

Racin'



Issue 366

December 2020/January 2021

John Freeman is under the spotlight with this time – see full interview on P.7.



SEASON TO BE CHEERFUL!

At the time of going to press plans are already well advanced to start rolling out the first of the Covid-19 vaccines in the UK so hopefully by mid-late 2021, the UK should again start to seem 'normal' again. For those that have lost loved ones or suffered loss of employment during the crisis the process will of course take much longer.

On a more parochial note, it was good to see that limited crowds were again allowed back at some tracks on December 2nd even though none of the first three tracks that were permitted to open managed to sell even half of their 2000 allocated spaces. With the problem still likely to be that travel from Tier 3 areas to Tier 2 courses is not allowed and hopefully, before too long many Tier 3 areas will be changed to Tier 2 if the 'R' numbers keep falling.

There may not be as many social gatherings over the festive season but no doubt giving presents will still going to be on most people's agendas.

I am sure the many racing charities such as the Injured Jockeys Fund and the British Thoroughbred Retraining Centre (previously called the TRC) would love to receive support by selling their festive items.

Also, details on pages 16-17 include some other Christmas present ideas including affordable shares in horses from Alan Crombie at Grange Park Racing, The Cheltenham Trail Jumps Annual (from Andy Gibson) and a top racing website subscription discount for NMRC members with Betturtle.

Finally, a mention for **Duncan McGraw (Derbyshire) & Andy White (Rochdale)** who were the winners of our first Zoom/Kahoot quizzes on November 30th.

Christopher Leech has kindly offered to compile the next quiz to be held in January 2021. Please register your interest at info@northernracingclub.com

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COMPETITION NEWS & RESULTS

59's DRAW RESULTS UPDATE

The latest '59's' winner is as follows:

November 7th – 44 – Robert Edge (Wettenhall)

Robert wins 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.

HERITAGE HANDICAPS CHALLENGE 2020

The result of the Heritage Handicap Competition 2020 is now final. The honours and prizes are as follows:-

Main competition

- 1st Dave Bates (Warrington).**
- 2nd Diane Bates (Warrington).**
- 3rd Helen Goodwill (Altrincham).**

Exacta/trifecta competition

1st Harold Woodward (St Helens)

Thanks for your participation again this year and congratulations to all the winners. Hopefully a few of you made a profit on your selections over the year.

- Editor's Note – In a very difficult year, many thanks to **Helen Goodwill & Mark Banks** for running the Heritage Handicaps & Alex Bird competitions once again. Photo on the right is **Ken Unsworth** receiving the Alex Bird trophy.

NATIONAL HUNT – SATURDAY NAPS CHALLENGE 2020-21

We are up and running in this winter's tipping challenge with just one week gone and four tipsters finding *Cloth Cap* in the Newbury showcase race on 28th November. So, well done to the early leaders **Eunice Flynn, Linda Boswell, John McDonald & Gary Parkinson.**

This season (due to Covid-19 issues) we are scoring over the full 19-week period but there will be bonus prizes also for (1) First entrant with a positive score (all start on minus 19pts). (2) The leader at half way (end Jan 2021). (3) Longest sequence of winners (4) Longest priced winner (5) Most winners selected.

Late entries can still be made until Sat Dec 12th 2020 – contact Phil Evans for details of how to enter (see committee details on last page)

ALEX BIRD CHALLENGE 2020

In this unusual racing year, we had two new rounds for the Alex Bird Challenge with Goodwood in July and then Cheltenham in November (as no Aintree this year).

In the final Cheltenham round our winner was **Frank Turley (Fulwood)** and runner up **Jeanette Laird (Merseyside).**

In the seasonal challenge **Ken Unsworth (Aintree)** was our winner with **Ted Halewood (Waterloo)** runner up and in third place **Jim Aitkenhead (Chester).**



GORDON ARMISTEAD'S RACING DIARY

(FROM BEHIND THE TV SET AT PRESENT)

Arc Weekend

Soft to heavy ground and then contaminated food problems for the three O'Brien's had a big effect on the racing over the weekend downgrading many of the races.

A good competitive field for the one mile six Prix de Royallieu the first Group 1 of the weekend. Wonderful Tonight has been making trips to France all season winning at listed and Group 3 level before being seen off in the Vermeille. This was a fairly soft Group 1 but she and runner up Pista the Park Hill winner stay well and will have more options if they are about next season if they go up in trip.

The other Group 1 of the day the Prix du Cadran and one of the best results of the year with the win of Princess Zoe who was awarded a handicap mark of 64 when she arrived in Ireland this year from Germany. In a season which has lacked any real star performer hers has been a great story. After she won twice at the Galway festival her owners still had the mare's novice hurdle at Cheltenham in mind for her but that will probably be shelved. Jockey Joey Sheridan (one of a host of good Irish apprentices this season) who couldn't claim here would have ridden Sceptical at Royal Ascot and Newmarket but for COVID-19 must have thought he would have to wait a good deal longer for another star performer after that horse's fatal accident.

Skalleti took the ten-furlong Group 2 Prix Dollar for the second time and it seems strange that with three Group 2's and two Group 3 in the bag he hasn't had a dig at a Group 1 somewhere along the line but with eleven wins from fourteen starts he hasn't had a bad career. Another five-year-old gelding The Revenant took the Group 2 Prix Daniel Wildenstein for a ninth success in twelve starts which started with a win at Haydock and he evidently will try to get a Group 1 in the QE 11 at Ascot.

It was 1986 when I was first at Longchamp for the Arc when Dancing Brave won one of the best renewals of the race. The same owners Enable was odds on after the defection of the O'Brien runners but neither she nor stable mate Stradivarius were given any chance of winning with very negative rides. Enable has made the running in the past while Stradivarius's best run this season was on very soft ground at Ascot and he was never going to win any sort of sprint.

The whole race was a bit of a mess with the miler Persian King allowed to set a moderate pace and no one made any move until the last quarter mile and then they all got in each other's way when they went for home. Sottsass had been the one tracking the leader had to barge his way out and might have been in trouble under the previous French interference rules. Good horse that he is he is no superstar and he now goes off to Coolmore stud. In Swoop ran on for second and we will see how he goes next year. Persian King after getting the best ride in the race from Pierre-Charles Boudot also goes off to stud.

