

Racin'



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MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS 2024

This renewal reminder is only for members who receive 'paper' copies of the club magazine.

The membership rate is maintained at £12 for a further year notwithstanding the cost increases re printing and postage seen in 2023.

Please send any cheques (payable to North & Midlands Racing Club) to Helen Goodwill, Membership Secretary, 124 Lindsell Rd, Altrincham, Cheshire WA14 5NZ.

If you pay by bankers order please ensure the sum is set at £12 and also keep the club updated if either your postal and/or e-mail addresses have altered.

Any 'paper' non-renewals will automatically be added to the online mailing list.

ONLINE RACING QUIZ – MONDAY 26TH FEBRUARY AT 8PM

Our first online quiz night of 2024 will concentrate on jumps racing.

If there is sufficient demand a 'flat racing' version will take place in early November.

Anyone with a computer, smartphone or tablet should be able to take part.

A small prize will be awarded to the winner!

If interested please contact Phil Evans via e mail at info@northernracingclub.com

CHELTENHAM FESTIVAL POINTERS 2024

The club's Cheltenham Guide will be updated daily ahead of this year's festival and copies can be downloaded at <https://the-nrc.weebly.com/festival-guides.html>

Followers of the 'Racing Systems Guide' on the club website may have already noticed that at Cheltenham (since 2020) it has been very profitable to follow the 'Days Last Ran' runners at the course and these lists can be found at <https://the-nrc.weebly.com/days-last-ran.html> with Cheltenham Festival races updated in early March on the website.

Don't miss our 'members discount' for this year's Weatherbys Cheltenham Guide which you can order online or get a copy directly from the author at the NMRC Cheltenham Festival Preview Night in Warrington (details on page 3).

If you do not live in the North West we have also included some details of some other preview events at Cartmel, Hexham and Uttoxeter - see page 26.

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COMPETITION NEWS

59's DRAW RESULTS UPDATE

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

January 6th – 41 – Angela White (Timperley)

Your £50 prizes will be with you shortly.

The winning number is determined by the 'bonus ball' drawn in the UK Lottery on the 1st Saturday of the month.

Thanks to all who continue to support the draw. All numbers are currently allocated but to join the waiting list please e mail info@northernracingclub.com for further details.

SATURDAY NAPS+ N H TIPPING CHALLENGE

Congratulations to **Peter Flynn** who won Round 1 or this winter's tipping challenge with **Harry Sandland** in runner-up spot. They win £70 & £30 prizes respectively.

The leaderboard after week 10 for Round 2 looks like this – Round 2 (in grey) seasonal (in pink).

R2	Tot	Name & Entry No.
26.7	40.9	Chris Watson 138
25	53.2	Patrick O'Donoghue 77
21.4	73.4	Harry Sandland 73
19.7	39.4	Brendan O'Meara 56
19.2	20.9	Eddie Carson 97
18.2	54.5	Alan Preston 51
18	55.5	Simon Wilson 121
16.7	32.22	Alan Spencer 30
13.86	28.66	Dave Edge 32
13.62	46.46	Ted Halewood 02
13.5	38.2	Colin Malone 01
13.3	54	Philip Doyle 105
13.1	36.14	Paul Willoughby 33
12.9	41.86	Mark Banks 96
11.9	21.7	Michael Wheeler 89
11.7	38.68	Gordon Armistead 17
11.7	45.7	Rob McDermott 28
11.6	69.34	Peter Flynn 20

PICK OF ITV RACING PRESENTERS (AS CHOSEN BY NMRC MEMBERS)

In mid-January we put a poll on the NMRC Facebook page asking which presenters/pundits members would like to see covering the Cheltenham Festival on ITV in March.

Based on the percentage of votes received the 'A' team would be:

Ruby Walsh 23% Tom Scudamore 13%
Mick Fitzgerald 12% Matt Chapman 12%

The 'B' team, also known as the subs bench, would include:

Luke Harvey 10% Sir A P McCoy 7%
Oli Bell 6% Adele Mulrennan 5%

The following can take the week off as far as our members are concerned!

Megan Nicholls 3% Ed Chamberlain 3%
Rishi Persad 3%

Some others scored 1% but as they are not on ITV racing roster they are not named here!

A similar poll will take place ahead of Royal Ascot to see which ITV flat racing pundits/presenters members would like to see.

MARK'S TRAVELS IN 2024

Mark Banks, who scores the ALEX BIRD tipping challenge, (see page 8 for entry form), loves going racing and arranges racing trips each year with his family and friends.

As for his plans this year, he is going to Haydock Park on Saturday 17th February. After that he is planning on going up to Musselburgh for their Sky Bet Sunday Series meeting on Sunday 21st April (trains permitting).

His main trip this year is a trip to Goodwood on Saturday 25th May followed by nearby Fontwell Park on the Sunday. Possibly staying in Chichester.

After that a family holiday to Listowel for their three-day June Festival is on the cards

And, he is also planning to go to the St Leger Meeting in September on Saturday and Sunday

Mark loves chatting to members about racing so if you see him on the racecourse please say 'hello'.

NMRC's CHELTENHAM PREVIEW NIGHT – THURS MARCH 7TH (7.45 PM START) THE TETLEYS CLUB, LONG LANE, WARRINGTON WA2 8PU

After a good turnout in 2023 we are again back with a **live** Cheltenham preview event in 2024! If you live within easy reach of Warrington we hope you can join us.

Paul Ferguson (author of the Weatherbys Cheltenham Guide and also Weatherbys Jumps Annual) will head the panel which will be chaired by our own **Gordon Armistead**, who writes in Racin' Magazine, and usually attends the key Cheltenham trials in the UK & Ireland. Also on the panel is **Dan Kelly** - A former owner with Alan King, Dan is a form expert and likes to search for value wherever possible. He is a regular panellist on Cheltenham & Aintree preview evenings with Paul Ferguson. Finally, **Keith McHugh** is a 'close-up' writer with the Racing Post and a past winner of the Racing Post Naps Competition.

Admission will be £10pp (If pre-booked) or £12 on the night (or a joint ticket to include an Aintree preview event at the same venue for £15). Those members booking 4+ places will also be seated on a reserved table as near to the front as possible. To book places please contact Phil Evans (info@northernracingclub.com or text 07858 034694).

The event will also support the Injured Jockeys Fund via our raffle on the night.

Copies of the **Weatherbys Cheltenham Guide** will be available to purchase on the night at a special NMRC price.

The venue has a capacity of 140 places and a decent sized car park.



If members cannot attend this event there are details of a couple of other preview events, in our region, on page.

Also, NMRC members are again able to order copies of the Weatherbys Cheltenham Guide by post at a special members discount – see page 13.

LEIGH O'BRIEN 'UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT' – COMPILED BY BRIAN GOODWILL

Leigh O'Brien is a recently retired Clerk of Scales. His partner, Anna, runs a livery stable and between them and with the help of their daughter Lara they care for numerous horses and they have had the retired racehorse Matsunosuke for several years. On the track he won 16 races.

