

Racin'



Issue 397

Feb/March 2026

HEXHAM 'CHELTENHAM PREVIEW' EVENT Wednesday 4th March, 7pm.

Tynedale Function Suite, Hexham Mart, Hexham, NE46 3SG.

Panel: Andrew Thornton, Gordon Brown, Ryan Mania, Stephen Darbyshire + 1 more (tbc).

All proceeds on the night will be split between The Injured Jockeys Fund & Racing Welfare; this will include a charity auction on the night.

Light refreshments at the interval and full bar facilities.

Tickets are £12 per person (£10 for annual members).

visit hexham-racecourse.co.uk/product/100233-cheltenham-preview-night or call 01434 606881.

NMRC MEMBERSHIP CHANGES IN 2026

A belated 'Happy New Year' to all our members for 2026! As most members will recall we have several important changes taking place this year.

Firstly, this is the final 'printed' version of Racin' Magazine that we are producing with online versions continuing until issue 400 after which time articles will be posted directly onto the club website.

Also, there will be two options for membership in future:

- **Full membership** – costing £12pa with one £10 e-voucher per full member to use for a club competition entry or 59's draw.
- **Associate Membership** – this will remain free but will only allow entry to competitions such as the ITV7 Leagues and 59's Draw, and will not give full access to all of the club website with some pages password protected after 1st March.

Associate members need to take no action and will remain on the club's mailing lists.

Those wanting to enter all competitions and have full access to the club website pages should become FULL MEMBERS as soon as possible.

There is a printed membership form enclosed for those receiving a printed magazine at present. As a one off please complete and return this to the club (in future only changes to contact details etc need to be notified). Payments can be made via bankers order still or by cheque. Online bank transfers also accepted.

For those receiving the magazine electronically you can find details of how to become a FULL MEMBER on the club website at <https://the-nrc.weebly.com/membership-details.html>

NB If entering the Alex Bird competition please become a FULL MEMBER first to use your e-voucher.

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COMPETITION NEWS

'ITV 7' 'FREE TO ENTER' COMPETITION

Our latest monthly winners are:

| | |
|--------|----------------|
| Nov-25 | Michael Evans |
| Dec-25 | Allan Wellsted |

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.

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.



NMRC's 59's Draw

Our latest winner in the monthly draw is as below:

Jan 3rd 2026 – 04 – Mike Campbell

We currently have a few numbers available – it costs £1pm to join the draw (payable quarterly or yearly) with a £50 monthly prize on offer.

The winning number is the 'Lotto' Bonus Ball number drawn on the first Saturday of the month.

For further details please contact Phil Evans via email at info@northernracingclub.com

SATURDAY NAPS + COMPETITION

The Round 1 prize winners of this winter's challenge are:

Debbie Kirkwood - £60 prize
Paul Halliwell £30 prize

In Round 2 (after 5 weeks) Simon Clark leads the way from Mark Banks & Brendan O'Meara whilst in the seasonal challenge, Paul Halliwell leads from Debbie Kirkwood & Elizabeth O'Donoghue.

GRAND NATIONAL DRAW 2026

Andy White has kindly agreed to run the Grand National sweepstake in 2026.

Tickets will revert to £5 each and FULL MEMBERS can use their e-vouchers for this draw if required.

Full details are now online at <https://the-nrc.weebly.com/club-competitions.html>



'ALEX BIRD' TIPPING CHALLENGE 2026

The prestigious Alex Bird Trophy returns in 2026, kicking off at Cheltenham Festival in March. Please make sure your 2026 membership fee is paid before using your 'e-voucher' as an entry fee.

This year, the competition is once again sponsored by the **Racing Post**, who have generously contributed a 12-month Ultimate Membership—valued at £499—as an additional prize for the overall winner.

The 2026 competition will once again follow a condensed four-month schedule, beginning in March with the Cheltenham Festival, in line with tradition. In April, the action moves to Aintree for the Grand National Meeting, before shifting to the flat in May with the Chester May Festival. The series will culminate in June at Royal Ascot, which will serve as the grand finale of the competition.

1. The points will be awarded based on winning and placed horses, with additional bonus points potentially awarded according to starting prices. Full details of the scoring system can be found in the official rules at www.northernracingclub.com.
2. The participant with the highest cumulative score across all four rounds will be crowned the overall winner and awarded the prestigious Alex Bird Trophy, held for a period of 12 months.
3. Entries for all races on a given day must be received before the start of the first race. Submissions can be made via e-mail, text, or WhatsApp.
4. Entrants who are on holiday or otherwise unavailable may nominate a substitute to submit entries on their behalf.
5. The entry fee for 2026 remains unchanged at £10, covering all four rounds. All entry fees will be added directly to the prize fund.
6. Participants may submit up to two entries. Each entry will be scored independently.
7. Cash prizes will be awarded to the overall competition winner as well as the winner of each individual round. The overall winner is expected to receive a minimum of £100, while each round winner will receive at least £50. Final prize amounts will be confirmed once the total number of entries is known. In 2025, strong participation enabled the awarding of additional bonus prizes, and similar extras will be offered again in 2026 if entry levels allow.