The Prix de L'Opera was a much more straightforward race and Tarnawa took her second Group 1 while needing all of the ten furlongs to get up. It would be very unusual for the Aga Khan to keep a five-year-old mare in training, but she is still improving, and good older horses will be in short supply next season. Alpine Star was just run out of it in second and has run her race on every outing this season and evidently, she will be around next year. Audarya in third showed her Deauville run to be no fluke and with another Group 1 winner Tawkeel in fourth it looks very solid form.

Wooded joined those who can win five-furlong races when Battaash is not around in the L'Abbaye.

Connections must have thought that it wouldn't get any better and the three-year-old was immediately packed off to stud. One Master took her third Foret which is a major achievement for a horse that does show Group 1 form elsewhere. Runner up Earthlight is another off to stud after not improving his C.V. as a three-year-old. The two two-year-old races looked pretty ordinary affairs. Nando Parrado odds on for the Lagardere looked in trouble very early on and Sealiway ran away with it in the straight. The Marcel Boussac was another mess of a race with plenty getting bumped and hampered while Tiger Tanaka had a clear run for her sixth win and fifth for rider Jessica Marcialis since the horse was claimed out after her first win at Lyon Parilly for just over €20K.

Both the winners are trained in Marseille and the major French trainers have run nothing of real promise for next year's classics.

Future Champions Weekend

Pretty Gorgeous and Shale have been trading victories in Ireland and with Shale not running to form here Pretty Gorgeous took her Group 1 in the Fillies Mile. She would have run in France but for the contaminated food problem and this was probably a harder race She is a worthy favourite for next year's Guineas and a mile will probably be her trip. The same applies to runner up Indigo Girl who ran on well and after her May Hill win looks the best of the British fillies. Third home Mother Earth was much closer to the winner than she had been on her last two starts in Ireland and had looked exposed. Shale was the disappointment of the race and never really looked happy.

The other fillies Group race on the card the Oh So Sharp was nothing special but winner Saffron Beach should win more races.

Only the 100/1 shot Devilwala stopped the Irish having the first four home in the Dewhurst and the British based two-year-old colts look very ordinary. The first three home from the National Stakes Thunder Moon, Wembley, and St Mark's Basilica finished in the reverse order here and while there is not a superstar amongst the three with the addition of Battleground they are the best around this season. On better ground I would fancy Thunder Moon would be the best of them. He and St Mark's Basilica will be milers while Wembley should certainly get a mile and a half.

In the Autumn Stakes One Ruler won nicely from the Aidan O'Brien runner Van Gogh. The Godolphin runners are usually trained pretty hard as two-year olds and the form of this looks well below the Dewhurst.

Champions Day

I am not sure that the idea for Champions day was for all for Group races for males to be won by geldings but that's the way it went (in fact the entire males mustered up just two places all afternoon) and it does mean they will all be around next season.

With Stradivarius not running any type of race the Long-Distance Cup Trueshan ran out a very easy winner. He had form on heavy, but this was a big step up and he was probably flattered by the winning margin. I guess there is no chance of Alan King sending him over hurdles now. Runner up Search For A Song just ran on at one pace of much softer ground than she had run on before while Fujaira Prince just didn't get home. The excuse for Stradivarius was the ground but he had probably had enough for the season. It will be interesting to see how he gets on as a seven-year-old next season.

Glen Shiel another Godolphin cast off to improve was out in the French provinces over a mile and a quarter at three and four but has improved no end as he has dropped in trip. He battled really hard to take the Champions Sprint. He may have finished fifth but Oxted looked the winner until the last hundred yards on ground that really didn't suit him. His win at Newmarket is the best of the six furlong races this season. Wonderful Tonight came on from Longchamp to take her second Group 1. Her two bad runs have been on good ground so she needs to prove she is not ground dependent next season and you imagine she will need some improvement for her stated objective of winning the Arc.

Until Wooded won the L'Abbaye Palace Pier had been the only three-year-old colt to win against his elders in the U.K. Ireland, or France this season but couldn't follow up in the QE11. He seems sure to be around next season and most of the three-year-old milers packed off to stud he should have every opportunity for more wins on better ground. This ground probably wasn't as bad as when he won at Deauville but both The Revenant and Roseman have shown their best form on heavy and were too good here. More heavy ground form in the Champion Stakes with Addeybb and Skalleti and good horses that they are neither could be described as champions. I am not sure Magical got the best of rides in third (Ryan Moore has given some horses poor rides on the round course at Ascot over the years) and she was below her best. Serpentine missed the break a bit and then was rushed to the front. Once headed he kept on well enough and I wouldn't give up on him on better ground back up in trip. Mishriff looked under-priced as second favourite but turned in a very poor effort.

The Final Group 1's

Anybody wanting one of the three final two-year-old Group 1's to make the picture clearer would be very disappointed. All were run on heavy ground. At Doncaster Mac Swiney stayed on to take the Futurity from One Ruler and Baradar. The winner is hardly a model of consistency winning three times including beating Wembley and Cadillac but finishing well beaten in the National Stakes and Tyros Stakes. Those were both on good ground so maybe he needs it soft and he looks odds on too stay well. One Ruler seemed to run his race but wasn't good enough on the day. The horse One Ruler beat at Newmarket Van Gogh was at Saint Cloud taking the one-mile Criterium International easily from a couple of Group 3 winners and sales race winner Jadoomi. As with stable mates St Marks Basilica and Wembley he has more defeats than wins. The ten-furlong Criterium de Saint Cloud went to Royal Lodge fourth Gear Up for Mark Johnson. They all finished in a bit of a heap. Runner up Botanik just had maiden form while third home Makaloun was four from four but stepping up in class Marcel Boussac winner Tiger Tanaka taking on the colts was fourth and might not have got home. The Prix Royal Oak was the last French Group 1 and Subjectivist joined that small band of three-year olds to win an open aged top-level race. Calling the Royal Oak top level is probably being generous as the winner had been well beaten in the Leger at Doncaster and the Voltigeur so is not among the top three-year olds. Runner up Valia has been solid with only one poor run in the Vermeille and if the Aga Khan keeps her in training there are plenty of staying group races in France for her next season. It was a shame to see Princess Zoe's season finish on a down note but another Irish runner that has improved massively took the other Group race on the card. Baron Samedi started his winning run in August off 65 and completely a five timer here taking the Group 2 Prix du Conseil de Paris. He is another gelding that had looked like he could have been a nice hurdler for Joseph O'Brien, but I imagine that will be put on hold.

Australia and the U.S.

