



## WEBSITE PASSWORD CHANGE COMING SOON!

The next password change will be made on **Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> June** and until then the old password will still be valid.

The new password will be **BLACKMORE2021**

The password protected pages include club competitions details and our comprehensive racing data bases.

The Drawfacts data updates are nearly completed for 2021 and Heritage Handicaps Drawfacts will be updated on the day of the races for 2021 in most instances.

The Festival Guides are usually updated each day during festivals with the next featured meetings being Royal Ascot in June. Enjoy!

## JERRY MCGRATH'S FIGHT FOR FITNESS AFTER INJURY – SEE PAGE 3



## STEPHEN HINDLE IS 'UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT' THIS MONTH – SEE PAGE 13



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# COMPETITION NEWS & RESULTS

## 59's DRAW RESULTS UPDATE

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

**April 3<sup>rd</sup> – 05 – Terry Slocombe (Southport)**

**May 1<sup>st</sup> – 14 – Jennifer Burgess (Cudworth)**

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

Thanks to all who continue to support the draw.

All numbers are currently allocated, but check the magazine each time to check if any numbers become available in the future!

## ALEX BIRDCOMPETITION AINTREE ROUND

**Maureen Dawson** from Waterloo who was the winner and receives £70. Runner-up is **David Evans** from Warrington who receives £30.

The next round will cover the first 4 days of Royal Ascot from Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> – Friday 18<sup>th</sup> of June.

So after two rounds completed the leaders of the seasonal challenge are:

Tim Cogan 405.5 pts  
Dave Evans 395.5 pts  
Colin Malone 390 pts  
Frank Turley 387 pts  
Mark Banks 376.5 pts  
Craig McConnachie 371.5 pts  
Ted Halewood 362.5 pts  
Harry Sandland 355.5 pts  
Ken Unsworth (1) 355 pts

## NATIONAL HUNT – SATURDAY NAPS CHALLENGE 2020-21

Another 'winter' jumps season is over and the confirmed result & prize winners are as follows:

- 1) Dave Bates £180+£100 Betfred vouchers
- 2) Alan Preston £100
- 3) Steve Cawley £80
- 4) Tony Short £50
- 5) Carol Evans £40
- 6) Maureen Dawson £30

Longest winning sequence - Kathy McGreevy £50

Most winners - Ted Halewood £50

Longest priced winner - Alan Preston £50

First in Profit - Dave Bates/Harry Sandland £25/£25

Leader at Half Way - Maureen Dawson £50

Total prize fund £730+£100 sponsorship from Betfred.

Thanks to all who took part and our sponsors.



## HERITAGE HANDICAPS COMPETITION

**Helen Goodwill** is again running this summer flat racing competition and thankfully this year we can start on the first Saturday in June (Derby Day) and continue for around 20 weeks until late October (Champions Day).

Each Saturday entrants are allowed to select three horses in the toughest handicap race of the day (usually the heritage handicap) and will score points if selections win or are placed.

Fuller entry details can be found on page 19

# Jerry McGrath's fight back to fitness

By HAROLD HEYS

THE Injured Jockeys Fund has featured regularly in *Racin'* magazine over the years. Readers may recall that it got under way and gathered momentum after Paddy Farrell broke his back at Aintree in 1964. The Fund has done sterling work over the years and *Racin'* magazine has often promoted its activities.

I was at Aintree that Grand National day and I'll never forget the sight of Farrell, married and with four little children, lying motionless in the wreckage of the Chair fence just in front of the stands. His National mount, the nine-year-old Border Flight, had somersaulted at the biggest obstacle on the course and after the field had raced on Paddy's maroon and yellow colours stood out starkly against the dull green of spruce, fir and turf.

Most falls are down the straight or out in the country, a long way from the crowds; this was sickeningly different. He didn't move.

On the Tuesday following the National, his great mate Jack Berry and a few other jockeys were riding at Wetherby and they went round with buckets, collecting from bookies and punters to raise money for the devastated family.

Jack recalled: "Everyone was really generous. It was a wonderful display of affection and understanding and I suppose this was the nucleus of the IJF."

Paddy was confined to a wheelchair till his death in November 1999. Writer and broadcaster Brough Scott, a vice president of the IJF, said: 'Paddy was a kind, brave and honest man, and an extremely appropriate symbol of the need to care for others.'

Within days of the accident Clifford Nicholson, who retained Farrell, Border Flight's owner-trainer Edward Courage, and others started a fund for the two jockeys and, at their request, it was widened to cover all National Hunt jockeys who were inactive through injury. It grew into the National Hunt Jockeys Fund and finally, in 1971, as some of the Flat lads also needed help, it became the Injured Jockeys Fund. However, 1964 is regarded as start time for admin purposes.

*Racin'* magazine has always been a great fan of Jack Berry after whom the IJF's second rehabilitation centre at Malton was named.

It was a hard, often grim, game, especially for Jack, who never turned down a ride, however mad, bad and dangerous the nag looked. He recalled coming down in a hurdle race at Haydock and finding an anxious St John Ambulance Brigade lad peering down at him, most concerned. "Are you all right?" asked the youngster. "Give us a fag," said Jack. "I've broken my leg so drag me under that rail before they come round again." Which he did. Jack had actually broken the leg in five places and was soon cursing, not with the pain but because he would have had a ride in the last.

As younger readers will realise, elf'n'safety hadn't been invented in the 1960s.

I first came across Jack in the summer of 1972. He had a small string of horses at Almholme, just to the north of Doncaster, and I heard that he was planning to move over to Lancashire, to the village of Cockerham on the Fylde coast. I was working for the *Sunday People* in those days and I did a piece about the unusual move.

Jack and his backers were impressed with the 100 acres, although not the farm buildings which they quickly flattened. He told me: 'If I can't train winners here, I can't train 'em anywhere.' And so it proved. He went on to prepare more than 1,600 winners on the soft peat moss over the next 30 colourful years.

In recent years he and other ex-jockeys have thrown their weight behind the IJF whose spring newsletter is just out. Chris Cook edits the magazine and among the features is one he has written on Jerry McGrath, a member of Nicky Henderson's team, who is recovering at Oaksey House, the IJF's first rehab centre which opened in 2009. Jack Berry House was opened in 2015 and Peter O'Sullivan House at Newmarket (2019) is the third.

This is Chris Cook's story about Jerry McGrath's brave fight for fitness.

THE IJF's LAMBOURN centre includes several living units where jockeys can stay during extended periods of rehabilitation, but Jerry McGrath never expected to find himself in one of them.

The 30-year-old has a home, barely a mile away on the other side of the village but a shocking pile-up at Lingfield in January left him unable to climb stairs for a couple of months, so living at home was not immediately practical.

The veteran jump jockey smiles as he recalls his approach to that day's work, when he had six rides in jumpers' bumpers. "There's no such thing as easy money but I'm going there with two or three favourites for Nicky Henderson and you're looking forward to them. No obstacles, you'd think it would be fairly straightforward.

"Turning for home in the last race of the day, it got a bit tight, there were a few big-priced horses in front coming back at us, everyone's looking for racing room and unfortunately it ran out. I was on a small filly who just clipped a heel and went down."

Fortunately, Vegas Blue was no more than shaken by the experience and was competing again by March. Jerry was not so lucky.

"When you clip heels like that, it's so quick. There's a neck and a set of ears in front of you and then all of a sudden there's nothing there and you're going down..."

"I stayed conscious for all of it and initially I was thinking, I'd prefer if I was knocked out. I fractured and dislocated my hip and shoulder on my left side. They had to be pinned and plated,

"The pain was horrendous, the worst I've ever felt in my life, And there was a horse on top of me at first. For maybe 90 seconds, I had no feeling in my legs at all. At that point, I thought, anything's a bonus, if this comes back.

