



MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS DUE MARCH 1ST 2021

Members who still prefer to receive the club magazine in the post are reminded that your annual subs of £10 (per address) are due shortly.

Many members will already have set up a regular bank payment for this, but for all others who prefer to pay by cheque, there is a membership form enclosed with this edition of Racin' Magazine.

If there are any online members who would prefer to receive the printed issue of the magazine in future, please contact Helen Goodwill, Membership Secretary, to arrange this.

Copies of the membership form are also available to download via the club website at www.northernracingclub.com

FORTHCOMING ONLINE NMRC EVENTS

At the club AGM in January, we discussed the impacts of the covid-19 lockdowns and what the club could do to help members keep in touch during these difficult times.

Whilst the club has already held online quizzes and will be holding online Cheltenham Festival previews in 2021, we decided to also trial holding some general online racing chats for members.

The first one will be held on **Monday 22nd February, starting at 7pm** and will last for up to an hour.

Phil Evans/Judith Bradley will host the chats and provide full details of how to join the online event nearer the time. To register your interest, please contact Judith by e mail (see committee panel).

With Cheltenham now on the horizon, it is planned to hold another online racing quiz (with multiple answer options – so it's not just for racing anoraks!) on the topic of the Cheltenham Festival.

This will be held a week later on **Monday 1st March, also starting at 7pm** and lasting up to an hour.

To register an interest for this please e mail Phil Evans (see committee panel).

For details of this year's Cheltenham Preview events, please see page 3. We have a great list of panel guests lined up and all are giving up their time for this fundraiser for the IJF.

For more information on how to join in the club's online events please see page 4. If you have a computer, tablet or mobile phone (plus internet access) you will be able to join in!

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COMPETITION NEWS & RESULTS

59's DRAW RESULTS UPDATE

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

December 5th – 18 – Chris Watson (Hazel Grove, Stockport)

January 2nd – 37 – Maureen Dawson (Waterloo, Liverpool)

Chris and Maureen 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.

We currently have available numbers 40 & 51 in the draw. It costs just £1pm to enter (payable quarterly or annually) so if you would like to join in please contact Phil Evans (see committee panel).

NATIONAL HUNT – SATURDAY NAPS CHALLENGE 2020-21

For this jumps season the scoring was altered to give all entrants 19 points to use over the 19 weeks thus all started on a score of -19points.

For each winner found, the entrant receives points based on the odds of the winner so for example a 4/1 winner scores 5pts.

Besides the main competition, we have extra bonus prizes for the first entrant to move into profit (won jointly by **Dave Bates/Harry Sandland**) and the leader at the half way stage (won by **Maureen Dawson**).

Additional bonus prizes are available for the highest priced winner selected, the most winners selected and the longest sequence of winners selected.

The leading scores are set out below (week 9/19):

TOTAL	NAME/ENTRY NUMBER
23.06	Maureen Dawson (03)
23	David Bates (44)
19.5	Harry Sandland (73)
11.5	Gordon Armistead (17)
7	Andy White (16)
7	Brian James (22)
7	Cieran Cassidy (87)
5.5	Alan Spencer (30)
3.5	Mike Campbell (18)
2.5	Diane Bates (68)
2.34	Floss Howes (36)
2	Duane Marshall (116)
1.5	Ray Squire (19)
1.5	John McDonald (98)
1	Gary Parkinson (119)
-0.1	Kathy McGreevy (117)
-2	Craig McConnachie (110)
-3.5	Eunice Flynn (21)
-4	Carol Evans (107)
-6	Elizabeth O'Donoghue (92)
-6.5	Guy Weaver (38)
-7.7	Jim Aitkenhead (29)
-8	Steve Cawley (70)
-9	Linda Boswell (94)
-9	Harold Woodward (50)
-9.5	Charles Rear (62)
-10.5	Mary Claydon (05)
-10.8	Sam Doyle (112)
-11.36	Jon Barry (49)
-11.85	Colin Malone (1)
-12	Julie Doyle (111)
-13	Tony Coleman (75)
-13	Simon Clark (48)
-13.12	Mark Banks (96)
-13.8	Kath Squire (103)
-14	Luke Parkinson (118)
-14	Phil Evans (24)
-14.09	Ted Halewood (02)
-14.5	Paul Walker (95)
-14.7	Linda Harrison (34)
-14.7	Martin Withinshaw (09)
-15	Eddie Carson (97)
-15	Paul Halliwell (104)

CHELTENHAM PREVIEW NIGHTS ONLINE 2021

IJF Fundraisers held March 15th – 18th

PANEL GUESTS ALREADY INCLUDE:

**CORNELIUS LYSAGHT (FORMER BBC RACING)
ANDY GIBSON (CHELTENHAM TRAIL ANNUAL)
DICKON WHITE (JOCKEY CLUB REGIONAL MANAGER)
RYAN WINKS (RETIRED JOCKEY/ASST TRAINER)
LUKE TARR (STAR SPORTSHEAD OF PR)
GARETH LEONARD (SIS BROADCASTER)
JULIA MARRITT (BET TURTLE RACING WEBSITE)**

Each guest has kindly offered to present an online session to support the Injured Jockeys Fund.