Handicaps have not got too many mentions this flat season but the Melbourne Cup is no ordinary handicap and having backed the winner it does merit some comment. Just how Joseph O'Brien keeps all the balls in the air at once is amazing. Having put a line through all the local runners and thinking that Tiger Moth was too inexperienced for a race of this sort Joseph's two runners looked way overpriced at 25/1. This had been the one objective for both all year and Twilight Payment got an excellent ride from Jye McNeil. No doubt owner Lloyd Williams will have others at Joseph's for next year. It will be interesting to see where they target Tiger Moth next season after his excellent effort but probably a Cup campaign would seem the logical choice. The Aussie broadcasters seemed to have plenty on their team for the Cup, but they were well outdone by the Americans at the Breeders Cup who were doing their bit for the unemployment figures. I made it thirteen but might have missed a couple. The two-year-old day produced no winners for the Europeans but plenty of places. Sprint winner Golden Pal is a point and shoot sort and just about got home. He could well come over for Ascot next year having been caught close home there this year. An excellent run from Ubettabelievit who will also probably be turning up in the Kings Stand.

The mile for colts was very rough race early on which winner Fire at Will managed to avoid and he got first run to take it easily. Runner up Battleground came from miles off the pace and had no chance with the winner but holds his position as one of the favourites for the Guineas. Cadillac back on good ground ran well in fourth while Lagardere winner Sealiway found this a much harder proposition. The filly's equivalent was never in doubt as Aunt Pearl made all and looks very good. Runner up Mother Earth came from the next county while Miss Amulet stepped markedly up in trip just about got home in third. Campanelle didn't get home and if she returns to Ascot next season the Commonwealth Cup would seem the target.

The American turf sprinters are not that great but have the advantage that they always race around a bend, but Glass Slippers got a dream run a furlong out. She has been no match for Battaash but has been as good as anything else around five furlongs. Wigan is hardly the centre of the racing world but with Cieran Fallon and Tom Eaves it has mustered two Group 1 winning jockeys for the year. Audarya has improved quickly and her run in the L'Opera was excellent. With all the other Europeans running very poorly in the Filly and Mare Turf she saw off multiple Grade 1 winner Rushing Fall under a very good ride from Pierre-Charles Boudot. She evidently will be around next season.

Another excellent ride from Boudot in the Turf Mile but you would be hard put to have made a case for winner Order of Australia who was running over a mile for the first time since his one run at two. The trainer was quoted as saying he has always worked like a miler which begs the question about what he has been doing all season. Hopefully we will see if this was a fluke next season. Circus Maximus was better than he has been recently while Lope Y Fernandez looks a horse without a trip. The Guineas winners Kameko and Siskin go off to stud with poor efforts.

The locals didn't count in the Turf and Tarnawa kept up her improvement and once she started her run it did not look in doubt that she would get up. Let's hope she stays around for next season. Magical in second seemed to lose her place before running on. Apart from Love Ryan Moore has had a poor season and has not been at his best. Seamie Heffernan and Wayne Lordan have done nothing wrong in Ireland and there is talk of Colin Keane who won this race replacing him as Coolmore's number one. We will see. Magical's stable mate Mogul was again talked up after his Grand Prix de Paris win but he did not follow up here.

Jumpers

Still early days with plenty of novice hurdlers and chasers winning on their first starts but we will need to see them taking each other on before any conclusions can start to be made.

Chasers

Plenty of the top chasers have been out. Cyrname showed he can go left-handed in the Charlie Hall but he was rated over a stone better than the runner up and two stone above the third so we shouldn't get too carried away. The same day at Down Royal the race fit The Storyteller beat Chris's Dream who always does well first time out with the bigger names of Delta Work and Presenting Percy seemingly needing the run. Whatever was wrong at trainer Pat Kelly's with over a hundred runners over eighteen months without a winner finally caused owner Philip Reynolds to move his horses and Gordon Elliot soon pulled off two big gambles with two of the lesser lights. Presenting Percy did come on for the run to win at Thurles beating Kemboy and Monalee and it will be interesting to see how he goes on this season.

I was surprised to see the going at Haydock for Betfair day starting as soft as the fields and tracks I have been running over have been waterlogged for weeks. It soon turned heavy and Bristol De Mai did what he does at the track on heavy ground. The National seems to be the spring target but he has never appealed to me for that race. Clan Des Obeaux just didn't get home and Kempton will be his target. Lostintranslation was beaten miles on his previous try at Haydock on heavy as a hurdler so the run was not too unexpected. Over shorter distances you would be very worried about Defi du Seuil after his last two efforts with seemingly no explanation coming to light.

Of last season novice chasers three have already won from the Arkle field In Put The Kettle On, Rouge Vif, and Notebook. From the Marsh Samcro has been well beaten at Down Royal and from the RSA Minella Indo is third in the betting for the Gold Cup after been found two soft races to warm him up for Leopardstown at Christmas. He will meet The Champ there as well as the other top Irish stayers and it should be a really informative race. Imperial Aura is getting well talked up after his Ascot win but I am yet to be convinced.

Hurdlers

The first Group 1 for the older hurdlers the Morgiana was a mess for a five-runner race and the form can only be treated with caution. Abacadabras got first run but was stopping quickly and just held on. Saint Roi probably should have won and hopefully when the pair meet at Leopardstown at Christmas we will get a proper view of their true merits. I have not forgiven Jason the Militant for beating Beacon Edge a nose as Nass on my last days racing back in February and he was only beaten a neck and a short head here. The stable think Aspire Tower is much better so as I said the race was a mess.

With the Fighting Fifth coming up we will see if the Champion is going to be as good this year and over longer distances Paisley Park is also due to return at Newbury with something to prove.

RACING SPOTLIGHT ON JOHN FREEMAN

By BRIAN GOODWILL

HOW DID YOU START IN RACING?

I had no interest in racing until I was about 18 and met an Irish guy called Billy McKenna when doing summer work at a hotel in Llandudno, North Wales. He took me to the Chester May meeting and I was immediately hooked. Some beginner's luck helped, of course. I couldn't tell you the names of the last five 1000 Guineas winners without looking them up, but I can still rattle off five of those Chester winners and their jockeys, on demand.

RECALL A FUNNY MOMENT

It was after one of the early runnings of the Queen Mother's Cup at York. Quite a few female riders from the continent had come over to ride, including a very attractive French girl, who joined a group of us later in the champagne bar. One veteran northern trainer, who had better remain nameless, was especially smitten and attempting to come over all smooth and sophisticated.

Trainer: "So where do you live in France?"

