



NMRC'S GRAND NATIONAL SWEEPSTAKE



Fuller details on page 2.

EDITOR'S NOTES – SPRING 2026

Thanks to all those that have become 'Full Members' of the club in 2026 and already used their 'e vouchers' to enter this year's Alex Bird competition which had a record-breaking prize fund of over £1200 plus the fantastic Racing Post prize worth around £500 for the overall winner!

This is the first year for the new membership scheme and whilst we had a handful of payment issues I think we got it 95% right, so well done to all concerned.

If you still have an unused e-voucher to your name they can be used to enter the Grand National Sweepstake, (Flat) Heritage Handicaps Competition, 59's Draw or in the Autumn the next Saturday Naps Challenge (Jumps).

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One new feature in this edition of Racin' is the crossword puzzle set by Mike Wheater – hopefully more will follow in due course!

Besides finding the correct answers (some are fairly tricky) on a practical note you may wonder what is the best way to complete the puzzle?

One way is to print off the puzzle on page (3) and complete in ink (if you have a printer!).

However, when you downloaded this issue of the magazine you will have seen that there is a separate option on the website to download the crossword separately as a 'word based' format.

I have tested this on my PC and you should be able to insert the answers into the squares in this 'word' format.

If you manage to crack the puzzle, please send entries to NMRC at 53 Dalebrook Rd, Sale, Greater Manchester M33 3LB or email your answer to [info@northernracingclub.com](mailto:info@northernracingclub.com)

All correct entries received by May 18<sup>th</sup> will go into the hat and the winner will receive a 'free entry' into the Heritage Handicaps Competition, starting on Derby Day in June.

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# COMPETITION NEWS

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

Our latest winners are:

|                        |                |
|------------------------|----------------|
| Jan-26                 | Dave Todd*     |
| Feb-26                 | Andy Harris    |
| Mar-26                 | Allan Wellsted |
| Cheltenham<br>Festival | Helen Goodwill |

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 and any extra 'festival' prizes when the website maintains additional league tables. 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.

- Dave Todd – please contact the club at [info@northernracingclub.com](mailto:info@northernracingclub.com) to claim your prize.

## NMRC's 59's Draw

Our latest winners in the monthly draw are as below:

**February 7<sup>th</sup> 2026 – 40 – John Boswell**  
**March 7<sup>th</sup> 2026 – 19 – Juliet Mercer**

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](mailto:info@northernracingclub.com)

## SATURDAY NAPS + COMPETITION

The top 10 entrants in the seasonal challenge are as follows as at the end of March:

| Name & Entry/Default Pick No. | TOT    |
|-------------------------------|--------|
| Linda Boswell 94 - 2          | 125.92 |
| Paul Halliwell 146 - 3        | 112.05 |
| Andy White 16 - 7             | 110.48 |
| Michael Wheater 153 - 8       | 110.04 |
| Elizabeth O'Donoghue 92 - 3   | 105.35 |
| Michael Wheater 89 - 6        | 100.54 |
| Debbie Kirkwood 122 - 23      | 96.32  |
| Paul Halliwell 139 - 3        | 95.95  |
| Gordon Armistead 17 - 7       | 94.32  |
| Mark Banks 96 - 6             | 93.92  |

## GRAND NATIONAL DRAW 2026

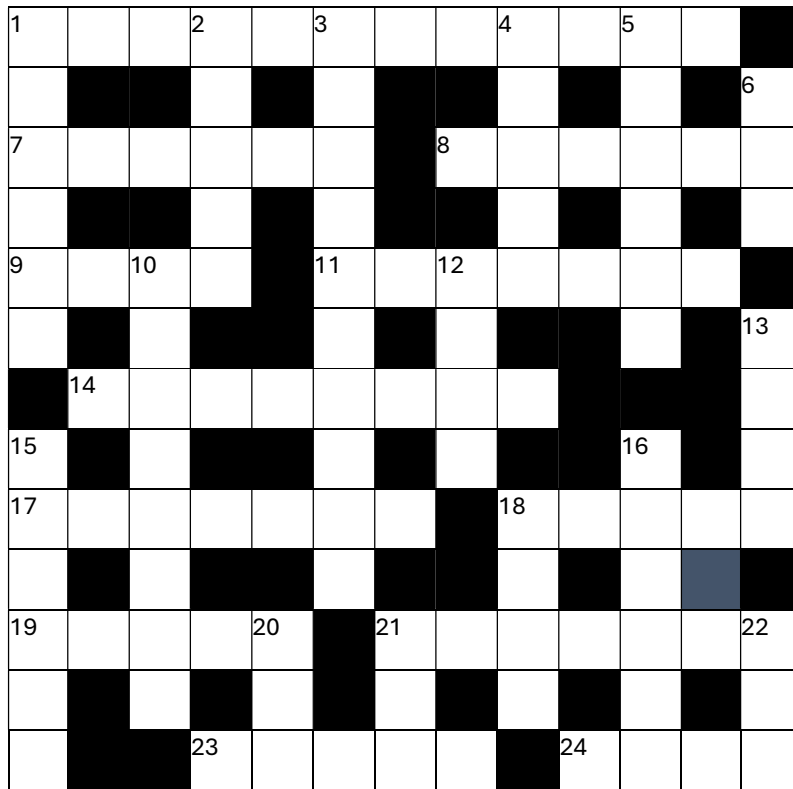
Andy White has kindly agreed to run the Grand National sweepstake in 2026.

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>



# Mike Wheater's Racing Crossword



## Across

- 1 Gigginstown Grand National winner (4,3,5)  
 7 Nickname of legendary grey chaser (6)  
 8 Bookmaker sign language (3-3)  
 9 Nickname of famed US racehorse War Admiral – 'The Mighty \_\_\_\_' (4)  
 11 Two-time Irish Arc winner - it's claimed (7)  
 14 Jockeys need a pair of these (8)  
 17 Derby winner in the year of Waterloo (7)  
 18 Renowned former head lad at Seven Barrows (5)  
 19 Also known as 'Levels' in the betting ring (5)  
 21 Arch-rival of 9ac (combined with 20d) (7)  
 23 Cobden or Skelton (5)  
 24 Jockeys need one of these (4)

## Down

- 1 Yorkshire racecourse (6)  
 2 Home to the Oaks and Derby (5)  
 3 Well-known Belgian beer or little-known Australian racehorse (10)  
 4 One of the Nicholl's clan (5)  
 5 Charlie Fellowes Group 2 winner at Saratoga or TV crime drama (6)  
 6 Racecourse organisation (abbrev.) (1,1,1)  
 10 The type of horse you might not want to bet on? (8)  
 12 Leading flat sire \_\_\_\_ de Vega (4)  
 13 Derby winner or ancient city (4)  
 15 They're popular at Grand National time - including with NMRC (6)  
 16 Distinguished racing journalist and ITV broadcaster (6)  
 18 When a horse gets stuck in its stable (4)  
 20 Legendary US racehorse (combined with 21 ac) (3)  
 21 Winning trainers may be found here! (3)  
 22 Piece of betting advice (3)

Closing date for entries is May 18<sup>th</sup> 2026

# GORDON ARMISTEAD'S RACING DIARY

## Saturday February 7<sup>th</sup> Warwick

The ground was described as heavy but mostly they seemed to be going through it well enough.

Just Golden was around evens in the two-mile three maiden hurdle but looked a mess. He was sweating and warranted being taken on but the opposition looked sparse. He ended up making all but had to be ridden to hold on from the last. Runner up Chasing Glance is already eight while the third Piping Rock is very one paced.

The first of two graded mare's hurdles was over two mile five and saw another all the way winner in Hollywood Cha Cha who goes really well on deep ground. She looks a chaser but although she has won over fences has not really convinced.

Only three in the Kingmaker with a horse who should have been here taking on his elders at Newbury. Steel Ally picked up the pacemaker Mirabad two out for a comfortable win. He stays two and a half well. He is in the Arkle but maybe the Manifesto at Aintree might be a better target. Mambonumberfive was disappointing not getting high enough at his fences from early on and not going the pace. The trainer has said he will be a stayer in time and there seems little point at persevering at two miles.

