send a SAE with the entry form - internet entrants will receive confirmation via e mail of course.

In the event that racing is again suspended in 2020 the competition may be extended until the end of the flat 'turf' season. Should it be impossible to complete at least 5 weeks of the competition, then the competition will be voided and entry fees rolled forwards to 2021.

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## HERITAGE HANDICAPS ENTRY FORM 2020

Please accept this entry for the 2020 Competition. I am also enclosing entry fee of £10 per person (payable to North & Midlands Racing Club). Please enclose SAE for paper copy of the rules.

Name(s).....

Address.....

.....

.....

Phone/Mobile.....

Email.....

# ‘Round Ireland with (and without) a horse’ By Steve Cawley

Below is extract from chapter 9 from Steve’s book ; ‘Round Ireland with (and without) a horse’. This is the third in a trilogy of books written by Steve. In his books Steve examined whether it was possible to ‘own’ a racehorse, when you in relative terms had no money (i.e. ownership on a shoestring). It followed on from an initial study of all the clubs out there that allowed a form of ownership, and a second book on joining a syndicate. This one was to see if he could get to Ireland to see ‘his’ horses run as the ‘owner’. The main vehicle for this was the Gordon Elliott racing club, which at various times had about 7 horses on the go and cost £600 annual membership from summer 17-18. The extra occasion was when he was at the Curragh as an ‘owner’ of Marsha (Elite racing) hence the 6 million guinea horse.

Steve also says ‘There was a nominal return and they had a manager who would field all your enquiries, including the all declarations (which was the important bit for me) & their communications were good. .My recollection was they paid a nominal dividend in January, but I left after 1 year and never bothered to claim any dividend. It wouldn’t have been very much in the year I was with the ‘string’, but it worked out very well for me in terms of getting to the races, so I saw that as the dividend with great days at Perth (I know that’s Scotland but Gordon liked going there), Navan, ,Fairyhouse, Downpatrick, Roscommon, Ballinrobe and obviously to his stables at Cullentry.

## ROSCOMMON

I moved onto Roscommon hoping it would be second time lucky in my quest to have a runner in the west. Two consecutive entry and non-declarations at Down Patrick and Galway had emphasised what a difficult task it was to get ‘your’ horse to the races. Non-the less I remained bullish about my chances as there had been a raft of entries for early August and amongst them were two live chances for a meeting at Roscommon. As a further bonus this meeting was my favoured National Hunt code, so I took this as a good omen.

Smiling Eliza was one of the two horses entered at Roscommon. She of course was one of ‘our’ string’s winners and I had seen her run a good race at Fairyhouse. She had followed this race up with a great effort at the Curragh on the Irish Derby weekend, coming in third and confirming that she was the best horse in ‘our’ string. The really exciting news, from my perspective, was that Gordon had decided to see what she was like over hurdles. She had been schooled over the previous couple of weeks and had apparently made a good impression. As usual though there were doubts over her participation as I noted that she had also been entered at other racecourses in the same week.

Crack of Thunder was the other horse with an entry at Roscommon. He was another new horse to ‘our’ string and he was an imposing looking steeplechaser. This was all very exciting, as there is little to compare with a steeplechaser taking on those bigger fences and hopefully galloping away to victory over a three-mile track. He had come from England where he would appear to have done very little for trainer Charlie Longsdon. However, he did have some point-to-point form, having won a couple of contests. At the end of July, Gordon had sent him off for a debut run at Perth, where the champion jockey Richard Johnson did the steering. I watched the race on my computer and a very strange story unfolded. Because Gordon has such a good record at Perth virtually every horse he saddles vies for favouritism. This is particularly the case when the champion jockey is on board and this occasion was no different as ‘our’ horse was evens favourite. However, I found this state of affairs hard to fathom, the horse hadn’t run for fourteen months and although Gordon is a top trainer, he had only had the horse for a short time. I put my money down with little conviction and the horse duly ran a most underwhelming race, finishing fifth of nine. Clearly ‘in need of the race’, word filtered through that the horse finished strongly and Gordon was firmly of the opinion that he would do better over a longer distance.

This news worked very much in my favour, as there were not too many three-mile chases on the calendar at that time, and the Roscommon race became a serious possibility. I checked out the entries and was further encouraged by the fact that only twenty-two horses had entered the race and a maximum of sixteen were permitted to compete. I was now seriously optimistic and waited for the email that might confirm my expectations. Early on Monday August sixth the news came through: not only was Crack of Thunder declared for the three-mile chase but Smiling Eliza was going to make her hurdles debut. After all the recent frustrations, this was brilliant news. Smiling Eliza’s schooling had gone well and Denis O’Regan would ride and I was made up when I heard that my favourite Irish jockey Davy Russell would partner Crack of Thunder. It would seem that whenever I was destined to see ‘my’ horses run, they would come two by two!

## RACE DAY – CRACK OF THUNDER and SMILING ELIZA AT ROSCOMMON TUESDAY, AUGUST 7, 2018

Roscommon is a typical Country course, located eighty miles west of Dublin. Some one of a pernicky persuasion might even question whether it was in the ‘west’, but Roscommon is one of the five Counties in Ireland’s most westerly province,

Connacht. I was back in the owner's facility today and if truth be told they were a little rudimentary in comparison with the Curragh, but non the less a welcome start to the evening's racing. The owners and trainer's facility was located in a portacabin, close to the casualty unit, which unfortunately was to come into play later in the evening. The tea and coffee was in abundant supply, but you had to pay for your biscuits!

There appeared to be one main grandstand, laid out in traditional terrace fashion. It had an owner's section adjacent to the winning post, but I eschewed that for a central location that offered fine views of the course and the large television screen. If you want a drink, a snack or the tote they are readily available on a large concourse under the stand or in a cosier lounge on the top of the stand.

Racing here goes back to the 1830s, when it was organised by the British who had a garrison based here. This is one of Ireland's summer racecourses, with nine meetings planned between May and September. There are a couple of tight bends on the course but they have a long galloping stretch in between. With this being the first jumps meeting that one of 'my' horses had raced in, I went to have a closer look at the obstacles. While they were not Aintree, they might be a test for a young horse making her hurdling debut or for a steeplechaser who hadn't seen many of the larger obstacles over the last twelve months.

### **PRE-RACE**

Pre-race activity in the parade ring can be a surreal experience. Roscommon parade ring on the evening of Tuesday the seventh of August was a perfect example of this. As usual the relaxed ring procedure meant that nobody seemed particularly bothered about checking my badge as I entered the quirky sloping parade ring.

On this occasion, even though Crack of Thunder was out already and strutting his stuff it was hard to identify my fellow 'owners' in the ring. Usually wherever the crowd is congregated would be a safe bet to be the Elliott 'owners', but it would seem not so many of them had ventured west. Things were not made any clearer by the fact that Gordon had still not arrived as Davy Russell appeared from the weighing room. Davy seemed equally lost as he attempted to locate the 'owners' and we all literally bumped into each other in the centre of the ring. There were about six of us that crowded around the champion jockey. It is of course a somewhat superficial experience, as we are all strangers to one another and only have the horse in common. Initially it would appear that we were in awe of the great man as very little was said as we stood staring at each other. Davy finally broke the impasse by murmuring something about the weather and questioning whether the rain would keep away.