Jockey: "The Bordeaux region."

Trainer, while topping up her champagne glass: "Ah, Bordeaux. And do they have drinks like this where you come from?"

BEST DAY'S RACING

It has to be the day Forgive'n Forget won the Cheltenham Gold Cup in 1985. He had finished runner-up in the Sun Alliance Chase the year before and his trainer Jimmy Fitzgerald was convinced he should have won. So, the following day we had a big ante-post bet between us at 33-1. I got on each-way, but Jimmy said he wasn't interested in the each-way bit; he would win. There was a lot of luck involved – Burrough Hill Lad, who would have been a hot favourite, missed the race through injury – but Forgive'n Forget did win, bless him, which was just as well for me because I was out of work by then and couldn't have afforded to pay the stake.

A BET THAT JUST HIT THE BAR

More like a penalty that hit the corner flag. My memory of this is a bit hazy, but I think it was another 33-1 ante-post bet in the Cesarewitch yonks ago. It was, as I recall, a freakishly dry autumn, and come the day at Newmarket the ground was so firm that there were only five or six runners. That seems really odd now, but it's how I remember it. My horse was now around 2-1 favourite, but didn't like the fast ground either and wasn't even placed!

YOUR FAVOURITE RACECOURSE AND WHY

Cheltenham. Not very original, but there are good reasons why so many people love it. I still feel that tingle of excitement when first glimpsing the racecourse in all its glory coming down Cleeve Hill on the Tuesday morning of the festival. Fantastic racing in a wonderful location.

ONE HORSE TO FOLLOW IN 2021

Now you're asking. How about Harriet Graham's staying novice chaser *Aye Right? You'd need to check he's still in good health. He wasn't good enough in the RSA Chase, but he's a very good jumper and I could see him winning a big handicap prize next year. And he might even become a proper Grand National candidate in 2022. * This article was received well before the big run at Newbury on November 28th!

WHAT DO YOU DO NOW?

I have been racing editor and tipster for the i newspaper for the past three years.

A LIFETIME AS A RACING JOURNALIST (PART 3)

BY FRED SHAWCROSS

The *Today* office was in Vauxhall Bridge Rd in Pimlico and one evening, a chap walks in and asked to speak to me. His name was Ray Potter, a greyhound owner/enthusiast and he wanted to discuss our racing results services. Ray was very persistent and insisted I leave the desk to give him a few minutes chat. He stressed during our brief meeting that if we included a comprehensive greyhound results service we would attract 'dog' punters who were not best served by the other 'nationals'. I put his suggestion to Len Gould and we subsequently launched an in-depth greyhound's results section in our racing pages.

Ray had numerous contacts in the sport and previewed the Greyhound Derby in 1988 when the classic was won by Hit The Lid owned by his friend Fred Smith (recording still available on youtube <https://youtu.be/GqAPd3QBqks>). *Today* carried a feature complete with colour print of the Derby winner and received numerous favourable comments from greyhound racing followers. I was even persuaded to buy a puppy Ray had bred and I called her *Cursors Gone* – a cynical reminder of the traumas we were experiencing in our brave new computing world! She became the foundation brood bitch for the greyhounds my wife and I bred and raced during the late 1980's and throughout the 1990's. We had terrific enjoyment and won well over 200 races with our dogs, many at the recently closed Belle Vue track in Manchester.

Meanwhile, back at the coal face, staffing levels at *Today* had improved. I got a deputy, *Henry Rix*, who in later years became a hugely successful tipster/punter. We also took on a number of 'casuals' who were all enthusiastic and knowledgeable horseracing people. This meant that I could get back to the race tracks to write about the day's events and preview the following day's programme. One afternoon, at Pontefract, I got talking to *John Barnes* (an ex-policeman who was *Steve Cauthen's* driver/minder). John told me that Steve loved the local delicacy (Pontefract Cakes). I took the hint and bought some bags on course and presented them to the jockey as he prepared to leave. That somewhat unusual introduction was the start of my working friendship with the talented American, which lasted throughout the remainder of my time at *Today* and beyond.

I later got Steve to preview the classic races and broke the exclusive story that he had spent time at a special resort in Aspen Colorado before riding in Honk Kong en route to Britain to resume his career after lurid tabloid stories of nightclubs and booze. I knew Steve wasn't a drunk but he was struggling with his weight and largely lived on pee pills and fresh air.. He was also depressed after the break up of his engagement to the society beauty Lady Caroline Herbert and in no state to drown his sorrows in champagne. He came back from Hong Kong as a new man I went to interview him shortly afterwards at Stetchworth Cottage on *Bill Gredley's* estate on the fringe of Newmarket. I saw at first hand the regime he (and no doubt many other jockeys) have to live by to stay in the game. He had a housekeeper that made him mushroom soup and fresh fruit salad. That was it backed up by long baths in steaming hot water and lots of saunas. I tried his diet for a couple of days to give authenticity to my piece but was quick to find the nearest McDonalds on my way back to London!

Besides Steve, I also ghosted articles by Cash Asmussen, Steve Smith-Eccles, Peter Scudamore and David Elsworth. The highlight of my tipping prowess was to find all seven winners at a York May meeting, which earned a place in the Guinness Book of Records! I only backed two of them but I was a happy chappie!

Then, in 1989, I was head hunted for the first time in my life. SIS offered me a job as Editorial Director. Initially this was a result of my friendship with *Steve Cauthen* and a number of other top jockeys. At that time the jockeys were threatening a period on non-co-operation with SIS over fees relating to the pictures and interviews being transmitted into betting shops. However, a deal was eventually reached and the unrest subsided. The various heads of department held periodic policy meetings to discuss ways of taking the company forward. At one such meeting I suggested that because I had seen how hugely influential and successful daily television broadcasts from Australia were, there was a money-spinner for SIS in transmitting the action to homes, clubs etc in the UK if a way could be found to authorise it. At that time, a TV company called British Satellite Broadcasting (BSB) had been launched in March 1990 in opposition to Sky and SIS was engaged to provide a nightly programme for them, a review of the days racing. Things were going well and BSB seemed happy with the programme. However, turmoil in the financial world at the time resulted in the

merger of BSB and Sky in November 1990. So after just 7 months in the new role myself and my team of 10 were no longer required!

Less than two years after I bid farewell to *Today* and national newspapers, I was on my way back to Bolton as a 'yesterday's man'. No matter, my old mate *Harold Heys* rode to the rescue and engineered a job subbing on the Lancashire Evening Telegraph. That then led to subbing on the Bolton Evening News and eventually to writing columns for both publications.

