

**'THE RAILWAY MYTH':  
FLAT RACING IN MAINLAND BRITAIN  
1830 - 1914**

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**ABSTRACT**  
**'THE RAILWAY MYTH': FLAT RACING IN MAINLAND BRITAIN**  
**1830 - 1914**

This thesis examines the development of flat racing in mainland Britain during the period bounded by the opening of the Liverpool & Manchester Railway in 1830 and the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. Its principal aim is to analyse this development against the influence of railways in nineteenth century Britain, and present a structured assessment of the real changes occasioned in the sport by the railways. It is not intended to provide a history of flat racing, but rather to concentrate on the key elements of continuity and change within the sport. The developments in associated leisure activities and social life are also briefly examined to provide a broader perspective and context.

Almost without exception, sports historians have seen the railways as driving the major changes in flat racing during the nineteenth century, and have overestimated both the real effect of the railways' ability to transport large numbers of people relatively quickly and cheaply, and their financial contribution to the sport. The present study seeks to present a more balanced picture by quantitative and qualitative analysis of major activities within flat racing, and place these in the correct chronological context against the growth of the railway system and the industrialisation of Victorian Britain.

It is contended that the key changes in racing came from within the sport itself. There were really two defining moments, the first in the last quarter of the eighteenth century -and therefore underway before the period covered by this thesis - when the establishment of the first three 'Classics' gave impetus to the gradual but inexorable move to the racing of younger horses and betting as a major activity for the general public. The second came almost a century later, when the Jockey Club, driven partly by the commercial imperatives of the day, finally took real control of flat racing, and within twenty years had changed it quite radically.

The thesis is divided into three main sections. The first defines the racing and transport background against which the main themes will be examined. The second reviews the services and support provided for the sport and its spectators, and examines the effects of the railways on the major participants - the jockeys and their mounts. The third part is an in-depth study of almost 200 established racecourses, and examines the underlying reasons for their closure or survival.

Within this framework, Chapter 1 provides an overview of the development of flat racing during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It also briefly surveys the social and cultural activities both complementary and hostile to racing. As such, it serves to establish both the environment and the major trends and events which shaped the racing industry during the review period. Chapter 2 focuses on travel before the railway age and identifies the rapid improvements in speed and frequency achieved during the last sixty years of the coaching era - for those who could afford it. In Chapter 3 the growth of the main railway system is covered in some detail, particularly the establishment of trunk routes between major population centres in 1837 to 1850, with many later developments shown to be infill and duplication.

Chapter 4 reviews the development of rail services and excursions both for major events and the minor annual meetings held around the country, often in quite remote areas. The generally later provision of special racecourse stations for both spectators and horses is covered in Chapter 5. Chapter 6 presents a detailed analysis of all individual races sponsored by railway companies during the review period, and compares this both with the pattern of sponsorship by individuals and institutions, and with the situation in Ireland. It proves conclusively that, contrary to conventional wisdom, the value of railway sponsorship and its effect on total prize money were negligible.

Chapter 7 reviews the work activities and associated travel of leading jockeys, demonstrating how their working week was lengthened by the establishment of the London suburban courses and their more upmarket successors, and assesses the other factors influencing their need to travel. Chapter 8 looks specifically at horses,

reviewing first the provision of horseboxes by the railway companies - the provision of special station facilities having been covered in Chapter 5. The analysis also assesses the effect of rail travel on the activities of a broad spectrum of racehorse owners during the first half of the nineteenth century. It then shows how the change in the type and conduct of race meetings drove the increase in the total number of horses racing against the humanitarian concern for their welfare, which was a factor in reducing their individual travel frequency close to that of the pre-railway age.

Chapters 9 to 12 contain the detailed review of individual racecourses and the factors which determined their closure or survival. Closures are reviewed in three main periods: Up to 1869 (Chapter 9), 1870 to 1879 (Chapter 10) and 1880 to 1909 (Chapter 11), there being no further closures until those caused by the outbreak of World War One. These chapters, together with Chapter 12, which analyses the problems encountered by the survivors and the actions taken to overcome them, highlight both the effects of the tightening of Jockey Club controls and the lack of direct influence exercised by the railways on the fortunes of racecourses. The conclusion briefly reviews and draws together the main themes and arguments of the thesis. These are that the railways, while providing both service and support to flat racing during the nineteenth century, merely facilitated, and perhaps accelerated, the trends and changes which were initiated and driven from within the sport itself.

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**GENERAL NOTE ON RACE MEETING DATES AND PARTICIPANTS, THE  
OPENING AND CLOSURE DATES OF RAILWAY LINES AND  
STATIONS, AND THEIR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OR ATTRIBUTION  
IN FOOTNOTES.**

**1. FLAT RACING**

The key source for the details of all flat race meetings and the horses, jockeys, owners and trainers participating in them, has been the *Racing Calendar*, published by Weatherby since 1773. Opening and closing meetings at any location are taken from the appropriate entry in the *Racing Calendar* covering races under Jockey Club Rules, although it is recognised, and discussed in the thesis, that unauthorised or minor meetings and steeplechase or National Hunt meetings may have taken place outside these dates.

All data of this nature obtained from the *Racing Calendar* will be quoted without any footnote reference, although other significant and specific information from this publication will be footnoted normally. Any information obtained from earlier, but similar publications, by Cheney, Pond and Heber, or from the contemporary publication, *Ruff's Guide to the Turf*, are given a footnote reference.

Two other sources which are quoted frequently in the body of the thesis require a brief comment here:

Whyte J.C. *History of the British Turf* (2 Vols.) (Henry Colburn, London, 1840) gives, as well as a history of flat racing, a 'snapshot' of the sport, the amenities which supported individual race meetings, and their relative importance in 1839 – 1840, when the trunk railway system was in its infancy.

Richardson, C. *The English Turf* (Methuen, London, 1901) provides a similar insight at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Although not always accurate, they are useful calibration points at critical times in the review period.

## 2. RAILWAYS

Opening dates quoted are those when the station or line was first used by the paying public. Closing dates (where appropriate) are those on and from which the public passenger services or facilities were withdrawn.

### (a) OPENING DATES

The main source for these has been :-

Quick, M.E. *Opening Dates of Public Passenger Railway Stations in England, Wales and Scotland* (Author, Taunton 1997) and supplements.

Additional information has been obtained from Carter, E., *An Historical Geography of the Railways of the British Isles* (Cassell & Co. Ltd., London, 1959)

Clark, R.H. *A Southern Region Record* (Oakwood Press, Lingfield, 1964) and supplements

Cook, R.A. & Hoole, K. *North Eastern Railway Historical Maps* (2nd ed.) (Railway & Canal Historical Society, Mold, 1991)

Gough, J.V. *The Midland Railway - A Chronology* (Railway & Canal Historical Society, Mold, 1989)

### (b) RENAMING AND CLOSURE DATES

The main source for these has been:

Clinker, C.R. *Clinker's Register of Closed Passenger Stations and Goods Depots in England, Scotland and Wales 1830 - 1977* (Avon - Anglia Publications & Services, Bristol, 1978)

Additional information has been obtained from Clark and Gough, as listed above.

Opening, renaming and closure dates obtained from the above sources are quoted without any footnote reference. Any minor discrepancy between the sources, which has no bearing on horseracing, has been ignored. Other information from the above sources, and all information from other sources, even if appertaining to opening, renaming or closure of lines and stations, is fully referenced in footnotes.

## **ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE TEXT, FOOTNOTES AND APPENDICES**

B & E.R.	Bristol & Exeter Railway
B. & T.R.	Blyth & Tyne Railway
B.L.C.J.R.	Birkenhead, Lancashire & Cheshire Junction Railway
C. & H.R.	Chester & Holyhead Railway
C.H.C.	Caledonian Hunt Club
C.L.C.	Cheshire Lines Committee
C.R.	Caledonian Railway
D.N.S.R.	Didcot, Newbury & Southampton Railway
E.C.R.	Eastern Counties Railway
E.G.S.A.	Epsom Grand Stand Association
E.U.R.	Eastern Union Railway
F.R.	Furness Railway
G. & A.R.	Glasgow & Ayr Railway
G. & R.R.	Gravesend & Rochester Railway
G.C.R.	Great Central Railway
G.E.R.	Great Eastern Railway
G.J.R.	Grand Junction Railway
G.N.R.	Great Northern Railway
G.S.W.R.	Glasgow & South Western Railway
G.W.R.	Great Western Railway
H. & B.R.	Hull & Barnsley Railway
L. & B.R.	London & Birmingham Railway
L. & G.R.	London & Greenwich Railway
L. & M.R.	Liverpool & Manchester Railway
L. & N.R.	Llanidloes & Newtown Railway
L. & S.R.	London & Southampton Railway
L. & T.R.	Leeds & Thirsk Railway
L.B.S.C.R.	London, Brighton & South Coast Railway
L.C.D.R.	London, Chatham & Dover Railway
L.D.W.J.R.	Luton, Dunstable & Welwyn Junction Railway
L.M.S.R.	London, Midland & Scottish Railway

L.N.E.R.	London & North Eastern Railway
L.N.W.R.	London & North Western Railway
L.O.R.	Liverpool Overhead Railway
L.S.W.R.	London & South Western Railway
L.Y.R.	Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway
M.R.	Midland Railway
M.S.C.	Manchester Ship Canal
N. & C.R.	Newcastle & Carlisle Railway
N.B.R.	North British Railway
N.E.R.	North Eastern Railway
N.M.R.	North Midland Railway
N.S.R.	North Staffordshire Railway
O.W.W.R.	Oxford, Worcester & Wolverhampton Railway
P.R.O.	Public Record Office, Kew
R.S.P.C.A.	Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
S. & D.R.	Stockton & Darlington Railway
S. & E.R.	Stamford & Essendine Railway
S.A.M.R.	Sheffield, Ashton-under-Lyme & Manchester Railway
S.D.R.	South Devon Railway
S.E.C.R.	South Eastern & Chatham Railways Joint Managing Committee
S.E.R.	South Eastern Railway
S.R.	Southern Railway
S.Y.R.	South Yorkshire Railway
V.C.H.	Victoria County History
W.M.C.Q.R.	Wrexham, Mold & Connah's Quay Railway
W.M.R.	West Midland Railway
Y.N.M.R.	York & North Midland Railway

## INTRODUCTION

In 1829, the year before the opening of the Liverpool & Manchester Railway, there were 123 racecourses supporting a total of 140 flat race meetings. Almost without exception the courses were unenclosed and spectators paid only if they brought carriages and horses to the meeting, or wished to make use of the grandstand, although some courses did not boast any such substantial or permanent structure. Most race meetings had a festive air - none more so than Epsom in 'Derby Week' - with sideshows where spectators could be entertained, and the unwary relieved of their money by fair means or foul. The inner man could be satisfied in refreshment tents or drinking dens, and the 'gambling hells' also did a roaring trade. Sometimes the race meetings formed part of annual fair celebrations - the only holiday for most workers and very definitely a family outing - with the racing itself often of secondary interest to many visitors.

Apart from the major racecourses such as Newmarket, where matches between two horses formed an important part of the seven or eight meetings held each year, or the annual meetings at Ascot, Epsom and Goodwood, where the programme tended to feature younger horses in races decided in a single heat, many of the races at other meetings were contested by older horses in up to four heats. This meant that a single race with little prize money could provide entertainment for a whole afternoon, while relatively few runners could fill a two or three day meeting.

Eighty years later, while there were an almost identical number of meetings, 139, these took place at only 49 courses, or just under 40 per cent of the 1829 total. (Appendix I) Although all the major racecourses - and a number of minor and quite remote ones - had survived, many others had closed for reasons which will be examined in Chapters 9 to 11. A new breed of 'gate money' courses, mainly in the London area, and staging several meetings each year, had emerged, so many, but not all, of the traditional race committees had been forced to form commercial companies, and set up enclosed courses often on a new site. They charged for entrance to the course in order to compete with the high level of prize money now expected, which traditional sources of income could not hope to sustain. Almost without exception, races were targeted at younger horses over relatively short distances, although this did not preclude older horses competing. These races attracted larger fields, giving a

greater level of uncertainty as to the outcome, and hence longer odds. This development, coupled with the widespread and speedy dissemination of racing information over the electric telegraph, had fuelled the growth of the betting industry. Gambling was now the main incentive for the general public to visit enclosed courses, as there were no longer any other diversions, so they were not the place for family outings, even if the father could afford it. There were now some three times as many horses competing as in 1830, and the top few jockeys could be expected to ride 600 to 800 races a year, as opposed to 200 to 300 in the 1830s and 1840s.

During the same period, the railway system in mainland Britain had developed from a few isolated lines, used mainly for mineral transport, into a network of some 20,000 route miles. This covered almost the whole country apart from some remote areas of Scotland and Wales although, even there, major trunk routes had greatly improved ease of access. The railway influenced all aspects of Victorian life, both facilitating the industrialisation of the country and providing a reasonably cheap, frequent and reliable means of mass transportation.

For race meetings and other leisure pursuits, the cost of travel was often substantially reduced by allowing a return journey for the normal single fare. The first race excursion had been run in June 1831, and within a very few years this facility had been made available on both a local and national basis for every meeting of any note, being advertised in newspapers and by handbills or posters. Jockeys were able to travel long distances to fulfil engagements on successive days, and, well before the end of the nineteenth century, could ride at a British course one day, at a continental meeting on the following day, and return to Britain for a further mount on the third. Moreover, as horses dominated road transport until the twentieth century and horseboxes were readily available at railway stations, racehorses were able easily to reach distant destinations, to which in pre-railway days, with rare exceptions, they would have had to walk.

So what was the effect of the railways on horseracing? Vamplew, in his seminal work, *The Turf*, was in no doubt: 'It is no exaggeration to say that the railways revolutionised horseracing.'<sup>1</sup> Similarly, the eminent railway historian, Jack Simmons, asserted that the railways 'contributed largely to the growth of spectator sports. First

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<sup>1</sup> Vamplew, W. *The Turf* (Allen Lane, London, 1976) p.33.

of all...to race meetings'.<sup>2</sup> But flat racing was already a major spectator sport before the railways arrived on the scene, with crowds of between 5,000 and 10,000 for local fixtures, and up to 100,000 for major meetings and associated events. Large crowds were also attracted to prize fighting, wrestling, footraces and rowing matches. *The Oxford Companion to Local Family History* also argues that 'with the coming of the railway, working-class enthusiasts were able to get to courses all over the country'.<sup>3</sup> But unless they were part of the racing industry or could derive a steady income from it, did they want to? And, in the increasingly constrained industrial life of Victorian England, even if they had Saturday afternoon free, did they have either the time or the money for lengthy journeys?

Moreover, until courses were enclosed, these 'working class enthusiasts' made no direct contribution to the income of the meeting, certainly between 1843 and 1874 when Vamplew infers that the railways increased prize money by almost £120,000, 'indirectly by bringing in more spectators and directly by sponsoring races'.<sup>4</sup> Railway sponsorship will be fully explored in Chapter 6, but it should be mentioned here that, although prize money continued to increase during the review period, sponsorship from all sources declined significantly in the face of the increasing commercialisation of the sport.

Railways really had a dramatic effect on travel for racehorses. They could now do in hours what had previously needed days or weeks to accomplish, but, to take issue with Brailsford, even before the coming of the railway 'a horse could in a single summer race comfortably at York and Lincoln, at Brighton or Manchester or wherever',<sup>5</sup> which he believed was the outcome of railway development. Brailsford has also claimed that: 'No longer did a long weekend have to be set aside to walk the horse from one course to another and no longer did a horse's season have to be planned with a careful eye on the map and the round of regional meetings.'<sup>6</sup> Yet this was not really necessary even before the railways, as from at least 1820 there were few meetings on

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<sup>2</sup> Simmons, J. *The Victorian Railway* (Thames & Hudson, London, 1991, rev. 1995), p.301. See also Simmons, J. *The Railway in Town and Country 1830 - 1914* (David & Charles, Newton Abbot, 1986) pp.88-90, 134-135.

<sup>3</sup> Hey, D. (ed.) *The Oxford Companion to Local and Family History* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1996) p.222.

<sup>4</sup> Vamplew, *The Turf*, p.32.

<sup>5</sup> Brailsford, D. *British Sport: A Social History* (Lutterworth Press, Cambridge, 1992) p.87.

<sup>6</sup> Brailsford, *British Sport*, p.85.



Saturdays until the arrival of the London suburban courses over forty years later, so a week was generally available to walk horses between meetings. Although by 1869 the number of horses racing fifteen or more times a year had risen to an unprecedented height, forty years later with the total number of horses racing almost doubled, the number racing so frequently had regressed almost to the pre-railway level, despite the ready availability of horse boxes and the ever-increasing network of railway lines and stations.

The top jockeys also had their work rate increased during the later nineteenth century, but their need to travel was determined by a number of factors; the total number of rides they obtained, the number of rides at any particular meeting, their success rate, and their willingness to sandwich trips to the continent in between their commitments in this country. Their involvement in Saturday meetings, which increased from about 4 to 42 between the later 1860s and the end of the nineteenth century, gave them an opportunity denied to earlier generations of jockeys. (See Appendix II)

While it may be true that the changes to flat racing during the nineteenth century were 'positive, dramatic and long lasting'<sup>7</sup> - can these really be ascribed to the railways? For forty years after the opening of the Liverpool & Manchester Railway, apart from the elimination of races in heats and the acceleration of the trend to shorter races for younger horses, it was very largely 'business as usual'. It has been widely stated that railways were responsible for the closure of many country and less important town courses<sup>8</sup>, but in fact as old racecourses closed, new ones sprang up and by 1869 a high point of 136 flat racecourses holding a total of 193 meetings was reached. In the next thirty years, however, the number of racecourses was cut by almost 65 per cent. While the railway network continued to grow, albeit more slowly, during this period, it can be argued that nothing of significance regarding railways occurred to trigger this radical change in flat racing, so its causes must be sought elsewhere.

Although the majority of contemporary and modern sports writers favour the railways as the major driving force for the changes in flat racing during the review period, Charles Richardson, writing at the turn of the century, while acknowledging the acceleration of change in racing during the previous 25 years, felt that the 'changes

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<sup>7</sup> Brailsford, *British Sport*, p.85.

have been a mere matter of natural evolution, but they have not been the less marked for that ...'<sup>9</sup> Richardson does not identify the constituents of this evolution, but fifty years later Rickman defines the agents of change as 'the rule that every race must be worth £100, and the hot competition of enclosed meetings ...'<sup>10</sup> This might more properly be considered revolutionary rather than evolutionary, but was internal to the sport itself. More recently, Huggins, Vamplew and Tolson - either separately or together - have identified other factors which have contributed to the changes in the shape of flat racing between 1830 and 1914.<sup>11</sup>

These will be discussed in the body of the thesis, which will examine both the development of flat racing within the review period and the divergent views about the major influences in this development, placing them in the correct chronological context against the growth of the railway system and the industrialisation of Victorian Britain.

It is contended that the majority of the continuities and changes in nineteenth century flat racing came from within the sport itself, but others were influenced by the railways and the general trends of life in Victorian England. There were really two defining moments within horseracing itself, the first in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, when the establishment of the first three 'Classics' gave impetus to the gradual but inexorable move to the racing of younger horses and betting as a major activity for the general public. The second came almost a century later, when the Jockey Club, driven partly by the commercial imperatives of the day, particularly the rise of the enclosed 'gate money' courses, finally took real control of flat racing, and within twenty years had changed it quite radically. The railways are seen as the facilitators rather than the drivers of change, and it is this view which is explored and quantified in the thesis.

### Methods and Sources

As the development of the thesis is concerned with an accurate comparative chronology of horseracing and railways, a full year-by-year analysis was undertaken of all flat racecourses appearing in the *Racing Calendar* between 1830 and 1914. A

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<sup>8</sup> Among others by Vamplew, *The Turf*, pp.36-37, Brailsford, *British Sport*, pp.85-87.

<sup>9</sup> Richardson, C. *The English Turf* (Methuen, London, 1901) p.VII.

<sup>10</sup> Rickman, J. *Horseracing* (Peter Garnett Ltd., London, 1952) p.201.

<sup>11</sup> Huggins, M.J. *Flat Racing and British Society 1790 - 1914* (Frank Cass, London, 2000) Huggins, M.J. and Tolson, J.M. 'The Railways and Sport in Victorian Britain', in *The Journal of Transport History* (forthcoming publication), Tolson, J.M. and Vamplew, W., 'Derailed: Railways and Horse Racing Revisited', *The Sports Historian*, XVIII (2), 1998.

similar detailed approach was used in investigating sponsorship by railways and other individuals or institutions, as well as the activities of jockeys and horses during the review period. An accurate railway chronology was established both from the sources outlined in the introductory 'General Note', and the other authorities acknowledged in footnotes throughout the thesis. These were then used as a check list to verify the facts, assumptions and assertions in both contemporary and secondary sources.

Contemporary newspaper sources are also central to the thesis, although subject to the same reservations applicable to newspaper reporting in our own day. The main emphasis has been on local and regional newspapers in order to access information as near as possible to the scene of the action in all areas of mainland Britain. Race committee minutes, race bills and other archival material have been examined to assist in an evaluation of the continuities and changes in nineteenth century flat racing.

The choice of chronological boundaries for the thesis also requires explanation. 1830, the year in which the Liverpool & Manchester Railway opened, is generally considered as marking the start of regular mass transport of passengers by rail, although it can be argued that the opening of the Grand Junction Railway in 1837 was more significant as it ushered in the era of long distance rail travel in Britain. But the choice of 1830 also facilitates the examination of nineteenth-century racing development, as it bridges the transition from the pre-railway age to the virtual completion of the trunk railway network between 1837 and 1850 - at least in the areas where major flat race meetings were held.

The end date of the study was originally set at 1900, as the reshaping of flat racing was seen to be all but complete, and any attack on the province of the railways by both the motor car and electric tramways was also negligible. But as research proceeded, it was decided to extend the timeframe until the outbreak of the First World War, when, after a short-lived attempt to continue, flat racing was almost totally suspended. The internal combustion engine, while of growing importance in the transport of participants and spectators to race meetings, had not really made any significant impact on rail traffic. Moreover, the inclusion of additional racecourses and racecourse stations in the study helps in presenting a more definitive assessment of a period with a clearly defined end date.

## Thesis Structure

The main body of the thesis consists of thematic chapters, each of which focuses on key groups or activities within flat racing. The treatment within each chapter is basically chronological, and examines both those activities and events which could be facilitated by the railways, and those which come either from within the sport itself or reflect general trends in Victorian and Edwardian Britain.

The considerable involvement of the railways in terms of train services, facilities and financial support for race meetings is examined in detail. But while due emphasis is placed on the changes in the activities of jockeys and horses, the main examination centres on the demise or survival of established racecourses and the radical changes in flat racing, which, as mentioned earlier, many authorities ascribe directly to the influence of the railways.

The thesis is divided into three main sections, the first defining the racing and transport background against which the main themes will be examined. The second reviews the services and support provided for the sport and its spectators, and examines the effects of the railways on the major participants - the jockeys and their mounts. The third part is an in-depth study of almost 200 established racecourses, and examines the underlying reasons for their closure or survival.

Within this framework, Chapter 1 provides an overview of the development of flat racing during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It also briefly surveys the social and cultural activities both complementary and hostile to racing. As such, it serves to establish both the environment and the major trends and events which shaped the racing industry during the review period. Chapter 2 focuses on travel before the railway age and identifies the rapid improvements in speed and frequency achieved during the last sixty years of the coaching era - for those who could afford it. In Chapter 3 the growth of the main railway system is covered in some detail, particularly the establishment of trunk routes between major population centres in 1837 to 1850, with many later developments shown to be infill and duplication.

Chapter 4 reviews the development of rail services and excursions both for major events and the minor annual meetings held around the country, often in quite remote areas. The generally later provision of special racecourse stations for both spectators and horses is then covered in Chapter 5. Chapter 6 presents a detailed analysis of all individual races sponsored by railway companies during the review period, and

compares this both with the pattern of sponsorship by individuals and other institutions, and with the situation in Ireland. It proves conclusively that, contrary to conventional wisdom, the value of railway sponsorship and its effect on total prize money was negligible.

Chapter 7 reviews the work activities and associated travel of leading jockeys, demonstrating how their working week was lengthened by the establishment of the London suburban courses and their more upmarket successors, and assesses the other factors influencing their need to travel. Chapter 8 looks specifically at horses, reviewing first the provision of horseboxes by the railway companies - the provision of special station facilities having been covered in Chapter 5. The analysis then assesses the effect of rail travel on the activities of a broad spectrum of racehorse owners during the first half of the nineteenth century. It also shows how the change in the type and conduct of race meetings drove the increase in the total number of horses racing against the humanitarian concern for their welfare, which was a factor in reducing their individual travel frequency close to that of the pre-railway age.

Chapters 9 to 12 contain the detailed review of individual racecourses and the factors which determined their closure or survival. Closures are reviewed in three main periods: Up to 1869 (Chapter 9), 1870 - 1879 (Chapter 10) and 1880 - 1909 (Chapter 11), there being no further closures until those caused by the outbreak of World War One. These chapters, together with Chapter 12, which analyses the problems encountered by the survivors and the actions taken to overcome them, highlight both the effects of the tightening of Jockey Club controls and the lack of direct influence on the fortunes of racecourses exercised by the railways. This treatment, however, does lead to a certain amount of repetition in the footnotes, but care has been taken to obtain the optimum balance in each chapter between repetition and cross reference. The conclusion briefly reviews and draws together the main themes and arguments of the thesis.

# **SETTING THE SCENE**

## CHAPTER ONE

### DEVELOPMENT OF FLAT RACING 1740 - 1914

#### INTRODUCTION

This chapter, together with those on travel and transport, will set the scene for a full discussion and reappraisal of the impact of railways on the evolution of flat racing during the nineteenth century. While it is not intended to present a conventional historical survey, the major events, influences and trends, many of which were evident well before the railway age, will be sketched in so that a balanced picture can be drawn. Important background influences, such as the social life surrounding race meetings and the growth of the betting industry, which cannot be addressed coherently in the body of the thesis, will also be covered here.

#### THE SEEDS ARE SOWN

By 1740, although horseracing at the highest level was suffering from lack of royal interest and patronage, lesser race meetings were proliferating to such an extent that an Act was placed on the Statute Book specifically to limit their spread. After 24 June 1740 all race prizes had 'to be of the full real intrinsic value of £50 and upwards', or a forfeit of £200 would be payable.<sup>1</sup> Newmarket and Hambleton in Yorkshire were given a dispensation from this ruling, and were the only courses allowed to stage matches, but in this case with a £50 minimum stake.<sup>2</sup> The Act was soon repealed, but it had the desired effect in the short term. Nevertheless, by 1780 there were 84 courses in England and Wales, with a further two in Scotland. Only six of these, apart from Newmarket with its seven meetings, had more than one

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<sup>1</sup> 13 Geo.II cap.19. Its purpose was to limit the spread of 'horse races for small plates, prizes or sums of money, which have contributed very much to the encouragement of idleness, to the impoverishment of many of the meaner sort of the subjects of the kingdom, and the breed of strong and useful horses have been much prejudiced thereby'.

<sup>2</sup> Fairfax Blakeborough, *J. Northern Turf History* Vol.I (J.A. Allen & Co., London, 1948) pp. 1 - 163 covers the history of Hambleton in detail. Despite its importance and the dispensation, the number of races declined from 36 to six in a single year, and the meeting went into a decline from which it never recovered, although it was in an important training area. Hambleton's fixtures were transferred to York in 1779. Tyrrel, *J. Running Racing* (Quiller Press, London, 1997) p.1.

annual fixture, although these figures fluctuated quite markedly over the years.<sup>3</sup> Financial support from local corporations and the nobility and gentry were very much in evidence, while an increasing number of Royal Plates,<sup>4</sup> and in Scotland, the establishment of the Caledonian Hunt Club, gave a boost to the fortunes of certain selected courses.<sup>5</sup> By 1869 there would be 136 courses, staging no less than 193 meetings, and the Jockey Club imposed a similar minimum prize money, which was increased seven years later. This, together with other stipulations, substantially cut the number of courses and determined the form of modern racing.

The Jockey Club had been formed by a group of sporting gentlemen about 1750, establishing its headquarters at Newmarket in 1752<sup>6</sup>, but retaining rooms at Richard Tattersall's horsemarket in London. Tattersall's connections are still maintained by its bloodstock sales, and the generic name for one of the enclosures at the more upmarket racecourses. The Jockey Club also became associated with James Weatherby, who not only provided an administrative service, but from 1773 onwards produced the *Racing Calendar*. There was no written constitution or manifesto, and in the early days the Club did not attempt to legislate or reform, but its members did want to protect the sport - solely at Newmarket at first - from any undesirable

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<sup>3</sup> Detailed and relatively consistent information on race meetings had been available since 1727 when John Cheney first published *An Historical List of All the Horse Matches and All Plates and Prizes run for in England and Wales (of a value of ten pounds and upwards)*. After Cheney's death in 1751, John Pond's *Sporting Kalendar* and Reginald Heber's *A Historical List of Horse Matches run and of Plates and Prizes run for, in Great Britain and Ireland* bridged the gap until the first issue of the *Racing Calendar* in 1773.

<sup>4</sup> Kay, J. 'Closing the Stable Door and the Public Purse: The Rise and Fall of the Royal Plates', *The Sports Historian*, XX (I), 2000. Ostensibly to promote the development of horses with stamina, the basic formula for these 100 gn. races was a weight of twelve stones with several four mile heats. But by the 1770s this had been relaxed, and in the 1830s almost all the 34 races were over a shorter distance, with each tailored to the individual location. The 1847 and 1861 rule revisions did not increase the prize money, even though both the value and the aim of these races had become increasingly irrelevant. In 1876, the number of Royal Plates was reduced and the value increased - except in Scotland and Ireland. But neither this, nor a further revision in 1885, improved their appeal, and the Royal Plates were withdrawn (except for Ireland) after the 1887 season. Specific issues arising from these prizes will be addressed in the appropriate chapter.

<sup>5</sup> Fairfax Blakeborough, J. *Northern Turf History*, Vol. IV (Author, Whitby, 1973) pp. 171 - 174. Founded in 1777, the Caledonian Hunt Club gave worthwhile but selective support to Scottish race meetings. It sponsored its first race at Kelso two years later, and in 1788 it was allocated a 100 gn. Royal Plate for donation at the various meetings in its itineraries. Although its direct sponsorship was relatively modest, the prestige it gave to a different race meeting each year both bolstered up the social events, which could last up to a fortnight, and encouraged participation and financial support from the attendees.

<sup>6</sup> The first specific mention of the Jockey Club is found in Pond's *Kalendar* concerning a race scheduled to be run on 1 April 1752, but which did not take place until over a year later.



influences.<sup>7</sup> Some basic rules were established quite quickly, including the weighing of jockeys after each race in 1758, and the mandatory use of racing colours in 1762.

In 1768 Sir Charles Bunbury became steward of the Jockey Club and, although in due course other stewards were appointed, he remained the major player into the early years of the nineteenth century, even taking on the Prince of Wales over the 'Escape Affair' in 1791<sup>8</sup>, and effectively stamped the authority of the Club on racing at Newmarket. But this did not officially extend very far until well into the nineteenth century, although its advice was sought in disputes, and its recommendations and rules were gradually accepted at all major racecourses.<sup>9</sup>

In the early days, particularly at Newmarket, matches between two horses in which the owners provided the prize money were the preferred type of race. But Charles II had laid down rules for the plates he had endowed, which were generally for horses of six years and above, all horses carrying 12 stones in four heats over four miles, the winner of two heats being the victor.<sup>10</sup> Although four year olds were being raced by 1727, the 1740 Act only stipulated weights of 10 stones for five year olds, 11 stones for six year olds and 12 stones for seven year olds. The King's Plate rules formed the basis for races run in heats, although the distance and number of heats varied, and reduced weights were stipulated for younger horses, with three year olds racing regularly from the 1750s.<sup>11</sup> Handicaps, in which different weights were carried by the horses, were introduced at first only for matches, and the 'Oatlands Stakes' at Ascot was the first public handicap race for a larger field. 'Sweepstakes', to which the prize money was contributed by a number of owners, became popular from about

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<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, a dispute over the first race at the first Coventry meeting in 1755 was referred to the Jockey Club for a ruling.

<sup>8</sup> In October 1791, Escape ridden by Sam Chifney finished last in a race at Newmarket for which he was the favourite, only to win handsomely on the following day when the odds had been driven out. As Chifney had had a £20 bet on this race and also owed £300 to the man who had laid the bet, some foul play was suspected and, after a hearing, the Prince of Wales was effectively told no longer to employ Chifney. The Prince refused and never raced at Newmarket again, despite being requested to return in 1807.

<sup>9</sup> This did not occur as early as Tyrrel, *Running Racing*, p.26, and other commentators, notably Holt, R. *Sport and the British: A Modern History* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1989) p.29, and Beckett, J.V. *The Aristocracy in England 1660 - 1914* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1986) p.359, have contended.

<sup>10</sup> Boyd, D. *The Running Horses - A Brief History of Racing in Berkshire from 1740* (Berkshire County Libraries, Reading, 1978) p. 1.

<sup>11</sup> The first public race for three year olds had been run at Bedale in North Yorkshire as early as 1731.

1750 onwards, and competitive racing with a greater element of chance was given impetus when heats for the Jockey Club Stakes were abolished in 1756.<sup>12</sup>

In 1771, the Craven Stakes became the first public race in which two year olds were allowed to compete among themselves or against older horses. It had now become necessary to check the ages of younger horses, so in 1770 the Jockey Club had issued an instruction that the ages of any two to four year olds should be checked after their first race and the findings certified.<sup>13</sup> Although there were several attempts to promote two year old racing at Newmarket, there was no lasting success until the inauguration of the July Stakes in 1786, a race which has survived until the present day.

What really gave the impetus to the racing of younger horses - and provided a 'career path' for good two year olds - was the foundation of the first three 'Classics' for three year olds - the St. Leger at Doncaster in 1776, followed by the Oaks and the Derby at Epsom in 1779 and 1780.<sup>14</sup> It was these races which brought in the big crowds well before the railway age, although, despite the vast improvements in coach travel between 1770 and 1830 due to the turnpike road system and better vehicles, only the relatively wealthy were able to travel any distance. Most people who attended race meetings walked or used their own transport, but a journey of three to four hours on foot was felt to be no more arduous than we regard a similar car or train journey today. As for the horses - they walked - and even though at the turn of the century some turfites were bewailing the adverse effect younger horses were having on the sport, by 1797 over 35 per cent of horses racing were two and three year olds. Twenty years later, well before the railway age, the figure was almost 50 per cent, and would remain around that figure, albeit with some fluctuation, for over thirty years until other factors caused further increases.

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<sup>12</sup> Tyrrel, *Running Racing*, p.17.

<sup>13</sup> Ages at that time were calculated from 1 May of each year, not from 1 January as at present, so some horses then classed as two year olds would now be considered to be three years old. This caused some confusion in April 1833 when the Jockey Club announced the change to take effect from the end of the year, as it was mandatory only at Newmarket, and some courses took several years to come into line.

<sup>14</sup> The other two 'Classics', the 2000 Guineas and the 1000 Guineas, both run at Newmarket, were inaugurated in 1809 and 1814.

## RACE MEETINGS AND THEIR PLACE IN THE SOCIAL ROUND

The eighteenth century had brought an increasing sophistication and elegance to the life and social activities of the upper and middle classes. The vogue for visits to spas, which had started in the previous century, had both broadened the horizons of the visitors, and in many cases defined a structure for their visit, a feature which was continued at seaside resorts, when this new form of 'healthy' activity came to the fore in the later eighteenth century.<sup>15</sup> Visitors expected to visit libraries and coffee houses and attend balls, concerts and the theatre. This type of social life, albeit not so extensive, was also found in county and market towns all over the country, and in 1840 Whyte provided a guide to what was available in towns which held race meetings at that time.<sup>16</sup>

By the late eighteenth century many towns had their own theatres, and as these were generally open for only a few weeks each year their performances could be provided by a travelling company visiting a number of towns on a fixed circuit<sup>17</sup> or by well known players from London theatres.<sup>18</sup> Almost without exception, one or two weeks of the theatre season would coincide<sup>19</sup> with the annual race meeting.

