

# Racin'



Issue 396

December 2025/January 2026

## Farewell to Keith McHugh – see page 5



## Brian Goodwill is 'under the spotlight' – see pages 3-4 to find out who his new friend is!



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### NMRC AGM – DECEMBER 2025

The club's AGM was again held on a 'virtual online basis' which gives all members the opportunity to get involved should they so wish.

Minutes of the meeting are available on the club website at <https://the-nrc.weebly.com/nmrc-agm-minutes.html> and members are encouraged to view this document which includes fuller details of the changes to club membership taking place in 2026.

# COMPETITION NEWS

## 2025 Heritage Handicaps Result

The prize money was shared as follows

1 <sup>st</sup> John McDonald	£200
2 <sup>nd</sup> Cieran Cassidy	£97
3 <sup>rd</sup> Diane Bates	£47

Wooden spoon - Peter Flynn  
(Free entry into next year's HH competition)

Exacta/trifecta

1 <sup>st</sup> Rob McDermott	£86
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Thanks again to Helen Goodwill for running this competition in 2025.

## SATURDAY NAPS+ COMPETITION

Thanks again to Andy White for running this winter's competition. Andy has had a couple of challenges with some emails/texts not arriving so can all entrants please ensure they are using the NEW contact details that Andy supplied (and not last year's details where the text number no longer exists!).

Here are the leaders in Round 1 after the December 6<sup>th</sup> Results – good to see so many ladies up there challenging for the prizes:

R1	Name & Entry No + Def No
45	Paul Halliwell 139 - 3
42.52	Debbie Kirkwood 122 - 23
40.16	Linda Boswell 94 - 2
39.36	Maureen Willoughby 156 -3
39.1	Elizabeth O'Donoghue 92 - 3
32	Alan Spencer 30 - 7
31.1	Paul Halliwell 146 - 3
30.24	Gary Mellor 12 - 5
26.98	Mark Barry 150 - 9
25.82	Helen Goodwill 46 - 6

## 'ITV 7' 'FREE TO ENTER' COMPETITION

Congratulations to **Mark Barry & Michael Evans** who won the October & November rounds of our monthly ITV7 competition.

If you haven't yet joined this free to enter competition the details are as follows:

Essentially we have set up a 'mini league' which members can join via the ITV 7 website.  
<https://itv7.itv.com/>

All you have to do is click on the 'leagues' option on the ITV 7 home page then select 'join a league'.

**The league name is NMRC and the entry code is 1Z2PX4**

Members can join straight away and are eligible for our monthly prizes. Your entries are then scored via the ITV 7 website and you can track progress via the NMRC Mini League.

Initially the monthly prize will be awarded for the top entry (most winners each month then if a tie most placed horses. If still a tie then least unplaced horses will apply). The monthly prize will initially be a £10 'free entry' into any major club competition or draw.

For all entrants there will also be a yearly competition in 2026 with the winner receiving the 'Burgess Cup' named in memory of former life members Martin & Jennifer Burgess.

## 59's DRAW RESULTS

The latest winners are:

**4<sup>th</sup> October – Jean Jarvis (42)**  
**1<sup>st</sup> November – Ted Halewood (29)**  
**6<sup>th</sup> December – John Boswell (40)**

We currently have some numbers available for the draw. It costs £1pm to join (yearly/quarterly) with the winners decided by the first Saturday Lotto Draw each month based on the bonus ball drawn.

Please e-mail [info@northernracingclub.com](mailto:info@northernracingclub.com) to join.

## **BRIAN GOODWILL UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT WITH PHIL EVANS**

After many years of asking his racing colleagues to answer questions about their racing lives, Brian has now decided that he has run out of people to ask so as a fitting finale to this longstanding delight for readers of Racin' Magazine I have now turned the table on Brian and have asked him 10 searching questions about his racing career. Thanks to Brian for all of his past contributions to Racin' Magazine.

### **What first got you interested in racing?**

My Uncle Geoff was a keen punter and when I was very young I spent a lot of time at my grandparents where he lived. I would watch the racing with him and I remember cheering when Sweet Story won The Northumberland Plate. That was the week of my 4<sup>th</sup> birthday.

### **How did you end up getting a job as a racecourse judge?**

My first paid role in racing was back in The 1980s as a race reader at point to points for what was then Mackenzie & Selby. From that I started commentating at point to points and harness racing meetings and I became the first person to call at Belle Vue Greyhounds. Andy Orkney, who is my longest standing friend in racing, was a part time racecourse judge at the time and he recommended me. I followed up that lead with a hand written letter to Jonny Dimsdale, the then senior judge. There was not a vacancy at the time but true to his word when a position arose we had a very informal interview at Doncaster Racecourse and I got a part time post which due to others retiring became a full-time job within a few months.

### **What were the best/worst parts of the job?**

Being paid to go racing to do a job that I found very straight forward and having the best view to watch the sport was a pleasure. Seeing some of the characters behind the scenes was fun. Doreen, the tea lady at Haydock, was one in particular. She didn't mince her words. One day a very well to do steward was in the room pouring a up of tea. He couldn't find the milk. He made the mistake of asking Doreen 'Where do you keep your milk?' "In the effing fridge" was the reply. "Where do you keep yours?".

The worst parts of the job were the driving and people who wanted to make the job complicated. It's straight forward. The horses finish, you announce the result or say photo, study the evidence, then announce the result. Job done. However, going to London for meetings that lasted several hours to discuss meaningless minutiae with empty vessels making the most sound was tedious. Though I have always believed in making the best of things and after one such meeting with another planned for the morning I met up with Dandy Nicholls in the bar, after he had walked out of a NTF Meeting and we drowned our sorrows together until the sun rose. I am saving the full details of that night for my autobiography.

### **Did you miss having a 'flutter' when working for the BHA?**

Not at all. I had my last on course bet at a Cartmel August meeting a couple of weeks before my interview and have not had one since. My initial Jockey Club contract forbade me from betting on horse racing in The UK and I obeyed the rules. I continued to bet on other sports and these days I bet online on racing as well. When I was working I was absorbed by what I was doing but now if I go racing I like pitting my wits against odds compilers. I don't follow form very closely and if I am going to a NH meeting I seek Gordon Armistead's advice before punting. I don't follow him blindly but if we agree on a selection I may get out a white fiver from under the bed.