"It did come back eventually. Not that I was relieved because I was still in a world of pain. But at least they moved my toes and stuff."

After weeks in hospital, isolated by the fact that visitors were not allowed under Covid rules, Jerry was frankly relieved to move in at Oaksey House. "There's a good welcoming feeling about the place, everyone's asking after you."

He has been working hard in the hydro pool, maintaining his fitness in the gym and benefiting from an electrical nerve stimulator. "I was saying to one of the physiotherapists, if I was just a guy doing a nine to five job and had this injury, what would the timescale be for recovery?

And he said anywhere from 18 months to two years.

"You'd be getting physiotherapy once a month, you wouldn't be doing much in between, you'd be sitting around feeling sorry for yourself, whereas here everything is done straight away and it's brilliant.

"When you've been here before and you know everyone, they get to know you. They're shrewd at knowing how you're feeling. The other day, I was really down. You think things are going the right way and then you hear some bad news.

“But they pick up an it right away and they handle it very well. It’s all well and good trying to fix your body but you have to fix your head as well.”

Soon, Jerry will be able to return to living at home, but his rehabilitation at Qaksey House will continue day-to-day. His hip is recovering well but his shoulder will evidently need a bit more time.

- Fellow jockeys Alexander Thorne and Jordan Nailor were also caught up in Jerry's Lingfield fall, but they avoided serious injury and all the horses were unhurt.
- The IJF have an interesting web site with lots of news, features and gift ideas. Take a look. And take another look as Christmas or a birthday comes into view.

Editor's Note: We are delighted to report that the club members have so far raised a superb total of £407 for this year's IJF fundraiser. Given this new article by Harold we shall now keep open out just giving page until June 30<sup>th</sup> in case there are any more folk who can make a small donation The link to our just giving page is on the club website at [www.northernracingclub.com](http://www.northernracingclub.com) Thanks for all the donations – you have done the club proud!

## GORDON ARMISTEAD'S RACING DIARY

(FROM BEHIND THE TV SET AT PRESENT)

### Easter @Fairhouse

After a day of mostly big field handicaps the Fairhouse Easter Festival stepped up on day two with a couple of Grade 1's and Grade 2's.

The £600 Willie Mullins cast off Skyace has been one of the stories of the season since winning a three-mile maiden hurdle at Tipperary last June. Three poor efforts in the autumn were soon put behind her with listed and Grade 3 wins followed up by a fourth at the Cheltenham Festival over two miles. Back up in trip she showed great resolution to hold off Gauloise and give Shark Hanlon his first Grade 1. She will need to improve to take on the best mares in open company but she has the right attitude.

Willie Mullins provided the first three home in the two-mile four Grade 1 Novice Chase but in reverse order of their starting prices. Janadil's jumping was much better than on his last two starts and he held Franco de Port and Asterion Forlonge well. The latter two might be worth a try at further but all three look to be below the level for open company Grade1's

Echoes in Rain was far too free early in the season but she settled better when beating Belfast Banter at Naas and bolted up here in the Grade 2 two-mile novice hurdle. Her main market rivals all disappointed but she is going the right way and will be in against the best mare's next season.

Ashdale Bob's run at the Dublin Festival looked wrong and he was back to his best taking the two-mile four Grade 2 novice hurdle. This looked a minimum trip for him and he might need some headgear before long. He will evidently be over fences next season.

The Irish National is a good race for novices and with about half the field filling that criteria it looked likely to be again but it was fourth season chaser and rank outsider Freewheelin Dylan who made all. Trainer Dermot McLaughlin went close at Aintree with veteran Vic's Canvas a few years ago and Freewheelin Dylan should just go up enough to head there next season. His sire Curtain Time won one race from three starts for Henry Cecil in 2001 and is a half-brother to Guineas winner Sleepytime. He has operated at the bargain basement as a sire with Texas Jack being his only decent performer previously.

Second placed Run Wild Fred will go into next season still a novice and you would imagine the National Hunt Chase would be the target. Third home Enjoy D'allen has made huge strides this year for trainer Ciaran Murphy who only got his licence in January. Favourite Latest Exhibition ran a super race under top weight and Aintree next season must surely be the target.

Paul Nicholl's took over all the Sullivan Bloodstock horses from Willie Mullins this season and most have been very disappointing. He admitted in one interview he had struggled with them and he would be interested to see how Stormy Island would get on returning to the Mullins yard after being sold. Well it was like she had never been away making all and taking the Grade 2 two and a half miles hurdle.

## **Aintree - Day1**

### **Manifesto Chase**

We now know when horses have had a wind operation but unfortunately we don't know which have worked and which haven't or which might work on the second run. It obviously worked on Protektorat after being easily turned over at 1/2 on his last two starts. Connections seemed to think he was a future stayer last Autumn but we will see next season. New colours for The Shunter who made plenty a niggly mistakes and I think he might have been well sold. Hitman seemed to race keenly and didn't find much near home and might be better back at two miles although he is only five and should have plenty of improvement in him. Eldorado Allen was beaten a lot further here than against Shishkin for what that is worth.

### **Anniversary Hurdle**

No Irish and no Tritonic so the quest to be best British juvenile hurdler was a shootout between Adagio and Monmiral. The latter would still have won even if Adagio hadn't fluffed the last hurdle. He hasn't really been challenged this season and is seen as a future chaser but it seemed that Paul Nicholls was favouring a second season over hurdles. Top class British hurdlers are thin on the ground and with the likes of the Fighting Fifth up for grabs why not. Fiveandtwenty ran a fine race in third and there will be plenty of mare's races for her.

### **Bowl**

A good-sized field but it was a rout as Clan Des Obeaux showed what cheek pieces can do and returned to his best. It will be interesting if he goes to Punchestown. Behind him Clondaw Castle just isn't a Grade 1 horse and Native River needs it nearly unraceable to slow his rivals down. Tiger Roll looked disinterested after hitting the third and was never going to get near the business end of the race. It's a long time since Waiting Patiently beat Cue Card to win his Grade 1 and his effort here just added to Ruth Jefferson's desperate season.

### **Aintree Hurdle**

Not a good renewal and in hindsight the winner was well overpriced as the only runner with a Grade 1 to his name this season. No one can accuse Abacadabras of being straightforward and in another hundred metres he would have given this away. Gigginstown have never been about hurdlers but he is evidently going to be given another try at this game next season.

As an ex flat runner I don't know if Buzz will go chasing but third home Millers Bank will and he is an improving sort. Buveur D'Air is not the force of old while McFabulous and Song for Someone seemed to have had enough for the season and I imagine it will be fences for both of them.

### **Foxhunters**

At Aintree it is still the Foxhunters and this was not a good renewal. The trip proved far too short for favourite Billaway. John O'Shea has turned Cousin Pascal from a 90 rated hurdler to now a 135 rated chaser in four months. His Irish form was poor and his previous trainer was 0 for 83 in the last five seasons.

### **Red Rum**

This looked competitive beforehand but until he hit the last and started to tire on the run in the rapidly improving Edituer Du Gite was always in charge. You would imagine he can improve a bit more. The two that closed from the last Sully D'Oc and Dostal Phil have been beaten three times since they won first time out in the season and have gone up for their defeats.