The second mare's graded was over two miles three for novices and had been transferred from Sandown.

The Irish challenger Good Girl Kathleen was my main fancy of the day, but she was going nowhere with a circuit left and had evidently got some of the mud down her throat. Kingston Queen well beaten by Old Park Star at Cheltenham was suited by the step back up in trip and fought back when she was overtaken after the last. She will get further. Runner up White Noise a typical big animal from the Bailey/ Nicholls yard was baulked on the home turn but still got to the front on the run in. She should jump a fence. Third home A Path to Ronda looks a hard ride.

Le Yacht was a dreadful even money favourite for the 0-120 two-mile handicap hurdle. Cornish Storm was the one to take him on with and Ben Jones on him was able to get a soft lead and then go for home in the straight. The Faye Bramley trained Almuhit looked in need of it while the same comment also applies to the same stables Last Kingdom on his first run after leaving Willie Mullins.

## Saturday February 14<sup>th</sup> Haydock

With everywhere else having going ranging from soft to bottomless it was far from that here today. That didn't stop Dan Skelton taking out Kabral Du Mathan early in the morning due to the ground being too soft. He later took Nurse Susan out because the ground was too firm.

The first race told everyone it was just on the soft side of good as the four years olds in the Victor Ludorum set off at a good pace and kept it up all the way. Manlaga had been a bit of a talking horse for the Fred Winter but overnight looked very short at about evens. She drifted on the day but came with a good run to pick up the pace making Pourquoi Pas Papa readily. Her rating of 123 shouldn't change after this. The runner up will probably head to the Fred Winter as well. The highest rated here was the ex-French The Mighty Celt having his first run for the Skeltons. He had graded form in France earning a rating of 134 but after a wind op and being gelded he was never placed to challenge before a running on third.

The Rendlesham ended up with four staying handicap hurdlers plus a very tubby staying chaser in Beauport. Lud'Or will be unlucky to go up in the ratings for winning.

An ordinary renewal of the Prestige Hurdle and a good ride from Harry Skelton sitting in second and kicking for home two out. The time was faster than the other three-mile hurdles on the day but his future will surely be back in handicaps. Runner up Ubatuba was given too much to do by his amateur rider unable to claim.

Once again the National trial hardly lived up to its name. Just the one runner being high enough to have a chance of making the cut at Aintree with a couple of others needing to win to go up in the ratings. Myretown was one of those needing a win and went off at a rapid pace but his jumping was again moderate and he fell in a hole after three out. His fellow pacemaker Top of the Bill with a rating of 145 is on the borderline for Aintree but his jumping kept him in this and he did well to take second place. Winner Grand Geste joined the leaders after half a mile and jumping the best for a cozy win after his poor effort in the Great Yorkshire. All eight finishers were covered by six lengths.

Not a great qualifier for the Pertemps but the first two Champagne Chic and Minella Emperor should go up enough to make it into the final. The runner up was a hard ride and I am sure he will have some headgear when he next runs.

Unexpected Party strolled home in the hunter chase as his rating entitled him too and you would imagine Aintree will be where he goes.

### Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> February Fairyhouse

Apart from the Bobbyjo the card was well under the usual standard.

A moderate looking bunch in the two-mile Red Mills Auction Qualifier. Eagle's Quest who had already had nine goes in bumpers and hurdles made all under Danny Mullins and battled well when challenged. I imagine there will be better than him come the final at Punchestown.

Most of the four-year-olds in the juvenile handicap couldn't cope with the ground and most just walked home. Mode Avion had it won a fair way out but the eleven pound rise he was given looks plenty.

The two-mile four Tommy Carberry Handicap Hurdle can be a good race but this year it was only average. One Big Boum sauntered home and after going up ten for his last win he went up another eleven for this.

Sportinthepark was well in on his chase rating but after three months off looked like he would be better for the run,

Not all of J. P.'s horses that drift are well beaten. Blow Wind Blow doubled in price to 12/1 in the two mile four 0-110 handicap hurdle and won nicely. Only five he was the nicest animal in the parade ring and looks a chaser.

Although he is by Gleneagles his full brother Inthenickoftime is one of the few chase winners by the sire. Ted's Corner was favourite for his sixth race running and has yet to score.

The Bobbyjo was an excellent renewal and all the runners looked in good shape. Grangeclare West had the highest rating and had run some good races in defeat in the last couple of seasons. Held up in a race run at a fair pace for the ground he came through after the last for a decisive win. He will go to Aintree with every chance off 11.10 but I fancy something will be better in there. I had thought Gerri Colombe had gone at the game after a lamentable display in the Savills Chase but he returned to something like his best here in second. He has the same weight as the winner at Aintree and will have stamina to prove there. Interestingly the Irish handicapper dropped him five pounds for this run. Third here under an eight-pound penalty and blinkered first time Stella Story led for much of the race. He will be twenty-one pounds better off with the pair that beat him here at Aintree but could easily stay here for the Irish version. Even further down the weights at Aintree was fourth home Answer to Kayf who did me a good turn in the Troytown in the Autumn. He needs this heavy ground. Captain Cody again made mistakes after falling in the Thyestes and I would think better ground would suit him. There was some signs of life from Intense Raffles back at his favourite track before fading after two out. He will need more and I imagine the Irish National will be next for him. It was a surprise that Three Card Brag was favourite for this and he was well beaten. He was Jack Kennedy's chosen mount and evidently was reported to be blowing hard post-race. Lecky Watson had no chance here giving a twelve-pound penalty away to most of them but ran O K up to a point. He will be twenty-two pounds better off with the principals here in the National. Spanish Harlem was beaten with a circuit to go and maybe his hard race at Gowran caught him out. The five pound extra he was given by the English handicapper for unseating at the last in the Thyestes was ridiculous. Better Times Ahead was four lengths clear halfway up the run in that day but still didn't win.

The novice chasers over the same distance were forty-five seconds slower in the next with Rokathir up fifteen pounds again proving he goes on heavy. He only won by a length but was probably value for more. Maxi Mac Gold in second jumped poorly for most of the race and if he ever jumps he is well handicapped on his hurdles form. The finish of the 0-110 three-mile chase was hard to watch. My nap of the day Duce Bigalow having led from the off was caught on the run in. It was a poor race.

Only four in the bumper. I didn't like the Elliot animal Detroit Maverick who wasn't the typical big Gigginstown type. Odds on for Willie Mullins Look Me was much nicer type and he won well but the race told us little.

### Sunday February 22<sup>nd</sup> Naas

Twenty-one in the two-mile maiden hurdle but few mattered and only four were ever involved. Favourite Star of the Week set off in front and was never challenged jumping well. He is a chasing type for next season. The next two home Dchingis Desire and Lyches Knock chased and swoped places before the last. Lyches Knock looked a stayer when he won an academy hurdle at Christmas and again here. A huge gap back to the rest with Stictothescrypt who was always fourth leading them home. The two newcomers who caught the eye in the parade ring both for Henry de Bromhead came next. Whisky Lads a big chasing sort and Brickfield Belle who was smaller, but a nice type will both come on for the run,

Just five in the listed juvenile. The overnight favourite Majolique on her first hurdle start drifted before the race but won nicely in the end. There isn't much of her. She is by an obscure stallion in Tigrion who ran well over a hundred times at a modest level and has sired just a few winners. One however is a star in Corsica with twenty-three wins in twenty-seven races. Paddock pick was Immediate Effect who was backed into favourite but ran no sort of race.

The Pertemps qualifier was a moderate affair with Melbourne Shamrock finally winning a couple of years after catching my eye in a bumper at Punchestown. He would be an outsider in the final. Runner up Minella Sixo has been out of form since he took a very bad fall in the big three-mile handicap hurdle on Betfair day 2024. He goes on better ground and while he may not be up to winning the final of this he could find a modest handicap in the spring.