I also decided it was time to dust down the drum kit and joined a band launched by an old showbiz pal of mine called *Colin Worth**. All the personnel were former professionals and, in spite of people passing or becoming too handicapped by ill health, the band is still operational, using replacements for the originals. Its name is *Jeriatic Jazz* and we've been entertaining swing music fans for more than 25 years.

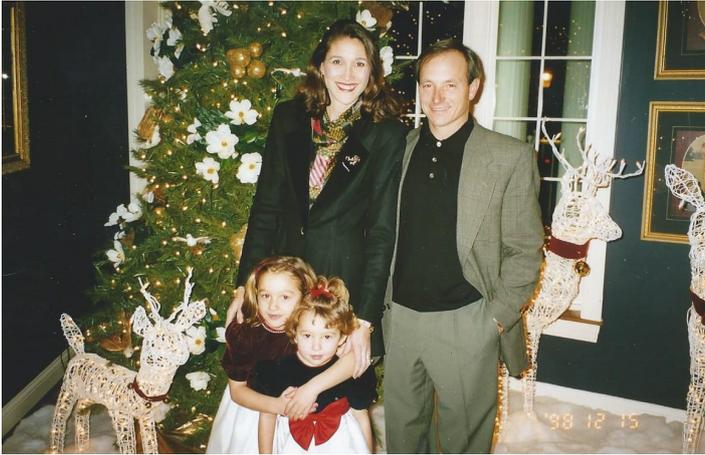
I'm 85 now and hoping that I, my musical mates and Jeriatic Jazz would keep going until 'Anno Domini' or the Grim Reaper came calling. We never thought a nasty bug from China would cut short our very promising careers! Now I'm hoping I live long enough to see society in general, and the racing part of it, get back to normal, or as near normal as possible. Meantime, thanks for remembering me (from my days as the Racing Club President) and giving me space to recall all, or most of my yesteryears.

Amazing really, I can still remember my army number. No dementia here Doctor!!!

*Editor's note – *Colin Worth* sadly passed away in 2002 and whilst Fred did not mention this is his piece I am aware that he and many of his musical buddies arranged a memorial concert in his memory in March 2003 to raise funds for Bolton Hospice.



- Photo above is Fred in his prime with Cursors Gone - one of his beloved greyhounds.



*What a special gift is Christmas
with all its warmth and magic.
What a special gift, too,
are wonderful people like you!*

Merry Christmas

Fred and Judith,

*Sorry we missed seeing you in June, maybe
we'll be back in 1999*

Love to all

Alan, Amy, Katelyn and Karlie

- Best buddies – Steve and family exchanging Xmas greetings with Fred & Judith.

CLUB RACING SYNDICATES OVER THE YEARS (PART 4) BY GORDON ARMISTEAD

Hawwam

As can be guessed from the name he started out running for Hamdan Al Maktoum out of John Benstead's Epsom yard. He was by Glenstal who had top class breeding, was just below the best as a racehorse, and apart from Guineas winner Las Meninas a moderate stallion soon exiled from the Coolmore set up and sold to stand in Hungary. The dam Hone won four listed races in Belgium when racing there was a great deal better than it is now and she had previously bred three good winners in that country. The dam's later foals included Hondo Mondo a Group 2 winner in Germany where he beat Lomitas the sire of Arc winner Danedream (which earned Hondo Mondo a place at stud albeit in Poland) and Hondero a Group 3 winner.

Hawwam made 65,000 Irish Punts as a foal and £54,000 as a yearling. As a two-year-old he got off the mark on his fourth run in a maiden at Kempton and later took a nursery at the Glorious Goodwood meeting in July. Ten runs in all finishing up being beaten a short head in a twenty-two-runner handicap at Newmarket in October.

He kicked off the three-year-old season winning a Newbury handicap in April and earned a trip to Royal Ascot for the Britannia where he was beaten less than six lengths but finished eleventh. Another couple of placed efforts in valuable Newmarket handicaps in July followed but no more victories.

It was downhill as a four-year-old with his official rating dropping from 92 down to just 64 finished down the field in a good mile handicap at the Dante meeting, in the Hunt Cup at Royal Ascot and the Cambridgeshire. A highlight was an appearance in a veteran national hunt rider's private sweepstake at Ascot. The Maktoums supplied all the ten runners and with multiple champion John Francome putting up no less than eighteen pounds overweight he finished fourth. He finished the season under his lower rating with a decent effort again at Newmarket when third of twenty-nine and a third at Doncaster before a trip to the sales.

£24,000 was the price this time and off to Lambourn for trainer Stan Mellor for owner Trevor Hemmings. Mellor rode in the jump veteran's race at Ascot so perhaps he caught his eye there. Four runs over hurdles offered little with a fifth of eighteen at Ascot being the best effort before finishing off when always behind in a valuable conditions race at Chepstow won by future Irish National winner Mudahim. One run on the flat followed at the May Chester meeting and Mr Hemmings had seen enough and it was off to Ireland and another owner of good horses in Mrs Seamus Purcell. Her best horse had been Supreme Hurdle and Champion Chase winner Buck House and Hawwam was to be trained for her in Kildare by Dickie Donoghue.

A nice easy introduction at Fairyhouse taking on future Irish St Leger and Melbourne Cup winner Vintage Crop in a maiden hurdle with the surprising thing being that he was only a 14/1 shot. Two runs later under just nine stone four he was sent for a minor handicap at Tramore with blinkers applied for the first time. He was the

subject of a gamble (12/1 into 7/1) and in the without the favourite market (10/1 into 3/1) the latter of which was duly landed. The press at the time reported the without bookies calling it a disaster of a day. A better effort was probably a fourth at Navan in March under just nine stone three including three pounds overweight. Three runs on the flat and then a victory back over hurdles at Naas in June under claimer D. P. Geoghegan by seven lengths. He was declared to run at Gowran Park a week later and at Ballinrobe in July while also appearing in the four-day declarations for a race at Listowel in September. However, he did not run again in Ireland and somewhere along the line picked up a leg injury which kept him off until he resurfaced in Lancashire at Eric Alston's over two years later.

He had been sent to Eric's by Frank McKeivitt who had had a few horses with Eric including Johnson's Express which won several races. In the summer of 1994 Club secretary at the time Kevin Parr had approached Eric and said we were looking for a horse and the outcome was that we could take up a free lease on Hawwam. Luckily we had enough club members interested at from memory £300 for the year.