Usually in this situation there are questions about tactics or how the course is riding, but somehow all this seemed superfluous. Davy was in the zone, concentrating no doubt about the dubious privilege of steering Crack of Thunder over the larger obstacles. Jump jockeys have a tough job, attempting to keep horse and body intact whilst tackling the larger obstacles; it is not a walk in the park. Davy was clearly concentrating on the job in hand and I for one was not going to ask some damn fool questions about the going!

At this point Gordon appeared, cheery and outgoing, he shook hands and quickly gave his assessment of 'our' horse. This was a big horse that would go better in a winter slog and tonight's run was over a longer distance, which Gordon thought might suit. The general drift appeared to be that a place might be a good result and that the race was a learning experience, for all concerned. This was an interesting exchange, as it hadn't escaped my attention that our horse was the short price favourite and he was certainly not drifting in the market (losing favouritism). Still I suppose Gordon doesn't set the odds, but I decided to reduce my betting stake somewhat and like all the others, see what happened.

### **THE RACE - Handicap Steeplechase, 3 MILES 124 Yards**

With three circuits of the racecourse to run, over three miles and taking on fifteen fences this was going to be a test of stamina. Nobody told the veteran horse Old Supporter, who bolted away at the start and had soon built up a significant lead. Crack of Thunder's jumping appeared clean if somewhat deliberate, and he seemed to be moving freely enough as he settled in with the chasing pack in fifth position.

After one circuit he maintained his position and although he was jumping the fences slightly to his left, he appeared to be going well enough. As he reached the half way stage, he seemed to be in a steady rhythm and I wondered if Davy might be biding his time, before making his move in the latter part of the race. However, by the end of the second circuit, his progress did not seem so smooth, as he was passed by horses and drifted back to tenth place. As the third circuit unfolded, Davy appeared to be steadying his mount; the horse maintained his midfield position and all the horses approached the back straight fences. Coming to the last fence in the back straight they were bunched together and I could only just make out Davy's black hat, as the horses took the obstacle together. I didn't see the hat again, because as the

horses came down on the other side and moved away from the fence, I could make out the figures of horse and jockey splayed out on the turf. The tannoy, relayed the news instantly, Crack of Thunder had fallen! I kept the binoculars trained on the area, where thankfully Crack of Thunder got up from the ground and chased after the other horses, but Davy remained grounded. Initially on his haunches, he attempted to get up, but soon subsided to the ground in obvious pain. Ringstone Castle eventually caught Old Supporter, to win the race at 16/1.

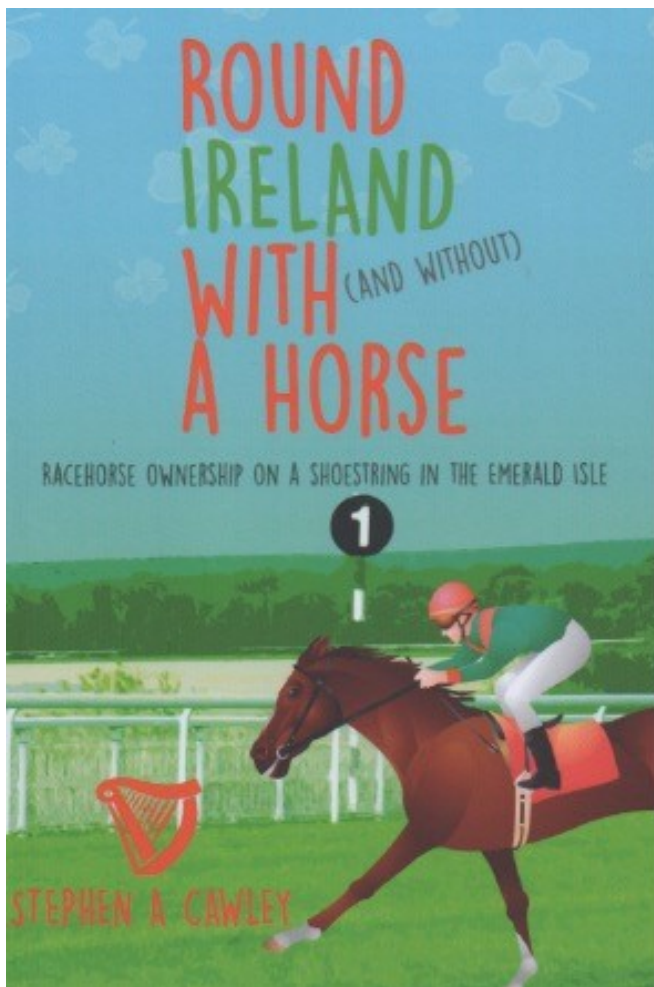
### POST RACE

Gordon had waited patiently on the edge of the course, clearly hoping that his injured jockey would recover. However, the last sight we had was of ambulances and stretchers being employed as Davy was transported away from the fence and was in fact on his way to hospital. A couple of the 'owners' came together, one commenting that it was never a good sight to see stretchers, another retorting that these days it was mandatory. However, before the start of the next race it was announced that Davy Russell had been stood down for the rest of the night, so clearly his injuries had necessitated the hospital visit. No specific news was forthcoming on the course that night, but later in the evening the Racing Post reported: 'Champion jockey in leg injury following fall'. At the bottom of the piece the report quoted the Tullamore hospital as saying he had sustained a tibia fracture. This was indeed a dramatic dénouement to 'my' first jumper on the Irish journey, although the news was better the next day, when Russell reported the injury to be mere bruising. Tough men, these jockeys.

Within the hour we were preparing for 'our' second runner and hoping for better luck.

- Editor's note – If the coronavirus epidemic continues longer term (hopefully not) then we be able to ask Steve to continue the story in Racin'. Alternatively, why not order your own copy of the book at just £3.70 from Amazon!

Photos below show the book cover (left) and a post-race discussion at Roscommon (Steve's second 'owner' race of the day) where he is standing to the right of Gordon Elliott.



# RACING SPOTLIGHT – WITH DAVID DICKINSON

COMPILED BY BRIAN GOODWILL

## **WHAT FIRST GOT YOU HOOKED ON HORSE RACING?**

I was a lad from a Lincolnshire Council Estate and it was my father who was into racing. He wanted me to back a horse in the Grand National, I wanted to back a grey one. It was Nicolaus Silver's year, so I was hooked on the betting side of things from a very early age. My reward for passing the eleven plus was to be taken racing for the first time. We went to the York Ebor meeting in 1967, the day Petingo won the Gimcrack. My parents went to bet, I fell hopelessly in love with the horses.

## **WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE DAY IN THE RACING CALENDAR?**

Probably an unusual answer but now it is probably the first meeting of the season at Fakenham. Reason number one is that many years back (early 1980's I think) it was the first time I won more money than I could carry there one day. Reason number two is that to me it signals that jumping is well and truly back. I did a lot of travelling around the world when I was younger but Kathryn and I spend our breaks in East Anglia so I reckon I shall be going back before too long. Previously my favourite was the first meeting of the season at Towcester, a course I always loved and tended to thrive at in my punting days.