Another small field for the bumper and a good winner in Low Kick. Again he wasn't the typical big Gigginstown sort but he was a nice animal and he paid a complement to his Navan conqueror The Irish Avatar.

The chase course here has been realigned in the straight due to the ground conditions finishing inside the hurdles track instead of up the stand rails. Former Champion chaser Captain Guinness was still good enough for third at Cheltenham and second at Punchestown last season. His form away from those two festivals has been modest for the last couple of years. He just ran O K in the two-mile Grade 3 here for third and at eleven he must be on the decline. Winner Blood Destiny is not one to trust that much but getting nine pounds from Touch Me Not he was ridden with confidence by Paul Townend. Touch Me Not will be interesting in this sort of race when his Group 2 penalty drops out next season.

A competitive two-mile four novice handicap chase rounded things off and I still can't believe Magic McColgan didn't win. She jumped very well but for a mistake at the last and still looked like winning three parts of the way up the run in. Mark Walsh however on Goraibhmaitjagat who had barely jumped a fence all the way round somehow drove him home. Harvard Guy looked like being a class act two years ago. He stood out in the paddock on looks but has shown nothing now in four runs back.

Tuesday February 24<sup>th</sup> Catterick

I have not been here for a couple of years and the upgrading of the facilities that was evident then has been continued. A new building housing a coffee bar with self-service restaurant and bars has replaced the old pokey affair. Plenty of tables and seats both inside and out and surprisingly for here in February it was just about possible to sit outside.

Nick Scholfield has really hit the ground running with his training career. Itsinthename made it fourteen wins in only his fourth month of training in the two-mile maiden hurdle. He looked outpaced leaving the back straight but under a typical Sean Bowen ride he led just before the last. He will benefit from a step up in trip. Runner up Myrighthandman was always prominent jumping well. He can go into handicaps and he can find a small race. In the female jockeys two-mile four handicap hurdle only Secret Vino had managed to win a race previously. He was the standout in the parade ring and won with more in hand than the official distance. This was a poor event but he can win again.

The change of stables and a wind op certainly worked for Shadowfax of Rohan in the two-mile handicap chase. He was not an unexpected win to some having been a double figure price the night before. He returned 100/30 and made all followed home by Forctobereckonedwith and the pair finished well clear.

Saturday February 28<sup>th</sup> Kelso

A course that I wish was a bit nearer but one that is badly affected by the sun. I wasn't going to go earlier in the week when the forecast was for a sunny day but the weather played ball. It proved to be well worth the trip.

A poor turnout for the Premier Chase after Iroko was pulled out but Protektorat managed to liven things up by an appalling mistake at the second last. He was good enough to recover and Minella Drama who found himself in front no longer has the inclination to put up much of a fight. Of the two National entries Stolen Silver might just make the cut but is a shadow of the horse he was and shouldn't run. Ain't That a Shame running for the first time since his sixth place in the 2024 National looked in need of the run. He fell at the last but the handicapper has dropped him in his absence, and he will likely not make the cut.

It looked a good field for the Grade 2 two-mile 2 novice hurdle but it was a bit hard to way up as the first two in the betting pulled up. Winner Montemares was held up but travelled into the race easily and won with lots in hand. He can go back to two miles and a trip to Aintree would seem to be the next target. Runner up Kosac d'Oudaries had been well seen off by Mydaddyaddy early in the season and he will go into handicaps. Third home West Hill Verde had run seven times behind some good horses without winning. He made a real mess of four out so did well. He was the biggest of these and should be better over fences. The market leaders Starmount and Le Beau Madrik both stopped quickly three out and are surely better than they showed here.

The Morebattle Hurdle has been a big success since reverting to a handicap in 2021. The big plunge horse course winner Spectacularsunrise had every chance racing just behind the leaders but faded out tamely. Runner up Serious Challenge from well off the pace swept around the field at the second last to go for home but was run down by Captain Hugo who was in midfield most of the way. Wise Eagle who stays further than this on the flat was outpaced in third while Quaviste in fourth came from the back but not for the first time found little when it

mattered. Laafi who I thought was well overpriced at 40/1 led most of the way and stayed on to land the each way in fifth.

Both Barrels barely jumped a hurdle when I backed him at Haydock in January but looked really well in the parade ring. The first two in the betting Good to be Alive and Florida Dreams are iffy characters so he was given another chance in the two five handicap hurdle. He hasn't won at three miles but will certainly stay the trip as it was his stamina that kicked in having looked tapped for toe some way out.

A Path to Ronda had by far the best form in the two miles mare's novice hurdle hence her price of 1/10 but she has looked far from straightforward. There wasn't much downside to laying her at that price and it nearly paid off. She went on two out but Gavin Sheehan did not look happy and 40/1 shot Changemyluck went on just before the last. Unfortunately, she had never been anywhere near the lead before and swerved into the jump. That just gave Sheehan the chance as he drove the favourite home.

#### Thursday March 5<sup>th</sup> Haydock

As can be expected the week before the festival it was low grade stuff today. Solid Performer looked to have the two five maiden hurdle under control when he guessed at the second last and came down. He had jumped well up to then but it was a poor field. His market rival Ballyeaston had jumped poorly and even when given a big lead proceeded to find a way to get beaten, He is not to be trusted. Eventual winner Chemoulin was under pressure and well behind in third when Solid Performer fell and was a lucky winner. It was his third hurdle run so he will get a mark which shouldn't be much over 100.

Winner Ki Woo was the youngest in the field for the feature Tim Molony and all of his rivals were untrustworthy sorts. He had been pulled up on his last start so was hardly a betting proposition, but he may be competitive in similar contests in the spring.

The disappointing Static came good in the two-mile three handicap hurdle where three of the first four in the betting failed to get round. Heather Honey got a good ride from Peter Kavanagh to win the three-mile handicap hurdle. He and runner up Hard Dealt are going to go up plenty as they were well clear and the runner up was beaten for the fourth time this season when well backed. There was a double for the McCain stable with another that has disappointed in the past with Idaho Valley in the two five novices handicap hurdle. I liked Lheur De Gloire in the parade ring but he pulled hard and never got involved. He looked more a chaser so maybe a poor novice handicap chase in the autumn might be better for him.

A few nice sorts in the bumper. Old Clayesmorian who I saw win at Warwick ran no sort of race and tailed off leaving the back straight. Winner Turbocharged was another that caught the eye in the parade ring but what it amounted too is anyone's guess at the moment.

#### Saturday March 7<sup>th</sup> Gowran Park

Heavy ground but I have been to this meeting when it has been much worse. The two-mile maiden was a race where nothing much happened. Minella Boss made all and held on well when challenged from the last. He had already had seven goes on the flat and over hurdles without winning so is no star but could do well in handicaps. Runner up Bulgaden Castle is a chasing sort and again has had a few goes. Odds on shot Manoir De Mirande found little from the turn in and dropped away tamely.

That was a poor race but the mares two-mile maiden was even worse. Likealightswitch was 2/9 after not getting home in most of his nine previous goes. She was never challenged here which doesn't say much for the opposition.

The two handicap hurdles were moderate affairs as well. Rebel Gold was a good chaser at his best (rated 146) but just isn't as good over hurdles. Now thirteen and off 109 he couldn't defy top weight when sent off favourite for the two miler. The winner Royal Soldier who had fair maiden form won nicely. He got an eight-pound rise and might be up to defying it. Another first-time handicapper Sky and Sand took the two and a half miler but his seven-pound rise looked plenty enough.

Big race of the day was the Shamrock Handicap worth €45K over two miles with fourteen runners and it was a wide-open affair. Winner Jigoro was a promising horse when he first went hurdling and I remember fancying him for the Coral Cup as a novice. He lost his way moving between hurdles and fences before he ran better in blinkers at Thurles in January over two and a half miles. Dropping back in trip here with the blinkers certainly did the trick as he always travelled well and was probably value for more than the one and a quarter length margin. A five-pound rise does not seem excessive, and he goes well for James Smith who has ridden him to his better efforts in the last twelve months. The run of runner up Maidenstreetprince was a surprise as he is one from twenty-nine over jumps without showing very much for a long time. There were horses with good recent form in behind.