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<sup>15</sup> Hembry, P. *The English Spa 1560 - 1815* (Athlone Press, London, 1990) pp.136ff describes how, particularly in Bath, a 'ritualised leisure industry developed, its financial risks underwritten by advance payments....'

<sup>16</sup> Whyte, J.C. *History of the British Turf* (Henry Coburn, London, 1840) I, covers these, with some omissions, by county in England, but less extensively in Wales and Scotland.

<sup>17</sup> Carruthers, R. *History of Huntingdon* (A.P. Wood, Huntingdon, 1824) p.295. T. Robinson managed theatres in Huntingdon, Lincoln, Grantham and Peterborough, and staged plays during race weeks in the first two towns. Hance, F. *Stamford Theatre and Stamford Racecourse* (Dolby Brothers Ltd., Stamford, 1970) p.7. James Whitley, the actor-manager, was responsible for theatres at Stamford, Derby, Worcester, Nottingham, Wolverhampton and Retford, all except the last having performances during local race weeks.

<sup>18</sup> Plumb, J.H. *The Commercialisation of Leisure in Eighteenth Century England* (University of Reading, Reading, 1973) p.13 discusses the travels of London theatre companies during their summer break. Ditchfield, P.H., 'Sport Ancient and Modern' in *Victoria County History - Berkshire II* (Archibald Constable, London, 1908) p.307 quotes from a diary kept by Mrs. Philip Lybbe Powys, which recorded that in 1788 the middle evening of the Reading race meeting had a performance from Thornton's Company, and p.308 states that during the 1815 Newbury races 'the theatre opened nightly with a special cast from the London stage.' Hance, *Stamford Theatre*, p.8 records that such notable actors as Charles Kemble and Edward Keane came to Stamford in 1826-27 and 1830 respectively.

<sup>19</sup> *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 11 August 1788. The proprietor of the new theatre in Newcastle-under-Lyme had set its grand opening to coincide with the opening of the racecourse, but he was thwarted when this was postponed because of clashes with meetings at Worcester and Nottingham.

Theatrical performances continued as a major feature of race weeks <sup>20</sup> - hence the sponsorship of races by theatre owners or managers in some towns - up to the 1850s, <sup>21</sup> and in certain cases, such as Stamford and Margate, well beyond.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, the nature of theatrical performances was changing from presenting one or two plays a night to an audience paying 1/- in the gallery and 3/- to 4/6d. for a box, to putting on a variety show moving towards music hall with seats at about half the price, <sup>23</sup> or on certain nights reducing admission to between 1d. and 6d. when presenting 'Entertainments for the People' in the theatre at Stamford. <sup>24</sup>

The other major social events during race weeks - and indeed throughout the social season - were the public breakfasts, ordinaries <sup>25</sup>, assemblies and balls, held in hotels, inns, the Town Hall or specially built Assembly Rooms, which usually added some architectural elegance to a town centre. These meals continued to flourish up to the 1850s, as evidenced by newspaper advertisements and racecards <sup>26</sup>, but their prices like those of the balls were such that they were only accessible to the more affluent racegoers.<sup>27</sup> The increasing ease of travelling in the mid-nineteenth century provided the option of a day trip to the races, and the need to provide entertainment for a longer stay was consequently reduced. Two other influences must also be taken into account, the increasingly moralistic atmosphere - often more apparent than real - of

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<sup>20</sup> Whyte, *British Turf* I, identified a number of theatres as being 'open during race week', and in at least one case this relationship went further. *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 4 August 1840. One of the performances during race week was described as being 'under the patronage of the race stewards'.

<sup>21</sup> See Chapter 5.

<sup>22</sup> Hance, *Stamford Theatre*, p.22, has an illustration of a racecard for 15 July 1864 advertising performances at Stamford theatre. *Keble's Gazette*, 26 August 1871, reporting on the last flat race meeting at Margate, ends: 'The Assembly Rooms, Theatre and the Hall-by-the-Sea all advertised attractions for the evening's entertainment, and were well patronised.'

<sup>23</sup> Hance, *Stamford Theatre*, p.9. Molloy, P. *Recreation in Newcastle under Lyme 1837 - 1900* (University of Keele, Keele, 1982) pp.11-14, and Dunn C. *The Book of Huntingdon* (Barracuda Books, Chesham, 1977) p.72 give charges in these ranges.

<sup>24</sup> Hance, *Stamford Theatre*, p.9.

<sup>25</sup> An 'ordinary' was a public meal provided at a fixed price and time in an inn or hotel.

<sup>26</sup> Two examples must suffice. *Salisbury Journal* 14 May 1764 recorded an assembly at Marlborough Town Hall, an ordinary on the first day of the meeting at the 'Three Tuns' (where horses could be entered for the races) and on the second day at the 'Castle'. See also *Marlborough Times* 6 July 1771 and 3 August 1771. A racebill in Stourbridge Public Library for the meeting on 25/26 August 1835 is typical, announcing the Steward's Ordinary at the Talbot Inn on the first night and at the Crown Inn on the second, with the Race Ball at the Talbot Inn on the same night.

<sup>27</sup> Boyd, *Running Horses*, p.4. The balls for the 1801 Reading meeting were held at the Town Hall and cost 5/- for ladies and 7/- for gentlemen on the Thursday when there was no supper, and 10/6d. and 12/- on the Friday when there was supper. In 1814, the last year before the races ended for nearly 30 years, 320 attended the race ball.

the late Victorian era, which identified the races as a major source of depravity, and the increasing commercialism of the sport, which caused many public figures to show less affinity with the races. They might still run their horses, but public support such as sponsoring of races became less frequent<sup>28</sup>, and their social life at race time focused more on house parties and the like, and less on attendance at public meals and race balls.<sup>29</sup> Similar events - such as Hunt Balls - whether tied to hunting or steeplechase race meetings - tended to be better attended as they kept their local affinities long after the commercial flat race companies had come onto the scene. But the demise of the meals and balls should not be given too much emphasis, as they were almost without exception, a minority activity because of their cost and social cachet. Between 2,000 and 10,000 people might attend the average race meeting, but the meals and balls would attract between 50 and 300 people.<sup>30</sup>

Gambling of one sort and another was an integral part of the social life in towns at all levels of society. But one sport on which betting was intense and which featured in many race week programmes was cockfighting. It was also associated with animal fairs and festivals, notably Shrovetide, and in later years became a favourite sport of miners in northern England. But all classes of society were involved, long after it was outlawed finally by Act of Parliament in 1849, although the Cruelty to Animals Act of 1835 had been intended to end it.<sup>31</sup> Cockpits could be quite large, that at

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<sup>28</sup> See Chapter 6.

<sup>29</sup> Pitt, C. *A Long Time Gone* (Portway Press, Halifax, 1996) p.281. For Tarporley steeplechases, the Duke and Duchess of Westmorland entertained at Tarporley and Eaton Hall, while for Derby races, the Duke of Devonshire, even in 1900, still entertained guests at Chatsworth. Bayles, F.H. *Atlas and Review of British Racecourses* (Equitable Publishing Syndicate, London, 1911) p.51. The Duke of Rutland had guests at Belvoir Castle for the Croxton Park meetings, while 'Lord Lonsdale and a host of others of the landed gentry entertain largely on the course.'

<sup>30</sup> An account of a typical day at a country race meeting, together with relative numbers, is found in a diary entry for Bungay races on 3 September 1828, quoted in Pitt, *Long Time Gone*, p.187. 'Drive on at one o'clock and stop till five [at the races]. Eight or nine thousand persons present. Dine at ordinary at 'Kings Head' at five thirty with forty others. To theatre in the evening.' Hall, J. *A History of the Town and Parish of Nantwich* (Author, Nantwich, 1883) describes a similar day at Nantwich races.

<sup>31</sup> The 1849 Act, entitled *For the More Effective Prevention of Cruelty to Animals*, took care of some of the loopholes in the 1835 Act. The *Racing Calendar* reported on cockfights until 1840, the last recorded being a 'main' at Liverpool. Bryden, H.A. & Cuming, E.D. 'Racing' in *Victoria County History - Derbyshire II* (Archibald Constable, London, 1907) p.180, quoting Fancy's *General View of the Agriculture of Derbyshire*, written in 1817, are critical of the breeding of large numbers of birds 'for the truly vile and disgraceful purpose of cocking', but the Earl of Derby continued to breed up to 3,000 fighting cocks a year until his death in 1834. See also Boulton, W.B. *The Amusements of Old London* (Benjamin Bean, London, 1901, rep. 1969) pp.196, 201, 206,

Stanford built at the George Inn about 1725 by the 8th Earl of Exeter being capable of holding 400-500 spectators.<sup>32</sup> One of the most fanatical supporters of cockfighting and horseracing, the 12th Earl of Derby, had a pit built in Preston in 1790 in addition to the one he had in Chester,<sup>33</sup> and even in 1849 there were still four cockpits in both Liverpool and Manchester. Stakes were normally 10 gn. the 'battle' (individual fight) and up to 200 gn. the 'main' (total contest) but some 'mains' were for up to 1,000 gns., particularly towards the end of the eighteenth century - and there was considerable betting besides. Contests were generally between the 'gentlemen' of various towns or counties, or between individual owners. The long series of contests between the Earl of Derby, with his 'Knowsley Reds', and the various members of the Legh family, who owned the racecourse at Newton, enlivened many northern meetings until the former's death,<sup>34</sup> which was almost contemporary with the end of cockfighting as an approved accompaniment to major race meetings.<sup>35</sup>

Other physical sports, which featured more at those meetings associated with fairs, festivals and 'wakes' weeks, were prize fighting and wrestling. Nevertheless, prize fighting in particular also took place after race meetings at Ascot<sup>36</sup> and Marlborough, both of which also staged more rustic sports, such as cudgel playing and backsword fighting.<sup>37</sup> Wrestling was particularly popular in Cumberland and Westmorland in the first half of the nineteenth century, often being billed as a major

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and Thomas, K. *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England* (Penguin- Allen Lane, London, 1983) p.150.

<sup>32</sup> Hance, F. *Stamford Theatre*, p.19. This pit, which is clearly shown on Knipe's map of Stamford (1834), was demolished in the late 1840s when a road was built to the railway station. There was a second pit in the yard of the Stamford Hotel, but this appears not to have been built until 1827.

<sup>33</sup> Head, Sir. G. *A Home Tour through the Manufacturing District of England in the Summer of 1835* (John Murray, London, 1836) p.416. Lord Derby's cockpit in Preston did not long survive his death, as by 1835 it was used by the local Temperance Society.

<sup>34</sup> The leading 'feeders', such as Gilliver and Potter, were almost as well known as the owners, and travelled considerable distances to take part in major contests even before the coming of the railway.

<sup>35</sup> The *Racing Calendar* recorded cockfights only at Chester, Liverpool, Manchester and Newton after 1835.

<sup>36</sup> Ditchfield, 'Sport Ancient and Modern', p.314. Kingston, A. *Fragments of Two Centuries* (Warren Brothers, Royston, 1893, rep. 1902) p.135. Although not associated with a race meeting, but held on Royston Heath where races took place, the fight between Jem Ward and Peter Crawley on 2 January 1827 attracted a crowd of 10,000 to 15,000, another example of large attendance at sporting events in relatively remote areas without the benefit of mass rail transport.

<sup>37</sup> *Marlborough Journal* 6 July 1771, 28 August 1773: Backsword playing was described as 'a kind of degenerate rustic fencing with single sticks'.

attraction at the race meetings at Carlisle and Penrith.<sup>38</sup> In due course prize fighting was outlawed, although the railways continued to run specials to fights,<sup>39</sup> and the popularity of wrestling waned before the growth of interest in cricket and football during the last thirty years of the nineteenth century.

But for the majority of racegoers the big attraction of the annual meeting was the multitude of sideshows, menageries, thimblerriggers and charlatans of all description, who could be watched without payment, or perhaps for a penny admission. Epsom had 'Show-out Sunday' before the Derby meeting - an event in itself with a monster funfair, and even relatively modest meetings like Newton had a similar 'fun day'.<sup>40</sup> Some meetings like Huntingdon in August 1801 had 'Additional Races' for Hacknies, Ponies, Asses and Women',<sup>41</sup> while the 'Eccles Wakes' in 1819, before the race meeting achieved respectability, had a mind boggling list of additional attractions,<sup>42</sup> all of which in smaller doses were typical of the events which attracted whole families to race meetings.<sup>43</sup> 'Gate money' meetings had none of these attractions beyond the refreshment tents and gambling dens and this, coupled with the cost of admittance, meant that only those dedicated to racing and gambling continued to

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<sup>38</sup> Nicholson, F. 'Wrestling' in *Victoria County History - Cumberland II*, (Archibald Constable, London, 1905) p. 486. The first annual wrestling match in conjunction with Carlisle races took place in September 1809, and at Penrith a year later. Big prizes were offered, and the bouts were well supported by all levels of society into the second half of the nineteenth century.

<sup>39</sup> Guilcher, G. 'The Involvement of Railway Companies in Victorian Prize-Fighting', *Journal of the Railway & Canal Historical Society*, XXVIII, 1986, pp. 339 - 348 covers the subject in detail, and tabulates all such major fights between 1837 and 1867, including the Orme v Jones fight in May 1852 on the closed Six Mile Bottom to Great Chesterford section of the Newmarket Railway.

<sup>40</sup> Wiswell, E.A.A. *Items of News about Haydock to 1900* (Local History Library, St. Helens, no date), p.10.

<sup>41</sup> Dunn, *Book of Huntingdon*, p.70, has an illustration of a handbill for Huntingdon Additional Races on 7 August, 1801. The race for women of all ages was in three heats for a 'good Holland shift, handsomely trimmed with blue ribbon'. There was no entrance fee for women, but the charge was 2/- for Hacknies, 1/- for Ponies and 6d. for Asses.

<sup>42</sup> Poster advertising Eccles Wakes, 30 August to 3 September 1819 (original in Manchester Central Reference Library, but copy in Salford Local History Library) had donkey races, footraces, jackass races, pony racing, apple dumpling eating, grinning match, catching a well-soaped pig, bull baiting, smoking match and a fiddling match.

<sup>43</sup> Fairfax Blakeborough, J. *Northern Turf History* Vol. II (J.A. Allen & Co. Ltd., London, 1949) p.238, quoting H.J. Tweddell, clerk of the course at the Stokesley Trinity Fair races, described how a brass band preceded the race officials to the course (a similar procession took place at Stockton for the revival of the race meeting in 1825). Apart from the horse racing, there were sports in the streets, footraces on the course, and cockfighting, long after it had become illegal. An ordinary at the 'Black Swan' was also part of the festivities.

attend.<sup>44</sup> although old style meetings did survive into the twentieth century, the open spaces of Epsom being a prime example.

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BETTING INDUSTRY.

In the early days of racing, betting on the result of a match was generally a private affair between the owners and a relatively small circle of friends. Gradually, however, betting came more into the public domain, and it became accepted practice to place bets in taverns, although there appear to have been no recognised bookmakers until about 1790.<sup>45</sup> The upper class turfites could set up their wagers at Tattersall's Subscription Rooms in London and Crockford's gambling houses either there or in Newmarket. For anyone to bet sensibly, knowledge of the runners' form was vital, but in the early nineteenth century the obtaining and disseminating of such information was not easy except for those involved in the sport or with the means at their disposal to pay for information from touts or 'work watchers'. So most punters were confined to betting on local races, for although the national and regional newspapers (where they existed) provided some information,<sup>46</sup> much of it came after the event. Results of major races were spread orally by the drivers and guards of stage coaches, and the more affluent employed carrier pigeons or trained dogs following a trail to get this information quickly.

As will be discussed in the next two chapters, the speed of travel had been increasing steadily since the 1770s and the arrival of the first trunk railway lines in 1837 to 1841, coupled with the adoption of the 'Penny Post' in 1840, accelerated the transit of people, goods and information. By 1850 there were few areas on the British mainland - except in the extremities of Scotland and Wales, which could not receive letters and newspapers within 24 hours, but it was the electric telegraph which revolutionised the passage of racing information. The first use of the

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<sup>44</sup> For contemporary comments at Carlisle and Leicester see Chapter 11.

<sup>45</sup> Tyrrel, *Running Racing*, p.29. The term 'bookmaker' came from the need to keep or 'make' a book, listing the bets and payments, as well as keeping a check on the odds against the runners in any given race..

<sup>46</sup> Whyte, *British Turf* 1, p. XIII, lists two weekly newspapers with racing information, *Bell's Life in London* and the *Sunday Times*, together with four monthly magazines, *Old Sporting Magazine* (1792), *New Sporting Magazine* (1824), *Sportsman* (1829) and *Sporting Review* (1837). All the magazines cost 2/6d., except the *Sportsman*, which was 1/6d. There were also several yearly almanacs in addition to the *Racing Calendar*.



telegraph was on the railways, <sup>47</sup> but members of the public were able to use surplus capacity on the system - at a price <sup>48</sup>- while independent telegraph companies proliferated until the Post Office monopoly was created in 1870. <sup>49</sup> Transmission of betting information was further improved by the telephone, telegraph and telephone facilities being quickly installed at major racecourses. <sup>50</sup>

The Jockey Club had decided in 1843 to detach itself as a ruling body from all matters and disputes concerning gambling. <sup>51</sup> But while this may have been a good thing, it is perhaps strange that the Club did not attempt to obtain some direct benefit for racing by tapping into the profits of gambling, particularly in the last thirty years of the nineteenth century when it was tightening its grip on the sport, both overall and at the level of the individual racecourse. Perhaps the Club members viewed it as 'living on immoral earnings', and there would have been undoubted problems in collecting any contribution, as until the introduction of the betting tax in 1926, bookmakers did not have to be registered. It was relatively easy, if risky, for 'welshing' bookmakers to make good their escape before the punters came to collect their winnings. Certainly, the continuation of what Tyrrel called 'amiable indifference' <sup>52</sup> even in the 1950s, when the Betting and Gambling Act was going

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<sup>47</sup> The first practical electric telegraph, patented by William Cooke and Sir Charles Wheatstone in 1837, was successfully installed on the Great Western Railway between Paddington and West Drayton in 1839. By 1840 London and Portsmouth were connected by telegraph - a joint venture between the London & South Western Railway and the Admiralty. Its use then spread rapidly, but in piecemeal fashion, across the rail network as this developed.

<sup>48</sup> Wilson, A. 'Improvements in Communication. The Telegraph and the Telephone come to Tonbridge' in C.W. Chalklin (ed.) *Late Victorian and Edwardian Tonbridge* (Kent County Library, West Malling, 1988) pp.15-23. In 1850 there was a minimum charge at Tonbridge of 5/- for 20 words, whether to Paddock Wood or London, over the 180 miles of the South Eastern Railway telegraph system.

<sup>49</sup> Kieve, J.L. *The Electric Telegraph: A Social and Economic History* (David & Charles, Newton Abbot, 1973), Perry C.R. *The Victorian Post Office* (The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 1992)p.87 shows that by 1870 the telegraph companies operated 16,879 miles of line against the railway companies' 4,871 miles.

<sup>50</sup> Huggins, M.J. *Flat Racing and British Society, 1790 - 1914* (Frank Cass, London, 2000) pp.27-29 describes this development, stressing particularly the upsurge in use by racecourses after the establishment of the Post Office monopoly, and the rapid growth of the cheap evening newspaper carrying racing results.

<sup>51</sup> The Tattersall's Committee to arbitrate on gambling matters was not set up until 1886. Gambling disputes and debts were and still are not enforceable by law.

<sup>52</sup> Tyrrel, *Running Racing*, p.29.

through Parliament, has resulted in an inadequate injection of funds into the sport via the betting levy.<sup>53</sup>

But for betting to be a profitable business for bookmakers and to give the desired level of excitement and anticipation of a big win for the general public, a real element of chance and uncertainty was required. Between two and six older horses running steadily through up to four heats averaging two miles each gave neither the thrills - particularly as some horses would be eliminated as the heats progressed - nor the ability to provide long odds. The continuing trend of racing two and three year olds over shorter distances provided more opportunities for gambling with worthwhile odds, as each race was an event in its own right. Moreover, this direction was also attractive to owners and trainers as a good win at two years - and particularly in a major race as a three year old - gave an opportunity for consistent and worthwhile earnings at stud, rather than the uncertainty and cost of racing for another two or three years.<sup>54</sup> Major races such as the Lincolnshire Handicap were a gift to bookmakers as there was no recent form on which punters could base their expectations, so, when not long after its establishment the race looked as if it might be a failure, it was funded by a group of bookmakers<sup>55</sup> just as innkeepers and tradesmen of an earlier era sponsored races as a means of maximising their takings in race week. Beyond touching on the Running Rein affair of 1844 in the next section, it is not intended to dwell further on betting coups, except to mention the influx of American jockeys and trainers at the end of the nineteenth century. The form book was turned upside down by the revolutionary 'monkey on a stick' style of riding, which proved too good for the traditional British jockeys, producing a number of American champions, who certainly won by skill, but also were prone to corruption and sharp practice of all kinds. Moreover, the American owners thought nothing of doping horses to enhance their performance, a practice which, it was estimated, relieved bookmakers of up to £2 million between 1897 and 1901. Very little of practical value was done to curb the practice until the Hon. George Lambton took it upon himself in 1903 to provide a demonstration by doping some mediocre horses of

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<sup>53</sup> Tyrrel, *Running Racing*, pp. 86ff gives more details of the Tote and betting controls, which are outside the scope and timeframe of this study.

<sup>54</sup> This aspect will be discussed in Chapter 7.

<sup>55</sup> Pitt, *Long Time Gone* p. 369.

his own and informing the Jockey Club what he was doing. He successfully showed the effect of the drug, and this resulted in the passing of rules outlawing doping.<sup>56</sup> In both these instances, sixty years apart, the Jockey Club held back, leaving the initiative to be taken by individuals. There was little difference in its stance, even though by the end of the nineteenth century it was in complete control of all flat racing at authorised meetings, a totally different situation from that prevailing in the 1840s.

### THE JOCKEY CLUB DURING THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

During the early years of the nineteenth century, the Jockey Club was occupied either on its own account or with the help of the Duke of Portland, in consolidating its position at Newmarket and gaining possession of as much of the Heath as possible. Although its members visited a wide range of meetings as individuals, participating either as owners or stewards, the Jockey Club itself, in its re-drafting and improving of the Rules of Racing even in the 1830s, made clear that these 'apply to all races run at, and engagements made by Newmarket only'.<sup>57</sup>

After Sir Charles Bunbury, the next man to make his mark on flat racing was Lord George Bentinck, whose activities as horse owner and gambler will be covered in Chapter 8. His efforts to improve the conduct of racemeetings and his battle against corruption, as exemplified by the Running Rein affair in 1844,<sup>58</sup> were the hallmark of his later activities, although the sceptic might describe as sharp practice his stratagem

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<sup>56</sup> Lambton, Hon. G. *Men and Horses I have Known* (J.A. Allen & Co. Ltd., London 1924, rep. 1963) pp.255ff.

<sup>57</sup> The Jockey Club had introduced a major update of its rules and regulations from 31 December 1828, but it was the *Rules and Orders of the Jockey Club* resulting from a meeting on 1 November 1831, which made the statement quoted in the text. Moreover, the Jockey Club, having no authority to extend their rules and orders to any other place '... will not receive any references of disputes from other places except those at which the rules and regulations of Newmarket have been declared to be in force in the printed articles of those Races'.

<sup>58</sup> Huggins, M.J. 'Lord Bentinck, the Jockey Club and Racing Morality in Mid-nineteenth Century England - the "Running Rein" Derby Revisited,' *International Journal of the History of Sport*, XIII, 1996, pp.432-444, examines the incident in detail and re-evaluates the wider scene of racing politics and attitudes. Suffice it to say that a three year old called Maccabeus won a two year old sweepstakes at Newmarket in October 1843, masquerading as the two year old Running Rein. Bentinck had suspicions which he was unable to prove, nor could he persuade the Epsom stewards to have the supposed Running Rein examined before the 1844 Derby, which he won from Colonel Peel's Orlando, ridden by Nat Flatman. Legal action was necessary to achieve the desired result, but the murky undercurrents remain largely untapped.

to length the odds on Elis for the 1836 St. Leger.<sup>59</sup> While undoubtedly driven partly by self interest in view of his extensive and expensive racing activities and lavish lifestyle, Bentinck did act in the best interests of the sport and of the great mass of punters.<sup>60</sup> He made strenuous efforts to improve the operation of the start of a race - his own filly, Crucifix, favourite for the 1840 Oaks, had had to endure no less than 16 false starts which delayed the race by an hour. Bentinck tightened up weighing procedures, and advocated the abolition of the custom of the winner giving presents to the judge in important races, which, as can be seen from reports in the *Racing Calendar*, was not always a secret transaction, but seemingly required by the terms and conditions of the race.<sup>61</sup>

After Bentinck's withdrawal from racing in 1846 to concentrate on his political career and his untimely death two years later, the dominant figure in the Jockey Club was Admiral Rous. It was in the later years of his tenure that the major decisions were taken and policies put into operation, which more than any other single factor effectively shaped the future of flat racing. Rous was a skilled handicapper, and made a good living from setting up matches for the Duke of Bedford, but his *On the Laws and Practice of Horse Racing*, published in 1850 and updated sixteen years later, contained many elements of racing control which are still relevant, the most important being the 'weight for age' scale, which, with minor adjustments made in 1976, is still in use today.

But the 1860s and 1870s were the years which shaped racing for the foreseeable future. Steeplechasing had been growing in popularity since the 1830s with the foundation of the shortlived St. Albans Steeplechases followed by the Grand National at Aintree, and soon there were meetings all over the country. The Jockey Club kept this type of racing at arm's length, but even though Rous considered it to be merely an 'extraneous branch of the sport', he was asked in December 1862 to give his view on the proposed *Rules and Regulations of the Steeplechase*, which he did in typically straightforward and trenchant fashion.<sup>62</sup> The formation of the

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<sup>59</sup> For a full discussion of 'Elis's' win in the 1836 St. Leger, see Chapter 7.

<sup>60</sup> Tyrrel, *Running Racing*, p.33, quoting a journalist's comments in 1847.

<sup>61</sup> Bentinck's method of starting remained in use until the adoption of the starting gate over fifty years later, and it took until 1866 before the Jockey Club officially abolished the practice of giving presents to the judge.

<sup>62</sup> Tyrrel, *Running Racing*, pp.64 - 65, quotes Rous's reply in full.

National Hunt Committee in 1866 took one area of uncertainty away from the Jockey Club, <sup>63</sup> gave some respectability to the sport, and in due course provided one escape route to legitimacy for meetings increasingly hard pressed by Jockey Club regulations and requirements.

Although the Rules of Racing had been comprehensively revised in 1858, these did not have the impact of the changes made in 1870, when the length of the season was redefined to start in the week containing 25 March, thus taking over a month off the front end. But there were two momentous changes, which marked the first major moves in the campaign for total control of flat racing. The first was highly visible and reminiscent of the 1740 Act, as it defined a £50 minimum prize money for each race at an authorised meeting, which would cause the closure of both old-established and marginal courses. The second - the virtual outlawing of 'unauthorised' or 'flapping' meetings - was more 'in the small print', but it had an equally profound effect as it differentiated 'recognised' meetings from the rest, and effectively stopped the appearance of new meetings in the *Racing Calendar* unless they had some substance. Whereas prior to 1870, owners had been able to enter horses at all types of races, and even the winning of an important prize at an 'unrecognised' fixture had the advantage of not involving a weight penalty for a major meeting, now any participation in such a meeting could lead to disqualification. Licensing of racecourses was also introduced, and in the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth, this was used not only to put pressure on what the Club saw as obsolete or unsafe courses, it also provided the medium to reduce the incidence of new racecourses by a factor of ten, and, as shown in Appendix III, to direct major racing investment and activities quite markedly towards London and the south east.

Although there had been some race meetings (more than generally supposed) for which a charge was made for admission to the course, the coming of Sandown Park brought a new dimension to the comfort and image of the sport. Nevertheless, this innovation might not have had the effect which has been ascribed to it, had not the Jockey Club from January 1877 imposed new minimum prize money requirements of £100 for races up to one mile, £150 for races of a mile and above, and a minimum

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<sup>63</sup> After the initial separation, there was a great deal of working together, and a gradual 'rapprochement', which resulted in the merging of the Jockey Club and the National Hunt

total of £300 for each day of racing.<sup>64</sup> This caused wholesale closures, defections to National Hunt racing and the formation of race companies to put meetings on a more commercial footing, as well as the gradual enclosure of existing courses. But there were other side effects - a commercial approach alienated some local gentry and M.P.s and, as will be discussed in Chapter 6, their donation of £50 or £100 had to be made up from other sources. Enclosed courses generally charged 6d. or 1/- for entrance - only Sandown Park (and, for a short time, Croydon, in a desperate attempt to reduce the less desirable elements at its meetings) dared charge 2/6d. - and so it required 4,000 or 2,000 paying spectators respectively to replace just one £100 donation. A typical two day programme of five races each day could require between £1,000 and £1,500 in prize money alone, which would have needed at least 20,000 spectators on the course, if all other expenses were covered by other means. So the assertions of the 'railway revolution' lobby extolling the importance of trainloads of racegoers paying little or nothing before 1870, and 6d. or 1/- afterwards, needs to be put into perspective. Naturally those who frequented the stands and the enclosures paid considerably more, but even as late as 1905, some two thirds of all race meeting income came via subscriptions and entry fees from the racehorse owners themselves.<sup>65</sup>

Stiffer licensing conditions limited the emergence of new courses and hastened the demise of some of the older courses. A straight mile, or at the very least a significant straight 'run-in' was required, and greater emphasis was placed on improvement of amenities and safety standards at existing venues, which had survived the demands of increased prize money. Moreover, with the proliferation of race companies, rather than the non-commercial race committees, the Jockey Club imposed a ceiling of 10 per cent for dividends to be paid to shareholders, and stipulated that the company accounts must be made available for inspection by their nominee. Despite this, old

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Committee in 1969.

<sup>64</sup> This came in yet another review of the Jockey Club Rules by a committee chaired by Sir John Astley. There were other stipulations which, while helping individual owners, also contributed to the centralisation of the sport. Payment of stakes to winners would now be made within fifteen days via the Race Fund at Weatherbys. This released owners from the chore of seeking their money directly from the losers, who now appeared on the defaulters' list until they paid. Similarly, after 1880, jockeys did not have to chase their riding fees as they were paid to the stakeholder.

<sup>65</sup> Dalzell, Lord Hamilton of 'The Financial Aspects of Racing', *Badminton Magazine*, XXIII, 1906, pp.251-257.

style courses survived and new enclosed courses, which fulfilled all requirements and were even provided with a special railway station, failed generally through over-investment after a very few years even in the less financially demanding climate of National Hunt racing.

## CHAPTER TWO

### ROAD TRANSPORT AND TRAVEL BEFORE AND DURING THE RAILWAY AGE

#### INTRODUCTION

The principal focus of this chapter will be on long distance road transport between 1770 and 1850, by which time the main arteries of the trunk railway system were in operation. But in order to understand both the development of the road coach and its co-existence with railways, it is necessary to consider briefly events and trends both before and after the main timeframe. The canal system and the growth of urban road transport will also be discussed, as the former provided facilities for race specials, while the inception and growth of the latter was almost exactly contemporaneous with the spread of railways, and moreover, greatly facilitated the transport of racegoers to the London area race meetings established in the later nineteenth century.

#### THE EARLY YEARS

Until the mid-nineteenth century and indeed, in some cases, well beyond it, only the well-to-do, or those whose job forced them to travel, left the immediate neighbourhood in which they lived.<sup>1</sup> Local journeys were still made on foot or in a farm cart, but in the previous two centuries long distance public road transport - at least for those who could afford it - had improved out of all recognition. Navigable rivers and canals also provided an attractive alternative, both for the transport of heavy or bulky freight, and for passengers who might very well continue their journey around the coast to reach distant parts of the British Isles by sea.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Collin, B.M. *J.P. Horning - A Family Portrait* (Orpington Press, Orpington, 1970), p.89, in discussing the area around West Grinstead in Sussex in 1913, could still say 'There was no public transport, except for the branch railway, so that many of the yokels had never been to villages a few miles distant not served by it, much less to London.'

<sup>2</sup> This use of coastal ships as an alternative to land-based transport continued until well into the nineteenth century with, for example, the new port of Fleetwood served by rail as early as 1840, vying with Liverpool as a suitable port of embarkation for journeys to Glasgow, until the railway line between there and London was completed eight years later. *Bradshaw's General Railway and Steam Navigation Guides* for the period 1845 to 1850 are particularly useful in identifying the extent of this traffic.



The first recorded public stage coach carried its ten passengers between London and St. Albans in 1637,<sup>3</sup> and just over twenty years later a notice in a newspaper provided details of journeys from London together with their times and costs.<sup>4</sup> To travel to Exeter took four days and cost 40/- (£2), with Salisbury the halfway point. Heading north, Stamford could be reached in two days for £1 and York in a further two at double the cost. These coaches ran three times a week, but there was a weekly coach to Edinburgh with a fare of £4. It should not be supposed that Edinburgh could be reached in eight days, for twenty years later it took six days to cover the 51 miles between Edinburgh and Glasgow. Even in October 1712, still with a four day journey to York, the Edinburgh coach was scheduled to take thirteen days (if God permits) at a fare of £4.10/-. To perform the journey 'without any stoppages', eighty 'able horses' were used, changing points being set at suitable inns along the route.<sup>5</sup>

### THE TURNPIKE ROAD

By 1688 coaches were running from London to some 88 different towns, a figure which had increased to 180 by 1705. But such vehicles required much improved roads if journey times were to be reduced and reliability improved,<sup>6</sup> so in 1706 a general turnpike road system covering some 22,000 miles of main road was set in motion.<sup>7</sup> Over 100,000 miles of secondary roads were not included in the scheme, but the length of those designated as main roads increased only by 10 per cent in the next 130 years.

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<sup>3</sup> Haughton, B. *Coaching Days in the Midlands* (Quercus, Birmingham, 1997) p.5.

<sup>4</sup> *Mercurius Politicus*, 8 April 1658. For further details see Rogers, H.C.B. *Turnpike to Iron Road* (Seeley, Service & Co., London, 1961) pp. 22-24.

<sup>5</sup> Public Notice for Edinburgh to London coach, starting on 13 October 1712, quoted in Sherrington, C.E.R. *100 Years of Inland Transport* (Augustus M. Kelley, New York, 1934, rep. Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., London 1969) p.15.

<sup>6</sup> The first Turnpike Act to improve part of the Great North Road had been passed as early as 1663, but it was to be thirty years before the second major road, from London to Harwich, was similarly treated.

<sup>7</sup> The term 'turnpike' is derived from the bar used to block the road until the toll was paid, and then swung aside to let the vehicle through. As each turnpike trust was a purely local venture, road improvement was piecemeal and took place over a long period. Some major coach routes deteriorated during this period, a notable example being the London - Exeter run which had taken 4 days in 1658, increased to five in 1700, and by 1791 required six days to complete. Rogers, *Turnpike to Iron Road*, pp. 26 & 29. Between 1751 and 1772 there was a 'Turnpike Mania', when no fewer than 389 trusts were set up. Another minor resurgence of interest took place in 1824-6, when some fifty new trusts were authorised.