## **WHICH RACE HAS GIVEN YOU MOST JOB SATISFACTION IN ANY OF YOUR ROLES?**

As a private handicapper, any big race winner meant something but in my current role one race stands out. My life seemed at a low point, personally and professionally in early 2007 but then the County Hurdle came along, won by Pedrobob. There were ten in the air together at the last, including a couple of Northern runners, Arcalis and Premier Dane. I have a photo of the last flight on my office wall. That was the last year the County Hurdle finished a three-day Cheltenham and wasn't on terrestrial TV. The next year it was and American Trilogy gave my backside a monumental kicking in front of a much bigger audience.

## **HOW TO COMPILE YOUR OWN HANDICAP IS STILL AVAILABLE ON AMAZON. DID YOU ENJOY WRITING IT?**

The honest truth is that I find the fact that I did achieve its publication a much greater joy than I actually found the process of writing it. To say I wasn't a natural is something of an understatement. I have been thinking about retiring for quite a while but any thoughts of writing a second one seem very much on the back burner. Did feel we should have printed more and that the NHS has missed a trick. Just think of all the money that could have been saved on insomnia medication!

## **WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST JOB IN RACING?**

I left the British Steel Corporation and joined Weatherbys in Wellingborough as a Computer Programmer in March 1979, and staying for around five and a half years before changing careers and joining Raceform full time as a journalist. I had been freelancing for them for a while before that.

## **HOW DO YOU RELAX AWAY FROM THE SPORT?**

Being a BHA Handicapper comes with a fair bit of stress and Music is my release valve, both live and recorded. I try to spot acts before they get too famous. Current recommendations would be Maisie Peters, Sea Girls, Rhys Lewis and The Big Moon. Kathryn and I have a couple of dogs, so they help too.

## **YOU RETIRE IN THE SUMMER. WHAT WILL YOU MISS?**

I missed the Press Room badly at first when I left it in 2000, so I am guessing my colleagues in the Weighing Room will be a considerably miss. It is obviously a privilege to have the best seat in the house on the big days and I shall obviously miss that as well. Most days I am in my office at home, so the job itself is a rather solitary existence, so spending more time with my wife and our dogs should amply compensate me.

## **CAN YOU RELATE A HUMOROUS STORY FROM YOUR RACING LIFE?**

My late Press Room colleague Steve Delve (gone all too soon, sadly) was an SP returner by trade but did "Man On The Spot" for the Sporting Life at many minor jump meetings. When Malcolm Bastard used to ride for Pam Sly, he was always trying (and failing) to get "the Sly/Bastard combination" past the sub editors!! Funnily

enough my own personal one involves the same two people. Pam had a runner at Market Rasen that was getting a bit worked up. She legged Malcolm up onto the horse but somehow his left foot ended up in the iron with her handbag dangling from it!

### **WILL YOU RECOMMENCE BETTING ON HORSE RACING WHEN YOU RETIRE?**

Yes, I think you can argue that when it comes to betting, history will say that my timing stinks! I made a small profit in the early 90's but by the end of the decade any angle I played to my advantage had been sorted. So, when the opportunity to join Officialdom came along, I took it. Unfortunately for me, it wasn't long before Betfair came into being. So, I'm sure I will quickly get some sort of Betfair account if nothing else. That said, the days when I would bet every day are permanently behind me.

### **HAS HANDICAPPING CHANGED IN RECENT TIMES?**

Certainly, at the BHA it has evolved in my time. There is more use of Race Standards and Statistics generally than there ever was. I have embraced it gladly but it is important to be aware of the fact that such things simply point you at what has happened in the past, not necessarily what will happen going forward. One of Racing's great beauties is that it is always changing.



## **When The Big Freeze Stopped Racing**

**By HAROLD HEYS**

IT'S been a long time since we last had any "proper" racing in the UK. Wetherby and Taunton managed to do the honours on ... now, can anyone remember? It was Tuesday, March 17.

We've had interruptions over the years but nothing has come close to the dismal nothingness of the past ten weeks or so. Foot and Mouth disease has raised its ugly head a few times and equine flu has interrupted proceedings. We all remember piles of burning cattle some 25 years ago in the wake of Mad Cow disease, but the last time racing was badly hit for a lengthy period was nearly 60 years ago.

I remember it well as, I'm sure, do many Racing Club members. No, the wipeout wasn't caused by some awful disease or epidemic, but by the weather.

The winter of 1962-63 was the time of the Big Freeze. Racing, and most everything else, ground to a halt. It was so bad, I remember, that in our local on a Saturday afternoon, we resorted to guessing the number of matches in the boxes on sale on the bar. Five bob a go; nearest picks up.

"Average contents 50," it said on the box. Nobody believed it. Guesses ranged through the 40s; nobody thought there might be 50 or more. Which there mostly were.

I've been trawling through my annual form books and, from before Christmas 1962, I found just one meeting in the UK till the weekend before the Cheltenham Festival which kicked off on Tuesday, March 12. The Festival was, as the Duke of Wellington said after Waterloo "a damned close-run thing."

England, Scotland and Wales formed a vast sheet of ice and snow from late December till Friday, March 8, when Newbury, thanks to a sudden thaw and gallant efforts from ground staff and volunteers, got horse racing under way again.

The Burford Novices' Chase (Div. 1), worth £344, and run over 2 miles and 100 yards, did the honours with Josh Gifford getting the eight-year-old Hamanet home by a head at 8-1 from second favourite Rise & Shine ridden by Stan Mellor.

Between that Friday and Christmas, the previous year, racing in the UK lost 96 cards. Somehow, probably thanks to an unseasonal warm blast from over the Isle of Arran and across the Firth of Clyde, Ayr managed to stage their Saturday meeting on January 5. Perhaps the lingering, post-New Year whisky fumes helped?

Apart from that one day, there was no racing for over 10 weeks.

Cheltenham looked to have had its chips but suddenly the spell was broken – with just four days to spare.

Newbury followed up the Friday ice-breaker with a good card on the Saturday and there was racing at Stratford. However, Newcastle succumbed, while Haydock's two-day meeting never stood a chance.

There were a few rusty nags in action that Cheltenham, but the meeting was memorable for the Gold Cup win of Mill House which set up the unforgettable clash 12 months later with the mighty Arkle who beat the Big Horse to win the Cup in magnificent style. Two more wins in the race followed.

Last year's Cheltenham Festival was threatened by equine flu. In February three vaccinated horses tested positive and several meetings were called off while it was brought under control. The situation echoed the Foot and Mouth crisis of 18 years earlier which eventually led to the whole meeting being called off.

At least we managed to get this year's Cheltenham festivities done and dusted before the balloon went up. Just.

First time any of us saw any decent racing was on May 11 when Sky gave us the opening day of the French return to action from Longchamp. It was very strange and not because a few hot-pots got turned over. Jockeys wearing surgical masks, even during the racing; no racegoers, no owners, restricted fields, very few staff.