HOW DID YOU ACQUIRE A RETIRED RACEHORSE?

I knew A B Coogan the Owner/Trainer and he knew I had re-homed a couple of racehorses previously. He called me to ask if we had space for Matsunosuke after his retirement. We had space so we gave him a chance. We always take them on trial initially as not all thoroughbreds are suitable for re-homing.

DID HE SOON SETTLE IN?

Yes he took a couple of days to get used to his new surroundings but he settled in nicely without a bother.

TEMPERAMENT WISE WERE THERE ANY ISSUES?

Not with Matsunosuke. He had spent a few months out of training before we took him and he was totally relaxed when he came to us.



HE IS 22 NOW, HOW IS HE DOING?

In spring and summer he still canters around his paddock like a youngster and always looks stunning once he loses his winter coat.

HOW IMPORTANT IS IT THAT RACEHORSES GET FOREVER HOMES?

It is extremely important but sadly too few of them get the kind of retirement that they deserve. The industry needs to do more to provide places for racehorses in retirement.

WOULD YOU GET ANOTHER EX-RACEHORSE

Matsunosuke was our fourth retiree, and being retired myself, sadly he is going to be my last.

LIKE ME, YOU WERE BROUGHT UP IN BURNLEY WITH A FOOTBALL MORE THAN A HORSE FOR COMPANY. HOW DID YOU TAKE TO THE NEW ADDITION TO THE FAMILY?

Caring for Matsunosuke is an honour and learning the new skills required to make him comfortable has been a pleasure. Football is still a big part of my life though.

HAVE YOU EVER RIDDEN HIM?

Anna hacked him out in the early days but he is now fully retired. I get greater pleasure seeing the horses happy.

YOU HAD TO RETIRE FROM BEING A CLERK OF SCALES AT AN EARLY AGE BECAUSE OF HEALTH ISSUES. DID

OCCASIONS THAT RYAN MOORE ISN'T JUST A MISERABLE BLOKE?

I loved every minute of my 16 years on the Scales. Every day different and you meet some fantastic characters in this sport. As for Ryan Moore, he is a charming articulate and witty individual once you get to know him with a serious sense of humour.

WHAT'S YOUR OWN FUNNIEST MOMENT ON A RACECOURSE?

So many to mention it's impossible to pick one. Jockeys embellishing each-others food. A lady rider trying to get a steward to go out on a date. The case of the mysterious DNA on the physio table. The screaming baby in the Fontwell weighing room.

Editor's Note: Matsunosuke even has his own Wikipedia entry which is worth a read. It also states that the horse is the highest rated runner on the all-weather as calculated by the Racing Post at 112.

A DAY AT THE RACES-----IN CYPRUS----BY DAVE KAY

While recently holidaying in Cyprus I took the opportunity to have a day at Nicosia races.

Racing in Cyprus has taken place for thousands of years but modern racing was established in 1892 by a group of British officers based on the English jockey club.

The racecourse is located near the centre of Nicosia and close to the border between the Greek and Turkish areas. This is highlighted by a large Turkish flag located on the hills bordering the track that becomes illuminated at night.

Racing takes place twice a week and many days commence at 3-30pm to avoid the hottest parts of the day. Each meeting has between 7 and 9 races over distances ranging from 1000 to 1600 meters .

The track is circular with a very short straight and all races are run around bends on a dirt surface.

Admission including a race card (printed in English) is free.

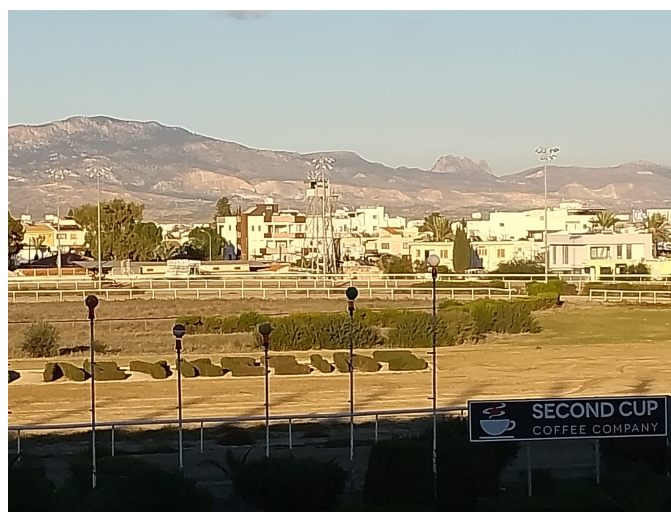
Horses contesting the races are all thoroughbreds but some races are restricted to Cyprus bred horses while others are open to horses born in European Union countries

Another interesting point relating to the handicap races is that in some the highest rated horses have priority for participation and in others the lowest rated have priority.

All betting is tote based and a large variety of bets are available win, place, forecast, tri-cast and multiple doubles and trebles.

Multiple TV screens are located throughout the building and show racing from England ,France and Ireland as well as live racing from the track with many replays.

Facilities consist of two stands a large old building of 3 floors with a top floor of boxes available to hire for the day a middle floor with a bar and refreshment area and a very large betting hall on the ground floor.



The newer smaller stand located next to the parade ring has 2 floors with the upper floor being restricted to members and the ground floor offers another refreshment area and bar.

A parade ring, unsaddling area and presentation area for the winner and placed horses is located to the side of the parade ring and available for all everyone to view. On the day I attended the crowd was similar in number to those attending a midweek meeting at Wolverhampton with the result that there was lots of space it was easy to obtain a seat and resulted in short waits at all the refreshment areas and betting outlets. So if visiting Cyprus why not enjoy a day at the races!

Editor's Note: I couldn't fit in all photos Dave sent in but on one I have omitted, good to see the old metal framed jockey boards are still in use out there!

WHY ARE BOOKIES REMOVING SO MANY OF THEIR PERKS?

Many racing fans I speak to will share stories about having their 'perks' withdrawn or accounts closed altogether if you win too often. This implies that bookies only want to retain 'mug punters' for want of a better phrase. So much for the bookies who 'pretend' they are looking after their customers with safer gambling supposedly at the heart of all they do – just look at the fines being dished out by the Gaming Commission to see the reality. It perhaps also explains why bookies have helped pushed against the affordability checks for punters as this now seems to be their target market – those that cannot afford to lose!

If we look at the financial accounts of the big bookies most are still doing ok albeit rapid growth may have slowed down in recent years. For the likes of Flutter & Entain they are global businesses so not always easy to identify their UK/Irish operations is isolation – here are a few glimpses of how they are doing:

Flutter – Owners of Skybet, Paddy Power, Betfair: Recent growth in USA but in UK/Ireland Sportsbook Stakes were down 12% in 2022 (online down 17%) whilst gaming revenues were up 23%. In 2023, Sportsbook revenues are reported to have recovered again but figures still awaited.