Please Note: All cash prizes will be remitted to the winners via direct bank payments.

✂.....

ALEX BIRD COMPETITION 2026 – ENTRY FORM

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

Phone/EMail.....

If you're entering online, please email your contact details to Mark Banks at zafonic93@gmail.com.

1. If you're using an 'e-voucher' please provide your **membership number** in the space below:
NMRC Membership Number: _____
2. To send an online banking payment please send to North & Midlands Racing Club ~ Sort Code: 16-30-32 ~
Account: 10139594 ~ Ref: Alex Bird.
3. To send a cheque please also enclose your entry fee of £10 per entry (cheques payable to North & Midlands Racing Club) and post to NMRC at 68 Mostyn Road, Hazel Grove, Stockport, SK7 5HT. Please enclose a SAE if you require a paper copy of the rules.

If you are making a double entry for yourself, you can still claim your 'e voucher' and pay for entry two as per the above options. **NB Please DO NOT send membership fees to the same bank account (Separate bank details are on the NMRC membership form)**

NMRC'S ONLINE 'FESTIVAL TIPS' 2026 (SUPPORTING THE INJURED JOCKEYS FUND)

As last year we have the same panel of experts available to share their selections via our 'event web page' which will be shared to all members making donations to our 'Just Giving' web page set up for the IJF.

Besides our panel of four (covering all races each day) we will also have a range of guest tipsters sharing their naps of the week.

Members do not have to sit through hours of discussions about the races with all tips posted online by 9pm on the eve of each day's racing. Can we also recommend Paul Ferguson's guide available from

<https://weatherbysshop.co.uk/collections/cheltenham-2026>

Here are some highlights from last year's event:

Michael Shiners (Skybet) selected Jimmy Du Seuil (won @ 16/1) ; **Daryl Jacob** selected Stumptown (won @ 5/2); **Paul Ferguson** (Weatherbys guide) selected Haiti Couleurs (won @ 7/2). **Paul Jacobs** (Moorstyle), **Gordon Brown** (Racing TV) & **Dan Kelly** (2024 preview guest) all chipped in with placed each way selections.

Graham Rossiter (Betfred TV) had the following winners: Inothewayurthinkin (15/2), Golden Ace (25/1) was tipped w/o favourite, Dodiethgreat (25/1) & Daily Present (12/1).

Gordon Armistead (Racin' Magazine): Winners included Lecky Watson (20/1), Bambino Fever (4/1), Jazzy Matty (15/2), Haiti Couleurs (7/2) & Kopek Des Bordes (4/6).

Martin Unsworth (Form & Ante Post expert): Puturhandstogether (17/2), Myretown (13/2), The New Lion (3/1) & Dinoblue (6/4). Martin also provided a good number of successful 'lay' opportunities.

Phil Evans (Trends Guides): Puturhandstogether (17/2), Woodhooh (9/2), Bambino Fever (4/1), Kargese (3/1), Jagwar (3/1) & Fact To File (6/4).

The aim is to raise some funds for the IJF so we are asking for a minimum donation of £5 per person (covers all four days). However, members may donate more if they can afford it!

To sign up for these events please e mail info@northernracingclub.com and you will then be sent a link to the 'just giving' website the club has set up for the IJF. Once the donation is received (ideally ticking the gift aid box) members will then be sent the log in details each day for these online events.

Members who do not wish to send donations via 'Just Giving' website can send cheques to NMRC at 53 Dalebrook Rd, Sale, M33 3LB and we shall ensure the donations are passed onto the IJF.



LATE NEWS – RICHARD JOHNSON NOW ADDED TO THE PANEL BELOW:



CHELTENHAM FESTIVAL PREVIEW NIGHT



**HOSTED BY
JONATHAN DOIDGE
RACING CORRESPONDENT
THE INDEPENDENT**

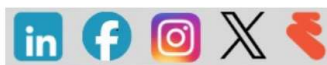
**JOEL PARKINSON
RACEHORSE TRAINER**

**MICHAEL SHINNERS
SKYBET PR MANAGER**

**DAVID CARR
AWARD WINNING JOURNALIST
RACING POST**

**RAWDON CRICKET CLUB
WEDNESDAY MARCH 4TH, 2026 at 7.30PM**

**ENTRY £20 by advanced purchase only
EMAIL: info@jdzevents.com**



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GORDON ARMISTEAD'S RACING DIARY

Thursday December 11th Warwick

The big race of the day the listed Lady Godiva just had the three runners. Diva Luna at 1/4 ran out an easy winner with just the one worrying jump at the fifth. She will evidently be taking on the geldings next time up.

The Pauling stable got the double up with Old Clayesmorian in the bumper who was very green early in the race but ran in well in the straight. He and runner up Cheap Sandwiches were the two from the parade ring with the winner being more a chasing prospect for the future. He was a big price today so probably surprised connections.

