# MEMBERS' ENCLOSURE

**The Newsletter of the West Berkshire Racing Club**

**www.westberksrc.org.uk**

**Founded in 1982** **Edition No. 255**
**October 2013** **Editor: Stewart Nash**

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## WELCOME

Welcome to Paul Brindley of Wokingham who has joined the Club since the last newsletter, we hope he enjoys his membership of the club and look forward to meeting him at future events.

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Turn to page 3 for updated details of our National Hunt Season preview, a new stable visit this time to new trainer Dan Skelton and don't forget the Christmas social at Oaksey House.

## ADDRESSES TO CONTACT

**Chairman** Terry Knight - Keeper's Halt, County Lane, Warfield, Berkshire RG42 3JH (01344 426866) (email: terry.knight@btconnect.com)
**Vice-Chairman and Newsletter Editor:** Stewart Nash - 14 Elland Road, Walton on Thames, Surrey KT12 3JT (01932 880211 incl. FAX) (email: hilda.n@ntlworld.com)
**Treasurer:** David Lees - 17 Boathouse Reach, Henley on Thames, Oxfordshire RG9 1TJ (07855 275588 or 01491 571299) email: shirley@leeshenley.co.uk
**Secretary:** Bernard Mills - 39 Highfield Drive, Ewell, Epsom, Surrey KT19 0AU (020 8394 1107) (email: Bern.Mills@btinternet.com)
**Membership Secretary**: Barbara Allen, Pilgrims Lodge, Baker Street, Aston Tirrold, Oxfordshire OX11 9DD. (01235 850318) (e-mail: bravoalpha@btinternet.com)
**Stable visits and event bookings:** Robert Watson - 1 The Courtway, Bone Mill Lane, Enborne, Newbury, Berkshire RG20 0EU (01635 42948 - Mobile 07979 460555) (e-mail watsonsnewbury@btinternet.com)
**Newbury Racecourse liaison**: Joanne Dillon - 17 Sandford Close, Kingsclere, Newbury, Berkshire RG20 5LZ (01635 299059) (email - jotel@supanet.com).
**Website and social media**: Patrick Fagan – 07796263762 e-mail Fagan.patrick@yahoo.com
**Social events organisers** Caroline Springfield - 01672 520086, Maurice Stringer – 07729 600180 and Joanne Dillon.

## TEN TO FOLLOW – FLAT SEASON 2013

The 2013 season is now in its closing stages and recent events have only made small changes to the leader board which continues to be led by Madeleine Thomas – can she hold on?

The results from Champions Day at Ascot and the Arc Meeting at Longchamp will most likely decide the final destination of this year's prizes.

The leaders table is shown below and will be updated via e-mail and the website. The final table will be published and winners notified as soon as the scores can be confirmed after the end of the competition.

**SCORES AS AT 29 SEPTEMBER 2013**

| Position | Name | Points |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Madeleine Thomas | 430 |
| 2 | Mark Chapman | 415 |
| 3 | Allen Carding | 400 |
| 4= | Roger Emberley | 390 |
| 4= | Alan Richard | 390 |
| 6 | Violet Neale | 380 |
| 7= | Pat Freeman | 370 |
| 7= | Will Sayer | 370 |
| 9 | Annette Waite | 360 |
| 10= | John Chilton | 350 |
| 10= | Roger Emberley (2nd list) | 350 |
| 10= | Violet Neale (2nd list) | 350 |
| 10= | Ann Peart | 350 |
| 14= | Mark Chapman (2nd list) | 345 |
| 14= | Tina Mitchell | 345 |
| 14= | Bob Neale | 345 |
| 17= | Will Sayer (2nd list) | 340 |
| 17= | Will Sayer (3rd list) | 340 |
| 17= | Annette Waite (2nd list) | 340 |
| 20= | Bob Neale (2nd list) | 335 |

**Leading horses with points**

| Horse | Points | Horse | Points | Horse | Points |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sky Lantern | 110 | Telescope | 35 | Times Up | 25 |
| Dawn Approach | 80 | Eye Of The Storm | 30 | Camelot | 20 |
| Elusive Kate | 60 | Havana Gold | 30 | Cap O'Rushes | 20 |
| The Fugue | 60 | Just The Judge | 30 | Gale Force Ten | 20 |
| Estimate | 50 | Morpheus | 30 | Ladies Are Forever | 20 |
| Farhh | 50 | St Nicholas Abbey | 30 | Leitir Mor | 20 |
| Montiridge | 50 | The United States | 30 | Liber Nauticus | 20 |
| Toronado | 50 | Aljamaaheer | 25 | Wild Coco | 20 |
| Trading Leather | 45 | Battle of Marengo | 25 | Dundonnell | 15 |
| Winsili | 45 | Hillstar | 25 | Secret Gesture | 15 |
| Brown Panther | 40 | Society Rock | 25 | Tawhid | 15 |

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# FORTHCOMING EVENTS

## NATIONAL HUNT SEASON PREVIEW, – TUESDAY, 29 OCTOBER AT 8.00 PM IN THE COPPER KING BAR AT NEWBURY RACECOURSE

**NO ADVANCE BOOKING - MEMBERS GUESTS WELCOME**

The National Hunt season preview is a firm favourite in the Club's annual calendar and we can now confirm that Nicky Henderson, Gemma Gracey-Davison and David Williams from Ladbrokes will be part of the line-up. We also hope to add a locally based jockey to the above line-up. I am sure you will feel that this meeting will provide a mouth-watering curtain raiser to the main part of the jumps season and should not be missed.