Whilst there will not be a set 'entry fee' to attend the sessions, we have set up a 'Just Giving' page so that we can again support the IJF fund via these events and details of this will be shared with all who attend the online sessions. Just donate what you can afford to.

Details of how to join these online meetings will be given to all who register for them.

There will be a total of four online sessions although the 'running order' will not be firmed up until the week before the festival in case any of the guests have a clash of commitments that week.

Monday 15th March – 7pm
Tuesday 16th March – 7pm
Wednesday 17th March – 7pm
Thursday 18th March – 7pm

As we may be limited to 100 members/guests attending each session we need everyone to register for those meetings they wish to attend (no restrictions regarding number of sessions that can be joined) so that the online meeting links can be sent out in due course.

To register for these events please send e mail to info@northernracingclub.com quoting which sessions that you would like to attend.

CHELTENHAM FESTIVAL GUIDES – MEMBERS SPECIAL OFFER

Whilst the NMRC Cheltenham Previews are being held online this year, we shall be repeating our special offer on Racing Post Cheltenham Guides again, all to be posted out this year.

If you order directly from Racing Post, these cost £15.98 including postage. If you order via NMRC they will be £8, including postage, to members.

The books are published on March 2nd so we shall need orders/payments at least one week before this date so our order can be sent in good time.

Please send requests by post to arrive no later than February 23rd with cheques payable to North & Midlands Racing Club.

Alternatively, for details of how to order online please e mail info@northernracingclub.com with the last date for requests also being February 23rd at 12 noon.



NMRC'S ONLINE EVENTS IN 2021 – MEMBER'S GUIDE

As indicated on the front page of Racin' , all you need to do to join in these events is have access to a computer, tablet or mobile phone plus internet access.

Whilst we have used 'Zoom' for some club events already, their free version is limited to 40-minute sessions. We have also tried using 'Microsoft Teams' which is a very similar platform but currently allows up to 60-minute meetings (possibly longer during lockdown).

When you register for an online event arranged by NMRC, please ask if you would like some guidance on how to use the online system ahead of the actual meeting.

Essentially, all those who join in the meetings will be able to see/hear the guest speakers from the comfort of their own homes!

The online quizzes do have a bit more technology involved (Kahoot used at present) and will work best if both a computer and mobile device are available.

'ALEX BIRD' TIPPING CHALLENGE 2021

The Alex Bird Trophy, the competition to find the North & Midlands Racing Club Champion Tipster for 2021, gets underway with the Cheltenham Festival. For 2021 we again have dual organisers being Mark Banks and Michael Wheater. Please note that for this year entrants must enter all four rounds – if anyone is on holiday etc for all/part of a round a substitute may be appointed!

The format of the Competition again covers all races on each day of the first two meetings at Cheltenham & Aintree with just the first four days covered by Round 3 at Royal Ascot. Round 4 will be another flat festival meeting (probably Goodwood or Doncaster) but will be decided later (due to a possible clash with holidays for the scorer!)

1. The points scored will be based on the winner and placed horses (2nd/3rd/4th depending on number of runners) with potential bonus points. Precise scoring details are set out in the full rules (available from Mark/Michael or online at <https://the-nrc.weebly.com/clubcompetitions.html>). Please note that the bonus points system has been embellished in 2021 for both race winners and some longer priced placed horses.
2. The overall winner, and therefore the 'Alex Bird' Champion Tipster, will be decided on the total for all 4 rounds and receives the coveted Alex Bird trophy for a period of 12 months.
3. Any entrants who are on holiday etc for all/part of a round may nominate a substitute to send entries on his/her behalf.
4. Entry Fees in 2021 are the same as last year, namely £10 for all 4 rounds.
5. As previously, entrants may submit up to two entries, as long as all are marked as 'entry 1' 'entry 2' etc and will be scored separately
6. Cash prizes will be awarded to the overall winner and the winner of the four rounds. The overall winner's prize is guaranteed as a minimum of £100 with the four round prizes guaranteed as a minimum of £50 with the actual prizes confirmed once the number of entries is known. In 2020, due to the high volume of entries, additional prizes for runners up etc were available. If the level of entries permits, these will again be awarded in 2021. NB All cash prizes are remitted to the winners by direct bank payments.

We hope that the 2021 competition will appeal to loyal members of previous years and to new contestants alike. In due course, your feedback will be welcome. In the meantime, we look forward to your entries and wish everyone the best of good tipping fortune.

ALEX BIRD COMPETITION 2021 – ENTRY FORM

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

Phone/E Mail.....

Please return to North & Midlands Racing Club at 53 Dalebrook Rd, Sale, Greater Manchester M33 3LB. Please also enclose your entry fee of £10 per entry (cheques payable to North & Midlands Racing Club please). Please enclose a SAE if you require a paper copy of the rules.

To make an online banking payment of your entry fee please Email info@northernracingclub.com for further details. You will then receive an e-mailed copy of the rules for 2021.

FAREWELL TO A CLUB STALWART – MARTIN BAGGOTT

By MARTIN BURGESS

It was very sad to hear from Carol, Martin Baggott's wife that he had passed away on the morning of New Year's Eve 2020.

Martin was a keen racing enthusiast who had been a long-standing member of the club as well as being a member over many years at Haydock Park and Bangor on Dee racecourses.