Friday December 12th Cheltenham

Eight of the ten runners in the two-mile one novice hurdle were last time out winners so the way Old Park Star won was very impressive. He was a bigger model than most of the field and just powered clear from the home turn. He looked like he will certainly stay another half mile. The other one from the paddock Our Boy Stan barely jumped a hurdle while the mare Kingston Queen will do better back against her own sex and up again in trip.

Only three in the two four novice chase and Sixmilebridge gave the penalty and a good beating to his rivals.

Runner up Califet En Vol has been talked up but has now disappointed twice running.

The proven star on show today was L'Homme Presse under top weight in the staying handicap chase. He looked fit but at halfway the prospects looked poor as he dropped out of the pack. Eventually he ran on for second which in the context of the stables form was a decent effort. He is coming up eleven and maybe cheek pieces will be needed soon. The winner Blaze the Way had been well plotted for this. A good run behind graded novices at three miles before three runs at around two miles. He was seven pounds above his Irish mark and was put up thirteen over there after this.

Saturday December 13th Cheltenham

Minella Study ran out a fine winner of the three-year-old hurdle after always being prominent. Let's hope he can be competitive later in the season. The runner up Winston Junior pulled hard for the whole race and had to be switched approaching the last jump. If he learns to settle there will be better to come.

You are wrong more often than you are right at this game and the novice handicap chase at Carlisle in early November I thought would work out has not. All the first six have now run and been beaten with Carlisle winner The Jukebox Kid completing the set in the three-mile novice handicap here. He appeared not to get home and hopefully one or two of the six will do better as the season goes on. The winner here Zertakt looks one for marathon trips.

The big part of Glengouly's season was in getting his rating down from the 139 he was on his first run for Faye Bramley in May to 119 when he showed his first form for the season. It wasn't the greatest renewal of the December Gold Cup and he will be back in the 130's after this. Vincenzo will go up again for getting beaten. Jagwar again made one bad and some other fiddly mistakes. Jonjo Jr again got the horse in a messy position two out and the horse couldn't get him out of it off a rating of 148 as he did off ratings in the 120's and 130's last season.

The three-mile graded novice hurdle was run at a crawl. It was a strange ride on the leader Conman John a proven stayer and he was out speeded from the last. Winner Carlenrig and runner up They Call Me Hugo together with the beaten favourite will head to the Albert Bartlett. Sixth home here was the Skelton second string Red Cadillac a super looking beast who has won his point and bumper but still looked a bit clueless here. We will see how he progresses.

Saturday December 20th Haydock

Finally a winner from the Carlisle novice handicap chase. Grand Geste finished second that day and was only running over fences for the third time here. He looked the likeliest winner when I did the race the night before but the 9/2 on offer looked short enough. The 11/4 in the morning and the 15/8 on the off made no appeal but all prices would have been good as he hacked up. He was already up nine from the Carlisle run and will surely be up ten for this. The Peter Marsh was mentioned as a target but if Royal Pagaille runs he would be a few pounds wrong there.

With Bill Joyce bursting the two four novice chase went easily to Lario. He will be in handicaps next and while this was not a great event he looked like he will be better over fences.

Friday December 26th Aintree

After last year's fog the total opposite with sunshine but the result was the same and a meeting ruined by the weather.

Any thought of transferring the King George here must have died a death with all the jumps in the straight missed out for four of the six races.

Whether Mydaddypaddy scared away some of the horses that were supposedly being aimed at the Formby I don't know but the field was certainly disappointing. Mydaddypaddy didn't live up to his status as Supreme Hurdle favourite. On his first time off the bridle he found nothing when asked to go passed Idaho Sun as they went around the last hurdle. He evidently goes straight to the festival and you couldn't support him on this showing. Idaho Sun sixth in the Champion Bumper last season will be a contender come March.

Saturday December 27th Leopardstown

Dual Grade 1 and County Hurdle winner Kargese has always looked like she would make a chaser and stepped up on her first effort making all and jumping well to take the two mile one beginners. She Had seen of St James's Gate when he fell and eventual runner up Lovely Hurling could never go the pace. It will be interesting to see where she goes. Lovely Hurling will need a trip.

Solness took his third Grade 1 two-mile chase at the course making most again and seeing off Marine Nationale. The runner up nearly got rid of Sean Flanagan at the second fence losing several lengths so was definitely unlucky. Both will be back for the DRF. Majborough started favourite and jumped much better but he looked one paced from two out and looks like he needs to step up in trip.

Having been surprised by Talk The Talk at Fairyhouse he again surprised me in the two-mile Grade 1 novice hurdle. Skylight Hustle looked to be the winner when he went on before the last but Sam Ewing pulled Talk the Talk out and they jumped the last more or less together. Talk the Talk seemingly having the momentum looked sure to win however a stride after the jump he came down and Skylight Hustle sped away to take the race easily. I do not think there would have been much to choose between them at the line and both should be in the mix come the spring festivals. Back in fourth Le Divin Enfant who made most of the running should also have a future, maybe over a bit further and eventually over fences.