But, unlike boring racing from the US, at least we recognised quite a few of the horses. I was going to say "and most of the jocks" but we had to take the commentator's word for who was on board because of all the masks, white and black, and the usual goggles.

I was fascinated by the lads aboard the Godolphin runners, neatly turned out in royal blue and wearing white face masks, gloves and bins. It could easily have been protective surgical gear and they could have come straight from the virus emergency wards.

Ah well, at least it was a start. Look after yourselves and don't take any risks.



French racing made a welcome return to our TV screens on Monday, May 11 with behind-closed-doors racing from Longchamp (since closed again!). Shaman won the Group 2 Prix d'Harcourt ridden by Maxime Guyon, sporting a very natty white surgical mask and colours resembling NHS scrubs. Black masks was the *couleur de choix* but Michael Barzalona on the unplaced Godolphin outsider Syrtis also sported the rather natty white and blue. Arc third and 5-2-on fav Scottsass (green) struggled into fourth.



# CARTMEL MEMORIES

by Luke Parkinson

For over 15 years, the trip to Cartmel Racecourse has become an annual pilgrimage. Originally starting off as the main event of a family camping trip to the Lakes for August Bank Holiday, it soon grew to a group of over 50 of us from Bolton packing our tents and heading for some winners in the fells.

I must add, I wasn't even in high school when all of this started, so Cartmel has played a huge part in my love of National Hunt racing – it's the ultimate dream to own a winner there one day.

The summer jumps might not be everybody's cup of tea, but for me, there is nothing better than taking your deckchairs, gazebos and BBQ's, and pitching up at the side of the racecourse (always the woodside) and having a good laugh with family and friends.

We love it so much that even since my Dad suffered a brain stem stroke in 2010 and now suffers from locked-in syndrome, which is a condition of almost paralysis apart from eye movements, we still go there every year without fail and even went in the 'posh bit' a couple of years back. Hiring one of the party tents to celebrate my Mum and Dad's 50<sup>th</sup> birthdays – it was a day that no of us will ever forget .

The coronavirus pandemic means that Cartmel will be without a few fixtures this summer, so I thought I'd jot down a few memories that stick in my mind from visits to the Lake District track to hopefully put a smile on your face.

## **College City - 25 August 2007**

A horse called College City is one of my first real memories of Cartmel, at least in terms of the action on the track. It was way back in 2007, but for some reason this memory stick with me as clear as day.

I wasn't old enough to have a bet back then, but like many of us, we'd nag our Dads to stick a couple of quid on for us. For those of you that have been in the course enclosure at Cartmel, you'll know the betting boards are just off the running rail for the home straight, and there's all sorts of people mixing in there from babies to grannies. Some even pitching up with their windbreakers at the side of the bookie's boards.

It was on the walk to there from the top of the woodside that I was mithering my Dad to put me a bet on College City. "No chance he said, it's a donkey" before adding what turned out to be famous last words of, "If that wins, I'll pay you out myself."

To this day, I've no idea why I wanted College City. A 10/1 shot in a seller's race, coming off a 87-day break with previous form of 10<sup>th</sup>, Unseated, 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>. I'd have been 14 at the time, and not exactly following the sport enough to know much about things, and usually went for the McManus colours, or McCoy.

On looking back in the Racing Post, it was College City's first run for Joss Saville, and that clearly did the trick, winning by four lengths. I remember shouting to my Dad as the commentator called the race home. Safe to say, my Dad knew what was coming.

He hadn't placed the bet, by duly paid out on my "£1 bet at 10/1". Enough for a Sticky Toffee Pudding!

## **Wash Out - 27 May 2017**

Cartmel has often been more than a yearly trip for us, and back in 2017 we headed up there to celebrate my 24<sup>th</sup> birthday with some friends and family.

When we got up there mid-morning, it was cracking the flags in true Lake District style and a few of us even had to take our shirts off after having a kick about on the course before racing.

As we tend to do when we go in a group, we all throw £5 in a race, back the same horse and then split whatever ends up being in the pot at the end. On this particular day we'd got off to a flying start by backing the McManus-owned Minotaur who won by 20 lengths – the perfect start.

In the next race, we were second with Restraint of Trade. All was still going well and even when the heavens opened during the third race, we still managed to get Munsaab home at 11/2 despite barely being able to hear the commentary because the rain was hitting our gazebo so hard. So much so, that we were now holding the roof up to save it from collapsing in.

There was momentary respite from the rain with the sun returning ahead of the fourth race where we had another winner in Wisty – the pot was certainly starting to fill up now.

But then came the rain again, flooding the course in a matter of minutes and drenching all but my Dad, who was sitting pretty in his wheelchair in the middle of the gazebo while the rest of us were bucketing rainwater off the roof.

There was then a track walk by senior officials, trainers and jockeys, but Donald McCain gave us the thumbs down as he walked back past us. Safe to say, that was it, the meeting abandoned with the Racing Post describing it as “the worst downpours seen at Cartmel since 1991. So much for being Lucky Luke.

### **Justatenner - 27 Aug 2018**

Of all the runners that I've likely seen over the years at Cartmel, the Tristan Davidson-trained Justatenner is the one that really sticks in the memory for me.

He'd had a few good days at the track prior to his run in the Swan Hotel & Spa Handicap Hurdle over 2m6f on this particular Bank Holiday weekend, and my Dad had flagged him up as his tip of the meeting.

Sent off at 7/2 there was clearly more than my Dad who fancied him, but the soft ground was far from ideal and certainly posed a few question marks.

As usual, the hold-up tactics were applied and he travelled as the back marker for quite a long way, up until the woodside for the third time, when Harry Reed began to make his move.

As I mentioned before, we always pitch up on the woodside and still to this day I have never seen a horse come cruising through that point as stylishly as Justatenner. He was the winner in waiting, even with a few furlongs left to run.

Just as the turn of the woodside he was hampered by a horse that slipped, otherwise I'm convinced he would have won by a lot further. He was never going to get beat once he got in front up the home straight, but he was much better than the winning distance of 2.5 lengths suggests.

That isn't where the story with Justatenner ends for me either. Me and my uncle have now started a yearly racing weekend trip to different courses in the UK, and last year we had a road trip to Ayr and Carlisle in early November. Luckily for me, Justatenner was a runner in the fourth race at Ayr, and given the story of him from Cartmel, I had to follow him again.

He was backed into 5/2 favourite this time with Harry Reed taking the ride once again and implying almost identical tactics. Sat out the back, he made his way through the field in the closing stages to win by two lengths. Get in there!