A couple of good ex handicappers in the Tetratema Hunter Chase. Hunters Yarn still owned by the Munir/ Souede partnership but back with his original point trainer Pat Doyle having been a decent two miler with Willie Mullins. His jumping held him back, but he ran in an Arkle. He has won three points this season and was second to Panda Boy in his first hunter chase. I backed Lets Go Champ in last season's Paddy Power at Cheltenham when he ran third to Il Rodoto and he had won his first point this season. The third runner in with a chance was Ryehill who started only 17/2 for the Cheltenham Hunter Chase last season. He had cheek pieces on for the first time but never went a stride here and the two ex-handicappers had it between them. Sophie Carter rode her first winner over jumps under rules (she won the ladies Derby at the Curragh in 2024) on Lets Go Champ who was always prominent and jumped well. Hunters Yarn was a good second and both could be the sort for the Aintree Foxhunters.

The bumper here has been won by some very good sorts including Bob Olinger and Dromard took this years by twenty-one lengths without coming off the bit. Willie Mullins arrived to see him run which might or might not mean anything. No doubt he will be at Fairyhouse or Punchestown and we will see how good he is then.

### Sunday March 8<sup>th</sup> Naas

Oliver McKiernan had his first winner for a year in the maiden at Gowran the day before and followed up here in the maiden with Healys Pub. He made it from the third hurdle and held the challenge of Doctor Elvis readily. For the time of year it was probably an O K race, The J P horse in third Sine Qua Non was well backed but decent bumper horse Colcannon jumped very poorly early on and stopped tamely two out,

The Grade 3 novice hurdle had good graded performer Blake in as favourite but he was beaten in a close finish by Le Labo. He had failed to finish his two maiden hurdles but was going to beat the decent Kazansky when falling at the last in Cork in December. John Gleeson is one of the top amateurs and lost nothing to Sam Ewing in a driving finish here. It was about ten minutes after the race when a stewards was announced Sam Ewing having said he was bumped twice. He was never going to get the race. The winner will be worth a try in a better race. Annie Power's first-born Mystical Power went the wrong way, and her third Davy Crockett was fifth and last here. He is small and his two wins last summer might be as good as it gets for him.

Another handicap debutante in Thankyouforthedays easily took the two-mile handicap hurdle. He was the standout in the parade ring but at 6/4 was no price. He was given a thirteen-pound rise but he can win again, and he looks a chaser for the future.

Good staying chaser Better Times Ahead was eighteen pounds well in for his return to hurdling in the two-mile four handicap. It doesn't work that way, and I wish the English handicap system would recognise the fact. Mojoe off bottom weight ran out a good winner but for a €25K race it wasn't a strong one.

Goraibhraitjagat was favourite in the Leinster National to follow up his win of a fortnight before but was run out of it close home by The Lovely Man. The winner had been favourite for a farce of a race in the Punchestown National trial which turned into a sprint and is an improver. He won by a head with twenty back to the third. He was two pound out of the weight so officially went up nine with the runner up going up five. Sa Majeste in third ran his best race of the season and was paddock pick but perhaps isn't one to trust while this was too short for the fourth Shanbally Kid. The one runner here who could make the Aintree National field High Class Hero was never out of the last two or three and pulled up.

Willie Mullins had the first three in the betting in the two four beginners chase with Spread Boss Ted winning. I first saw him in Marine Nationale's first bumper win, but he has missed plenty of time since then. He will be handicapping over three miles. Runner up Ballygunner Castle is becoming disappointing while third Supersundae is probably on borrowed time in the yard. Trainer Conor Houlihan made it three winners from his last four runners and only nine in total when Kiltybo took the mares bumper. She beat the Mullins runner Poetisa well and evidently could be headed to Aintree. The runner up had been placed in a listed hurdle.

### Saturday March 14<sup>th</sup> Uttoxeter

It's a long time since I have been to Midlands National Day. Three big field handicaps to start the card. Wellington Arch appreciated the step back up to two and a half miles and was a ready winner despite a mistake three out. He evidently goes on to Aintree where he won last year but he will be a good stone above the mark he had then. Runner up A Perfect Day was coming down in trip and after disputing the lead was staying on to the line. An extra half mile next time would suit him. Third Below the Radar looked super in the paddock but it is two years and lots of placed efforts since his last win.

Having been on course for three of Doughmore Boy's four runs this season it was hard to see him winning the three-mile handicap hurdle here but he held off the Skelton hotpot A Pai De Nom. The runner up came there cantering but found precious little when let down. Twig ran O K on his warmup for the National but is not guaranteed a run at the moment.

The ground on the hurdle track didn't seem too bad but it sorted them out on the chase track in the Midlands National with only five finishers.

Rock My Way broke his maiden over jumps in a Grade 2 hurdle at Cheltenham on trials day 2023. It has been hard work since but under top weight here he put most to the sword with a great display of jumping in the lead. It was only at the last when Issac Des Obeaux got the better of him to go away on the run in. The pair along with the third Git Maker had always been up with the pace.

After the big fields at Cheltenham a first prize of over £25K in the three-mile novice handicap chase was battled out by horses rated 113 and 122 and only six runners. Kycorock and As the Fella Says were miles clear and even with this being a small field could well hold their own in a higher-class affair.

I really liked Dig Deep when I saw him at Warwick in November. He was beaten at odds on that day and has been plain disappointing since but he came good here in the two-mile four novice hurdle. Always forcing it he went away from two out. Runner up Seaniecon was outpaced three out and he needs to go out again in trip.

The mares bumper went to Sassipants who had already had two goes without making a place. Runner up Vrheligonne beaten for the second time as favourite is a big girl who was paddock pick and will be suited by a trip over jumps.

### Friday March 20<sup>th</sup> Musselburgh

Only my third time here. The first time it was still called Edinburgh. We went up on the train and there is a complimentary bus from Wallyford railway station. It would have been quicker to walk from the station as the town centre was gridlocked.

110 rated flat performer Alkasib was weak in the market for the two-mile one maiden hurdle but took it up at halfway and made the best of his way home. His jumping will have to improve with mistakes at the third last and a worse one at the last. That made the saddle slip and Theo Gillard did well to stay on board up the run in. It was a pretty modest contest.

The first of the Go North finals was the two-mile handicap hurdle. It went to another horse weak in the market with Light Fandango not leading until the run in to follow up from Doncaster. He was paddock pick along with the favourite Star of Guiting. That one came from last turning in to lead at the last but faded from there probably making up the ground too quickly,

Another paddock pick took the two-mile four novices handicap hurdle final in top weight Sanilam. He came from off the pace to lead at the last and stayed on well. He will certainly stay three miles in the future and should jump a fence. Back in third decent flat performer Who's Glen kept on from two out on his handicap debut and maybe slower ground would help.

The sun ruined the three-mile handicap hurdle final with only six of the fourteen scheduled hurdles jumped.

Another paddock pick Authorised Mission took them along and winged the hurdles they did jump. Being in front facing a three parts of a mile run in is not the place to be. He was collared after bypassing the second last but will be interesting when out again in a proper race.

Two odds on shots in handicaps had been turned over at Newbury on the afternoon and Railway Bell joined them in the mares two-mile four handicap here.

### Sunday March 22<sup>nd</sup> Carlisle

Rocking Man appeared to have little to beat in the two-mile one novice hurdle and gave the penalty away with ease. The two that chased him home were ex flat animals making their jumping debuts. Loving Look was two from eighteen on the flat with a rating of 69 and the 72 rated Earnest Belief was placed twice for the Gosdens. Both should find races in the north.