In the two-mile handicap hurdle Jack Kennedy showed the difference a top jockey can make. Bowensonfire has a string of placed efforts and is not the most cooperative of individuals. With his head to one side approaching the last Kennedy was not taking no for an answer as he made up his partner's mind.

The three-year-old maiden hurdle had four runners under 10/1 and three of them completely blew out. The two who fought out the finish Hardy Stuff and Ole Ole had both already had two goes so the form is probably just ordinary. The one of the favourites to run well was the e Roger Varian trained Munsif who looked awful in the parade ring but ran with promise in third.

The two-and-a-half-mile bumper has been won by some top-class performers but it was run at a crawl and Generous Risk held up in last for most of the journey was given plenty to do from turning in. He could only manage third place but I fancy he will turn out the best of the bunch going forward.

Sunday December 28th Leopardstown

Some decent sorts in the four-year-old two-and-a-half-mile maiden hurdle. Lazare De Star was always prominent and went away from the pack going to the last for an impressive win. He looks one to step up to graded company soon. Runner up Le Moulin Rouge kept on well and was clear of the third and can win a maiden. Royal Gladiator was outpaced from halfway but kept on for fourth and will need three miles. Jet to Monte Carlo led until just before the last before fading. He looked a good sort in the parade ring but looked like he would improve for time so might have a future,

Only one mattered in the two mile five beginners chase from some way out. Cocktail Divin made all jumping very well winning by twenty lengths. They weren't the worse bunch behind and he will be taking on the best novices next time out.

The Grade 1 staying hurdle turned into a procession as Teahupoo strolled clear from the last from his owner mate Bob Olinger. The pair will be nine and eleven come March so you would expect there to be some younger competition but they will have to be good. Ballyburn was very disappointing and was beaten just after two out. He looked not to stay and where he goes after this is a big question. Also disappointing was The Yellow Clay who has now had three poor efforts in a row.

Just after the second last fence in the Savills Chase the noise of the crowd started to grow louder as Galopin Des Champs went to the front and it looked like he would retain his unbeaten record here. It was not to be as the lack of his usual warm up race told after the last. Winner Affordale Fury who made just about all fought back and ran out a good winner. He was 33/1 the night before so he was not an unexpected winner for some. He was a good staying novice hurdler but after an injury following just two novice chases it took him a few runs to get back to that standard and now greatly surpass it. I had him down as a likely National contender but he will be heading to Cheltenham now after a probable rematch with most of these at the DRF. Behind him the Grand National pair I Am Maximus and Grangeclare Native ran about to their official ratings as did Lecky Watson. Fastorslow ran below his best while Monty's Star again ran like he needs an extreme trip and he will be on my short list for Aintree. Gold

Cup winner Inothewayurthinkin was just poor. He didn't look anything like fit in the parade ring so the run was no surprise.

One amazing fact about the runners in this race is that four of them ran in the same Grade 1 novice hurdle at Naas in January 2023 when Champ Kiely won and Affordale Fury was thirty lengths back in sixth.

The Pertemps qualifier was a surprisingly weak affair and none of the qualifiers would normally get into the final. Winner Duke Silver might get there with another win and provided jockey Hugh Horgan with his first win over jumps on only his second ride.

Bumper winner Bentraghhill went to the top of the Champion Bumper market after a comfortable win. He wasn't the greatest on looks but had far too much speed for his rivals who were probably not a great bunch.

Monday December 29th Leopardstown

Two maiden hurdles on the card. The first an Academy for three-year-olds over two miles two only concerned three runners. The well-bred Kilbarry Lizzy took them along from favourite Hygge and she had just seen him off when Lyches Knock came from well of the pace to nab her on the line. This looked a minimum trip for the winner while the other two especially Hygge will be better back at two miles.

Frankie John took the two-mile four older horses maiden on his third hurdle start. He had been placed in the first two without looking like winning either so this was probably just an ordinary race. Runner up Jalon D'oudairies was second in the 2024 Champion Bumper but missed last season. He should find a maiden.

Walk in June won when I was at Limerick and followed up here in the two-mile four novice handicap. The extra trip suited him well and he could go in again before going chasing next season. This race is becoming a favourite of mine with a second big priced winner on the bounce,

Lossiemouth made it thirteen wins from sixteen starts seeing off Brighterdaysahead in the December Hurdle. The race changed at halfway when Anzadam took charge of Patrick Mullins and stormed into a lead of several lengths. He wasn't going to last home but gave Lossiemouth a lead until going to the last. We will have the debate about whether she should go for the Champion Hurdle again this year and we can only wait and see how that plays out. The pair will be back for the DRF.

The field for the bumper looked a decent lot. The first two in the betting Bud Fox and Gomez Adams were well beaten as Keep Him Company needed all of the trip to get home in front.