Admission to the event is £2 for Members and £5 for non-members. Raffle in support of the injured jockeys fund. Pay bar available.

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## VISIT TO DAN SKELTON'S LODGE HILL STABLES at SHELFIELD GREEN, ALCESTER THURSDAY, 31 OCTOBER AT 10.30am

Dan Skelton needs no introduction as he has been the high profile assistant to Paul Nicholls for nine years. Now training on his own account at Lodge Farm, Alcester Dan has invited the Club to visit and see third lot work on the gallops together with a tour of the yard and facilities.

There is racing at Stratford on Avon in the afternoon which is a reciprocal meeting for Newbury members. The course being only 15 minutes from the stables.

**The cost of the visit is £5 and bookings should be sent to Robert Watson using the form on page 15 of this newsletter.**

***HOW TO GET THERE*** From Newbury take the A339 towards Oxford and then signed M40/Bicester. Join the M40 towards Birmingham. Leave the M40 at Junction 15 and at the roundabout follow the A46 signed Stratford. After one mile take the A46 signed Snitterfield. After four miles at the roundabout take the 4th exit signed A46 Evesham/Worcester/Redditch. After one mile turn left into Salter's Lane, continue along White Horse Hill and after two miles turn left into Burford Lane to reach Lodge Hill Stables (B49 6UR).

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## CHRISTMAS SOCIAL EVENING AND DINNER – SATURDAY, 23 NOVEMBER AT OAKSEY HOUSE, LAMBOURN. ADVANCE BOOKING ESSENTIAL

Last year's social evening proved popular and we are repeating the event at Oaksey House, Lambourn. The format will be similar to before with a mixture of racing related games and quizzes, racing personalities and a buffet dinner and the opportunity to meet other members of the Club in the informal but charming setting of Oaksey House.

**Tickets for this event are £20 per head which includes a drink on arrival and bookings should be sent to Caroline Springfield using the form on page 14 of this newsletter**

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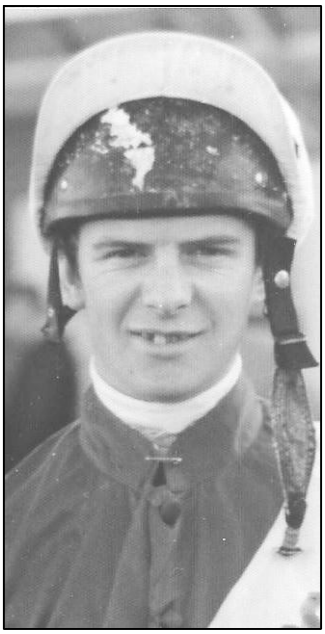
## CHELTENHAM FESTIVAL PREVIEW, WEDENSDAY 5 MARCH 2014 8pm

Please make a note of the date now – details to follow.

**DIRECTIONS** Please note that directions for stable visits and other events are provided based on the information available to us but cannot be guaranteed to be correct. Similarly post codes provided for navigation purposes cannot be certain to pin point the precise location of the stables. Members are advised to leave ample time for their journey and be prepared to ask locally for directions

## JOHN SUTHERN: A LIFE IN RACING — An interview with Ian Kimberley

*This article originally appeared in the September 2013 edition of the Midlands Racing Club newsletter and is reproduced here by kind permission of the author Ian Kimberley.*



Original members of the Midlands Racing Club may well remember that former jockey John Suthern *(pictured right)* was a guest at the very first meeting. John is the only English jockey to win the Belgian Grand National, not once, but twice. I've grown to know John over the last few years, and this interview tells us something of his life and times in racing.

"My first knowledge of racing was when I was about 12 years old. My dad used to have a bet, and this was in the days when betting was illegal, so I would take his bets to a bookie's runner. The runner then passed them on to the bookie who usually kept clear of the law in a garage or shed. That was my first experience of the world of racing, and people used to tell me to become a jockey, as I was so small. This really appealed to me, but I was brought up on a Cheltenham council estate. There were no ponies or horses around. I hadn't even sat on a horse.

"Then I got to hear about a pony in a field about three miles away in the direction of Cleeve Hill. There was me and a mate, and we made our way there. When we got there I jumped on the back of the pony and it bolted away. There was no saddle or reins, just me holding on to the horse's mane for dear life. But I managed to stay on, and that was the moment I knew I wanted to be a jockey. The speed and buzz was great. We went back up the hill again and the pony did the same again, and I still managed to stay on him. It wasn't until later I found out the pony had never been sat on or broken in, so I'd managed to stay on a wild pony not once, but twice.

"Not long after I was introduced to a man who had a couple of racehorses at Southam. I went up there at weekends to muck out, and received ten bob a weekend for my troubles. After a while, he asked me if I wanted to ride out with him. He taught me the basics of riding: walking, trot, rising trot and the rest. After about four weeks I started to canter. Thinking it would be easy, we went to the top of Cleeve Hill and I started cantering. We went faster and faster, and I think I must have galloped five or six miles across Cleeve Hill without stopping. I couldn't hold him, but I loved it. I carried on doing that until I left school at 14."

After John left school, still having the desire to be involved in horse racing, he made his way towards the Mecca for so many youngsters, Newmarket.

"My first job at Newmarket was with Jimmy Thompson. He was a private trainer for David Robinson, the man who owned the Robinson rentals chain. He had something like 100 horses in training, and may have been the biggest owner in racing at the time. Jimmy Thompson was a bit of a character. He only had one eye, and if you were on his blind side he would shout: 'Get over the other side where I can see you!'