It's a while since I saw a dead heat. Two Brothers never quite looked like getting there in the two-mile four handicap hurdle but right on the line he got up to be level with Ryebridge. A regular in decent flat handicaps over a few years this was only Two Brothers third hurdle run at the age of eight. Ryebridge has much less overall experience so has plenty of room to improve again.

Adam Nicol has had a breakout season and made it a winner a day (all for the same owner) over the go north weekend when National Question took the two-mile one handicap hurdle. The winner a half-brother to both a Group 1 flat winner and a Grade 1 jump winner is a long way off that class but this was his fifth win. I haven't seen much of Joshua Thompson but after riding me a 10/1 winner I won't be bothered if he is on one I fancy in the future.

A few of the winners of the Go North races have been on a winning role and Marty McFly made it four on the bounce in the two-mile handicap chase.

Also on a roll is Chasingouttheblues for a third win in four in the three-mile chase. He won this by staying well having been four lengths down at the last. He will be stepping into the regional nationals next season.

I backed two-and-a-half-mile chase winner Wolfsburg when he won his maiden hurdle two years ago and he looked like one who would go on. He then pulled up on three of his next four starts. Sandy Thomson's yard sprang back to life in December and he had four winners over the three days. Wolfsburg cruised in and we will see how the handicapper reacts but there is more to come from him.

Only four in the bumper and Red Acres Max's form had been boosted by the one who beat him on his rules debut. He looks a stayer and future chaser. Runner up Dundee Law more a hurdles sort improved from his first run while the winners main market rival Just For Dad could be made fitter.

## POINT TO POINT NEWS - YORKSHIRE MEETINGS REVIEWED BY ANDY WHITE

### HELMSLEY RACES AT DUNCOMBE PARK

The Yorkshire season continued on 22 February as the Helmsley races took place in the grounds of Duncombe Park. This was a week later than planned as with everything setup the previous Sunday, a few hours of snow meant the cancellation of the racing. Thanks to the efforts of the committee and the Point-to-point authority, the meeting was re-arranged for the following weekend.

The Easterby family once again won the opening hunt members race. With Will Easterby retiring from the Saddle, it was younger brother Tom riding this year's winner for trainer Will and owner mum Sarah. My e/w pick GETUPEARLY ran well for trainer Amy Jones and ridden by Felix Foster.

Lucy Brown riding Charles Clark's TAG MAN won the Conditions race.



The restricted race saw BYORDEROFTHECOURT trained and ridden by Dale Peters travel from Cambridgeshire to claim the prize as he fought off the challenge from Alice Dawsons HUGO MOSS who finished runner up. Peters made the trip to North Yorkshire doubly worthwhile by winning the Intermediate race, rescheduled from Askham Bryan with LINE EM UP.

(see photo on next page)



The mixed open race saw another well-judged ride from Christy Furness on his families CAMDONIAN, to win for the second successive year. My fiver to win was on too. Odds on favourite and last year's Aintree Foxhunters winner, the Joe O'Shea trained GRACCHUS DE BALME ridden by Henry Crow led the whole way round but faded up the stiff Duncombe Park finish.

Lois Teal rode Jack Teals JOB WELL DONE in the maiden and Tom Easterby completed a double on Steph Easterby's PINGED in the concluding two-mile flat race.

### **YORKSHIRE JOCKEY CLUB AT CHARM PARK**

The following Sunday it was off towards the coast on 1 March to Charm Park Scarborough for the Yorkshire Jockey Club meeting.

There were nine runners in opening Conditions Race and for the second week it was the Easterby's who claimed the prize as Will Easterby's MOROZOV COCKTAIL was ridden to victory by brother Tom (pictured below).

My e/w pick LETTHEDUSTSETTLE now back pointing for Paul Collins under jockey Paddy Barlow claimed second place.



The GB Pointing sponsored young horse maiden went to the Cherry Coward trained KINGOFTHEFONTIER ridden by Joe Wright. The stable doubled up in the Ladies Open when Olivia Rogers gained her first point to point win riding BALYDONAGH BOY. Just three went to post and odds-on favourite WHATS THE SOLUTION slipped on the far bend, and it was left to the only other runner, BLUE SANS to challenge but the winner held on, winning by five lengths.

There was a shock in the men's open. Just four went to post and the odds on 1-2 Favourite LOUD AND PROUD ridden by Huw Edwards crashed out at the second last fence leaving GUSTAVO GOODWAY under Felix Foster out in front. The only other finisher JIMMIL under Will Brown pushed all the way but the winner held on to win by a length. Plenty of people backed the winner including me who had it both to win and to win without the favourite, so it was a good punting day for me. The Northern Professional Jockeys sponsored this race, and it was good to see plenty of them in attendance.

DRIVEONDONN owned, trained, and ridden by George Atkinson was an easy winner of the restricted race and NATIVE NELLIE won the concluding maiden ridden by Lois Teal for Karen Clifton beating Alex Wilson's APIECEOFTHEMOON ridden by Pippa Brown by a neck.

### **PRINCESS ROYAL CHALLENGE CUP AT THE CHELTENHAM FESTIVAL**

Readers of this column in January would have seen that I gave a good word for BARTON SNOW after a promising run at Sheriff Hutton. When asked for my NAP for the clubs IJF fundraiser it had to be BARTON SNOW, so I hope some of you had

money on the horse who won well for Joe O'Shea and jockey Henry Crow. Can they double up at the Aintree Festival or could the third placed horse at Cheltenham, Music Drive go well again for Kelly Morgan.

### **DERWENT HUNT AT HUTTON RUDBY**

I couldn't make meeting the day after the Cheltenham festival at one of my favourite courses as football took precedence for me.

Henry Crow fresh from his win the day before on BARTON SNOW won the restricted race on Cooper Wilson's BABY CHOU.

Olivia Rogers followed up her first win at Charm Park as BALYDONAGH BOY won again for the Cherry Coward team.

Riding performance of the day went to Tom Easterby with a fine treble. First up it was SUMMERVILLE BOY in the mixed open for Charles Clark. Then it was another win on brother Will's MOROZOV COCKTAIL before claiming the maiden on Albertine Barkers THATS WERE ITS AT.

### **HOLDERNESS AT DALTON PARK**

To end the month, Holderness Hunt held their meeting at Dalton Park near Beverley on 22 March.

Tom Easterby rode the winner of the first, the Hunt members race on SUNSET ON FIRE for Cherrie Coward.

Henry Crow continued his good form with a double on PONCHERELLO for Tim Garton in the Conditions Level2 race and on FAYRELY FRUITFUL for Rhiannon Lodge in the Restricted race.

Joe Wright was another jockey with a double, first on Charles Clark's SAM MAGEE in the mixed open and then on Francesca Postes SHORT SELL in the closing Maiden.

Dale Peters made another successful trip north winning the Conditions Level1 on short priced favourite LARGY PEARL.

### **Forthcoming meetings**

The Yorkshire season continues with its meetings on Easter Saturday at Sheriff Hutton, at Hornby Castle near Bedale on Saturday 11 April, then on Saturday 18 April at Charm Park before ending the season at Witton Castle on Monday 4 May.

For members in the Cheshire area, this year's two Sunday meetings at Tabley Knutsford are on 26 April and 17 May.

## **Go Racing In Yorkshire Update**

### **A Battle for Northern Supremacy: Cock O' The North**

Running alongside the racing action is the return of one of the sport's most respected regional titles: the Cock O' The North.

This prestigious jockeys' competition, spanning 16 northern racecourses, celebrates consistency, resilience and excellence in the saddle. From Doncaster to Musselburgh, and Chester to Ayr, the contest unfolds across the entire flat season, culminating in a final showdown in November.

Reigning champion Jason Hart returns to defend his crown after a standout 2025 season that saw him ride 78 winners. His tactical brilliance and relentless work ethic make him a formidable contender once again.

But the competition is steeped in history. Legendary names such as Kevin Darley and Edward Hide—the latter a 16-time title winner—underscore the prestige of a prize that remains a true badge of honour in the weighing room.

With emerging talent joining established stars, the 2026 renewal promises another compelling narrative for racegoers to follow throughout the season.