He was the same at Fairyhouse and is going to stay well when he goes jumping. Bud Fox was particularly disappointing. The Cromwell yard had appeared to come out of the major dip in form during November but it seems they are still not quite right.

It was a great meeting for the Elliot yard. In previous years it has all gone wrong for the stable in the spring as the Mullins juggernaut won more or less everything. It will be interesting to see if he can keep up the momentum in the new year.

Tuesday December 30th Haydock

No one could begrudge the Parkinson/ Smith stable winning with Paddy O'Mahler in the staying novice handicap chase. The stable lost the promising hurdler Brixson in the first and then that horse's half-brother Tara Hills gave away the second race with a dreadful mistake at the last.

The junior national hunt novice hurdle looked an ordinary enough affair. Diamond Jim well beaten in a listed hurdle easily took the race but he will have to go into handicaps in the future.

Thursday January 1st Cheltenham

Probably not a great two-mile four maiden hurdle to start things off. Winner Step Ahead will stay further and will make a chaser.

I liked Regent Stroll when he won the big sales bumper at Newbury but he has been hard work for the Nicholls yard since then. The run in the grade 1 at Aintree showed the ability was there but his first chase was a mess as he reverted to pulling far too hard. He was settled here but the end result was disappointing as Miami Magic found plenty from the last to win the two-mile four novice chase.

Kabral Du Mathan again showed a good turn of foot to take the Relkeel Hurdle. The way he races doesn't yell out stayers hurdle and I would be surprised if he goes that way.

Glengouly completely flopped trying to follow up from December not getting the same easy lead. The field wasn't great and Matata's easy win shouldn't be taken seriously.

Saturday January 17th Haydock

Old Park Star who was so impressive at Cheltenham made short work of the field in the Rossington Main. Making all he had it won some way out and went into favouritism for the Supreme Novice Hurdle. That could well change after the DRF but he is certainly a serious contender. Having been transferred from the Nicholls yard he is not a typical Nicky Henderson horse having more size about him and he will make a chaser in time. His chief market rival Hurricane Pat didn't impress in the parade ring. Smaller than the favourite he looked a bit weak. Having

chased the winner he was well outpaced from two hurdles out. Third placed Soldier Reeves was never in the race being held up in last place early on. It will be interesting which handicap Dan Skelton picks out for him in the spring.

The Peter Marsh turned into a sprint and the two doubtful stayers had too much speed at the end. Imperial Saint had turned in two moderate efforts so far this season but plenty seemed to know better was expected today. The National was talked about as a target but that seems fantasy. Richmond Lake has tried the trip plenty of times without looking like he stays it and Brian Hughes gave him a super ride but he came up short again. The handicapper seems to have finally caught up with Konfusion and he won't be taking up his Gold Cup entry. Neither will Myretown who's jumping again let him down. Johnnywho had been talked up as a National contender but jumped poorly and is probably not one to trust too much. This was surely a swansong for Royal Pagaille. He has been a super performer.

Friday January 23rd Warwick

The Junior National Hunt Hurdles have been better in the UK this season. We might have seen the best horse to run in one as Feel Gut made all here. In the Donnelly colours for Nicky Henderson, he made all and apart from launching himself at the second last he jumped well if a bit big. The flat form is nothing special and we will see how he progresses. Third home Mecene tried to go with him and probably paid for that as he faded close home. He can certainly win one of these,

The two-mile three mare's novice hurdle had a big field and while plenty were no hoppers there were a few who were better than average. They were led home by the two who were carrying penalties. Jackie Hobbs who had been a bit disappointing in a listed race at Haydock returned to winning form but may have been lucky. Betty's Daisy tried to make all but a mistake at the third last lost her the lead. Having gone on again she ran down the last and lost her momentum. Both will we worth a try back up at listed level and Betty's Daisy has the size to make a chaser in time.

Excelero looked good when he won here in the autumn and he again tried to make all in the two-mile novice handicap chase. As soon as they got to him he turned it in tamely as he had at Ascot and seemingly he isn't one to battle.

Golden Son came from France with a reputation but soon began to disappoint. He got his first win in two years in the hunter chase (aided when favourite Jet Plane came down) and Aintree could be an option.

Saturday January 24th Cheltenham

Trials day was to last a bit longer than expected and descended into a bit of a farce but more of that later, It started with the two four novice handicap chase that has a good record of producing festival winners. It probably wasn't as classy as in previous years but winner Jordans Cross is probably unlucky not to be four from four this season. He will have risen the best part of twenty pounds in the ratings after this and will no doubt go for the novice handicap chase at the festival. He might be outpaced there as he looks like three miles will be his trip in the future. Runner up Quebecois was better here and might have won if Freddie Gingell hadn't got in a tangle changing his whip on the run in. The jockey could do with a good win as he hasn't really got going this season. Third home Scorsese took them along and this was a step forward for him as well. Califet En Vol was again short in the betting but again checked out tamely. He must show plenty at home but doesn't on the track.