Fingers crossed we get to add to these brilliant experiences in the very near future, but in the meantime may I send my best wishes to you all and look forward to seeing you back on the racecourse very soon. Cheers, Luke Parkinson (@lukeparksy2)

- **Editors note** - Although he is no longer with us, one of my Cartmel memories will always be seeing (Barrovian) Emlyn Hughes (ex Liverpool & England) and family in the members bar each meeting - even there after his op for his brain tumour with bandaged head! Sadly, he died in November 2004. The first meeting after his death was on Wednesday 25th May 2005. That was also the date of the Champions League Final when Liverpool came back from 0-3 to finish 3-3 and win on penalties against Milan. Although I don't support Liverpool, I had backed them to win at 9/1 at the quarter finals stage as that year there was an e mail doing the rounds at work saying (as I recall) that Liverpool always won the European Cup in years when Wales won the Grand Slam, Ken Barlow got married and a new Pope was announced. Enough substance there for me to risk a tenner! The following day at Huntingdon, Mantles Prince (owned by an Emlyn Hughes named syndicate still) won as well. It was the horses' first win in five years yet went off as a well backed 11/4 shot. No doubt it was all a coincidence, but Cartmel folklore has it that this was Emlyn's 'farewell double' placed at Cartmel before bidding his final farewell to the course

## 60 Racecourses in 60 years by Frank Donohoe

It was a wet summer day on Tuesday 20 July 2010. I took the 7.04 am train out of Lime Street Station heading for Ffos Las, I had 2 more racecourses to visit and Perth, at the end of the month would be my last.

I had planned ahead and decided that Kidwelly Station, one mile from the racecourse (Racing Post and Racing Post Diary) would be my chosen destination. We passed the delights of Ludlow and Hereford and ambled through Newport and Cardiff changing at Swansea to a local Pembroke Dock service that would take me the rest of the journey. I arrived Kidwelly Station on time at 12.38pm. I say station but it was only a platform, to save me from falling on to the track and a brick shelter the size of a bus shelter to hide from the wind and rain. The train driver got out of his cab and pointed me down the line to a crossing where I would find a road to the village. It was Welsh rain that greeted me as I raised my telescopic umbrella and trudged along the path. I crossed the track, I saw a pub, then read the notice 'Open at 5.00pm.' The plan had been to walk the mile to the course on a balmy summer day!! I had a number for a taxi as a precaution, but noticed a local number pinned to a telegraph pole. A couple who had been on the train and had followed me down the path came out from under their hoods and waterproofs and I asked if they were going to the races, they said "we are going to a local museum". They tried their taxi number; he would be there in 20 minutes but could not accommodate me. I rang the number on the telegraph pole and was told the driver was on another job and would not be available for an hour. I rang my number and got no reply and waved goodbye to the museum people. The thought of walking and hanging around a racecourse soaking wet for a few hours crossed my mind but soon vanished. I tried the number again and was answered by an angel who said she would "contact our driver" and ring me back. I waited; she rang back to say "the taxi will be with you in 15 minutes". Thank you, God, The taxi driver was very friendly and as we chatted away, I thought this is a long mile, he said "no boyo, it is 5 miles to the racecourse from the station". I asked if I could book him to return after the last race, but he said he was fully committed in the town at that time.

Ffos Las looked like a brand-new racecourse with shiny new buildings, which it is. It will look better when the trees and shrubs all grow and give it a bit of character. I paid my £17 entrance money plus £3 for a race card and headed for the Secretary's office. I politely challenged the 1 mile from Kidwelly and showed her the Racing Post entry. I told her the Taxi had cost me £11.80 or in Liverpool language £14 with a tip! and presumably I would be paying the same on return. She listened sympathetically and offered a complimentary ticket for the next race meeting. I politely explained that I don't often pass this way, whereupon she agreed to provide a full refund of my entrance fee and keep her customer happy.

The rain continued to bucket down, the rain level had reached 8cms up my trouser leg, my shoulders and arms were very wet as I decided which building to run to and limit further soaking. I chose the main stand, found a seat and set about finding a winner. Richard Hughes was at the meeting and I knew if I only backed him, I could make it a winning day, but we do try to make things difficult, don't we? Twenty minutes before the first, I headed for the betting ring, I looked out and with neither sou'wester or canoe, decided it would not be possible to get there. I was reminded of the Irishman who, when asked by an American tourist 'why do scuba divers always fall into the sea backwards, scratched his head and said well if they fell forwards they would fall into the boat' I digress, I watched the first race indoors with 99% of the other racegoers.

It was now 2.45pm and I had planned to have a meal about this time and then have a snack from the trolley service on the train home. "Due to the bad weather the restaurant is booked throughout the afternoon" said the very nice man at the bottom of the stairs. "Pies of every description are available here in the bar" I do not do pies of any description!! I asked if the Marquee restaurant some 20 yards away was open to the public, he said it was. I revved up, umbrella at the ready and ran.

"I will ask if there is any buffet left" said the waitress, but as I turned to look at the table it was obvious that the girls from St Trinian's had already been there, I could not decide what kind of food had been on offer from the crumbs that were left!

I returned to the main stand, hungry, cold and wet. Through the side entrance I saw a mirage 'McCoy Bar and Grill' I ran, it was closed! I ran back. The rain level on my trousers was now approximately 12 cms. At this point I remembered seeing an upmarket 'hot dog van', I ran and bought a Big Bacon Bap. With umbrella in one hand and bacon bap in t'other I ran for cover. With grease and water running up my arm I ate, oh I did enjoy it! I scrubbed up, had a cup of tea and felt almost normal.

I backed Hughes on Mirza in the 3.00pm (the tote paid £5.90 the book paid 5/1 but I didn't have a canoe, did I?) God is Good!

The time was approaching 3.45pm and a form of panic set in, how was I going to get to the 'Platform' for the 5.19pm train. Should I start to ring for a taxi? I had 3 taxi numbers; all rang out. I remembered the taxi driver had given me his mobile number in an effort to help, I rang it, he picked up, "I can come in 5 minutes"

he said, "but not later". At 4.00pm I left the course and arrived on the 'Platform' a good hour before my train was due. The taxi driver told me that as I had paid £11.80 coming, he would charge the same on return and wouldn't need to put the meter on, why didn't I think of that! The water level on my trousers was just below my knees and it was still raining!

We had quite a chat the local passengers and me huddled in our 'train shelter,' conversation went from "sometimes the 5.19pm train stops and sometimes it does not" The couple who I had met earlier in the day said their visit to the open museum would have been better on a sunny day, as they could have opened the guide they had bought and read about what they were looking at. They had enjoyed a nice cup of tea though!!

I had a reserved seat on the train, but it was not facing the engine (I don't like travelling backwards on a long journey) so I moved seats as the train approached Swansea and people got off. I made myself comfortable only to find the train pulling away in the direction it had come, I was still facing the wrong way! I moved to a lovely spot at the next station, a table for four and spread myself out, that was a mistake, as three rather large teenage girls crammed next to me together with their dog who was now sitting on the table, looking for a tasty morsel. I don't do dogs sitting next to me on trains! I made my final move after Cardiff to a two-seater, no table, facing the front, bliss!

"When will the trolley service be coming?" I asked the attendant as we approached Newport, "Not normal to have a service on these late trains" (5.19pm) he said "If one does not get on at Newport there won't be any trolley service Sir" There was no trolley service. I was cold, wet and very hungry, would I survive the expedition? If I had known that the advertised trolley service, printed on my ticket, was only a maybe, then I could have asked my taxi driver to stop on the way to pick up supplies.