Entain – Owners of Corals, Ladbrokes in UK. Accounts do not give separate UK results but globally revenues up 10% in 2022 and operating profits up 12%. Deemed to be underperforming by the stock market though with share price down 40% in the last 3 years.

Bet 365 – Whilst it does trade partially globally as well it is run as a private business for the Coates family with Denise taking a salary of £304M in 2023 and also funding trading losses at Stoke City FC. The accounts state that 'profits stable'.

William Hill – Acquired by 888 a few years ago. Their latest accounts reveal revenues down 8% in 2023 and looking to save £30M in costs in 2024.

Betfred – A mini version of Bet 365 with the Done family the main beneficiaries. 2022 profits up to £38.7M (from £6M in 2021).

UK Tote – 2022 accounts show turnover up 20% whilst losses reduced to £4.5M (from £11.3M). Still reportedly paying £7M pa to racecourses.

There is no doubt that the impacts of Covid-19 restrictions in recent years has impacted on bookies profits and triggered the cutbacks seen regarding perks for punters. Similarly, those companies with large portfolios of betting shops are probably faring worse as customers visiting betting shops has not recovered well post covid-19 restrictions ending.

Based on my personal experience, here are my star ratings for online bookies I have used in recent times:

***** **Bet 365** – They have reduced a few perks in recent times but generally still offer the best odds on most races (via Oddschecker) and if you bet directly on their site many races have extra value on some horses so maybe 5/2 on Oddschecker but 11/4 if you visit their site instead. Pretty good with extra place races. Still offer BOG on day of races. Some 'free games' to play on racing/football.

**** **Paddy Power** – If you opt in you can still get BOG. Most Saturdays they have a race where you get a free bet if your horse finishes 2nd, 3rd, 3th. Although I would never use my own money on a football 'bet builder' (as it's impossible to spot whether odds reflect the risk) they often give punters a 'free bet builder' to use if you want a free fun bet. A fair number of extra place races offered. Like Betfair offer you 'prize vouchers' at retailers when you withdraw funds (up to 10% bonus may be available).

*** **Corals** – Still offering BOG. Perks like 'fail to finish' and 'beaten less than a length' are long gone. Occasional extra place races. On Saturdays there are some free to enter racing & football 'games'. Also on Saturdays there is usually a 'free bet' offer if you back a winner (win or e/w) at odds of 5/1+ on an ITV race. They also run the Coral Racing Club where you can theoretically 'get involved' as an owner.

*** **Tote** – On win bets still offering SP (if better). 'Tote Stayers Club' gives free bets if placing at least 6 qualifying bets each week. Also, on most Saturdays you can opt-in for a free £1 placepot bet. Can watch most races without placing a bet.

** Betfred – Still offering BOG on certain races plus occasional extra place races. However, more than any other site, the odds are often less than Oddschecker when the slip opens on the Betfred site.

** Betfair – BOG removed for everyone. Offer a few extra place races. Useful for betting on exchanges if odds are much better than other options. Occasional perks on Saturdays such as a free accumulator bet or a free 'build a bet' for football. Like Paddy Power offer you 'prize vouchers' at retailers when you withdraw funds (up to 10% bonus may be available).

*Star Sports – I only keep open as they used to sponsor our Cheltenham Preview event. Rarely offer the decent odds with few if any other perks. Still offer BOG.

*BetVictor – Occasional extra place races and still offer BOG. Occasionally offer better odds on 'outsiders'.

*William Hill – Removed BOG for everyone albeit on Oddschecker can still look the best value in some races. Occasional extra place races. Nearly all my perks removed (such as free games, epic value offers etc) but still allowed one 'odds boost' per day – yippee! Even if not betting with them I like to listen to William Hill Racing Radio, which is excellent.

*Skybet – Has gone from 5 star to 1 star in just over a year. I used to qualify for a free £5 bet every week through the 'Sky Bet' club and saved them for Cheltenham. Was banned from that over a year ago. Next week I will also lose BOG (on races that Skybet allow) as not in Skybet Club. Also banned from all other perks. Only kept open for their extra place offers where I will usually prefer SP to their stingy odds! From getting 50% of my bets in the past they now get about 2% from me.

Zero stars – For various reasons I have closed accounts with Unibet, Boyle Sports & Ladbrokes and would not use again.

There are some 'new kids on the block' that I have not yet tried but I am at that stage where I cannot be bothered if they do not offer something different – all too often there is little or no variation in the odds shown on Oddschecker to lure me into a new bookie.

Where is the best betting value for horse racing?

The average racegoer will often be lulled into assuming the best value in races is for larger field races because this produces more longer odds winners.

Whilst no two races are the same, and handicaps will usually be more 'competitive', the smaller fields can often give better value at SP with larger fields usually giving better value at Tote odds.

My maths behind this are as follows;

The SP calculations usually assume an 'over round' of up to 2% per runner e.g. in a 10 runner race the over-round will usually be around 20% (shown in Racing Post results summary as SP 120%).

Tote pools work differently in the UK & Ireland with win pool deductions in the UK 19.5% and Ireland 25% (information based on the website I used – hopefully this is still correct).

So in this example for a 10 runner race the SP & UK Tote offers the better value.

As field sizes increase generally Tote prices will be better as for say a 20 runner race the SP market will show as around 140% so both UK & Irish Tote prices will be better 'in aggregate'.

There can, however, only be one winner of the race so if heavily backed on the Tote the returns can still be lower for one horse in isolation even in a 20-runner race.

Beware big field maiden races though as often a 20-runner maiden only has a handful in with a realistic chance so in betting terms it will often look like a five or six runner field.

In summary, whilst most racing folk like a bigger field, as it gives an impression of being more competitive, in betting terms it will usually give punters poorer value unless they use the Tote whose 'never beaten by SP' promises also offer some extra protection for 'value seekers'

'ALEX BIRD' TIPPING CHALLENGE 2024

The Alex Bird Trophy, the competition to find the North & Midlands Racing Club Champion Tipster for 2024, gets underway at the Cheltenham Festival. Mark Banks will again run the competition assisted by Mike Wheeler. Please note that entrants must enter all four rounds – if anyone is on holiday for any round a substitute may be appointed!

As in previous years the 'first' three rounds of the competition will cover the festival meetings at Cheltenham, Aintree and Royal Ascot but for round four, we're going to try something new with the July festival at Newmarket. Last year we used Doncaster's St Leger festival for round four, but we feel the gap until that meeting isn't ideal, and we're not fully available to cover either Glorious Goodwood or York Ebor. All the days of each meeting will be covered, except for Royal Ascot which will comprise the 'first' four days from Tuesday to Friday.