So, after 844 days off in October 1994 he made his debut for the club in a one mile 0-60 limited stakes at Leicester. His handicap mark had dropped to 50 in his absence so he was wrong at the weights with many of his rivals but he was only 10/1 and ran a super race leading two out before fading to sixth. With little time left in the turf season it was on to Newmarket's last meeting for a twenty-four-runner handicap over seven furlongs. He ran a stormer leading just before the furlong pole and just going down in the last few strides by a neck. On to the all-weather with everybody thinking a win was a formality but two placings at Southwell without looking like winning began to dampen expectations. On to Wolverhampton for an evening meeting on New Year's Eve and then back a week later when there was a layer of ice on the running rail and another two places the last with Jason Weaver riding when beaten three parts of a length finishing fast.

The New Year brought changes at work and for a few weeks it was going to be impossible for me to get much time off so the win was bound to come in this period. Having planned to take a late lunch to pop out and watch what was to be his first win - a Limited Stakes at Southwell-I had a call summoning me to a meeting at head office for the afternoon. Great. I also couldn't get out for the second win ten days later in a 0-70 Southwell handicap by seven lengths again under Jason Weaver but managed to get the afternoon off to get to Wolverhampton where with Jason suspended he had arranged for his friend Frankie Dettori to ride. It was his only ride of the day and I wished he hadn't bothered as he gave Hawwam a dreadful ride and was far too whip happy as well. Work again got in the way for the third win back at Southwell under claimer Tony Proctor which took his rating up to 73 against his turf rating of 52. So, three wins in a month and I hadn't seen any of them live or in the betting shop however with the rating difference for the turf that would surely soon be put right but a problem arose.

After the third win that we learned from Eric that Mr McKeivitt wanted to end the lease and race Hawwam himself back on the turf. Negotiations were entered into and the result was in exchange for £6,000 we became the official owners paying for him out of the prize money he had won.

The turf win didn't come with a second of fifteen at Newcastle and third of sixteen at Haydock being his best efforts and by July he was due a break and he was given a summer holiday.

Back for the same race at Leicester in October and then back on the all-weather. Southwell in the winter is a cold old place and apart from one second place in November under Kieran Fallon he never looked to be in with a chance of winning. The handicapper had him and an experiment of going up to a mile and a half didn't work. On the last occasion after we had driven down for the third time in eleven days he looked pretty uninterested in proceedings when dropped into a seller and another break was taken.

On the turf and even off his lower rating he was showing little and when he really didn't make any effort when back on the all-weather at Wolverhampton it was more or less decided that retirement beckoned and contact was made with the Northern Racing School to see if they would take him. Funds were running low when he went to Carlisle for their early July Saturday evening meeting for a mile handicap. Tony Proctor was booked for the ride but simply didn't turn up and with the race having the largest field of the night the choice of a replacement was Iona Wands or K M Chin a Hong Kong apprentice on a work experience visit attached to Mark Johnson. We plumped for Iona but I am not sure it made any difference as he was totally uninterested and came back in his own time. Eric was sure he could still do it and said he was entered at Musselburgh on the Monday and he would get Kieran Fallon to ride and "wake him up".

In a better race Kieran did indeed wake him up and he finished third winning £404 which just kept the show in the road and would pay the transport for another effort. That came a week later at Ayr and with Kieran booked for another horse he rode regularly he arranged for his number two at Henry Cecil's John Lowe to ride. I had no chance of going as it was Wigan holiday weeks and while the factory was closed I was in doing the accounts. I did however manage to get up to the betting shop in Standish which late in the Monday afternoon was empty when I arrived. 25/1 in a bad seller and thinking it could be the last run I had small win bet. Having seen him run enough times it was obvious from early on he was on a going day and he led two out and never looked like stopping while the betting shop manager must have wondered what sort of idiot had wandered in.



- Hawwam winning at Ayr 15th July 1996 – photo kindly supplied by Dennis Nolan.

Friday of the same week with the work all done I told the girls I had in working for me they could finish early because I was and it was up to the evening meeting at Redcar. Ironically as he had been destined for the racing school the mile handicap was confined to apprentices who had graduated from the schools. Kevin had been impressed with Steve Drowne who at the time had ridden about fifty winners and on finding he was qualified he was booked. Nineteen runners and my memory is that it was like the Red Sea parting as Hawwam came up the centre of the course to win by half a length. It was tremendous being finally on course for a win with the photographs in the winner's enclosure and I remember John Lowe coming out of the weighing room to say well done which was nice and of course retirement was shelved.

Another trip to Newmarket in August was memorable for the journey. Friday afternoon leaving work at noon with the race the first on the card at 6.30. Piece of cake but the M6 was not playing the game and I might just have been over the speed limit on the final stretch from Huntingdon to the course. Turning into the July course car park I headed right up to the owner's entrance dumped the car and made the paddock just as the horses started to come in. He again showed his liking for Newmarket and a plan of sorts was later hatched. After only his second run at Haydock where he slipped on the home turn and lost all chance it was Ripon on St Wilfred's Day and a qualifier for the Rothmans Royals North South Challenge. Then on to the Northern semi-final at Doncaster on Leger day and then the final a £30K to the winner race at Newmarket on Champion Stakes/ Cesarewitch day. The problem with the plan turned out to be a horse called Concer Un who was rated

97 and ten pounds clear of anything else in the race. We had known we were going to be out of the handicap but he made us seventeen pounds wrong. He finished well down the field but only ten lengths off the winner and I have always thought he could have made a place from only seven pounds wrong.

The end of the season and nobody was keen on another all-weather program and right back at the beginning we had hoped he might run over hurdles so the decision was made. There was no official mark for his win in Ireland but the Racing Post had given it a mark of 111 so his rating of 95 seemed fair enough.

The Becher Chase meeting was two days then and the Friday was not the greatest card in Aintree's history and only seven were in the two-mile handicap hurdle. The horse was relaxed enough while the owners were a bag of nerves but he jumped well and finished fourth which of course got us into the famous unsaddling area by the old weighing room. Lorcan Wyer who rode thought he could pick up a small handicap but just before his next start came the news of a leg injury and the end had arrived suddenly.

So, forty-seven runs over twenty-five months, five wins, seventeen places, and over £20K in prize money and runs on some of the biggest days and at the top tracks. Far more than we could have wished for.