The tremendous improvement in the construction of main roads between 1770 and 1840 was largely due to three men - John Metcalfe, Thomas Telford and John Macadam - even though their methods and spheres of influence varied. Metcalfe's activities were more circumscribed and earlier than the other two, but his improvement of some 180 miles of turnpike road in Yorkshire helped to reduce the journey between London and Leeds from some four days in 1760 to only 39 hours in 1776, with much improved reliability in timekeeping. By 1773, the government had realised that the local nature of the myriad turnpike trusts did not produce a consistent quality of road, and authorised the collection of money for road improvement by taxation as well as by tolls. There was then a gradual improvement until the early nineteenth century, when the influence of Macadam and Telford made itself felt. The latter was well-known as a civil engineer, specialising in bridges and aqueducts, and one of his masterpieces, the suspension bridge across the Menai Strait in North Wales, completed in January 1826, was the most important work in his total reconstruction of the main road from London to Holyhead, which took from 1815 to 1830 to carry out. Telford's well-engineered roads were expensive to build, but those of his almost exact contemporary, Macadam, combined high performance with relatively low cost, and as such contributed much more to the development of good quality roads throughout the nineteenth century. By 1838, when the main railway line from London to Liverpool and Manchester was completed, there were 1,116 turnpike trusts with no less than 23,555 employees - about one employee per mile of turnpike road. <sup>8</sup>

### THE ADVENT OF THE MAIL COACH

Although there had been improvements in the speed of long distance coaches aided in part by better roads and customer demand, a major speed-up was instigated by a complete outsider, John Palmer, who managed theatres in Bath and Bristol. Palmer had become very dissatisfied with the service provided by the Post Office, <sup>9</sup> and in the

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<sup>8</sup> Haughton, *Coaching Days*, pp. 25-26.

<sup>9</sup> The 'Post Office of England' had been set up in 1657, and mail was carried along the main routes by mounted post boys, and these connected with postboys on foot to serve other towns and villages. The system was still basically the same in 1780, although wheeled vehicles known as 'mail carts' had been introduced on some routes. Until that year the Post Office had a monopoly in the provision of 'posthorses' which were available, not merely to facilitate the passage of the mail, but could be hired

early 1780s started using his own coach to send documents to and from London. This was achieved in 17 hours, which was less than half the time taken by the postboys, and also considerably better than the Bristol coaches had been able to achieve some 40 years previously, when the 'fast' coach took two days and the 'slow' coach three days.<sup>10</sup> Against considerable opposition, Palmer was able to persuade Prime Minister Pitt to give his backing to a proposal to carry mail in coaches, whose costs could be defrayed to some extent by carrying a small number of passengers. Once adequate servicing and maintenance procedures had been provided, as well as suitable staging points for horse changes along the route, strict control enabled the London - Bristol journey to be accomplished in 15 hours.<sup>11</sup> Speed, comfort, safety and reliability made the mail coaches an instant success. Even though the first service only started in August 1784, by the time Palmer became Controller General of the Post Office some two years later, there were no less than twenty mail coaches operating out of London, with seven more between provincial centres. The success of the mail coaches forced the stage coach proprietors to improve their somewhat lackadaisical operations, and provide additional facilities along the roads for both passengers and horses. They were also able to take advantage of the gradually improving road system to provide heavier coaches capable of carrying up to 11 outside passengers. This in turn put pressure on the mail coach operators who could carry only inside passengers (or at the most three outside), and with only a meagre payment for the carriage of mails, had continual difficulty in covering their costs, despite increases in payments from the Post Office. By the 1790s there were about 400 stage coaches on the road with a further 120 or so 'patent' mail coaches, but although the latter would only double in the next thirty years, there were over 3,000 stage coaches on the roads in the mid 1830s. The last twenty years of the supremacy of the road coach is that depicted on most Christmas cards and described in

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by travellers either to ride, haul private coaches in relays or complete with coach and driver provided. Hence the use of the term 'posting' for a journey made by one of these methods.

<sup>10</sup> Sherrington, *Inland Transport*, p.16.

<sup>11</sup> Horses on mail coaches were changed every 6 to 8 miles against the 10 to 15 miles customary for ordinary stage coaches. To maintain frequency and reliability it was necessary to have as many coaches under repair as on the road, while the contractor needed one horse for every mile of route operated to allow for rest, sickness and re-shoeing.

vivid detail by the sporting journalist, 'Nimrod'.<sup>12</sup> Whereas in the early eighteenth century 25 miles a day was a good average and by the 1760s 6 m.p.h. was an accepted norm, on the better routes in the latter period sustained speeds of 10 m.p.h. (including stops) were regularly achieved.

### CANALS, WAGGONWAYS AND URBAN TRANSPORT

The opening of the first part of the Sankey Brook Navigation near St. Helens in November 1757,<sup>13</sup> closely followed by the Duke of Bridgewater's Canal from his mines near Worsley to Manchester, ushered in the canal era.<sup>14</sup> Although some of the canals which made up the final network of over 2,500 miles served purely local needs, many formed comprehensive transport arteries linking industrial centres in the North of England, the Midlands and South Wales with markets and ports. Canals were used mainly for freight traffic, and although generally highly profitable for their shareholders, reduced bulk transport rates to a third or half of those by road.<sup>15</sup>

But many canals operated some form of passenger service, and some, like the Chester Canal, opened as far as Beeston in 1775, provided special boats for race goers. In April 1776 it was ordered that 'the one Boat sett out from Beeston Brook on each of the Race days at Ten O'Clock in the forenoon and another Boat at Eleven O'Clock, and both return from Chester to Beeston Brook half an Hour after the Race is over'.<sup>16</sup> If the fares were the same as on normal service boats, the return trip of 22 miles, if made on the one day, would have cost 6d., or 1/- for travelling in the 'Grand Cabin', which could be hired in its entirety for half a guinea each way. Much later, after the establishment of Wolverhampton races in 1825, canal boats were chartered to take

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<sup>12</sup> Nimrod, *The Chace, the Road and the Turf* (John Murray, London, 1837, rep. 1927) pp.48-95. The article 'The Road' was first published in 1832 in the *Quarterly Review* and updated for the collected version.

<sup>13</sup> *Liverpool Chronicle*, 4 November 1757. For more details see Barker, T.C. *The Sankey Navigation* (orig. 1948, rep. Sankey Canal Restoration Society, St. Helens, 1990) and Tolson, J.M. *The St. Helens Railway* (Oakwood Press, Salisbury, 1983) pp. 7 - 9.

<sup>14</sup> Hadfield, C. *British Canals* (David & Charles, Dawlish, 1950) provides a meticulous survey of their inception and development.

<sup>15</sup> Sherrington, *Inland Transport*, p.35, quoting from Jackman, W.T., *The Development of Transportation in Modern England*, published in 1917.

<sup>16</sup> Chester Canal Minute Book, 30 April 1776. in B.T.C. Historical Records. This referred to the meeting on 6 to 8 May, but there was a further meeting on 9 to 12 September 1776. See also Hadfield, C. 'Passenger Boats on the Chester Canal', *Journal of the Railway and Canal Historical Society*, XXXII, 1998, pp.497 - 499

working class race goes to what became known as Birmingham's own 'Derby Day', a leisurely journey enlivened by food, drink and music.<sup>17</sup> Canal boats were also used to take racegoers from the North Midland Railway at Swinton in 1840 to the St. Leger meeting for at least eight years until Doncaster was on the railway map.<sup>18</sup>

The growth of the canal network encouraged the spread of waggonways, tramroads and plateways in many industrial areas to bring minerals from mine or quarry for processing or trans-shipment. These primitive railways, which used horses, humans or gravity to move the waggons, were originally of wood, but the first cast iron rails were used in the 1760s. It was on just such waggonways that the first tentative experiments with steam locomotives were made by Richard Trevithick, George Stephenson and others. When Stephenson ran his first trials at Killingworth in 1814, his locomotive could only travel half as fast over a short distance as the Bristol mail coach averaged over the whole of its journey.<sup>19</sup>

Steam traction finally triumphed on the railway, and after a similar gestation period was to provide a useful addition to horse power on the canals, although it did not totally replace it. Problems with erosion of banks, coupled with the fact that horse traction could produce speeds of up to 10 m.p.h. on suitable stretches, made the canal proprietors less receptive, particularly as they only provided the waterway in most cases, goods being moved by independent carriers. But on the roads, even though there were successful trials in the 1820s and 1830s in both urban environments and over relatively long journeys from London to Brighton and Bath, steam traction was virtually strangled at birth by both punitive tolls and by legislation.<sup>20</sup> So steam traction did not play any large role on the roads until the use of steam tram engines some 40

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<sup>17</sup> Reid, D.A. 'The "Iron Roads" and "the Happiness of the Working Classes"', *Journal of Transport History*, XVII, 1996, p.67. Wilkinson, D. *Rough Roads* (Sampsonlow, Marston & Co. Ltd., London, 1912) pp. 6 - 7 described other ways of going to Wolverhampton races before the coming of the railway.

<sup>18</sup> See Chapter 4.

<sup>19</sup> Sherrington, *Inland Transport*, pp. 23-24. Stephenson persevered over so many years because he knew that the locomotive engine could only replace horse traction if it was more economic and more reliable - speed was not seen as an end in itself.

<sup>20</sup> Rogers, *Turnpike to Iron Road*, p.62, Sherrington, *Inland Transport*, pp.40-41 for 'Report of Select Committee on Steam Carriages', December 1831, and pp.47-53 for both urban and long distance trials by Hancock and Gurney. As an example of a punitive toll, the Liverpool to Prescot turnpike charged 4/- for a horsedrawn coach and 48/- for a steam carriage.

years later, and although there were steam traction engines for freight, passenger traffic remained dominated by the horse until the coming of the internal combustion engine.

In the early nineteenth century, there was no real public transport in towns and cities, even those as large as London. It is true that in 1814 there were several hundred hackney cabs, some 400 sedan chairs and no less than 3,000 wherries on the Thames, all plying for hire. Their fares were not cheap, so the poor walked, and the wealthy rode or used their own carriages as well as the options listed above. It was not until 7 July 1829 that George Shillibeer put the first omnibus on the road, and even at a fare of 1/- between the Yorkshire Stingo on the New Road (now Marylebone Road) and the Bank, it was still much cheaper than a hackney cab, so another transport revolution was underway. By 1856 there were 810 horse omnibuses operating in London, 600 of which were operated by the London General Omnibus Company, making it the largest single horsebus company in the world, when the largest company in Manchester in 1865 could muster only 91 vehicles.<sup>21</sup> Two years previously the first purely urban railway, the Metropolitan Railway, had been opened and within twenty years, together with the horse omnibuses and the later horse tramways, had raised annual passenger journeys in the capital from 18 to 78 per head of population, but 63 per cent of these were by public road transport rather than local railways.<sup>22</sup> Although this section has moved considerably ahead of the main story in this chapter, it was felt appropriate to emphasise the dominant role of road transport in urban areas even before the advent of the electric tramcar, when the railway companies were really forced to re-evaluate their attitude to and service for the less affluent suburban traveller.

### THE LAST YEARS OF THE STAGE COACH

To illustrate the rapid progress in long distance travel made between 1770 and 1814, and then through to 1835, a number of major coaching routes will be examined. By 1812 the journey time from London to Edinburgh and Glasgow had been reduced to 57 hours exclusive of stops, rather than the thirteen days required a century earlier. But the cost for the 400 mile journey had risen to £10.8/-, and with a servant travelling

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<sup>21</sup> Gray, E. *The Manchester Carriage and Tramways Company* (Manchester Transport Museum Society, Rochdale, 1977), p.22.

<sup>22</sup> Lascelles, T.S. *The City & South London Railway* (Oakwood Press, Lingfield, 1955, rep. 1987) p.5.

outside and tips, there was little change from £20, even without meals. <sup>23</sup> By 1836 the journey time was down to 42 hours but, when the railway was completed through to Edinburgh in 1850, both time and fare had been halved.

Until 1825 the main Holyhead mail coach ran via Chester, taking 28½ hours to reach the Deeside town in 1808, and 44 hours 50 minutes to Holyhead itself. Although the time for the journey had been reduced to 38 hours by 1817, the completion of much of Telford's Holyhead Road and the re-routing via Shrewsbury brought this down to 28 hours in 1831, and to only 26 hours 55 minutes for the 260 mile journey in 1836. <sup>24</sup> Shrewsbury also benefited from the road improvements which reduced the route from London from 162 to 148 miles and the time from 28 hours to 20½ hours by 1825. But in this year Edward Sherman introduced the first long distance day coach - the 'Shrewsbury Wonder' - which made the journey in 14.3/4 hours, and soon established an enviable reputation for punctuality and reliability. <sup>25</sup>

By the 1830s some 30 mail coach routes served London alone, the journeys ranging from 55 miles to Brighton and 396 miles to Plymouth, with average speeds of 7½ to 10 m.p.h. The fastest coach in the country was the Devonport Mail, which carried the overseas mails for the Falmouth packet and covered 216 miles in 21¼ hours. The onward journey by ferry and coach to Falmouth then took just under eight hours more. <sup>26</sup> Mail coaches travelled overnight, and those into London arrived almost without exception well before 7 a.m., so they became less favoured as slower overnight coaches with arrival times around 9 a.m. became more reliable, and day coaches became a practical proposition for journeys of up to 150 miles.

A coach route map in the 1830s was just as densely populated, at least in England, as a railway map seventy years later. Haughton records that it had been calculated that 'a

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<sup>23</sup> Sherrington, *Inland Transport*, p.24.

<sup>24</sup> Rogers, *Turnpike to Iron Road*, p.47.

<sup>25</sup> Nimrod, *The Road*, pp. 64-65 comments that although the 'Shrewsbury Mail' was a very bad time-keeper in earlier days, the 'Shrewsbury Wonder' 'had not varied five minutes in or out of Shrewsbury during the last eighteen months'. The 'Shrewsbury Wonder' once raced a train from London to Birmingham and won - but the feat was not repeated.

<sup>26</sup> Sherrington, *Inland Transport*, p.100. This coach, together with three coaches from London to Exeter carried a total of 1,500 passengers in one month in 1837, and a survey carried out by the London & Southampton Railway estimated that it could expect to capture 900 of these, 600 travelling via the Great Western and Bristol & Exeter Railways. Figures like these help us to understand why the L.& S. was caught unawares when 5,000 passengers besieged its Nine Elms terminus one morning in the following year - all wanting to go to the 'Derby'. See Chapter 4.

person had 1,500 opportunities every 24 hours to leave London by stagecoach'.<sup>27</sup> There were 82 coaches a day to Dover and over 40 to Birmingham, which was itself served by some 80 coaches, and a busy stretch of turnpike road could see well over 100 stage and mail coaches a day. Nevertheless space was often at a premium even though fares at 4d. to 5d. a mile inside and 2d. to 3d. a mile outside were not cheap, as the traveller had to allow for tips and meals in addition to this. The nobility and gentry continued to use their own vehicles with relays of posthorses, even though Nimrod felt that 'coach travelling is no longer a disgusting and tedious labour, but has long since been converted into comparative ease, and really approaches to something like luxury'.<sup>28</sup> After all, some night coaches even had reading lamps! Nor was speed always the essence of a coach timetable as a two-day journey in 1817 between London and Malvern had twelve hours in Oxford for sightseeing, dining and sleeping. A 2½ hour lunch break at Worcester compensated for a 4 a.m. start on the second day.<sup>29</sup>

The number of licensed stage coaches had grown from 400-500 in the 1790s to an average of just over 1,100 in the period 1810 - 1814, and to some 3,500 together with 700 Royal Mail coaches by the 1830s, the main increase occurring in the previous decade.<sup>30</sup> The major player in the latter years of this multimillion pound business which at its zenith employed over 30,000 people (not counting those on the turnpikes), was undoubtedly William Chaplin of the 'Swan with Two Necks'. He operated five inns and their yards as well as two hotels in London, and in 1837 owned 68 coaches and 1,800 horses, which he changed at regular intervals, with about 2,000 people employed in his various enterprises. His nearest rivals, Edward Sherman and Benjamin Horne, had about 700 horses each and their empires were about a third the size of Chaplin's. Sherman tried to compete with the railway, and had lost an estimated £7,000 when he gave up the unequal struggle in 1840, but Chaplin and Horne formed a partnership to work with the railways, acting as feeders for both passengers and goods, setting up

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<sup>27</sup> Haughton, *Coaching Days*, p.79. With average capacities of 10 to 14 passengers, 15,000 to 20,000 people could travel to and from the capital by coach each day.

<sup>28</sup> Nimrod, *The Road*, p.49.

<sup>29</sup> Haughton, *Coaching Days*, pp.78-79.

<sup>30</sup> Ferneyhough, F., *Liverpool & Manchester Railway 1830 - 1980* (Robert Hale Ltd., London, 1980), p.119.



parcels depots in the inn yards.<sup>31</sup> Chaplin in due course sold his road interests, and became chairman of the London & South Western Railway between 1843 and 1858.

The devastating impact of the railway even after the radical improvements made in coach travel over the previous 100 years can be best illustrated by looking at journeys between Birmingham and London, as this was one of the very first routes to benefit from the new mode of travel. In 1700 the journey took a reputed four days, but on 24 May 1731 Nicholas Rothwell started a coach service with a 2½ day journey for a fare of 12/-. In the 1750s the time was down to 36 hours, and by 1783 Edward Hart was able to advertise a journey of only 16 hours, although the fare had increased to £1.12.6d.<sup>32</sup> In 1822 the 'Tally Ho!' coach running via Coventry could do the journey in 14 hours,<sup>33</sup> and by the 1830s the average time was 11 to 12 hours, although there was a record breaking run of 7 hours 39 minutes on May Day, 1830.<sup>34</sup> By 1841 even the 3rd Class train stopping at all stations with a fare of 14/- could beat the 'racing' time by 9 minutes, while the fastest trains could cover the distance in 4½ hours, with fares at £1.12.6d. and £1 for first and second class, roughly equal to inside and outside coach fares, although there were some minor variations.

Coach proprietors, apart from Sherman, did not try to compete with the railway, and when the Grand Junction Railway was opened between Warrington and Birmingham in July 1837, the Liverpool and Manchester coaches to London were withdrawn, as a four hour railway journey to Birmingham<sup>35</sup> gave a good start against the coach time from Manchester to London of 18 hours. In less than two years the whole journey could be accomplished by rail in under ten hours.

During the piecemeal completion of the London & Birmingham Railway the coach proprietors reorganised their routes to maximise their revenue, both by meeting trains at the appropriate railhead and providing additional services like those offered by

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<sup>31</sup> Webster, N.W. *Britain's First Trunk Line* (Adams & Dart, Bath, 1972) pp.99-100.

<sup>32</sup> Haughton, *Coaching Days*, p.39.

<sup>33</sup> *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, December 1822.

<sup>34</sup> *Coventry Chronicle*, 8 May 1830.

<sup>35</sup> Steel, W.L., *The History of the London & North Western Railway* (Rail & Travel Monthly, London, 1914), p.98 estimated that the 220,000 travellers using coaches annually between Birmingham, Liverpool and Manchester rose to 1,600 a day or 584,000 a year after the railway opened.

Chaplin and Home.<sup>36</sup> The former coachman of the 'Exeter Telegraph' was able to adapt his coach services to cover Exeter, Devonport and Falmouth for 18 years between the opening of the railway to Bridgwater in 1841 and the completion of the link between London and Truro in 1859. Such exploits give the lie to the assertion that after 1842 coaches merely acted as feeders to the railway. It should also be remembered that there were then less than 2,000 miles of railway with over 24,000 miles of turnpike road, most of which carried coach services, and even by 1859, when the rail network linked London with Holyhead, Plymouth and Aberdeen, there were still only 6,617 miles of railway in use. Rich men took their coach and their horses on the train and completed quite long journeys by road. The Post Office also took advantage of new travel possibilities, loading its mail coaches complete with guard onto trains and continuing the journey by road or making extension contracts with coach owners.<sup>37</sup> Even though the last major mail coach into London, that from Norwich via Ipswich, was taken off the road in January 1846, mail coaches continued to be a feature of the transport scene into the twentieth century.

The coaching inns in many towns continued to serve a number of important routes for many years and retained or developed their social functions, which will be a recurring theme in relation to race meetings in the main body of this thesis. Shrewsbury was particularly important as it served mid and west Wales, with numerous coaches running to the seaside resorts such as Aberystwyth in the 'bathing season' until the mid-1860s.

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<sup>36</sup> Some were shortlived, like those which helped to elevate Denbigh Hall station, near Bletchley, to great prominence while the L. & B.R. was being completed. Its opening also caused the coaches between Worcester and Birmingham to increase from six a day in 1835 to 29 in 1839, but when the Birmingham & Gloucester Railway opened a station at Spetchley on 24 June 1840 (Haughton, *Coaching Days*, p.117 is incorrect in dating this as 1841), these ceased overnight, although feeder services from Worcester, some five miles from the station, were still necessary.

<sup>37</sup> Mail was carried by the Liverpool & Manchester Railway as early as 1830, and mail sorting on the train using a converted horsebox was started on the London & Birmingham Railway in 1838. Even before the line was completed, the Post Office had announced on 22 May of the same year that 'The Mails to Holyhead, Liverpool and Carlisle will be despatched for the first time by the London & Birmingham Railway. The coaches are to be drawn by horses to the terminus at Euston Square, and there to be placed on trucks and so run on the railway, retaining their coachmen, guards, passengers, etc., and only requiring horses when they reach the end of the railway, to proceed on their respective journeys.' This meant travelling by rail to Denbigh Hall (elevated from its previous name of Pig and Whistle), and by road thence to Rugby. The L. & B. and G.J. Railways would then take the Holyhead mail to Crewe, the Liverpool mail to its destination, and set down the Carlisle mail either there or at Newton.

All subsequent mail contracts were handled similarly, the routes, pick-up and set-down points being modified as new railway lines were opened.

In the west and north of Scotland the long distance stagecoach had an even longer life, some lasting until the twentieth century. Even the last regular coach into London - that from Amersham and Wendover - only ended when one of the constituents of the Metropolitan Railway reached Aylesbury on 1 September 1892. Cross country services such as those between Cheltenham and Oxford also lasted a long time because of the lack of adequate rail links between the two towns.

The real losers from the coming of the railways were the turnpike trusts, particularly those on the trunk routes, who were unable to raise sufficient income from tolls to maintain them. Many were bankrupt by the 1850s, but there were still 865 in 1871, although twenty years later only two remained and the last toll gates, which were on Telford's Holyhead road in Anglesey, closed in 1895. Care and maintenance had reverted to the parishes, but in the Local Government Act of 1888 County Councils were set up, and these became responsible for maintaining all main roads.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RAILWAYS IN NINETEENTH CENTURY BRITAIN

#### INTRODUCTION

During the first half of the nineteenth century the canal network, largely projected and executed between 1770 and 1800, grew to some 2,700 miles, and, despite its many disadvantages, dominated the bulk transportation of freight and minerals until the early 1840s. Similarly the stage coach, helped by an ever-expanding network of turnpike roads, reached its pinnacle of speed and efficiency in the 1830s. Moreover there were approximately 100,000 miles of secondary roads, over which both local traffic and the lumbering stage wagons moved, often with great difficulty in inclement weather - and certainly with no great speed.

It was against this background that the railway was to make its mark. In this brief survey only the actual growth of the network will be discussed, and both the convoluted world of railway politics and the myriad railway schemes which were still-born will be avoided, unless these have any real bearing on the development of flat racing during the review period.

Despite the impact first of the Stockton & Darlington Railway on freight and mineral transport, and then of the Liverpool & Manchester Railway as a demonstration of relatively speedy, cheap and reliable mass passenger transport, there was no significant advance for some seven years after 1830. In 1836 London had a mere two miles of railway. By 1838 it was possible to travel by train from the capital to Liverpool and Manchester, to say nothing of the opportunity to get within striking distance of both Epsom and Ascot by the new mode of transport. Thereafter events moved swiftly, and within three years it was possible to travel from London to Exeter, Lancaster and Darlington, albeit in the latter case by a quite different route from that which we regard as normal today. By 1844 both London and Bristol were linked to Newcastle by rail, and much of the framework of trunk lines was in place, at least in England. East Anglia, however, was a railway desert beyond Colchester, while apart from a few short and isolated lines, only the Bristol & Exeter Railway penetrated the area west of Southampton and south of the London - Bristol main line. In Scotland, by 1842 it was possible to travel between Edinburgh, Glasgow and Ayr, and eight years later

Aberdeen was connected to the main rail network, although there were no railways at all north of a line drawn between the latter city and Greenock. Railways extended along both the south and north Wales coasts by 1850, although it was to be a further two years before the former was connected to the main railway system, and penetration through mid-Wales and along the west coast of the Principality took place only in the later 1860s.

### THE EARLY YEARS

Although in the eighteenth century - and before - there had been many tramways or plateways using horse traction to move coal and other minerals from mines and quarries, the Surrey Iron Railway, which opened on 26 July 1803, differed from its predecessors in that it was the first public railway scheme to be laid before Parliament. It carried agricultural products as well as coal and minerals to and from the capital, but no passengers. This distinction fell to the Oystermouth Railway, extending some eight miles from Swansea towards Mumbles Head, which started to carry fare paying passengers in horsedrawn trains on 25 March 1807, <sup>1</sup> thus predating the Stockton & Darlington Railway by almost twenty years, although this facility was to be withdrawn in 1826. Even at this early stage of railway history there were ambitious schemes such as the 'Great National design of a Rail Road from Glasgow to Berwick', <sup>2</sup> but these were all stillborn, and the twenty railway schemes authorised by 1819 were for relatively short mineral lines in various parts of the country. Although steam locomotives were being developed and used very early in the century, <sup>3</sup> it was not until the 1830s that they really came into their own, and even then there was much agonising and conflict between the protagonists of stationary engines and locomotives, to say nothing of those who still thought the horse was irreplaceable. <sup>4</sup>

The first railway of real significance was the Stockton & Darlington Railway, authorised in 1821 but, despite the fact that George Stephenson had maintained that

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<sup>1</sup> Lee, C.E. *The Swansea & Mumbles Railway* (Oakwood Press, Blandford, 1970) pp.5-9.

<sup>2</sup> *Sheffield Mercury*, 9 December 1809.

<sup>3</sup> Notably by Richard Trevithick, who tested the first practical steam rail locomotive on 15 February 1804 on the Penydarran Ironworks plateway near Merthyr Tydfil, and George Stephenson with the 'Blücher' at Killingworth Colliery in Northumberland in 1814. See Ferneyhough, F. *Liverpool & Manchester Railway 1830 - 1980* (Robert Hale Ltd., London 1986) pp.6ff.

<sup>4</sup> Carter, E. *An Historical Geography of the Railways of the British Isles* (Cassell & Co. Ltd., London, 1959) pp.6-7, quoting from a contemporary magazine, *Sporting Anecdotes*.

his 'locomotive was worth fifty horses', <sup>5</sup> its initial acts gave no authority either for the use of steam locomotives or for the carriage of passengers. This came only in 1823 and, apart from the much publicised opening on 27 September 1825, passengers were hauled - often in chaotic conditions, by horse traction, until 1833 - freight traffic was all important.

Rather ironically in view of what transpired, the original purpose of the Liverpool & Manchester Railway was to carry freight between the two cities, as the average transit time by the circuitous canal routes which linked them was about 36 hours, even when passage was not hindered by ice and snow in winter and lack of water in summer. Moreover, all 28 railways totalling 418½ miles already authorised by the time the L. & M.R. was incorporated on 5 May 1826, had the transport of freight as their primary objective. Nevertheless, despite the tragic events at its ceremonial opening on 15 September 1825, the outstanding success of the passenger services on the L. & M.R. meant that the first freight train did not run until 4 December, although it achieved, even with three stops, a very creditable transit time of 2 hours 54 minutes.

All the railways opened for some seven years after the L. & M.R. were relatively isolated, but some, such as the Leeds & Selby <sup>6</sup> and the Newcastle & Carlisle, <sup>7</sup> would in due course form part of major routes.

### THE TRUNK NETWORK TAKES SHAPE

6 May 1833 was a most important date in the development of railways in the British Isles, for it was then that the Grand Junction and London & Birmingham Railways were incorporated. In just over five years these linked London via Birmingham with both Liverpool and Manchester, some 200 miles distant, as well as with other Lancashire towns to which short lines had been built both before and after the opening of the L. & M.R. The G.J.R. opened between Warrington and Birmingham on 4 July 1837, while the L. & B.R. was completed in September of the following year, after its

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<sup>5</sup> Carter, *Historical Geography*, pp.16-17.

<sup>6</sup> Carter, *Historical Geography*, p.39. When opened on 22 September 1834, the Leeds & Selby Railway quickly raised the number of return journeys over its route to 3,500 per week compared to 400 by coach, and within seven years formed part of a continuous line of railway linking Liverpool and Hull.

<sup>7</sup> The Newcastle & Carlisle Railway opened its 60 mile line in stages between 1835 and 1839, gaining markedly in importance when its eastern and western extremities were connected to the trunk routes from London in 1844 and 1846 respectively. For more details see Whittle, G. *The Newcastle & Carlisle Railway* (David & Charles, Newton Abbot, 1979) pp.26ff.

engineer, Robert Stephenson, had overcome the difficulties of Kilsby tunnel, a totally unnecessary structure thrust upon him by the intransigence of the inhabitants of Northampton, who refused to have a railway passing through or close to their town. By 1841, it was possible to travel from London via Birmingham to Liverpool or Manchester in about 8¾ hours with 13 intermediate stops, but by 1850 still using the same route the Merseyside city could be reached in 6 hours 10 minutes with an equivalent number of stops.<sup>8</sup>

Meanwhile other important lines radiating from London were being opened. The London & Southampton Railway was destined to reap the whirlwind when it attempted to cope with racegoers to the Derby shortly after its opening as far as Woking Common on 21 May 1838. It was then completed in somewhat piecemeal fashion through to its western terminus on 11 May 1840, by which time it was known as the London & South Western Railway,<sup>9</sup> and destined to become a major sponsor of races. The Great Western Railway, when opened from Paddington to Maidenhead on 4 June 1838, was definitely different. Unlike most other lines so far described, which were constructed to the so-called 'standard' gauge of 4ft. 8½in, the G.W. line was built to the 'broad' gauge of 7ft.0¼in. The capital was linked via Bristol to Bridgewater on 30 June 1841 over the Bristol & Exeter Railway,<sup>10</sup> which reached Taunton on 1 July 1842 and its southern terminus on 1 May 1844. By then an express train could cover the 193.¾ miles in 4½ hours, although a more usual average was 7 to 8 hours. The third class passenger could take up to 15 hours to cover the same distance depending on the number and length of intermediate stops, but even this represented a gain of some five hours on the stage coach journey, although the railway route was 30 miles longer. 1836 was a peak year for railway legislation as some 25 lines were authorised, with powers to raise a total of £19.5 million in capital and loans.<sup>11</sup> Several of these were to form a major axis from Gloucester to Darlington, and all were completed

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<sup>8</sup> *Bradshaw's Railway Companion*, October 1841, and *Bradshaw's General Railway and Steam Navigation Guide*, March 1850.

<sup>9</sup> The name change was authorised by the Act of 4 June 1839.

<sup>10</sup> Authorised in May 1836, the B.& E.R. was leased to the G.W.R. for five years from the opening of its main line. It became independent again on 1 May 1849, and remained so until its amalgamation with the major company in 1876.

<sup>11</sup> Vaughan, A. *Railwaymen, Politics & Money* (John Murray Ltd., London, 1997) p.93 sees the years 1835 - 1836 as the second 'Railway Mania', the first having taken place between 1824 and 1826. In this study, however, the term 'Railway Mania' will refer specifically to 1844 - 1847 and the second

between 1839 and 1841. In the same period the Hull & Selby and Manchester & Leeds Railways, also authorised in 1836, completed the 130 mile chain of lines between Liverpool and Hull, but this was not fully in use until 1 March 1841, because of the engineering difficulties encountered with the Littleborough tunnel.

All these impressive achievements took place in five years from authorisation, but the situation with two ambitious schemes for East Anglia, also incorporated in 1836, was very different. The Eastern Counties and Northern & Eastern Railways, both originally built to a gauge of 5ft., were almost complete failures under the terms of their original acts. The former took seven years to reach Colchester, during which time the company had expended £1 million more than the capital authorised for the whole of its projected line to Norwich and Yarmouth.<sup>12</sup> Although the original prospectus of the N. & E.R. had envisaged a line from London to York, authority had been granted only for a line to Cambridge, but even that had proved too much and construction had stopped in September 1840 at Broxbourne, a mere 16 miles from the capital. This should have been a salutary warning well before the 'Railway Mania', and certainly the sanctions for new lines slowed down markedly between 1837 and 1843, when even well organised companies, with their construction costs under control, struggled to complete the works for which they had been authorised.

Nevertheless, some did manage to achieve their objectives, including the South Eastern Railway, which had to gain entry to London over the London & Croydon, London & Greenwich and London & Brighton Railways, but opened its line to Tonbridge in 1842, reaching Folkestone in the following year and extending to Dover in 1844. This gave a rail link to the Continent in addition to that which the London & Brighton Railway had provided since 21 September 1841. Brighton, apart from having been a favoured watering place for the Prince Regent (later King George IV), had provided a steamer service to the Continent for many years.

The Glasgow, Paisley, Kilmarnock & Ayr and Glasgow, Paisley & Greenock Railways, both authorised in 1837, were important not only for their part in transporting racegoers and the financial support they gave to the meetings at Paisley and Ayr, but also for the role they played in the development of the Glasgow & South

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and smaller surge in railway speculation in the 1860s. See also Thomas, R.H.G. 'The First Railway Mania' *Journal of the Railway & Canal Historical Society*, XXVII, 1983, pp. 241 - 243.

<sup>12</sup> Carter, *Historical Geography*, pp.62-64.



Western and Caledonian Railways. The Chester & Crewe Railway, authorised in the same year, when opened on 1 October 1840, took the railway to the borders of Wales, but nothing of importance other than the opening of isolated mineral lines took place in the Principality for another eight years.

Of the companies authorised in 1838 the Edinburgh & Glasgow, opened on 16 February 1842, provided an important artery for the railways of Southern Scotland, although these were still isolated from the English network. At the other end of the country, the Bristol & Gloucester Extension Railway not only linked the two towns in its title, but as a 'broad' gauge line, ultimately helped to ignite the 'gauge wars' as it brought the rival schemes into physical contact for the first time when finally opened on 8 July 1845.

Despite this last example, railway construction was still relatively quick, and incorporation not too inhibited by rival schemes, but all this would change in a few short years. One line promoted at the right time was the Darlington & Newcastle Railway, authorised in 1842, and when opened for traffic on 18 June 1844, linked the Tyneside city with the capital in less than 12 hours, although the route was via Derby and Rugby and into Euston.

### THE RAILWAY MANIA YEARS

By 1844 the revival in the promotion of new railway schemes was well underway. Five of the major schemes authorised in that year are worthy of note as they were virtually to complete the trunk network - with one or two notable exceptions - by 1850. The Chester & Holyhead Railway was authorised on 4 July, and formed an effective rival to the existing route for Irish traffic via Liverpool. Running close to the North Wales coast for almost all its length, it was opened throughout by 1 August 1848, except for the crossing of the Menai Strait, which had to be effected by coach over Telford's suspension bridge until Robert Stephenson's Britannia Tubular bridge was opened on 18 March 1850.

The broad gauge South Devon Railway, which was effectively a prolongation of the Bristol & Exeter, was authorised on the same day as the Chester & Holyhead, and despite an unfortunate flirtation with the 'atmospheric system of propulsion' as an

alternative to steam traction, succeeded in reaching Plymouth on 2 April 1849.<sup>13</sup> although its various branches, mainly promoted by local interests, would take some twenty years to complete.