I first met him approximately 70 years ago when we were playing junior football respectively for the Chancel Lane and Fulshaw primary schools in Wilmslow. We then moved on to playing football together, primarily in Wilmslow, but when our youthful days came to an end we sought solace in the less physical activity of following racing. Not only enjoying our memberships at Haydock Park and Bangor but in attending the annual Cheltenham Festival for over 35 years as well as branching out abroad visiting the Prix de L'Arc de Triomphe in Paris and the fashionable Deauville meetings on numerous occasions.

During his membership of the, (original) North West Racing Club, he was an avid attendee of the preview evenings at various venues enjoying particularly the camaraderie of such events.

Away from the frivolous world of racing, he was a Chartered Accountant, held in high esteem within his profession, being a person of honesty and of the upmost integrity who will be sadly missed by all who knew him.



Editor's Note – Martin was always keen to get involved in all types of club events. Here he is (second from right) assisting with our post-race presentations at Bangor On Dee a few years back. He was an avid competition entrant also, although sadly, due to deteriorating health last year, he was unable to join in the Saturday Naps Challenge again this winter. Your Saturday morning messages will be missed. R.I.P Martin.

GORDON ARMISTEAD'S RACING DIARY

(FROM BEHIND THE TV SET AT PRESENT)

Week Ending November 29th

In the Long-Distance Hurdle at Newbury Paisley Park ran a fine race on his return in a slowly run race. The Albert Bartlett looked a good race last season with Thyme Hill not the first to advertise the form and he and the third that day Fury Road add a depth to the staying hurdlers. McFabulous was a strange favourite for the race but didn't get the trip.

The Ladbroke Trophy was a below average renewal and Cloth Cap routed the field to ensure he goes up enough to make the cut at Aintree in April. He needs the good ground he had here or better.

The Fighting Fifth told us Epatante was alive and well but she will have harder tasks ahead. Sceau Royal is nobody's idea of a Champion Hurdler and disappointedly Ribble Valley was nowhere near good enough at this level.

At Fairyhouse Monkfish made it the first five from the Albert Bartlett that have won first out this season when strolling home in the two four novice chase while stable mate Concertista also had an easy win in the Grade 2 Mares Hurdle. This was her first win in Ireland and proved she can show form away from Cheltenham.

The three Grade 1's on the second day at Fairyhouse produced three odds on winners and three slowly run races. Envoi Allen was far too good in the Drinmore and we are evidently only to see him once more before the spring festivals. The Royal Bond turned into a sprint which Ballyadam won easily but I have no doubt that Willie Mullins has half a dozen better than third home N'golo. Even slower was the Hatton's Grace where Honeysuckle out speeded her rivals. Twenty seconds faster than Honeysuckle was Zanahiyr in the three-year-old hurdle and even this early in the season he looks the business.

Week Ending December 6th

Altior's absence from the Tingle Creek caused plenty of controversy and Nicky Henderson's attempt to defend his actions against Lydia Hislop on Racing TV was cringe worthy viewing. The Tingle Creek and Henry VIII were run in just over the standard time and that just about says it all. Politologue beat a couple of good handicappers and they do seem to have him in a good place at the moment. A top class one would find him out but he would make them fight for it.

The Many Clouds race at Aintree was a waste of time due to the sun while the fences in the Becher sorted the field out. Vieux Lion Rouge jumped impeccably to earn himself another go in April where he will finish somewhere about seventh. Runner up Kimberlite Candy will finish near him staying better but being very badly handicapped.

At Punchestown the fog ruined what should have been a great spectacle in the John Durkan. Min took it for the third time from a vastly improved Tornado Flyer. The winner will go back to two miles until the Ryanair while the runner up will try and prove he is top class over three at Christmas.

Week Ending December 13th

The rearranged Peterborough Chase at Cheltenham had a good field and Mister Fisher boosted the Marsh Chase form winning nicely. He will probably be found out in Grade 1 company. Luckily for my neighbours they were out for the afternoon as I shouted home 28/1 shot Some Neck in the Cross-Country race. Trainer John McConnell has done me some good turns in the past notably with Pearl of the West and jockey Ben Harvey must be the only jockey to ride his first winner under rules in a National when Space Cadet won the Ulster version last season. Some Neck had gone into the notebook after his cross-country debut at Punchestown over three miles. He stays all day but his jumping is not the best but the cross-country course here is pretty soft. The La Touche in April rather than Cheltenham in March would seem the best target.

It was great to see Mick Winters take the big chase with Chatham Street Lad. He has already had a good season with novice hurdler Sayce Gold for Trevor Hemmings who is also having a good season for someone who sold a big proportion of his string in the summer. Jockey Darragh O'Keefe was champion conditional last season in Ireland but rode just two winners after November. This season he has been in top form right from the off. Where the winner will end up I have no idea.

Week Ending December 20th

The first candidate for race of the season came in the Long Walk with Paisley Park back to his best to just get up and nab Thyme Hill close home. The Worlds End took them along at a good pace and turned it into a proper stamina test and that suits the winner down to the ground. The stayers have to take each other on all season so the Cleeve and then the Festival for the pair seems probable. Rokšana ran right up to form in third. At Navan Ashdale Bob beat a decent field in a Grade 2 Novice Hurdle over two miles four. It was a hard race to weigh up as the first two favourites Holymacaponny and Fighter Allen dropped out turning in and both were pulled up. The winner, second Fakiera, and third Gabynako look stayers with a future but maybe not top class.