### **After retiring from the BHA you also took on some other roles in racing - tell us about them?**

I did my last judging at Chester in the summer of 2017 and by the time of the next Chester meeting I was a betting ring manager. There were some comedy moments in that role but also some more serious ones where I had to call on Police for back-up at Haydock. I described the job as reuniting the bewildered with their money. The vast majority of issues were lost tickets and were dealt with quickly. Occasionally there would be a punter trying it on but

again like judging it was relatively straight forward. The attached photo is of a racegoer called Kenny who had a lost ticket. "I am not used to not having pockets" was the excuse.

Now, I do some part time work for The Press Association as a raceday manager which involves sending information to PA HQ in Howden from the racecourse. I don't do it very often but it helps me to keep in touch with friends and former colleagues.

### **You still go racing as a spectator/punter - have you any favourite/least favourite tracks?**

Cartmel is by far and away my favourite racecourse. I first went there as a teenager and from 1980/99 I didn't miss a meeting. Even though I have usually lived within a couple of hours drive of the course I make a holiday of it. The standard of racing there has improved a tremendous amount. Much of that is due to the former manager, Jonathan Garratt. Since he moved to Kelso there have been massive improvements there and that would be another favourite, along with Hexham. As for flat racing, York takes some beating but all the Yorkshire courses have something to offer.

### **Have you visited all UK tracks yet and if not is that a goal still?**

I had visited all the then racecourses by 1984 and worked at both Ffos Las and Chelmsford when they opened. In 1987 I walked to and from every racecourse in the country. That was fully supported by The North West Racing Club and members joined me as I walked through "our area" and there was even a coach party to greet me at my final destination of Chepstow. I worked on all the existing courses except Perth and Plumpton but I once unofficially worked at Perth on a day when I was there on holiday and the photo finish equipment broke down. The judge in the chair was fairly inexperienced so I helped out. Though I did leave all the announcements to him. I was about four pints in when he called for help and I don't think any slurred announcements from me would have improved the situation.

### **Does racehorse ownership appeal to you?**

I did racehorse ownership as a teenager. At one point as a 19-year-old I owned one and a half horses. The best of which was Walduck who won three times in a fortnight in the autumn of 1981. He was trained by Mike Chapman who is still training at the age of 87 and who has a shared love for Cartmel.

Having done that, got the winners and got the photographs I feel that I don't need to do it again but my wife Helen is involved in a small way with both The Stella Barclay Racing Club and Susan Corbett. She and I get a lot of pleasure from following those horses. They are with good people and it's good to see Stella again after first meeting her over 40 years ago. As far as I am aware, Helen and myself and Paul Clarkson and Stella are the only couples who have married as a result of meeting via the racing club. It was extremely sad when Paul became ill and died. If it hadn't been for him the club would not have existed.

### **Remind us about that 'Hamdan Maktoum sandwich' commentary at Haydock?**

It was the summer of 2013. A heavy cloudburst had flooded the commentary box and interfered with the broadcast equipment. I was aware of it when Malcolm Tomlinson was calling the runners to post for a six-runner race. Only one word in ten was audible. As one of the few people with a working microphone in front of me I waited for the horses to leave the stalls and when it was obvious that no sound was forthcoming from the commentator I stepped in. Approaching the final furlong there were three disputing the lead and with the blue and white of Hamdan being on both sides it was clear to me that the one in the middle was in a Hamdan sandwich. Not something I could have thought about in advance. It's still online. Back in the 90s with point to point and harness racing experience I applied for a commentary position but got told I was "Too Northern". That was a little strange seeing that the late Doug Fraser was on the list but to be honest I would never have reached the standards of today's callers. Also if there had been 20 runners as opposed to six when Malcolm's microphone failed then mine wouldn't have worked either!

### **Finally, when you eventually return to meet your maker, how would you like to be remembered by the racing fraternity?**

I am sure I won't be remembered by the racing fraternity. I presume some of my family will be sorry I am not around and Helen may recall with fondness our first meeting at a racing club dinner with a seating plan that had been devised by the much-missed Dave Kay.

## KEITH MCHUGH

We are very sad to announce the death of Keith McHugh who has been a stalwart supporter of the club preview events over several decades.

As regards racing, Keith was a sports reporter for the Oldham Evening Chronicle for many years and he won the Racing Post Naps competition whilst he was there.

After that paper closed in August 2017, Keith joined the Racing Post as a race reader and analyst.

In April 2024 Keith posted on Facebook that he was having treatment for cancer at Christies Hospital in Manchester which effectively ended his career in racing. The treatment certainly seemed to help at first and Keith was seen at York in May 2024 with old Racing Post colleagues looking in fine fettle (3<sup>rd</sup> from left in photo below).



In October 2024 he began a fundraiser for McMillans to walk 100Km with his dog Eve and raised over £2300.

In September this year Keith again went for further treatment at Christies and celebrated his 65<sup>th</sup> birthday on 5<sup>th</sup> October. However, on 28<sup>th</sup> October Keith posted his final update on Facebook:

*My last post on FB. Making plans for my for final visit home from hospital. You've all been amazing over the years so thanks so much for your support. but now it is time to be with my wife and family. I'll try to reply to pms, but it won't always be easy. Be goodbye to each other. Xxx*

A couple of days later the Racing Post confirmed that Keith had passed away

Another of the good guys in racing gone and someone who will be sorely missed by all that knew him

# JUMP INTO CHRISTMAS AT CATTERICK: 3 UNMISSABLE RACEDAYS

Catterick Racecourse is gearing up for a spectacular festive season, with three National Hunt fixtures set to bring excitement, thrilling racing and Christmas cheer to racegoers on Tuesday 16 December, Sunday 28 December and New Year's Day. With seasonal entertainment, special giveaways and quality racing on offer, the racecourse is encouraging visitors to book early and make the most of its advance ticket savings.



Hurdle Race sponsored by Heineken Ltd, is scheduled for 1.45pm.

The celebrations begin on Tuesday 16 December with Christmas at Catterick, when the course will be transformed with sparkling lights and a festive atmosphere. Ahead of the first race, racegoers will be welcomed with Christmas carols performed by the choir from St Francis Xavier School in Richmond. The Injured Jockeys Fund will also be on course with a range of Christmas gifts and stocking fillers, providing an ideal opportunity to tackle last-minute festive shopping while supporting a fantastic cause.

Gates open at 10.15am, with the first of seven races beginning at 12.15pm. The highlight of the afternoon, the John Smiths Catterick – Raise A Pint Novices'

*General Commercial Manager Emma Stevenson said:* "We're delighted to welcome St Francis Xavier School Choir back to the course for Christmas at Catterick. Hearing carols as visitors arrive brings such a warm and festive feel to the racecourse - it's the perfect start to our Christmas fixtures."