"Another couple of trainers were Paul Davey and Michael Jarvis. Along with Jimmy Thompson, all three were private trainers to David Robinson.

"This was to be my apprenticeship. I was on £1.50 a week plus digs, but also did overtime. I would work until 1 o'clock and then have a break until 3pm. If I worked through I would get an extra two shillings, which of course is only 10p today. We would do things like paint the yard and stables. Back then I could get drunk every Friday but, still have enough money to do other things like have a bet.

"This was 1968 and Newmarket was a lot quieter than it is now. Even so, there were great names there like Noel Murless, who had Derby winner Royal Palace. So Blessed was there too, the champion sprinter that year. The Australian jockey George Moore was around at the time, and he usually rode Noel's top horses like Royal Palace."

By this time John had gained a little bit of weight, and his attention turned to jumping and working for David (the Duke) Nicholson.

“Still in 1968, my dad saw an advert in the Cheltenham Echo announcing that David Nicholson was setting up as a trainer. Although still a jockey, David wanted to combine the two jobs. I was given a trial and ended up staying with him for 17 years. In those days the conditional jockeys were called Opportunity riders, so there were Opportunity (boys’) races at the time.

“My first ride was at Chepstow in February 1970 on the Duke’s horse, Royal Nutmeg. I remember walking around at the start and meeting jockeys like Bob Davies, Andy Turnell and Ken White. I’ll never forget we went to the first without me even moving, but she pinged it, and after that I thoroughly enjoyed the race. We finished fifth, and I thought ‘this is easy’. About three weeks later I rode her again, but fell off. I was kicked from pillar to post but amazingly there wasn’t a mark on me. That incident gave me a lot of confidence, as it proved I could physically make it as a jockey.”

John had to wait until December 1971 for his first winner. That came at Worcester on Eloped.

“Eloped was trained by the Duke’s dad, ‘Frenchie’ Nicholson. It was a boys’ race at Worcester, and the going was very heavy. I’d never finished in the first four before, and my instruction was to creep into the race. As we got closer and closer I remember thinking ‘I’m going to be third ....I’m going to be second....Oh bloody hell, I’m going to win!’ And that’s how it was.

“Life at the Duke’s was great. It was a work hard, play hard atmosphere, and we had some great times. There were names like Roy Mangan, Robin Dickin, Allen Webb, and Paul Carvill, and we were like a big family.

“When I was racing I used to look up to jockeys like Johnny Haine and David Mould. They were my role models. Very stylish jockeys. I used to watch how they rode. I beat Johnny Haine by a short head on a horse called Snoopy at Stratford, and beating my hero gave me a lot of satisfaction.

“I remember my first ride at Cheltenham. I was sat on the bench in the weighing room with the Duke. He used to look after me when I first started as he was still a jockey then. On the bench with us were Terry Biddlecombe, Bill Rees, David Mould and Graham Thorner. Under the bench was a bottle of whisky and bottles of Guinness; in between races they kept topping up with more drink. They were the cavalier jockeys back then, and their final years overlapped with my early years as a jockey.

“I never really struggled with my weight. In fact, one year I spent riding on the Flat. The Duke thought it might do me good. I rode a lunatic at Ripon once, and that fell at the bend, so I seemed destined to be a jump jockey.”

When it came to Aintree and the Grand National, John was not so lucky.

“I had seven rides around the National course, four in the National and the other three in the Topham, but I never got round. My first ride was in the 1974 National on Go Pontinental, but he went at the third fence. When I rode Burrator, he got stuck on top of a fence and I had to jump off. Then I rode No Gipsy twice and ended up on the floor. One year on No Gipsy I was one of nine horses to be taken out of the race at the Chair.”

While John might not have had the success he would have liked in the National, when he crossed the Channel it was a different story.

“I won the Belgian National twice on Kildagin, first in 1974 and then again in 1975. The race was run at Waregem, and it’s a cross-country race over about 2m7f. The fences included hedges, bullfinch and a massive water jump.

“A tradition the Belgians have is for the winning jockey to be thrown in the water jump. Kildagin was the horse that made me as a jockey, as I won on him about 11 or 12 times. I came fourth on him in the Whitbread when it was run at Newcastle; sadly that was the race in which Doug Barrett was killed. He also came third in the Scottish National twice, and second in the Norwegian National. Jeff King beat me on Josh Gifford’s Avon Dua. I even finished second on him on the flat at Chester, so Kildagin is the horse I am most closely associated with.”

Whilst Kildagin was a favourite of John’s, and one of the best horses he sat on, some good mounts came as spare rides.

“I was at Nottingham and Mrs Monica Dickinson had a horse called Righthand Man. He was due to carry 10st 4lbs, and there was no one else available so I got the call. He romped home by 20 lengths. It was just a steering job.

“There were other quality horses I rode as well. I won the Game Sprint at Newbury on Gambling Prince. Gembridge Jupiter was very good horse, and I won on him six times. My best win on him came towards the end of my career at Aintree in 1985. I’d already ridden him at Cheltenham, where he looked like he was going to win coming down the hill but didn’t quite make the three mile trip and when we hit the rising ground he faded to finish fifth to Von Trappe. I told the guv’nor to run him at Aintree as I thought he should stand a good chance. It was a 2m 6f trip, and I travelled to Aintree with a good mate, Louis Carenza. Louis liked a bet and fancied I had a good chance. I won the race and going home found out Louis had backed his hunch, showing me about £3,000 in cash!