The train meandered through the beautiful English countryside and I thought of the oasis at Crewe and the goodies that awaited as I changed trains for Liverpool. We got to Crewe at 9.26pm, I saw the lights of the Café only to find it open but closed if you know what I mean! "Five minutes earlier and you would have been ok" said the waitress.

I was thinking about the hour long wait for my connection when I noticed on the board that a Liverpool train was due in 3 minutes, I ran to the coffee machine, fumbled for money and pressed the first button, at the same time I pressed the button for cheese and biscuits on the second machine, "come on coffee", I shouted as I heard the train, would I have time to get a Twix as well? I could see the train and pressed the button anyway, YES, YES, YES. I ran, sat on the train and opened my haul, black coffee, no milk, no sugar, but who cares.

It was 11.23pm on the big clock at Lime Street Station and I was home.

## EPILOGUE

It was 1950 when my father first took me to the Grand National. There were 49 runners and the favourite Freebooter won at 10-1. We both went home very happy and I thought to myself this game is easy and I have been going racing ever since. Following Ffos Las I had one course to visit, I went to Perth on 29 July 2010 and had a wonderful uneventful time. Well that's not quite true, on the way, there was a fatality on the line between Wigan and Leyland and the line was closed, a bus took us from Wigan to Preston. I was travelling via Edinburgh, but because all the services were disrupted, I was advised to take the Glasgow train and sort it out from there. The attendant kept us informed as we passed through Penrith and Carlisle. He later suggested that those passengers going north of Edinburgh should get off the train at Glasgow Central and he would personally walk us over to Glasgow Queen Street where a train travelling north would take us to our destination!

Frank Donohue frankdonohue@hotmail.co.uk

\*Editor's note – First published in 2010 we felt this article was worth another airing whilst racing is in lockdown! When I did the trip to Ffos Las we drove down from the North West and did Chepstow on a Saturday in October then Ffos Las next day. Even on the motorway it was a good 2 hour journey from Chepstow to Llanelli (where we stayed overnight). When we went it was sunny at first and rained later but we did find some shelter! The food service was no better then, about 5 years after Frank's visit and I recall course staff checking bags as we went in (for illicit food stuffs) and families with young kids having bags of crisps confiscated (bet they haven't been back since!). When you park up outside you can get a great view of the course from the car park and enjoy your own food and drink there! If anyone is tempted to try the train to visit the course (worth one visit at least!) then the track website now says: *By Rail The nearest train stations to Ffos Las Racecourse are Kidwelly (4.5 miles), Pembrey and Burry Port (4.5 miles), Llanelli (6 miles) and Carmarthen (12 miles).* This must be one of, if not the most remote track in the UK both for spectators and trainers. Initially it was expected that a lot of horses trained in the South or Ireland would visit but numbers have gradually declined. Llanelli is the nearest big town with a population of 49,000.

# FORTY YEARS ON AND STILL GOING STRONG!

Many of our newer members will not be familiar with the long history of our racing club. So, as we pass our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year we asked co-founder Paul Clarkson to say a few words.

Paul writes 'My interest with horse racing goes back to when I was only 7 years old (1960). My dad, brother & myself were all very good with figures/mental arithmetic & being a sporty family we always started reading the Daily Mail from back to front. I was fascinated by the racing section & in particular the betting forecasts & what did all those odds mean? So began a life-long love affair with the 'Sport of Kings.'

In 1969 I left school & went on to college in Lytham St. Annes where I met Martin Lord who lived just a mile or so from me. Martin had no interest in racing whatsoever until one day I gave him a tip & it won! From that day on he wanted to know anything & everything about racing. He was a quick learner & we spent most of our spare time together discussing this most fascinating of pastimes. Like myself Martin liked to have a bet but as time went on, we wanted to know more about what happened behind the scenes – the horses, the trainers, jockeys & alike as well as going racing as much as we could.

I was on a business studies course at college & was required to do a thesis on any subject connected with business. Well this was a no brainer! I contacted Ginger McCain and myself and Martin made an appointment to visit him at his small yard behind a car sales showroom in Birkdale. At that time Ginger & Beryl only had a small team of horses & were struggling for winners (something like 3 in 18 years of trying). The few hours we spent that day at Upper Aughton Stables were to change the rest of my life. I came away from there determined to somehow get a job in racing and 15 years later I finally succeeded!

Fired up by what we had seen, we joined the Racegoers Club and were regular attendees on the stable visits which they organised to training yards in virtually every part of the country. Almost every spare day we had we spent going racing. Martin had a small blue car (cannot remember the make) and we would set off to anywhere and everywhere! By 1972 there were only 2 tracks in the country that I hadn't been racing at – Brighton & Epsom – but unfortunately nearly 50 years later the list has now doubled to four!!

By 1976 we wanted to meet some like-minded people who we could get to know & socialise with talking about our all-consuming passion. And so, the Fylde Racing Club was formed. Most weeks a dozen or so of us would meet on a Monday night at The Station Inn just over the road from the bus station and Blackpool North railway station. This routine continued for two or three years & certainly helped us broaden our circle of racing friends.

In 1978 I married Jayne Cousins whose parents lived in Exeter. The following year I noticed that the country's first regional racing club – The South West Racing Club – had been set up by racing journalist Michael Ayres who very kindly invited me to his Plymouth home on one of my regular visits to Devon. Michael couldn't have been more helpful. His vision was for a network of regional racing clubs covering the length and breadth of the country and the idea of setting up the North West Racing Club the following year was about to become a reality. Back home myself and Martin started to make plans – we could use the SWRC as a blueprint. I recall us having a meeting with the Lancashire Evening Post's racing correspondent Andrew Hoyle. What did he think of the idea? Would it work & could he help us to publicise it?

Andy was very supportive & advised us to give it a go and so in the Spring of 1980 the country's second regional club – the North West Racing Club - was born. The first few months were hard work getting it off the ground and I recall once a month myself and Jayne going over to Martin's house in Little Lever (he was manager of the WH Smith shop in Bolton) for the weekend with the aim of writing the monthly newsletter.

Unfortunately, after 6 months Martin was transferred by his employers to their Weston-Super-Mare branch and that left me with the task of trying to find someone with the time and dedication to take his place and share the not inconsiderable workload. Step forward Mr George Harris! After one false start George stepped into the breach and the rest, as they say, is history. At the end of 1983 I wanted to take on new challenges within the sport and I am delighted to be able to say that under George's guidance the NWRC continued to flourish and although it has recently changed its name it is still going strong after all these years. Happy 40<sup>th</sup> birthday & long may you continue!!

Paul continues 'By the time you read this newsletter racing should be back 'under starter's orders' after a break of about 11 weeks. Like all walks of life, it has been a very frustrating period for those involved in the racing & breeding industries which contribute £4 billion to the economy annually. Unfortunately, going forward there are going to be plenty of casualties among the ranks of owners, trainers, jockeys, breeders, stud/stable staff, bookmakers, etc. There are likely to be a few thousand horses less in training in the months & years ahead as owning or part owning a horse is hardly one of life's necessities! It is going to take a long time for the sport – like most other businesses and pastimes - to recover either partially or (hopefully) fully. Who knows what the 'new normal' will be?