The festivities continue on Sunday 28 December with the hugely popular Sky Bet Christmas Meeting, one of the standout fixtures in the Catterick calendar and always a post-Christmas favourite for families and friends. Sky Bet has generously supported all six races, with action beginning at 12.18pm and the last race at 3.13pm. The first race on the card celebrates lifelong racing fans Philip and Tommy, both loyal Go Racing in Yorkshire members since its inception.

To add to the festive fun, the first 100 racegoers through the gates from 10.00am will be greeted with complimentary mulled wine and mince pies. Visitors wearing Christmas jumpers will also be invited to take part in a prize draw to win a Christmas stocking packed with gifts, including a voucher for two Grandstand & Paddock tickets to any 2026 fixture of their choice. Even the equine stars will join in the celebrations, with each winning horse receiving its own Christmas stocking filled with carrots and polos. In recognition of their hard work over the festive period, every member of stable staff working on the day will receive a small Christmas gift arranged by Sky Bet and the racecourse.

Catterick's festive season concludes in style on New Year's Day, when the racecourse proudly hosts the first fixture of the 2026 Yorkshire racing calendar - a longstanding tradition and a favourite among regulars looking to start the new year with top-quality racing and a vibrant atmosphere. The gates will open at 10am on New Year's Day, with the first of six races scheduled for 11.45am.

Adding even more value this season, the racecourse has introduced the new Horseshoe Package for the 2025/26 National Hunt Season. For just £25 on standard racedays and £27 on feature days, visitors can enjoy Grandstand & Paddock admission, a racecard and the Dish of the Day from the new Horseshoe Café Bar - making it an excellent choice for racegoers seeking a great day out at exceptional value.

Tickets for all festive fixtures will be available on the gate; however, racegoers are encouraged to book in advance to secure the best prices, with savings of up to £5 per adult available for all bookings made at least 48 hours before each meeting. Advance and group tickets can be purchased online at [catterickbridge.co.uk](http://catterickbridge.co.uk) or by calling the racecourse office on 01748 811478. As always, accompanied under-18s are admitted free of charge, making Catterick's festive racedays an affordable and enjoyable day out for families.

Catterick also has a new package for the National Hunt Season – the *Horseshoe Package* – which offers great value to racegoers. It includes Grandstand & Paddock admission, a racecard, and a voucher for the Dish of the Day from the Horseshoe Café Bar for just £25 on standard racedays and £27 on feature racedays.

Also, a Catterick annual pass is available this year for £190 and is fully transferable, so it can be shared with friends and family. The pass runs from 1st November 2025 to 31st October 2026 and includes admission to all of Catterick's fixtures, along with a number of reciprocal fixtures at other racecourses.

# HEXHAM 2026 ANNUAL MEMBERSHIPS

Hexham Racecourse Annual Membership offers great value to regular racegoers and is available now for 2026.

Photo below – Hexham covered by snow in November 2025 – its not always like this though!!



[admin@hexham-racecourse.co.uk](mailto:admin@hexham-racecourse.co.uk).

Prices are as follows:

Single - £155; Senior Single (65+) - £130; Double - £250; Senior Double (65+) - £210

Benefits include:

Admission to all Hexham fixtures in 2026. Use of the Members' Rooms where free tea & coffee will be served.

Use of Annual Members Car Park. Discounts on hospitality. Free exchange visits to over 50 racecourses and in excess of 60 days racing.

To purchase Annual Membership please call 01434 606881 or email

# UTTOXETER 2026 ANNUAL MEMBERSHIPS

Our Annual Badge includes all of the following great benefits:

- Exclusive access to all race days at Uttoxeter Racecourse, swipe card and metal Annual Members badge
- Access to attend over 500+ fixtures across Arena Racing Company Racecourses & Greyhound stadiums
- A wallet-sized 2025 fixture list
- A voucher to claim a racecard at each fixture
- 4 complimentary racecard vouchers
- 4 complimentary guest passes
- Complimentary car parking pass
- £50 worth of food & drink vouchers to use in the restaurant and public areas
- Discounted restaurant packages
- 20% discount on selected food & drink outlets in public retail areas at your home track
- Reciprocal visits to racecourses outside of Arena Racing Company
- Dedicated seating area OR access to members bar at Uttoxeter Racecourse

The standard price is £345pa with discounts for seniors, under 21's and under 25's

<https://www.uttoxeter-racecourse.co.uk/raceday-experience/annual-membership>



## POINT TO POINT NEWS with Andy White

The new Point to Point Season has started with meetings across the country but as usual in Yorkshire, the first meetings are in the New Year.

Yorkshire trainers and jockeys have already been out at meetings in the Midlands and Northern areas with the Antony Ross owned and trained **Meelick Island** Dead Heating in a maiden race at Garthorpe under jockey Joe Wright for the first Yorkshire based winner of the season.

After the opening Border meeting at Hexham on 29 November, fans in the North have three meetings to look forward to at Alwicks on Saturdays 13 December and 3 January and then Sunday 25 January.

The Yorkshire area meetings start with the **Yorkshire Area Point to Point meeting** on Sunday 11 January on Mick Easterby's land at **Sheriff Hutton** east of York as usual raising funds for the Yorkshire Air Ambulance.

Sunday 31 January sees the **York & Ainsty and West of Yore meeting at Askham Bryan College** just the A64 west of York

The Sinington Hunt have the '**Helmsley Races**' meeting at **Duncombe Park, Helmsley** on Sunday February 15.

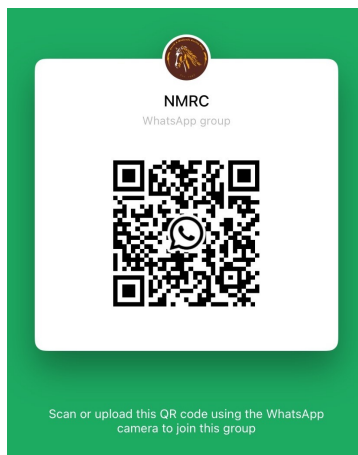
Last season the leading riders in Yorkshire were Tom Easterby and Rosie Haworth, who will be in front this year.? Will there be up and coming young riders taking their first steps becoming a conditional jockey? Plenty to look forward to.

John Dawson will continue to challenge as a rider to complement his new role as rules trainer.

Ponting trainer and rules Permit holder Fiona Needham has three former pointers Red Delta, Great Notions and Moonlight flit now all running under rules this season. Lucinda Hughes continues to have jumps success with her former pointer Super Citizen, a winner at Carlisle last week. Great to watch these horses in points and then seeing them having success under rules.