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 added based on the starting price of the winning horse. Precise scoring details are set out in the full rules (available from Mark/Michael or online at <https://the-nrc.weebly.com/clubcompetitions.html>).
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 for a full round may nominate a substitute to send entries on their behalf.
4. Entry Fees in 2024 are the same as last year, namely £10 for all 4 rounds. All entry fees are added to the prize fund.
5. As previously, entrants may submit up to two entries and are marked as 'Entry 1' and 'Entry 2' and will be scored separately.
6. Cash prizes will now 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 2023, due to the volume of entries, additional prizes for runners up were available. If the level of entries permits, these will again be awarded in 2024. NB: All cash prizes are remitted to the winners by direct bank payments.

We hope the 2024 competition will appeal to both loyal contestants and new participants alike. We look forward to your entries and wish everyone the best of good tipping fortune.

ALEX BIRD COMPETITION 2024 – 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 – bank details are the same as last year if entered previously. You will then receive an e-mailed copy of the rules for 2024. Please register your entry by noon on Monday 11th March.

Laura says a sad farewell to her stable star

By HAROLD HEYS

ERNIE, the little pony, had a day at the races a couple of weeks ago. He went with his stable pal **Notlongtillmay**, star of Laura Morgan's Leicestershire stable, and they enjoyed a bright sunny morning together after arriving early at Kempton.

But Ernie travelled back North on his own in the stable horse-box. His pal, the eight-year-old gelding, was left behind. He had to be put down after crashing through the last fence in a Group 2 chase and breaking a shoulder. Banbridge went on to win the £46,000 Coral Silviano Conti Chase from Pic D'Orhy.

Ernie wouldn't have known of the tragedy for the stable. But many thousands of racing fans knew exactly what had happened. A heartbroken Laura told them in a tearful interview with Alice Plunkett.

I was one of them. No doubt many *Racin'* readers would have shared the moment. Minutes earlier the pair had smiled through the tale of a big win in a Pertemps Hurdle Qualifier up at Warwick with 8-1 shot **J'Ai Froid** ridden by John Kington.



The ups and downs of racing struck within half-an-hour as **Notlongtillmay** (David Noonan) was put down. He hadn't moved. Laura, heartbroken, had sought out Alice and asked if she might go on air to pay tribute to the star of her small stable. It must have taken some guts. Anyone who has ever been even loosely involved with life behind the scenes will appreciate just how devastated Laura would have been feeling. And how desperately painful it would have been for her.

I can't recall a trainer *asking* to talk about the death of a horse. Yes, we all know it happens, but it is always spoken of *en passant* or briefly towards the end of a

transmission. The ITV team didn't hesitate. And they were rewarded with a couple of minutes of stark sadness. It certainly got to me.

Laura, tears in her eyes, told Alice: "It's absolutely horrendous. He didn't deserve that. He just took a nasty fall at the last and broke his shoulder.

"He's been our stable star and it's so upsetting. It will leave an absolutely massive hole in the yard every day. He was just a character. We brought him here with a little pony called Ernie who always goes with him."

It was hard for Laura. And it wasn't easy for Alice. As the camera shot pulled back and faded, the interviewer put her arm around the trainer's shoulder and they walked slowly away ...

The only other trainer who I can remember talking on live TV about the death of a stable star was Oliver Sherwood who was shattered when **Many Clouds**, winner of the Grand National and Hennessy, and who had just beaten **Thistlecrack** to add the Cotswold Chase at Cheltenham to his tally, collapsed with a pulmonary haemorrhage. It was in 2017.

Sherwood composed himself for a few minutes and went on air and spoke so eloquently about his horse. "I always said he'd die for you, and he has today, doing what he loved most. He wanted to win that race, by God he wanted to win it – he was beat at the last and he fought the last 50 yards to get up and win. I've trained for 32 years now and horses like that don't come along very often." It was very moving, but he had wanted to do it.

ITV lead presenter Ed Chamberlain recalled in his *Daily Mail* column that the death of **Many Clouds** was the first time he had had to pass on the sad news about the death of a racehorse in action to a TV audience.

He recalled the 2011 King George at Ascot when the Godolphin-owned **Rewilding** broke a leg coming into the run-in, throwing Frankie Dettori. John Gosden, whose **Nathaniel** had won the race, gave a quite brilliant interview said Chamberlain.

Gosden detailed articulately and carefully why these unique animals cannot be saved in such circumstances. "It's a freakish thing. He has put the leg down wrong, and he's broken the cannon-bone clean," he said. "He ran down the track in front of everyone and stopped. He was very calm and collected and we held him.

"He was in no pain. The extraordinary thing is when they break a leg like that, it's as though nature anaesthetises them. They feel absolutely no pain. I fed him a bit of grass and he munched away. Unfortunately, he had to be put down. Six months, standing still in a box would be impossible and also leave them vulnerable to other complications.

"I'm aware that this explanation will not please everyone, but I'll stand firm and explain why our nation of animal-lovers should be proud of the care that this sport exhibits."

Chamberlain concluded: "When you love horses as much as we do, the news that something dreadful has happened will always sting. It never gets easier – but we should never be afraid of confronting that rare reality."

POINT TO POINTING WITH ANDY WHITE

The Yorkshire Point-to-Point season started on 14 January when the Yorkshire Area Point to Point Club held their meeting at Sheriff Hutton, courtesy of Mick Easterby, once again raising funds for the Yorkshire Air Ambulance. For the second year it was a sunny, frost-free day and the large crowd were treated to competitive racing with each race having at least 10 runners. I made the short Twenty-minute journey from Helmsley in the hope of finding a winner or two.

The opening conditions race went to the 2-1 Favourite Lagan Valley ridden by James King for Warwickshire based Julie Wadland. My punting got off to a bad start as my pick, the second favourite Wild Romance, unseated jockey Shay Halton at the first fence.

Hoping for better luck in the Restricted race, Latenightrumble for Tom Ellis was my selection. The half-brother to Latenightpass who has moved to Dan Skelton and won the recent Cheltenham Cross Country race was patiently ridden by Jack Andrews and challenged the leader Fortunes Hill as the pair approached the final fence. However, Jack Andrews was unseated, letting Fortunes Hill ridden by Paddy Barlow for John Barlow run on for a deserved victory.

The Ladies Open saw the fast-finishing Mount Mews ridden by Roisin Leech for Luci Hughes joining recent Alnwick winner Ballydonagh Boy trained by Sam Coward and ridden by Rosie Howarth on the line. The judge declared a dead heat, the first of two dead heats on the day. Mount Mews a winner on this card last year was my selection so after backing two unseated horses in the first two races, I was delighted to back a winner albeit at half the stake money for the dead heat.

The Men's open saw last year's Cheltenham Foxhunters winner Premier Magic having his first run of the season for jockey/trainer Bradley Gibbs. Unbeaten in two points and two Hunter Chases last season it was sent off as the 1-4 favourite and won by 10 lengths. Looking for value, I found a bookmaker betting "without the favourite" and backed the Sarah Fanning trained Torygraph who ran into second place under current leading men's rider James King.