### **Nickel Coin Bumper**

Me Too Please was a surprise winner but she had the form horses just behind so there is no doubt about her merit even overcoming a tendency to hang to her left. The horse she beat at Down Royal won a maiden hurdle the day after this race. Favourite Eileendover just didn't pick up like she had been doing. It's doubtful she will ever go over hurdles so we will see how she goes on the flat. Runner up Elle Est Belle was third in the Champion Bumper at Cheltenham to give the form a boost. Third home Miss Lamb looks another good performer from Sally Hall's Lamb family which has produced plenty of good performers.

## **Friday**

### **Top Novice Hurdle**

For a Grade 1 this was pretty moderate. The season has probably finally caught up with Cheltenham third For Pleasure who didn't go with his usual verve. For all his seemingly improved attitude Belfast Bandit is no superstar and he will be back in handicaps. The very inexperienced Dusart was sent off joint favourite and looked like he will need a much longer trip. It will be interesting if they try and get another run into him as a novice.

## **Mildmay**

This just fell apart and it was last man standing for Chantry House who won by thirty lengths without being impressive. I think he has a big step to take when going into open Grade 1 company at three miles. Shan Blue in second ran like a horse that had well had enough while the only other finisher Fiddlerontheroof was beaten at halfway. His stable mate The Big Breakaway looked totally uninterested and the promise of last season looks a long time ago. The signs of life for the Tizzards in early February never made much headway and under new management next season they need a quick revival. The same applies to Sporting John even with his Grade 1 win at Sandown. Espoir de Romay would have given the winner a race if he hadn't come down and will be a wildcard in graded staying chases next season.

## **Melling Chase**

Fakir D'oudairies well beaten on his last three starts found this much easier as his main market rivals all turned in poor efforts. Politologue burst again. Master Tommytucker jumped poorly and Notebook again turned in a poor effort in the UK and will surely be kept at home in the future. Nuts Well and Itchy Feet just about ran to their form in the Old Roan in second and third. Fakir D'oudairies could well go to Punchestown but will have to go up or down in trip. Nuts Well was having just his third run of the season but there seems nowhere for him to go until the Autumn. Itchy Feet is hard to place.

## **Topham**

The Topham was always going to suit Livelovelaugh with the only doubt his poor win record of 1 for 18 over fences. You won't see a better display of jumping and the way Patrick Mullins sat still from three to two out as the pack closed before going again was super. I had a saver on fellow Irish runner Dunvegan who without making mistakes did not jump as well as usual. He has a good handicap chase in him at around two and a half.

## **Sefton**

This looked tailor made for Bravemansgame who appeared to travel well and get the trip but had no answer to Ayr maiden hurdle winner Ahoy Senior. No fluke about it and with the Albert Bartlett second and third Oscar Elite and Streets of Doyen finishing third and fourth here it looks solid form. The winner goes chasing next season after only two hurdle runs and let's hope he is as good as he looked here.

## **Saturday**

### **3-mile Handicap Hurdle**

After years of obscurity for the second time in a week the stallion Curtain Time sired a high-profile winner in Hometown Boy. The connection goes further as the dams of he and Freewheelin Dylan are half-sisters. Perhaps the ability comes from the female side of the family for the grand dam of both sisters was also the dam of top chaser Simon and a full sister to Black Humour and half-sister to Gaye Brief and Gaye Chance. Back to Hometown Boy and he is a rapidly improving animal who was only having his second run of the season here. He will evidently go chasing.

### **Mersey Novice Hurdle**

My Drogo has been brought along steadily by Dan Skelton and hopefully he can keep improving when going over fences next season. This turned into another pretty weak Grade 1. The third here was well beaten off a rating of 135 in the Coral Cup. This looked a race too many for Ballyadam who was just very laboured and while he had looked more a speed horse it wasn't the trip that beat him here.

### **Maghull Novice Chase**

As 1/8's go there have been more impressive winners but Shishkin got the job done. He hasn't had a real race all season and the remark by one of the Racing TV presenters that he was the best chaser in training looks a bit premature. At 5/4 for next year's Champion Chase he is no value no matter how good he may become.

### **Liverpool Hurdle**

A good-sized field but it looked to be a rematch of the first three in the Long Walk. With Paisley Park bombing out Thyme Hill and Roksana battled it out with the gelding just being too good. He will evidently be kept hurdling after having to miss Cheltenham and if fit his season plans itself out. Roksana has her Grade 1 from Cheltenham 2019 so whether she will carry on we will see. It is hard to know what to make of Paisley Park now. He was supposedly short of practice at Cheltenham yet over the top here.

### **Betway Chase**

When Thomas Patrick won this as a six-year-old in 2018 it looked like he would go on to be a really good handicapper. He never won another race- in fact he never ran another decent race. Let us hope that

Happygolucky fares better although he will have to improve to defy what looks a harsh rise up to 157 for beating what were mainly a group of disappointing or out of form sorts.

### **Grand National**

After more than a year off course missing this meeting was not good and missing being there for a piece of history just made it worse. For most of the race I didn't think the history part was going to happen as Burrows Saint and Patrick Mullins carrying my money at 33/1 just travelled and jumped like a dream. Crossing the Melling Road second time I was hoping he would just wait till after the last and press the button. It didn't happen of course as he emptied in a matter of strides as many have done here before. Having once been anti each way betting I have now been converted so a profit on the race but it's still not the same as backing the winner.

I didn't fancy the winner Minella Times especially at the price. I have seen him on track just the once when beaten 68 lengths off 131 at last year's Dublin Festival. He had gone up the weights while getting beaten but that just sneaked him into the race and obviously the big step up in trip suited him well.

As for the jockey it was early in her breakthrough season 2018/19 at Tipperary that she rode a big priced winner for me on Bedrock in a graded hurdle. At that meeting she also won a flat race on a two-year-old for Willie Mullins and two novice chase winners one for Joseph O'Brien. You couldn't doubt she was good after that.

Henry de Bromhead's first star Sizing Europe started favourite for the 2008 Champion Hurdle when he was training only a dozen winners a season. He was a super horse winning twenty-two races and his last Grade 1 came at the age of twelve in 2014. The split with the Potts's in 2016 was very strange but that left room for the Gigginstown horses from Willie Mullins which led to Eddie O'Leary asking for Rachel to ride their horses in the stable and the rest is history.

Of the other runners Any Second Now was obviously unlucky being knocked back a long way after Double Shuffle fell in front of him and will doubtless be back next year while favourite Cloth Cap is now badly handicapped and will struggle.

### **Bumper**

The first three all came from the same six runner race at Ascot. Knappers Hill is a half-brother to two good runners in Swamp Fox and Rene's Girl so hopefully he will make a jumper. Runner up Peking Rose is related to seven jumps winners including graded place Twelve Roses.

### **Ayr and Sandown**

Not the best Scottish National but a good progressive winner in Mighty Thunder running in his third four miler in about two months. He will evidently head to Aintree next season and will certainly not fail for stamina. Sandy Thomson seems to have got improvement out of runner up Dingo Dollar while the trip certainly brought out improvement in third home Mister Fogpatches.

The Bet 365 is now not a patch on the old Whitbread but produced a good if controversial finish. Enrilo would probably have won nicely but for a mistake two out but was always going to get thrown out after hanging on the run in. You would imagine he too will be a National candidate next season. Eventual winner Potterman was probably third best while the unlucky Kitty's Light won off only 109 last summer and at only five he should find compensation next season.

In the Grade 1 two miler Bryony Frost rode an excellent race on Greaneteen not letting the front running Altior get too far ahead. It's hard to get a true grip on the race with the runner up on the downgrade and Put The Kettle On disliking the place but it was probably an improvement by Greaneteen on his run at Cheltenham.