## **Easter at the Races: Family Fun Takes Centre Stage**

As the flat season gathers momentum, racing also opens its doors to a new generation of fans during the Easter holidays.

Racecourses across Yorkshire are embracing family-friendly fixtures, offering far more than just racing. At Doncaster, young racegoers can enjoy K-Pop Superstars, arts and crafts, colouring activities and even an on-site treasure hunt—ensuring there's something to entertain every age group.

Better still, under 18s go free, making it an affordable and memorable day out for families looking for something different over the holidays.

The family theme continues at Pontefract Racecourse, Catterick Racecourse and Thirsk Racecourse, all of which host their own Easter-inspired racedays as the season gets underway.

## **One to Watch: The Yorkshire Flat Horse to Follow 2026**

No new season would be complete without a name to keep firmly on your radar—and the Yorkshire Flat Horse to Follow 2026 adds another layer of intrigue for fans.

While the Lincoln and early-season contests often provide the first clues, Yorkshire trainers give you their thoughts for tracking emerging talent and following their horse's journey through the campaign.

[Watch the video](#) to see which horses should be going in your tracker!

The annual **Middleham Open Day** organised by [Racing Welfare](#) takes place on Friday, April 3, where Middleham trainers give the public the fantastic opportunity to see behind the scenes and meet the horses at their yards, followed by an afternoon of activities on the Low Moor gallops.

[Book your tickets](#) in advance and use the code GRIY to get 20% off!



## **Gordon Armistead's Cheltenham Festival Review**

I wrote a long diatribe on the Cheltenham starts last year so won't repeat it. Quite what the review they held after last year's meeting came up with I don't know but there were no improvements. Perhaps they will get it right for next year. The other problem this year was the ground. Cheltenham put in so many drains in after the heavy ground festivals at the end of the last century (in Master Oats year they had to use the old course straight to get the Gold Cup run) that it only gets heavy when it pours down on the day they race. The rain just goes right through and with a wind blowing it dries out quickly. It certainly was never soft or even good to soft.

### **TUESDAY**

#### Supreme Novice

Usually there is one clear favourite for this race but this time several looked as if they could establish themselves as the next big thing. In the end we saw three very good horses fighting it out. Sober Glory should probably have won after making most of the running. He put down at the last when Ben Jones asked him and that cost him. That gave Old Park Star an opening which he took. Nico de Bonville was lucky to escape a ban after the winner went left when he used his whip and badly interfered with both his rivals. My Daddypaddy came with his run at the last and had a chance when Old Park Star knocked him out of his stride.

All three are likely to be over fences next season and the winner will probably be better at two and a half than two.

Behind Baron Noir in fourth has always looked like he will jump a fence. El Cairos found little at the business end. He looks more a hurdler. Talk The Talk was beaten just after halfway and his jumping will have to improve, maybe going out in trip will help him. Mighty Park was found out by his inexperience. The winners of one hurdle at Punchestown (The Louis Fitzgerald) won by Kaid D'authie and Grangeclare West in recent years looks the race for him.

#### Arkle

Kargese really is a tough mare and bossed the Arkle from the off. She kept outjumping Lulamba and eventually he made a mistake at the second last which finished whatever small chance he had at the time. Kopek Des Bordes having settled down after the first two fences came with a chance at the last. I am not sure his peck made the difference to the result as she battles so hard. She will not be going on like the last two winners to make a Gold Cup horse but will certainly give anything a fight over this trip. Kopek Des Bordes I would think would improve for more races over fences and is sure to run again before the end of the season. Lulamba needs to step up in trip and that will evidently be in the Manifesto at Aintree.

#### Fred Winter

The first two here had very contrasting passages through the race. Saratoga was always well placed led at the last and won well. The Irish handicapper put him up fifteen to 140 which is the highest mark for a four-year-old with a rating. (he ran here off a British mark of 130). Winston Junior was badly hampered at the start and had to weave his way through. The winner evidently goes to the Grade 1 at Punchestown while the runner up will no doubt be at Aintree.

My each way selection The Mighty Celt was held up in last until they started down the hill. You simply can't come from there on the Old Course and his sixth place to land the place part of the bet was a fair effort. No doubt the Skelton team will find a race for him in the spring.

#### Ultima

Winner Johnnywho has rightly been called a few names in the past. A wind up and cheek pieces made the difference as he ran on well to give the excellent Richie McLernon his first festival win for several years. He is in the National and he is around where the cut might be. His owner mate Jagwar qualified for Aintree with this second place but again made mistakes and he just doesn't seem to be learning. The other McManus runner Iroko was never really going and hardly boosted his Aintree chances. Of the other National entries, of the two guaranteed a run Resplendent Grey was prominent but dropped away to finish last and Handstands made one mistake and stopped. Leave of Absence on the same mark as Johnnywho at Aintree finished fifth without ever looking dangerous. Search For Glory who would need luck to get in ran a great race but unseated at the last while Blaze The Way stopped quickly having had a chance turning in.

#### Champion Hurdle

With the only possible pace angle Tutti Quanti throwing his toys out of the pram it was always going to be a crawl. That suited Lossiemouth as although she stays she has a turn of foot off a slow pace. She's a great mare and will be back next season. They ran a pacemaker for Brighterdaysahead last season and must have wished they had this time around as well. She needed the stronger pace. I imagine she will be chasing next season. The New Lion also needed a stronger pace, but they didn't have the faith in his jumping to make it. No doubt he will go up in trip at Aintree. Alexei got a ten-pound rating rise for his fourth place and will probably join him there.

#### Plate

Madara had the form to win this but maybe not as easily as he did. Saying that it wasn't the greatest handicap with plenty of badly handicapped and disappointing sorts. Runner up Will The Wise was better back in trip but nothing else showed much for the future.

#### National Hunt Chase

Four of the five horses at 10/1 or less barely jumped a fence in the race so it probably took little winning. Hollywood Queen went up ten for the win at Newbury and the same again after this to 144. I imagine the Welsh National would be a good target next season as the ground may be too fast for a tilt at the Scottish National or Bet 365 Gold Cup.

### **WEDNESDAY**

#### Turners

This looked a really deep race. King Rasko Grey and Act of Innocence ran fourth and third respectively in the same bumper on their racecourse debuts at Punchestown 2024. It looked like being close at the last but King Rasko Grey pulled away near the line. Willie Mullins mentioned the Champion Hurdle for him next season, but he looks a chaser. Act of Innocence has done little wrong this season, and he is another for fences. He might be

more suited to two miles. Zeus Power and Soldier Reeves ran on for third and fourth and both could go three miles as could I'll Sort That. The next pair Bossman Jack and Shuttle Diplomacy might be better back down at two miles especially the latter. The Elliot pair Ballyfad and Skylight Hustle both ran poorly the latter pulling too hard. The stable finds it hard to target its novices at the meeting. That leaves favourite No Drama This End who never got competitive after a poor start. I thought he had chances to make some ground at various times and maybe the ground was just too fast for him.

#### Brown Advisory

So much better than last year's poor race. Two very decent animals returning from poor efforts in Kitzbuhel and Final Demand. I imagine one might go to Aintree and the other to Punchestown, but we will see. Next season the King George looks obvious for Kitzbuhel, and we will see how they go in open company. Salver was well off the pace three out but stayed on well for third. Gary Moore said earlier in the season he didn't think he was a stayer but he certainly is. Next came Two Grand National entries. Oscars Brother was bounced out to be handy but slow jumps at the first two fences lost his position. He and Now is the Hour both stayed on and certainly the latter has the experience for the National.

Koktail Divin as suspected failed to get home. Romeo Coolio was never really going and then his jumping which had looked his strength went to pieces. His stable mate Western Fold fell away tamely as well. He holds the National entry as well but must be doubtful after this.