It looked a good field for the Triumph Hurdle Trial to tie up some form lines with a second division Irish challenger thrown in. Maestro Conti and Minella Yoga stood out in the parade ring with both looking more like future chasers than four-year-old hurdlers. One Horse Town took them along at just a fair pace and stuck on well with only Maestro Conti getting to him. The winner pulled quite hard throughout but had plenty left from the last and showed a turn of speed. Minella Yoga stayed on well for third. The Irish runner Hardy Stuff was surprisingly short in the betting with the form of his Leopardstown win already having been let down. He also pulled hard but was well beaten in the end.

Minella Study's win here in December is looking good and we will see how he goes at Musselburgh on their trials weekend.

Jagwar was short enough for the two-mile four handicap chase and while I wanted to take him on it was hard to find one to do it with. Jagwar was ridden closer to the pace than usual and looked the winner two out but he couldn't (or wouldn't?) go passed Donnacha. The winner did me some good turns over hurdles but he is not a big one and has tended to make mistakes over fences. Here he jumped impeccably just behind the leader and would not be denied. Jagwar had been touted as a Ryanair outsider but that won't be his target. He will go up another few pounds for this and maybe go up in trip.

The one betting race of the day proved to be the cross country. I backed Favori De Champdou here in December when he fell at the hidden water jump and then watched him win at Leopardstown at 66/1. None of the others here

would win a £100K handicap chase and even under top weight 14/1 was far too big. What the handicapper will make of it for March we will see as he won with many pounds in hand.

Just the four in the Cotswold Chase all with questions to answer. Favourite Grey Dawning went along in third and I never got the impression he was going to be involved in the finish. A mistake two out finished any chance he had, and the Gold Cup trip will still be a question come March. With Venetia's horses just about all running poorly it was hard to know what we would get from L'Homme Presse. In the end he probably ran right up to his best making most and battling well giving the winner six pounds. Spillane's Tower after two underwhelming hurdle runs looked very fit for this. He loomed up to L'Homme Presse two out and maybe won easier than the three parts of a length. He needs it at least soft so the ground will dictate where he goes but he showed he got this trip well.

At the time of writing there seems every hope that Sir Gino will at least make a recovery from his injury even if he doesn't race again. I hadn't seen him since Aintree 2024, and he has grown into a big powerful animal who looks far more a chaser than hurdler. The main challenger here The New Lion who I hadn't seen before is much more a hurdle type. The race told us nothing about his Champion Hurdle chances as it developed into a two-furlong sprint. I am not sure there is anything in that race that will make it a test of stamina and I would be taking him on. Impose Toi was the new name on the graded stayers hurdle front in the UK, but he had no answer to Ma Shantou from the last. He was giving the winner six pounds but stopped very abruptly after the last. Ma Shantou was rated only 144 before this and what happened at Haydock in November is one of the mysteries of the season. He still has plenty to find to take on Teahupoo.

Just how lucky the runners in these two hurdle races were we will never know after a hole was found in the centre of the course in the straight. The announcement that was made of a delay was totally inadequate. The horses kept walking around the parade ring with their rugs back on, then the jockeys disappeared back into the weighing room and everyone assumed that the last race was off. We made our way towards the exit but the horses were still in the parade ring so we hung around another ten minutes before another announcement that again told us nothing. As it began to go dark another announcement just said the delay would go on and we called it a day. It isn't hard. Just tell people what the problem was and what is happening, but racecourse managements never seem to learn. On looks there were some really good sorts. Fortune Timmy, Taurus Bay, and The Blue Room all caught the eye. Act of Innocence who ended up not running looked weak behind the saddle. Watching the replay when I got home there is no way to say how dark it was when the race was run. The cameras always make it look much better than it is. The photo finish print however showed that it was totally ridiculous to run the race and it should have been off the minute the hole was discovered. Just the six weeks to get things right for the festival.

- Gordon will also be compiling a further report after the Dublin Racing Festival which will be available on this new web page <https://the-nrc.weebly.com/racing-diary1.html>

Go Racing In Yorkshire Update

Season Ticket

The Go Racing In Yorkshire Season Ticket is on sale now! Offering great value, with a season ticket, you can attend all 184 meetings at Yorkshire's nine racecourses, in the Grandstand & Paddock Enclosure, including the Sky Bet Ebor meeting and the Betfred St Leger.

A single ticket is £475 and a joint (for two people living at the same address) is £795. There is also the option to pay in instalments, either three or 10 monthly payments.

To book your ticket, please visit our website www.goracing.co.uk or drop me a line, charlotte.russell@goracing.co.uk or give me a call 07305 932411.

The closing date for orders is Wednesday 25th February.

Introducing Mason

As you read this, Mason Paetel, the winner of our Go Racing In Yorkshire Future Stars Apprentice series, supported by White Rose Saddlery, has just returned from Palm Meadows, Miami. But he wasn't sunning himself and resting on his laurels. No, the seventeen-year-old spent some time with trainer Saffie Joseph, learning how they do things in America.