### **Punchestown**

With the de Bromhead and Elliot/ Foster yards being mostly out of sorts for the meeting it left a bit of an open door for Willie Mullins but he didn't forget to go through it.

### **Tuesday**

No Appreciate It in the two-mile novice hurdle and Echo's in Rain could afford to run below her Fairyhouse form and still win. Talk was of a Champion Hurdle campaign next season but beating a 125 rated maiden and the disappointing Blue Lord is a long way off that class.

It was super to see Chacon Pour Soi return to his best in the two-mile chase and it was as good a performance as seen by any chaser all season. This is the way to ride him rather than for speed at the end of the race as at Cheltenham. Allaho showed he is not at his best at this trip and I imagine next season he will start in the John Durkan and head to the Ryanair again. Nube Negra was probably a bit off his best but that would not have been anywhere near good enough here.

After that the staying novice chase was a bit of a let-down with Envoi Allen jumping poorly from the start and he looked beaten at halfway. Hopefully the hind leg lameness will be nothing major. Monkfish jumped better than he had at Cheltenham but had no answer to the top mare Colreevy who goes off to the paddocks with a third Grade 1 and five from five over fences. Monkfish will head for battles with Minella Indo and A Plus Tard starting in the Saville's at Christmas.

### **Wednesday**

Without Minella Indo the Gold Cup turned into a match with the revitalised Clan Des Obeaux carrying on his Aintree form to see off Al Boum Photo. He will probably be rated third best of the staying chasers and missing Cheltenham as been very profitable. Al Boum Photo always gives everything but has found better rivals this season. Fakir D'oudairies was again well seen off in a top Grade 1.

Galopin Des Champs took the step up from the Martin Pipe and bolted up in the three-mile novice hurdle. He will probably be over fences next year. His task was made easier by Vanillier running moderately while Gentlemansgame ran a decent race and Stattler again failed to get home.

A faster pace in the Champion Bumper suited Kilcruit and he was a ready winner with Sir Gerhard running a bit flat. Runner up O'Toole was a big priced winner first time out and it will be interesting to see where he is trained next season having been purchased by Simon Munir and Isaac Souede after that win. Back in fourth it was good to see the return of Eric Bloodaxe after over a year off.

Having managed to get 20/1 for Dunvegan in the two-mile four handicap chase and seeing him backed into favourite it was disappointing to see him run out of it by two in and out performers in Foxy Jack and Pont Aven.

### **Thursday**

Those who backed Flooring Porter to follow up from Cheltenham knew their fate before the race as he was far too revved up and on edge. Klassical Dream set off the season as the stables Arkle horse but a setback kept him off until today and upped to three miles he bolted in. It will be interesting to see what they do with him next season as they will have their usual quota of novice chasers but not staying hurdle contenders. Runner up James Du Berlais came here from finishing last in the Champion Hurdle and this was obviously much better and he evidently goes over fences. Ronald Pump in third gives the form some solidity.

In the other Grade 1 of the day Energumene cantered around but still saw off Fairyhouse Grade 1 winner Janidil. Shishkin will not have things all his own way next season and hopefully Willie Mullins will send something over for the Tingle Creek.

### **Friday**

Honeysuckle didn't travel and jump as well as she had on her last two starts but still took the Punchestown Champion Hurdle cosily. Talk of going over fences will surely be just that and she will be very hard to beat next season. Sharjah didn't travel early on but came through to challenge without really looking like getting to the mare. Epatante will need to find plenty next season to get back to the top.

The two four novice hurdle cut up and Cheltenham runner up Galliard Du Mesnil got his second Grade 1. He will go chasing. Ashdale Bob having needed to be pushed along early when winning at Fairyhouse pulled today but ran his race.

The difference between graded races and handicaps was shown as Asterion Forlonge dropped into a handicap off top weight bolted up off 152 and we will see next season if he can go back up in company.

### **Saturday**

Concertista never looked happy in the two-mile four Mares Champion Hurdle as Stormy Island set her usual fast pace. Danny Mullins kicked her on again turning in and she scooted away looking better than ever. Runner up Minella Melody just can't do Cheltenham where she has run her only two poor races. It was strange to see Laurina turn out for this race. Sold for £290K to go to stud she dropped out tamely. Last year's Triumph Hurdle winner Burning Victory returned and was well beaten. She evidently hasn't been practicing her hurdling technique during her absence.

From starting 80/1 off just 125 in the Fred Winter Jeff Kidder has just taken off and beat all the Triumph Hurdle horses fair and square in the Grade 1. It will be hard to resist a flat handicap off his rating of just 67. Zanahtyr again looked like he will be better upped in trip or made more use of. Quilixios just dropped away like something was wrong.

On the first day of the meeting Punchestown sent out e-mails offering half priced tickets for next season which was far too good to refuse.

## **Flat**

### **Three-year-olds**

The 2000 Guineas saw the three best runners from last season all bomb out and a tight three-way finish. Not vintage stuff and with the winner Poetic Flare finishing well beaten in France the form has already been let down. At least St Marks Basilica upheld the Dewhurst form at Longchamp and must have every chance of following up in the Prix du Jockey Club. There don't appear to be too many legitimate candidates for the Derby with Bolshoi Ballet standing out after the trials. His stable companion High Definition looks too short on pace and then the betting goes to Mohaafeth who has won three very nondescript races.

The strange gamble on Santa Barbara in the 1000 Guineas only showed how moderate the two-year-old form had been. I thought she put her head in the air so making her favourite for the Oaks hardly looks logical. Once again the winner Mother Earth was turned over in France by an unconsidered rival. Snowfall looked impressive at York but the form of those she beat looks average. I have taken a risk with Shale at 20/1 before she runs in the Irish Guineas the weekend after I write this.

### **Older horses**

Moguls win in the Grand Prix de Paris last season looked out of kilter with all his other runs and he has reverted to type since looking one paced in Dubai and the Prix Ganay starting favourite both times.

Of the milers last season Palace Pier has stayed around and got rave reviews for beating Group 3 and listed performers easily in the Lockinge. With the three-year-olds looking moderate he could clean up at a mile without having to take on a serious rival.

Quite what Al Assy has achieved in his two wins is open to question but he looks a much-improved performer. The Coronation Cup will tell us more and maybe Love will turn up there.

### **Book Review**

Rachel Blackmore's win in the National was not the first time a female jockey has won a major steeplechase. Back in 1937 Lata Brandisova won the Velka Pardubicka on the mare Norma and her story is told in 'Unbreakable' by Richard Asquith a winner in the Daily Telegraph sports book of the year awards 2020. It's more than your average racing book also telling the tale of a very turbulent period for the Czech people. Her life saw the collapse of the Hapsburg Empire, a period of democracy, the Nazi invasion, and finally the communist takeover. The 1930's saw horses from Germany winning the Pardubicka ridden by SS cavalry officers. Much the same was expected in 1937 and with an invasion seemingly inevitable Lata's victory made her a national heroine. It was the last race for ten years and although she rode in the race in 1947 the communist takeover in 1948 and her noble background (she was born a Countess) made her almost a non-person and she lived in obscurity until dying in 1981. The author best known for a book on fell running called 'Feet in the Clouds' has done an excellent research job with so many records destroyed in the war and by the communist authorities. Well worth reading.