Christmas New Year Holiday Week

Kempton

Still only eight Frodon was in his thirtieth chase when taking the King George and he is so consistent. He probably just ran up to his best as others seemingly underperformed. It's hard to see Frodon winning a Gold Cup but he certainly deserves a chance. Second placed Waiting Patiently could have done with being a bit handier when the slow pace quickened and seemed to get the trip well. No doubt there will be a spring target for Cyrname who seemed uninterested here but what that might be we will see. Saint Calvados looked like he would rather go left-handed but ran a fine race and he will go to the Ryanair. Santini again just looked slow. He is not a horse I like and maybe blinkers could replace the cheekpieces would help. He won't get an entry for the National but probably should. In his third chasing season this was just his eighth chase. Having burst here Lostintranslation just added to the problems of the Tizzards who are having a poor season.

Their big novice chase hope The Big Breakaway had gained a sheepskin noseband since his defeat at Exeter and while he looks class as he bullies lesser rivals he again didn't look up to it in a good race like the Kauto Star. Mistake after mistake littered his effort and while the excuse was made that the course didn't suit him I have plenty of doubts that he really wants it. Winner Shan Blue was a 100/1 shot when sixth in the Ballymore at Cheltenham but has really taken to fences and tries really hard. With the runner up not jumping and the third home If The Cap Fits seemingly hating chasing it is hard to know just how good he is.

The Christmas Hurdle saw Epatante well beaten and never looking happy. She went straight to the Champion Hurdle last season and I imagine she will again but would you take a short price about her after this. Silver Streak would want it good ground for the Champion Hurdle but inevitably it is on the slow side for Day1 of the festival.

Day two saw Shishkin stroll home in the two-mile novice chase to go odds on for the Arkle. Playing devil's advocate, he has beaten horses rated 137 and 141 in his two chases and while it looks a poor category so far this season the race is ten weeks away.

What to make of the Desert Orchid? Nube Negra had to find a stone and a half of improvement but travelled like the winner from a long way out. Spanish bred chasers have been rare since the days of the Duke of Albuquerque but he looks a good one and is an interesting contender for Cheltenham. He is the only U K winner from two runners for his sire Dink who was placed in a Spanish Derby but ended his career failing to beat a rival in two of his three tries over hurdles and pulling up in his one chase in France. Bookmakers couldn't give Altior away in the betting and he made it look like hard work a long way from the Champion he was. We will need another run probably at Newbury to see if he still has it.

Shan Blue's win in the Kauto Star was not rated the best performance by a staying novice at the meeting according to the official handicapper. He rated Royale Pagaille's easy win in the open three-mile handicap higher. Having backed him in a double with very easy Leopardstown handicap winner Master Mcshee I thought he looked the winner from halfway. It will be interesting if he is asked to take on the same owners Monkfish come Cheltenham.

Leopardstown

Day one is the quietest and the Grade 1 two-mile novice chase lacked any real star in the making. Felix Desjy tore off but slammed on at four out and lost his hard-won lead and was a spent force soon after. Champion Hurdle third Darver Star was left in front but they had gone too hard. Franco de Port couldn't go the pace but came to pick it up at the last and win easily. Willie Mullins has a couple of others waiting in the wings.

The other graded race was the juvenile and Zanahiyr again won with plenty in hand despite the race being run at a far more sedate pace than his win at Fairyhouse.

Day two started with a possible challenger to Zanahiyr as French Aseel strolled home in the juvenile maiden by over twenty lengths which could easily have been doubled. The Holdens who own and train him are sellers so whether they will take a quick profit on the €62K they paid for him we shall see. Perhaps the €570K they

received for point winner Jonbon earlier in the month will be enough for now. (It did not take long for the sale to go through as he joined Willie Mullins to race in the Donnelly colours within a week.)

Willie Mullins took both the Grade 1's. Chacon Pour Soi was much better than at Cork and he beat Notebook and Put The Kettle On very easily. He stands out in the two-mile brigade and hopefully will go on to the Dublin Festival and then Cheltenham. Put The Kettle On might be better going for the new Mrs Paddy Power Mares Chase at Cheltenham. Appreciate It was impressive winning the Grade 1 two-mile novice hurdle by nine lengths against a field of good winners. He won a bumper at two and a half and will eventually want that at least over jumps but is not short of speed. Royal Bond winner Ballyadam was well beaten in fourth and while he had winners he was not the only Gordon Elliot runner to run surprisingly badly during the meeting. While the Mullins bandwagon managed four more wins on day three he missed out in the two Grade 1's. It was a super field for the Savills Chase with only Al Boum Photo missing. I was surprised that Minella Indo was such a short favourite after winning two very weak chases this season but did not expect him to depart early on. Also out early was Delta Work after Jack Kennedy was not allowed to ride under very strange circumstances. They went a proper pace here unlike at Kempton and Kemboy and Melon who helped force that pace kept going just being caught by A Plus Tard after the last. It was a proper staying performance and there seems no reason for him to go back in trip for the Ryanair at Cheltenham and he looks a genuine Gold Cup candidate. Kemboy has not been at his best at Cheltenham but Melon has and the way he travelled you would think of the Ryanair for him. Allaho in fourth seemingly failed to get home and he might be hard to place. Presenting Percy and Samcro never travelled.