Not from a racing family, Mason was first introduced to horses at a friend's birthday party, which had a pony theme. From there, Mason's parents took him to a riding school, near their home in South Wales and he never looked back.

After showing enough interest and commitment, his parents bought him his first pony and he was introduced to pony racing. Mason took part in the racecourse series over four years and knew after his first ride that he wanted to be a jockey.

The Paetels are lucky, in that while they do not have a racing background, close family friend Tim Vaughan, most certainly does and he was able to point Mason in the right direction.

Upon leaving school, Mason went straight into racing and while in his first job, he saw and advert for an apprentice with James Owen and he went straight for it, getting his license when he was still 16.

Now based in Newmarket, Mason has been with James for nearly a year and is looked after by agent, Chris Dixon. The pair are clearly getting something right as they finished 2025 with 32 wins from 267 rides, a 12% strike rate.

The trip to America was a tactical to plan, to allow Mason to build his experience, while protecting his current 5lb claim.

"The aim next year is to go for the apprentice title and I want to save my claim for that." Said Mason.

Having had some time on the sidelines due to a lengthy whip ban, Mason has really worked on getting things right.

"I've had to learn from my mistakes and keep practicing on the equicisor. It took a while to click but it's coming much more naturally now."

He also describes himself as a fitness fanatic.

"I used to do a lot of cycling, but now I go to the gym five days a week and have regular one on one personal training sessions at Peter O'Sullivan House and I'm a fan of the hydro pool, which has a treadmill in the water to exercise on."

Mason is sponsored by Nick Luck Daily but has agreed to let Go Racing In Yorkshire follow him through the year, so that we can keep a track of his progress and what he is getting up to.

Expect to hear more, as we approach the flat season.

The Yorkshire Nine

Introducing a new racing syndicate, with Micky Hammond Racing, Dubawi Time is the horse to take you racing in Yorkshire!

The bay gelding, by Dubawi, was purchased by the team at the October horses in training sales and has won twice in his career so far, running over one and a quarter to one and a half miles.

With a dual-purpose career in mind, he will continue to run on the flat but could also have a future over hurdles and the team are looking to build a plan around Yorkshire's nine racecourses.

The cost of the share is a one-off payment for the 12-month term and will include a collection of goodies in the welcome pack.

To find out more contact hayley@mickyhammondrracing.co.uk or phone 01969 625223.

Racing Welfare's Home Energy Grant

Open to those working in or retired from the thoroughbred racing and breeding industries, Racing Welfare's Home Energy Grant is designed to help ease the pressure of increasing home energy costs.

Grants awarded will be a one-off £300 payment.

If this applies to you or someone you know, please contact Racing Welfare on 0800 6300 443.



Yorkshire Area Point to Point at Sheriff Hutton on 18 January 2026

My 2026 pointing journey started on misty and wet Sunday with a short 20-minute drive to Sheriff Hutton for the Yorkshire Area Meeting. This was rescheduled by a week following the Snow and frost that caused the meeting to be cancelled the previous Sunday.



The opening race was the Racing TV sponsored conditions race with 14 runners. My lucky fiver went on the Gina Andrews trained and ridden FUMET D'OUDAIRES 2-1 Fav who returned after 15 months off the track to claim the prize under a patient Gina Andrews (pictured left) ride. I always follow the Warwickshire based rider when she brings her horses north. Another long-distance traveller, Monmouthshire based Nicky Sheppard's YIPPEE KI YAY ran on to finish a close second under Milo Herbert.

The Restricted race also went to a long-distance raider as BYORDEROFTGECOURT the 6-4 Favourite trained and ridden by Dale Peters made for a worthwhile journey from Cambridgeshire winning by 13 lengths. My selection HUGO MOSS under John Dawson and trained by wife Alice, ran on in the final stages to finish second and looks one to follow in the coming weeks.



Race 3 was the Ladies Open which attracted just four runners and was won in fine style by the 2-5 Favourite BARTON SNOW (pictured left) who justified the short price with an excellent round of jumping under Amber Jackson-Fennell, winning by 40 lengths. Winning trainer Joe O'Shea has set his sights on the Aintree Foxhunters for the horse as he seeks to follow up his previous wins in that race by Cousin Pascal in 2021 and Gracchus de Balme last year. Watch out for BARTON SNOW in forthcoming Hunter Chases too. As some bookies were offering e/w on the first two, so I chanced an e/w bet on the outsider of four which went west as the horse was pulled up at halfway.

The men's open had 8 runners and popular course specialist CAMDONIAN came with a well-timed run under Christy Furness for his mother Grania to claim the prize and be the first local success of the afternoon. The horse carried my Fiver too, so I ended up in profit on the day. Race favourite Grandads Cottage unseated Milo Herbert when challenging two out to make it a disappointing afternoon for the Herbert

/ Sheppard combination. The fifth race, the Maiden saw another Yorkshire winner as George Atkinson gained his first win as a jockey in his 23rd ride on his own horse SPORTS MAGIC winning by 18 lengths at 6-1 in the Atkinson Family colours.