The Maiden Race had 27 entries and with 22 declarations became a divided race. The first division was won by Cash or Card trained and ridden by Dale Peters who won by 3 lengths from the favourite and only other finisher Wheres Hector (my selection). The second division saw my selection Rue Galilee win for jockey/trainer Will Easterby who ran on to beat odds on favourite Gabrielle Du Balon for Jack Andrews and Tom Ellis. Unusually for the Ellis team, they did not have a winner from their four runners. For Will Easterby, the win was his 100th winning point to point ride.

In the concluding 2mile 4-furlong maiden there were 12 runners. Fire in Her Eyes ridden and trained by Jack Teal got up on the line to share the prize with Wottinger ridden by John Dawson and trained by his wife Alice in another exciting finish.

It was a great day's racing which whets the appetite for the rest of the Yorkshire area season.

Forthcoming Yorkshire area meetings are -

Sunday 4 February The Sinnington Hunt 'Helmsley Races' at Duncombe Park, Helmsley

Sunday 18 February York & Ainsty and West of Yore at Askham Bryan College near York

Sunday 3 March Yorkshire Jockeys Club at Charm Park near Scarborough

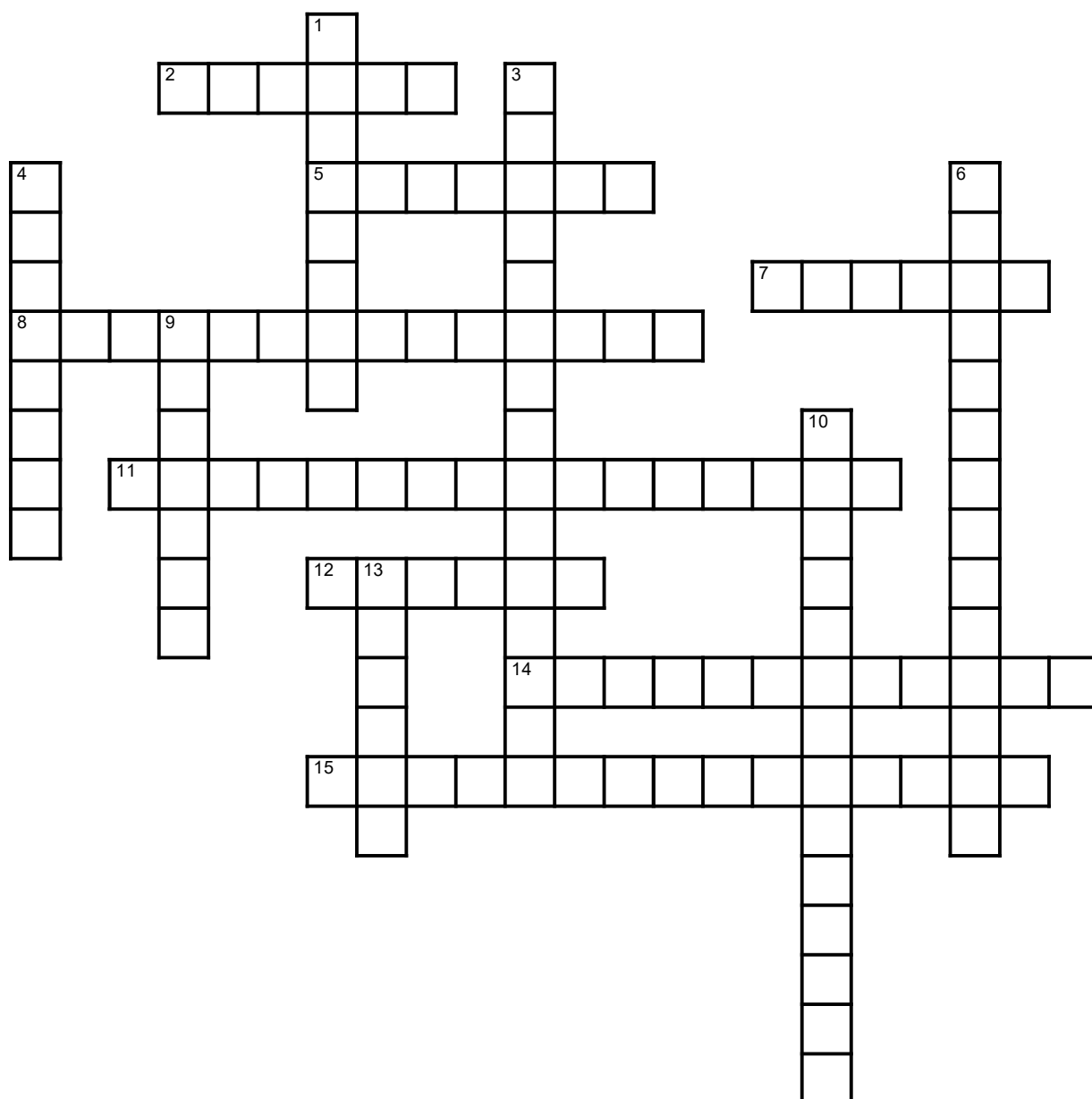
As always you can find details of point-to-point news and forthcoming meetings at www.pointtopoint.co.uk



● Runners in the ladies open at Sheriff Hutton

MAL BOYLE'S CHELTENHAM FESTIVAL PUZZLE

START THIS YEAR'S CHELTENHAM FESTIVAL WITH A WINNER!
NAME AND FRAME THE LAST 15 WINNERS OF THE 'SUPREME NOVICES'.



Once you have solved the puzzle you can either e mail the answers to info@northernracingclub.com or send in the post to NMRC at 53 Dalebrook Rd, SALE, Greater Manchester M33 3LB. Please include your postal address in case you are the winner!

The winner will then be drawn 'in the hat' if more than one all-correct entry and receive a copy of the Weatherbys Cheltenham Guide 2024. Closing date is March 6th 2024.

The Frankie Dettori Book Competition winner from the last issue of Racin' Magazine was **Gary Sutcliffe** from Littleborough.

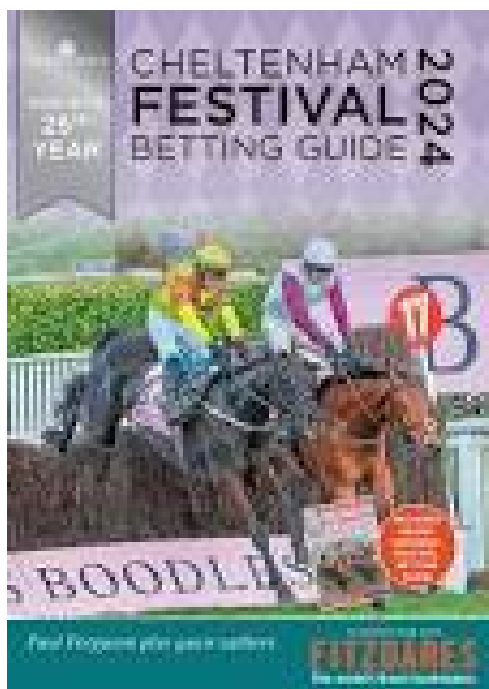
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WEATHERBYS CHELTENHAM GUIDE 2024



We are delighted to share details of this year's edition. Paul has again arranged a discount for NMRC members with full details as below:

At the checkout use **Promo Code NWRC24CF** which will give £4 off print copy, digital or the bundle of both, via Weatherbys Shop website: <https://weatherbysshop.co.uk/collections/cheltenham-festival-2023>

Yes the above link does work even though it shows 2023 in the name!