When Flooring Porter won at Gowran Park in July off 122 you could not imagine him taking the Grade 1 Christmas Hurdle but from two out he had it in the bag having never been challenged making all. The two Elliot runners Fury Road and Sire de Berlais were beaten leaving the back straight and the form looks suspect. With the defeat of Epatante there was a chance we could have had a new Champion Hurdle favourite after the Matheson Hurdle but with the obvious candidates Saint Roi and Abacadabras not even being placed it didn't happen. Sharjah took the race for the third year running and seemingly remains the best of the Irish hurdlers. He will be back here in February and then try again at Cheltenham. Aspire Tower followed up his Down Royal win with a terrific effort here in second. In new colours he looks far more settled and just needs to brush up his jumping. Saint Roi appeared to have no excuses and just wasn't good enough while Abacadabras totally bombed out but scoped badly after the race. No doubt most of them will be back here at the Dublin Festival with Honeysuckle added to the mix.

The three-mile Grade 1 Novice Chase was top class with the Albert Bartlett first and second taking each other on again. The result was the same with Monkfish this time winning it by three lengths. There is nothing to dislike about Monkfish and he is the obvious favourite for the race which had been sponsored for the last forty-six year by the RSA Group. Runner up Latest Exhibition was just beaten by a better horse but will no doubt also head to Cheltenham.

Concertista looks a much better horse since her Cheltenham win and gave weight and a beating to some good mares over two and a half. We don't know where Honeysuckle will be going come March or if Benie Des Dieux will be back but Concertista's liking for Cheltenham will help in the Mares Hurdle.

Other races

At Limerick the two-and-a-half-mile Grade 1 Faugheen Chase was a setback of sorts for the Mullins team as odds on Asterion Forlonge took what looked a soft fall. They still won the race with the mare Colreevy who had also beaten the geldings in a Grade 1 bumper. The form of the placed horses Pencilfulloflead and Janidil was boosted over the holiday period so we will see how she will fit into the stables plans.

Al Boum Photo made his annual trip to Tramore where he again beat stable mate Acapella Bourgeois without too much fuss. We won't see him again till Gold Cup day and he will be right in the mix again.

Some recent winners of the Grade 1 Challow Hurdle like Captain Cutter and Parlour Games have quickly been forgotten but this year Bravemansgame was getting Denman comparisons from his trainer. He has plenty to do to justify that and you can pick all sorts of holes in the form beating just two others. We will see.

The other Grade 1 Novice Hurdle over the period the Tolworth didn't seem to have a great field and the favourite Metier won it pretty easily. The next three home are already seven-year-olds and had plenty of runs to prove they are nothing special so he still has plenty to prove.

Week Ending January 10th

Kempton had one of the races saved from Cheltenham's New Year's Day meeting in the Relkeel and McFabulous found the two mile five much more to his liking. On the official ratings the field were closely

matched but he is on the up and most of the others fine winning races hard work. The Aintree Hurdle is said to be his spring target but he will need to improve again to win there.

The other Grade 2 on the card the Silviniaco Conti lost its favourite Imperial Aura very early on and Master Tommytucker was far too good for the other two runners with the last fence mistake being the only danger from a mile out. The winner is another who probably has a Grade 1 target at Aintree but I don't see him being in Min's class. Imperial Aura will go to the Ryanair where he will be too short in the betting.

At Chepstow the Finale Hurdle lost the possible Irish challengers because of the travel ban and Adagio's Cheltenham runs looked better to me than Nassalam's beating of trees in two runs at Fontwell. It proved to be so and he looks the best of the British juveniles so far but of course has been well beaten by what looks to be Gordon Elliot's third string.

The Welsh National was run at a good pace on ground not as soft as it can get there. Secret Reprieve was well in under his four-pound penalty having been put up twelve for his December win. The trainer was talking of Aintree despite him being a novice and the handicapper gave him an extra two pounds to take him up to 144 which would have got him in in four of the last five Nationals.

Week Ending January 17th

Midweek racing at this time of year is pretty moderate so the rearranged Naas meeting stood out. The Group 1 Lawlor's of Naas Novice hurdle over two miles four was the highlight with Ashdale Bob coming on from his Navan win taking on some impressive maiden winners. Ashdale Bob took off a stride too soon at the second and didn't make it but the way Bob Olinger won he would have been hard pressed to match him. Bob Olinger now challenges Bravemansgame for favouritism of the Ballymore. Runner up Blue Lord pulled too hard to get home in this class of race while Gabynako in third gives the level of the race.

The four-runner two-mile novice chase was probably a better race than the Grade 1 at Leopardstown. Energumene only had the one hurdle run just before lockdown 1 and this was his second chase but his jumping could not be faulted. He looks the Mullins Arkle runner at the moment but we will know more after the Dublin Festival. Runner up Captain Guinness

had won his beginners well and had good hurdles form so this looks solid form.