The Lancaster & Carlisle Railway, which completed the west coast route to the Scottish border via Birmingham, was also authorised in 1844, and completed with commendable speed by 17 December 1846. So too was the Norwich & Brandon Railway, which together with the revived Northern & Eastern (now leased to the Eastern Counties Railway, and like its new owner converted to standard gauge) was to complete a line from London to Norwich via Cambridge. When it was opened on 30 July 1845 it had required little over 15 months for its construction unlike the vicissitudes of the original company, which had spent some nine years in intermittent building. Like most railways in East Anglia, the Norwich & Brandon ultimately formed part of the Great Eastern Railway.

Probably the most important new company to be incorporated in 1844 was the North British Railway, which was to build a line from Edinburgh to Berwick, and together with the Newcastle & Berwick Railway, authorised in the following year, would complete the link between London and Edinburgh and connect the Scottish railways to the English network. Although these two railways reached the banks of the Tweed in 1846 and 1847 respectively, a temporary viaduct across the river was not opened until 10 October 1848, and this remained in use until the completion of the Royal Border Bridge on 29 August 1850. The N.B.R. was to develop into one of the major Scottish companies and survive until the 1923 Grouping, but the Midland Railway, incorporated on 10 May 1844, was born out of the amalgamation of various companies under the aegis of George Hudson.<sup>14</sup> It would continue to pursue acquisitions and new lines, making two important additions to the rail network in the 1860s and 1870s.

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<sup>13</sup> Continuation beyond Plymouth was somewhat fraught. The West Cornwall Railway from Truro to Penzance, although authorised originally as broad gauge, was constructed to standard gauge to save money and to harmonise with the earlier Hayle Railway. As recounted by Anthony, G.H. in *The Hayle, West Cornwall and Helston Railways* (Oakwood Press, Lingfield, 1968), this did not cause a problem from its completion in 1852 until the long delayed opening of the Cornwall Railway between Plymouth and Truro in May 1859, which had already given an extended life to trunk stage coach services in the south-west. The Cornwall Railway was broad gauge, and so trans-shipment was necessary at Truro until the West Cornwall Railway was regauged. The first through passenger train from Paddington to Penzance did not run until 1 March 1867, almost 21 years after the two Cornish companies had been incorporated.

<sup>14</sup> George Hudson (1800 - 1871) known as the 'Railway King', was also an M.P. and three times Lord Mayor of York. He was involved in numerous railway schemes and was instrumental in the formation

Rather paradoxically as the 'Railway Mania' runs into its peak years and the number of railway schemes increases tremendously, the number to be discussed individually in this brief survey will decrease, as with the trunk network virtually complete - at least on paper - and, certainly after the Great Exhibition of 1851, fully attuned to mass excursions of all types, the key railway elements affecting flat racing are almost all in place. Individual lines are then generally better discussed in conjunction with the racecourses and traffic which they served.

The broad gauge South Wales Railway, at 194½ miles the longest line so far authorised by a single Act of Parliament, was destined to open up the South Wales coast just as the Chester & Holyhead had done for the north, but more importantly would connect with or give impetus to the construction of numerous lines serving the rich coalfields in the area, as well as ultimately providing access to important harbours in West Wales. Capital of £2.8 million was authorised on 4 August 1845, but although it was opened between Chepstow and Swansea on 18 June 1850, it remained isolated from the main railway system until 19 July 1852, when a bridge was opened over the River Wye.<sup>15</sup> Like the South Wales Railway, the Oxford, Worcester & Wolverhampton Railway was destined to become part of the G.W. system. By virtue of its location it was forced to construct some of its lines with both standard and broad gauge tracks, and thus gave scope for much acrimonious dispute both before and after the opening on 1 October 1852 of its rival, the Birmingham & Oxford Junction Railway, and its own delayed opening between Wolvercote Junction, north of Oxford, to Evesham on 4 June 1853.<sup>16</sup> Although the broad gauge was to survive until 1892, the writing was already on the wall when standard gauge trains began to run between Paddington and Birmingham on 1 October 1861. The 'battle of the gauges' had no effect on race traffic and will not concern us except in passing.

A major development occurred in Scotland on 31 July 1845 when both the Caledonian and Scottish Central Railways were authorised. These two companies

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of the Midland Railway. His involvement in the Eastern Counties Railway and indirectly with the Newmarket Railway, coupled with his propensity for shady dealing, brought about his downfall. Bailey, B. *George Hudson - The Rise and Fall of the Railway King* (Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd., Stroud 1995) is a recent biography covering all aspects of his life.

<sup>15</sup> *Illustrated London News*, 24 July 1852.

<sup>16</sup> Jenkins, S.C. & Quayle, H.I. *The Oxford, Worcester & Wolverhampton Railway* (Oakwood Press, Blandford, 1977) cover the subject in detail. The section of line between Stourbridge and Evesham had been open since 1 May 1852.

were to link Carlisle, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Perth and Aberdeen, although some sections of the route were over existing railways. Perth was reached on 22 May 1848, and Aberdeen on 1 April 1850. All the lines involved became part of the Caledonian Railway, and effectively thwarted the North British Railway in its bid to reach the Granite City.

Quite apart from the myriad conflicting schemes which did not reach the statute book, there were several schemes for alternative routes between major cities - whether more direct or more circuitous - which brought about amalgamations of companies having similar ambitions or mutual problems. The Liverpool & Bury Railway, in linking the towns in its title via Wigan and Bolton, gave the Manchester & Leeds Railway an alternative to the L. & M. route in its attempt to tap the lucrative Liverpool traffic. The amalgamation of these two in 1846 effectively formed the Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway, although the name was not confirmed until the Act of 9 July 1847. 1846 also saw the formation of the London & North Western Railway, after the authorisation of the Trent Valley Railway between Rugby and Stafford had caused the Grand Junction Railway considerable concern at the potential loss of much of its traffic between London, Lancashire and Scotland. After flirting with schemes which would have allied them with the G.W.R., the G.J. directors decided that their fortunes were best served by remaining with the 'devils they knew'. The L.N.W.R. was born from the amalgamation of the G.J., London & Birmingham and Birmingham & Manchester Railways on 16 July 1846, when its combined authorised capital was just under £23 million,<sup>17</sup> making it the largest company in the world at the time.<sup>18</sup>

Towards the end of 1845 the fever of railway speculation was at its height and *The Times*<sup>19</sup> added fuel to the flames in an article entitled 'The Railway Interests of the United Kingdom', by stating that the total capital invested in completed railways was over £70 million, with a further £67 million already expended or to be expended on lines under construction. This pales into insignificance beside the £563 million required for the 620 projected schemes for which details were available, to say nothing of the 643 other projects whose prospectuses had not been published, and for which no financial calculations could be made. In fact only 120 of the 225 schemes presented to

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<sup>17</sup> Carter, *Historical Geography*, p.115.

<sup>18</sup> Vaughan, *Railwaymen*, p.97.

<sup>19</sup> *The Times*, 17 November 1845.

Parliament during the 1845 Session had received the Royal Assent, but nevertheless these had sanctioned 2,883 miles of new railway at a cost of about £44 million, compared to the earlier peak in the mid-1830s, when some fifty acts had authorised about 1,600 miles. But worse was to come, as in 1846 there were no fewer than 272 Acts authorising 4,790 miles of new railway, for which total capital and loans would be in excess of £121 million.

Two companies which were to form important components of the trunk network, and managed to escape wholly or partly the clutches of the newly-born L.N.W.R., even though they had originally been promoted by the London & Birmingham Railway, were the Shrewsbury & Birmingham and Shrewsbury & Hereford Railways, both authorised in 1846. The former, despite its name, only connected Shrewsbury with Wolverhampton when opened throughout on 12 November 1849. Apart from the Shrewsbury to Wellington section, which became joint G.W./L.N.W. property, the rest became part of the G.W.R., and together with the Shrewsbury & Chester and Birkenhead Railways would give the major company access to Merseyside and the opportunity to run Grand National specials. The 50.3/4 mile Shrewsbury & Hereford Railway formed part of a trunk route close to the Welsh border, and in due course facilitated the construction of the L.N.W.R. Central Wales line. It took until 6 December 1853 to complete, and remained joint G.W./L.N.W. property until the Grouping.

1846 also saw the incorporation of the London, Brighton & South Coast Railway by the amalgamation of the London & Brighton and London & Croydon Railways. It certainly lived up to its new name, for in the year of its formation its line along the south coast stretched from Hastings to Chichester - the nearest it would get to Goodwood for 35 years.

But by far the most important new railway to be authorised in this peak 'Railway Mania' year was the Great Northern, whose main line was to run from London to York via Peterborough and Doncaster, a distance of nearly 186 miles, together with an 83 mile loop line from Peterborough through Boston and Lincoln to rejoin the main line at Bawtry. When the southern section was opened on 7 August 1850, it cut almost 30 miles off the shortest existing route between London and Peterborough. Even the loop line, opened at the same time, was shorter than the old route to York via Derby, but with the opening of the direct 'towns' route through Grantham and Newark

on 1 August 1852, the east coast route to Scotland gained an advantage which no amount of acceleration by the L.N.W.R. and its associates could match.

1846 was also a boom year in Scotland, where almost 60 new lines were authorised, but only one, the Glasgow, Dumfries & Carlisle Railway, was of real importance as far as race traffic was concerned. Not only did it produce a new route between London and Glasgow by 1850, but amalgamated a year later with the Glasgow, Paisley, Kilmarnock & Ayr Railway to form the Glasgow & South Western Railway.

But while all these schemes were being born the Board of Trade could report the opening only 350 miles of new railway between November 1845 and October 1846.<sup>20</sup> Realism was also starting to filter into the minds of railway promoters and parliamentary committees alike, for although in 1847 there were 173 Acts involving 1,663 miles and total capital of £35 million, far more emphasis was paid to the revision and curtailment of what had been approved in the previous two years. There was a realisation that there was neither the capital nor the manpower to build railways at the rate at which they were being authorised.<sup>21</sup> Well over twice as many miles of railway - 9,336 miles in 576 Acts - had been authorised between 1845 and 1847 as in the previous 44 years, when 3,970 miles had been approved by 412 Acts. At the end of 1842 there were 2,036 miles of railway in use. Six years later there were about 4,500 miles, of which a quarter had been completed in the previous year. A half yearly report covering the period up to June 1848 indicated that no less than 188,197 people were employed on 2,958 miles of railway under construction. 1848 saw only 77 Acts authorising about 300 miles of new railway, and much lower totals were recorded in the next two years. Even so, by the end of 1850, only just over half of the 12,000 miles of authorised railway had been completed. Less than one third of the 1848 level of new lines - 864 miles - were in progress, and only 58,884 people were engaged in this work. But although there was no return to the frenzy of the mid-1840s there was a further minor boom in the early 1860s, which effectively ended when a general

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<sup>20</sup> Carter. *Historical Geography*, p.162.

<sup>21</sup> This was hardly surprising as in the mid 1840s Britain was heading towards the worst economic crisis since the end of the Napoleonic Wars. Bad corn harvests and the failure of the potato crop in 1845 caused hardship in mainland Britain and a disaster in Ireland. There was also a commercial crisis, caused to some extent by the failure of the American cotton crop, and many banks failed. Just when it seemed that the economic crisis was ending at the start of 1848, revolutions in France and other European countries paralysed business. But the discovery of gold in California enabled America to purchase large quantities of British manufactured goods and the tide turned.

financial crisis engulfed a number of companies closely associated with the financing and construction of railways.

### TAKING STOCK AND CONSOLIDATION

By the early 1850s then, almost all the lines which could have any marked effect on horseracing were already in place. Even Newmarket, which had in the Jockey Club a somewhat ambivalent protagonist of railways, had been connected, albeit somewhat tenuously to the main network since 1848. It would benefit from a permanent connection via Cambridge in 1851, even though this brought about the closure of the original main line.

While much of the legislation of the early 1850s covered branches to relatively remote or minor places and alternative routes, there was still scope to link major population centres such as Worcester. This scheme, authorised in 1853, took seven years to complete and led to a series of amalgamations, first to form the West Midland Railway - a regular but shortlived supporter of Worcester races - and the absorption into the Great Western Railway. 1853 also saw with the incorporation of the Llanidloes & Newtown Railway the start of the group of railways, which in 1864 would form the Cambrian Railways and open up mid-Wales and its coastline. The L. & N.R. took until 1859 to complete its lines, and its associates reached Aberystwyth in 1864 and Pwllheli in 1867. The L.N.W.R. striking out from the Shrewsbury & Hereford line reached Swansea in 1868 over a number of joint lines.

### ANOTHER MINOR BOOM

Even in 1853 only 491 miles of railway were being worked on out of a total of 2,950 already authorised, but there was a gradual return of confidence, and the number of Bills receiving the Royal Assent rose to 162 by 1861, although many were for short branches and connecting lines, or duplicated, replaced and amended lines already authorised and abandoned. Nevertheless, the period 1861 to 1864 saw the incorporation of a number of lines which in 1865 would form the Cheshire Lines Committee,<sup>22</sup> and provide, among other things, yet another route between Liverpool

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<sup>22</sup> The Cheshire Lines Transfer Act of 5 July 1865 vested six railways jointly in the Great Northern and Manchester, Sheffield & Lincolnshire Railways with powers for the Midland Railway to join as an equal partner, which it did in the following year. These small railways, together with lines

and Manchester. In 1862 the much maligned Eastern Counties Railway amalgamated with other companies to form the Great Eastern Railway, which went on to become one of the most efficient and punctual of pre-grouping railways, proving that the leopard can change its spots.

By 1862, there were just under 10,000 miles of railway in operation in the United Kingdom, over which 160 million passengers and 240,000 horses were conveyed. Railway promotion remained at a high level until 1865, when no less than 250 Acts received the Royal Assent. Even though the bubble finally burst with the failure of the finance house of Overend & Gurney and the railway contractors Peto & Betts in May 1866, 201 railway bills received the Royal Assent. The majority, it is true, covered financial arrangements, extension of time for constructing lines or the amalgamation of companies already in existence. Nevertheless the six years 1860 - 65 had seen the authorisation of about 7,300 miles of new railway or over 1,200 miles each year. 1867 saw a return to sanity with only some 200 miles authorised, while the collapse of unsound companies caused havoc among contractors. Intransigent shareholders refused to pour good money after bad, and many schemes already approved were abandoned without any work having taken place. But one major scheme was worthy of attention - the extension of the Midland Railway's main line from Bedford to London, culminating in the opening of the magnificent terminus at St. Pancras on 1 October 1868, and a brief spate of sponsorship for flat racing and steeplechase meetings along its route. During the next ten years most of the railway Acts addressed financial matters, extensions of time and the construction of short branches. Nevertheless, there were some impressive achievements, and with the opening of the line to Wick and Thurso on 28 July 1874, it became possible to travel by rail all the way from Penzance, a distance of over 1,000 miles. In 1876 the Midland Railway completed its Settle & Carlisle line, which was achieved at the cost of much hardship and several fatalities. In 1873 there was a minor peak of 104 railway Acts receiving the Royal Assent, and their number decreased to a low point of only 15 in 1910, but in any case only a small proportion covered new lines and new companies. The railway system had continued to grow steadily, and by 1873 there were 11,369 miles open in England and Wales

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subsequently authorised, ultimately provided a network linking Manchester with Liverpool, Southport and Chester.



with a further 2,612 miles in use in Scotland. Passenger journeys had almost tripled to 455 million in less than 12 years.

### UP TO THE GROUPING

The railway system continued to expand throughout the rest of the century, and was given added stimulus by the Light Railways Act of 1896, which allowed short local railways to be built and operated cheaply under Board of Trade Orders.<sup>23</sup> This enabled lightly populated areas of the country to be opened up, and even major railway companies took advantage of the facility. By the turn of the century the railways were starting to come under some pressure from motor vehicles in rural areas, but this was nothing compared to the competition from the spread of electric tramways in urban areas, which were countered to some degree by steam railmotors providing frequent services on lines where additional rudimentary halts were erected to reduce the distance between stations. There were also some electrification schemes, but these flourished mainly in the London area where there was a tremendous expansion in the interwar years.

Only one major new railway line is of particular interest - the opening of the Great Central Railway's London extension from Annesley near Nottingham to Quainton Road, giving access to a fine new station at Marylebone and brought into service on 15 March 1899. The G.C.R. was held up as a paragon - at least as far as dealing with race traffic was concerned - by F.H. Bayles during the first decades of the twentieth century.<sup>24</sup>

On 31 December 1899 the total capital authorised for railway companies in the U.K. was in excess of £1,275 million, more than fulfilling the prophecy of *The Times* some 45 years earlier. In the U.K. (including Ireland) there were 21,700 miles of railway open for traffic and 1,108 million passengers were carried in the year, over twice as many as 25 years previously.

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<sup>23</sup> This enabled railways to be built without incurring the expense of the full parliamentary procedure. Reading S.J. *The Derwent Valley Light Railway* (Oakwood Press, Lingfield, 1967) p.7 gives details.

<sup>24</sup> Bayles, F.H. *Atlas and Review of British Racecourses* (Equitable Publishing Syndicate, London, 1911) pp. XXI - XXII.

The years before the First World War saw traffic hit by a number of coal and railway strikes, and during the war itself the transit of both racehorses and spectators was limited by governmental directive, even to those meetings which were permitted. This forced both owners and racegoers to break the almost total monopoly of the railways, and the interwar years saw a tremendous spread of motor transport (and aeroplanes for both rich racegoers and jockeys), but railways still remained the dominant mode of travel for both people and horses until the late 1950s.

This brief survey ends at the 1923 Grouping when all the major companies, and many of the smaller ones, were amalgamated into one or more of four large companies - only the Great Western Railway maintaining its identity.

**RAILWAY SERVICES & SUPPORT  
FOR FLAT RACING, ITS SPECTATORS  
AND PARTICIPANTS**

## CHAPTER FOUR

### TRAIN SERVICES AND FARES FOR RACEGOERS

#### INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the development of train services for racegoers - whether by regular train or special excursions - together with the fares charged. These were normally set at a single fare for the return journey provided this was made on the same day. Some companies were more generous in their approach, while a minority endeavoured to maximise profits or subsidise the provision of an overgenerous infrastructure by charging higher than normal fares for major events such as the Derby. Trains were run on a local or national level to most race meetings, even those of a minor status, if the local railway management felt that these would generate enough interest. Passenger accommodation ranged from open waggons for some early racegoers to first class Pullman and restaurant cars for the 'toffs' in later years. Race train operation covered the whole spectrum from clockwork precision by the Great Northern Railway for the St. Leger meeting to total chaos, overcrowding and a 'take it or leave it' attitude from both railway companies and their employees.

A chronological approach has been adopted both here and in Chapter 5, which deals with special station facilities for race meetings. As the development of train services, particularly at major meetings such as Doncaster and Epsom, is bound up with the provision of additional station facilities, there will be some overlap between the two chapters. This also prevents Chapter 5 from becoming a mere recital of dates, places and operational data. Details of the special stations mentioned in both chapters are in Appendix IV.

#### THE EARLY YEARS TO 1850

The Liverpool & Manchester Railway provided for the first time a means of mass passenger transportation, saving both time and money for those individuals who were

able to afford the fares. The first trains could carry over one hundred passengers<sup>1</sup>, and demand increased rapidly, as the company exploited its opportunities and public confidence and interest grew in the new mode of travel.<sup>2</sup> By the early 1840s excursion trains with over 40 carriages hauled by several engines were running to the seaside and other destinations.<sup>3</sup>

The first recorded race excursions took place on 1-3 June 1831, when the L.& M.R. set out to carry some 2,400 racegoers to each day of the Newton meeting. The first class fare was 5/-, and this guaranteed a seat. Twenty six cotton waggons were fitted up for temporary use as second class carriages, and the return fare for travelling in these or the regular carriages was 2/6d.<sup>4</sup> 1,200 different coloured tickets were provided each day for journeys starting from either Liverpool or Manchester, and the service was advertised both by posters and in the press. There was a special train from both Liverpool and Manchester each day at 11 a.m., returning half an hour after the last race, but not before 7 p.m., and the regular service trains were retimed to make them available to returning racegoers. On the second day of the meeting there was also a special from Bolton which reached the L.& M. line via the Bolton & Leigh and

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<sup>1</sup> Carlson, R.E. *The Liverpool & Manchester Railway Project 1821-1831* (David & Charles, Newton Abbot, 1969) p.235, and Ferneyhough, F. *Liverpool & Manchester Railway 1830 - 1980* (Robert Hale Ltd., London, 1980) p.81. On 16 September 1830, the day before regular public services began, a special train was run for some 130 members of the Society of Friends to enable them to attend their quarterly meeting. A standard first class fare of 7/- each way was charged. A second class single fare of 4/- was not introduced until 22 September 1830.

<sup>2</sup> 6.014 travelled on the L.& M.R. in the first eight days of operation. *The Times*, 6 October 1830 reported that 550 passengers travelled from Manchester alone on 30 September 1830. From mid October the L. & M. ran excursions from both ends of the line every day except Sunday to view the viaduct over the Sankey Navigation Canal near Newton. The return fare was 5/-.

<sup>3</sup> Dendy Marshall, C.F. (rev. Kidner, R.W.) *History of the Southern Railway* (Ian Allan Ltd., London, 1963) p.203. The London & Brighton Railway ran an excursion to Brighton on Easter Monday, 1844. It set out with 45 carriages hauled by four locomotives, and after being augmented twice en route, ended up at its destination with 57 carriages and six engines after a journey of 4½ hours.

<sup>4</sup> Ferneyhough, *Liverpool & Manchester Railway*, p.88-89, and Thomas, R.H.G. *The Liverpool & Manchester Railway* (B.T. Batsford Ltd., London, 1980) p.198. The regular second class carriages on the L.& M.R. did not get roofs until 1834 or closed sides (with windows) until 1840. In the early days servants accompanying their masters were better off as they were accommodated in a special compartment in the first class coach, although only paying a second class fare. Although the provision of third class carriages was considered by the L.& M.R. in 1840, there were no regular services incorporating them until 1 October 1844. Some railways did not provide third class accommodation for another 30 years, and until the early days of the twentieth century some excursionists still travelled in open waggons.

Kenyon & Leigh Junction Railways, over a week before these opened to normal passenger traffic.<sup>5</sup>

Excursions were also run to Liverpool races on 5-8 July 1831, but the L.& M.R. does not appear to have run any to the corresponding event at Manchester or to an earlier meeting in Liverpool. Unlike the Newton meeting, where the stations were relatively close to the course, the Liverpool terminus at Crown Street was about five miles from Aintree and seven miles from Maghull, when meetings were held there.

Although the special trains to Newton had been a great success, the decanting of large crowds at the two rudimentary stations of Viaduct and Collins Green had caused considerable operational problems on the L.& M. line, which were exacerbated after the meeting when racegoers who had arrived by various trains all wanted to go home at the same time. Both the L.& M.R. and Thomas Legh, the owner of the racecourse, were concerned about this, and agreement was reached for him to construct a station behind the grandstand, which would be reached by a branch from his own mineral line to Haydock, which both crossed and connected with the L.& M. line at Newton Junction station.<sup>6</sup> To help finance this the L.& M.R. raised the 2nd class race excursion fare from 2/6d. to 3/-, guaranteeing Legh 3d. for every passenger carried over his line. The branch was built in May 1832 and first used for the meeting on 20 - 22 June, greatly reducing the congestion on the L.& M. line. All went well until Friday, 16 June 1837, the last day of a three day meeting, when after a rainstorm a locomotive was derailed, trapping on the branch several trains for Liverpool, Manchester, Bolton, Wigan, Warrington and St. Helens. With the last service trains departing at 6.15 p.m., many racegoers were left with transport problems, some visitors from Bolton not reaching home until Sunday evening after a detour to Manchester and a canal boat to

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<sup>5</sup> The Bolton & Leigh Railway was opened for goods traffic, at least in part, on 1 August 1828. An extension, known as the Kenyon & Leigh Junction Railway, was opened to freight on 3 January 1831. (*Bolton Chronicle*, 8 January 1831). Both lines were opened to passengers on 11 June 1831, and were absorbed by the Grand Junction Railway in July 1845, becoming part of the L.N.W.R. in the following year. The provision of the race special prior to the opening is recounted in Thomas, *Liverpool & Manchester Railway*, p.199.

<sup>6</sup> Legh's mineral line, which originally ran to the Sankey Canal and antedated the L.& M.R., gave him certain rights of passage over the main line. Viaduct station was replaced by Newton Junction, probably on 25 July 1831, when the Warrington & Newton Railway was opened. Newton Junction was renamed Warrington Junction in the July 1852 *Bradshaw*, becoming Earlestown Junction in November 1861.

Bolton.<sup>7</sup> Satisfactory arrangements were made to avoid a repetition (see Chapter 5), but after the opening of the G.J.R. in July 1837, there were some problems at the 1838 meeting as that company opted to provide a shuttle service of one or two carriages from its stations in Cheshire. This created havoc on the L.& M. line, so the latter's board requested the G.J.R. to run one normal length train directly to the racecourse station to avoid this problem.<sup>8</sup> Both the improvements to the station and the control of operations were important, as by 1843 trains were running not only from the towns already mentioned, but also 'from Preston and the north and from Crewe and the south to the Course, close by the Grand Stand, so that there is no annoyance of dust or rain, and excellent accommodation afforded to the company at a cheap rate'.<sup>9</sup>

Although the attendances at Newton races were relatively modest, the more recently established Liverpool meetings were attracting in excess of 40,000, both before and after the advent of the railway.<sup>10</sup> Every conceivable form of transport was pressed into service to get both locals and visitors to either Aintree or Maghull, but the majority came on foot. The advent of the Grand National in 1837 (only so named two years later) increased the crush, which was not relieved by any railway nearer than the centre of Liverpool until the 1849 race.<sup>11</sup>

The Derby Day crowds at Epsom, however, were of a different order of magnitude with attendances of 60 - 80,000 reported in the 1820s,<sup>12</sup> rising to over 100,000 in the following decade. When the first section of the London & Southampton Railway between Nine Elms and Woking was nearing completion, the Chairman, Sir John Easthope, decreed that the scheduled opening should be brought forward from 1 June

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<sup>7</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 17 June 1837, *Bolton Chronicle*, 24 June 1837. See also 'Newton le Willows Races - History of the Races and other sports'. (Photocopy MS of unknown origin in St. Helens Central Library) (A29.8 93280) p.134.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas, *Liverpool & Manchester Railway*, p.199.

<sup>9</sup> 'Newton le Willows Races' (A.29.8 93280), p.135.

<sup>10</sup> *Liverpool Standard*, 1 March 1837, and Bird, T.H. *A Hundred Grand Nationals* (Country Life Ltd., London, 1937) pp.27-28, quoting *The Courier* in 1839. 'A greater crowd was never before seen on any race course than that at Aintree on Tuesday'.

<sup>11</sup> The Liverpool & Bury Railway, opened on 20 November 1848, provided a station relatively near the south east side of the course. This station, originally known as Simonswood, became Aintree by 1850 and Fazakerley in March 1860. The Liverpool, Ormskirk & Preston Railway, opened 2 April 1849, missed the Grand National by a month, but provided a station at Aintree close to the main entrance to the course. These companies were absorbed by the East Lancashire and Lancashire & Yorkshire Railways respectively before their lines were opened. Jordan, A. & Jordan, E. *Away for the Day* (Silver Link Publishing Ltd., Kettering, 1991) p.81, are incorrect in a number of statements concerning the opening of the stations at Aintree, including that of the C.L.C.

<sup>12</sup> *Bell's Life in London*, describing the 1823 Derby, quoted in Wynn Jones, M. *The Derby - A Celebration of the World's Most Famous Horse Race* (Croom Helm, London, 1979) pp.47-48.

to 21 May 1838, so that advantage could be taken of the Derby week crowds, although the nearest station on the line at Kingston (now Surbiton) was over seven miles from the course. Over 1,000 people had travelled on the line in the first week, but when trains for the races on 30, 31 May and 1 June were advertised, the company had no inkling of what would happen.<sup>13</sup> Some 5,000 racegoers besieged the London terminus and, despite heroic efforts by the railway staff, 'hundreds were fated to be disappointed. There were ten times more applicants for seats in the train vans than there were seats for their accommodation'.<sup>14</sup> Ultimately the company managed to get eight trains away to Kingston, whence the punters made their own way to the course. Despite the chaos, the receipts for the Derby week were ten times those of the opening week and demonstrated to the directors just what profit could be derived from race traffic. In the following year the company (by then the L.S.W.R.) contrived to despatch trains at twenty minute intervals from Nine Elms to Kingston, where the racegoers fell into the hands of predatory cabbies.

The L.S.W.R. was to have an undisputed monopoly of rail traffic to the Derby for only three more years, as in 1842 the London & Brighton Railway offered racegoers the opportunity to travel to its Stoa's Nest station, between Purley and Coulsdon 'and the activity that prevailed .... at the Croydon Railway terminus, particularly since the "Stoa's Nest" to which that railway runs, is not more than six miles from Epsom .... showed that the racing week had begun'.<sup>15</sup>

For the next four years the latter had to be satisfied with this arrangement, but behind the scenes the rival companies had schemes to bring the railway to Epsom itself.<sup>16</sup> In the event, the London, Brighton & South Coast Railway (as the company had become by the time its line was opened) triumphed and its line from West Croydon to Epsom

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<sup>13</sup> *The Times*, 29 May 1838.

<sup>14</sup> *The Times*, 31 May 1838.

<sup>15</sup> *Illustrated London News*, 28 May 1842. The London & Croydon Railway did not run to Stoa's Nest, which was a London & Brighton Railway station. The confusion arose because the latter's trains started from the London & Croydon terminus in London. The report is also optimistic in describing the distance to the course as 'not more than six miles' it was anything between seven and ten miles, depending on the route chosen. Wynn Jones, *The Derby*, p.61, is incorrect in implying that the London & Brighton was the first railway to bring racegoers within striking distance of Epsom.

<sup>16</sup> The Epsom & South Western Railway scheme, supported by the L.S.W.R., was rejected, one of the reasons being that it did not traverse a particularly well populated area. The Croydon & Epsom Railway, supported by the London & Brighton and London & Croydon Railways, was authorised on 29 July 1844, and luckily did not form part of the latter's ill-fated 'atmospheric railway' experiment.



was opened on 10 May 1847.<sup>17</sup> The station was still two miles from the racecourse, but, even when Epsom Downs station was opened 18 years later, many racegoers preferred to use the town station as there were plenty of hotels, shops and inns around it. For the moment, however, the L.B.S.C.R. had just over a week to prepare itself for the 1847 Derby, but despite its experience both in race traffic and running excursion trains to the seaside, it completely underestimated the pulling power of its new line, and there were some major frustrations, particularly for those who only 'reached the Epsom terminus by half past 3, where they learnt that the Derby was over, and met a crowd of persons returning towards London'.<sup>18</sup>

Although there was only one railway serving Epsom directly, the crowd at the 1851 Derby, estimated at between 200,000 and 300,000, was perhaps the highest attendance of the nineteenth century, but two more railways would arrive during the century with a final line right on the course in 1901. One view was that 'the railways did not noticeably affect the noisy, dusty, beer-swilling pilgrimage by road. Trains could still only accommodate a portion of the crowd, and offered only time-saving in place of bonhomie'.<sup>19</sup> This statement refers to the situation after the L.S.W.R. had built its line to Epsom in 1859, and remained largely true even when the railways became major players, for it took over one hundred years before they carried passengers equal to the highest crowds of the 1820s.<sup>20</sup> The effect of the L.S.W. line and the retaliation by the L.B.S.C.R. will be discussed later.

For Ascot, some two weeks after the 1838 Derby fiasco, the L.& S.R. made sensible plans and coped satisfactorily with trains to and from the railhead at Woking, seven miles from the course as the crow flies, but probably nearer ten miles over the roads and paths then in use. It was also helped by the opening of the Great Western Railway's Paddington to Bristol line as far as Maidenhead (the present Taplow) on 4

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<sup>17</sup> Jordan & Jordan, *Away for the Day*, p.90, are incorrect in stating that the L.S.W.R. was the first railway to reach Epsom. It did not arrive there until 1859.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Burnett, A. & Neligan, T. *The Derby - The Official Book of the World's Greatest Race* (Michael O'Mara Books, London, 1993) p.129 The photograph on this page purporting to be Tattenham Corner, is in fact Epsom Downs. But delays and crowds were endemic at major meetings before the coming of the railway. At Ascot in 1829/30 carriages were 20 deep down the straight and queues were half a mile long so that many racegoers did not arrive at the course until the main race was over. Batchelor, D. *The Turf of Old* (H.F. & G. Witherby Ltd., London, 1951) pp 67-68.

<sup>19</sup> Wynn Jones, *The Derby*, p.35. Nevertheless, when Pullman trains were introduced, some measure of the bonhomie returned, as the more affluent racegoers could have lunch on the way down, tea on the way back, and be in London in time for dinner.

<sup>20</sup> *Southern Railway Magazine*, July 1938, p.253.

June 1838. This gave the broad gauge company the ability to unload passengers at both Slough and Maidenhead, even though there was no official station at Slough because of the ongoing battle with the intransigent authorities of Eton College. The old order continued at Ascot, but changes in its nature were immediately evident. 'A great number of lodgings have been taken for the meeting at Windsor, Egham, Staines, etc., but a considerable portion of the assemblage seen on the Heath yesterday were merely visitors for the day ...' As there was little public transport in the area these were 'compelled to pedestrianise their way to the course' and at the end of the day 'were too late for the late train, too late for the coaches and too late to obtain food, raiment and lodging'.<sup>21</sup> In 1839 the G.W.R. alone carried over 5,000 racegoers, who paid more than £2,000 in fares. Problems occurred when an already full excursion stopped at Slough and intending passengers climbed on the roof ready to go to London. The railway official refused to start the train, and after half an hour's delay he had his way. His persistence gained a commendation from the G.W. Company Secretary.<sup>22</sup> The transport situation continued without change for a further ten years, so that during the hot summer of 1843, 'a long tail of pedestrians were (sic!) flowing through Windsor and Eton 'till nearly eleven o'clock at night, tired, wearied and depressed with the laborious bliss of the day ... The innkeepers made yesterday a very pretty thing out of it.'<sup>23</sup>

In 1849 three railways built lines into the area without materially improving the situation. The G.W.R. and L.S.W.R. completed lines into Windsor on 8 October and 1 December respectively, but although this might have provided a more salubrious staging point than Slough or Woking, the same distance to Ascot had still to be covered by road. The third company, the South Eastern Railway, opened its isolated line between Reading and Farnborough on 4 July 1849, the nearest major station to Ascot being at Wokingham. For the moment, the centre of gravity for race traffic shifted to Windsor where the G.W.R. had the advantage of the patronage of the Royal

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<sup>21</sup> *The Times*, 13 June 1838.

<sup>22</sup> MacDermott, E.T. (rev. & enlarged by Clinker, C.R. & Nock, O.S.) *History of the Great Western Railway* (3 vols.) (Ian Allan Ltd., London, 1982) Vol. I, p.353.

<sup>23</sup> Quoted in Laird, D. *Royal Ascot* (Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1976) p.97. PRO 250/755 Report of the Gauge Commissioners, 1846. An undated 'open letter' of Observations bound into the Report indicated that 400 to 500 private carriages were loaded onto the railway at Paddington 'on an ordinary Ascot day ... without difficulty or accident...' (Obs. 38).

Family, a route five miles shorter and a journey time 15 minutes less.<sup>24</sup> This was as near as the G.W.R. would ever get to Ascot, but within seven years the L.S.W.R. would have a line close to the racecourse, and capable of taking G.W. and S.E. trains from the west as well as the London traffic.

By the early 1840s excursions to race meetings were becoming commonplace, and neither a five to eight mile accompanying road journey, even on foot, nor primitive and uncomfortable carriages or waggons were any deterrent, as for the majority of racegoers these represented a major improvement on previous modes of transport. Before moving on to the development of rail services for the St. Leger at Doncaster, it is appropriate both to look at less prestigious meetings and the vehicles provided for the less affluent traveller.