“Other landmarks were my 100th winner on Eastern Citizen at Southwell, my 150th on Willy Wombat at Nottingham and my 200th winner on Baltic at Bangor. My final winner was Annis at Stratford.”

John’s career finally came to end in 1986 when he broke his leg at Chepstow.

“I was forced to retire. I had fallen and was about to get up when one of the fence attendants shouted ‘there’s another one coming’, so I stayed down. It was Rod Millman, now a trainer, who had been about 200 yards behind. Of all the places he had to land, it was on top of me! He clipped my leg and I’ve still got a lump today. I was off for 12 months, and that finally stopped me.”

After life as a jockey, John tried his hand at a number of things in the world of racing.

“During my last years as a jockey, I kept a few horses in livery as something to fall back on. I received £5,000 in compensation for breaking my leg, and that enabled me to increase the number of boxes I had. For a number of years we were really busy as we had up to 25 horses for breaking, pre-training and rest. Over the years I had Barnbrook Again and Relkeel.

“To be frank, I didn’t really want to be a trainer. I don’t think it would have suited me. I preferred the pre-training side of things. Even so, I’ve had runners with some success in point to points over the years.”

John is also a flagman, and gets plenty of work in that capacity.

“I would have liked to have been a starter. I also applied to be a vet’s technician, taking pee samples from horses. Neither job happened, so I remained a flagman. I enjoy the work though. I also help out with pony racing too, both as a flagman as well as helping a few kids with their riding.

“My son Lee was a jockey. He went to Epsom and rode for Gary Moore before going to Nigel Twiston-Davies. He also had a spell with Karl Burke. He rode 20 winners altogether, 12 over jumps and eight on the flat. He had to stop because he had a car accident as well as a knee injury. He’s a jockey’s valet now and looks after people like Frankie Dettori on the Flat, and AP over the jumps. He loves it.”

John is currently based in the lovely picturesque village of Broadway. He still has five boxes so there are always a few horses around, and this is coupled with working over 100 days a year as a flagman. How does John reflect on his career today?

“It was a great life as a jockey. I finished with 213 winners altogether, so there are lots of nice things to remember. The only thing I would change would be to have ridden fewer bad jumpers. They shortened my career. Other than that, I would do it all again. It really was a great life.” ν

## WBRC Tote Ten To Follow 2013/14 Syndicate– Any interest?

A year ago I asked if anyone was interested in forming a syndicate to enter the NH Tote Ten to Follow competition, which starts at the Open meeting in November.

As a result we were able to put together a syndicate of five, of whom four were active and one was passive – by that I mean that the active members picked the horses and the passive one didn’t.

It would be good to do this again for the 2013/14 season and given that we managed to stay in contention until pretty much the end of the competition, I would be hopeful that most of the original five will return for more.

If anybody else is interested in forming a syndicate then please let me know and we can try to sort something out. It’s helpful if you have internet access, as putting together entries can involve quite a lot of passing around of information and selections. **Continued on page 7**

At this point in time I have very little recollection of the last jumps season so it is time to pick up the form book and start refreshing the memory.

The Ten To Follow is a fun way of enjoying the build-up to the season as well as the racing itself. 'Who will be running where' is a big part of compiling the entries and at this time of year there is plenty of news on running plans.

After such a glorious summer it seems a shame to be looking forward to cold, wet afternoons and dark evenings, but I guess that all good things have to come to an end, and a cracking looking jumping season will provide some quality compensation.

Please do get in touch with me if you are interested. **Terry Knight**

## REPORTS OF PAST EVENTS

***Flat Season Review and Preview*** ***by Stewart Nash***

Based on my sole flat racing experiences of 2013 of two days at Brighton plus one at Sandown I approached chairing this evening with some trepidation. Mind you the Solario Stakes at Sandown did at least let me see Kingman endorse his credentials for next year's 2000 Guineas for which he is now installed as favourite. But this evening wasn't about me it was about the views of our guests and in the recently retired commentator 'Aussie' Jim McGrath and multi-talented journalist, tipster Neil Morrice we had the ideal pair to give us their views on what we had seen on the flat so far and what might happen in the concluding weeks of the season.

**Pictured above** – Neil Morrice (left) and Jim McGrath (*photo Harley Quilliam*) and (below) The audience listen attentively (*photo Patrick Fagan*).

Jim and Neil go back a long way having been press room colleagues ever since Jim made his way to the UK having spent a period in Hong Kong on his way from native Australia. Neil had a slightly less glamorous start to his career being sports correspondent for the Harrogate Advertiser one of a group of regional papers published in Yorkshire. This Neil admitted gave him a good knowledge of racing at Catterick, Ripon, Thirsk, Pontefract etc. before moving to the press association and the Racing Post.

Both Neil and Jim had attended the Arc trials day at Longchamp a couple of weeks previously and were particularly impressed by Treve winner of the Prix Vermeille and trained by Criquette Head-Maarek. Derby winner Ruler Of The World who was beaten by Kizuna in the Prix Neil was thought capable of reversing those placings whilst, Kizuna's Japanese Orfevre compatriot had been installed as Arc favourite following his win in the Prix Foy. Novellist trained in Germany but a winner in Italy, France and the UK as well as Germany was thought an uncertain prospect despite winning the King George VI and Queen Elizabeth at Ascot. I personally thought he had plenty in hand in his follow up race at Baden Baden and could go well – but what do I know!. Of this years crop of two year olds Toormore from Richard Hannon's was considered a decent prospect.