**For all point-to-point news, the Point-to-point authority has launched a brand-new website [www.gbpointing.co.uk](http://www.gbpointing.co.uk) which has plenty of news and information about all forthcoming point to point meetings across the UK.**

**NMRC WhatsApp Group** – Not everyone uses Facebook so this group will compliment/add to the information shared there. Keith Dodd has already started adding content and you can join the group by scanning the QR code on the below:



## GO RACING IN YORKSHIRE NEWS – DECEMBER 2025



Have you purchased your Triple Jump Pass yet?

We've collaborated with [Catterick](#), [Wetherby](#) and [Doncaster](#) to offer you an amazing deal for three consecutive jump days racing in January!

The [Triple Jump Pass](#) is just £36 - that's up to 47% off on the day full price admission. You can visit the Grandstand Enclosure at all three racecourses from Wednesday, January 21 - Friday, January 23 2026. Plus there's a free racecard and an exclusive tipster talk!

Tickets must be booked by Wednesday 31st December - hint, they make a great Christmas Present!

The Go Racing In Yorkshire Season Ticket is now on sale! It's the best value ticket in racing and includes;

- 184 scheduled racedays
  - 65 weekend and bank holiday fixtures
  - 22 evening fixtures
- Access to all nine Yorkshire racecourses
- Yorkshire County Cricket Club reciprocal fixtures
- Single or Joint ticket options

While the ticket is excellent value, we've made it even more affordable by offering the option to pay in either three or 10 monthly instalments.

Visit the GRIY [website](#) to find out more and book or contact [charlotte.russell@goracing.co.uk](mailto:charlotte.russell@goracing.co.uk).



# Steve Bradley takes a look at the history of the Rowland Meyrick

Named after [Wetherby's](#) long-serving clerk of the course (appointed in 1920), the Rowland Meyrick Handicap Chase is the Boxing Day centrepiece of the Yorkshire Christmas Meeting. Run over about three miles with 19 fences, it now holds Premier Handicap status (formerly Grade 3). Its roll of honour is unusually strong for a handicap: the race famously launched two subsequent Cheltenham Gold Cup winners—Forgive 'n Forget (1984) and The Thinker (1986).

Yorkshire trainers have shaped the race from its early decades. Middleham legend Neville Crump set the benchmark with a record seven victories, including Merryman II (1960) and Chesapeake Bay (1969), a dominance that stamped the contest as a true northern winter test. Towton-based Charlie Hall - whose name now headlines Wetherby's other great chase - also struck with Chancer (1968) and Great Noise (1971), keeping the prize in the White Rose county.

The modern era has seen a notable resurgence for Yorkshire yards. Malton maestro Jimmy Fitzgerald sent out Forgive 'n Forget to win in 1984 before that famous Gold Cup triumph, a touchstone for the race's quality and for the county's influence on it. Three decades on, Malton-based Brian Ellison added a popular home success when Definitely Red powered home in 2016. In 2019, North Yorkshire's Philip Kirby produced a polished, front-running performance from Top Ville Ben, the gelding's signature Wetherby success and a banner win for a trainer long associated with the track.

Even when the trophy travels, Yorkshire form lines are never far away. In 2024, the winner Some Scope beat Kinondo Kwetu - a prolific improver from Sam England's upwardly mobile West Yorkshire yard - underlining the depth of county representation in the race's upper reaches.

Weather has sometimes had the final say, most notably abandonments in 2009 and 2010, but when the tapes rise the Rowland Meyrick remains a pure expression of Yorkshire National Hunt racing: honest fences, a relentless three miles in mid-winter ground, and local yards ready to meet visiting raiders head-on. From Crump and Hall to Ellison and Kirby, the White Rose imprint runs right through the history of Wetherby's great Christmas chase—and it shows little sign of fading.

Book tickets for [Wetherby's Christmas meeting](#).

## GORDON ARMISTEAD'S RACING DIARY

Friday October 10th Downpatrick

A second visit here within two months. Barrys Spirit stepped up on some ordinary bumper form to beat his odds-on stable mate Luker's Tipple in the two-mile maiden hurdle. He should make a decent handicapper later in the season while Luker's Tipple might be one to avoid. The third here Campbell Black was backed from 50/1 to 11/4 on debut but never threatened to win.

In the two mile four beginners chase for horses rated 110 or less over hurdles the odds on The Electrical Kid proved very one paced to finish third. Winner Seskin Flash jumped well and at a very modest level can probably win again.

Saturday October 11th Fairyhouse

In the two-mile beginners chase Relieved of Duties tracked the leader and soon had the race won in the straight. He was highly tried over hurdles and was a shade disappointing but he looks more a chaser and will be better than his hurdles mark of 125.

The old breeding adage was breed the best to the best and hope for the best. In the case of Apples Jane the hope appears not to have been realised. By Walk in the Park out of Apple's Jade she seems to have inherited no speed and none of her mother's jumping prowess. In as bad a mares novice hurdle as you will see Apple's Jane could only manage seventh place of the ten runners showing no promise whatsoever.

### Sunday October 12th Naas

The two-year-old six-furlong filly's maiden looked a match and it proved to be. Josh's Joy had three placed efforts over longer trips but had the speed to make all. She is a big strong sort who might make up to be a listed performer. Runner up Institute a daughter of Frankel and the speedy Acapulco should find a race and it will be interesting to see how far she stays. Down the field Purely wasn't given a hard time on debut and will certainly come on for the run. The seven furlongs €120k auction series final had a mixed bunch of runners. Madbadanddangerous was paddock pick but was outpaced two out before finishing well. He will win races and make a decent handicapper over a mile.

There were two listed fillies and mares' races on the card and in the mile Swelter who disappointed in the Irish Guineas was returning to action. She was a short price but looked poor in the parade ring. She ran like she looked behind Onemoredance who started the season winning off a rating of 58.

In the mile and a half race Fleur De Chine who has been disappointing over a mile for over a year came from off the pace to win well. Royal Entry came from further back to take third and unlike the winner she didn't get a clear run.

Plenty of dual-purpose animals in the €100K two-mile handicap but it was Aiden O'Brien who took the race with Light As Air a half-brother to St Ledger winner Continuous. He is in the Horses in Training Sale but could well be kept after this.

### Monday October 13th Roscommon

Mocking had last run the day I was at Deauville and it was a big drop in class to a maiden here. He was even money but was a lucky winner as McLoughlin came to win the race and then gave it away. Mocking is in the end of season sales and could make a hurdler. McLoughlin is at Gavin Cromwell's and could also go jumping but might not be one to trust too much.