The Weatherbys 2024 Cheltenham Festival Betting Guide is now in its 25th year, which covers all races in great detail, as well as covering the Grand National meeting. There is additional content from other leading analysts and in the format of Jumpers To Follow, author Paul Ferguson selects his Spring Horses To Follow.

Available to pre-order now, the Cheltenham Festival Betting Guide will be published in late February. Also available at the NMRC Cheltenham Preview event on Thursday March 7th. See page 3 for details.

GORDON ARMISTEAD'S RACING DIARY

Saturday December 9th Aintree

Really testing going and plenty of horses couldn't handle it.

Only five got to the finish of the Becher Chase with Chambord who was always up with the pace running out a good winner. This was off 140 and I can easily see the handicapper putting him up six pounds which could probably make the cut for the National. Two surprising facts about jockey Lucy Turner were that she had only ridden twenty-one winners under rules and that she went zero from thirty-three last season. She has however had the necessary ten chase winners which would enable her to keep the ride in the National.

Coko Beach ran a fine race in second under top weight. After two goes at the National we know he doesn't get the trip so perhaps Fairyhouse will be his spring target. Favourite The Big Breakaway has never been one to trust and on going he should have liked he turned it in well before the end.

The juvenile fillies listed race (transferred to Newbury) had been replaced by a listed open juvenile race (transferred from Doncaster). The winner Liari looked a decent sort both on looks and the way he travelled. He is Cracksmen's first winner over jumps but no doubt Arc winner Ace Impact will give him a bit more time as a flat stallion.

Friday December 13th Cheltenham

With the International Hurdle after which this meeting used to be named moved to trials day the management came up with the very unimaginative Christmas meeting.

The opening two-mile novice hurdle looked a decent event and the first two home look well above average. The Aintree bumper Dysart Enos won has turned out a whole host of winners and she jumped much better than on her debut to make in five from five under rules. She is the leading British contender for the mare's novice come March. Runner up Beat The Bat got himself very worn before the race but was well clear in second. Third home Soldante had turned over a 2/9 Willie Mullins animal on his hurdle debut and seems an improved performer. Kintail in fourth was back in trip which didn't seem to suit.

The two-mile five novice chase was a good race with four of the runners holding decent chances. Ginny's Double stepping up from handicaps made all jumping very well and will be going up to graded company next time. He would have had a real fight on his hands if Grey Dawning hadn't made a complete mess of the second last fence. Despite that he flew the last and was closing all the way to the line. He can step up to three miles. Trelawne in third made a couple of mistakes and will be back into handicaps.

Saturday December 14th Cheltenham

A tremendous race for the December Gold Cup and a fourth course meeting inside twelve months for Fugitif and Il Ridoto. There has never been much between them and there certainly wasn't here. The winner had not looked a fighter before this. Both will get another ratings rise which will make it very hard. Top weight Fakir D'oudairies dropping into a handicap from Grade 1's was noticeably tubby and will come on for this.

Another dropping from Grade 1's was Protektorat in the three-mile two handicap chase. He jumped better than at Haydock but was held up in last place and never placed to challenge finishing a never nearer third. The winner Broadway Boy will be in the 150's after this and evidently will go for the Browns Advisory. He will not be good enough for that.

Chasing sorts in the three-mile graded novice hurdle and winner Shanagh Bob stepped up from a modest Plumpton win. He looked like he will improve physically for another year. The second and third Destroytheevidence and Moon d'Orange have ratings of 129 and 125 so it looks below Alber Bartlett standard.

Saturday December 23rd Haydock

An above average listed mare's hurdle with an improving winner in Pawapuri. She was bred when Golden Horn was still being marketed as a flat stallion but is a big animal. She stayed the two mile two well and should win more at this level. Joint favourite El Elefante looks the part but jumped poorly.

Not the best renewal of the Tommy Whittle but a good race and an improving winner in Famous Bridge. He stays all day and tries hard at the end of his races. Topham winner Bill Baxter will have to return there in the spring as attempts to get his rating up are getting nowhere and 140 will not get him into the National.

Tuesday December 26th Aintree

I imagine the management were expecting a much bigger crowd for this first Boxing Day meeting but it will take a few years to get people into the habit and the pricing was ridiculous.

The Tolworth moved from Sandown was rechristened the Formby which is very drab and surely the four-time Aintree Hurdle winner Morley Street deserves a race named after him.

In the race itself the first three in the betting all failed to finish which could devalue the form but the two that fought out the finish are fair types. Jango Baie drifted alarmingly in the betting but his Irish point form is solid and he won his maiden well. I liked runner up Favour and Fortune when I saw him win his bumper at Warwick and he only gave best close home here. Neither appeal as Supreme Hurdle horses but both have a future. Cannock Park ran a fine

race in third while fourth and fifth Making Headway and Florida Dreams will need at least two and a half. Favourite Farren Glory was going very well when falling two out and could well have won. I doubt if he is near the top of the Irish novices even after his Royal Bond win.

Last year's Tolworth winner Tahmuras took the two four novice handicap chase off 137. I am not sure it amounted to much even if it was a big step up from his chasing debut.

I thought Union Avenue was paddock pick in the bumper and he ran out a good winner for Jimmy Moffat and Charlotte Jones to give them a double on the card.

Wednesday December 27th Leopardstown

Just the twenty in the juvenile maiden hurdle to kick the card off and with the Mullins short priced favourite running appallingly it left the door open. Intellotto a maiden on the flat hadn't run since April and looked like he would come on for this but ran out a clear winner for Joseph O'Brien. We will have to see how the form works out. Down the field I will be watching for Evening Empire when she is handicapped and the 125/1 Elliot runner Barrier shaped well enough in seventh.

It was impossible not to be impressed with Marine Nationale's chase debut as he made all and jumped extremely well in the two-mile one beginners chase. Odds on for the Arkle three months away seems ridiculous but where is the opposition. Firm Footings in second ran a solid race and is better over further.

Nowhere near the best renewal of the two-mile Grade 1 chase and with favourite Captain Guinness bombing out it proved easy for the mare Dinoblue. It will be interesting to see where she goes now. Runner up Gentleman De Mee looked like the run would do him good while it is hard to know where they go with Dysart Dynamo.

