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Celebrating 150 years of Racing  
at Newton Abbot Racecourse



## THE HISTORY OF NEWTON ABBOT RACECOURSE

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We couldn't let 2016 pass without acknowledging and celebrating 150 years of racing at our famous racecourse in the heart of Devon. This limited edition book charts some of the highlights and memorabilia associated with our history ... from that first race in 1866 to the current day. We hope you enjoy it !

**Patrick Masterson**  
Managing Director



# 1866 - 2016

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## NEWTON ABBOT RACECOURSE CHAIRMEN

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**Mr C L Vicary**  
1920 – 1953

**Mr H G Michelmore**  
1953 – 1957

**Commander R J B Mildmay-White**  
1957 – 1970

**Mr A C Bulpin**  
1970 – 1983

**Mr C C Whitley**  
1983 – 1988

**Mr C R Willcocks**  
1988 – 1996

**Mrs M A A Ridgway**  
1997 – 2000

**Mr A J B Mildmay-White**  
2000 – 2002

**Mr A Loze**  
2002 – 2013

**Mr R H G Michelmore**  
2013 - PRESENT



1866.



SOUTH-DEVON AND NEWTON RACES

WILL TAKE PLACE ON THE TEIGNBRIDGE RACE COURSE,  
On THURSDAY and FRIDAY, the 9th. & 10th. of AUGUST, 1866.

STEWARDS:

Lord COURTENAY, M.P.  
Capt. CAREW,  
HENRY CAREW HUNT, Esq.,

W. J. WATTS, Esq.,  
Capt. FERREIRA,  
Capt. TOLCHER.

FIRST DAY.—THE  
NEWTON PLATE OF 25 SOVS.

Added to a STAKE OF TWO SOVEREIGNS EACH. Free for all Horses carrying the following weights, viz:—Three years old, 7st. 4lbs.—Four years 8st. 7lbs.—Five years, 9st.—Six years and aged, 9st. 4lbs.—Mares and Geldings allowed 3lbs. Thorough-bred horses to carry 7lbs. extra. Winners of £50 or above, once 5lbs. extra, twice 9lbs. extra. The Winner to pay £4 towards expenses. About 2 miles.

THE TEIGNMOUTH STAKES,  
A HANDICAP HURDLE RACE FOR A PLATE OF FIFTEEN SOVEREIGNS,

Added to a STAKE OF ONE SOVEREIGN EACH. To close and name to the Clerk of the Course at, or before, half-past Eight o'Clock on the Evening of the day preceding the Races, at Mr. SHERWIN's Union Inn, Newton. Weights to be fixed as soon after as possible, and, Acceptances signified to the Stewards or to the Clerk of the Course, by 10 o'Clock the same evening. Hents about a mile-and-a-half.

THE SOUTH DEVON HUNT STAKES

OF ONE SOVEREIGN EACH, WITH  
ADDED FROM THE RACE FUND.

Free for all Horses that have never won any Steeple Chase of the value of £20. To carry 11st. each.—Gentlemen Riders—11st. 7lbs. Over about Three miles of fair hunting country. The second horse to save his stake.

THE LADIES' PLATE,

A SELLING RACE FOR TWENTY SOVEREIGNS,

Free for all horses carrying the following weights, viz:—Two years old, 7st. 10lbs.—Three years old, 9st. 10lbs.—Four years old, 10st. 8lbs.—Five and Six years old and aged, 11st.—Mares and Geldings allowed 3lbs. If entered to be sold for £80, allowed 7lbs.—if for £100, 12lbs.—if for £200, 16lbs.—if for £300, 21lbs. The Winner to pay £2 towards expenses, and to be sold by Auction immediately after the race, and the surplus, if any, to be divided between the second horse and the race fund. Hents about one mile.

A vintage poster for Newton Abbot Races. The text reads "NEWTON ABBOT RACES" in large, bold letters, followed by "TUESDAY AUGUST 8th 1866". Below this, it says "GRAND STAND" and "HATCHER'S DAULISH". There are decorative elements including a laurel wreath and the text "3d. 6d.". At the bottom, it says "No.....".

## A DAY AT THE RACES

A selection of our original  
advertising publicity including the  
poster promoting the first meeting  
at Newton Abbot Racecourse.

A vintage poster for Newton Abbot Races, titled "SECOND DAY OFFICIAL CARD". It lists the "Price Sixpence" and "No Reduction in the price of Race Cards at this meeting". The races are scheduled for "Monday (Bank-Holiday), & Tuesday, AUGUST 2nd & 3rd." The poster lists the "Stewards" and "Officials" for the event. The text is arranged in a grid-like format with decorative borders.





## DRAWING IN THE CROWDS

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During the 1914-1918 war, the site was occupied by troops and became a prisoner of war camp. Racing resumed in 1919. February 1921 saw the incorporation of the present company with 10,000 £1 shares issued to 50 shareholders.