In recognition of the difficult times that lay ahead, Stella & Paul at Lancashire Racing Stables (Garstang) have shares available from 5% shares and upwards in a few selected horses (flat & jumping) with winning and/or placed form for NOTHING!! All you have to do is make a monthly contribution towards his/her training fees and racing expenses (5% = £95; 10% = £180) with the option to drop out at any time by giving just one month's notice!

Also, the club's long-standing Treasurer (of 40 years) Richard Mattinson has finally become a dad!! Last year he decided to dip his toe into the world of breeding and his first ever broodmare Melanna (a winner at Dundalk, the Curragh & Galway) presented him with a lovely Coach House colt on the night the Prime Minister told us all about the joys of 'Lockdown'. Named 'Boris' (it was a no brainer really!!) Richard is syndicating him into 20 x 5% shares. If you would like details of how you can get involved right from the start of a young thoroughbred's life then please give us a call on 01995 605790 or e-mail [paul@lancshireracingstables.co.uk](mailto:paul@lancshireracingstables.co.uk) for further details without any obligation whatsoever. Stay safe (or is it now alert or both?).'

- Editor's note – Paul has enjoyed a long career in racing and many will know him as the raceday presenter at many courses across the North West and North East. At most of these courses Paul also set up racing syndicates for their annual members. Some years ago, together with Stella Barclay, Paul set up Lancashire Racing Stables in Garstang. Initially they employed 'salaried trainers' to run things but a couple of years ago Stella took out a licence to train.

## MORE RACING CLUB REFLECTIONS

BY DAVE KAY

### IN THE BEGINNING (AS NORTH WEST RACING CLUB)

On 12th February 1980 the Lancashire Evening Post carried an article by its racing correspondent Andrew Hoyle on the club and invited interested people to contact Paul or Martin. Over the next 2 weeks articles about the club appeared in a wide range of NW newspapers and the Sporting Life and Chronicle these were backed up by a radio interview from Paul and Martin at radio Lancashire and broadcast during the Saturday sports programmes. This led to 450 requests for details and membership forms and by the end of February 150 had joined. I joined the club early in February following a meeting with Paul in a Garstang pub.

### EARLY DAYS.

The first newsletter was sent out in March 1980 and consisted of 4 sides of type written text and included a welcome to the club It was planned to be a non-profit making organisation with the sole aim to encourage interest in all aspects of horseracing.

Other items included:

Plans to run stud and stable visits to amongst others Jack Berry, Colin Crossley Don McCain, Ray Peacock, Bill Wright, Roger Fisher and Captain Jim Wilson (father of Geraldine Rees).

First visit was planned for Saturday 19th April 1980 to the Tarporley yard of Martin Cousins and would be limited to 25 members and cost 75 pence per member.

Social evenings with racing personalities, quizzes and film shows.  
Planned racing trips both in this country and abroad.

Discounted racing admission to Tattersalls had been agreed for club members at Haydock, Chester, Liverpool, Cartmel and Bangor.

Prices were £2-65 at Haydock on the 16th/17th April and £3 at Bangor on the 19th April.

## SECOND NEWSLETTER

Published April 1980 and consisted of 8 sides. Articles included:  
Write ups on permit trainers Brian Thornley at Heskin Green and John Townsend at Whalley Nr Blackburn and trainer Bill Wright. Details of second stable visit on 24th May to Jack Berry's.

First social evening to be held at Hunters Lodge in Manchester programme:

Film "Year of the Minstrel", Hot pot supper, Jockeys v Trainers quiz (Kevin Darley/Reg Crank/Keith Taylor and Roy "Bull" Davis against Jack Berry/Martin Cousins/, Capt. Wilson and Ray Peacock)  
Followed by disco and late bar until 1-00AM.

A list of pub get togethers to be held in Blackpool, Chorley and Scarisbrick.

A question and answer session with Michael Dickinson--jockey to watch John Francome.

Details of first racing trips. (Look at the costs! Inflation since 1980 has been around 432%):

'Foreign' Trip to the Isle of Man derby at Castletown. Departing Friday 1st August ferry from Liverpool to Douglas 2 nights B and B in the Palace Hotel and Casino return Sunday cost about £22 admission to races not included ( £1).

'Classic Trip' to Newmarket 2000 Guineas. Departing morning Saturday 5th May luxury coach, admission to Tattersalls, lunch at the track, a sweepstakes with £20 first prize and a copy of Sporting Life cost £18.

Trip to Arc De Triomphe .Departing Saturday morning overnight ferry Southampton to Le Havre stop night following morning visit to Versailles onto hotel and then Longchamp races with lunch returning to hotel with evening tour of Paris. or stable visit and tour of training grounds Leave Paris early Monday evening for return overnight ferry home. Cost £49-50.

Book Review of Sean Grahams 1979/80 racing annual available at £2-90. A racing quiz.

- Editor's Note – Dave has been a longstanding supporter of the club and hails from the Morecambe area. In the early years Dave was instrumental in arranging sports weekends with the Middleham Stable Lads involving football in the spring and cricket in the autumn with snooker and darts also on the packed schedule. After a while Dave also took over the role of 'Annual Dinner Secretary' which was once the highlight of the club year (held in February on the eve of the 'Grand National Trial' at Haydock Park), with a fantastic array of after dinner speakers seen over the years. One year, Jack Berry also performed with his C&W band – still have the cassette tape somewhere from that night! Some of the more famous club presidents over the years have included Phil Bull (Timeform founder), Alex Bird (Legendary punter) and Fred Shawcross (Racing Editor with Today Newspaper). These were great nights and at one time attracted more than 200 members and guests each year. However, numbers attending gradually decreased and when they fell below 100 the club decided that they were no longer viable.

# BOOK REVIEW – GRAND NATIONAL JIG-WORD PUZZLES

BY MAL BOYLE

Mal (or Malcolm) Boyle started writing sports betting books about 25 years ago. His 'Placepot' related books are still available on the internet as are his books on fixed odds football betting. He tried his own bookmaking business in the past and that resulted in a book called 'The Art of Bookmaking'. Other books followed linked to racing and football.

In 2020 however Mal has started putting together a series of 'puzzle' books known as 'jig-words'.

The first edition in March 2020 covers the Aintree Grand National (more details below) and in April 2020 a 'General Knowledge' version was published then in May 2020 a 'Movies' version.

Whilst avid puzzlers may enjoy all three books (possibly more to come?) I shall concentrate on the Grand National edition at this time.

The book contains a series of 'themed' puzzles – for example puzzle 31 covers 'winning favourites' of the race since 1874. For each puzzle there is a 'word search' and on the opposite page a 'jig-word' puzzle where readers use the answers from the word search to complete the jig-word (a sort of mini crossword).