## **Where it pays to follow the Irish Trained runners in the UK**

Whilst a mixture of Brexit & Covid has restricted the flow of Irish runners in the UK in recent times there are still enough runners making the trip to assess which tracks they fare best at. These statistics cover the period 2019 to date with all based on a level profit at SP to a £1 stake:

National Hunt – Cheltenham + £201.55, Aintree +£33 and Wetherby +£24.1

Flat – Newmarket (Rowley) + £52.4, Hamilton +£44.11, Ayr +£29.97, Epsom +£14.6 As regards Hamilton there is a Scottish owner based in the UAE that has his horses trained in Ireland but they run mainly at his home track at Hamilton. However these runners dried up in 2020 due to the travel restrictions. (By Phil Evans)

# Sixty years of betting shops

By HAROLD HEYS

I DON'T remember much about my early years in journalism. It was rather a blur after the cloistered life at Darwen Grammar School. I was 16 and dog-paddled a bit till the penny dropped and I was up and running.

I do remember May 1, 1961. I would have been 19 and my big interest apart from chasing stories for the Blackburn Telegraph was horse racing. It had been my major interest for over four years and looming GCE exams took second place. I actually managed to drag myself away from studying racing form for a few weeks to mug up Latin and French and History and the rest. Somehow, I managed to crack half-a-dozen passes in the summer of 1958 – and then it was back to the Turf.

I had wanted to be a racing correspondent but realised I had to do the local slog for a few years before I got the chance which came, incidentally, in the early 70s.

Anyway, May 1, 1961? It was the day my hobby and my career met up. It was the day that betting shops opened in the UK and I walked into a world of opportunity. No one else on the Blackburn Telegraph had much of a clue about racing, or betting, including the lads on the sports desk so I got the job. Horses for courses, so to speak.

Photographer Frank Walsh and I walked into a strange new world at exactly 10 o'clock that morning. It was a Monday. I'm not sure why we started off at a small shop away from the town centre. It was up Little Harwood way. The manager – he might have been Frank's cousin – didn't seem to know what was happening but he was pleased to welcome his first customers and did his best to make the town's new venture sound interesting.

It wasn't easy. The first betting shops were meant to be drab and dismal. You couldn't see in from the street. Facilities seemed to be a few ash trays dotted around. You got the impression that the government had already begun to think it was all a bad idea.

Not the punters. Within six or seven months there were over 10,000 betting shops around the country. The Big Boys had been quick to take a slice of the market – except for William Hill who didn't want to know for four or five years.

Of course I had to have a bet in the shop and having weighed up a rather boring Monday card over breakfast I stuck my ten bob note on the nose. After knocking out a piece for the afternoon edition back at the office I hung around the ticker-tape machines in the office as the results came through. I was hooked.

I hadn't realised that betting shops had been packing 'em in over a hundred years earlier. In 1850 there **were** some 400 betting shops operating quite legally in London. Three years later they were banned. What was that all about? Not a clue.

In mid-April this year some 6,000 betting shops reopened after being closed during winter and early spring because of Covid restrictions. For the first time since December, bookmakers could open their doors and once again welcome patrons. Along with betting shops, the UK's rollback on coronavirus shutdowns allowed outdoor dining, pub gardens, hairdressers, and retail shops to resume operations.

"Great news," said Michael Dugher, chief executive of the Betting and Gaming Council (BGC). "It's been a long few months for betting shop staff, as well as their customers, and I know they are all looking forward to safely getting back to business." Well, not *all*, Michael. A lot of shops didn't make the big reopening. More are likely to shut. It's surprising how they are still buoyant with the steady increase in telephone and computer betting.

There are a lot of restrictions now and shops certainly aren't as welcoming as they used to be. Businesses can't offer any seating or tables; television displaying must remain switched off and customers can only be in the shop for a maximum of 15 minutes. Shops must practise social distancing, offer hand sanitizer and there have to be Perspex barriers between cashier and customer. No more than two visits to a betting shop per day, and closing time is 8 pm. Number of guests permitted indoors at a single time is capped at eight people, excluding employees. Coming across old pals is almost impossible. Finding winners is the easy bit.

However, the BGC sees it all as "a major step" in the right direction. "As well as providing a much-needed boost for the millions of people who enjoy a flutter, they will also be playing a key role in the UK's post-Covid economic recovery," says

Dugher rather grandly. UK betting shops support some 46,000 jobs and raised nearly £1 billion last year for the Government to spend.

Over the years change came slowly to the shops. Who now remembers the board-men? And the pencillers? Until 1986 shops were not allowed to have live broadcast coverage but this changed when Satellite Information Services (SIS) was formed to screen live races. Sadly, there aren't many individual bookies still around. Just the Big Boys and their manic and maddening advertising.

The larger chains also operate at sports grounds including racecourses. On-course bookies don't seem to have risen to the challenge and the boring, lack of variety in the electronic odds they offer these days drives many an old hand daft. There's little challenge nowadays; little chance of shading the odds.

Biggest-ever shop pay-out came in February this year when a punter picked up over a million pounds in a William Hill shop in Thirsk. It reminded me of a late afternoon in the Darwen branch office of the Telegraph in 1965. A chap I knew vaguely, called in and showed me a betting slip from a bookie's just round the corner.

"Look at this," he told me cheerfully. It was an eight-horse ten-bob accumulator (I can't bring myself to call 'em "accys"). Everyone had gone in; some at very good prices. "How much have you won," I managed to gasp. Er, nothing. His bookie had a first-past-the-post rule and this chap's last selection had won on an objection.

How unlucky can you get! If he'd put his roll-up on with the bookie next to the office he'd have picked up thousands. His bookie gave him a fiver for hard luck. Such a disappointment might have stopped me from ever having another bet. Ever. But the old boy was very philosophical. "I'm in form," he smiled. "I'll have 'em tomorrow!"

That's racing!

Incidentally, what happened to that first ten bob bet back on May 1, 1961? Well, the nag finished down the field but I consoled myself that I would get it back on the Friday when I stuck it on my weekly expenses claim. The snort from the tough news editor as he ran a critical eye over what we used to call "the big story of the week" and the flash of his heavy red pencil told otherwise ...



IT'S tricky illustrating a feature on betting shops. Which do you choose? Anyway here's a photo of the superb Castle Irwell main stand which became part of the Salford Uni campus. It's been left a wasteland in recent years and now is the site of a 500-house development by bookmaker Fred Done.

# RACING SPOTLIGHT ON STEPHEN HINDLE

By BRIAN GOODWILL

## WHAT FIRST GOT YOU HOOKED ON HORSE RACING?

I'm not from a racing family and didn't knowingly attend the races (my parents tell me they once took me as a baby) until I was sixteen, when we went on a family trip to Catterick in May, 1998. I remember being heartbroken to lose my £2 by a short head in the first race, a seller, but ecstatic later on after being fortunate enough to back two winners, namely Lunch Party, ridden by the 5-lb claimer Iona Wands, and Mick Easterby's Hasta La Vista. I was fascinated by everything from the sights, smells and sounds to the studying of the form, which for me on that day simply involved reading the short comments in the race card.

## YOU JOINED TIMEFORM AS A YOUNG MAN. WAS IT YOUR FIRST JOB IN RACING AND WHO DO YOU LOOK UP TO ON THE STAFF FROM BACK THEN?

When I left school, I didn't know what I wanted to do and decided there wasn't much point in going to college, so I started working as a modern apprentice for my local council in Bury. Around that time is when I got hooked on racing. I would usually go with my dad, who used to purchase Timeform race cards and after I started doing the same thing, I noticed a job advert on the Timeform website. They were looking for a graduate but I decided to go for it anyway, attempted to write a review of a race and they saw enough in me to invite me in and that led to a role in their Editorial Department. The late Paul Morrell was a super nice guy and one of the people who showed me the ropes in my early days at Timeform, but he also taught me the value of using a staking plan when betting, and I continue to use his method to this day.