#### MGM Cup

Jingko Blue's jumping went to pieces when he was sent chasing last season and he brought that back to his early hurdle runs this season. Here he jumped really well and had this handicap won some way out. He will be well in the 150's now and the Aintree Hurdle might be next. The only one who could have challenged was Storm Heart who lost lengths with a bad jump two out but ran on when back on an even keel for third. Old Ballyadam ran his usual super festival race in fourth.

#### Cross Country

The two winners from earlier in the season had this between them with the better ground favouring Final Orders over Favori de Champdou. This was the winners seventieth run under rules having started with Simon Crisford on the flat owned by Michael Tabor. Both are in the National. The English handicapper doesn't seem to be able to deal with freak winning margins or special races. He has evidently put Final Orders up to 157 (he is 138 in Ireland). He is no more a 157 horse than the horses in the field down from where I live. The cross-country races are different which is why horses rated in the 90's regularly win the La Touche at Punchestown. It was the same when Nassalam won the Welsh National on near unraceable ground by thirty lengths. He went up sixteen pounds and has pulled up in five of his six runs since.

#### Champion Chase

Oh dear. The best two miler gets at Timeform X and another horror show of jumping for Majborough. Paul Townend on Il Etait Temps just let everyone get on with it and stroll through for an easy win. He will have the choice of Sandown or Punchestown next. Liberty Hunter was another to come from off the pace for second. L'Eau Du Sud was probably too close to the pace and had nothing left from two out. Captain Guinness again ran a super race here in fourth. I imagine they will try again with Majborough at Punchestown.

#### Grand Annual

The first of two races that would have turned a decent week into a good one. Jazzy Matty was always perfectly positioned and when he went for home there appeared no danger. Then Martator appeared and even when he went past Jazzy fought back.

Third home Break My Soul still a novice ran a stormer and can surely win a handicap this spring. Release the Beast keeps going up for getting beaten and a try at two and a half might be worth a go.

#### Bumper

The Mourne Rambler won on the day I wasn't at Leopardstown at Christmas. The fifth that day had won since but none of the first four had run. It looked a bumper where the graded form was moderate and one of the maiden winners would take it and he proved the one. Second was the record breaking four-year-old ex French Mets Ta Cienteure (all €710K of her). Bass Hunter having been clear at halfway kept on well for third and then a whole host covered by just over a length. No doubt as every year there will be plenty of novice hurdle winners here. Some of those beaten will be much happier with plenty of give in the ground.

## THURSDAY

### Mares Novice

Having seen White Noise win at Warwick she looked a future chaser not the sort to come back to two miles for this. That race was two miles three and she won this by staying as she was roused along before the straight. Oldschool Outlaw in second was below the form she had shown but that was all on heavy. She had beaten third here Place De La Nation easily last time, but that horse ran her best race since the Triumph Hurdle. Four-year-olds have a poor record in the race so Charme de Faust ran a fair race in fourth. Bambino Fever never travelled and was well beaten. Third favourite Carrigmoonaspruce got no sort of ride.

### Jack Richards

Another race where nothing came from off the pace. Mettmebythesea and Gold Dancer were always forcing it with the former just too strong from the last. The obvious race for the winner is the Paddy Power back here in November. Gold Dancer who had top weight here might be forced back into graded company. Regent's Stroll seems to be settling down and the Mildmay is said to be his target. Fourth King Alexander is a consistent sort and the equivalent race to this at Punchestown would seem to be a good next target. Fifth Kiss Will needs three miles. Mares Hurdle

Of the short-priced ones this week Wodhooh was probably the most solid. She just goes out, runs her race and invariably wins. She is getting idle in her races but when she is woken up she responds. A return to the Aintree Hurdle would seem the way to go but with the trainer's championship on the line in Ireland the Mare's Hurdle there might be too tempting.

Jade De Grugy ran her race as did Feet of a Dancer.

### Stayers Hurdle

One thing about Irish summer jumping is that it is possible to see a future star starting out. Home By The Lee won his bumpers at Killarney in May and Roscommon in June. His chase career wasn't a total washout but after poor efforts in an Irish National, Galway Plate, and Kerry National it was abandoned. An amazing performance in the 2022 Lismullen Hurdle (where he traded at 1000/1 in running) beating one past and two future Stayers Hurdle winners announced he was back in the game. It has been up and down since then but fifth time lucky here and he was best on the day. Another character in Ballyburn finally showed up and if anything was unlucky it was him, having not much room at the last. Kabral Du Mathan had looked speed over stamina in the Relkeel and he didn't get home. Teahupoo was beaten a mile out and the ground was against him. There seemed no excuse for Homest Policy and Ma Shantou.

### Ryanair

No Fact to File although the Irish handicapper put him up a pound on collateral form. Heart Wood second last year bossed this from some way out after following the pace making and non-staying J P R One. Aintree is probably next. After his two hard races at Ascot Jonbon didn't travel or jump but managed to maintain his record of never being out of the first two. He has a month to Aintree but got another hard race here. Banbridge doesn't seem to like the festival.

### Pertemps

There is laying one out but some of the runs since Supremely West qualified didn't look good. Ladiva Adiva ran a stormer in second place for Ruth Jefferson. My each way Dukes Silver at 50/1 was never a factor but sneaked into sixth right on the line. Overall, this was not a good renewal.

### Kim Muir

The second tight finish that didn't go my way as Ask Brewster fought back to beat Road to Home. Just a second rules win for Shane Cotter (the same was the case of last year's winner Barry Stone). Ask Brewster is only seven and apart from a blip on his last run has improved with every run in the last twelve months. Road to Home up in trip got it well but Willie Mullins wins in handicap chases remains at zero. Kim Roque appeared to get the trip in fourth but never really got involved. Favourite Jeriko De Reponet just hates chasing and was beaten before halfway. Second favourite and owner mate Waterford Whispers has been well backed on a few occasions but has not delivered.

## FRIDAY

### Triumph

I thought the Brits had a good chance here and the two main contenders ran excellent races as Maestro Conti and Minella Study finished second and third. However, even with Willie Mullins probably having no idea which was his

best chance one emerged in the shape of Apolon De Charnie to take the race. I imagine we will see him again at Punchestown. Maestro Conti and Minella Study will likely head to Aintree.

Selma De Vary in fourth was baulked at the last while another of the Mullins runners Forty Fifty (who like the winner had had only one run in France) ran a fine race in sixth.

#### County

A steadily run affair and the held-up horses never got to challenge. The O'Neill yard is in good form and Jonjo Jr. gave Wilful a good ride here. Hopefully he has now learnt to go and win his races without trying to look clever. Runner up Sticktotheplan returned to his best in second. Sinnatra and Karbau both came from the back and I am sure Paul Townend on the latter would like another try at this one.

#### Mares Chase

The mistakes Dinoblue had made earlier in the season were absent and she was too good for her rivals. Only By Night appeared to get the trip in second but was never able to challenge.

Panic Attack's rapid improvement reached its ceiling in third. She goes to the National and we will see how she goes there. She won't be on my short list. Spindleberry probably needs it softer.

#### Albert Bartlett

This has a reputation of going to a big priced winner and another 20/1 shot came home in Johnny's Jury. Stepping up from two miles and after an awful start he stayed it well. The second and third Fruit Der Mer and The Passing Wife were also stepping up in trip and improved for it. I imagine all three will be chasing next season. The fourth Moudoui'boy is one of the ex-David Maxwell horses to do well after the sale. The fifth and sixth Spinningayarn and Kripticjim might not have got home. DRF winner Doctor Steinberg pulled too hard in front ending up pulled up along with the runner up that day Kazansky.

#### Gold Cup

It looked fairly wide open beforehand but not afterwards as Gaelic Warrior cruised away from his rivals. The ease of his win suggests it wasn't the greatest renewal. Jango Baie simply couldn't go with him from three out but was never really in danger of not finishing second.