The dreadful weather was getting into the ground for the two-mile Grade 1 novice hurdle and they went a real pace which sorted then out. Most had just had the one maiden hurdle win to their name and with Caldwell Potter's being on heavy he looked overpriced at 6/1. Sat behind the leader he went on two out and won well. He will stay two and a half as will runner up Predators Gold who was the only one to give him a race. Down the field highly touted Down Memory Lane never went while favourite Daddy Long Legs didn't jump well enough and was pulled up. Ebor winner Absurde also couldn't handle the going.

The Paddy Power Chase is always a great spectacle with twenty-seven in the race. Less than half finished in the conditions with the sun making an appearance to mean the second last was omitted. Winner Meetingofthewaters did me a good turn last season winning a hurdle off 106 so the handicapper hadn't missed him off 130 after just three chase starts for new connections. He jumped well and won with a bit in hand and the handicapper hasn't missed him again with a fifteen-pound rise. Panda Boy again ran well in a big handicap but still only has a beginners chase win to his credit.

The two four bumper only had eight runners of which two pulled up. The Mullins winner Joystick didn't look the sort for graded bumpers in the spring.

Thursday December 28th Leopardstown

Only two ever mattered for win purposes in the two four maiden hurdle and in the end the filly Jade De Grugy pulled away easily to win by fifteen lengths. She looked a stayer so may not be one for the mare's novice at Cheltenham but she will win plenty. Runner up Butcher Hollow will have a future and should find a maiden hurdle. Whale Harbour was in third the whole race and will improve while Pax is one for handicaps down the line.

The two five beginners chase went in good style to last season's Cheltenham bumper runner up Fact To File. He jumped his way to the front before the end of the back straight and it was all over. He was chased home by Zanahiyir who has been placed in the last two Champion Hurdles and Grade 1 novice hurdle winner Minella Cocooner. Just to prove I can name drop with the best I was joined where I watch the races from by Fact To File's owner J P McManus and A P McCoy who both seemed impressed as well.

Another impressive winner in the three-mile Grade 1 hurdle in Irish Point who barely came out of a canter. The race was run at a crawl with the proven stayer Home By The Lee none too enthusiastic in front. The owners already have Teahupoo for the stayers' hurdle but Irish Point could be a better option.

On a super days racing the best was yet to come with Galopin Des Champs demolishing the field in the Savills Chase. Fastorslow has beaten him on his previous two starts but it's hard to think he would have done the same here. Allowed to stride on he powered away from the second last. I think Gerri Colombe ran up to his best. The form of his novice races last spring didn't look outstanding at the time and nothing this season has boosted it. He only just held second from a favourite of mine Capodanno who ran a good National trial. The 50/1 on offer was too big to not take for a small interest. It looks the end for A Plus Tard who was never in the hunt. I backed him in both of his Festival wins and he was certainly a good thing off 144 in the discontinued novice handicap chase.

Only two mattered in the bumper and Patter Merchant was always holding Sounds Victorious. What it is worth I have no idea.

Friday December 29th Leopardstown It was a one-horse race for the two-mile four maiden hurdle both in the betting and the race itself. Ballyburn took it up leaving the back straight and went further and further away without

seemingly being asked for much effort. Those he beat have no pretensions to being graded horses but he will be in a Grade 1 next time.

I saw Jetara win a decent listed mare's bumper at Navan last season but she took ages to win her maiden hurdle. Now she is just improving at a rapid rate of knots and scooted away with the two-mile four Grade 3 mare's race. Her dam is a full sister to Jezki and Jenari and a half sister to Jett, Jetson, and Jered who won forty races between them. It will be interesting to see how she goes against the best mares,

Corbetts Cross was favourite for the three-mile Grade 1 novice chase but his jumping was simply not good enough being slow at many of the early jumps and giving himself too much to do. Even if he had jumped well enough Grangeclare West was mighty impressive winning hard held. He has improved physically since a saw him last season. Flooring Porter was well seen off and isn't going to be as good over fences while the fourth and fifth Flanking Maneuver and Favori De Champdrou will be in handicaps later in the season.

State Man did what State Man does and saw off the Irish challengers in the Matheson Hurdle with the minimum of fuss. Impaire Et Passe tried his best but wasn't good enough.

Today's bumper was much more like it with Jalon D'oudairies making all to beat a proven performer in Redemption Day. He evidently goes straight to Cheltenham while the runner up will have to go over hurdles as he is about to turn seven.

Saturday December 30th Haydock

A bit of 'after the lord mayors show'. Bertie's Ballet took the two-mile novice hurdle to give Dianne Sayer her first course win. He should make a decent handicapper later in the season.

Whoever scheduled the last race for 3.45 must have been mad as the horses only emerged from the darkness as they entered the last furlong.

Monday January 1st Cheltenham

The start of Premier Raceday's. This day is always the biggest crowd at the course apart from the Festival so it was hardly a test of the new concept and the actual card was the worst I can remember on this day.

We did however have three top performers and Bob Ollinger continued his return to form in easily taking the Relkeel Hurdle. He was ridden with great confidence and dismissed Marie's Rock readily. The Aintree Hurdle at this trip looks the obvious target. Marie's Rock has turned in a couple of poor efforts since winning this last year and at nine wouldn't be getting any better,

The other star performer Stage Star again tried to dictate matters in the two five handicap but after Frero Banbou took him on he soon looked in trouble. He evidently was very stiff after the race likely pulling some muscles. Winner Shakem Up'Arry did it well for my first winning bet of the year and could be one for the Topham in the spring. Jockey Ben Jones is moving up the ranks and riding very well.

The two four maiden hurdle was a moderate event and the winner Peaky Boy will not be one of the Henderson stable stars.

Saturday January 13th Warwick

Donnacha was my contribution to Brian Goodwill's Christmas Jumper feature in the last edition of Racin' so it was good to see him land the two-mile handicap hurdle here. This was a drop-in class after running in two competitive Cheltenham races and he battled well from two out. This was a 0-120 and he will have to go back up in class after this.

Diamond Ri was evens for the two-mile maiden hurdle and landed the race readily. He looks a horse with a good future but could probably end up at Aintree rather than the festival. The second and third Vincenzo and Tap N Go Leo will be winning races.

I have been on course for six of Grey Dawning's nine jump races. He has looked like three miles would be his trip and he got it well in the Grade 2 novice chase. I am not sure he is really up to winning a Grade 1 at the spring festivals but he should win plenty more. Apple Away ran a fine race in second but was beaten exactly the same distance as when she met the winner at Haydock. Broadway Boy dropped away a bit tamely after his Cheltenham wins.

The Classic Chase is one of the premier National trials but none of the runners had a rating that would guarantee a run at Aintree. Plenty never got into the race but winner My Silver Lining was always up with the pace and led three out. I had backed runner up Galia Des Liteaux and as she went after the leader I thought she would pick her up but she never got there. The winner looks the sort for the Midland National while the runner up might get the five pounds she needs to go to Aintree.