The race meeting at Preston had effectively become defunct after 1833, but was revived for the 1842 Preston Guild celebrations. The Preston & Wyre Railway ran trains from Fleetwood to all kinds of festivities associated with the Guild, including the races on 8 and 9 September, with return workings at 3 a.m. after the costume ball. Cattle trucks and freight waggons were pressed into service where necessary.<sup>25</sup>

The short lived meeting at Romford only appeared in the *Racing Calendar* from 1840 to 1844. But for a steeplechase in 1842, 'the elite of the sporting world' were transported by train and provided with a mobile grandstand as the carriages moved slowly alongside the course, 'thus affording an opportunity never before presented of witnessing a steeplechase throughout'.<sup>26</sup>

The 'sporting elite' was also targeted by the Glasgow & Ayrshire Railway in its advertisement for an express train of first and second class carriages to a steeplechase

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<sup>24</sup> See Potts, C.R. *Windsor to Slough - A Royal Branch Line* (Oakwood Press, Oxford, 1993) for the genesis and subsequent operation of this line and its competitor.

<sup>25</sup> *Preston Pilot*, 3 September 1842, carrying a Preston & Wyre Railway notice dated 30 August 1842. These races were held on Penwortham Holme as the old course on Fulwood Moor was being used for the construction of Fulwood Barracks. The revival saw meetings between 1845 and 1848, but these ended permanently after a fracas between soldiers of the 39th Regiment and the police. Hewitson, A. *History of Preston* (Preston Chronicle, Preston 1883, rep. S.R. Publications, Wakefield, 1969) p.120. See also Hardwick, C. *History of the Borough of Preston and its Environs* (Worthington & Co., Preston, 1857). The races were not revived for the Preston Guild in 1862 or 1882, when even greater numbers of passengers were carried.

<sup>26</sup> *Great Eastern Railway Magazine*, October 1913, p.332. Many early steeplechases were run over a cross country linear course, rather than a circuit, hence the advantage of a moving train.

meeting on 12 March 1846 at Kilmarnock. Ample time for the social niceties was provided with a return after the meeting at 10.15 p.m.<sup>27</sup>

A Newcastle & Carlisle Railway notice dated 17 June 1846 advertising a special train to 'Carlisle Races and Wrestling' on Wednesday, 1 July, provides a direct insight into the type of concession offered by some contemporary railways. Return journeys were allowed at the single fare of 11/- first class, 8/6d second class and 5/- third class, although the N. & C.R. seemingly did not introduce regular third class fares until early in 1847.<sup>28</sup> Two other concessions showed the company's keenness to maximise revenue from racegoers, although the fare would still be out of the reach of most working men. Tickets were valid for the return journey until the end of the meeting on 3 July, except for the eastbound mail train, which left Carlisle just after noon. Moreover, travellers coming from the North Shields line were able to travel on the 9 a.m. regular service train, as they could not reach Newcastle in time for the special, unless they got up at some really ungodly hour. The local press in Carlisle reported that 'we never saw the race course so densely crowded as on Thursday' and that 'the wrestling, which is generally the most attractive sport at our races, drawing together immense numbers of visitors and a rich field of competitors, was this year brought out with much spirit.'<sup>29</sup>

An analysis of twenty nine excursions operated from Birmingham in 1846 identified only three which were run specifically to race meetings or gave the opportunity to attend them.<sup>30</sup> These were to Chester races on 5 May (lowest fare 8/-), Nottingham races on 5 August (lowest fare 3/6d.) and to Leamington for Warwick races on 2 September (fare 3/-).<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> *Glasgow Argus*, 2 March 1846. The Glasgow & Ayrshire Railway in the advertisement is the Glasgow, Paisley, Kilmarnock & Ayr Railway.

<sup>28</sup> Whittle, G. *The Newcastle & Carlisle Railway* (David & Charles, Newton Abbot, 1979), p.48. This is borne out by contemporary issues of *Bradshaw*, which have only first and second class fares, but in March 1850 give the third class fare as 1d. per mile, i.e. 5/- for the 60 mile journey.

<sup>29</sup> *Carlisle Journal*, 4 July 1846. Jordan & Jordan, *Away for the Day*, who also use this quotation, are incorrect in stating that the Lancaster & Carlisle Railway 'poured in excursionists', as the line was not opened north of Oxenholme until 17 December 1846.

<sup>30</sup> Reid, D.A. "The Iron Roads" and "the Happiness of the Working Classes", *Journal of Transport History*, XVII, 1996, pp.57-73. The excursions were advertised in the *Birmingham Journal* on 18 April, 18 July and 29 August 1846. A survey of the other excursions made by the present writer against the dates of race meetings in the *Racing Calendar* for 1846, shows that it would not have been possible sensibly to attend any race meetings by taking advantage of the remaining 26 excursions.

<sup>31</sup> The Warwick station was at Milverton, on a branch from Kenilworth opened by the London & Birmingham Railway on 9 December 1844, and was known as Leamington at the time of the excursion listed by Reid. It was to change its name no less than nine times in the next 110 years. The

Despite the provision made by the Railway Regulation Act of 1844 for the comfort and conveyance of third class passengers, a notice in a local paper in 1848 informed the public that 'a wagon train will leave Blackburn Station at 12.30 p.m. on 14th, 15th, 16th June for Manchester races, returning shortly after races are over.'<sup>32</sup> The fare was 2/6d. return for sitting on the floor or standing, but the novelty attracted the punters as the first trip ran only two days after the railway between Bolton and Blackburn was opened, even though a double journey through the 2,015 yard Sough Tunnel in open waggons tempered their enthusiasm. This attitude on the part of the railway companies is typical of the era and was not directed specifically at racegoers. Some, like the Lancaster & Preston Junction Railway, even regressed and removed seats from third class coaches which already had them.<sup>33</sup> The Furness Railway on the other hand merely ignored the 1844 Act, and did not even contemplate third class passengers until 1850, when, faced with a Board of Trade edict, 'a few open wagons were fitted with seats of a kind'.<sup>34</sup>

The most impressive demonstration of the railway's ability to transport large numbers of racegoers efficiently was at the St. Leger meeting at Doncaster, which was already an important fixture well attended by all classes from a wide area of Yorkshire and further afield. When the North Midland Railway line between Derby and Leeds was opened in its entirety on 1 July 1840 a station was provided at Swinton, and this was

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major reason was the domestic tug of war between the old county town of Warwick and the resort and spa at nearby Leamington. The first station to be named Warwick was opened by the G.W.R. on 1 October 1852 on its line from Banbury. There was also a Leamington station on this line, and in February 1854 when the L.N.W.R. opened a Leamington station (Leamington Avenue) the original Leamington station became Warwick Milverton. The former also underwent six more name changes.

<sup>32</sup> Tattersall, W.D. *The Bolton, Blackburn, Clitheroe & West Yorkshire Railway* (Oakwood Press, Lingfield 1973) pp.56 - 57.

<sup>33</sup> Greville, M.D. & Holt, G.O. *The Lancaster & Preston Junction Railway* (David & Charles, Dawlish 1961) p.12 and p.36. The company had purchased, albeit as an afterthought, three third class carriages for its public opening on 26 June 1840, stipulating they should be 'with seats as close as they can be put'. But, when the Lancaster Canal took over the railway from 1 September 1842, one of its first acts was to increase fares and the capacity of the third class carriages by removing all the seats. This brought forth a letter to the *Lancaster Guardian* from an irate third class traveller who said he now had to pay 2/6d. to stand for 20 miles to Preston, but when the Canal Company ran their swift packets to Preston 'we were accommodated with comfortable seats, in one end for 1/- and in the other for 1/6d.'

<sup>34</sup> Rush, R.W. *The Furness Railway* (Oakwood Press, Lingfield 1973) p.96. The company, being mainly a mineral line, was not at that stage greatly interested in cheap passenger transport, but having discovered there was profit to be made, became very keen on the third class passenger. Far more extreme was the case of the London, Tilbury & Southend Railway, which did not have any third class coaches when its proprietors took over from the contractors, Peto, Brassey & Potts, in 1875, although its enabling Act in 1852 had stipulated that they should be added to at least half its trains. Welch, H.D. *The London, Tilbury & Southend Railway* (Oakwood Press, South Godstone 1951) p.10.

certainly in operation before the St. Leger meeting.<sup>35</sup> Provision was made for connecting coaches and canal boats to run to the races at Doncaster and additional facilities were erected at Swinton for the convenience of racegoers. Although the N.M.R. saw a considerable increase in its revenue the connecting services by road and water struggled to cope,<sup>36</sup> a situation which would continue for another eight years until the G.N.R. reached Doncaster, where a temporary station was opened in time for the 1848 St. Leger.<sup>37</sup> In that year almost 8,000 spectators arrived in eleven trains, of which six were specials, but far many more still arrived by road or canal.<sup>38</sup>

The following year saw Doncaster linked with London just before Leger week, albeit by an even more circuitous route than that it would enjoy in 1850. Besides specials from London both on the day before the races and on Leger Day itself - a journey taking between 6¼ and 7 hours - there were excursion trains from Newcastle, Hull, Liverpool and intermediate stations. The G.N.R. alone carried 10,000 spectators, and was to come even more into its own when the next section of its line opened, giving the company its own access to London<sup>39</sup> with race specials now taking only five hours in each direction. Even more specials were run and the *Doncaster Gazette* commented 'The railways have made Doncaster races what they ought to be. They have opened them "to the masses" ' even if they were occasionally overwhelmed by the amount of traffic generated.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> *Doncaster Gazette*, 4 September 1840.

<sup>36</sup> *Doncaster Gazette*, 2 October 1840. Whyte, J.C. *History of the British Turf* (Henry Colburn, London 1840) I, pp.344-345, had already commented on the difficulties experienced by racegoers who had travelled to Derby by rail from London and wished to continue their journey by coach.

<sup>37</sup> Wrottesley, J. *The Great Northern Railway* Vol. I (B.T. Batsford Ltd., London, 1979) p.36 gives the opening date as 5 August 1848. The *Doncaster Gazette* records 7 September, while Grinling, C.H. in *The History of the Great Northern Railway* (Methuen, London, 1903) p.79 gives 4 September 1848, but these varying dates still give an opening date in advance of the St. Leger meeting. Scowcroft, P.L. 'Railways and the St. Leger', *Journal of the Railway & Canal Historical Society*, XXVII, 1983, pp.266 - 276, who has provided the writer with much generous assistance in his researches, favours the date quoted by the *Doncaster Gazette*.

<sup>38</sup> *Doncaster Gazette*, 1 September 1848 gives details of the through train facilities on each day of the meeting, as well as the special trains operated from Manchester by the Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway on both the St. Leger and Gold Cup days.

<sup>39</sup> G.N. traffic was able to run to and from the Eastern Counties Railway Bishopsgate station in London from 4 September 1849, by exercising its running powers over various companies' lines.

<sup>40</sup> *Doncaster Gazette*, quoted in Scowcroft, 'Railways and the St. Leger' p.267.

## 1851-1875

The second half of the nineteenth century saw an immense growth in rail travel. One of the major catalysts was the Great Exhibition at Crystal Palace in 1851, which was visited by just over six million people, although the reduction in the entrance price from £1 (almost a week's wages for a more skilled workman) to 1/- and corresponding reductions in rail fares were a major reason for such crowds. If the G.N. fares for day trips from Peterborough at 6/- first class, 5/- second class and 3/- third class were thought to be good value, these were put in the shade by the Midland Railway's offer of 15/- first class, 10/- second class and 5/- third class with a 14 day validity from York, particularly as less affluent members of the public were concerned. Nor was ease of access the only criterion. When the Taff Vale Railway offered trips from Aberdare and Merthyr to the Exhibition, the participants had to walk across Cardiff to the South Wales Railway station, continue by train to Newport, change to the Screw Steam Packet Company's boat to cross the Bristol Channel (as the bridge over the River Wye at Chepstow was not complete). They then continued to London by the G.W.R., making their way across the capital to catch a train to the Crystal Palace.<sup>41</sup>

It should also be remembered that for most people Sunday was the only free day until the Factory Act of 1850 granted a 2 p.m. finish to some workers on Saturdays, although a weekly early closing day for shop workers was not generally introduced until 1911. Holiday race meetings had long been popular, but became more frequent after the Bank Holiday Act was passed in 1871, although any increase tended to be on the new courses in the London area. This obviously proved another problem to the Lord's Day Observance Society, which was keen to get the Jockey Club's embargo on Monday meetings, as they occasioned a fair amount of travelling on the Sabbath. It may ultimately have been successful at Newmarket, but Appendix II shows that it had no effect on the meetings which were developing from the later 1860s onwards.<sup>42</sup> Some workers also enjoyed a certain amount of paid annual holiday, but this did not become generally available until the interwar years of the twentieth century.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Mountford, E.R. & Kidner, R.W. *The Aberdare Railway* (Oakwood Press, Oxford 1996) pp. 92-93. The excursion was run on 18 August 1851.

<sup>42</sup> Brailsford, D. 'The Lord's Day Observance Society and Sunday Sport 1834 - 1914', *The Sports Historian* XVI 1996, pp.140 ff.

<sup>43</sup> Jordan & Jordan, *Away for the Day*, p.28.

As the development of the St. Leger traffic at Doncaster presents a picture of continuous growth and improvement up to the First World War, it is fitting to begin the survey of the second half of the nineteenth century here. In 1851 there were a few excursion trains to the spring fixture, but nothing like the St. Leger meeting when on the main race day twelve trains arrived between 11 a.m. and noon and no less than 24 left in the evening, mostly between 5 p.m. and 7 p.m.<sup>44</sup> This put tremendous strain on the rudimentary station facilities where the staff were accustomed to dealing with 40 to 50 trains spread throughout the day. The situation had been eased somewhat by additional facilities provided by the South Yorkshire Railway, which will be discussed in Chapter 5.<sup>45</sup> First class passengers on the GN trains from London had to pay £2.6.0d. against the £1 return charged by the L.N.W. and Midland Railways for the special run on the Monday before the meeting, but the G.N. still carried more people.<sup>46</sup> Moreover the G.N. had to deal with the reception, refuelling, stabling and departure of all companies' trains at Doncaster, and by the turn of the century the traffic of up to ten companies would need to be co-ordinated.

In 1853 the G.N. Locomotive Works moved from Boston to Doncaster, and the additional land, which the company had purchased, enabled extra sidings to be laid in adjacent to Doncaster station. During the 1850s it was noticeable that the G.N.R. was concentrating on getting more people to travel on service trains with facilities for them to make a longer stay in the town. Naturally there were numerous G.N. specials on St. Leger Day, and by the 1860s it was using sidings north and south of the station to deal with the ever increasing traffic (see Chapter 5). The phenomenal growth in traffic can be seen in the following progression of receipts for St. Leger week operations: 1840 (N.M.R.) £3,834, 1859 (G.N.R.) £30,733, 1867 (G.N.R.) £48,478, to which would be added the receipts of the other participating companies. The pattern of operation was changing with the development of the new facilities. In 1863 only eight specials left from the station, nine from the Shakespeare Sidings and 17 from the Locomotive

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<sup>44</sup> Scowcroft. 'Railways and the St. Leger' p.268 gives full details of these trains.

<sup>45</sup> As the S.Y.R. extended its network, its activities on St. Leger Day increased and, in order to cope with demand, it was forced to time some local excursions to arrive in Doncaster as early as 7 a.m. For more details see Scowcroft, P.L. 'The South Yorkshire Railway as Excursion Operator', *Journal of the Railway & Canal Historical Society*, XXXII 1996, pp.129-132. The S.Y.R. did not only run specials to prestigious meetings. Consequent upon the opening of its line to Barnsley in 1851 it ran a special train on both 23 and 24 August 1852 to Barnsley Races, which do not appear in the *Racing Calendar*. Return tickets at single fare were offered on all trains, not just the excursion.

<sup>46</sup> *Doncaster Gazette*, quoted by Scowcroft, 'Railways and the St. Leger', p.268.



Sidings, while the facilities at Cherry Tree dealt with 14,500 S.Y.R. and M.R. passengers from Sheffield.<sup>47</sup> The 1864 St. Leger brought 74 trainloads of racegoers by regular services and excursions, but by 1872 there were 135, of which 104 were specials, carrying 150,000 visitors, a figure roughly equal to the total estimated crowd at the St. Leger in 1848.<sup>48</sup> Despite the inadequacy of the main station facilities, 101 trains were despatched from Doncaster in 2¼ hours during the evening. Improvements were made to the station during the next ten years, but even while these were at an early stage some 500,000 racegoers were being handled during the week. As we leave the development of the traffic in 1875, gross receipts for the week were £69,246, about 15 per cent up on surrounding weeks, but well over double the equivalent figure for 1859. 120 specials on St. Leger day saw 40 each dealt with at Cherry Tree and the Locomotive Sidings, between 15 and 20 at Shakespeare Goods Sidings and the rest divided between Marshgate and the station, which had also to cope with all regular service trains.<sup>49</sup>

Meanwhile, some twenty years previously on 4 June 1856, the railway had reached Ascot,<sup>50</sup> but while this was a boon to the major racecourse, the improved railway access could create havoc at a small course like the Meadows at Reading, particularly if the unloading of trains was not well controlled. At the August 1857 meeting the S.E. train brought 1,000 racegoers, the L.S.W.R. 900, with the G.W. 'Leviathan train ... adding as many as 1,200 visitors to the already thronged course'. The crowds spilled onto the course and stayed there until 'the horses were close upon them and one or two races were completely spoiled by reason of this'.<sup>51</sup>

Despite the opening of the L.S.W. line to Ascot, the Royal Family continued to use the G.W. route to Windsor, stayed at the castle and drove over to Ascot by carriage for the traditional procession down the course. But those who had no social

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<sup>47</sup> Scowcroft, 'Railways and the St. Leger', p.270.

<sup>48</sup> *Doncaster Gazette*, 17 September 1848.

<sup>49</sup> Scowcroft, 'Railways and the St. Leger', p.270.

<sup>50</sup> The Staines, Wokingham & Woking Junction Railway was incorporated on 8 July 1853 to build a line from the L.S.W. Windsor branch near Staines to a junction with the S.E.R. at Wokingham, which after the partial opening to Ascot mentioned in the text, was completed to Wokingham on 9 July 1856. The local company was leased to the L.S.W.R. for 42 years from 25 March 1858 and amalgamated with it from 4 July 1878. There were reciprocal running powers with the S.E.R., so that after the latter's connection to the G.W.R. at Reading was opened to freight on 1 December 1858 and to passengers on the following 17 January, standard gauge trains of all three companies could serve Ascot on race days.

<sup>51</sup> *Reading Mercury*, 18 August 1857.

pretensions found that the facility of travelling directly by train to the course was a distinct advantage, although a considerable number of racegoers continued to use the G.W. line to Windsor and make their way to the course by brake or omnibus.

But at Epsom, after 12 years of the L.B.S.C. monopoly, the L.S.W.R. finally opened its line into the town from Raynes Park near Wimbledon on 4 April 1859, which now gave it direct access from London and the west.<sup>52</sup> This was a blow to both L.B.S.C.R.'s pride and its revenues, and, as will be discussed in Chapter 5, it retaliated by building a branch line up onto the Downs. After its opening on 22 May 1865, the L.B.S.C.R. was able to carry 70,000 racegoers during the four days of Derby week, and in due course would be able to handle the arrival, storage and departure of more than 50 trains on Derby Day alone.<sup>53</sup> The Derby occupied a pre-eminent place in the minds of racegoers, politicians and the railway companies, so that when the L.B.S.C. enginemen went on strike on 26/27 March 1867 at the time of the Epsom Spring Meeting, a spirited discussion took place in the press on a proposal to train members of the Royal Artillery and Royal Engineers as engine drivers to avoid the repetition of such a 'catastrophe'.<sup>54</sup> To put such a proposal in perspective it should be remembered that since 1847 Parliament had recessed on Derby Day - a custom which continued until the 1890s.<sup>55</sup>

Even quite small country meetings attracted large crowds before the railways arrived. The Hertfordshire town of Harpenden attracted a crowd of 10,000 to its first meeting under Jockey Club rules on 21 June 1848, when the nearest railhead was ten miles away at Dunstable.<sup>56</sup> In 1857, three years before the railway reached the town itself, 'blackguardism' had been 'allowed to establish its Saturnalia' there,<sup>57</sup> and when in 1860 the Luton, Dunstable & Welwyn Junction Railway brought the meeting within one hour of Kings Cross at a return fare of 2/6d., 'every thief and pickpocket in

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<sup>52</sup> The L.S.W.R. had already opened a line, to be jointly operated with the L.B.S.C.R., from Leatherhead on 1 February 1859. The latter opened a connection from its own station in Epsom on 8 August of the same year, but because of the layout at the L.S.W. station was not able to use its facilities.

<sup>53</sup> Kirkby, J.R.W. *The Banstead & Epsom Downs Railway* (Oakwood Press, Salisbury, 1983) pp.6ff.

<sup>54</sup> Dendy Marshall, *Southern Railway*, p. 231.

<sup>55</sup> The motion was proposed by Lord George Bentinck as the opening of the L.B.S.C. line to Epsom in that year made access very easy. The custom ended in 1894 when a Liberal government, whose members were less interested in horseracing, took office.

<sup>56</sup> The Dunstable, London & Birmingham Railway, an offshoot of the London & Birmingham Railway was authorised on 30 June 1845 to construct a line from Leighton Buzzard to Dunstable. By the time the line opened on 1 June 1848, both companies had lost their identities in the L.N.W.R.

London was to be found in Harpenden that day'.<sup>58</sup> Yet subsequent examination of the history of the meeting right up to its demise in 1914 showed that little changed overall once the police had regained control, and it remained a relatively small social gathering even if it saw a greater number of visitors when two more railways had been opened into the town.<sup>59</sup> Despite the influx of excursionists, crowd sizes at rural meetings tended to remain relatively static or even decline as the inhabitants found new leisure activities, both sporting and educational. Moreover, increasing industrialisation meant that workers were less able to arrange their lives as individuals, and faced not only loss of earnings but dismissal for absenteeism. But, as at Harpenden, the 1860s brought excursionists to many racecourses from different directions as the railway map filled up and new communities were brought into direct and easy contact with the new means of communication. Huntingdon had been served by rail since 1847 and by the G.N. main line since 1850, but on 1 March 1866 a line from Kettering opened up a new catchment area, and the Midland Railway ran a twenty coach train to the meeting on 26/27 July.<sup>60</sup>

The opening of the G.N. line from Grantham to Lincoln via Honington on 15 April 1867 reduced the London - Lincoln journey time by one hour against the existing route from Peterborough via Boston. With a journey time in the early days of 3½ hours each way there was ample scope to run specials to the first and third days of the Spring meeting, giving the racegoer time to enjoy a really good afternoon's sport even if he had to walk between the city and the course at Carholme.<sup>61</sup>

The meetings at Bedford had been popular since the eighteenth century, and even though the Midland Railway London Extension gave improved access to the town when it opened in July 1868 and enabled cheap trips to be run to Kingsbury races,<sup>62</sup> the station was well over two miles from its home course, and even further than the

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<sup>57</sup> *Hertfordshire Advertiser*, 22 May 1857.

<sup>58</sup> Woodwood, G. & S. *The Hatfield, Luton & Leighton Buzzard Railway* (Oakwood Press, Trowbridge, 1977) p.33.

<sup>59</sup> The subsequent progress of the meeting will be reviewed in Chapter 12. After the L.D. & W.J.R. had been opened on 1 September 1860, it was followed by the Midland Railway main line from Bedford to London on 13 July 1868 and the branch from Hemel Hempstead on 16 July 1877.

<sup>60</sup> Rhodes, J. *The Kettering & Huntingdon Line* (Oakwood Press, Salisbury, 1984) p.11.

<sup>61</sup> Squires, S.E. *The Lincoln to Grantham Line via Honington* (Oakwood Press, Oxford 1996) p.73. In later years, a favoured train left Kings Cross at 9.30 a.m., arriving in Lincoln at 12.10 p.m. Departure from Lincoln was 5.40 p.m., giving an arrival in Kings Cross at 8.17 p.m.

<sup>62</sup> The first such excursion was run on 23 July 1868, leaving Bedford at 10.00 a.m., with fares of 5/- first class and 2/6d. 'covered carriage', but these were valid only on the 7.15 p.m. return train.

existing L.N.W. station in the town. After the Bedford meetings ended in 1873, each company built a temporary station to serve the Royal Agricultural Society's Show, which took place on the racecourse from 13-17 July 1874, and was one of the contributory factors to the demise of flat racing there.<sup>63</sup>

But at Ascot, the railways both enabled the day trippers to get there more easily, and the gentry to take their pleasures more gently, so not all specials ran on race days. 'Never has the South Western Railway (L.S.W.R.) brought down such a heavy and fashionably filled train as that which left Waterloo at 4.40 p.m. on Monday afternoon and dispersed its contents over an Ascot radius of some half dozen miles or more, while the afternoon trains on the Great Western had filled the Royal Borough (Windsor) with bustle and excitement'.<sup>64</sup> There were also at least three luggage specials on the L.S.W.R. which deposited their contents at several country stations, from whence brakes and waggons took the luggage to various country houses in the area. On race days the journey would generally be by road unless the houses were close to the L.S.W. line, while all arrivals by the G.W.R. line to Windsor would be forced to go by road, as none of the schemes to link Windsor with Ascot came to fruition any more than the reinstatement of the Newmarket Railway's original main line would become reality.<sup>65</sup>

Although the railway had reached Newmarket in 1848, this had little effect on the attendance at meetings there. Its main function was to transport the 'toffs' and the horses, as was made clear at the sod-cutting ceremony on 30 September 1846.<sup>66</sup> The races were still run to suit the fancies of mounted spectators with starts and finishes of successive races at widely different locations. There is an amusing story of an 'unwary stranger' who wanted to see the races at Newmarket. After walking some two miles from the station to the course he found that if he stayed where he was he would see

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<sup>63</sup> The L.N.W.R. built their temporary station on the site of the later Kempston & Elstow (opened 30 October 1905), while the other station was on the Midland main line, approximately 1,500 yards south.

<sup>64</sup> *The Times*, 10 June 1873.

<sup>65</sup> Potts, *Windsor to Slough*, p.279. A scheme to link Windsor with Ascot was authorised in 1898, but proved stillborn. The seal of the proposed railway had as its centrepiece a racehorse passing a grandstand. The Newmarket proposal only got as far as a petition, even though this was signed by such notables as the Duke of York (the future George V) and Lily Langtrej (mistress of the future Edward VII). Joby, R.S. *Forgotten Railways - East Anglia* (David & Charles, Newton Abbot, 1977) p.101.

only about half of the races. To see everything he would have to be 'an athlete' and cover 'about ten miles at a nice useful pace'. The narration concludes: 'In either case, the stranger's first visit to Newmarket was almost invariably his last, and the Admiral's (Rous) little scheme to keep his beloved Heath free from the multitude proved completely successful.'<sup>67</sup> Nevertheless, there were some long distance excursions even at this date.<sup>68</sup>

In 1874, however, it seemed that things were about to change. The Jockey Club approached the G.E.R. to run specials to the 1000 Guineas and 2000 Guineas meetings. There were to be three departures each from St. Pancras and Bishopsgate, which would combine en route to arrive at Newmarket as two first class specials (which would later use Pullman coaches from St. Pancras) and a cheap excursion.<sup>69</sup> Even with these specials and normal service trains it is unlikely that the total numbers attending these meetings would have exceeded 6,000. But at the same time the minor and unauthorised meetings at the seaside resort of Skegness could attract up to 25,000 spectators after the opening of the railway in July 1873.<sup>70</sup>

### 1876 - 1900

Although only the L.S.W.R. had direct access to Ascot, except for those companies which chose to exercise their running powers over its lines, and had also opened another route off its main London - Southampton line on 18 March 1878, the G.W.R. could still be highly competitive. A circular giving details of its activities on Gold Cup Day, 12 June 1879, shows that horse and carriage trains would run from Paddington to Windsor mainly between 5 a.m. and 8 a.m., but would continue thereafter as long as there was any demand. At least nine passenger trains - none of which would be less than twelve coaches and two brake vans - were scheduled to leave Paddington

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<sup>66</sup> Mr. Smiley's speech stressed that M.P.s and other notables would be able to support the races and still get back to the House for any late evening sessions. In fact, in due course, the Prime Minister was accused of neglecting his duties in order to watch his horses run at Newmarket.

<sup>67</sup> *Racing Illustrated*, 1895, p.215, quoting a pedestrian visitor in the 1860s.

<sup>68</sup> *Sheffield Times*, 20 October 1866, advertised an excursion from Manchester via Sheffield.

<sup>69</sup> Jackson, A.A. *London's Termini* (David & Charles, Newton Abbot, 2nd ed. 1985) p.71. The G.E.R. ran trains to Newmarket (and other places) from the M.R. terminus at St. Pancras, where it had its own booking office. These facilities were in exchange for M.R. running powers over the G.E.R. to London Docks.

Bishopsgate was used at first, as the G.E. terminus at Liverpool Street was not taken into full use as a main line station until 1 November 1875.

between 9 a.m. and 12 noon. Additional trains would run after that if required. Return trains after the races would run up to 10.30 p.m., followed by their appropriate horse and carriage trains. In addition, two coaches were attached to each of the normal service trains which ran through from Victoria to Windsor via the Metropolitan Railway.<sup>71</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the journey was completed by road, a time-consuming and expensive business. An attractive G.W. poster for Ascot races in June 1897 shows that the return fares between Paddington and Windsor, just over 21 miles each way, were 5/6d. 1st class, 4/- 2nd class, and 3/6d. 3rd class, with a day excursion fare of only 2/6d. for each of the four days of the meeting. But the horse brakes plying between Windsor and Ascot, a return journey of some 16 miles, had a return fare of 5/- except on Gold Cup Day when it rose to 7/-.<sup>72</sup>

At Doncaster, even though the station improvements were well in hand, the relentless increase in race traffic continued. The pattern of operations had been set and the bulk of excursions continued to be handled at the outlying sidings and Cherry Tree, with only about 15 out of 120 to 130 specials being routed into the station in 1876. Private specials were also on the increase, the most notable being that of Earl Fitzwilliam, which ran from a special station at Elsecar, where the Earl owned ironworks and collieries.<sup>73</sup> Even the Prince of Wales, who attended the St. Leger meeting, staying at

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<sup>70</sup> Ludlam, A.J. *Railways to Skegness* (Oakwood Press, Usk, 1997) pp.17-18. 12,000 spectators were reported at Skegness races in 1876 and 25,000 in 1881.

<sup>71</sup> G.W. Circular, covering arrangements for Gold Cup Day, 12 June 1879, summarised in Potts, *Windsor to Slough*, p.134. A special stop signal, ½ mile before reaching Windsor, was only used when traffic was especially heavy during race meetings at Ascot or Windsor.

<sup>72</sup> These fares are shown on tickets in David Geldard's collection. The G.W.R. started a motor bus service between Windsor on 5 April 1905, and augmented the regular service on race days. See Cummings, J.M., *Railway Motor Buses and Bus Services*, Vol.II (Oxford Publishing Co., Oxford, 1980), p.141.

<sup>73</sup> The station was at the end of the Elsecar branch, opened in 1850, and still survives as part of Elsecar Heritage. These outings to the races by aristocrats and their guests did not develop as a result of the railways, but in various forms had been concomitants of the racing at Doncaster and many other meetings since the eighteenth century. Then the whole journey was by road in coaches and brakes, but as the railway system developed part of the journey might be made by rail in reserved first class carriages attached to normal service trains or excursions, or complete trains chartered for the use of the nobleman and his guests. The *Doncaster Gazette* of 21 September 1888 bewailed the loss of atmosphere compared with when the Earl sat on his 'well-known omnibus' at both bloodstock sales and race meetings, where there was a 'prodigious variety of vans and breaks, mostly with four horses'. Their absence also meant a considerable loss of revenue to race organisers, as even on open courses there was a charge for vehicles.

Jordan & Jordan, *Away for the Day*, pp.83-84, err in considering this extract as confirming that 'railways transformed racing!' All that happened was a change in transport mode! Its combination

different houses each year, might find himself decanted at Barnby Dun or Marshgate Sidings. The early 1880s saw a levelling out of the numbers arriving by train, albeit temporary, and a new road built to link the station more directly with the course. 1,000 trains were handled in the St. Leger week in 1884, 350 of these being run on the big day. In addition to the passenger trains, there were also luggage and carriage specials, horsebox trains for both racehorses and carriage horses, while mineral and freight traffic had also to be dealt with, although by now this was suspended on St. Leger Day. A 47 page supplement covered the working arrangements in 1887.<sup>74</sup> A high point occurred in 1888 when 1,149 passenger trains ran during race week. There appears to be a decline in the number of trains during the 1890s, although this may have been due to introduction of longer trains. The same period saw more trains being handled at the main station, for example on St. Leger Day 1894, when out of 175 trains despatched after 4 p.m., no less than 86 left from the station. There is little point in enumerating any further details, except to note that at the turn of the century the number of special trains was declining, but this did not prevent the G.N.R. from fine tuning its operations.

The same meticulous attention to detail was demonstrated in handling traffic to the Croxton Park meeting, which had not enjoyed the luxury of a really close railway station until 1883 (see Chapter 5). For the 1889 meeting nine trains arrived from Nottingham, Leicester, Northampton, Grantham and other towns between 11.06 a.m. and 2.17 p.m., but these same nine trains were despatched after the meeting between 5.15 p.m. and 6.30 p.m. To achieve this feat along a single track, freight-only branch, the level of detail planning was taken down not merely to numbers of staff and their activities, but to named individuals for key tasks.<sup>75</sup> Not all country meetings were so well served. The trains from Swansea to the small meeting at Llandilo in April 1876 were overcrowded, took 2½ to 3 hours for a 20 mile journey and left racegoers 'in total darkness when they returned after the races'.<sup>76</sup> Even in the south east of England there was a less than dynamic approach to race specials, albeit expressed in a more

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with a quotation from *Railway Magazine*, I, 1897, p.314, does not support their contention as the two extracts are addressing different aspects of the St. Leger traffic.

<sup>74</sup> The scene in this year was described by Acworth, W.M. *The Railways of England* (John Murray, London, 1889) p.224.

<sup>75</sup> Great Northern Railway Special Operating Notice for Race Traffic on 4 April 1889, supplied by Robin Culling.

<sup>76</sup> Letter in *The Cambrian*, 21 April 1876.

relaxed manner than that used by Bayles when he lambasted railways in the same area after the turn of the century. 'Travelling down from London by the London, Brighton & South Coast Railway to Eridge, on Easter Monday, cannot be set down as an ideal journey, either from the point of view of the traveller, the convenience of the service, or the punctuality of the trains. There is a genial sort of happy-go-lucky, go-as-you-please air about station masters on Bank Holidays. They never seem to know when trains will come; often, indeed, they are quite unable to say whether they will come at all.'<sup>77</sup>

The meeting at Eridge was a steeplechase meeting, and serves as a reminder that this form of racing had become popular in the latter part of the nineteenth century and had acquired respectability after the formation of the Grand National Hunt Committee in 1866. Some of the more recently established courses were quite remote, but managed to survive either without rail access or via a circuitous route. The Grafton Hunt Steeplechases, established in the 1870s, brought several thousand visitors to Towcester each Easter Monday over the struggling Northampton & Banbury Junction Railway, when a number of excursions from outside the district would come in from both the Banbury and Blisworth directions. Extra stock was provided for the local company by the L.N.W.R., which operated the normal service, and the trains were stabled in the sidings at Towcester, while the locomotives went off to Blisworth to turn, until the installation of a turntable at Towcester solved the problem.<sup>78</sup>

In 1885, the North Staffordshire Hunt set up a fully equipped racecourse on farmland at Woore about half a mile north of Pipe Gate station on the North Staffordshire Railway branch from Silverdale to Market Drayton. The Hunt had in fact used this line to transport huntsmen, hounds and horses at very favourable terms from its kennels and stables at Trentham to its favourite stretches of country since its opening in April

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<sup>77</sup> *Country Life Illustrated*, 1897, quoted in Pitt, C. *A Long Time Gone* (Portway Press, Halifax, 1996) p.92. The remarks made by Bayles about railways in south east England will be covered in the section dealing with the years 1901 - 1914.