Questions from the audience on a range of topics and a few horses to follow completed a lively evening.

## WBRC TEN TO FOLOW – NATIONAL HUNT SEASON 2013/14

Select your 10 horses from the list below and enter them on the entry form provided. Each member can enter a maximum of three lists. Each list costs £2 or £5 for the three.

Rules

The competition will begin on Saturday November 16th and will end on Grand National Day 2014.

Entries should be received by noon on Saturday November 16th and should be sent to Phil Brown. 12 Cygnet Court, Fareham, Hants. PO16 8AU.

Scoring will be as follows Win only.

50 Points for the Paddy Power Gold Cup, Betfair Chase, Hennessy Gold Cup, Tingle Creek Chase, Long Walk Hurdle, Christmas Hurdle, King George VI Chase, Victor Chandler Chase, Betfair Hurdle, Champion Hurdle, Queen Mother Champion Chase, World Hurdle, Ryanair Chase, Cheltenham Gold Cup, Melling Chase, Aintree Hurdle and the Grand National .

30 Points Grade 1.
25 Points Grade 2.
20 Points Grade 3.
15 Points Listed Race.
10 Points winner of any race.

All races in GB and Ireland qualify.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1/. African Gold | 26/. Counsel | 51/. L'Unique | 76/. Rolling Star |
| 2/. Al Ferof | 27/. Countrywide Flame | 52/. Medermit | 77/. Ruacana |
| 3/. Arvika Ligeonniere | 28/. Court Minstrel | 53/. Melodic Rendezvous | 78/. Runswick Royal |
| 4/. At Fishers Cross | 29/. Cue Card | 54/. Menorah | 79/. Sametegal |
| 5/. Back In Focus | 30/. Diakali | 55/. Monksland | 80/. Sanctuaire |
| 6/. Balthazar King | 31/. Diamond King | 56/. My Tent Or Yours | 81/. Shutthefrontdoor |
| 7/. Big Bucks | 32/. Dynaste | 57/. Oscara Dara | 82/. Silviniaco Conti |
| 8/. Binocular | 33/. Easter Day | 58/. Oscar Rock | 83/. Simonsig |
| 9/. Blood Cotil | 34/. Far West | 59/. Oscars Well | 84/. Sir Des Champs |
| 10/. Bobs Worth | 35/. Finian's Rainbow | 60/. Oscar Whisky | 85/. Sire De Grugy |
| 11/. Bog Warrior | 36/. First Lieutenant | 61/. Our Conor | 86/. Sizing Europe |
| 12/. Boston Bob | 37/. Flaxen Flare | 62/. Overturn | 87/. Sizing Gold |
| 13/. Briar Hill | 38/. Flemenstar | 63/. Pont Alexandre | 88/. Solwhit |
| 14/. Caid Du Berlais | 39/. For Non Stop | 64/. Ptit Zig | 89/. Sprinter Sacre |
| 15/. Caledonia | 40/. Gone Too Far | 65/. Puffin Billy | 90/. Taquin Du Seuil |
| 16/. Cape Tribulation | 41/. Grandouet | 66/. Pure Science | 91/. The Giant Bolster |
| 17/. Captain Chris | 42/. Hadrian's Approach | 67/. Quevega | 92/. The Liquidator |
| 18/. Captain Conan | 43/. Hurricane Fly | 68/. Realt Mor | 93/. The New One |
| 19/. Champagne Fever | 44/. Irish Saint | 69/. Red Sherlock | 94/. Thousand Stars |
| 20/. Champion Court | 45/. Jezki | 70/. Regal Encore | 95/. Turnandgo |
| 21/. Chatterbox | 46/. Kashmir Peak | 71/. Reve De Sivola | 96/. Vago Collonges |
| 22/. China Rock | 47/. Kauto Stone | 72/. Riverside Theatre | 97/. West Wizard |
| 23/. Cinders And Ashes | 48/. Killyglass | 73/. Rock On Ruby | 98/. Wishful Thinking |
| 24/. Clondaw Court | 49/. Long Run | 74/. Rocky Creek | 99/. Zaidpour |
| 25/. Cockney Sparrow | 50/. Lord Windermere | 75/. Rolling Aces | 100/. Zarkandar |

PRIZES

1ST 65% of stake money
2ND 20% " " "
3RD 15% " " "

## NOVEMBER 2013 NEWSLETTER

The November Newsletter will be published in early November As always the Editor welcomes contributions from members and these should be sent to him by no later than 31 October.

## THE REIN IN SPAIN by Gordon Armistead

*This article is reproduced by kind permission of Gordon Armistead of the Northern Racing Club who tells of his recent visit to Madrid for the Spanish Derby.*

**Sunday, 9 June : La Zarzuela**

It was a toss-up between whether to go to Prague for the Czech Derby or Madrid for the Spanish version, and the right choice was made as flooding in Central Europe meant that Prague racecourse disappeared under the River Vltava and the Derby was transferred to the racecourse at Most in the north-west of the country.

Over the years Spanish racing has had more problems than the weather with plenty of ups and downs and some of the few racecourses that there are missing whole seasons or indeed several seasons due to money problems. The Hipodromo Costa del Sol at Mijas appears to be closed at the moment but La Zarzuela seems to be on the up after being closed between 1996 and 2005 after going bankrupt. The other two main racecourses operating at the moment are in Seville and San Sebastian, but races are held on the beach at Sanlucar de Barrameda and there was also a meeting in Laredo in May.