Two grade two races at Warwick on Classic Chase Day. Just the three in the three-mile novice chase but they produced a good race. Next Destination looked in trouble for most of the last mile but kept finding and battled right to the line. Off over two years before this season he looks all about staying and the National Hunt Chase would seem a target especially if amateur riders are still not allowed come March. The Tizzard season got no better as runner up Fiddlerontheroof was not only beaten but burst as well.

The Leamington Hurdle looked wide open with five in with a chance from the last. Adrimel just held on from the fast-finishing Mint Condition with just three lengths covering the first five home. The first two look stayers but not up to Grade 1 class.

I have long thought there was a good race in Daly Tiger and was not amused when he won first time out this season unbacked. That form is outstanding and I talked myself into ignoring his appalling second run so the 20/1 on offer for the big two-mile handicap at Fairyhouse was just wrong. He could be named the winner from four out and will be into Graded company now.

Punchestown on Sunday was due to be the first challenge for Envoi Allen but Asterion Forlonge disgraced himself for the third time in four runs and the super horse had no more than a school round.

Dreal Deal has been one of the stories of the season since being backed in from 33/1 to 6/4 off a rating of just 84 in September. Four odds on handicap wins (two over hurdles and two on the flat) before he arrived for the Grade 2 Moscow Flyer Novice Hurdle. After an opening price of 8/1 he drifted to 22/1 and probably even bigger before two out before sauntering passed a decent field of horses to win easily. He will be the joker in the Supreme Novice Hurdle field where maybe his style of running will be against him.

Week Ending January 24th

Scraping home from two exposed northern handicappers in the Castleford Chase hardly looked Grade 1 form but First Flow made the jump in some style in the Clarence House Chase. His race comments are littered with references to jumping errors as well as jumping left on right hand courses and jumping right-on left-hand courses but he finds a way to win. He will be an interesting addition to the two-mile champion chase.

Politologue was just beaten by a better horse on the day while Waiting Patiently ran his race. Defi Du Seuil hasn't been the same horse since this race last year.

Four of the first nine winners of the Peter Marsh Chase went on to win the Gold Cup later in the season. Since then, only Truckers Tavern and Bristol de Mai have tried the double and the next few weeks will no doubt be will he /wont he debate about Royal Pagaille. He has the novice options but has run in more chases than four of the five in front of him in the Gold Cup betting.

With the fourth horse from last year's Triumph Hurdle Navajo Pass joining Allmankind and Aspire Tower in boosting that race form it makes you wonder what the winner Burning Victory and moral winner Goshen could be doing if they were fit enough. What his win in the Champion Hurdle Trial is worth we will see. Former champion Buveur d'Air just ran O.K. and logic says he won't be a contender at Cheltenham three years after his last win there.

Week Ending January 31st

Once again a rearranged Irish meeting boosted the midweek racing with the Grade 2 Horse and Jockey Chase at Thurles. Allaho back in trip to two four made just about all and saw off the mare Elimay. He was immediately made joint favourite for the Ryanair but on form this season he would be the stable third string behind Min and Melon. Elimay is now favourite for the Mrs Paddy Power Chase alongside her stable mate Colreevy who bolted up in the Grade 2 Mares Novice Chase earlier on the card.

The Galmoy Hurdle at Gowran is sometimes a decent Stayers Hurdle trial but Sams Profile and Diol Ker who slogged it out in the mud look someway off that class.

With no trials day at Cheltenham Shishkin at Doncaster was the star of Saturdays racing. He came through his warm up race for March with no problems. We will see which is his main Irish challenger after the Irish Arkle.

RACING SPOTLIGHT ON RICHARD HOILES

By BRIAN GOODWILL

WHAT FIRST SPARKED YOUR INTEREST IN RACING?

My Dad used to watch the ITV7 but I didn't really take a great deal of notice until we went to Plumpton one Bank Holiday and parked up next to the rail. I found the speed, noise, flash of colours mesmerising and was hooked. When I go racing and am not working, I will always watch at least one race from out in the country somewhere. There are some great vantage points.

YOUR FAVOURITE RACEHORSE WHEN YOU WERE GROWING UP?

Fontwell, because the figure of eight circuit meant if you stood at the intersection you could get up close to loads of fences in the staying chases. I still think it is the best place to take someone racing for the first time as you are always close to the action.

WHICH RACE THAT YOU HAVE NOT YET CALLED WOULD YOU LIKE TO CALL?

I have been extremely fortunate to have called in so many places but I have always fancied doing an Australian or New Zealand Bush meeting at some far-flung country track. Some of the pictures of those courses in the middle of nowhere look fantastic. Even though I have been lucky enough to call so many major meetings the smaller ones still are where my heart really lies

YOUR MOST CHALLENGING DAY ON-COURSE?

Any day when it is foggy. It is by far the worst weather to work in as it just spoils all the enjoyment for everyone. Trying to pick out shapes that randomly appear of the gloom is both unnerving and a bit like Russian

Roulette. The stewards cup won by Genki and a Bath handicap won by Kayf Aramis are both worth checking out for the sheer degree of panic in the commentator's voice.

YOU SUPPORT CREWE ALEXANDRA. WHAT OTHER LINKS DO YOU HAVE TO THE NORTH WEST?