<sup>78</sup> The Northampton & Banbury Junction Railway was opened from Blisworth on the L.N.W.R. main line to Towcester on 30 April 1866, and to Cockley Brake Junction on the same company's branch on 1 June 1872. It had delusions of grandeur, however, and at one stage turned itself into the Midland Counties & South Wales Railway with a proposal to build a line to Ross-on-Wye, which did not come to fruition. Such a scheme was typical of the second wave of 'Railway Mania' in the later 1860s. For more details see Jenkins S.C. *The Northampton & Banbury Junction Railway* (Oakwood Press, Oxford, 1990). Another line into Towcester was opened to passengers by the Stratford, Towcester & Midland Junction Railway on 1 December 1892, but these services lasted only until the end of March 1893, although race specials continued to use the line for many years.



1870. Special trains were run to the races from many Midland towns such as Birmingham, with additional staff brought in to deal with crowds often in excess of 8,000. A siding along both the up and down platforms provided stabling for the excursion trains if waggons were cleared out in advance to the nearby stations at Norton-in-Hales and Keele.<sup>79</sup> Even a very minor railway such as the North Sunderland Railway, opened between Chathill and Seahouses on the north east coast in 1898, needed to augment its own two coaches by hiring extra rolling stock from the North Eastern Railway whenever there was a race meeting at Newcastle.<sup>80</sup> In Wales, there were still steeplechase meetings even though flat race fixtures of any note in the Principality had ended in 1876. The Hunt Races at Cowbridge, where flat racing had ended as early as 1855 in favour of Cardiff, started as an annual event in 1887, and trains were provided over the Llantrisant branch to this major event in the area, right up to its demise in 1939.<sup>81</sup>

The G.W.R. had operated Grand National specials to Birkenhead for many years, but the racegoers then had to cross the Mersey by ferry, before making their way to Aintree by road or from any of the Liverpool stations. The extension of the Mersey Railway line to Liverpool Central (Low Level) on 11 January 1892 enabled the G.W.R. to run through to the city centre for the 1892 Grand National. Unfortunately this facility ended after the 1903 meeting, as the Mersey Railway was electrified on 3 May of the same year.<sup>82</sup>

### 1901 - 1914

With the lavish facilities available at Epsom Downs, even though the final line capacity improvements had not been carried out at the turn of the century, the ability was there to cater for more than 50 trains on Derby Day, together with all their

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<sup>79</sup> Lester, C.R. *The Stoke to Market Drayton Line* (Oakwood Press, Salisbury, 1983) pp.36-37. The Woore meetings survived until 1963, but, as will be discussed in Chapter 5, Keele Park, much nearer to Stoke and with its own station, did not.

<sup>80</sup> Wright, A. *The North Sunderland Railway* (Oakwood Press, Lingfield, 1969) p.17. This short line was opened to freight on 1 August 1898, and to passengers on 18 December of the same year.

<sup>81</sup> Chapman, C. *The Llantrisant Branches of the Taff Vale Railway* (Oakwood Press, Oxford, 1996) p.67.

<sup>82</sup> The Mersey Railway had actually extended under the Mersey to James Street in Liverpool on 1 February 1886, but a connection was not provided to the L.N.W. & G.W. Joint line in Birkenhead until 15 June 1891. This, coupled with the extension to Liverpool Central (under the Cheshire Lines Committee station) gave the G.W.R. the opportunity it needed. Parkin, G.W. *The Mersey Railway* (Oakwood Press, Lingfield, no date), pp.11,17,26.

associated stock movements. There were also two stations in Epsom itself, so it may seem strange that yet another railway line should be built for racecourse traffic, which ran on only very few days each year. Firstly, travellers to Epsom Downs still had to walk some distance to the course, and even with two stations in Epsom, the railways could carry only a fraction of the race crowds. Secondly, not far away at Purley, was the S.E.R., which after a series of prolonged and bitter struggles with the L.B.S.C.R., mainly (but not wholly) associated with the construction and operation of the Caterham branch, opened on 5 August 1856, was more than ready to settle the score with its rival.<sup>83</sup> Moreover, the London, Chatham & Dover Railway, with which the S.E.R. was to enter into a joint operating agreement in 1899, had been the sponsor of the London & Epsom Downs Railway, which had proposed to build a railway right up to the Epsom grandstand in the 1860s. The catalyst to bring the various threads together was Henry Cosmo Orme Bonsor, M.P., who was anxious among other things to have an easier journey between London and his home at Kingswood Warren.<sup>84</sup> Bonsor gave shape and impetus to the two schemes which were to make up the double track S.E. branch to Tattenham Corner. This was opened in stages between 1897 and 1901, with a terminus about as close to the racecourse as it was reasonably possible to get.<sup>85</sup> The opening on Derby Day 1901 brought some 15,000 spectators in 48 trains, mainly from the London area, although 2,293 arrived from more distant parts of the S.E. system such as Reading, Hastings, Margate and Dover.<sup>86</sup> Although Tattenham Corner was over 23 miles from London, the S.E.C.R. charged the same fare as the L.B.S.C. and L.S.W. Railways over their much shorter routes. It did nothing, however, to remove the complaints levelled at the railways of excessive fares on race days, which also affected travellers who had no desire to go to the races.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Spence, J. *The Caterham Railway* (Oakwood Press, Oxford, rev.ed.1986) covers these struggles in detail.

<sup>84</sup> Bonsor, who was in the brewing business, joined the S.E. board in 1894, becoming Deputy Chairman in the following year and Chairman in 1898. When the South Eastern & Chatham Railways Joint Managing Committee was formed in January 1899, he became its Chairman, as well as continuing to head up the S.E.R.

<sup>85</sup> The Epsom Downs Extension Railway was authorised on 27 July 1892 and the Chipstead Valley Railway exactly one year later. For more details see Owen, N. *The Tattenham Corner Branch* (Oakwood Press, Blandford, 1978). The first public passenger train ran over the line to Kingswood & Burgh Heath on 9 November 1897, and reached Tadworth & Walton-on-the-Hill on 1 July 1900. The branch was doubled in November of the same year, and opened throughout on 4 June 1901.

<sup>86</sup> Owen, *Tattenham Corner Branch*, p.10 indicates 35 of these were special trains.

<sup>87</sup> Bayles, F.H. *Atlas and Review of British Racecourses* (Equitable Publishing Syndicate, London, 1911) p.XXII 'It is simply abominable to experience the coercion that is imposed by the last named

It was not only major meetings which had traffic problems. Although Harpenden was served by three lines, the branch from Hemel Hempstead had been operated since 9 August 1905 by either a steam railmotor or a downgraded 'Pullman' coach hauled by a tank engine. Even the local 'Great Horse & Dog Show' brought crowds too great for the new system to handle, so as well as making a complaint about 'language shocking in the extreme', the enraged correspondent to the local paper attacked the Midland Railway's attitude to its passengers: 'Surely on the occasion of such things as race meetings the Railway Company should see, by providing more than one carriage on the trains, that the comfort of their passengers is not interfered with.'<sup>88</sup>

Sometimes there were problems when a race meeting clashed with another important event in the same town. This happened at Windsor on 20 June 1908, when a race meeting was scheduled for the same day as a Royal Garden Party. Although the race times were advanced to clear the stations before the guests returned from the Castle, it began to rain so the garden party guests came to the station too early 'and so got in amongst the racing people, and I am sorry to say that many lost their tiepins and watches.'<sup>89</sup> Eleven trains had been laid on for 4,000 guests, together with four specials for racegoers. There were also specials from the Berks & Herts line and from Wolverhampton, as well as the usual horsebox traffic. All empty stock had to be stabled at Slough and moved up the branch as required. No doubt the L.S.W.R. had an equally hectic time on its line! Details of what the G.W.R. organised for race meetings at Windsor can be seen in a handbill advertising a steeplechase meeting on 10/11 December 1913.<sup>90</sup>

Through workings by the L.S.W.R. to the new racecourse at Newbury, which opened on 26 September 1905, did not start until the steeplechase meeting on 10 October

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lines (L.B.S.C., L.S.W., S.E.C. Rlys) to Sandown, Kempton, Epsom, Ascot and Hurst Park - their excess of rates, not to speak of the disgraceful time that is generally occupied in travelling twelve or fifteen miles, and the undesirable element that is tolerated to gather on their platforms at every meeting'. Richardson, C. *The English Turf* (Methuen, London, 1901) p.118 is equally scathing. The major and fully justified complaint was that the railways charged a first class return fare of 8/- on Derby Day against the normal 3/-. Moreover, many contemporary rail tickets show 'No particular Class of Carriage guaranteed' for the return journey. In justification for these fares Allan Searle, the Secretary and General Manager of the L.B.S.C.R., had told the Lords Committee on the Chipstead Valley Railway Bill in 1893, that race traffic had fallen off considerably in the previous decade, and in 1891 had brought in only £2,700 on a mileage basis despite the high rates.

<sup>88</sup> Woodward, S. & G. *The Harpenden to Hemel Hempstead Railway* (Oakwood Press, Oxford, 1996) p.85.

<sup>89</sup> *Great Western Railway Magazine*, 1908. Quoted in Potts, *Windsor to Slough*, p.141.

<sup>90</sup> Illustrated in Potts, *Windsor to Slough*, pp.210-211.

1910. Prior to this the L.S.W.R. locomotive had been replaced by a G.W. engine at Winchester Chesil. The Traffic Superintendent of the Didcot, Newbury & Southampton Railway commented: 'This was the first occasion that special trains for Newbury Races or any other event have been worked over our line by L.S.W.R. engines.'<sup>91</sup> Thereafter there were regular workings.

Back in the main stream of race traffic, workings at Doncaster continued much as before, but a comparison between 1898 and 1904 shows that in the latter year, although there were more trains during race week (1,045 v 923), there were less special workings (335 v 388), except on St. Leger Day itself. Then there were more excursion trains (172 v 156), and the number of normal service trains had also increased to 177 from 134. In 1909 the railways brought a total of 381,380 racegoers in the week, of which an estimated 190,000 travelled on St. Leger Day. Although the bulk came from Yorkshire (particularly Sheffield) there were even trains from Brighton, Chester and Carlisle, and the detailed operating instructions were a far cry from those in force at Epsom, particularly the rudimentary arrangements at Tattenham Corner.<sup>92</sup> Mineral trains apart from a few operated at night were suspended for the whole week, and on Leger Day the various excursions were carefully segregated.<sup>93</sup> Many of the excursions were third class, but there were still house party specials or first class saloons attached to ordinary trains. These declined with the growth of private cars, and even though the Royal Train took Edward VII to Ollerton for his overnight stay at Rufford Abbey, his journey to Doncaster was made by motor car. Five day excursion fares were offered to Doncaster by both the G.E. and G.N. Railways, while the G.N. provided an 'add-on' covering dinner, bed and breakfast at the Great Northern Hotel, Leeds, and a first class return journey on each race day for £3.12.0d. But, even with co-operation very much in the air, Great Central and Midland Railway tickets to and from Sheffield were not interchangeable until 1903.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Sands, T.B. *The Didcot, Newbury & Southampton Railway* (Oakwood Press, Lingfield 1971) p.44.

<sup>92</sup> See Chapter 5.

<sup>93</sup> Excursions from the West Riding, (L.Y., G.N. and Hull & Barnsley Railways) were put into the Loco Yard on the west side of the station. Work was suspended there to ensure that sufficient siding capacity was available. N.E.R. and M.R. trains were put into the down goods yard, M.R. excursions from Sheffield were in the Goods Shed sidings on the up side, while G.E.R., L.N.W.R. and G.N.R. excursions from the south went into the Shakespeare sidings.

<sup>94</sup> Scowcroft, 'Railways and the St. Leger', p.274.

War broke out a month before the 1914 St. Leger, and only the main station and St. James (the former Cherry Tree) were used for the much reduced traffic.

Meanwhile, at Newmarket where, as will be discussed in Chapter 5, a new through station had been built in 1902 with facilities to segregate first and third class travellers, cheap excursions were still only run to major meetings. Even in 1907 the numbers arriving and leaving by train are not large. 1,032 1st class and 3,639 3rd class passengers left from the main station to London, and 1,641 of both classes departed from Warren Hill. There were four trains from the main station at 4.10 p.m., 4.18 p.m., 4.30 p.m. and 4.50 p.m., while Warren Hill had the 4.28 p.m. to Lincoln, Leeds and Manchester, and 4.35 p.m. to Peterborough. But in 1908 the Jockey Club approached the G.E.R. to run third class excursions from Liverpool St., or in conjunction with the Midland Railway from St. Pancras, to all meetings at a fare of 6/6d.<sup>95</sup> First class passengers could buy season tickets for travel to all meetings, and enjoy exclusive trains such as the 10.55 a.m. from St. Pancras. The situation at Newmarket was still a far cry even from the first Edwardian Ascot, where despite the fact that the Court was in mourning for Queen Victoria, there were 24 trains from London alone.<sup>96</sup> The King did not attend, but in 1905 he made the journey for the first time by motor car.

More on the lines of Doncaster, however, was the Grand National meeting at Aintree. While many Merseysiders limited themselves to walking round the course on 'Jump Sunday', when both the Liverpool Overhead Railway trains and the L.Y. electric trains were crowded, the railways poured in the crowds for the big race, although the electric tramway also delivered their share. In 1913 a train arrived every two minutes at the three stations which served the course. 91 trains, not counting the shuttle service on the L.O.R. (extended to Aintree from its usual terminus at Seaforth Sands), brought in an estimated 34,000 racegoers from a wide variety of originating stations.<sup>97</sup> The year

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<sup>95</sup> *Railway Magazine*, XXIII, 1908, p.373. C.J. Allen commented that 'something approaching treble the present traffic' would be necessary to break even against the normal fare of 11/9d., but this did not occur.

<sup>96</sup> The L.S.W.R. provided tickets allowing a day trip from London on each of the four days of the meeting for 42/- but once again, 'no particular class of carriage' was guaranteed.

<sup>97</sup> *Railway Magazine*, XXXII, 1913, p.409. Special trains were noted from Manchester, Chester, Stockport, Cleethorpes, Sheffield, Leeds, Barnsley, Derby, Burton, Bristol, Birmingham, Leicester, Nottingham and London. Some racegoers came directly from the Lincoln meeting. (See also Chapters 5 & 12.) Richardson, *English Turf*, pp.165-170, was fulsome in his praise for the organisation, good timekeeping and the facilities for private parties to lunch on the train before

war broke out, every conceivable vehicle was being pressed into service including old six-wheel coaches sandwiched between two electric motor cars on the L.Y.R. local trains. 77 specials came over the C.L.C. lines, and 11 had dining cars. One first class special from the L.N.W.R. had no less than six dining and kitchen cars. The fare from London was 64/- which included luncheon, tea and dinner. The equivalent third class fare was 21/-, including breakfast and dinner, or 16/- for the return journey alone.<sup>98</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The Railways took every opportunity to provide special trains and fares for racegoers - not merely for major meetings, but also for all types of local fixtures. A full assessment of their impact will be undertaken at the end of Chapter 5, which both overlaps and extends the scope of the present chapter.

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walking to the course. See also Griffiths, R.P. *The Cheshire Lines Railway* (Oakwood Press, Lingfield, 1958) p.39.

<sup>98</sup> Jordan & Jordan *Away for the Day*, pp.82-83, compare these fares with average weekly wages. Even the third class fare would be in the region of a week's wages for some 50 per cent of the working population, to say nothing of the loss of a day's pay to attend the meeting.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### RACECOURSE STATIONS AND THEIR OPERATION

#### INTRODUCTION

While special fares on normal service trains and the running of excursion trains satisfied the requirements of most race meetings, the railway companies provided over thirty racecourses with either dedicated stations, permanent or temporary facilities at goods stations, or additional facilities at normal passenger stations. Similarly stations were used for race traffic before opening to public passenger services or after normal services had been withdrawn, but almost all of the latter lie outside the timeframe of this study. Although only in use for race traffic on a few days each year, some regular passenger stations, like those at Epsom Downs and Tattenham Corner, could rival contemporary London termini in numbers of platforms, if not in other facilities, while even simple single platform stations maintained the class distinctions of the trains which conveyed the passengers to them. Some, such as Rothbury's goods station, gained official approval for excursion traffic after many years of unauthorised use, while others like Bobber's Mill on the Nottingham-Mansfield line had no recognition after a fleeting, locally advertised use.<sup>1</sup>

A detailed study has been made of all known instances of special stations or facilities provided adjacent to race courses, exclusively or primarily for race traffic. The findings are tabulated in Appendix IV, and cover both flat race and National Hunt courses. No account is taken of stations from which race specials started, even if such a use took place before opening or after closure to regular passenger services.<sup>2</sup> The opening dates listed are of the first and last meeting for which the facilities were used,

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<sup>1</sup> Nottingham Central Reference Library. An undated newspaper cutting advertising Radford Spring Meeting has a footnote: 'Special Trains every ½ hour from Bobber's Mill and Intermediate stations'. This is also illustrated in Davies, G. *A Touch of Colwick* (Pride of Place Publishing, Chorley, 1994) p.32 The line between Mansfield Junction (Nottingham) and Kirkby in Ashfield was opened on 2 October 1848. Bobber's Mill was a level crossing (and later a signal box) between Radford and Basford stations. No mention of a station at Bobber's Mill (however temporary) is found in Gough, J.V. *The Midland Railway - A Chronology* (Railway & Canal Historical Society, Mold 1989). There was, however a Bobber's Mill Plate at the Nottingham meeting towards the end of the nineteenth century.

<sup>2</sup> One such example mentioned in Chapter 4 was the Bolton & Leigh Railway station at Bolton, which was used for a special to Newton Races on 2 June 1831, nine days before its opening to public passenger services.

and are not the official railway opening dates. Where appropriate, closure dates are similarly treated. The dates have been calculated from information in the *Racing Calendar*. While it is recognised that the facilities may possibly have been in use before (or after) the dates given; e.g. on the Sunday before the Derby or Grand National meetings, these have not been taken into account (unless specific evidence has been obtained). The summary below, which lists the facilities provided, gives a chronological background to the discussion.

**TABLE 5.1: SPECIAL RAILWAY FACILITIES FOR RACE MEETINGS**

<u>Date</u>	<u>Special Stations</u>	<u>Extra Facilities</u>	<u>Used before Public Opening</u>	<u>Used after Public Closure</u>	<u>Horses</u>	<u>Total</u>
Before 1875	6	1	-	1	1	9
1875 - 1899	20	5	2	-	2	29
1900 - 1923	4	2	-	-	2	8
1923 & After	3	-	-	-	-	3
	33	8	2	1	5	49

Note: This reflects the fact that more than one facility could be provided at a racecourse, but does not take account of any minor facilities discussed in Chapters 9 to 12.

## DEVELOPMENTS UP TO 1875

As discussed in Chapter 4, the first dedicated racecourse station was provided for the June 1832 meeting at Newton by Thomas Legh at the behest of the L. & M.R.<sup>3</sup> After the derailment on 16 June 1837, which blocked off five sidings and trapped some trains all night, the L. & M. directors considered whether it might not be better to confine

<sup>3</sup> Simm, G. *Richard Evans of Haydock* (Author, Newton le Willows, 1988) pp.13-15. Thomas and William Legh, who owned Haydock Colliery, as their family had done for many years, had constructed their railway between 1830 and 1832, to supplement the existing tramway to the Sankey Canal. The colliery, together with its railways and coal yards, was leased to Richard Evans and William Turner on 4 November 1833, for £21,560. The lease document contained a clause guaranteeing Thomas Legh use of the railway, not only for his business enterprises, but also to convey spectators to the race meetings.



race specials to the main line, setting down and picking up at Collins Green and Newton Junction. But in February 1838, Edward Woods, the L. & M. Engineer, agreed with Legh's agent that additional sidings should be provided at the racecourse station and the layout altered, both to avoid a repetition of the mishap and to cater for the additional traffic now that the G.J.R. was opened, with the expectation of a through route to London before the year was out. This proved to be a wise move as traffic built up in the next few years. Newton racecourse remained open until 13 July 1898, and in view of the pressure placed on the Great Central Railway to expedite the opening of a station to serve its replacement at Haydock Park, the station may well have continued in use until the end.<sup>4</sup>

The second 'racecourse' station qualifies for inclusion by default rather than by design. The Manchester, Bolton & Bury Railway opened its line from Salford to Bolton on 29 May 1838,<sup>5</sup> and the *Bolton Chronicle* of 2 June stated that Agecroft (also known as Agecroft Bridge) was the station for Manchester Races, which at that time were held on Kersal Moor. According to Clinker,<sup>6</sup> Agecroft was closed soon after its opening and could have served purely as a 'racecourse' station as early as the meeting on 6-9 June, but certainly for that on 30-31 August 1838. It was probably superseded before 1843 by Pendleton, which despite a sporadic early existence, was nearer to Kersal Moor. In any case, its role as a 'racecourse' station would have ceased after the last meeting at Kersal Moor on 5 June 1846, and it is therefore of only minor interest in this survey.

The next four instances in the chronological study of special race station facilities are all concerned with the ever-growing St. Leger traffic at Doncaster. Although no permanent buildings or platforms were constructed at these locations, other than those necessary for their normal use as goods stations or locomotive sidings, they were used

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<sup>4</sup> The mineral line to Haydock Colliery remained in use until the 1960s.

<sup>5</sup> The company was amalgamated with the Manchester & Leeds Railway under the Act of 18 August 1846, and thus became part of the Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway. See Marshall, J. *The Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway* (David & Charles, Newton Abbot, 1969) Vol. I, pp.23-65, and Townley, C.H.A., Appleton, C.A., Smith, F.D. & Peden J.A. *The Industrial Railways of Bolton, Bury and the Manchester Coalfield Pt.I* (Runpast Publishing, Cheltenham, 1994) pp.20-23.

<sup>6</sup> Clinker, C.R. *Clinker's Register of Closed Passenger Stations and Goods Depots in England, Scotland and Wales 1830 - 1977*, (Avon - Anglia Publications & Services, Bristol, 1998) p.154, Note 83.

for many years, and clearly specified as distinct destinations on contemporary railway tickets.<sup>7</sup>

As discussed in Chapter 4, the build up of traffic in three short years after the opening of the temporary station at Doncaster in 1848 had been rapid, particularly after the completion of the G.N. link to London via the loop line through Lincoln in 1850. The opening of the South Yorkshire Railway in November 1849<sup>8</sup> had also exacerbated the situation at the G.N. station. But a permanent station to serve both G.N. & S.Y. trains was opened on 16 September 1850,<sup>9</sup> just in time for the St. Leger, and in 1851 the S.Y.R. erected a 200 yard long platform on the down side of their line at Cherry Tree Junction with equally good timing.<sup>10</sup> This was used to cater for third class passengers from Sheffield, first and second class passengers travelling by separate specials to the G.N. station.

By 1860, even with the help of the extra platform at Cherry Tree Lane for the S.Y. and Midland Railways' traffic, the two platform G.N. station was inadequate, so both the Shakespeare sidings to the south east of the station and the Marshgate sidings to the north - available now that the S.Y. line to Thorne and Keadby had been opened - were used to set down and take up passengers on St. Leger Day. Three years later the accommodation at Marshgate was increased by thirteen new sidings at a cost of £6,000, and the Locomotive Sidings were also brought into play as passenger numbers were some 25 per cent up on the previous year. By 1867, the G.N.R. was having to borrow over 250 carriages from other railways to cope with its own excursion traffic, which made up just over half of the 70 specials arriving in St. Leger week.<sup>11</sup>

Race traffic continued to grow rapidly, and in 1873 a major reconstruction of the G.N. passenger station was put in hand. Apart from the improved waiting and refreshment facilities, extremely long platforms were provided, capable of dealing with two, or even three trains simultaneously. But with 150 specials and nearly 200

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<sup>7</sup> Examples of tickets from David Geldard's collection.

<sup>8</sup> The S.Y.R. opened its line between Doncaster and a junction with the Midland Railway on 10 November 1849, reaching Barnsley on 1 June 1851 and Blackburn Junction near Sheffield on 11 September 1854. The line from Doncaster to Thorne was opened to freight on 11 December 1855 and to passengers on 7 July 1856. The extension to Keadby was taken into use on 10 September 1859, and the S.Y.R. passed into the hands of the Manchester, Sheffield & Lincolnshire Railway in 1864.

<sup>9</sup> *Doncaster Gazette*, 6 September 1850, *Doncaster Chronicle*, 13 September 1850.

<sup>10</sup> *Doncaster Gazette*, 12 September 1851, advertisement.

scheduled passenger trains on the 1884 St. Leger Day, the various additional facilities were still in great demand. Even the Prince of Wales' special in this year arrived at Marshgate rather than at the main station. In 1888 a peak of 1,149 passenger trains were handled at Doncaster during the four race days, but this did not stop further improvements being made. In 1898 four new signal boxes were erected to reduce block sections and speed up operations on racedays - a similar tactic was used in connection with major meetings at Ascot and Epsom - and a 60 ft. turntable was installed in 1904 to deal with larger engines. The junction at the Decoy was remodelled to avoid shunting movements and the Cherry Tree Lane sidings were extended and styled St. James's station. Passengers were provided with a printed notice giving their train number, and instructions how and when to get back to their departure location. This was essential as trains were being despatched at 75 second intervals. Even Richardson was impressed: 'The Great Northern Railway Company deal with the traffic in an absolutely wonderful manner. There seems to be little bustling and comparatively very little crowding. The trains steam up to the various platforms - specials and ordinaries - with their distinctions shown in large black and white placards, they are instantly filled, and, moving away, make room for others. The excursionists depart from other platforms, away from the station proper.'<sup>12</sup>

The G.N.R. was now using some 1,200 staff and 70 miles of sidings cleared of goods wagons in the immediate area of Doncaster for stabling trains on St. Leger Day, when all freight traffic was suspended. But the success of the operation still depended on the effective co-ordination of permanent and temporary facilities as well as that of all the other railway companies involved.

In October 1904, the as yet unborn South Yorkshire Junction Railway<sup>13</sup> proposed a racecourse station on its projected line north of the Low Ellers, but this was on the

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<sup>11</sup> *Doncaster Gazette*, 13 September 1867. Information on activities at Doncaster in St. Leger week, except where otherwise stated, is taken from Scowcroft, P.L. 'Railways and the St. Leger', *Journal of the Railway & Canal Historical Society*, XXVII, 1983, pp.266-276.

<sup>12</sup> Richardson, C. *The English Turf* (Methuen, London 1901) p.129. But not all of the outlying locations had real platforms and racegoers had to scramble in and out of trains. *Doncaster Gazette*, 9 September 1910.

<sup>13</sup> This line (not to be confused with the earlier South Yorkshire Railway), jointly owned by the G.C., G.N., L.& Y., Midland and N.E. Railways, was authorised in 1903 round the east side of Doncaster from a junction at Dinnington to a junction with the G.C. (formerly S.Y.) line north of Doncaster at Kirk Sandall. The line was opened to freight traffic on 1 January 1909, but passenger services even over part of it did not begin until 1 December of the following year. As it was only built as a single

opposite side of the course to the stands, and there would also be difficulty in transporting the crowds from Cantley, which was then out in the country. The idea was dropped in April 1907,<sup>14</sup> and the generally held view of the G.N. efficiency was expressed in the local paper some six years later. 'The work of bringing passengers from and despatching them to all parts of the country has been brought to such a perfect pitch of organisation that one year's story .... is a precise repetition of that told the year before.'<sup>15</sup>

York races, held on the Knavesmire south of the city since 1731, benefited from the special excursion platforms originally provided for a Volunteer Review on 28 September 1860.<sup>16</sup> They were used for the race meeting in August 1861<sup>17</sup>, and this remained their most important traffic until the Second World War. Before the new through station at York was opened in June 1877, these platforms were on loops on either side of the running lines, but when the N.E. main line was quadrupled, the platforms were moved outwards on to two new loops. By the turn of the century the level of traffic was such that for the main race day on 26 August 1903, for example, there were eight excursions routed to Holgate Bridge from Newcastle and Sunderland alone, with five regular trains to York station strengthened by one or two carriages each and provision made for a full relief train to be run for the 10.25 a.m. Newcastle to York express and its return working.<sup>18</sup>

Doncaster was fortunate in having the space and facilities to continually improvise and improve its handling of ever increasing crowds, unlike Epsom, which as we have seen, had enjoyed huge crowds before the dawn of the railway age. Moreover, Doncaster was able to earn year round revenue from its many sidings and goods

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line, major expense and alterations would have been necessary if facilities for dealing with even a fraction of the St. Leger traffic had been laid in.

<sup>14</sup> Elliott, B.J. *The South Yorkshire Joint Railway* (Oakwood Press, Lingfield, 1971) p.17.

<sup>15</sup> *Doncaster Gazette*, 12 September 1913. Croughton, G., Kidner, R.W. & Young, A. *Private and Untimetabled Railway Stations, Halts and Stopping Places* (Oakwood Press, Trowbridge, 1982) p.68 identify one further race meeting use for a line normally used only for freight traffic. This was the Hull & Barnsley & Great Central Joint line from Aire Junction on the H.& B. main line, which served various collieries in the Doncaster area and ran to a goods station in the town. None of its five stations ever had a regular passenger service, but the York Road terminus handled St. Leger traffic, seemingly for the only time, in September 1919.

<sup>16</sup> Hoole, K. *Rail Centres - York* (Ian Allan Ltd., London, 1983) p.106.

<sup>17</sup> Holgate Bridge was used for the main York meeting on 28-30 August 1861, but may have been used for the less important spring meeting on 14/15 May if the level of traffic warranted this.

<sup>18</sup> 'N.E.R. Northern Division Programme of Excursion and Special Trains, etc.', 22-28 August 1903, supplied by Gerry Knox. Similar arrangements were made in other northern areas, with less extensive provision for the other days of the meeting.

stations, whereas at Epsom two railway companies built branch lines with lavish facilities, which saw heavy use on no more than six days a year. The arrival of the L.B. & S.C.R. at Epsom in 1847, followed by the L. & S.W.R. twelve years later, gave the town two normal sized public stations, but capable of handling only a fraction of the Derby Day crowds and still nearly two miles from the course. Moreover the arrival of the L.S.W.R. had hit the L.B.S.C. receipts sufficiently hard for the Chairman to comment on this fact at the Annual General Meeting. Local businessmen realised that there was potential to make money, and quickly obtained authority to build a line from Sutton to Epsom Downs. But matters did not run smoothly and by the time the railway was opened on 22 May 1865, it was part of the L.B.S.C.R.<sup>19</sup> Despite the fact that a normal passenger service of between four and eight trains a day was envisaged, the branch was built as double track with a terminus at Epsom Downs boasting no less than nine platforms, although no shelters were provided. To facilitate train movements 'middle sidings' with crossovers were installed between two pairs of platforms. There was also a 42ft. locomotive turntable, coaling and water facilities were provided together with several long sidings, although there was no proper goods yard or even a crane. Despite the lavish facilities and layout, signalling arrangements were rudimentary until the late 1870s, as except on racedays there was only one train on the branch at any one time.<sup>20</sup> As race traffic built up three more intermediate signalboxes were opened in 1901-2, but although provided with a full set of signals in both directions, these were switched out except for race weeks, and the signal arms were removed and stored during the rest of the year.<sup>21</sup>

But, despite these facilities and the efficient operation at peak periods which will be described below, race traffic over the branch did not prove as lucrative as projected. Many people preferred to travel from London by road - a gigantic 'deliciously

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<sup>19</sup> Kirkby, J.R.W. *The Banstead & Epsom Downs Railway* (Oakwood Press, Salisbury, 1983) p.4. This gives more details of the struggles to get the line built, including the refusal of the Epsom Grandstand Association and the Lord of the Manor to allow a station only 220 yards from the grandstand, instead of ¼ mile away as finally built.

<sup>20</sup> After freight traffic commenced in 1872, signal boxes were installed at California (renamed Belmont on 1 October 1875) in 1874, at Banstead in 1877, with a new box brought into use at Epsom Downs on 27 May 1879.

<sup>21</sup> 'B' Intermediate signalbox between Belmont and Banstead was opened in 1901, with 'A' Intermediate between Sutton and Belmont and 'C' Intermediate between Banstead and Epsom Downs in the following year. Additional signalling was also provided at Epsom Downs, giving 19 stop signals on the down line and 16 on the up line, which greatly facilitated stock storage and train movement on major race days.

prolonged pub crawl' - or by rail to Epsom Town, where there were ample hotels and public houses,<sup>22</sup> rather than to Epsom Downs from which there was no real road to the course until 1892. It was then described by a witness at the Commons Committee on the Epsom Downs Extension Railway Bill as 'an absolute wilderness and the most godforsaken place on earth'. The L.B.S.C. Secretary and General Manager, Allan Searle, told the same committee that the operating profit on the Epsom Downs branch was only £90 in 1890 and £203 in the current year, a loss of £550 in 1891 being largely attributable to track relaying costs.<sup>23</sup>

Despite this, the L.B.S.C.R. dedicated itself to providing an efficient service on the major race days with specials from both Victoria and London Bridge, and its offices remaining open until 10 p.m. for several days before the event to facilitate advance purchase of tickets. On Derby Day there was a very early start to get spare locomotives, staff and up to 600 policemen to Epsom Downs, and to strategic stations en route. Regular services were extended to Epsom Downs for the day and these started running as early as 8 a.m., returning to town for a second trip. The early specials were dealt with in like fashion, as Epsom Downs could only hold about 15 trains, and some later specials had to be stabled at other convenient points. Then in the afternoon the normal passenger service was suspended beyond Banstead, so that the empty trains could be queued buffer to buffer on the down line under a specially authorised permissive block arrangement. This allowed trains to be quickly backed into a platform as soon as there was a space available, as all the racegoers wanted to return to town as soon as possible after the races had finished. In 1901 Epsom was to get another large racecourse station, but this and some of the operations at Epsom Downs at that time will be discussed in a later section.

### THE ERA OF THE 'PARK' RACECOURSE

The last quarter of the nineteenth century saw the growth of new enclosed or 'park' courses, and many of these were provided either with a special station, or with additional facilities at existing stations. Nevertheless, in a number of cases, lavish

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<sup>22</sup> Wynn Jones, M. *The Derby - A Celebration of the World's Most Famous Horse Race* (Croom Helm, London, 1979, pp. 65 ff.

<sup>23</sup> The Reports of the Commons Committee on the Epsom Downs Extension Railway (1892) and of the Lords Committee on the Chipstead Valley Railway Bill (1893) contain much information about

facilities on the racecourse and the proximity of one or more railway stations did not guarantee success - Portsmouth Park, Hedon and Keele Park are some striking examples of failure. Some older racecourses such as Newmarket, Aintree and Goodwood were also provided with additional or more convenient stations within the same time period.