Last year's winner Inothewayurthinkin never travelled, and his jumping was moderate, but it was a huge improvement on his other starts this season, The fact that he could finish in third after the way he travelled holds the race down. Grey Dawning as suspected failed to get home. He holds a National entry but the Bowl would seem more likely at Aintree. L'Homme Presse was never in it but ran past beaten horses. He is a likely runner in the National but he is not travelling in his races. Firefox is another that didn't stay and his National entry looks optimistic. The Jukebox Man just fell in a hole turning in and it was before his stamina was tested. Haiti Couleurs took them along but was soon beaten at the business end. I can't believe he will take up his National entry. The sad death of Envoy Allen cast a shadow over the race. Seventeen wins including ten Grade 1's he was a star of the sport.

#### Hunters

An amazing performance by Barton Snow arriving at the last still pulling double against the perennial bridesmaid Its On The Line. Even after walking through it his jockey still kept tight hold of his head to make it five from five under rules. He showed little ability in seven Irish points, twelve bumpers, and a couple of hurdles winning just one point beating a horse who is 0 from 31 under rules. The way he was ridden he isn't straightforward. Aintree looks next. Its On The Line is another who has never been straightforward. We will see if he goes to Aintree, but he will be at Punchestown where he has won in the last three seasons.

Third home was Music Drive who I saw win a decent bumper at Naas. He never really progressed for Gordon Elliot before missing over two years and has proved a bargain at £4,000 for current connections. Golden Sun didn't get home and will be better suited to the trip at Aintree.

#### Martin Pipe

Last year's mare's novice hurdle winner Air of Entitlement sprang back to life to take this after a poor effort at Leopardstown at Christmas. Hot Fuss in second also ran poorly last time out but had some good form earlier. Jump Allen in third should probably have won but was badly hampered when starting his run. That horse's stable mate Kel Histoire on his first handicap start ran well and can find a race soon. Another Mullins runner Roc Dino patently failed to stay.

Editor's Note: Since this article was produced we have now learnt that the track has closed early for the season to allow for the much-needed drainage work to take place at the track. A few of the April races will be moved to other tracks and the May (Hunter Chase) card will be moved to Warwick.

# ALEX BIRD COMPETITION 2026

As alluded to on page one we had a record entry this year! This has allowed Mark Banks to award prizes to the first four-point scorers in each round this year – in the Cheltenham round the prize winners were:

(1) John Boswell (2) Jack Gibson (3) Alan Hill (4) Alan Wellsted. Well done to all concerned!

Next up is the Aintree Round followed by Chester (May) and Ascot (June).

Thanks again to our sponsors in 2026 – The Racing Post.



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## WALTER KIRKHAM – TRIBUTE BY PHIL EVANS

The club was saddened to learn that lifelong member of NMRC Walter Kirkham had passed away in late January 2026 at the age of 92. Walter was a stalwart supporter of the club over the years and, living in Barrow, was a regular at Cartmel where I often used to chat with him at the 'Tote Credit' van where we would often both be sheltering from the rain!

In his working life Walter was a policeman and always came across as a firm but fair type in the mould of Dixon of Dock Green! He had a never-ending library of interesting racing stories that he would share with you on race days and about 5 years ago I finally got him to send in something to the club for publication in the magazine. At that time he told me he also had a really interesting story to share about one of the late Queen Elizabeth's horses (not the one mentioned below) but would not do so whilst she was still alive.

Last Christmas I sent Walter a festive card and added a note asking if it was now the right time to tell the story about the Queen's horse. Sadly, I never got an answer, as Walter was by then living in a care home and in his final days.

As an homage to Walter I would like to re-print the 'story' he sent in around 5 years ago – a lovely chap and raconteur that will be missed by the racing fraternity:

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

*Later that year, in June 1956, it was the 300<sup>th</sup> Centenary of the Grenadier Guards. I had just been demobbed from the Grenadier Guards. I was asked to 'sign on' but refused over an incident at Buckingham Palace. Later I was invited to Royal Ascot and a garden party at Windsor Castle. With the invitation was a letter from Simon Loder (father of David Loder – former trainer). He asked me to attend and said that the Queen's horse ALEXANDER would be trained by Captain Cecil Boyd Rochfort for the Royal Hunt Cup at Royal Ascot.*

*The amount I won on these two winners was enough to finish my home when I got married in 1957!*

*During my 80 years of following horse racing I have made many trainer friends. My favourite would have to be Sir Henry Cecil and I visited Warren Place many times.*

*I've been a very lucky punter and thanks to MILL REEF & BRIGADIER GERRARD I was able to buy a barn for £3000 which I converted to a 4-bedroom house.*

*I don't spend too much time watching racing as I am only really interested in Group 1 winners. However, I was in the racing club syndicate that bought THE MANOR and watched it run at Carlisle. After our race I watched TELEPROMPTER run and win at 11/4. I knew it was special so I headed to Knowsley to find out what Lord Derby had in mind. He told me the horse would be aimed at 'The Million' being the 'Arlington Million' in Canada. It won for me at 14/1 !*



# IJF FUNDRAISER 2026

Thanks to all our members who donated to this years fundraiser with around £250 raised for the IJF this time!

The IJF is always very grateful for these donations and has already sent us a letter of thanks for our efforts.

Our daily tips were provided by a panel including Gordon Armistead, Martin Unsworth, Graham Rossiter and Phil Evans with tip of the week going to Phil who selected Martator (won at 66/1) as a low stakes selection! Club PTP guru Andy White also joined us for the last day for the Hunter Chase and duly found the winner Barton Snow (9/1 when published on the website).

We also asked a number of racing professionals for their naps at the meeting – most were personally addressed to the club and a few from preview events in Leeds & Hexham that the club had helped to promote. Thanks to all those named below for their support:

Susan Corbett (Trainer)  
Brian Goodwill (Judge)  
Paul Fergusson (Weatherbys Guide)  
Geraldine McKay (Cartmel)  
Malcolm Tomlinson (Commentator)  
Jonathan Garrett (Kelso)  
Matt Chapman (ITV)  
Ryan Mania (Jockey)  
Andrew Thornton (Ex-Jockey)  
Gordon Brown (Racing TV)  
Stephen Darbyshire (Hexham Preview)

David Carr (Racing Post)  
Paul Jacobs (Daily Star)  
Richard Hoiles (ITV)  
Cornelius Lysaght (Former BBC)  
Andy Gibson (Cheltenham Trail)  
Jason Heavey (Daily Star)  
Steve Lewis Hamilton (Pro Punter)  
Rebecca Menzies (Trainer)  
Richard Johnson (Ex-Jockey)  
Joel Parkinson (Trainer)  
Jonathan Doidge (Independent Newspaper)  
Michael Shiners (Skybet)

If anyone wants to see how the various tipsters fared you can now view the website (unrestricted) with all winners highlighted in red and placed selections in blue to make it easier!

The website address is <https://the-nrc.weebly.com/cheltenham-preview-tips-2026.html>

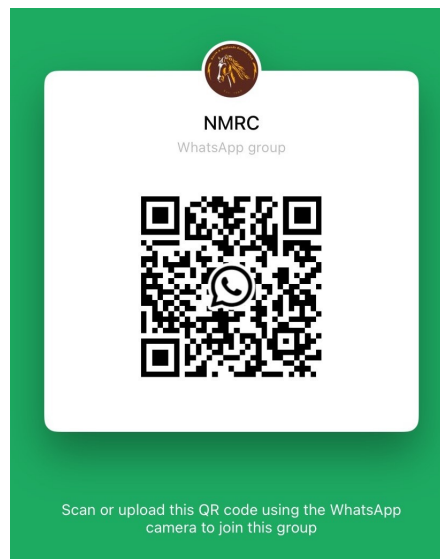


## NMRC 2026 COMMITTEE

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| Dave Bates        | Stable Visits              |
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Please direct all emails to [info@northernracingclub.com](mailto:info@northernracingclub.com) and general postal correspondence to NMRC at 53 Dalebrook Rd, Sale, Greater Manchester M33 3LB. Competition entries and membership subscriptions can still be sent directly to those names on the competition entry forms and membership renewals forms etc.

**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 18<sup>th</sup> May*