Denise Williams one of the syndicate had said she would have him in retirement and he went off to North Wales. We went to see him the next summer and he was happy as Larry turned out with a mare and her foal. That was 1997 and he was eleven. In 2013 myself and Kevin were at Liverpool Airport on our way to Punchestown when we bumped into Denise who informed us he was still going strong. It was 2016 or 2017 when on the same trip I saw Denise at Dublin Airport and she told me old age had finally caught up with him.

MEMBERS LETTER'S – FROM JIM MOTTRAM (IN KETTLESHULME)

Thank you for your never-ending ability to lift our enthusiasm up and your fellow workers! I decided to become a Life Member of the club because I no longer have any horses and sadly my fellow owners have themselves passed on. I can recall at a moment's notice how I got involved in horse racing! Every Thursday night I would meet up with my three pals, one of which had recently bought his first racehorse, a description that I found quickly to be untruthful! More and more drink followed when suddenly racing's most recent owner suggested we all have a leg in this venture! Gerry Lowe was my friend who went onto share horses with Sir Alex Ferguson. Phil Davies, an Auctioneer in Stockport, whose horse Tedburrow would be invited to Saudi to race over there and was held in such esteem that Sheik Mohammed's generosity allowed us to take the Horse to the World Cup and we stayed in his Hotel free of charge!

That night the Beer had whet our enthusiasm two were in and two to follow. I managed to get Home safely and wake my wife (Valerie) up with such enthusiasm that I'd got a horse! Which was quickly changed to we've got a horse. My wife interruptedA HORSE! A HORSE!! You are daft after you've had a drink.....How much is it going to cost!! The drunks arm waved about searching for a wordoh it's not dear, words stuck in my throatgone were the colours, Willie Carson the Jockey, but by then Kit Carson would have done....tears followed. Where are you going to keep it? There's no room in the Garage and more tears ...and you knew I wanted a Microwave! Gentlemen be very wary of the effects of drink, from one who knows!

The greatest tip was I had was from the days of NWRC with the winner of the Grand National given at the Aintree Preview event from Roy David* (when the Manchester Evening News had a proper racing coverage) who gave us Bobbyjo....I got the much-needed microwave with the winnings!

Another of my happy memories also involves club members Mark & Sheila. I remember taking a party in a mini bus to the races at Catterick one Saturday. I thought I did well getting us there safely but one after one of the "good things" lost. In desperation I asked one of the lads if he wanted the winner of the next race and he said "No thanks!" I've only got a small garden

*Roy David is a former journalist and best-selling author of non-fiction books. He had a top ten hit with his investigative book on the downfall of former British champion jockey, Lester Piggott, who was jailed for three years for tax fraud. On another horseracing theme, his book, The Shergar Mystery, was the basis of a major BBC 2 drama on which he was originator and technical adviser. His novel, AN ENEMY WITHIN, set against the first nine months of the US invasion of Iraq, is a compelling, fast-paced thriller which raises ethical and political issues surrounding war.

NORTH & MIDLANDS RACING CLUB AGM

MONDAY JANUARY 25TH 2021 AT 7.30PM

HELD VIA ZOOM – ALL ARE WELCOME TO JOIN THE MEETING

Our AGM will be held 'online' for the first time ever as a result of the Covid-19 restrictions.

To be honest trekking out in the middle of winter is not the most appealing thing so hopefully the fact that members can sit at home and join in the meeting will encourage more people to get involved this time.

If you would like to join in please register your interest by e mailing info@northernracingclub.com and you will then be sent an invitation to join the meeting a few days before.

Similarly, please e mail any agenda items for the meeting as soon as you can.

The meeting should last around 40 minutes although an extended time slot will be booked in case there are extra agenda items to discuss.

RACING SYSTEMS EXPLORED – BY PHIL EVANS

Regular visitors to the club website (www.northernracingclub.com) will hopefully have had a look at the 'Racing Systems' tab and viewed some of the variety of systems that are being tracked for effectiveness, with the rolling results updated most months.

Some of the most effective systems for the National Hunt season are detailed below with details as recorded in early December 2020.

TRAINER TRAITS – Based on trainers with three or more wins in races over the last ten years – these trainer statistics can be also found on the club website although many newspapers will also include such data.

The top tracks to follow this system are currently Wincanton +£28.58; Clonmel +£27.84; Punchestown +£27.43; Cartmel + £24.50. All based on a notional £1 stake placed on qualifying races for the period 2016-20.

COURSE & TRAINER – Based on horses with a previous win at the track and whose trainer has a 60% or higher RTF rating in the Racing Post. The RTF lists in the printed edition of the paper are in a separate table whilst online the RTF score is shown after the trainer's name on the race card.

The top tracks to follow this system are currently Leopardstown +£27.98; Kelso + £27.98; Wincanton +£23.43; Fakenham +£21.43. All based on a notional £1 stake placed on qualifying races for the period 2016-20.

TRAINER PAST WINS – Based on races won once/twice by a trainer in last ten years (if the trainer has three or more wins, treated as trainer traits, as above). Some daily papers will show such information but if checking online I would recommend using either irishracing.com (past race history available on individual race cards) or betturtle.com (subscription required to view past trends).

The top tracks to follow this system are currently Huntingdon +£39.15; Listowel +£32.38; Sligo +£25.33; Ayr +£25.17; Limerick + £24.85; Leicester +£24.81 All based on a notional £1 stake placed on qualifying races for the period 2016-20.

BLINKERS FIRST TIME – My system also includes hoods and this data is shown in most papers and online via Racing Post etc. This system doesn't throw up too many winners but when they win the odds are usually very rewarding.

The top tracks to follow this system are currently Hereford +£40.25 & Perth +£27.45.
All based on a notional £1 stake placed on qualifying races for the period 2016-20.

RESTED AT LEAST 365 DAYS – The system excludes flat and point to point races. Many newspapers show the number of days since any run so I tend to double check via other sources such as the Racing Post website which shows a more reliable figure. A bit like the blinkers system, the winners are not as regular but the prices are often very good.

The top tracks to follow this system are currently Worcester +£62.14; Sligo +£59; Sedgefield +£55.33; Wincanton +£53.75; Ffos Las +£42.67; Carlisle +£36.25; Cork £35.88 & Hexham +£22.5.
All based on a notional £1 stake placed on qualifying races for the period 2016-20.