The second of the 'park' courses at Kempton Park, could have been served well enough by the station at Sunbury on the Shepperton branch, opened in 1864, but actually provided the first instance of dedicated race facilities during this part of the review period. After a certain amount of persuasion, the L.S.W.R. had doubled the track from Fulwell as far as Sunbury<sup>24</sup>, and for the opening of the racecourse on 18 July 1878, provided a single canopied platform on the south side of the line about ½ mile east of Sunbury and adjacent to the grandstand. A second platform was added in 1879, but the station remained available only to members until 1890 when a radical rebuilding was undertaken. A third platform was added and additional long canopies installed over the platforms, which were connected to the grandstand by a covered footbridge and walkways.<sup>25</sup> Public specials and branch trains then started using the station, although there was no access other than to and from the racecourse. The down platform could accommodate two first class members-only saloon specials at the same time. Four years later the L.S.W.R. opened a north curve onto the Shepperton branch at Fulwell, so that race specials could run via Richmond as well as via Wimbledon.<sup>26</sup> In due course three temporary signalboxes were provided, in addition to that at Kempton Park station, and on racedays the specials were parked on the up line

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the profitability and other operating details on the Epsom Downs Branch. The two railways in question together formed the S.E. Tattenham Corner branch, which will be discussed later.

<sup>24</sup> The Thames Valley Railway, which was born out of a more ambitious scheme, was incorporated to build a branch to Shepperton on 17 July 1862. It was opened on 1 November 1864 and sold to the L.S.W.R. under the terms of an Act in July 1865, the company being wound up on 11 January 1867. The line was doubled as far as Fulwell about 1867, but even the sale of Kempton Manor in 1869 for the projected construction of the racecourse, brought no further improvements. The line was doubled to Sunbury on 17 July 1878 and through to Shepperton on 9 December of the same year. For further information see Jackson, A.A. *London's Local Railways* (David & Charles, Newton Abbot, 1978) pp.65-71.

<sup>25</sup> Richardson, *English Turf*, p.185 commented that it was possible to leave Waterloo in the pouring rain and reach the grandstand at Kempton Park without getting wet.

<sup>26</sup> The Fulwell curve, from Fulwell Junction on the Shepperton Branch to Shacklegate Junction on the Kingston line about ½ mile south of Strawberry Hill station, was opened on 1 July 1894. While constructed mainly for race specials, it helped the passage of freight trains to and from the Shepperton branch. It was not used for ordinary passenger trains until 1 June 1901.

and called forward as required. As by the outbreak of the First World War there were race meetings in eight months of the year, facilities were well used.<sup>27</sup>

Meanwhile in the northwest the Cheshire Lines Committee was making a determined bid to tap the lucrative seaside traffic to Southport.<sup>28</sup> Its line ran close to Aintree racecourse, which had been served by the L.Y. Liverpool - Preston line since April 1849,<sup>29</sup> and the C.L.C. decided to get a share of the race traffic, opening its own station at Aintree on 13 July 1880 for specials, over four years before the start of public passenger traffic on 1 September 1884. Thereafter, although it continued to play a major part in dealing with race trains, particularly on Grand National day, it falls outside the scope of this chapter.

The L.B.S.C.R. opened its Chichester - Midhurst branch on 11 July 1881, and this included a station at Singleton, only a couple of miles from Goodwood. Prior to this the nearest station had been at Chichester, opened on 8 June 1846, and over fifty years later was still favoured by Richardson, who made no mention of Singleton.<sup>30</sup> Not so Acworth, who soundly berated the L.B.S.C.R. for providing an insignificant branch station with such lavish facilities - including four long platforms, waiting rooms, telegraph offices and an engine turntable - 'all ... purely for the accommodation of the Goodwood traffic. A wooden platform and lean-to shed on it would be all to which the importance of the place would naturally entitle it'.<sup>31</sup> The same comment could have been made about Epsom Downs and Tattenham Corner.

Although flat racing on the Isle of Wight was sparsely represented in the *Racing Calendar*, the last report being as early as 1846, steeplechasing flourished in two major locations on the island until 1881. But in April 1882 the Isle of Wight Hunt and the

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<sup>27</sup> In January 1916, while the course was being used as a motor transport store the Shepperton branch was electrified, but although race specials remained steam hauled during the interwar years, electrification had improved operations, so that trains could be despatched at four minute intervals.

<sup>28</sup> The Southport & Cheshire Lines Extension Railway was just one of a number of projects undertaken by the C.L.C., and was a continuation of the line from Aintree, which had been opened to freight traffic on 1 December 1879.

<sup>29</sup> See Chapter 4, Note 11.

<sup>30</sup> Richardson, *English Turf*, pp. 79-80. This was understandable because special trains with Pullman cars and first class coaches only ran to Chichester or Drayton, with onward road transport available. Only third class excursion trains normally ran to Singleton, from which there was a steep walk to the course.

<sup>31</sup> Acworth, W.M. *The Railways of England* (John Murray, London, 1889) p.351. He did not mention that ¾ miles of sidings, capable of holding fourteen 20-coach trains, were also provided. The 'four long platforms' were in fact the faces of two island platforms. See Gray, A. *The Railways of Mid-Sussex* (Oakwood Press, Blandford, 1975) p.48. Course, E. *The Railways of Southern England: Secondary and Branch Lines* (B.T. Batsford Ltd., London, 1974) p.176.



Castle Club of Ventnor joined forces to hold a meeting on a new course just south of Ashley station on the Ryde-Newport line.<sup>32</sup> A short branch line to a nearby quarry swept round the west side of the course, and enabled passengers to be set down near the grandstand. As specials were run from all parts of the island with connections from the mainland, trains were also stabled on the branch to minimise interference with regular passenger services, and used as impromptu grandstands during the meeting.<sup>33</sup>

The first of the modern enclosed courses, Sandown Park, had been opened in 1875, and was soon putting on four or five flat race meetings each year, as well as National Hunt fixtures. It was served by Esher station on the L.S.W. main line, which had been opened in 1838, and reconstructed in 1877 with some minor improvements to cater for race traffic.<sup>34</sup> But in 1882, two special platforms with three faces, together with sidings, were provided by the L.S.W.R., and in the following year these were directly connected to the racecourse by a subway financed by the Sandown Park Race Club.<sup>35</sup> An additional signal box - Esher East - was also installed, together with a special signal on a slotted post, which enabled it to be folded away when not in use.<sup>36</sup>

Mineral traffic requirements proved equally propitious for the popular but somewhat isolated course at Croxton Park in Leicestershire. The G.N.R. built a line from Scalford on its joint line with the L.N.W.R. to tap the ironstone deposits in the area. It was opened on 5 April 1883, which coincided with a race meeting at Croxton Park. Although the nearest station on the branch at Waltham-on-the Wold was provided with passenger facilities, these were only used for race meetings or in connection with Waltham Fair.<sup>37</sup> The opening of the Midland Railway branch from Holwell Jct. to Wycombe Junction on the Waltham branch in 1887 gave additional opportunities for racegoers, and up to nine specials were regularly handled in the early years.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> The Ryde & Newport Railway's line from Smallbrook Junction, on the Isle of Wight Railway main line from Ryde to Newport in the centre of the island, had been opened on 20 December 1875, together with the public station at Ashley, to which the new racecourse was adjacent. In July 1887, the local railway amalgamated with two other companies to form the Isle of Wight Central Railway.

<sup>33</sup> Pitt, C. *A Long Time Gone* (Portway Press, Halifax, 1996), p.240.

<sup>34</sup> Esher was opened as Ditton Marsh on 21 May 1838, but, although renamed Esher about 1840, and undergoing a number of renamings thereafter, did not become Esher for Sandown Park until August 1934.

<sup>35</sup> Jackson, A.A. *The Railway in Surrey* (Atlantic Transport Publishers, Penryn, 1999) p.178.

<sup>36</sup> Body, G. *Railways of the Southern Region* (Patrick Stephens, Cambridge, 1984) p.92.

<sup>37</sup> Waltham Fair took place generally in September, as evidenced by a special railway ticket for the event on 20 September 1897.

<sup>38</sup> See Chapter 4, Text and Note 75.

Meanwhile, even Newmarket with its elitist attitudes and relatively small race crowds was feeling the need for additional railway facilities. The reason for this was not really the level of attendance, although special trains from London had run regularly to the 1,000 Guineas and 2,000 Guineas meetings since 1874, but operating problems caused by the layout of the railways within the town. The original Newmarket Railway station, opened in 1848, had remained a terminus, when the extension to Bury St. Edmunds had been built in 1854. This was because of the need to protect the training gallops on Warren Hill through which a 1,100 yard tunnel had to be bored.<sup>39</sup> The original single platform terminus had in due course been provided with an additional island platform - the so-called 'third class platform' - but through trains had still to back in and out of the station. The opening of the Ely line in 1879<sup>40</sup> exacerbated the problem, which the G.E.R. tackled some two years later by providing an island platform on the Bury line linked to the original station by a short footbridge. Through running was now possible, but in April 1885 a new station to cater solely for race traffic from the Midlands and the North was opened at the eastern end of Warren Hill tunnel. In keeping with Newmarket tradition, this was a good way from the racecourse and consisted of a terminal island platform with very meagre facilities. The problems affecting trains from London and Cambridge were not fully resolved until the opening on 7 April 1902 of a spacious new through station with two long platforms for dealing with race traffic, and financed by Colonel McCalmont at a cost of £40,000. The original Newmarket Railway station was then relegated to dealing with horsebox and freight traffic, but the Warren Hill race station continued in use until World War Two.

It is now appropriate to review three racecourses opened or reopened in the 1880s for whose special station facilities no precise date is known to the writer. The major meeting at Newcastle-on-Tyne was moved from the Town Moor to High Gosforth Park in 1882. This new venue was some six miles from the city centre, and although

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<sup>39</sup> The Newmarket & Chesterford Railway received the Royal Assent for a line linking the two places in its title, together with a branch from Six Mile Bottom to Cambridge, on 16 July 1846. It was opened to freight traffic on 3 January 1848 and to passengers on 4 April of the same year. After some early struggles with the Eastern Counties Railway and suspension of train services for a time, the Newmarket Railway opened its branch to Cambridge on 9 October 1851, and immediately closed its main line to Chesterford. It became part of the E.C.R. in 1852, and the line from Newmarket to Bury St. Edmunds was opened on 1 April 1854.

<sup>40</sup> The Ely & Newmarket Railway was opened on 1 September 1879, being worked from the outset by the G.E.R., in which company it was vested in 1898.

there were other railway stations one or two miles distant, the N.E.R. resolved to establish special facilities at Killingworth on the Newcastle to Berwick main line, which had been opened in 1847. Certainly by 1903 there were three cinder covered platforms in the yard adjacent to the passenger station, and train movements to these were controlled by a signal box used only on race days. In October 1903 at least six specials (not including a horsebox train from Malton) were scheduled to run from Newcastle to Killingworth Sidings Platform, in conjunction with strengthened regular trains from York and the south.<sup>41</sup> The special platforms continued in use until the late 1950s.

The race meetings at Bogside near Irvine on the Ayrshire coast had had a somewhat sporadic existence during the nineteenth century, firstly under the patronage of the Earl of Eglinton until 1852 when he became Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and then under the aegis of the Eglinton Hunt between 1867 and 1877, when they vanished from the pages of the *Racing Calendar* for several years. A fresh start, still under the control of the Hunt, was made on 10 April 1885, and the meetings remained a permanent fixture for a further 80 years. Although there had been a station at Irvine since 1839,<sup>42</sup> it seems that, about the time of the restarted meetings, an unadvertised race station was opened. It was certainly in use for race traffic before it became a public passenger station on 1 June 1894, the last special use having taken place on the previous 5 April.

The next race station for which a specific opening date is known was for the course at Hedon, some four miles east of Hull, which had been laid out on a 267 acre estate at a cost of £75,000. The station, which was on the North Eastern Railway branch from Hull to Withernsea,<sup>43</sup> was adjacent to the course and ready for the first meeting on 24/25 July 1888. Although there were only moderate fields, this attracted 14,000 spectators on the first day and 20,000 on the Saturday. Despite this, Fairfax Blakeborough maintained that the course was inaccessible by road and a local paper

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<sup>41</sup> 'N.E.R. Northern Division Programme of Excursion and Special Trains etc.', 17-23 October 1903, supplied by Gerry Knox.

<sup>42</sup> The Glasgow, Paisley, Kilmarnock & Ayr Railway was authorised on 15 July 1837 to construct a line linking the places mentioned in the title. The first seven miles between Glasgow and Paisley were jointly managed with the Glasgow, Paisley & Greenock Railway, authorised on the same day. The line was opened through to Irvine and Ayr on 5 August 1839, and the undertaking amalgamated with the Glasgow, Dumfries & Carlisle Railway in 1851 to form the Glasgow & South Western Railway.

<sup>43</sup> The Hull & Holderness Railway was authorised on 8 July 1853 for a 17 mile line out to the coast at Withernsea. It was opened on 27 June 1854 and a station was provided at Hedon. The company was dissolved and vested in the N.E.R. under the terms of an Act of 7 July 1862. The race station was situated at the west end of the course between Marfleet and Hedon stations.

stated that 'the train service turned out to be hopeless. Extra trains were scheduled from Hull's Paragon station every five minutes on racedays, but these failed to materialise'.<sup>44</sup> There were only eleven meetings between August 1888 and May 1895 - the last flat race meeting being on 8/9 May 1890 - and the company went into liquidation. A new company was registered in 1906,<sup>45</sup> and meetings were restarted in August 1908. These only lasted until September 1909, even though top jockeys such as Maher, Fox, Halsey and Madden rode in the four meetings, which saw a sharp drop in prize money as the revival lost momentum.<sup>46</sup>

Meanwhile at Aintree, despite the opening of the C.L.C. station, the continued build-up of race traffic, particularly on Grand National Day, persuaded the Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway to provide additional facilities for the 1890 meeting. A racecourse station was therefore built on the freight branch which linked the Liverpool - Bury main line at Fazakerley Junction with North Mersey goods station in the Liverpool Docks.<sup>47</sup> This branch already had connections to the L.Y. Preston and Southport lines and in due course would be linked to the Liverpool Overhead Railway at Seaforth Sands. So it was well placed to take a substantial share of the Grand National traffic.<sup>48</sup> The long 'single' platform of the station, known variously as Cinder Lane or Racecourse, was provided with separate exits for first and third class passengers, so staff had to ensure that trains were correctly positioned both before and after the meeting.<sup>49</sup> The investment was certainly justified, as in 1906 it was used by 26 trains and in 1913 by 34.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Fairfax Blakeborough, *J. Northern Turf History Vol. II* (J.A. Allen & Co., London 1949) pp.128-129, and *Hull Express*, 24 August 1888.

<sup>45</sup> *Hull Times*, 18 August 1906, carried a notice: 'A company under the style of the Hedon Park Estates (Limited) has been registered with a capital of £75,000 in £1 shares to acquire the lands and premises known as the Hedon Racecourse and Twyers Hill Farm in the Parish of Preston, Holderness, to carry on the business of racecourse and recreation ground proprietors.'

<sup>46</sup> In the first meeting on 5/6 August 1908 there were two races worth £900 or more, but by August 1909 the top prize was only £232.

<sup>47</sup> *Salford Reporter*, 22 March 1890. It was used for the first time on 27 March 1890. Nine trains were scheduled to call during the three day meeting.

<sup>48</sup> The branch was opened to freight on 27 August 1866, together with the west to north connections at Marsh Lane and Aintree. The southbound connection to the Southport line was laid in on 15 May 1886 and the link to the L.O.R. on 2 July 1905.

<sup>49</sup> The 'platform' was actually the eastbound track, which was raised so that passengers could alight from trains on the opposite line. This avoided the expense of a conventional platform which would only be used on a few days each year.

<sup>50</sup> *Railway Magazine*, XXXII, 1913, p.409. The main L.Y. station at Aintree was substantially rebuilt in 1912, and it may be that additional excursion platforms were provided at that date, but this has yet to be confirmed by the writer.

Portsmouth Park racecourse, opened complete with station provided by the L.B.S.C.R. on Farlington Marshes on 26 June 1891, was virtually inaccessible by road. Moreover the locals did not support it, even by train 'though the journey was only of ten minutes duration, and ... nine tenths of the visitors arrived by the London and Brighton specials'.<sup>51</sup> The company went into liquidation after the last race on 28 June 1894, but reopened as a National Hunt course on 25 April 1899, and as such proved both popular with racegoers, making modest profits until the First World War intervened. The course then became one of the largest ammunition dumps in Britain and its station continued to be used for workmen's trains until after the cessation of hostilities,<sup>52</sup> but the meeting was not revived.

The other new course opened in 1891 was far more successful. This was Gatwick, which replaced the last survivor of the South London suburban courses at Croydon. Situated midway along the L.B.S.C. London - Brighton line, a few miles north of Three Bridges, it was provided with excellent facilities, including a special station from its opening on 7 October 1891. Richardson wrote eloquently about the beauties of the course, noting that the Gatwick stands were adjacent to the station platforms and connected to them by covered walkways.<sup>53</sup> The L.B.S.C.R. (and later the Southern Railway) provided a frequent service of trains on racedays, although average attendances were around 4,000. Nevertheless, the meetings remained popular and successful until the Second World War brought an end to them on 15 June 1940.<sup>54</sup>

Many authorities give the opening date of Nottingham Racecourse station as 3 October 1857, but this is incorrect.<sup>55</sup> At that date the racecourse was on what is now

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<sup>51</sup> Richardson, *English Turf*, p. 197. This comment is borne out by the fact that Portsmouth, despite being a garrison town, was only recorded by the *Racing Calendar* as having flat race meetings in 1819 (Portsmouth) and 1845 to 1846 (Portsmouth & Southsea). Quite apart from Farlington race station which was directly accessible from Portsmouth, Brighton and London, racegoers could also use Cosham station on the Portsmouth - Fareham - Southampton line, which gave access to several other towns.

<sup>52</sup> Farlington became a public station on 17 June 1928 (Croughton) or 7 July 1928 (Quick), but as this is outside the study timeframe it is noted for the sake of completeness. Farlington Halt closed on 4 July 1937. In the 1920s a pony racing course was established at Wycherley Park, a few miles to the west at Paulsgrove, between Portchester and Cosham on the former L.S.W. line. This proved so popular that the Southern Railway opened a special station with long narrow platforms behind the grandstand on 28 June 1933. The last meeting at which it was used was on 23 August 1939, the official railway closure date being September 1939.

<sup>53</sup> Richardson, *English Turf*, p.195. Two signal boxes had been opened at the beginning of October 1891, and additional line capacity provided by an up relief line a year later.

<sup>54</sup> The meeting on 12 May 1937 attracted 9,500, nearly twice the previous record.

<sup>55</sup> These include Croughton, Kidner & Young, *Private and Untimetabled Stations*, p.107, Gilks, J.S. 'By Rail to the Races', *Railway Magazine*, CXI, 1965, p.7. 3 October 1857 is merely the opening date

the Forest Recreation Ground to the north of the city, as the present racecourse in Colwick Park was not opened until 19 August 1892. The lack of a racecourse station, and more importantly, the lack of a central railway station in the city had provoked various discussions at meetings of the Corporation during the 1880s. So in October 1881, the General Purposes Committee resolved that a 'memorial' should be sent to the Midland, G.N. and L.N.W. Railways urging them to consider the Corporation's own proposal for a central station. This also included a line running in a tunnel under the General Cemetery and the Forest Recreation Ground where a station was proposed to serve Hyson Green and the racecourse. This line would then have run due north to join the G.N. Leen Valley line half a mile south of the future site of Bulwell Forest station.<sup>56</sup>

The proposal fell on stony ground, the central station was never built, and in due course the Corporation decided it could no longer support the racecourse and the last meeting was held on 30 September 1890. As mentioned above, the new racecourse was opened some two years later, and in the 'Report of the Directors of the Nottingham & Colwick Park Race Course & Sports Company Ltd.' dated 3 December 1892, it was stated: 'The great Northern Railway have erected a siding and station adjoining the Race Course<sup>57</sup>, and have liberally met the views of your Directors in providing train services for those attending the Races, which will greatly add to the interests of the Shareholders of the Race Company.' Between 70 and 80 trains had used the new station during the meeting.<sup>58</sup>

Lingfield Park, not far from East Grinstead, was opened as a steeplechase course in 1890, the first flat race meeting being held on 16 May 1894. There was already a station at Lingfield, opened on 10 March 1884, when the line from South Croydon to

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of the Ambergate, Nottingham, Boston & Eastern Junction Railway's independent line to a terminus in Nottingham to overcome operational problems, which had plagued it since the opening of its line from Grantham to the Midland Railway at Colwick Junction on 15 July 1850. Both the new terminus at London Road and the Midland Railway station were much nearer to the then existing racecourse than the racecourse station, if it had been built when it was claimed.

<sup>56</sup> Records of the Borough of Nottingham, IX, 1836-1900, October 1881. Bulwell Forest station was opened on 4 October 1882, and the course of the proposed line to this point would have been very similar to that of the Great Central main line built some 18 years later.

<sup>57</sup> A booking office and waiting rooms were provided on the north side (up) platform. There were no buildings on the down platform. The 'siding' was some distance from the racecourse station, and will be discussed later. A plan of the racecourse station can be found in Henshaw, A. *The Great Northern Railway in the East Midlands* (Railway Correspondence & Travel Society, Huntingdon, 1999), p.44.

East Grinstead was completed.<sup>59</sup> In May 1894, a down loop line was provided to create an additional platform face, while the platforms themselves were extended. Additional sidings were provided, and the horsedock in the up yard was extended so that it could be used for race specials as well as horses. Two footbridges and a long covered walkway to the course were built to ease congestion and improve the amenities offered to racegoers.<sup>60</sup>

Flat racing was revived in Birmingham after a lapse of several years on a course at Bromford Bridge on 14 June 1895. This was situated close to the Midland Railway Birmingham - Derby main line between Saltley and Castle Bromwich stations. The M.R. provided a race station with platforms on the goods lines at Bromford Bridge, and these were ready for the meeting on 9 March 1896. Signal boxes north and south of the station had been opened on the previous 23 February, so that extra block posts could be brought into use on race days to speed up the operation of passenger trains to and from the meeting.<sup>61</sup>

In May 1895 Ralph Sneyd opened his Keele Park steeplechase course not far from the North Staffordshire Railway Stoke-on-Trent to Market Drayton line and somewhat nearer the Potteries conurbation than the Woore course mentioned in Chapter 4. Although there were five public stations within five miles of the course<sup>62</sup>, the N.S.R.

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<sup>58</sup> *Nottingham Daily Guardian*, 22 August 1892. Eleven days earlier the *Nottingham Evening Post* had stated that racegoers 'will be able to leave the station and at once enter at turnstiles, six of which have been provided.'

<sup>59</sup> The line from South Croydon to Crowhurst Junction near the S.E. Redhill to Tonbridge line was jointly owned by the L.B.S.C. and S.E. Railways, the rest of the branch southwards through Lingfield being solely L.B.S.C. property.

<sup>60</sup> Turner, J.T.H. *The London, Brighton & South Coast Railway* (B.T. Batsford Ltd., London, 1979) p.36. A plan to build a spur line to the racecourse, ¼ mile south of the station, was authorised on 25 July 1898, but never carried out. See also Jackson, *The Railway in Surrey*, p.180.

<sup>61</sup> Bromford Bridge station was built on the site of a shortlived public station, known as Bromford Forge, opened on 16 May 1842, and closed in May 1843. Although Richardson, *English Turf*, p.202, was very complimentary about the course, he seemed unaware of the existence of Bromford Bridge station.

Gough, J.V. *The Midland Railway - A Chronology* (Railway & Canal Historical Society, Mold 1989) p.213. The operation was somewhat simplified when Bromford Bridge station signal box was opened on 16 December 1917, and the south and north boxes closed on 16 and 24 December 1917 respectively.

<sup>62</sup> On the N.S.R. there were stations at Stoke-on-Trent (5 miles), Madeley Road (3 miles) and Keele (2 miles), while on the L.N.W. London - Crewe main line, there were stations at Madeley and Whitmore, both about 3 miles from the course.

Christiansen, R. & Miller, R.W. *The North Staffordshire Railway* (David & Charles, Newton Abbot, 1971) p.69 believe that Sneyd had a racecourse as early as 1870, and the N.S.R. opened Madeley Road specially for this traffic, but later writers such as Lester, C.R. *The Stoke to Market Drayton Line* (Oakwood Press, Salisbury, 1983) pp.34-35, have failed to substantiate this.

provided for Sneyd a special race station, which was opened on 26 October 1896. Despite all these facilities, the sporting fraternity considered it hard of access, and it was bedevilled with shortage of runners throughout its short life. Moreover, its owner was unable to persuade the Jockey Club to allow flat racing there. Although a full programme had been scheduled for 1907 the last meeting took place on 17/18 October 1906. The 1907 fixtures were transferred to the new course at Uttoxeter, which was adjacent to an important junction on the Crewe - Derby line and amply provided with facilities to cater for race traffic.<sup>63</sup>

In Kent, a new racecourse was opened at Westenhanger near Folkestone, the inaugural National Hunt meeting taking place on 30 March 1898, and the first flat race fixture on 17 August of the same year. The course was adjacent to the S.E. Tonbridge - Ashford - Dover main line, where there had been a station at Westenhanger since 7 February 1844. The S.E.R. gave its full support to the new racecourse, providing prize money for races, free transport for horses and lads, and improving the station in March 1898 with extended platforms on the downside and resignalling. Two island platforms were ultimately provided on loops to the west of the original station, and were certainly in place by 1907.<sup>64</sup>

Although the New Barns Racecourse in Manchester had opened in December 1867, its patrons were served only by the normal public stations in and around the city until the last few years of its existence. The opening of the L.Y. Salford Dock freight branch from Windsor Bridge Junction on 28 March 1898 gave a belated opportunity to provide a race station in the last of several tunnels on the line, and this was used for the flat race meeting on 1 June of the same year. Unfortunately the plans of the recently opened Manchester Ship Canal to build an inland port at Salford were about to come

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<sup>63</sup> Information on the closure of the race station is equally fraught. While the *Staffordshire Advertiser* 27 May 1911 is correct in stating that Keele Park failed to secure 'that measure of popularity and public patronage essential to success', Kettle, A.J. 'Horseracing', in *Victoria County History - Staffordshire*, II (Oxford University Press, London, 1967) p.368, errs in giving the date of the last Keele Park meeting as 27 May 1905, and the start of the Uttoxeter meetings as 1908. Baker, A.L. *The Chedale Railway* (Oakwood Press, Blandford, 1979) p.26 states that Keele Park station was built at private (i.e. Sneyd's) cost and closed officially on 5 March 1907, after which half of the buildings were sent to Tean station on the Chedale Railway, which had been taken over by the N.S.R. from 1 January 1907. *Uttoxeter Racecourse*, 1968 Racing Information Bureau, Bath, 1968) p. 2 confirms that the first fixture at Uttoxeter was on 3/4 May 1907. Entrance to the course was 1/-, and excursions were run from Nottingham, Birmingham, Derby, Manchester and Macclesfield.

<sup>64</sup> Course, E. *The Railways of Southern England: The Main Lines* (B.T. Batsford Ltd., London, 1973, p.41. There is no evidence of specific sponsorship of individual races in the *Racing Calendar*, so this must have been either for steeplechasing or a donation to the race fund.



to fruition, and the New Barns Racecourse vanished under No. 9 Dock in this terminal. The final flat race meeting was held on 21-23 November 1901, but the station was used for two further National Hunt fixtures, and survived to be used first for workmen's trains and then for excursions until August 1939.<sup>65</sup>

Meanwhile the race meetings at Newton had ended in July 1898, but the proprietors had already earmarked a larger tract of land at nearby Haydock Park, where they hoped to continue racing without a break. At the same time the Liverpool, St. Helens & South Lancashire Railway, having opened a single line from Lowton Junction to St. Helens for freight traffic on 1 July 1895, was struggling to lay the second track and open the branch to passengers. When it became obvious that completion was not imminent, pressure was put on the railway company to open the line as far as Haydock Park Racecourse station in time for the inaugural meeting. The Board of Trade Inspection passed off successfully and the station was brought into use for the first meeting on 10 February 1899.<sup>66</sup>

The long-established meetings at Rothbury figured fleetingly in the *Racing Calendar* between 1869 and 1871, so as the railway arrived in the town on 1 November 1870 only one meeting under Jockey Club rules had the advantage of the new mode of transport. Nevertheless National Hunt racing was to continue at Rothbury for a further 94 years, and the railway was to play an important part in its life, even after normal passenger services had been withdrawn from the branch.<sup>67</sup> In the early days, which occupy our survey, the full facilities of the branch terminus, including the goods yard and loading dock were used, albeit in a manner unapproved by the Board of Trade, to cope with the annual race traffic. But in 1899 the North British Railway finally upgraded the loading dock into a proper platform, which together with other

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<sup>65</sup> Thorpe, D. *The Railways of the Manchester Ship Canal* Oxford Publishing Co., Poole 1984) p.27.

<sup>66</sup> Tolson, J.M. *The St. Helens Railway* (Oakwood Press, Salisbury, 1983) pp.80-83 covers the involved and prolonged genesis of this line. Townley, C.H.A., Smith, F.D. & Peden, J.A. *The Industrial Railways of the Wigan Coalfield* (Runpast Publishing, Cheltenham, 1991) p.34 state that excursions ran to the meetings on 3/4 February 1899, based on *Wigan Observer*, 28 January 1899. This was indeed the plan, but the fixture was postponed for a week because of bad weather. Moorhouse, S. *The North Western Courses* (Field Sports Publications, London, no date [but c.1963 written on title page]) p.27 is incorrect in stating that the Liverpool to Manchester line ran past Haydock Park.

<sup>67</sup> Jenkins, S.C. *The Rothbury Branch* (Oakwood Press, Oxford, 1991) provides a full history of the branch. On racedays stock was stabled in the goods yard or sent down the branch to Scotsgap to await its return working, if space at the terminus was insufficient.

improvements carried out at the same time, was presented for inspection. Major Marindin R.E., the Board of Trade Inspector, in approving the work, commented that 'the practical result has been to make available for passenger use a long loading bank hitherto used occasionally by excursion trains in a manner not satisfactory'.<sup>68</sup> The first official use of the new facilities was for the April 1900 meeting.

Although the railway did not reach Ascot until June 1856, the subsequent history of additional facilities for its race meeting is complex and the various accounts are full of contradictions. The original station was extended in 1878 on the opening of the Bagshot line, so five platforms were then available for race traffic, while a subway was built to connect directly with a path to the course and thus facilitate the passage of the crowds without going through the booking office. The L.S.W.R. later provided a two platform station - Ascot West - on the Wokingham line about a mile west of the main station. This was intended to cater for race trains from the Reading direction, and a two road horsedock was also provided. Although the station was improved in 1899 no shelters were provided on the bare platforms.<sup>69</sup>

In 1905 the L.S.W.R. erected a cover over the footpath from the main station to the course, and on 12 May 1910 agreed to provide an additional platform on the north side of the railway about 400 yards west of Ascot station, to facilitate the departure of spectators from the Royal Enclosure.<sup>70</sup> The Grandstand Trustees constructed a footpath through the woods to the simple wooden platform, which was ready for the 1911 meeting.<sup>71</sup> Additional signalboxes were built to cater for increased traffic on racedays by reducing the block sections, and substantial sidings laid in to stable stock during the meetings.<sup>72</sup>

Before moving fully into the twentieth century two more racecourses and their stations must be mentioned. Redcar, in North Yorkshire, had been provided with a

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The meetings were popular before the arrival of the railway in Rothbury. Coaches were run from Morpeth to connect with trains from Newcastle and the south when the east coast main line was opened in 1847.

<sup>68</sup> Report by Major F. Marindin, R.E. to the Board of Trade, 14 October 1899.

<sup>69</sup> Faulkner, J.N. & Williams, R.A. *The L.S.W.R. in the Twentieth Century* (David & Charles, Newton Abbot, 1988) p.44. Maggs, C.G. *Branch Lines of Berkshire* (Berkshire Books/Allen Sutton Ltd., Stroud, 1993) p.136. It was also used to serve the adjacent winter quarters of Bertram Mills' circus.

<sup>70</sup> Faulkner & Williams, *L.S.W.R.* p.44.

<sup>71</sup> Laird, D. *Royal Ascot* (Hodder & Stoughton, London 1976) pp. 174 ff.

<sup>72</sup> The additional signalboxes were at Knowle East, Knowle West, Drake & Mount's Siding, near Sunningdale, and at Ascot West. See also Maggs, *Branch Lines of Berkshire*, p.137.

new through station in 1861, when the line from Middlesborough was extended to Saltburn. As will be discussed in Chapter 12, racing took place on the sands until a new course was provided in 1872 close to the station. A special platform was later provided on the north side of the line to the west of the main station, and served by a loop off the down main line, with a connection to the up main at its western end. Although its original purpose in the early years was to cater for the race crowds at Whitsun and August meetings, this was somewhat diluted as normal holiday traffic built up, and it was used for short distance trains with the main station taking long distance race excursions even though this was marginally further from the racecourse.<sup>73</sup>

In 1884 a new National Hunt course in Sussex was provided at Plumpton, adjacent to the station of that name, which had been opened on the Keymer Junction to Lewes line in June 1863.<sup>74</sup> At some stage a very long platform giving direct access to the racecourse was constructed on the up side at the Keymer end of the station.<sup>75</sup>

### THE FINAL STRETCH

The S.E.R. started the new century with considerable panache by opening its station at Tattenham Corner on Derby Day - 4 June 1901. Although, like Epsom Downs, a public station with a relatively modest passenger service of 13 trains a day, it was laid out on a lavish scale with six gravelled platform faces 20 ft. in width and between 550 and 750 ft. long. Engine release roads and a turntable were provided, as were two long horsebox sidings, horsedocks and stables. The yard could accommodate up to 24 full length trains, and three signalboxes were provided at the terminus - one having no less than 205 levers. Crossovers as well as auxiliary signalboxes were provided at strategic points in the branch to facilitate speedy movement of trains on race days. Facilities for racegoers in the spacious concourse were also good with two refreshment rooms, and a further refreshment room at the bungalow in the station approach road, which also housed a luncheon room, telegraph office, cloakroom, cycle store and an extra ticket office. The approach road skirted the 'Mound' - a raised lawn on which

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<sup>73</sup> Semmens, P.W.B. 'Handling the Tees-side Holiday Crowds', *Railway Magazine*, XCVIII, 1952, pp.690-696.

<sup>74</sup> The L.B.S.C.R. had opened this line on 1 October 1847. This enabled direct running from London to Lewes, which had been accessible via Brighton since June 1846.

<sup>75</sup> Body, *Railways of the Southern Region*, p.145, states that the up platform was designed with race trains in mind. This is unlikely given the relative dates of station and racecourse.

the S.E. directors could entertain guests and enjoy a superb view of the finishing straight.<sup>76</sup>

On the opening day the station handled 35 special trains between 7.23 a.m. and 1.30 p.m. and despatched an equal number after the races had finished, in addition to thirteen regular service trains in and out. In the early days all shunting and engine movements were handled by senior staff on site making decisions as necessary. But, as traffic built up just after the First World War, all movements were planned in advance by London Bridge control and the signalling arrangements at the terminus simplified.<sup>77</sup> As on the Epsom Downs branch the down line was used to queue trains with engines at the London end, ready to make their return journeys.

26 September 1905 saw the inaugural meeting at Newbury Racecourse, which owed its existence to the foresight and persistence of John Porter, aided a little by King Edward VII when the Jockey Club was being obstructive.<sup>78</sup> The course, which was on the south side of the G.W. Reading - Westbury line, just to the east of Newbury, was provided with its own four platform station from the outset.<sup>79</sup> First class return fares of 10/- for a 53 mile journey covered in one hour put the equivalent fare of 8/- for a sixteen mile journey between London and Epsom into its true perspective.<sup>80</sup>

Towards the end of the first decade of the twentieth century airshows were all the rage, and the open spaces of a racecourse were an ideal venue. An airshow was held on Doncaster Racecourse in 1909, and in the following year it was the turn of the

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<sup>76</sup> Owen, N. *The Tattenham Corner Branch* (Oakwood Press, Blandford, 1978) pp. 3-11, and Jackson, *London's Local Railways*, pp.141ff. give more details. See also Chapter 4, Note 85.