## ANY INTEREST IN JUMP RACING OR HAS IT BEEN FLAT ALL THE WAY FOR YOU?

When I really started to get into racing, I took much more of an interest in jump racing than the Flat. I expressed this when I joined Timeform, and my four and a half years there were spent entirely on the jump racing side of the office. When I started as a Handicapper at the BHB, as it was then, I was asked to do Flat in the summer and jumps in the winter, but as the years have passed, I have found myself to be more comfortable with Flat racing.

## NOW YOU WORK IN FLORIDA. WHAT DOES THAT ENTAIL?

I've been living in Miami since 2015 and had been trying to get a position in racing since I got here, even applying to tracks outside Florida. I've done a few part-time jobs to keep going and recently I managed to obtain a role at Gulfstream Park as a Placing Judge. This is something in which I have no previous experience, but I do know judging here is a bit different from the equivalent task in Great Britain. For example, we don't work alone. Gulfstream has two Placing Judges and I am told that certain tracks in the US actually operate with three, possibly in the event of a disagreement with a photo finish. There is also no requirement to talk on the public address system, so the people of South Florida are sadly deprived of my North West English accent!

## ALSO, YOU WORK AS A REMOTE HANDICAPPER FOR SAUDI ARABIA. HOW DOES THAT WORK?

I'm sure many of your readers will have heard of Phil Smith. He is a former Head of Handicapping at the BHA and now has his own consultancy business. Things have gone really well for him, so much so that he was unable to do all of the work himself, so he asked me if I wanted to do the handicapping of the racing in Saudi Arabia. It came at the perfect moment for me as not only did I need the money, I had used my time between

jobs in racing to teach myself how to do speed figures, which come in as a very useful complement to handicap ratings for racing on dirt, the primary surface used in Saudi Arabia. As you mentioned, all of the handicapping is done remotely, but I was able to go out to work at this year's Saudi Cup, which provided a very memorable experience.

YOU WERE BROUGHT UP IN LANCASHIRE BUT WORKED IN HALIFAX. WHAT WAS IT LIKE DOING MISSIONARY WORK?

Timeform has people from all over, so in that sense it wasn't a problem at all. However, I was the only one in Editorial that commuted from as far as Greater Manchester. I certainly don't miss trying to get my Peugeot 106 over the M62 on snowy or accident-filled days.

I BELIEVE THAT THE BHA ALLOW RACEHORSE TRAINERS TOO MUCH OF A VOICE WITH REGARD HANDICAPPING. HAVING WORKED FOR DIFFERENT JURISDICTIONS DO YOU HAVE A VIEW ON THAT?

It can be frustrating to have people who are not experts in the field of handicapping speaking out about what a terrible job the handicappers are doing. At the same time, you come to appreciate that these individuals invest a lot of time and money into the game and everyone has their own opinion. I think most handicappers will tell you they don't have a problem with someone who goes to them directly with a genuine grievance, as long as that person is respectful. Beyond that I am okay with a simple appeals system if the matter is not resolved and once that is dealt with, I think people should just move on as there are more important things in life to worry about.

YOU HAVE RECENTLY BECOME A PLACING JUDGE AT GULFSTREAM. JUDGING IS AN EASY GIG ISN'T IT. SURELY, THEY DON'T PAY YOU FOR IT?

In theory, being a Placing Judge is very easy. The primary task, obviously, is to post the order of finish, for which you have the help of sophisticated technology. It does require a fair amount of concentration, however, as if a mistake is made, it is extremely costly. I've worked in jobs I've strongly disliked on both sides of the Atlantic, which has made me truly appreciative of being able to come to a premier track to work and have one of the best views of the racing in the house.

DO YOU BELIEVE THAT BRITAIN HAS THE BEST RACING IN THE WORLD?

With races like many of those at Royal Ascot and the calibre of the horses in contests such as the Derby, I think Britain certainly boasts some of the best Flat racing on turf annually. One of my favourite things about racing in Britain is variety, as you also have jump racing such as the Grand National meeting and Cheltenham of course, while the tracks themselves differ greatly from place to place. Amongst the activities I miss most about home is being able to go to a midweek National Hunt meeting at one of the smaller courses.

WHAT WOULD BE YOUR OWN PIECE OF ADVICE FOR ANYONE LOOKING TO BEAT THE BOOKIES THIS SIDE OF THE POND?

I would suggest isolating the types of events you feel you specialise in and really focus on those. When I used to work for the BHA, I wasn't allowed to bet on horse racing, so I made NFL bets my speciality and took little notes on every game to try to give myself an edge. With horse racing, if you are an avid follower of jumps racing in the North you will probably have a strong opinion on many of those races, but perhaps a two-year-old maiden at Brighton is not a race you would be able to price up with a lot of confidence. Either way, if you're struggling to form a solid opinion on an event it is usually better to file it under "too difficult" and move on. When you do bet, as mentioned earlier make sure to incorporate a staking plan. If you are willing to bet on a

horse at 3/1, don't be frightened of putting on the same amount if it turns out to be available at 10/1, because in the long term you will really maximise your profit if your opinions are on point.

## DO YOU REMEMBER A SUCCESSFUL GAMBLE WHILST WORKING AT TIMEFORM?

One of the heavy hitters during my time there was Matt Taylor, who was described to me as the "Placepot King" when I was introduced to him. On a seemingly ordinary day at Perth, May 16th, 2002 to be exact, there was some real carnage in the first race which knocked out the vast majority of tickets as the first three in the betting were all wiped out in one way or another. That set the stall for a Placepot which featured many unplaced favourites, and the dividend was £7,689.30 to a £1 stake. In addition to being a very talented punter, I remember Matt having a really good ability for finding betting loopholes to take advantage of, and back then William Hill took Placepot bets without funnelling the money into the pools, so Matt benefited greatly on the day by not having to share the pot with as many people. A few of us went to the betting shop in Halifax with him the following day, when he collected his cheque for what I believe was the best part of 20 grand, an amount which enabled him to pay off the remaining balance on his mortgage.

## MICROSHARES IN RACE HORSES – IS THIS THE WAY AHEAD?

A recent article on the Irishracing.com website caught my eye. A new venture called Racehorse Club was selling 50,000 shares @ £84 in The Lir Jet, 50,000 shares @ £75 in Potters Corner and 5,000 shares @ £80 in Balko Des Flos. The scheme was promoted by Ed Chamberlin, Frankie Dettori & Oisin Murphy according to the article. No ownership of the horses was included although 'members' would receive a share of the prize money, subject to a minimum of £20 being due – in the case of Potters Corner the horse would have needed to win the equivalent of three Grand Nationals for shareholders to get a pay-out. In summary the article advised caution (to put it mildly).

My own experience in 'ownership' started in a big group in the 1990's called Laurel Racing Club. In those days these sort of clubs often had links with a newspaper to gain 'free advertising' to sell shares. This group was set up by Andrew Hoyle who was a racing reporter for the Preston based Lancashire Evening Post in those days. I don't remember the cost to join but we did get three horses in the first year being multiple winner Laurel Queen, Kestrel Forboxes and Fleet Footed. The first two were trained by Jack Berry and the other by Mary Reveley. I did get an owners badge once during my time with them and also went to 'open days' at Jack Berry's for the owners group. With plenty of winners to show for the subscription and regular updates via a newsletter and phone line it whetted my appetite for ownership.

My next involvement was through syndicates run by this club with 20-30 members usually involved. With a small group the experience was much more friendly and badges/stable visits much easier to attend. When horses were leased there was no capital outlay and initially I paid £50pm, later £75pm although today it would be more in the region of £125pm for a similar sized group.