The final race was the Tattersalls Cheltenham GB Pointing maiden over 2 miles 4 furlongs with a field of five saw BARITO win for Joe Hill giving a double on the day and five over the weekend for rider Dale Peters who also reached the 200 winners mark. BARITO held off a late challenge from Gina Andrews SLAY GIRL and according to the winning trainer Joe Hill will now go to the Tattersalls Sale. Last year the race was won by the Gina Andrews trained, EDITH PELHAM who sold for a record £180,000 at the February Tattersall Sale.

Despite the rain, there was a knowledgeable crowd in attendance and excellent commentary from Gareth Topham. My afternoon was completed as I managed to negotiate my way out of parking area without getting stuck in the mud.

Post Sheriff Hutton Sale News

Both the winner and runner up in the Tattersalls race at Sheriff Hutton were entered in the Tattersalls sale, held after the Cheltenham Trails Day meeting on 24 January.

BARITO was sold for £60,000 to Lucinda Russell/Paul McIvor and SLAY GIRL to Highflyer Bloodstock for £65,000. Two to look out for as they continue their racing careers under rules. In addition, last year's winner EDITH PELHAM was in action running for Fergal O'Brian at Warwick on 23 January and ran well to finish third in a hot Novice Hurdle at 20-1 behind Harry Dereham's Favourite JACKIE HOBBS.

Positive Yorkshire Pointing News

Good news for fans of the Yorkshire point scene is that Will Easterby, jockey, trainer and clerk of the course at Charm Park has been appointed as an independent member of the Point-to-Point Authority replacing Fiona Needham whose six-year term on the board has come to an end.

Next Meetings

The next Yorkshire meetings are at Duncombe Park, Helmsley on 15 February and Charm Park Scarborough on 1 March. In the Midlands Area, there is a meeting at Bangor on Dee on 8 March.

There is plenty of free information on the new Point to point website **GBPOINTING.CO.UK** and on their Facebook pages.

Hats off to Huntingdon! By Mike Wheeler.

Huntingdon was one of the few British racecourses I hadn't visited, so last December I made amends by attending its flagship meeting on Peterborough Chase day. I didn't have great expectations but was impressed with the track and its facilities.

It's a Jockey club course that stages National Hunt racing throughout the year. The track is a right-handed oval, with easy bends and long straights. It's fast, favouring speedy types who race up with the pace, whereas hold-up horses tend to struggle.

The layout is neat and compact so it's easy to walk between the paddock, the course and wherever you want to go. There are bars aplenty, including a bistro and mobile food outlets next to the paddock serving good-quality grub at reasonable prices.

Having arrived at the same time as Nicky Henderson, I took this to be a good omen and placed a fiver each-way on his hurdler, Coastal Command, in the second race with course bookie Billy Bongo (real name Simon). However it proved to be an unsound investment, and thereafter I restricted myself to interest bets online.

Ambiente Friendly's second run over hurdles was a talking point in the novice hurdle, and the 2024 Derby runner-up didn't disappoint, fighting back gamely to win after being headed. Although his Cheltenham festival aspirations now seem up in the air after an underwhelming return to Huntingdon just before Christmas, a big-field handicap with a strong pace might be right up his street.

Willie Mullins provided a touch of glamour by bringing over a handful of horses from Closutton, including Saint Sam for the 5-runner feature. The market for the Grade 2 Peterborough Chase was tight between Saint Sam and Djelo for Venetia Williams, with the latter going odds-on just before the off. In a change of tactics Djelo opted to front run and his precision jumping took the field apart for a dominant victory.

Although it rained persistently throughout the afternoon, it couldn't dampen the spirits of a cheery crowd in the lead-up to Christmas. Although it might be a lesser experience on a weekday fixture, my first impression of Huntingdon is that it's a great, little racecourse and well worth a visit. It's easily accessible from the A1 and has the convenience of a Holiday Inn on site for overnight stays.



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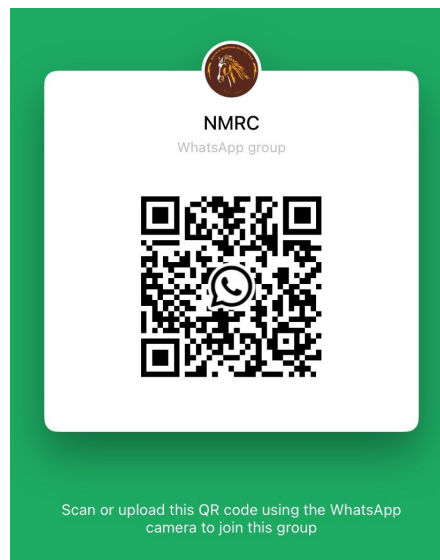
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NMRC WhatsApp Group – Not everyone uses Facebook so this group will compliment/add to the information shared there. Keith Dodd has already started adding content and you can join the group by scanning the QR code on the below:



Next copy deadline for Racin' is Monday 23rd March