Only through my wife Sarah who hails from Liverpool and whose family still live there. The National meeting are my favourite three days not just for the challenge but also for how much the city gets behind and connects with the race. My first National was the bomb scare year where we were using a new position down at the Canal Turn for the first time. It was somewhat surreal to see the stands empty out and head towards you as it slowly dawned on me it wasn't going to happen. Thankfully Simon Holt managed to make it to the airport to go on holiday so I co-called the race from the stands with Graham Goode on the Monday.

CAN YOU RECALL A PARTICULAR FUNNY ON-COURSE EXPERIENCE?

Many years ago, a horse got loose at Folkestone and was messing around evading capture right in front of the stands. Sean Woods the trainer strode out purposefully to show them how it was done only for the horse to sneak past him as well. Sean, rather like myself, had put on a few pounds and knowing him well, it was great fun to describe the horse getting by Sean Woods before a slight pause and adding 'something that isn't that easy these days! He took it in good spirits shaking his fist up at the commentary box ! Sean is back in the UK and has made an astonishing job of completely renovating Shalfleet stables in Newmarket during lockdown and it will be great to have him back in the training ranks this year after his own spell in Hong Kong.

YOU HAVE CALLED RACES FROM ALL AROUND THE WORLD.HOW DID YOU FIND LIFE IN HONG KONG OUTSIDE OF WORK?

For 95% of the time, it was terrific and I made some great friends. For the other 5% though it could be very testing just due to the congested mass of humanity which could be relentless. The first cinema showings on a Sunday morning or a trip out to the islands were important therapy. For my final year I lived in a Chinese area and rather like that Hitchcock movie could see about 4000 windows in various high rises from my own apartment.

WHAT CAN YOU RECALL FROM YOUR FIRST DAY'S COMMENTATING?

The first day I went solo into the betting shops (there were separate calls from the racecourse in those days) was a Bath in May 1992. It seemed strange to think that from a sentry box on the roof my voice was going to all the betting shops round the country so I had to go into a shop on the Monday just to check it had really happened. There was an odd incident after the fourth race when some chap came banging on the window which put the fear of god up me until I realised he couldn't possibly have heard my commentary as it was only going to the shops. It turns out the course commentator had muddled up two Sheikh Mohammed horses and called the wrong winner. All I had done was call an eight-runner race pretty averagely but it was a fortunate break from my side as it reinforced SIS's determination to use new people.

WHO ARE YOUR OWN FAVOURITE SPORTS COMMENTATORS?

Richie Benaud was always my favourite and I have never been as nervous before or since as when linking to him during a Morning Line when Channel 4 used to share the racing coverage with the cricket on a Saturday.

The use of language, be it written or spoken, can be so powerful in supporting or creating images and there was no one better on finding the right phrase and delivering it with perfect timing than Richie. As a piece of race commentary Michael O’Hehir’s description of Foinavon’s National pile up remains an astonishingly accurate description of the melee given the fact there were horses everywhere and technology was so basic.



Khalid Abdullah legacy will go from strength to strength

By HAROLD HEYS

IT'S ALWAYS a pleasant and interesting experience visiting a racing stable with a group of fans. My wife and I have done several over the years, mainly with the Northern Racing Club as members of various owners' groups. But I can remember only one visit where the enthusiastic trainer introduced a few of us to the stable stars – and tipped us a Group 1 winner the following day! It was the morning before the 2002 French Derby and she was charming and chatty. Yes, of course it was the delightful Christiane Head-Maarek. She walked us up to her nearby gallops close to the racecourse at Chantilly to watch some of her string going through their paces. The sun was flickering through the tall trees; it was a lovely June day.

Prince Khalid Abdullah had popped in that morning and he had a runner in the big race on the Sunday. Criquelette had trained for him for years but her only runner on the following day was Rouvres in the Prix Jean Prat. Courtesy didn't allow me to ask if she fancied it as she tickled its nose but she told us straight out she was confident. I don't think she actually said "*fill vos sabots*" but the owner was her old man Alec Head which added to the "nod". Rouvres, sporting Alec Head's all-red colours, duly trotted up in the Group 1 race at excellent odds – about 11/2, I remember – ridden by Olivier Doleuze. "*Bravo, Christiane!*" was the call in stand-out Lancashire accents across the packed *enceinte des balances*. An hour or so later Sulamani, owned by the Famille Niarchos, won the Prix du Jockey Club. I can't recall that race, we were still in the bar celebrating.

Christine and I have been on several racing trips with Khider Messaoud who runs Swinley Travel at Wigan. All of them excellent, including a couple of trips to the Breeders' Cup meetings, one just after 9/11 and the other which took in the Grand Canyon and Las Vegas, but Chantilly was even more memorable. Khider had known now-retired Criquelette for years. (Editor's note: Khider also generously supported the North West Racing Awards dinners in the past, which were then run by the club under its former name.)

And that tale from yesteryear is a rather roundabout way of highlighting one of the major differences of the racing scene in France and England. The Niarchos family seem to have been winning races for ever across the Channel, along with the Wildensteins and lots of other names to conjure with; Rothschild, Boussac, Dupré, Strassburger, Wertheimer, Volterra, Widener, Lagardère and of course the Aga Khan. Their names have

graced French racing over the decades. It's not the same over this way. With a few notable exceptions, owners, certainly on the Flat, seem to rather come and go.