Whilst the enjoyment from a small group is much better when things go well, if the horse struggles in races at first a small syndicate can soon fall apart if members decide to quit when things are not going too well.

Ownersgroup is probably the biggest micro share operation in the UK at present and usually offers around 3000 shares per horse at an initial cost of about £50 for the year with a reduced fee in year 2 onwards. They currently have around 50 horses in training and keep contact with their subscribers via a monthly magazine, website and e mails

They are part of a wider group including Elite Racing Club – shares slightly more expensive – and Axom even more expensive with prices reflecting the lower number of shares issued.

The person behind all of these entities is Tony Hill, who reportedly keeps a very low profile and is rarely seen on the racecourse. He was previously a stand-up comedian and a 'serial entrepreneur' according to historic comments about him. Elite Registrations was an early money maker for him (personalised number plates) and in 1992 he set up his first racing syndicate with a horse called Elite Reg, with around 50 members. It didn't go too well though, with the horse claimed in a selling race before going on to better things with Martin Pipe.

The rest, as they say, is history and his group of companies Wentrow Media Ltd now has an annual turnover of nearly £9M and a pre tax profit of £173,000 in 2020. Whilst the directors pay is not stated in the accounts, they would appear to be substantial given their admin costs are nearly £3M (the group has around 40 employees). Nice work if you can get it!

Some critics of micro shares will say these groups are a licence to print money and subscribers are merely paying to fund other peoples race horse ownership/breeding set ups. However, it has taken Mr Hill 30 years to build his empire and with around 150,000 subscribers he must be doing something right!

We sounded out some views on micro shares via the club's social media platforms with many comments concerning Ownersgroup and to be fair all were positive about their experiences. Here are some of the comments left:

**Stuart Dunn** has shares in horses with Paul Nicholls & Ben Pauling and says 'great value for money'. **Louise Palmer** had a share with Racehorse Club in the Grand National runner up and describes that as 'a very proud moment'. **Aiden Kenny** has shares in several horses and says they are 'exceptional value'. **Tony Coleman** has two horses and says the experience is 'close to excellent'. **Tim Cogan's** horse was side lined with an injury but still feels the experience was 'good'.

**Leon Lewis** says 'I've never bought shares before but it's something I've always wanted to do but felt it was beyond my budget, however after a couple of good months punting towards the end of 2020 I started to do some research on horse ownership and give me something to look toward to in 2021.

I found a few options in my budget from small %age shares for a monthly fee ranging £50 upwards to those that I guess would be classed as micro shares where it's a very small fee with 000s of owners. Eventually I found Grange Park Racing who were selling lease shares for 1 year for a one-off price. I ended up paying £200 for 1 share of 100 for a 2-year-old filly with Tim Easterby. For that price I thought I'd get value from following a young horse in its first year and also it could be anything, we could even get to Royal Ascot I thought, but that's probably a pipe dream, although the filly Sonella has a couple of decent entries later this year. So far she's had 1 run which wasn't bad and I get regular updates and videos showing her progress. Hopefully later this year I may even get a chance for an owners badge. I think micro shares are a good way to dip your toe into ownership as it's about the enjoyment of being part of that horses team I guess. So far I'm convinced next year I'll do similar maybe get small cost shares in a couple of horses or shares for me and the Mrs. I'm also trying to convince some friends to buy in too but they want to see how I get on this year.

**Russ Foster** writes 'I had a great time in the Martin Pipe Racing Club, had a nice weekend staying near the yard and mixing with one or two of the stable staff. It was all about the experiences for me and not the money as we had plenty of winners and plenty of useful tips. Nothing but a positive experience for me and met plenty of likeminded, good people. Had a great time.

**Ed Brougham** writes 'Like most race goers, I have limited funds and I've steered away from syndicates that ask for an upfront payment followed by monthly payments. I also believe that schemes that involve thousands of members paying a £50 one off payment are not for me because they don't provide a real on course owner experience. I have, however, been involved in two schemes, both of which have suited my pocket. I was a member of the Goodwood Racecourse Owners Group and was fortunate enough to have been a part owner of Goodwood Crusader who was trained by Richard Hughes and won five races as a three-year-old. There were 250 members of the group who each paid a one of fee to join that covered the cost of the purchase of the horse as a two-year-old and training fees etc. Each member was a part owner and it lasted for two years for a one-off payment of £1100. Every member had the opportunity of obtaining an owners badge on a first come first served basis and those who missed out were able to obtain a complimentary members badge at the course. I was fortunate to have been in the winners enclosure when Crusader won at Bath and Newmarket and because I live in the Midlands myself and my wife were able to obtain owners badges when Crusader ran at Wolverhampton, Nottingham and Leicester because most of the other owners lived in the South East and weren't inclined to travel long distances. At the end of the scheme, Crusader was sold and the proceeds plus prize money was divided equally amongst the members. I received about £600 and I have to say that two years racing with owners badges and/or free entry to courses for £500 was real value for money. I have been looking around for similar schemes run along similar lines but have not made any decision because of the restrictions imposed on racecourse attendance by Covid. I have a couple of friends who are members of £50 schemes and, and seem to consider themselves to be 'owners' but being one of thousands just doesn't appeal to me at all. For example, the chance of obtaining an owners badge when your horse runs is limited. So my advice would be to join a middle of the road scheme as I described earlier with limited membership that gives you the rights and privileges of ownership with the possibility of receiving a small return on your investment.

After leaving The Goodwood Group, a small group of us approached Richard Hughes and he agreed to set up a Richard Hughes Racing Club. He chose a couple of horses to run in the Club's name and, although the club members didn't own the horses, we all enjoyed all the race day privileges of ownership. I believe that quite a few stables run these schemes.

Obviously, the horses that ran in our colours were never going to be world beaters but everyone enjoyed the racing days and the visits to the stables and up on the Lambourne gallops. Richard and his wife are brilliant hosts and he always treated us to a meal at the local pub after the visit. This type of scheme is also well worth considering.

So there we have it. The owners behind the really big syndicates (3000+) are probably on a 'nice little earner' but if they do a good job, as indicated by the comments above, most subscribers appear to enjoy their involvement and will no doubt be back for more in the future!

For others, a smaller syndicate gives a much more personal involvement even if the cost is a lot higher.

Everyone has their own views on how much they want to spend on 'racing ownership' and provided you feel that you get good value for money then the choice is yours. Certainly if aiming at a 'Saturday' or 'Big Race' horse then the micro share option gives people a chance of getting involved in the upper end of the sport, even if in a limited capacity. By Phil Evans.

## THE THOROUGHBRED QUESTION – BY KATE AUSTIN

### Q. WHEN IS A THOROUGHBRED NOT A THOROUGHBRED?

#### A. When it's AQPS!

"Autre Que Pur-Sang", is translated as "Other than Thoroughbred". There is not much physical difference between AQPS equines and thoroughbreds, but many French trainers & agents believe there's more guarantee of jumping ability with AQPS horses as they come from many generations of jumpers on their dam side. Although differences may be slight, the AQPS are usually more solid, with extra bone and substance. Tougher perhaps? - which in turn allows them to be trained harder, allowing them to become fitter. To race under rules, horses must have at least 87.5% Thoroughbred blood.

This may be why many are seen at their best on soft ground over longer distances, where their greater strength makes it easier to plough through tiring ground.

Interestingly, each year all AQPS horses must be named with a designated letter of the alphabet; for example, the 2008 letter was "U", which included **Un De Sceaux & Un Ace**.