From 1919-1945, the racecourse was hugely popular and crowds of 15-17,000 commonplace. We possess pictures with crowds lining the rails way down the track. After World War II crowds on foot were 6-8 deep on both sides of the road leading from the town and the railway station. There was no television and few cars to draw people away. Newton Abbot Races was the big attraction.

# 17,000

The racecourse was hugely popular,  
with crowds of 17,000.





Lord Anthony Mildmay

## THE MILD MAY YEARS

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After the war in 1945 came the Mildmay years. Mr Anthony Mildmay later to become Lord Mildmay very nearly won the '1936 Grand National on Davy Jones but a buckle broke near the last fence and he was denied a famous victory. His blue/white striped colours became a legend in racing. This was his home course living as he did at Flete in the South Hams. It was reported that railway workers on the embankment could hear jockeys shouting 'come through milord'.

However, tragedy struck and he drowned during an early morning swim. His sister Helen had married a Commander White and to keep this famous name alive they became the Mildmay-White's and their son

Anthony has devoted much of his life to racing as an amateur jockey, steward, Disciplinary Chairman of the Jockey Club and Chairman at Newton Abbot. The Mildmay era was followed by Tim Molony, Fred Winter, Terry Biddlecombe, John Francome and Josh Gifford. Champions all and regulars at Newton Abbot at a time when meetings tended to be two days and races could be won and lost in the Globe or Commercial hotels. Perhaps sadly nearly all today's meetings are single days and the circus rolls in during the morning and is gone again by evening.





# 1969

## A ROYAL CELEBRATION

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In 1964, the course was extended to 1.1 miles by the purchase of land at the Kingsteignton end. The work was not without problems. The ground initially being totally different and much criticism ensued, it took years to get it right. The old wooden grandstand was demolished and a new state of the art complex built. To open it in 1969, the Queen Mother brought Woodman to run in a steeplechase. It fell at the water jump and had to be put down, a bitter sweet day. Some years later in 1981, the Queen Mother sent us another runner, Upton Grey. This race would be the last ride for HRH Prince Charles under National Hunt rules.







**Martin Pipe**  
CBE



**Carl Nekola**  
Over 50 years service

# A CHANGE IN DIRECTION

The late 70's and early 80's became the Martin Pipe CBE and Peter Scudamore years. Martin Pipe stole a march on other trainers by using high tech advanced training methods. Two or three winning favourites each meeting – often by 30 lengths – was commonplace and did not provide exciting racing. Our crowds fell away alarmingly to 900-1200 and add to this a dearth of chasers, and the game was for a while in trouble.

To get to this point in history, a lot of excellent work had been done by three generations of Mildmays, Michelmores and Bulpins. Claude Whitley, Colin Willcocks and Ivor Lang had also devoted themselves

to the cause. Charles Lane Vicary employed an office boy Carl Nekola who helped with the administration during the 30s, he went on to be the course manager – running the job on the back of the proverbial fag packet and in his head for over 50 years. They must have been happy days, no VAT, no health and safety regulations, no security guards and constant inspections as happens today.

In 1990 the Company decided that it needed a new direction and a young Patrick Masterson fresh out of the armed forces, was employed as a General Manager, promoted to Managing Director in 2000.



**Patrick Masterson**  
Today's Managing Director



# CONTINUED DEVELOPMENT

In 1990 the Company invested large sums of money in the Teign Suite a visionary corporate hospitality complex to increase raceday income. The racing landscape was changing with Northern Racing and Arena Leisure following the long established Jockey Club as groups within the industry. The Company continued to invest in the infrastructure during the 1990's and into 2000 with a new weighing room and hospital together with a brand new stable complex.



For many years Newton Abbot had raced from August through to May, but due to changing weather patterns it was decided to move to Summer Racing between April and October and at the same time abandon the lucrative Boxing Day fixture after 6 years of successive cancellations. This was a big, but inevitable step for the Company to take but it has proved hugely successful.



## EXPANDING FACILITIES

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Another milestone was the creation of our own catering business the first at any racecourse, this continues to grow from strength to strength and is a vital part of the company today in terms of both raceday and non raceday business.







## THE COURSE TODAY

Small Independent Racecourses remain vulnerable within the Industry and to help matters we created a group of likeminded courses which include Fakenham, Hexham, Leicester, Newton Abbot, Plumpton, Ripon, Stratford, Taunton and Towcester. The group is called Independent Racecourses Ltd (IRL).

So you will see that Newton Abbot Racecourse is no sleeping giant, the Board and staff are proud of all that takes place here. An article in the Racing Post recently nominated

Newton Abbot as “best of the independents”. It has recently been voted the best small racecourse in the west, nominated for an award by South Devon & Torbay Leisure & Tourism, received the Racehorse Owners Association Gold Award for 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015 for its efforts in looking after every aspect of the owners experience when having a runner here, and perhaps best, the course was shortlisted with Doncaster and Musselburgh for Best Racecourse in the UK in 2013.





# CELEBRATING 150 YEARS

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