### Tuesday October 14th Punchestown

The three-year-old hurdle featured some decent looking performers. Secret Force rated 74 on the flat ran out a good winner on his jumping debut and would be up to contesting graded races at least this side of Christmas. Runner up Hopes are High under a double penalty ran a fine race but looks more an early season sort. Adrienne a fourteen-race maiden on the flat at around a mile showed promise in third but favourite Cinnamon Coco turned in a moderate effort in fourth.

I last saw Glen Kiln in February when he was favourite but beaten when he fell at Fairyhouse off a rating of 118. He did win in the spring but has stepped up considerably on his return this autumn. Well clear when unseating at the last in a Grade 3 at Tipperary he bolted in here in the two-mile three conditions hurdle. It is evidently the Hattons Grace for him next which will be a huge step up.

The two-mile four maiden hurdle must be amongst the worst ever run at the course. Reiki Revolution won at 1/2 on his sixth try over jumps by eleven lengths with another eighteen back to the third.

Jack Kennedy takes very few outside rides so his booking for Pourquoi Poi in the 0-100 handicap hurdle caught the eye. On handicap debut the horse was always prominent and just had to be pushed out to win.

Rising Dust is another horse improving no end for the switch to Emmitt Mullins. He defied a twelve-pound rise in the two miles seven handicap hurdle and could easily go in again with the ten pound rise he got for this. Ceanndana pushed him all the way here and will be better going back chasing.

Willie Mullins took the bumper with Easter Bonnet. She is only small so she is probably not a star but could be one for a listed bumper sometime soon.

### Wednesday October 15th Punchestown

A much better maiden hurdle today this one over two miles with three decent winning bumper horses. Gameball beat a moderate field well at Ballinrobe when I was there in July and took this very well by six lengths despite a slow jump at the last. He looks useful. Kovanis won at the Leopardstown Christmas meeting but was outpaced at this trip in third. Punchestown festival winner Vitorio Piel started odds on but after leading faded tamely. The runner up here O'Reilly had some decent maiden hurdle form and can go into handicaps now. The Guinness Boys had run appallingly in his bumper was an eye catcher in the paddock and in the race in fourth place.

King of Kingsfield was winning his third chase in taking the two-mile two Grade 3 novice chase. He is not going to be a star and could be the sort for a good handicap come spring time at the big festivals.

Heart Wood is just below a Group 1 chaser but had the weights in his favour for the Grade 3 two-mile seven chase. The Grade 1 at Down Royal seems the logical next step. Croke Park had to give the winner ten pounds after his two Grade 1 wins last season and ran a fine race in third and he too looks likely to go to Down Royal.

#### Thursday October 16<sup>th</sup> Thurles

Qualimita cost €500K after winning a point which hasn't worked out. She has proved an expensive horse to follow under rules including three times at odds on. It was a virtual match for the mares two-mile maiden and she didn't put up much of a fight getting eight pounds from Run for Mahler.

No doubt about the star turn on the card as Hewick made his seasonal debut in a two mile six and a half conditions hurdle. Looking like the run wouldn't be lost on him he made all pinging all the jumps for a cozy win. The Charlie Hall was talked of as a possible target and that would suit him well.

The two-mile four rated hurdle which is a novice handicap in all but name produced a tremendous finish as Tassarolo came from fourth on the short run in to win. The first four here all should have a future. Paddock pick the Henry de Bromhead trained Lambray Island should go on to make a chaser in time.

#### Saturday October 18<sup>th</sup> Limerick

The two-mile maiden hurdle had some decent sorts in it. Winner Talk The Talk had finished runner up in the big sales bumper at Newbury. He was probably lucky here as runner up Starting Fifteen fluffed the last. Two in behind who will come on for the run were fourth home Splendid Fellow and fifth Royal Approval.

The two mares listed races were not good for the grade. The two-mile seven race went to Millstream Lady who will be back in handicaps after this.

The novice race over two-mile five saw Shadow Paddy give trainer Eoin McCarthy the biggest race of his career after being top trainer at the Listowel festival.

#### Sunday October 19<sup>th</sup> Limerick

A really good crowd for one of the courses big days of the year with the Munster National topping the card. Local trainer Eric McNamara has rejuvenated horses from other trainers in the past including last year's winner of this race Real Steel. This year he had two runners on their second starts for the yard in French Dynamite and Weveallbeencaught and they finished first and second in that order. French Dynamite will be back up to a rating over 150 and might be out of handicaps. Jockey Paddy O'Brien unlike some conditionals who burst on to the scene has slowly gained experience and is now looking as good as any of the claimers.

The €50K two-mile four handicap chase was won by Crowatedaapplecart who has his own fan club. He has been slowly creeping up the weights in ten runs over the summer and must be due a rest after this win. The second and third here Conyers Hill and Theatre Native were making their seasonal debut and should both come on for this.

The mare's two four beginners saw a one two three for Henry de Bromhead. Winner July Flower who is a classy sort placed in a French Champion Hurdle jumped well and stays well. Runner up Tareze was listed class over hurdles took time to warm up but came home well while third Mystical Goddess will go into handicaps.

De Bromhead also took the two-mile maiden hurdle with Walks in July who will have a future eventually over fences, and the three-mile handicap with Kir under top weight. He too will be at his best over fences but can win a couple more staying handicaps over hurdles first.

#### Monday October 20<sup>th</sup> Gowran Park

An ordinary enough card but unlike in the UK the course chose not to charge for entry. The course has also started on a refurbishment of the grandstand which is certainly not before time.

The mile colts and geldings two-year-old maiden was an eventful affair. After one horse wouldn't enter the stalls, another went ninety degrees sideways as they opened. Another horse proved virtually unsteerable while the stirrups broke on another runner. The winner Mr Vettori will be into handicaps and should stay a little further.

The fillies equivalent saw a gamble landed with Marjorie Daw and she too should get a bit further. The third and fourth Chablis Rock and Yousaynothingatall both for Joseph O'Brien were both big sorts who will be better next season.

From the seven furlongs handicap another Joseph O'Brien trained runner Kachori caught the eye in fifth on his handicap debut and will be better for the experience.

#### Thursday October 23<sup>rd</sup> Ludlow

A mess of a day. Two inspections mid meeting, rails moved and the last race abandoned. All this less than twelve months after the course was fined for not calling off a meeting when it was completely frozen over until everyone had arrived. Everyone expected to lose three races when the second inspection was called but the hurdle track was declared OK. I was glad it was as I backed the two winners. Tankardstown Diva defied a penalty in the three-mile handicap hurdle and might still have improvement in him while Sun Joy had the two-mile five handicap won turning in.