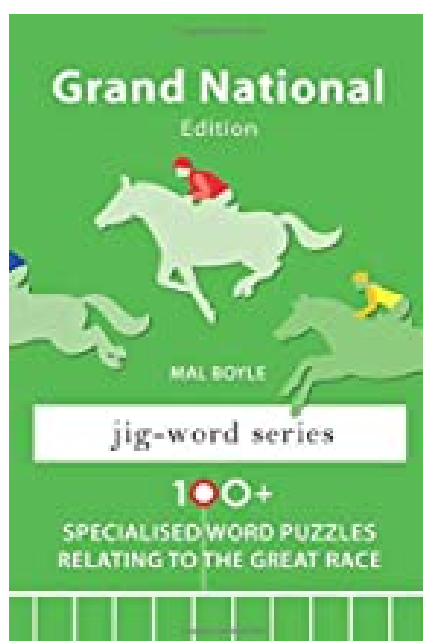
The book lists all 172 Grand National winners to date (Gatwick races ignored) which is the nearest thing to a clue that the author gives readers at the outset. All together there are 55 puzzles (word searches & jig-words) making 110 in total.

The jig words look more taxing, so to help anyone struggling to get started, one answer for each puzzle can be found later in the book.

And, once completed, you can check your answers as all jig-word puzzle answers are included at the back of the book.

I think readers will need to be either Grand National fans or avid puzzlers to get the most from this book, but if you get into them, as alluded to above, other subjects are now becoming available.

The books are currently available via Amazon at £9.99 a copy. Well worth a look if still in 'lockdown mode'.



# CLUB RACING SYNDICATES OVER THE YEARS (PART 1)

BY GORDON ARMISTEAD

The twenty fifth anniversary of the first winner in the club's colours would seem a good a time to take a look back at the horses that have raced for the various owners' groups since the club started forty years ago. There have been a total of ten wins but there have been plenty of disappointments along the way and one runner met its end on the course.

While some raced their entire career for the club most had either raced before or after and some both so I thought that I would cover the horse's entire career and not just when they raced for us. In amongst the overall story are my recollections of the five horses I was involved in which started at rock bottom and took eight years until I managed to get a winner.

All the club horses have run for syndicates within the club but two of the earlier horses here Gradwood and Burrogerrard probably didn't run in the club's name but for groups of club members on a more informal basis but I have included them as they are part of the early club history. There is also one horse that was with the club for just a week.

So, taking them in order and in 1983 the first horse which ran in the original club colours of dark blue yellow epaulets and yellow cap was:

## **The Manor**

Having made £1,300 as a foal The Manor was bought for £2,500 as a yearling and trained by Jack Berry. He was by Manor Farm Boy so could easily have made a fast two-year-old although his dam Fond Farewell had won at a mile and a half. The Manor was her first foal and she never had another runner while Manor Farm Boy turned out to be a very poor stallion.

His first run was at the old Wolverhampton in May where he finished fifth which was good enough to see him start favourite at Carlisle ten days later where he made no show. Another poor effort saw blinkers applied for the fourth run after which he was gelded. It was all going downhill and by the end of the season he was up to a mile and after failing to make a place on his six starts he was dispatched to the sales where he made 740 guineas. His end of season Timeform rating of 60 looks on the generous side. His later career was no better with Eric Alston. Starting off over a mile and a half as a three-year-old before ending up at six furlongs he was also tried a couple of times over hurdles without showing any ability.

## **Julia Bravo**

Julia Bravo made £4,000 IR as a yearling in 1983. Her dam was a speedy two-year-old that won a five-furlong Brighton maiden and while she failed to train on, she had bred two minor winners. Julia Bravo was also trained by Jack and was out in the first week of April running unplaced at Haydock under Willie Carson. She caught the eye of one journalist with John McCartney of the Liverpool Echo putting her in his list of horses to follow as sure to win a couple of minor races. A fourth at Nottingham was followed by third places at Haydock and Edinburgh (as it was then) both in June but that was as good as it got. A break before returning in a seller at Haydock in October where she was well down the field upped to six furlongs was the end with Timeform giving her a rating of 51.

Her sire Raga Navarro had been a good Italian sprinter / miler before moving to France and despite her poor form she had some appeal in Italy. It was there she raced as a three-year-old having a much busier time making twenty-four starts and winning on three occasions. After two outings at four she was retired later going on to have had eight foals with at least one winner in her 1993 foal Aji.

## **Gradwood**

Gradwood was a nine-year-old when he joined Eric Alston for the 1984/85 season. Bought for 750 guineas out of Peter Aliingham's yard he already had a chequered past. He had won a point but his enthusiasm for racing was in question after his first season under rules where he refused to race twice and ran out once while Timeform also noted his poor jumping. His second season seemed to highlight this trait as he fell three times from five outings. The 84/85 season encompassed eleven outings-seven over hurdle and four chases- mainly in selling company. First time out under his trainer's son Mark was moderately promising with a third in a selling handicap hurdle at Hexham beaten just over a length. Next time as if he needed any excuse to get out of racing, he was carried out. A fourth place later on beaten a distance was as good as it got during the rest of the season before he decided he had had enough and ran out yet again on his final outing By the

end of the season he was running in Sue Alston's colours so whatever the ownership situation at the start of the season it had dissolved by then.

Gradwood's sire was an interesting individual. On the flat Rugantino never raced over further than six furlongs winning five handicaps at that distance up to the age of four and getting a Timeform rating in the high 90's for trainer John Sutcliffe. He then went jumping with Kent trainer Neville Dent winning five hurdle races and two chases before retiring to stud aged seven. His dam won over hurdles and had two moderate jumping winners.

## AND FINALLY - TERRY SLOCOMBE WRITES

Having the time to look back on racing memories during lockdown. 1959 was my first Grand National with my late father. I then used to get a corporation bus with a small step ladder and position myself by the existing railing on Melling Road when dad was not available to attend. A couple of years latter in 1961 when betting shops opened, with dad again in attendance we would stand in an entry near to the street in County Road and listen to the 'Extel Blower', for the evening racing commentaries at the flat meetings, (Betting Shops Closed At 6pm in those days). Think how fast we obtain the results today and can watch in the betting shops or at home with 'At the Race's and 'Racing TV'. or Ed Chamberlain and company on ITV

I miss the BBC, with Sir Peter O'Sullivan Clive Graham and Julian Wilson. I was due to meet Sir Peter at Aintree when the race was lost through a bomb scare. He contacted me later with a postcard greeting although I never met him in person.

However, I was fortunate to have shook hands with Sir Henry Cecil at York on his last visit, and also had chats with Sir Michael Stoute. Roger Charlton and Andrew Balding.

I am a 70 this month, was planning a Derby trip with my son which has gone west, so instead I am sending £50.00 to Rebecca Menzies to obtain 1 share in 'Rainbow Applause' with any winnings going to the NHS charities. For further details please visit <https://rebeccamenziesracing.co.uk/rainbow-applause-club/ols/products/rainbow-applause-club>

## N & M RACING CLUB COMMITTEE/OFFICIALS 2020/21

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