WIND OPERATIONS (FIRST AND SECOND RUNS AFTERWARDS) – In the UK this data only became readily available three years ago but I have only collated data for the last two years. Many papers will identify horses that are having their first run after the operation but the Racing Post is the best guide for identifying horses on their second run back after the op. In Ireland the data is not usually disclosed but for horses that had their first run in the UK after the op the Racing Post will again identify second comeback races in Ireland.

The top tracks to follow this system (first race after operation) are currently Wolverhampton* +£41; Aintree +£38; Uttoxeter + £34.13; Hexham +£27.38 & Ludlow + £26.59. *Relates to an AW 'bumper' meeting held when other meetings were frozen off.
All based on a notional £1 stake placed on qualifying races for the period 2019-20.

The top tracks to follow this system (second race after operation) are currently Hexham +£87.6; Warwick +£31.22; Ludlow + £29.32 & Southwell +£20.98.
All based on a notional £1 stake placed on qualifying races for the period 2019-20.

CHELTENHAM POINTERS

A couple of other systems that have produced positive results at Cheltenham include the following:

Hardly original, but following Irish trained runners blindly has produced a LSP of £38.86 over the last two years. The downside to this system is that at the festival in March we will often find that half of the runners in many races have travelled from Ireland!

The 'Days Last Ran' system has also produced a LSP of £24.14 at Cheltenham over the last three years. The system looks for races where at least three winners in the last ten years had last run the same number of days earlier (ideally in the same race). This data is also available on the club website. Essentially this is looking for the clues that trainers won't tell the public – the most effective training programme to win the big races.

Some examples of this are:

Champion Hurdle – Nicky Henderson has had three winners of a listed race at Sandown (38 days earlier) since 2010 that won here.

QM Champion Chase – Since 2012, four winners had last run 53 days earlier at Ascot in the Gr 1 Clarence House Chase with three winning that race and the other finishing 2nd.

Stayers Hurdle – Since 2012, five winners had last run 47 days earlier in the Gr 2 Cleeve Hurdle at Cheltenham. Three won that race and started as favourites with the others 3rd (50/1 winner) and 4th (14/1 winner).



Grange Park Racing

The Simple Way to Racehorse Ownership

Since we had our first runner in 2011 we have had over 65 winners combined over Flat & NH. The aim of GPR is to offer Fun, Affordable syndicates, with the very best Communication, making the shareholder feel like they are the sole owner.

We are Northern based & our horses are trained mostly in the North, by some of the best trainers in the North. Currently we have horses in training with the following trainers;

- Ruth Carr
- Rebecca Bastiman
- Micky Hammond
- Karen Tutty
- Richard Whitaker
- Tim Easterby



Shares are mostly available in 5 & 10% shares, but also in certain horses there will be smaller shares, making it affordable for everyone. As well as purchase there are also lease shares available in some horses. Purchase prices for a 5% share average at £600 purchase & £125pm to cover all costs.

Grange Park Racing Club Horses

We currently have three horses in the Racing Club, including winners HIGHLAND ACCLAIM trained by Ruth Carr & HIGHLIGHT REEL trained by Rebecca Bastiman, as well as a young exciting racing prospect a 2019 filly by ARDAD out of LOVE ACTION trained by Tim Easterby. All of these horses have lease shares available in them for a one off payment of only £195 (all inclusive) for a period up till the 31st of Decemeber 2021!!!

Benefits include: Welcome Pack, Race Day Badges (on a draw rota basis), Text & Email messages of all entries & declarations, Race Reports, Stable Visits, Your Percentage of all Prize Money, Dedicated Owners Website Login Page, as well as Invites to all GPR Social Events.

Great Gift Ideas

2019 LOVE ACTION filly

2019 Bay Filly
by Ardad out of Love Action



HIGHLIGHT REEL

2015 Bay Gelding
by Big Bad Bob out of Dance Hall Girl



HIGHLAND ACCLAIM

2011 Bay Gelding
by Acclamation out of Emma's Star



Lease shares available at a one off payment of £195
(Period running till 31/12/2021)



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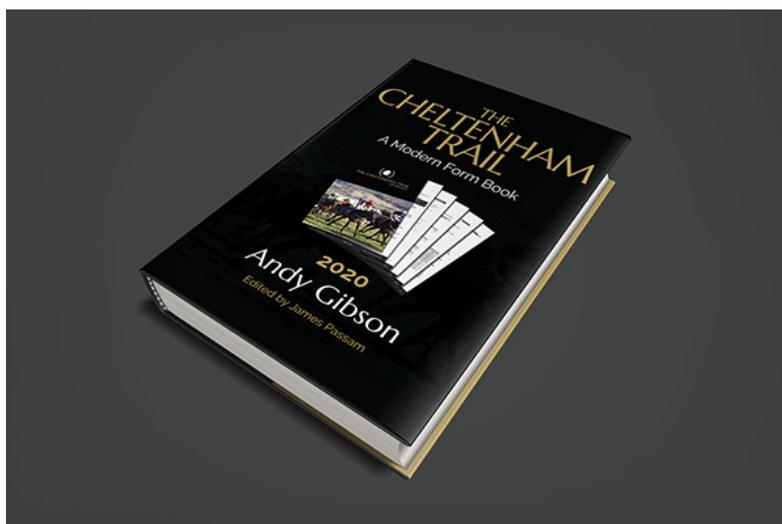


SCAN ME

MORE XMAS GIFT IDEAS FOR 2020

Andy Gibson has published his first ever edition of 'A Modern Form Book' with the first print sold out and the second print now available at £30 plus £3.90 p & p in the UK. This is a 400+ pages hardback edition and looks at the main jump's races in the 2019-20 season.

Online orders can be placed at <https://thecheltenhamtrail.co.uk/register/a-modern-form-book-the-cheltenham-trail-2020>



Betturtle is one of the best independent racing websites I have come across and whilst there are parts that are free to access their premium parts do require a paid subscription (a bit like the Racing Post model).

It is run from a base in Lymm, Cheshire by a small enthusiastic team.

Whether you just want to view race cards or use their in-depth racing data that is available or maybe look at their 'tipping' models it is well worth a look and the cost is cheaper than Racing Post!

An added benefit is that if subscribers quote 'North & Midlands Racing Club' they will get an extra 50% subscription so 12 months becomes 18 months!

The website address is <https://www.betturtle.com/betturtle/index.html> and subscription requests can be sent to julia@betturtle.com



BETTURTLE

And finally – A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all NMRC Members and their families.....



N & M RACING CLUB COMMITTEE/OFFICIALS 2020/21

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Next copy deadline for Racin' will be Sunday 31st January

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