#### Friday October 24<sup>th</sup> Cheltenham

The rain came just in time for this meeting with the going just good enough for plenty of runners. Twenty in the two-mile four handicap hurdle and French Ship always well placed ran out a good winner. He can go in again and behind him Classic King and my old friend Jazzy Matty in fourth and fifth looked like they will improve for the run.

Having helped force the pace Anilam was in no danger from turning in in the two-mile novice chase. He started out with Godolphin and his dam is a half-sister to a Preakness Stakes winner but he jumps fences for fun and he will be in graded company next. Runner up Relieved of Duties stepped up on his Fairyhouse win but this probably came too soon for his stable mate King of Kingsfield who never travelled.

The Grade 2 two-mile novice hurdle didn't look the best and went to the Skelton runner Fortune De Mer who drifted from 3/1 out to 14/1. He pulled but not as badly as he had on his previous run and is not straightforward. Runner up Doctor Blue who was an ordinary enough bumper horse ran well here on his hurdle debut.

#### Saturday October 25<sup>th</sup> Cheltenham

A very competitive two-mile four novice handicap chase opened the card and it should produce a few winners even though the two shortest in the betting both fell. Zurich had four runs over fences last season but has stepped up this time around and this was his second success. The second and third Crest of Fortune and Double Powerful both had good hurdle form and on their chasing debuts looked like they will be better over fences especially over a bit further.

It was hard not to be impressed by Conman John's win in the three-mile novice hurdle. Always forcing the pace he looked set to be picked off at the last but went away again to win cosily. He is a typical Lucinda Russell sort who will make a chaser in time but he will be competitive in the graded staying novices before then. The horse that appeared to be going better at the last was the Skelton runner Great Fleet. I thought he was paddock pick and took some of the 33/1 each way available. I would think Harry Skelton on board thought he was on a winner as well and he will win his maiden and make a chaser in time. The pair were well clear but of the rest the Tizzard runner Kasino Des Mottes stayed on well for a stable yet to hit form.

Three Card Brag always looked the winner of the three-mile handicap chase traveling well just behind the leaders. On this you would be saying he would be a National sort but he appeared not to stay in the race last season. Well down the field King's Threshold looked in need of it and was badly hampered four out.

#### Sunday October 26<sup>th</sup> Aintree

No chance of the sun causing them to miss out fences on a thoroughly miserable day. The Old Roan looked to have a couple of iffy characters in it and the way Imperial Saint acted before the race didn't look good for the future. He was well beaten in the race as one of those characters Hitman ran on like the most honest horse ever to race. Boombawn travelled like he would be at least involved in the finish but found absolutely nothing when let down.

#### Saturday November 1<sup>st</sup> Wetherby

Not for the first time the rain hadn't come in time for this meeting but there were still some good horses running. The winner and third in the Champion Hurdle both ran and neither beat a rival. Golden Ace looked in fine condition before her match race against Kateira but checked out tamely before three out. She reportedly scoped badly after the race.

This was Winter Fog's sixth run since Cheltenham including winning a maiden on the flat aged eleven. Here he was never out of last place as Sean Bowen somehow got Strong Leader home in front in the West Yorkshire Hurdle. It looked very unlikely turning in and Strong leader will no doubt be acquiring some sort of head gear for his next run.

Djelo and Pic D'Orhy produced a super race for the Charlie Hall with Venetia Williams getting off the mark for the season. Djelo has gone up over forty pounds in the ratings since he was turned over at 1/3 in a two-mile three handicap hurdle at Haydock on his second run after coming from France. He gets this trip well and it will be interesting to see where he goes after a return to the Peterborough Chase. Hewick was never going and maybe he would be better staying over hurdles nowadays.

#### Sunday November 2<sup>nd</sup> Carlisle

The rain had reached Carlisle and this was an excellent card. The opening two-mile five novice handicap chase had plenty of depth and should throw up lots of winners. For an inexperienced horse The Jukebox Kid jumped well disputing the lead and ran out a fine winner. He was only off 122 here and will surely be in the 140's later in the season. He disputed the lead with Grand Geste who only gave way after the last. He couldn't win over hurdles and this was a big step up with the Parkinson/Smith stable looking to be coming into form. Third home First Impression will need three miles. Laganhill and Kilbarry Hill both ran well while Mr Hope Street in sixth looked like he would improve for the run and was never nearer than at the end.

Some of the Murphy/ Bowen horses are being put in too short. In the two four novice hurdle Burncourt Boy was an early 9/4 shot which enabled some to get 5/1 for the Skelton runner Tormund Giantsbane. He was backed into 5/2 and ground out the win after not jumping the last well. He is a three-mile chaser for the future. Runner up Intosomethinggoog ran well under his penalty and third home Lost Frequencies should do well in northern hurdles.

Telepathique ran like she looked in the listed two mile four mares chase just lacking in fitness from two out. She will come on for this. Paggane sold out of Willie Mullins for £100K had fitness on her side and the 147-chase mark looks high to me.

The Colin Parker had a decent field with Handstands setting a steady enough pace but not really attacking his fences and he was out speeded from the last by Resplendent Grey. I had given up on the winner after the National Hunt Chase where he (not for the first time) made stupid mistakes and looked hard work. The cheekpieces that were added for his Sandown win were missing here and he travelled, jumped, and showed a turn of speed that seemed to show he had learnt how to race. He could be a National horse and I wouldn't give up on Handstands either.

In the two four handicap hurdle the disappointing Florida Dreams looked the winner at the last but he looked to give it away to Hartington. The winner who looked a nice sort in the parade ring was off 119 here and will be in much better races later in the season. Fourth home Personal Ambition tried to make all and will improve a lot for the run.

#### Tuesday November 4<sup>th</sup> Warwick

Just three in the novice hurdle and two in the novice chase as the non-runners mounted up during the afternoon. In the novice chase you could have backed both the rummers at odds against as the two-flip flopped in the market. Go West was the right favourite in the end as he made all at a moderate pace to see off Joss the Boss. We will see what it amounts to as the season goes on.

A couple caught the eye in the hurdles. Banksman was modest enough on the flat but won three times and he is certainly built like a jumper. He was 150/1 for the juvenile hurdle but ran well enough and as this was his third run he should get a handicap mark. If it is somewhere in the 80's his trainer Sheila West could find a small handicap round her local track at Plumpton for him.

From the two five handicap Datsallrightcharlie caught the eye in the parade ring. It was only his fourth outing and in a slowly run race he was tapped for toe but he could be all right and make a chaser one day.

#### Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> November Aintree

A decent field for the Grand Sefton and Colonel Harry came from a few lengths off the pace turning in to win comfortably. He had a poor time of it last autumn before missing the rest of the season but this was back to his best and he should stay three miles. The second and third might be back for the Becher Chase.

A decent looking field for the two four novice hurdle with Only Way Is Up being another winner for the Skeltons. He is a big chasing sort who should get three miles. Runner up Lightfingered Jack on debut looked like the run would do him good.

Mambonumberfive is only four but was tossed into an open two-mile handicap for his chase debut and jumped really well to win. He cost €450K so connections will no doubt hope he can mix it in some graded novice chases later in the season.

In the junior bumper Merlin Allen ran out a very easy winner. We will see what it amounts too.

### Monday 10<sup>th</sup> November Carlisle

You wouldn't expect to see the Supreme Hurdle winner at Carlisle on a Monday but first race winner Mydaddypaddy was made favourite for Cheltenham. He won without being asked anything and beat a dual bumper winner in Harbour Island but it is a long time till March.

The Skelton stable also won the second division of the two-mile maiden hurdle with Real Quartz but he was twelve seconds slower and had to be pushed out to beat some moderate sorts. Both could be anything. The stable also took the mares bumper with debutante Lune Brillante. He beat the well supported Trinity Street quite easily. The third placed Capricciosa in the Desert Orchid colours should find an ordinary northern bumper within her grasp.

Steel Ally jumped well on his chase debut to see off the 149 rated Unexpected Party. He was getting eleven pounds but will surely be stepping up to graded company soon.

### Friday November 14<sup>th</sup> Cheltenham

This is right there as one of the worst days weatherwise I have been on course. Storm Claudia was in full force and while it was bad as we arrived it just kept getting worse as the day went on. Another defeat at Cheltenham for Jonbon in the Shloer this time without the excuse of a major jumping error. Harry Skelton gets plenty of stick but at halfway when it was clear Jonbon was not going well he sent L'Eau du Sud on not giving his rival a chance to recover. L'Eau du Sud finished last season looking like he didn't like a battle so an easy win like this tells us nothing about how he will react if it gets hard. Jonbon didn't seem to have any excuse and would have finished a poor third if Matata had jumped the last properly.

A decent field in the Grade 2 two-mile five novice hurdle. Last year's Champion Bumper runner up Heads Up tried to make all and kept on well but No Drama This End sidled up to him going to the last and went away for a very impressive win. He will make a staying chaser in time. Heads Up might be better just down in trip the way he races. Third home King's Bucks got a good mention here when second on his bumper debut at Gowran. This was a tough ask after a fourth place on his hurdles debut and he will stay further and jump a fence.

### Saturday November 15<sup>th</sup> Cheltenham

One Horse Town started at Hexham in June and keeps stepping up making all in the Grade 2 juvenile. He will find it harder when the better ones come out but he is certainly game. Runner up Precious Man was paddock pick and travelled well making steady progress and having every chance at the last where he made a mistake. Secret Force was a bit disappointing in fourth but the Cromwell yard is having a down period.

I had thought Arkle Trial winner July Flower was more a stayer but she showed plenty of speed here and jumped very well to see off Be Aware. She was a Grade 1 bumper winner and twice Grade 1 placed over hurdles and the Grade 1 at Leopardstown at Christmas seems a good target. Burdett Road didn't seem an obvious chaser and while he might win over fences it looked hard work for him.

I was hoping Vincenzo would be aimed here and in not the greatest renewal of the Paddy Power thought he was the one to beat. He ran a fine race but lost his momentum at the last which finished his chances. I have seen plenty of Panic Attack over the years and couldn't see her winning this but the Skelton's had her better than ever. She was led out unsold three times at the sales. Once as a foal and twice as a yearling with the highest bid being £8.500.

Celestial Tune had some good bumper form in Ireland and was well backed for the listed mare's bumper. She made all and quickened away up the hill. This was her fourth bumper so the chances are she will be jumping next.

### Sunday November 16<sup>th</sup> Cheltenham

Ambiente Friendly looked like a pony alongside some future chasers as the Derby second made his jumping debut in the two-mile novice. His refusal to settle has been his downgrade on the flat and again here he pulled far too hard in what was a poor maiden for the course. The one too take from the race was fifth home Bras D'Or who couldn't win a point but looks all over a future chaser.

Alexei ran away with the Greatwood Hurdle and is a rapidly improving animal. He will be getting a huge rise for this and we will see where he goes from here. Those behind were mostly well exposed sorts.

Having won the mares bumper on the Saturday Tom Cooper also took the geldings race in very similar fashion. Saint Clovis made all and quickened right away up the hill. His second at Listowel is working out well. Favourite Punchestown festival winner Bud Fox looked like he would improve for the outing and having come with a good-looking run faded in the last

furlong. John Dawson hasn't had a winner yet so sending A Likeable Rogue here for his debut looked strange. He was a fine-looking chasing sort and ran well to take fourth.

#### Wednesday/Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> 20<sup>th</sup> November Warwick

The second and last Warwick winter festival. Excelero jumped his rivals ragged in the two-mile novice handicap chase and that jumping could see him win a decent open two mile handicap this season.

The runners in the two-novice hurdle should have a future. In the two mile five Sogna In Grande held off Dig Deep despite looking like he would be better for the run. Both should be O K and make chasers as should third Sackville Lady who is a big mare.

In the two miler Punchestown festival bumper winner Baron Noir failed to peg back all the way winner Crystal D'Estruval who cost £400k after his point win. Both are very useful and the third Bossman Jack will be better for the run.

#### Saturday November 22<sup>nd</sup> Haydock

The ground was a bit better than can sometimes be the case for this meeting and certainly suited Grey Dawning in the Betfair. He won easily enough but with the gallant Royal Pagaille not getting any younger and Handstands not staying he will need a lot more to be a Gold Cup contender.

One challenger come March could be The Jukebox Man who took the two-mile five graduation chase. The race was run at a crawl but he never looked like he was in any trouble. He goes to Kempton for the King George and a lot more will be needed there but it will be interesting to see how he goes. Iroko ran a decent race in second as he sets off on the way to Aintree in April.

Kabral Du Mathan ran away with the two-mile four handicap hurdle with Harry Skelton riding him right out like the future handicap mark didn't matter. The Relkeel on New Years Day looks the obvious next run and then we will see if he is graded class.

The rest of the card belonged to Chris and Freddie Gordon. It started with Diamond Hunter in the Grade 2 novice hurdle who disputed the lead and battled on well to hold the other runner who went forward Masked Man. The last three winners of this have gone on to the Tolworth/ Formby and this pair could easily do the same.