The re-routed Veterans Chase had higher rated runners than the classic and they set off at a very rapid pace. Aye Right led for most of the second circuit but as so often he found something to go passed him close home. I had backed Sam Brown at 12/1 and he came from well off the pace under an excellent ride from Jonathan Burke.

Saturday January 27th Cheltenham

The addition of the International Hurdle and the now regular recruitment of the Clarence House Chase now makes this look a real trials meeting.

It kicked off with the juveniles and a winner that doesn't look like a juvenile hurdler. Sir Gino is a big scopey sort who already looks like a chaser. His jumping is a little careful but he powered up the hill after the last and into Triumph Hurdle favouritism. Runner up Burdett Road ran like he needed this after two months off. Closer to the pace today he was there to challenge at the last but faded up the hill. Back in fourth Excelero was held up in last place and made-up ground smoothly. He wasn't good enough but it was his second good run and it wouldn't surprise me if connections keep him a novice for next season.

Ginny's Delight did what Stage Star did last year and made all under top weight in the two four novice handicap chase. He was racing off a higher mark than Stage Star and will follow him to the Turners. The Irish novice chasers look a good bunch so we will see.

Wide open betting for the Cotswold Chase and five still in with a chance turning in. Capodanno soon put the race to bed coming to the last getting weight from all his rivals. The Real Whacker ran on well after making most to hold second place and this was right back to his best. Novice Stay Away Fay was a bit outpaced but closed near the line. There was no Gold Cup winner here and Stay Away Fay will surely find something with more pace in the Browns Advisory.

What to make of Jonbon in the Clarence House? Apart from the horrendous mistake at the fourth last his jumping was ordinary enough. Hopefully he didn't do himself any harm although I imagine he could well have tweaked a few muscles. He now has something to prove.

Lossiemouth has grown since last season and is now a big powerful mare. She just breezed through the International Hurdle against some decent but not top-class rivals. In an ideal world she would go for the Champion Hurdle but she seems sure to go for the Mares over two and a half. Wherever she goes she is very very good. All the old timers turned up for the Cleeve Hurdle and it produced a super race with six in with a chance at the last. Noble Yeates looked hard work last season and could have gone completely the wrong way. While he still looks hard work he kept trying here and just held Paisley Park. The stayers' hurdle has got much more interesting over the last couple of months and while it is hard to see any of these winning they will make the younger brigade honest. How far back to we need to go for a National winner subsequently winning over hurdles? Just three and a bit years and Tiger Roll in the Boyne Hurdle.

The two four novice hurdle has not been a great trail for the festival and while it had some good sorts in it I doubt if this year will be any different. Winner Gidleigh Park is a big lump of a thing who should be a chaser in time. He looked beaten at the last but ran on like he will be better over three miles. Runner up Lucky Place has now finished second four times in five goes and looked the winner at the last. While not obviously doing anything wrong it's something to bear in mind. Johnnywho looked a stayer when fourth in the Challow Hurdle and the slowish pace here will not have suited but I was a bit disappointed in him.

- All being well, Gordon will send in a report on the Dublin Racing Festival which we will share on the NMRC Facebook page.

Centenary of the wonderful Gold Cup nears By HAROLD HEYS

HEATHER, my oldest granddaughter, emailed me last Saturday night to see how we were and she asked if I realised that this year's Cheltenham Gold Cup marked the centenary of the jumps classic. Er, no I admitted. She's had an interest in the sport since she bagged a good job at the course while at Uni there a few years ago. Apparently her job was to "look after the jockeys." Anyway, I thought I'd better get cracking and write a look-back piece for *Racin'* as deadline loomed.

YES, the first Gold Cup down in the Cotswolds goes back to 1924. I must say, first of all, that it was about time. For years the whole National Hunt scene had revolved round the Grand National. Every half-decent horse was trained all season with that one race in mind.

The only races of any note then were the National Hunt Steeplechase at Cheltenham and the Champion Chase at Liverpool. All the rest were handicaps. On the Flat, of course, it was different. The classics were run at level weights and nearly all the important races were weight for age.

With the launch of the Gold Cup in 1924 – for five-year-olds and up; 11st 5lbs and 12st – it all changed. It grew quickly in both prestige and prominence, although for a short while it was still regarded by trainers and owners as just another National trial. A few hundred quid to be picked up on the winter slog towards Aintree.

The first race was run on March 12 and won by **Red Splash** ridden by Fred Rees. The race really needed a kick-start; a "golden hero" to spark public enthusiasm. It got two stars quickly with **Easter Hero** who did the double in 1929-1930 and

Golden Miller with five from 1932 to 1936. It would probably have been a magnificent six if the 1937 race hadn't been abandoned.



* **Golden Miller** leads over first Becher's on his way to victory in the 1934 National. Renowned painter **Martin Stainforth** – then in his 80s – splashed on a bit of artistic licence. The Miller only took it up after jumping the last. **Photo: National Racing Museum**

And, in between all that action, The Miller added the 1934 Grand National. He remains the only horse to win both races in the same season. The future of the Cheltenham Gold Cup was assured.

The Grand National still reigns supreme in the public's affections even though it is but a shadow of its former strength. The course is, let me just say, "easier" – good old Ginger McCain was scathing when the snipping started – and now the field has been slashed to just 34 runners.

I've seen well over 40 Nationals – but only a few Gold Cups – and in the 60s fields of 47 or so were common. At least the start is being brought back to a more civilised time of about 4pm this year instead of the early evening.

However, back to the Gold Cup. My wife and I drove down to see the anticipated 2008 clash between **Denman** and **Kauto Star**; a sort of **Arkle** v **Mill House** battle from 1964. **Denman** won easily and Paul Nicholls trained the first three.

Everyone of middle age and more will remember the 1983 race when Michael Dickinson trained the first *five* home – **Bregawn**, **Captain John**, **Wayward Lad**, **Silver Buck** and **Ashley House**. All five were allowed to parade in the unsaddling area reserved for the first four. Michael watched the race on TV in the weighing room. "Come on my lot," he urged as "his lot" turned into the straight.

The Gold Cup has spun many happy memories for race fans. My favourite? It has to be the **Arkle** win over **Mill House**. Is it really coming up to 60 years ago? Of course Arkle won the race the next two seasons as well. It's one of my regrets that I never saw the mighty horse race. **L'Escargot** did the double in 1970 and 1971. And **Best Mate** did the *treble* in 2002, 2003 and 2004.

In 2009 Timeform rated the victory of **Kauto Star** as "*the best Gold Cup-winning figure since the Arkle era in the mid-1960s*". Praise indeed. In 1986 **Dawn Run** became the first horse to do the Champion Hurdle-Gold Cup double having won the former two years earlier.

And, finally, in this trip down memory lane, let's hear it for Rachel Blackmore who, in 2022, became the first female to win the Gold Cup – on **A Plus Tard**.