La Zarzuela is situated on the north-west outskirts of Madrid and building work started in 1935 to replace La Castellana racecourse, which was nearer the city centre and about to be built on. Work soon ground to a halt however, as the civil war raged from July 1936 until April 1939 and it was not until May 1941 that the course was ready for competition.

As the country recovered from the war it took quite a few years for the racing to build up, with a Derby and Oaks added to the programme in 1952 and a gradual increase in prize money, number of horses and the standard of racing until the 1970's. One of the first Spanish horses to graduate from La Zarzuela to race in Britain was Rheffissimo, who ran third in a Jockey Club Stakes and also ran in the King George at Ascot in the mid-1970s. He was followed in the next decade by Royal Gait who 'won' an Ascot Gold Cup and won, and kept, a Champion Hurdle.

But it was all downhill for La Zarzuela in the late 80's and early 90's with prize money dropping by 90% before the eventual closure in 1996.

Nowadays the course holds about 40 meetings a year from February to December, mainly on Sundays but also on holidays and several night meetings on Thursdays in the summer. Not evening meetings, you may note, as the first race is held at 10.15pm with the final event held at 1.00am. A different concept of a two-day meeting.

Most of the meetings have either five- or six-race cards and the course has both a grass track and an all-weather surface, these being left-handed. The grass track is about 1,700 metres around with a straight course of about 1,000 metres and a chute off the back straight for the start of 1,600 and 1,800 metre races. The all-weather is inside the grass track and looks very tight.

The stands are superb with excellent views and have been declared a monument of cultural interest, but looking at them you would think they had been constructed very recently. There are two main general stands either side of a club/VIP stand which overlooks the winner's enclosure. Behind the stands are two large grassed areas where food and drinks are available either side of the parade ring. All in all, a simple but excellent layout with plenty of space.

***Left: The South Stand***

Getting to the track could not be easier as the course runs a free courtesy coach service from the Paseo Moret, right outside Moncloa metro station (on lines 3 and 6), with the journey only taking about ten minutes. Entry was nine Euros with a free race card which just gave the very basic information. I bought a copy of A Galopar magazine for three Euros 60 cents which gave much more information. This printed the full result for every race the day's runners had run in but was in date order with no index and you would have needed plenty of time to find the form for all the runners in a particular race

***Above : The view from the South Stand***

It might be Derby Espanol day, or Gran Premio Villapadierna day, to give it its official name, but it is not, however, the biggest meeting of the year. That honour goes to the day of the Gran Premio de Madrid, which, under various conditions and at various courses (including San Sebastian when this track was closed), has been run since 1881 and takes place on the last Sunday of June.

There was a really decent crowd and, despite there being a big screen, it was surprising to see a lot of people watching the races properly with binoculars.

Racing kicked off at 5.30 pm with a two-year-old maiden over 1,100 metres. Only two had run before and they had not been placed and they looked a fairly ordinary bunch. Most seemed to run like they needed the experience and the jockeyship did not look the best but, in the end, there was an easy winner in Al Gallop, a son of 2007 Spanish Derby winner Premier Galop, whose other minor claim to fame is beating top hurdler Thousand Stars in a claimer at Saint Cloud two months before his Derby win.

The second race was a 2,400 metre conditions race for four-year-olds and upwards. It looked like a race I could find the winner of. Short priced seven-year-old Karluv Most looked the obvious one but I thought two four-year-olds, Avante and Biladi, didn't need much improvement to win the race. Avante, by Shamardal, had only won at up to 2,200 metres and was the better horse, but Biladi, by Authorized, had won at this trip and slightly further. I plumped for Avante and, after sitting in second, he was sent to win the race on the home turn before not getting home as Biladi got up by three-parts of a length.

The next two races were divisions of a mile handicap. For some reason, part two was run first with 19 runners while part one had only 12 runners but was worth an extra thousand Euros to the winner. It was impossible to go through the form in the 19 runner race but Alabama stood out in the parade ring and jockey Vaclav Janacek was top of the jockey standings. He came from a long way back off a fast pace and won nicely. Janacek, twice a Derby winner in his native Czech Republic, looks far better than the local jocks.

The Derby was the fifth race on the card and the local jockeys were joined by Frankie Dettori, Colm O'Donoghue and three French jockeys, including Pierre-Charles Boudot who I had backed in Epsom's Derby on Ocovango.

There was a familiar name among the owners as well in the Duke of Alburquerque. This was not, however, the 18th Duke Beltran Alfonso of Grand National fame, who died in 1994, but the 20th Duke Juan Miguel who also trained his runner, Acamante, under the family name of Osorio.

Fourteen runners and the race looked wide open with the tote screens showing six horses between 4/1 and 7/1. To give a guide to the standard of the race, favourite Son Bou had been placed fifth in a listed 1,600 metre race at Saint Cloud in May behind a horse rated 106, but had finished only fourth of five in a minor race there in May.

Apart from three or four looking fairly moderate, there was not much between them in the paddock but I thought Spagnolo, a son of Singspiel, just about looked best.

The race itself was a mess, with a fast pace early stringing the field out before everything closed up on the home bend. Three then went clear and at one stage it looked like Frankie might win but his horse was outstayed by Rilke, under Jorge Horcajada, who was winning his first Derby. Trainer Guillermo Arizcoretta was winning his third Derby in four years with the son of Dyhim Diamond, who looks a real stayer, which is surprising as his sire was a sprinter whose best win came in a Group 3 in Germany, while he also ran second to Tomba in the Cork and Orrery at Royal Ascot.