David's Well is an improving two-mile handicap chaser and was again always prominent. He can step up to a better class handicap. The third winner for the Gordons was Electric Mason in the staying handicap hurdle. Again he was always prominent and got the better of a battle with Hartington. The step up in trip has improved him.

#### Sunday November 23<sup>rd</sup> Windsor.

Straight after the Betfair card it was off south instead of home. I hadn't been to Windsor since the 1980's and never to a jump meeting. The course is back to its traditional figure of eight after last season's layout didn't work. I knew that the view of the bottom loop would not be great but what I didn't expect was that the big screen would be set up at a right angle at the end of the stand. That meant that even the final hurdle and fence could not be seen and the only jumps you could see were the one hurdle and two fences down the back straight.

There were lots of horses slipping on the bend just after the winning post and lots of poor jumping. Nothing really of note amongst the runners but quite probably one of the worst gambles you will see.

Sheeka Supreme is rated just 66 and she was running from 13 pounds out of the weights in the three miles handicap chase. She was beaten 63 lengths on her last run racing off her correct mark but after being 20/1 in the morning she was down to 7/2 at the off. Her race lasted less than fifty yards as when the flag dropped she decided she would rather be a rodeo horse and was unrideable. If someone was trying to get back the £170K she cost after winning her Irish point they can only have been disappointed.

#### Saturday November 29<sup>th</sup> Fairyhouse

A good two mile five beginners chase and Coral Cup winner Jimmy de Seuil made all jumping well and seeing off Albert Bartlett runner up The Big Westerner from two out. We will see were the winner fits into stable plans but I imagine he will be tried in graded races. The runner up will be better up in trip. Third and fourth Jacob's Ladder and Joystick ran fine races. Stayers hurdle third The Wallpack has now had two poor efforts over fences and finished here with the 100/1 shots.

The four-year-old Grade 2 hurdle went to Talk The Talk who had looked lucky in his maiden hurdle at Limerick but won well here. He will no doubt be stepped up again and at the minute I don't know what to make of him.

Skylight Hustle for the Elliot yard was odds on for the twenty-runner two-mile maiden hurdle. Making all he was never in danger to win by over twenty lengths and is obviously very useful. Behind his stable mate Ravendark a half-brother to three Grade1 winners including Brighterdaysahead ran a fine race on debut before lack of condition told from two out.

#### Sunday November 30<sup>th</sup> Fairyhouse

A super days racing with class acts and close finishes. There was a good crowd on day one and a bigger one today.

The Grade 3 three-year-old hurdle was the first of the graded action with two different sorts at the head of the market. The Mullins runner Narcisco Has had won in France and was a decent sized scopey sort. The Elliot runner Mange Tout also a French winner was a close coupled filly. She had won since arriving in Ireland and the fitness advantage probably told. She was made favourite for the Triumph Hurdle after this which was ridiculous.

The Royal Bond ended up a set two for most of the way between Koktail Brut and Blake with the former just holding on by a head. They are both decent but there will be better than these as the season goes on. The Passing Wife in third was a rare good run from a Cromwell horse over the weekend. He ran over twenty and most didn't look great and ran poorly. I was disappointed with Gameball who lost ground at plenty of the hurdles.

A super performance from Romeo Coolio in the Drinmore Chase just cruising home from two 150 plus rated rivals. He always looked like he needed this trip over hurdles and the novice chasers already look a decent bunch. Gold Dancer ran his race in second while not unexpectedly Captain Cody stayed on and I imagine the National will be his target. Old Man Dingle had to be niggled from early on and after a move on the home bend had nothing left to give.

All the paddock judges were agreed that Teahupoo would be better for the run before the Hatton's Grace while Ballyburn was fitter. They fought out a tremendous finish with just the nose in it. I was stood just behind Gordon Elliot and he thought he had been beaten. Ballyburn still has to prove he will stay three miles if he goes the stayers hurdle route and I imagine he will get the chance at Leopardstown at Christmas.

After a host of second place finishes at the meeting (still not sure how Will Do didn't win the Porterstown Chase) (and Three Card Brag at Newbury) the bumper came to the rescue.

The Elliot favourite Grangeclare Park was a giant and looked in need of it. The Mullins second favourite Lutimatom didn't look any better. Only two looked ready of which 20/1 shot Young Rebel looked best from a stable (Mags Mullins) who has bumper winners. Never at any stage did the horse look like winning until fifty yards from the line. Jockey Anna McGuinness who looks very promising never gave up after dropping back to nearly last at halfway.

#### Wednesday December 3<sup>rd</sup> Haydock

Not that many runners but some high-profile performers on display. Supreme Hurdle favourite Mydaddypaddy had just the two opponents both maiden hurdle winners and he saw them off easily. 5/1 for Cheltenham at this stage is totally mad but we will know more after the Formby at Aintree.

Just Ennemi was sold for the second highest price (£320K) at the David Maxwell dispersal but turned in a moderate effort on his first chase start. His jumping was ordinary and he ran out of steam early in the straight. The winner Western Knight jumped well and will go into handicaps now.

The Harry Derham yard had better luck with Western Monkey in the three-mile maiden novice hurdle. He led but jumped poorly early on only warming to his task up over the last three. He might jump better with a lead and could be useful.

Befair don't reduce each way terms with non-runners and when the two three handicap hurdle went from eleven to six runners it was an opportunity. Despite being off over six hundred days Lets Go To Vegas looked very fit. With a 500/1 shot in the race she only had to beat two for a place and there were some untrustworthy individuals there. It looked an each way bet to nothing at 12/1. She jumped her way into second place and the place element was secure before the straight. After the last the longtime leader Knomorediamonds who had pulled hard fell in a hole. Two winners out of the paddock in two meetings.

#### Saturday December 6<sup>th</sup> Aintree

Fairly ordinary stuff for a big Saturday card. A poor turnout for the two-mile novice hurdle but all were winners and Taurus Bay won this like he could go on to be decent.

The two handicap chases on the Mildmay course both went to the Twiston-Davis yard. Guard the Moon and Uncle Bert both made all on their seasonal debuts and both were well backed. The handicapper will have his say with both,

A slow-motion finish in the Becher as Twig just got the better of Mr Vango. The trainer keeps saying that Twig is better on good ground yet his two best runs have been on heavy and soft. He won't win the National and the half million William Hill bonus didn't do much to boost the field.

*A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL OF OUR READERS*



*Next Racin' Deadline is Monday 26<sup>TH</sup> January*