Prince Khalid Abdullah, who has died aged 83, will be particularly remembered by English racing fans for the encouragement and support he gave to Sir Henry Cecil, especially in the later years of his life. Frankel, the best horse I and many others have ever seen, gave Our 'Enery "something to get up for every day," as his widow Lady Cecil put it.

She told the Racing Post: "Prince Khalid was a gentleman and was so loyal to Henry. Sending him Frankel to train really helped him carry on. He was a good friend to Henry and without his support he wouldn't have been able to continue."

Many a hardened racing man had a tear in his eye at the waves of affection for the trainer that swept over the Knavesmire after Frankel had duly won the Juddmonte International in 2012.

The prince's green, white and pink silks will be seen on racecourses for many years to come after his family made public a commitment to continue what has become probably the world's most successful racing and breeding operation.

In an announcement welcomed by fans of the sport worldwide – and especially in England – it was revealed that the Juddmonte bloodstock empire will remain intact. By pledging to drive forward over the coming years, Abdullah's family is seeking to honour what would have been the wishes of a man whose colours were synonymous with an array of racing greats, including Frankel, Dancing Brave and Enable. He also, of course, graced racing in France with dual Arc winner Treve, trained by Christiane, the stand-out.

Juddmonte chief executive Douglas Erskine Crum said: "There will be no change. Juddmonte will continue. There is a commitment from the family and from all the management and staff. It's onwards and upwards.

"The prince always said this was his hobby, but he always ran it as a business – and it is a very successful business at the moment as well, which allows us to reinvest."

There will be some streaming – planned a few years ago – but the family's horses will remain with some of the world's top trainers, including John Gosden and Sir Michael Stoute, while breeding will continue to be led by outstanding stallions Frankel and Kingman.



Christiane Head-Maarek chats to Prince Khalid Abdullah with Douglas Erskine Crum looking on ... on the right is Swinley Travel chief Khider Messaoud.

CAPTAIN JIM WILSON - OBITUARY

Captain Jim Wilson, who held a trainer's licence under both codes for 50 years, died peacefully, surrounded by his family at his home at Sollom, near Southport, Lancashire on Friday. He was 94.

James Hume Wilson first took out a training licence on leaving the South Lancashire regiment in 1948 and trained first at Malpas, and then at Sollom, until his retirement in 1998. His daughter, Geraldine Rees, who had been the first woman to complete the course in the Grand National on Cheers in 1982, then took over the licence until 2010.

Among Captain Wilson's better-known horses were prolific winners under both codes, such as Twidale, Crofter's Cline, Profilic and Red Rosein – the latter giving him his greatest training success when capturing the Wokingham Handicap at Royal Ascot in 1992. Many of his winners were homebred, including future Champion Hurdle winner Punjabi, and he was a great admirer of that horse's sire Komaite, who became a significant sire, principally of all-weather winners.

He was the founder of Marlborough Horseboxes Manufacturing, still going strong today. His 'bread vans', as he described them, are now much copied, being 32-ton boxes, built for two horses on to a Renault chassis. He was also a director of Leisure Lakes.

He first saw his wife, Junette, on the stage in 1948 and pursued her relentlessly until they married in 1950. She died in 2015. They had three children, all of whom survive him – sons Alastair (an artist) and Hamish (a social worker) as well as Geraldine.

Many members of the club were involved in ownership groups when Geraldine Rees was training at Sollom and she had taken over the reins from her father, Captain Jim Wilson, who was then involved as assistant trainer.

Visitors to the stables in those days, when asking about the horses owned by the club (Cee-N-K, Princess of Garda, Skymaite, Kozando, plus part owned Final Dynasty & Pitbull) would have often been told by Jim that we might go to xyz course for a little tantivy. None of us really understood what this meant but the assumption was it was a 'racecourse gallop' but in an actual race! Several other racing club members also enjoyed ownership groups when Jim was there run by the likes of Red Rose Racing and Stella Barclay (who had horses there before setting up her own stables at Garstang). A lovely family that the club was proud to be associated with for many years.



N & M RACING CLUB COMMITTEE/OFFICIALS 2021/22

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HEADLINES FROM THE CLUB AGM HELD ON JANUARY 2TH 2021

- The club accounts to 30/11/20 show a small surplus of £59 for the 14m period although without the usual Cheltenham Preview at Haydock Park this year, a shortfall of around £500 is expected in 2021. The club's reserves can cover this if needs be.
- The total registered membership is currently 410 with over 80% now classed as 'online members'. The club's membership has more than doubled since 2019.
- An additional 367 people now follow the club on Facebook (increased by 92 in 2020) although only about a third of these also register as online members for some reason!
- The club will continue to produce a printed magazine for as long as it is practical and viable to do so.
- Stable visits will be resurrected in the future once it is safe to do so again.
- If the Cheltenham Preview events are well supported, we hope to also hold an Aintree Preview event.
- The Grand National sweepstake will again be run in 2021 (cancelled due to Covid-19 in 2020).
- We are delighted to advise that four additional committee members have been elected – thanks go out to Andy White, Gordon Armistead, Mark Banks & Judith Bradley.

Next copy deadline for Racin' will be Sunday 21st March

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