When I'd first looked at the make-up of the card earlier in the year there was a jump race scheduled but when I looked again a fortnight before the trip it had disappeared and been replaced by a 1,800 metre handicap. Checking up I found that hurdle races (of which only nine races were scheduled for the entire year) had been suspended for the remainder of the year in April following a spate of injuries.

So what of Madrid as a city apart from being the home of a couple of football teams? It has no equivalent of the Eiffel Tower or Coliseum, no great river flowing through it and lacks any real centre.

What all the guides agree on is that the Prado is one of the world's great art galleries and not to be missed. The problem I have with these places is the subject matter of the paintings, no matter what the quality or skill of the painter. There were far too many portraits of various Spanish royals or simply unknown people and far too many religious paintings. For what it's worth, my two not to miss are Hieronymus Bosch's 'The Garden of Earthly Delights' and Peter Brueghel's 'The Triumph of Death', which both are well out of the ordinary.

It was absolutely bucketing down when I left but close by were two other galleries. The first of these, the Thyssen Bornemisza, surprisingly holds the famous portrait of Henry VIII, which should surely be repatriated, but the other, the Reina Sofia, was much more interesting with a special summer exhibition of Dali's works. It also holds the famous Picasso civil war painting 'Guernica', which I must admit was a disappointment, and there were far better anti-war paintings in this collection. There was also some total rubbish. Trying to find my way out I went into a large room where the walls and ceiling were totally painted yellow. A small sign on the wall said 'Citrus' and the artist's name.

The Royal Palace, which is a huge, impressive building with over three thousand rooms, is open most days as the Spanish Royal Family lives elsewhere. Reinstated in 1975, they have plenty of critics with an anti-royal demonstration taking place earlier in the year and the King's daughter being investigated for embezzling public funds.

I gave it a miss to go to where the other local royals play at the Bernabeu, and it was well worth the visit. It's a well-organised self-guided tour and, apart from the impressive trophy room, there is an excellent area dedicated to Alberto Di Stefano. It also looks a better stadium for watching football than Wembley.

## POINT TO POINT SEASON 2013/14

Yes, point to point is back, well in just two months time! Weather permitting the starters flag will get them underway on 1 December at Cottenham (Cambridgeshire) and Black Forest Lodge (Devon). More locally Barbury Castle hosts a meeting on 8 December. Although the total number of meetings planned for 2013/14 is slightly down on last season racing still runs through to its usual conclusion at Umberleigh (Devon) on 14 June. Other early season meetings to put in your diary are the Larkhill Racing Club on 5 January, the Heythrop on their new course at Cocklebarrow, just off the A40 beyond Burford on 12 January, the Royal Artillery at Larkhill on 25 January and the South Midlands Area Club at Whitfield (off the A43 just beyond Brackley) on 26 January.

A more detailed preview of the season plus details of how to get up to date information on prospects, travel and weather/going will be in the next newsletter.

## Les Sables d'Olonne

**By Hilda and Stewart Nash**

Following on from our report in the September Newsletter on our visit to Pompadour we now travel on to the seaside course of Les Sables d'Olonne on the Atlantic Coast in the Vendee. The town of Les Sables d'Olonne has grown up from an 11th century harbor and by the 17th century played a major role in the cod fishing industry. South of the old town and the port is an extensive sandy beach and the opening of the first bathing station in 1825 initiated tourism which really took off when the railway from Paris reached the town in 1866. Today the town, which is twinned with Worthing in West Sussex, boasts a smart promenade along the entire length with an mixture of 19th century buildings and modern apartments. The resident population of around 16,000 is only slightly more than it was in the hey-day of the fishing industry but swells to ten times that number when the tourists arrive for their summer holidays.

This influx of visitors is one of the reasons why most of the meetings held at the town's racecourse take place during July and August. The Hippodrome de Malbrande lies just off the sea front at the southern end of the promenade. Although 2013 was officially the centenary of racing at Les Sables d'Olonne *(see poster right)* the current venue only dates back to 1970 and in the early days the meeting took place on the beach much closer to the town centre as shown in the picture below. It would appear at that time they even held hurdle races on the sands.

The first course not on the beach was known as the Hippodrome de la Lande. This course lasted until just before the Second World War but as it increasingly had to share the site with a growing Aero Club (does the rise of Gatwick airport ring any bells?) a move was made in 1947 to a new course the Hippodrome de Saint Jean d'Orbestier.

The move to Malbrande in 1970 was not only a new venue but an opportunity to increase the number of meetings from just three per year to 16 by 1971 and this has now risen to just over twenty. The course underwent a major refurbishment in 1996/97 and is now a modern and practical affair considered of sufficient class to stage category one meetings which gain exposure by being part of the PMU's principal national meeting programme.

Unfortunately for the British racing enthusiast the majority of the meetings are 100% trotting races held under floodlights (when needed) on the synthetic inner track. Fortunately the day we visited there were no trots but an eight race programme featuring six on the flat and two over hurdles. As it was a PMU meeting the first race was due off at 1 pm thus satisfying the lunchtime gamblers watching the Equidia simulcast all over France.

As in Britain the early start did not seem to please the locals and the attendance can be described by no other word than sparse. The writing was the wall as we drove into the public car park half an hour before the first race and found no more than 30 cars parked in an area that at a quick guess could accommodate 2,000. It was therefore somewhat amusing that the car park attendant was extremely precise about keeping his rows of cars neat and tidy as he asked us to move 30cm forward to close up the gap. Surely this was to relieve the boredom as he could hardly have been expecting a late influx!