There are also restricted AQPS races on the flat, with their own pattern system. The "AQPS Derby", the **Jacques de Vienne, will be run on Nov27** at St Cloud. They are not allowed in the actual thoroughbred pattern races anymore - or in UK Bumpers!

### NOTABLE NAMES

Some of the names on the AQPS honour-roll may surprise you! For example, there's **Edredon Bleu**, winner of the Champion Chase in 2000 and the King George in 2003 - no arguing with his fluency over fences! Then came **Mon Mome**, winner of the Grand National in 2009, followed by **Neptune Collonges** in 2012, both AQPS horses, as was **Orphée des Blins**, winner of The Grand Pardubice Steeplechase 2012, 2013 and 2014. No doubt that mixed breeding stood them in good stead over those staying races!

**The Fellow** won the Prix La Haye Jousselin in 1990, the Grand Steeple-Chase de Paris in 1991 and enjoyed even greater success in England where he won the King George VI Chase in 1991 and 1992 and the Cheltenham Gold Cup in 1994.

Possibly the best-known AQPS horse globally, was The Fellow's full brother, **Al Capone II**, who won the Grade One Grand Steeple-Chase de Paris in 1997 plus **seven** consecutive Grade One Prix La Haye Jousselin steeplechase races at Auteuil Hippodrome from 1993 through 1999.

Occasionally, race cards will show a horse with 'Aa' after its name. It stands for **Anglo-Arab**. Keen-eyed race fans will have noticed that **Anthony Honeyball's** recent Ascot winner, **Sully D'Oc** is one such horse. Members might be surprised to learn that, a few years ago, **Coolmore** owned & raced an Anglo-Arabian, **K'chou Du Pecos**. It's still in training, with **Henry Oliver**, last running in March 2020.

As previously mentioned, the great **Un De Sceaux** is also an 'other than thoroughbred' racehorse. However because he has less than 12.5% Arabian, he was classified as AQPS. If they have more than 12.5% they will have an 'Aa' designation. Between 12.5 - 25% is known in France as AC (Anglo-Arab Compte). Anything over that is a true Anglo-Arab & K'chou Du Pecos comes into that category. The grey Champion Chase winner **Azertyuiop** was also bred out of an Arabian bloodline.

Both **Nicky Henderson & Paul Nicholls** have had huge success with AQPS horses; **Sprinter Sacre** and **Silviniaco Conti** being two of their best. **Duc Des Genievres** and **Eglantine Du Seuil** are AQPS-bred and having been sourced by French bloodstock agent, **Pierre Boulard**, were bought by **Harold Kirk** for **Willie Mullins** to train for **Sullivan Bloodstock**. Both horses were moved to **Paul Nicholls** for this season. The great **QueVega** is also AQPS, which means her offspring are too. AQPS youngsters tend to be sold at specific regional sales, rather than the thoroughbred yearling auctions.

Clearly, AQPS racehorses have had huge success in Britain and Ireland. As such, demand has never been higher for the breed. I wonder if those farmers, in the late 1800s, ever imagined that the descendants of their big female carthorses would, one day, win our blue-riband jumping prizes!

(**Kate Austin** is a regular contributor to the **London Racing Club** magazine and has kindly shared this article with us)

## **RACING REFLECTIONS** BY WALTER KIRKHAM

It is 65 years since I pulled off a massive gamble on E.S.B. in the Grand National and the Queen's horse ALEXANDER in the Royal Hunt Cup. I went to Haydock earlier in the year to watch the Grand National Trial. E.S.B. won it for Fred Rimmell and I went around the ring placing a series of bets at 25/1.

Around the same time in June 1956 it was the centenary 300 years of the Grenadier Guards. I had just demobbed from the guards and was asked to sign on, but refused after an incident at Buckingham Palace. I was invited to Royal Ascot and a garden party at Windsor Castle. With the invitation was a letter from Simon Loder (father of David Loder the former trainer). In the letter Simon advised that ALEXANDER would be trained by Captain Cecil Boyd Rochfort and specifically aimed at the Royal Hunt Cup.

The amount I won on the two winners was enough to furnish my home when I got married in 1957!

During my 80 years 'gambling' I have made many trainer friends. My favourite would have to be Sir Henry Cecil and I visited Warren Place many times over the years. I've been a very lucky punter and thanks to MILL REEF and BRIGADIER GERARD I was able to buy a barn for £3,000 which I then converted to a four-bedroom house!

I don't spend too much time watching racing because I am mainly interested in 'Group 1' and other big races.

I was in a past racing club syndicate with a horse called THE MANOR and when it ran at Carlisle I also saw TELEPROMPTER win. I knew that horse was special so I headed to Knowsley to find out what Lord Derby had in mind. He said 'I've one race in mind, The Million'. I replied that 'we don't have any £1m races' to which he retorted 'The Arlington Million in Canada'. The horse duly obliged for me at 14/1.

- Editor's Note – Walter lives in Barrow-in-Furness and I have had many a chat with him over the years when at Cartmel. I look forward to Walter's next 'reflections' about his time in the police and policing at racecourses!

# HERITAGE HANDICAPS CHALLENGE 2021

The Heritage Handicap Competition is back for another season, a challenge for all flat racing fans. It will run throughout the main flat season starting on 'Derby Day' in June and ending at Ascot's 'Champions Day' in October.

Each Saturday the organiser will select the highest profile handicap race (normally a Heritage Handicap race) and will e mail/text details to the entrants in good time to send in their entries.

Entrants can select three horses which they think will win or be placed.

Points will be awarded as per the Tote dividend (win and place). The number of places to be determined by the Tote pool place dividends for each of the selected races. If you select more than one placed horse, you will score the points gained from all placed horses.

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

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

It costs £10 to enter with all entry fees added to the prize fund. If you wish to send entry fee electronically please contact Helen Goodwill for details. One entry per member is allowed but other family members can also enter.

To enter by post please complete the slip below and return to North & Midlands Racing Club, 124 Lindsell Rd, Altrincham, Cheshire. WA14 5NZ.

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

This year's competition will be sponsored by Betturtle (racing website) who will give the main competition winner an enhanced annual membership worth £199!



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## HERITAGE HANDICAPS ENTRY FORM 2021

Please accept this entry for the 2021 Competition. I am also enclosing entry fee of £10 per person (payable to North & Midlands Racing Club). Please enclose SAE for paper copy of the rules.

Name(s).....

Address.....

Phone/E Mail.....

The form should be returned to North & Midlands Racing Club, 124 Lindsell Rd, Altrincham, Cheshire. WA14 5NZ together with your entry (cheques payable to North & Midlands Racing Club please).

# NMRC EVENTS FOR THE REMAINDER OF 2021

Hopefully the club will again be able to hold some outdoor events later in the year if the covid-19 situation allows. Ideally we will start with stable visits with a possible trip to the races near to the stables.

For the time being, we have decided not to arrange further online previews over the summer months as most members will be enjoying the light evenings and enjoying the relaxation in covid-19 restrictions rather than staying indoors on their computers!

That said, Judith Bradley is happy to run further online racing chats over the summer months if there is demand. These will be informal chats about anything racing related. Please contact Judith (details below) if this is of interest.

Later in the year we hope to re-start our monthly online quiz nights as well.

Any ideas/suggestions from members as to what activities you would like to see in the Autumn would be greatly appreciated.

In particular, if any members have connections with racing yards and would like to ask if the club could arrange a stable visit later in the year that would be very helpful.

## N & M RACING CLUB COMMITTEE/OFFICIALS 2021/22

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Helen Goodwill	Membership & HH Comp	0161 928 0213	cheshirecherry@hotmail.co.uk
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*Next copy deadline for Racin' will be Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> July*

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