Having paid our 5 Euros admission the stand itself (below left) was well appointed with a vast hall underneath which accommodated the PMU (tote), catering facilities and seating. There was also a smaller open stand but given that temperatures were in the low 30s the majority watched from the shade covered stand.

The flat and jumps races take place on a grass course that is a neat oval, dead flat, left handed and 1,500 metres round. As justifies its PMU status the flat races were started from stall.

The card itself was fairly typical mid-week programme that can be described as 'betting shop fodder' not dissimilar to Britain except for the prize money!. The first race over 2,700 metres (approx. 1mile 5furlongs) for maiden French Bred three year olds carried a total prize fund of 15,000€ of which 7,500€ went to the winner. The second race over the same distance as the first was a handicap for three year olds carried 16,000€ (Winner 8,000€).

The third again over the 2,700 meters trip was for want of a better word a 'national hunt flat race' for four and five year old French Bred AQPS horses (not 100% thoroughbred) with the magnificent prize of 24,000€ (winner 12,000€). They moved the stalls for the fourth run over 1,950 metres (1mile 1 furlong). This was a claimer with a prize fund of 11,000€!

This brought us to the fifth race a three years old conditions race back over 2,700 metres. There were 16 runners and included horses owned by the Niarchos Family, Wildenstein stables and Sheikh Mohammed. The last named owner was the winner with Forty Winks *(pictured right*) ridden by Fabrice Verson and trained by Alex Pantall. The winner being bred by the Sheikh under his Darley Stud Management banner.

The sixth was the second division of the handicap which finished with an exciting dead heat.

This brought us to the two concluding hurdle races which are run on the outside of the flat course with the hurdles being swung out from underneath the rails when the flat racing is finished. The view down the straight with the hurdles in position can be seen in the picture below.

The first hurdle race for novice three year olds over 3,450 metres (2miles 1 furlong) (22,000€ prize fund) had 11 runners including King Dancer from Guillaume Macaire's stable. King Dancer was only having his second outing having fallen in a hurdle race at Sennones-Pouance but skillfully ridden by James Reveley, who is really making a name for himself in France, King Dancer jump to the front between the last two to win comfortably.

The card ended with five year olds hurdle with 14 runners of whom only eight got round.

To conclude the Hippodrome de Malbrande is nowhere so picturesque as Pompadour but it is tidy and functional reminding us a little of Great Yarmouth and providing a good afternoon's racing away from the crowds.

As always with this type of course the 'health warning' if you are planning a visit is to check it's not a trot meeting first – unless of course you like that sort of thing!.

# WBRC TEN TO FOLLOW NATIONAL HUNT SEASON 2013/14
# ENTRY FORM

| LIST 1 | LIST 2 | LIST3 |
|---|---|---|
| 1/. | 1/. | 1/. |
| 2/. | 2/. | 2/. |
| 3/. | 3/. | 3/. |
| 4/. | 4/. | 4/. |
| 5/. | 5/. | 5/. |
| 6/. | 6/. | 6/. |
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| 9/. | 9/. | 9/. |
| 10/. | 10/. | 10/. |
| Reserve No 1 | Reserve No 1 | Reserve No 1 |
| Reserve No 2 | Reserve No 2 | Reserve No 2 |

It would be most helpful if you could please enter your selections in alphabetical order. It would also be helpful if you could choice two reserve horses for each of your lists which can be used should one of your main selections be declared unfit to race for the entire season proir to the starting date of the competition.

* When you have completed your list/lists could you please nominate one horse in each list as a Nap Horse for which you will receive Double Points.

I enclose a cheque (MADE PAYABLE TO W.B.R.C.) to the value of £ _____
( ONE LIST £2 - TWO LISTS £4 -THREE LISTS £5 ).

MR/MRS/MS _____
ADDRESS _____
_____
_____
_____
TEL NO _____

WHEN COMPLETED PLEASE SEND YOUR ENTRIES TO--
PHIL BROWN.
12 CYGNET COURT,
FAREHAM,
HANTS,
PO16 8AU.

## PLEASE REMEMBER TO MARK YOUR NAP HORSES IN EACH OF YOUR LISTS

**BOOKING FORM**

**VISIT TO DAN SKELTON'S STABLES – 31 OCTOBER 2013**

I wish to reserve ____ places for the visit to Dan Skelton's This application is in respect of the following members:

1_____ 2 _____

3 _____ 4 _____

I enclose a cheque for £ ____ (£5 per person) made payable to West Berkshire Racing Club.

Please send this application to **Robert Watson at 1 The Courtway, Bone Mill Lane, Enborne, Newbury, Berkshire RG20 0EU**
Contact details in case we need to contact you to advise of a change to the visit arrangements:

Telephone (home)_____ and Mobile _____

E-mail _____ (please write clearly)

**CHRISTMAS SOCIAL AND DINNER – 23 NOVEMBER 2013**

I wish to reserve ____ places for the Christmas Social and Dinner, This application is in respect of the following members/guests:

1_____ 2 _____

3 _____ 4 _____

I enclose a cheque for £ ____ (£20 per person) made payable to West Berkshire Racing Club.

Please sate any dietary requirements i.e. vegetarian/vegan etc._____

Please send this application to **Caroline Springfield at Catharine House, Whittonditch Road, Ramsbury, Marlborough, Wiltshire SN8 2PX**

Contact details in case we need to contact you regarding a query or change to arrangements:

Telephone (home)_____ and Mobile _____

E-mail _____ (please write clearly)