<sup>77</sup> Although the S.E.C.R. had wanted to encourage excursion traffic over the branch, loading beyond Tadworth was always light, except on racedays. Normal passenger services were withdrawn from the top end of the branch from 1914 until the start of electric train services on 25 March 1928. Race meetings were suspended during the First World War, but special trains were run once these restarted after cessation of hostilities.

<sup>78</sup> Orchard, V.P. *A Short History of Newbury Racecourse* (Reid Hamilton Publications, no date) p.23. and Boyd, D. *The Running Horses - A Brief History of Racing in Berkshire from 1740* (Berkshire County Libraries, Reading, 1978) pp.9-10.

<sup>79</sup> Newbury was linked to the railway system as early as 21 December 1847, when the G.W.R. opened its line from Reading to Hungerford, the nominally independent company authorised on 30 June 1845 to construct lines from Reading to Basingstoke and Hungerford, having passed into its hands in the previous year. Four carriage sidings were provided west of the station by 1912, and increased to six by 1931.

<sup>80</sup> See Chapter 4, Note 87. Even from small country towns such as Cirencester the G.W.R. provided ½, 1 and 2 day excursion tickets at competitive rates. Similar facilities were offered for Cheltenham meetings after the opening of the Honeybourne - Cheltenham line in 1908. Bray, N. *The Cirencester Branch* (Oakwood Press, Usk, 1998) p.38.

newly-reconstructed course at Lanark to host an International Aviation Week.<sup>81</sup> The Caledonian Railway provided a special station between the branch terminus at Lanark and Sandilands on the Carstairs - Muirkirk line. The station was first used for this event on 9 August 1910, and a 32 page supplement to the Working Timetable was issued to ensure the efficient handling of the heavy traffic.<sup>82</sup> The station was not used for race traffic until 27 September 1910, but served this purpose for over 50 years, as well as seeing use by a nearby military establishment to facilitate movement of troops and equipment.

Neither of the two main stations in Cheltenham were particularly convenient for the racecourse, which since 1876 had held only National Hunt meetings, but had to suffice until the G.W.R. opened its Cheltenham - Honeybourne line on 1 August 1906, which when other lines were completed, inaugurated an express train service between Birmingham and Bristol on 1 July 1908.<sup>83</sup> A station adjacent to Cheltenham Racecourse was opened on 13 March 1912. This had a booking office at street level and its two platforms were provided with buildings prefabricated at Swindon Works and containing mainly toilets. There were also strong crush barriers, which only allowed racegoers to come out in three streams, thus making life difficult for fare dodgers. It had a six lever signalbox, which was only used on racedays, but as the station had no sidings, the stock of the race specials had to be stabled at other locations, where the yards would be cleared of waggons in readiness for major race days. In addition to regular local and express trains, which were strengthened and made special stops, up to ten specials were dealt with in this way, their locomotives generally sent to Honeybourne for turning.<sup>84</sup>

For the sake of completeness the racecourse station near the National Hunt Course at Wetherby in Yorkshire should be mentioned, although it was not opened until about

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<sup>81</sup> *The Scotsman*, 6 & 10 August 1910. An airshow had been held on the Dunstall Park Racecourse at Wolverhampton from 27 June to 2 July 1910. See Onslow, R. *One Hundred Years of Racing at Dunstall Park* (Wolverhampton Racecourse p.l.c., Wolverhampton, 1987) p.6.

<sup>82</sup> National Archives of Scotland BR/CAL/4/144.

<sup>83</sup> Maggs, C.G. & Nicholson, P. *The Honeybourne Line* (Line One Publishing Ltd., Cheltenham, 1985) covers the construction of the various lines in some detail.

<sup>84</sup> At the other end of the line was Stratford-upon-Avon Racecourse Station, which had two bare platforms 550 ft. in length faced with sleepers. This station is outside the review period as it was not opened until 6 May 1933, and apart from Paulsgrove, mentioned in Note 52, was the last new race station to be opened.

1924 after the lease of the course had been purchased by a race company formed for the purpose and a more secure future for the fixture could be foreseen.<sup>85</sup>

### STATIONS PROVIDED FOR RACEHORSES ONLY

Although some special racecourse stations, such as Ascot West, were provided with facilities for handling racehorses, most were not, and these had to be dealt with at the nearest public station catering for horses and general livestock. Stations provided specifically for handling racehorses were rare, and the facilities for grooms or those owners who liked travelling in the 'horse specials',<sup>86</sup> were at best spartan or at worst non-existent - but no worse than many contemporary halts.

Derby was the first course to be provided with separate facilities for racehorses. The Midland Railway's Racecourse Horse Siding was probably opened in 1855 at the same time as the St. Mary's Goods Depot branch to which it was adjacent, racegoers being handled at the public station at Nottingham Road, opened on 1 September 1856,<sup>87</sup> three days before the autumn meeting. Thirty years later the G.N.R. built a loading dock with an office and waiting room between Breadwall and Derby on its Kimberley - Derby line, which had been opened on 1 April 1878. The original plan, mooted in February 1884, was for a passenger station near the racecourse, which would also have had facilities for loading horses. But this was felt to be too expensive and the wharf, opened in time for the Derby Hunt meeting on 16/17 March 1885, was for racehorse

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<sup>85</sup> The original Wetherby station was opened on the line between Church Fenton and Harrogate on 10 August 1847, some five years after the establishment of the racecourse, which was then at Linton on the banks of the River Wharfe. The landowner and his tenants demanded ever more exorbitant rents, and although the race committee set up in 1878 enclosed the course in 1884, it was a struggle to survive and the last meeting was held there at Easter 1890. A new course was provided rent free by a Mr. Montague and the first meeting took place in 1891. The lease expired in 1920, but the race committee persuaded Lord Leconfield to sell, but although the public station had been moved to a position on the Cross Gates line on 1 July 1902, it was not until over twenty years later than there was sufficient confidence in the future to agitate for a special station. It has been suggested to me, but not substantiated, that the racecourse station was the former public station continuing in an unadvertised capacity.

<sup>86</sup> The journey from Lincoln to Liverpool at the start of each flat race season, but encompassing the Grand National, seems to have been particularly well patronised. See Bland, E. (ed.) *Flat Racing since 1900* (Andrew Dakers, London, 1950) p.173, for the Hon. Mrs. George Lambton's reminiscences. Also Chetwynd, Sir G. *Racing Reminiscences and Experiences of the Turf* (Longman, Green & Co., London, 1891) p.80.

<sup>87</sup> The Nottingham Road station was on the original North Midland Railway main line opened between Derby and Rotherham (Masboro) on 11 May 1840.

traffic only.<sup>88</sup> There was easy access to the racecourse across the Mansfield Road, at the opposite end of the straight mile to Nottingham Road, where horses brought by the Midland Railway entered the course.

The racehorse siding at Nottingham was also built by the G.N.R., in conjunction with the new racecourse, where the first meeting was held on 19 August 1892. Known also as the Hall Sidings, there was a small wooden horsedock on the south side of the line, which had buildings for use by railway staff and grooms.<sup>89</sup> The siding was quite separate from the racecourse station, which was about 620 yards nearer Nottingham, and serves to emphasise that horses often needed to reach a different part of a racecourse to those convenient for spectators. As mentioned earlier, the original Newmarket Railway terminal station at Newmarket was used for horsebox traffic, when the new through passenger station was opened in 1902.

No special passenger station was provided for the new Manchester racecourse opened in the same year, but a facility to handle racehorse traffic was provided by the L.Y.R. in its goods station at Brindle Heath, north of Pendleton on the line to Bolton, and about one mile from the course. A precise opening date has not yet been found, but the horsebox handling facilities were certainly in use by 1904.<sup>90</sup>

These stations remained open well into the twentieth century, the first to close being those at Derby, as they were no longer required after racing ended there in August 1939.

## CONCLUSION

These last two chapters have clearly demonstrated the considerable lengths to which the railway companies went in serving the racing industry in terms of special trains, fares and station facilities, although the majority of the latter were provided during the last 40 years of the review period. Certainly both local and national newspapers, particularly during the latter part of the review period, carried regular advertisements for excursions to race meetings in all parts of the country. Although from time to time the railways tried to capitalise on the more prestigious events, as in the case of the high

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<sup>88</sup> PRO Rail 235/48, 236/49, 236/149, 236/176. For more details, and a map of the siding facilities in 1899, see Higginson, M. *The Friargate Line* (Golden Pingle Publishing, Derby, 1989, rev. 1992) p.113.

<sup>89</sup> Henshaw, A. *The Great Northern Railway in the East Midlands* (Railway Correspondence & Travel Society, Huntingdon 1999) p.42 has a plan of the racehorse siding.

fares from London to the Derby, the normal return excursion tickets at single rate were genuine bargains. Nevertheless, the relative cheapness of these fares did not bring very frequent trips within the scope of the ordinary working man, for whom a visit to the races was a family outing rather than a serious and consistent sporting or betting activity. Moreover, until the mid 1860s, almost all racecourses did not charge for admission to the ground, so any direct increase in revenue was minimal - apart from any increased rent from refreshment and amusement tents. Indeed, it is not possible to determine whether the railways made any real profit from this traffic, and there are conflicting views on the profitability of excursion traffic in general - a topic which lies outside the scope of this study.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Railway ticket evidence supplied by Godfrey Croughton.

<sup>91</sup> Jordan, A. & Jordan, E. *Away for the Day* (Silver Link Publishing Ltd., Kettering, 1991) Chapter XIII. discuss this subject at length.



## CHAPTER SIX

### RAILWAY SPONSORSHIP OF FLAT RACING

#### INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the extent and financial value of railway sponsorship in flat racing during the review period, and tests Vamplew's statement that 'the railway companies helped raise the level of prize money from £198,990 in 1843 to £315,272 in 1874. They did this ... directly by sponsoring races'.<sup>1</sup> It will also consider the effect on the further increase in prize money to £493,890 in 1901, and compares these both with the overall trends in race sponsorship by individuals or social groups and with railway sponsorship in Ireland during the same period. More general financial support given to race meetings by railway companies, such as subscriptions to the race fund or donations for a new stand, will be covered briefly under the appropriate racecourse, using data obtained during research for the main thesis topics, but sufficient evidence will be presented to show that such support was also of a very modest nature.

The incidence and financial value of sponsorship of individual races by railway companies has been determined by a year-by-year examination of the *Racing Calendar* between 1830 and 1914.<sup>2</sup> Only races with the word 'railway' in the title, or with a direct attribution to a railway company, have been included in the analysis, although it is realised that the former may serve to inflate the incidence and value of the railway involvement, as the race promoters may have merely selected the title for its topicality.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Vamplew, W. *The Turf* (Allen Lane, London, 1976) p.32.

<sup>2</sup> This covered only races run under Jockey Club Rules. Thus steeplechases are not included, nor are hurdle races after 1867 or hunters' races on the flat after the end of July 1871. There were also 'railway' races at steeplechase meetings, and some will be mentioned in passing in the text.

<sup>3</sup> Two specific instances of this have been identified and are therefore omitted from the analysis; firstly, at the shortlived City of London Racecourse at Hatcham Park on the Old Kent Road on 30 June, 1843: 'The Railway Plate of 2 sov. each, with 25 added by the Proprietors, for the beaten horses'; and secondly at the Yorkshire Union Hunt Club meeting at York on 8 October 1846: 'The Railway Stakes of 5 sov. each, with 25 added by George Hudson, M.P'. Although Hudson as the 'Railway King' was associated with many railway companies, this donation was made as a private individual.

Races with such titles as the Grand Junction Stakes at Heaton Park, Manchester, in the 1830s, the Great Northern Handicap at Alexandra Park and the South Western Stakes at Hampton and Southampton, which might infer railway involvement, have been omitted from the analysis as they lack the word 'railway' in the title. Nevertheless, they have been recorded, but only a minor increase in sponsorship value would have occurred if they were included.

As this analysis identified 535 instances of possible railway sponsorship at 74 different courses during the review period, but with a total yearly value only once exceeding £1,000 (in 1861), figures at variance with the claims by Vamplew, a ten year interval survey of the total sponsorship by individuals and social groups between 1801 and 1911 was made, and this underpins the discussion of nineteenth and early twentieth century sponsorship of individual events at race meetings.

### SPONSORSHIP TRENDS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The donation of a prize for a horse race, whether a cup or a sum of money added to the individual stakes of the subscribers, or as the sole reward, dates back at least to the late sixteenth century, as instanced by the silver bells of Carlisle donated by Lady Dacre in 1599 and by the silver bells of Paisley, first awarded in 1620. Royal patrons were in the forefront of this sponsorship, with Charles II founding the Town Plate at Newmarket in 1664, while Queen Anne provided the Queen's Plate at Ascot from its opening in August 1711. The nobility and gentry were obvious candidates to follow suit, but local tradesmen, such as those at Newmarket in 1744, who provided two plates of £50 each to be run in four mile heats, also got involved in the hope of stimulating trade. In this particular case, the donation was seen as an aid to survival, as the town had gone into serious decline in the years between the death of Queen Anne and the formation of the Jockey Club.

The later eighteenth century provided many examples of £50 Town Plates and other prizes of a similar value, often donated by local nobility and gentry, or more occasionally by Members of Parliament. Most races were run in heats over a fair distance, so each such prize could provide a full afternoon's sport. The 100 gn. Royal Plates, designed both to encourage racing and the breeding of horses with stamina for military use, were run in heats of two to four miles, and so fitted in with the general pattern of racing at that time.<sup>4</sup> The founding of the 'Classics', which stimulated the spread of shorter races for younger horses run in a single heat for a higher level of prize money, brought a major new strand into racing, and this became a key element in its development during the nineteenth century. The total value of prize money rose in line with the increased number of races, the expectations of the owners, and the

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<sup>4</sup> See Chapter I, Note 4.

growing commercialisation of the sport. The number of sponsored races also increased rapidly in the first decades of the nineteenth century, and peaked by 1841, but because of the fall in the number of meetings after the first 'Racecourse Mania', the highest incidence of sponsored races per meeting did not occur until ten years later. The high point of railway sponsorship was not reached until 1861, as shown in Appendix V. The incidence of real sponsorship in the latter years may well be overstated as the same criteria for inclusion have been used throughout the period under review, even when the race title masks the fact that the prize was in reality provided by the race company, unless that fact is clearly stated. Suffice it to say that in 1911, out of 104 instances of perceived sponsorship, merely four were directly attributed to specific individuals or institutions - and only one of these was a railway.

Sponsorship from various social groups is summarised in the following table and any contradictory trends, which may have been masked in the totals, are discussed below. 'Cup' races, whether sponsored or not, are also reviewed in their own right as their transition from a trophy valued for itself, to a complete cash prize, or a trophy of relatively insignificant value backed by massive added money, mirrored the growing commercial approach within the sport. Certainly, as racing progressed through the 1870s, the involvement of those who gave prizes for the love of the sport, or because it might favour their individual business or political ends, dwindled significantly as seemingly there was less pleasure or advantage in donating money at a meeting run as a commercial venture. A detailed financial evaluation is outside the scope of this study, but estimates using average prize money values associated with sponsorship have been applied to calibrate the analysis against both the total prize money and the figures obtained for railway sponsorship. This demonstrated that sponsorship of individual races was unlikely to have exceeded £25,000 at any time. The values for the first two decades of the twentieth century have been set using the full incidence of perceived sponsorship, but in view of earlier caveats may well have been less than £10,000 against total prize money of £493,890 in 1901. The three specifically identified sponsorships contributed less than £1,000 in total.

**TABLE 6.1: FLAT RACE SPONSORSHIP 1801 - 1911**

SPONSOR	1801	1811	1821	1831	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911
Royalty, Nobility & Gentry	40	52	57	70	133	90	92	46	37	16	24	10
Members of Parliament	24	34	46	62	85	63	51	29	16	2	2	-
Town Councils, Citizens & Ladies	33	52	65	83	112	72	62	78	30	24	22	33
Innkeepers, Tradesmen, etc.	1	1	1	12	42	60	38	49	25	6	6	4
Hunts, Clubs, Stand Committees	5	26	18	16	49	63	50	79	44	46	53	50
Others (including Military)	-	2	15	4	18	16	2	22	10	3	8	6
Railways	-	-	-	-	3	11	22	7	3	2	1	1
<b>Total number of sponsored races</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>442</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>317</b>	<b>311</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>104</b>
<b>No. of Meetings</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>140</b>
<b>Sponsorship Incidence/ Meeting</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>0.7</b>
<b>Average 'Notional' Sponsorship (£)</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>200</b>
<b>TOTAL ESTIMATED SPONSORSHIP (£)</b>	<b>5,110</b>	<b>8,350</b>	<b>10,100</b>	<b>12,350</b>	<b>22,100</b>	<b>18,750</b>	<b>23,375</b>	<b>23,325</b>	<b>16,500</b>	<b>9,900</b>	<b>23,200</b>	<b>20,800</b>
<b>CUP RACES (not necessarily sponsored)</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>ROYAL PLATES (included above)</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>

Source: *Racing Calendar*.

In 1801 the level and spread of sponsorship across the social groups were relatively modest and dominated by the upper classes, the King's Plate of 100 gn. being run for at 21 of the 86 meetings, with Newmarket accounting for four of these. The nobility and gentry provided 19 prizes, but were outstripped by the Members of Parliament. Town or City Plates were provided at 25 meetings, but only at Newcastle-on-Tyne were the freemen and innkeepers represented.<sup>5</sup> The 'ladies' ostensibly donated prizes

<sup>5</sup> This is not to say that innkeepers did not make a contribution to the races - it was often the only way to gain permission to set up a refreshment booth on the course, for example for the meeting at Carlisle on 23 May 1764, when a notice stated 'No innkeeper will be permitted to retain liquors on the raceground, except those who subscribe one guinea each three weeks before the said races', quoted in Fairfax Blakeborough, J. '50 Years of Racing at Blackhall' (*A Cumberland Evening News* supplement), Carlisle Local History Library IBC 798.4.7842. An announcement, similar in intent, if not in content, appeared in the local press for the Durham meeting on 27 to 29 July 1796.

at seven meetings, ranging from Lewes and Egham to Ayr and Montrose, while Hunts provided four trophies, all in the Borders and Scotland.

There were only eight races for cups, four of which were gold, but by 1811 their number had risen to 43, of which no less than 29 were gold, and all were valuable prizes in their own right. Overall sponsorship levels had also shown a healthy increase, with the ladies of Totnes providing a silver cup, and the gentlemen at the Chesterfield Ordinary giving 10 guineas, but this only equated to one stake in the race for which it was donated. Although the number of Town and City Plates had shown a healthy increase from 25 to 39, with Corporation support for several races at Doncaster and York, these were not always the gift of the town, for at Winchester the £50 City Plate was donated by the Duchess of Chandos and Sir H. Mildmay. In addition to the Hunts, Racing Clubs and Stewards, Stand Committees were starting to make a contribution, because it was in their interests to fill the stand, and a demonstration of involvement in the meeting could only benefit what was even at that date a commercial venture. There was no movement from the innkeepers, except that this time the donation came from Newcastle-under-Lyme in the Potteries. But now the military, who were to be staunch supporters of races in garrison towns, made a contribution, as did some commercial travellers<sup>6</sup> although this was a more infrequent event.

By 1821 a marginal increase in the number of meetings was matched by a 20 per cent surge in the amount of identifiable sponsored races. There was a further growth in the provision of cups, particularly gold, although cash was starting to play a part, as any surplus over the intrinsic value of the trophy was paid 'in specie'. One 'cup' race at Abingdon was actually for a cash prize with no trophy. There were no notable additions to the categories of sponsors established in the previous twenty years, but the inhabitants of towns were now seen making contributions as an identifiable group, as well as via the town council. The nobility and gentry made both individual and collective donations, and royalty such as the Prince of Wales, the Duke of York and the Grand Duke Michael of Russia were also in evidence.

Ten years later the 'cup' races reached a high point at 97, with gold again predominating, and silver also reaching its peak. But a fivefold increase in races for cups, tureens and bowls of unidentified metal ushered in the era of the cash 'cup', for

at least five of the gold cup races, at Blandford, Chester, Oswestry, Shrewsbury and Worcester, had only a cash prize, with a choice of cash or trophy being given at Canterbury and at Haigh Park in Leeds. The overall rise in sponsorship was matched by an increase in meeting numbers, so there was no change in its incidence per meeting. The innkeepers were represented only at York and 'on the road to Goodwood', but no less than ten prizes were directly ascribed to tradesmen of the towns in which meetings were taking place. Ladies continued to make their contribution - there was certainly no doubt of this at Plymouth and Weymouth. The cockpit at Stamford - soon to be legally suppressed - made a donation of £10, just as in later years the lessees or owners of local theatres made a donation to stimulate interest in what might very well have been the only or certainly the peak week of business in any year. The support of town councils, particularly those which helped to organise the local meetings, had also to be modified as the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835 made it illegal for public money to be devoted to race prizes, as had been common in the past.

The later 1830s saw a sharp, but shortlived, increase in the numbers of racecourses and meetings, and lagging only slightly behind this came the rapid development of the trunk railway system between 1837 and 1850. The number of sponsored races increased to 442 in 1841, and the incidence per meeting was up by almost 40 per cent. Almost a third of the 'cup' races were now solely for cash, with an option given in a further six cases. The 'unspecified' cup race was also taking over from the gold cup, with the silver cup going into terminal decline, but at York on 8 October 1841 there was a race for a 'Superb Silver Tea Service, value 50 l., added by the Ladies of York and the vicinity..',<sup>7</sup> one of several donations specifically identified in a high of 33 'ladies'' prizes.

Almost all classes of sponsorship peaked numerically in 1841, but the most significant increase came from the innkeepers who, realising that the railways were not dependent on them as the coaches had been, made a determined effort with other tradesmen in the town to ensure that their support of the race meeting was well publicised. Their contributions ranged from £10 added to the 'Cocked Hat Stakes' at Beccles in Suffolk,

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<sup>6</sup> These were travelling salesmen, who with the improved travel facilities afforded by coaches and later by railways, were a major factor in Victorian and Edwardian commerce, if not in racing.

and a £12 purse at the Stone and Cheadle meeting in Staffordshire to £150 raised by the innkeepers of Dudley. Members of Parliament sponsored 85 races, but their level of support had actually peaked ten years previously, although they maintained a respectable level until the 1870s, when the increasing commercialisation of the sport and its loss of identity with the local community made their contribution less desirable personally and politically. Railway companies made three donations in 1841, and their involvement was to rise to 11 in 1851, the peak year for the overall incidence of sponsorship, and to 22 in 1861, their own peak year.

The traditional sponsors still remained at a high level in 1851, but other more commercially orientated groups such as grandstand proprietors were moving to the fore. Some, like the proprietors of the various stands on the corporation course at Chester, had always made a worthwhile contribution, but some of the 33 sponsors had needed more or less subtle persuasion from other interested parties for them to make a donation. The Betting Room at Doncaster, commercial travellers at Carlisle, Mr. Munro of the Theatre Royal, Wolverhampton, and the lessee of the theatre at Yarmouth all made their contribution, as did 'friends' and 'visitors' at various courses. 'Ladies' races were still popular at 20 meetings, with at least five emphasising their specific contribution. The overall number of 'cups' had declined, but no less than half offered only a cash prize, and even when there was a resurgence in their numbers in 1861, the cash element was pre-dominant. Moreover, the 'Tradesmen's Cup' at Manchester was by then provided by the race committee, so the determination of local sponsorship by the name of the race becomes ever more difficult.

By 1871 the overall level of sponsorship had dropped considerably against 1841, when there had been an almost identical number of meetings. One element of this decline was the number of meetings held at the new London suburban courses, where as they were run as commercial ventures, traditional sponsorship was almost non-existent. 'Gold' cup races had now dropped to four and 'silver' to one, while many of the 35 other 'cup' races were for cash only. Town plates still remained at a high level, but in name only, while the contribution of the nobility and gentry had almost halved in ten years and would dwindle away still further in the next thirty. The support of Hunts and Racing Clubs remained buoyant, particularly in those areas where flat race

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<sup>7</sup> In this chapter the titles of individual races have been put in inverted commas, as in many cases

meetings were augmented by hurdle races and steeplechases, and would be superseded by them when the Jockey Club stipulations on minimum prize money began to bite. Stand committees still proclaimed their involvement with no less than 33 sponsored races, and the single £50 contribution from the Rawcliffe Stud Farm was a harbinger of the increasing financial involvement of professional breeders from the 1880s onwards. The Queen's Plates still continued but, despite their relatively high value of 100 gns. at country meetings, were often 'walkovers' or two horse races, as the type of horse for which they had been instituted was no longer in vogue. The Queen also donated gold vases at Ascot and Plymouth, the former being one of the few directly attributable races at the end of the period under review. The incidence of support by M.P.s had declined by almost half over ten years, even though some courses such as Lichfield, Monmouth and Shrewsbury still enjoyed support from both the county and borough members. Other older traditions still survived, as at Bromyard on 19 May 1871, where there was a 'Tenant Farmers' Cup of 30 sov., with a Hunting Saddle for the second, and a Hunting Whip to the third', or at Ayr on 20 September of the same year, where the winner of the 'Champagne Stakes' gave three dozen bottles of the same to enliven the Caledonian Hunt Club festivities.

But by 1881 such niceties had all but disappeared, like many of the traditional racecourses in the wake of the Jockey Club prize money edicts. The early London suburban courses were also all but gone, and the success of Sandown Park and Kempton Park had hammered home the commercial imperative to many race committees. 'Cup' races, as ever, provided a trend barometer, with the emphasis even more on cash, and the 'Liverpool Cup' was now worth £1,000. The instances of sponsorship had almost halved since 1871, but the major reduction in the number of meetings only took the incidence figure back to the 1811 level. Half the contribution made by royalty and nobility came from the Queen's Plates, of which there were still 18, but these would disappear (except for those run in Ireland) after 1887. The gentry no longer made named contributions, and MP's races had dropped to a mere sixteen, although Lichfield and Shrewsbury still enjoyed two each. Hunt and Racing Club contributions also dropped markedly, as support of National Hunt racing was now far more suited to their pocket and inclination.

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they are in the form of an extended quotation.



By 1891, the incidence of sponsorship per meeting had declined to less than a third of the 1851 level. MPs only gave support at Ripon and Chester, while innkeepers, licensed victuallers and tradesmen were now only a minimal presence.

There was little change in 1901, if the same criteria are applied, but it was obvious that while the 'Gold Vase' was still the gift of the Queen, and was so stated, the £10,000 'Princess of Wales Stakes' was merely a commercial courtesy title. Similarly, by 1894, the 'Lancashire Handicap' had become the 'Prince Edward Handicap', and Doncaster had also dedicated races to the Royal Family but with added money from the race fund. The position was also clarified with regard to the intrinsic value of some cups still on offer - the 'Chester Cup' of £50 with £2,550 added, and at Hamilton Park 'The Glasgow International Exhibition Handicap Cup' of 100 gn, with £5,000 added'. Not everything was quite so precise as 'The Jockey Club Cup of 500 sov. (a cup value £112/3/-) and the remainder in 'specie', added to a sweepstakes of £20.' The question of MPs' support, although minimal, was now problematical, for while a 'Member's Cup' at Chester, which had enjoyed such support for many years, might be carrying on the tradition, such a race at Lingfield was more likely to refer to club members. In fact in 1901, there were only three really definitive sponsorship attributions, the 'Queen's Vase' at Ascot and the 'Great Eastern Railway Handicap' at Newmarket, with £200 donated by the railway company and £300 added by the Jockey Club. In 1911 there was one additional instance, when Tattersalls added £200 to a race at Doncaster 'for two year olds sold by them as yearlings by public auction'. Although just over 100 instances of possible sponsorship were recorded using consistent criteria, the incidence level was only just over half that of 1801 and it is likely that the actual level was very much lower. In any case, this analysis has demonstrated that the level and pattern of railway sponsorship was consistent with overall trends during the period under review.

#### 'RAILWAY' RACES AND DIRECT RAILWAY SPONSORSHIP

The normal level of sponsorship for an individual race in the early nineteenth century ranged from £10 to £100, with some deviation on either side of these figures, and the entry of railway companies into race sponsorship was generally pitched at the expected level. But between 1846 and 1850 the Great Western Railway donated £300 for a single race at Ascot - a sum which was not matched by sponsorship from any single railway company during the rest of the nineteenth century. As mentioned earlier, a

'railway' race of some kind took place at 74 different racecourses during the review period, over half of these in the south of England. Some occurred on only a single occasion, while others such as those at Newmarket, Salisbury and Hampton were to appear on the card for over forty years. Rather surprisingly, the major racecourses at York and Doncaster<sup>8</sup>, both important railway centres, enjoyed no apparent direct railway support, while Goodwood only had railway involvement for a mere two years.

The following analysis shows the regional distribution of 'railway' races, together with the timespan during which these are recorded in the *Racing Calendar*. Only Newmarket, out of the 74 courses identified, still enjoyed railway support of an individual race until the end of the review period (and beyond).

**TABLE 6.2: REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF 'RAILWAY' RACES**

<u>Area</u>	<u>No. of Courses</u>	<u>First Year</u>	<u>Last Year</u>
London & the South	39	1836	1893
Midlands & Wales	9	1839	1898
North East England	9	1840	1873
North West England	8	1842	1856
Scotland	5	1843	1868
East Anglia	4	1845	ongoing beyond 1914
	74		

Source: *Racing Calendar*.

Sponsorship will be reviewed on the regional basis in line with the analysis above and a five yearly summary of its incidence and value forms Appendix V. In view of the large number of racecourses and railway companies involved in London and the south of England, the data will be further analysed to individual railway companies to form the basis for the discussion. 'Railway' races without clear evidence of ownership or indeed of railway sponsorship have been allocated to the most likely company in the area.

<sup>8</sup> But when Britain's first Air Display was held on Doncaster Racecourse in October 1909, the Great Northern Railway donated a 50 gn. silver cup, and was congratulated by the *Railway Magazine* XXV, 1909, p.435 on its open mindedness.

## 1. LONDON AND THE SOUTH

**TABLE 6.3: COURSES IN SOUTHERN ENGLAND WITH RAILWAY SPONSORSHIP**

<u>Company</u>	<u>Courses with Sponsored Races</u>	<u>Courses with 'Railway' races in Company area</u>	<u>Total Courses Involved</u>
Midland Railway	1	1	2
Great Northern Railway	0	2	2
Great Western Railway	2	2	4
London, Chatham & Dover Railway	2	0	2
South Eastern Railway	3	5	8
London, Brighton & South Coast Railway	6	1	7
London & South Western Railway	14	3	17
	<u>28</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>42</u>

Source: *Racing Calendar*.

As three racecourses, Ascot, Epsom and Margate, each enjoyed the direct sponsorship of two railway companies, the total now amounts to 42 as against 39 in the previous table, which did not identify individual companies. Any constituent companies of the above railways are included in the relevant total, and their involvement and relationship with the main railway will be identified and discussed appropriate. In this area, between 1836 and 1893, there were 351 instances of 'apparent' railway sponsorship for a total of £20,593, an average contribution of only £420 a year, but much higher than in other parts of the country. The only identifiable sponsorship by the Midland Railway occurred at the Kingsbury & Hendon course in North London in 1868 and 1869, when the 'Midland Railway Plate (Handicap) of 40 sov. for all ages' was run over five furlongs. The first of these, on 24 July 1868, was very timely as the M.R. had finally opened its own line into London, together with a station at Hendon only eleven days previously, after having relied for many years on the G.N. route to bring its trains into the capital.

St. Albans was also on the new line, and at the race meeting on 18 May 1869 there was a 'Railway Selling Handicap of 30 sov'. over ½ mile followed by the 'Railway Claiming Plate of 30 sov. for all ages' run over a ¾ mile course on the Townsend Estate. There is nothing to link these races directly to the M.R., but the company had sponsored a race at the steeplechase meetings in February 1869 and March 1870,<sup>9</sup> so it appears likely. In any case, 1869 and 1870 mark the only appearance of St. Albans in the *Racing Calendar* after 1837.

<sup>9</sup> Edwards, E. *Friar's Wash Point to Point Races* (Flamstead Society, St. Albans, 1996) pp.3-5.

There is no evidence to show that the Great Northern Railway sponsored the 'railway' races at either Barnet (1847 - 1853) or at Alexandra Park (1879 - 1880). Nevertheless the races at Barnet, whose values varied from £10 to £30 and whose names kept changing, must have been indirectly stimulated by the opening of the G.N. main line from a temporary London terminus at Maiden Lane to Peterborough in August 1850. The two races at Alexandra Park in 1879 and 1880 were quite simply entitled the 'Railway Plate of 100 gn. for all ages over five furlongs'. This new course, opened on 30 June 1868, had also since May 1876 staged races variously titled the 'Great Northern Nursery Plate' or the 'Great Northern Handicap'. These persisted until 1887 with as many as three, each with minimum added money of 100 gn., being run in some years.<sup>10</sup>

On 12 June 1846 racegoers at Ascot were very pleasantly surprised by a race to be run over the Swinley Course for 'Three Hundred Sovereigns, the gift of the Great Western Railway Company, added to a Handicap Sweepstakes of 10 sov. each for three years old and upwards ....' This was an unprecedented sum for a railway company to give for one race, particularly in the south, where the previous highest recorded sums were £50 at Hampton and Brighton. But it came at a time when the G.W.R. was struggling to gain authorisation for its branch from Slough to Windsor, which would provide a more attractive railhead for its Ascot traffic. The G.W.R. provided sponsorship at the £300 level until 1850, took a holiday in 1851, and then resumed its support but only at £100 until 1856. After this date support was given by the L.& S.W.R. which, as discussed in Chapter 4, had reached Ascot on 4 June 1856, giving it an unassailable advantage in transporting racegoers, although the G.W.R. still competed vigorously for a share of this traffic.

There are no other confirmed instances of race sponsorship by the G.W.R., although on the notorious and relatively shortlived West Drayton course, there were 'railway' races at both the spring and autumn meetings in 1866 and 1869. A 'Great Western

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<sup>10</sup> These latter races are, however, omitted from the analysis, as the word 'railway' does not appear in the title, nor is there any acknowledgement of a donation from a railway company. There does not appear to have been anything on the railway front to stimulate interest by the G.N.R., particularly as its Alexandra Park branch, opened in May 1873, was in a semi-moribund state from which it did not emerge until the 1890s. However, the Great Eastern Railway had opened its Palace Gates branch on 7 October 1878, and this could have provided impetus to sponsor races at the nearby course, but no evidence has been found to substantiate this. Moreover, as Alexandra Park was a commercial enclosed course, sponsorship was unlikely.

Stakes' or 'Selling Plate' also featured on the card for several years, but despite local research no railway connection has been established.

There was one instance of direct sponsorship in southern England by a constituent of the G.W.R. on 7 September 1868, when the 'Bristol & Exeter Railway Plate (handicap) of 25 sov. one mile and a distance' appeared on the card at the Bridgwater & West Somerset meeting - the last to be recorded in the *Racing Calendar*.<sup>11</sup>

The L.C.D.R. came relatively late onto the railway scene of south east England, as it did not open its first line until 1858.<sup>12</sup> It reached Margate, the first town whose races it sponsored, on 5 October 1863. Both the L.C.D. and S.E. Railways, which served the town since 1846, supported races to the tune of £25 each at the September 1865 meeting, but for the former this was to be its only obvious support for the Isle of Thanet course. The S.E.R. continued for the following year, but thereafter there was only a 'railway' race for the next two years.

Between 1870 and 1874, the L.C.D.R. sponsored a race at the Gravesend, Meopham and Mid-Kent meeting at Culverstone Green for sums ranging from £20 to £50. The course was relatively easily reached from stations at Meopham and Sole Street, both opened in 1861. The meetings, which had started in 1867, ended after the 1874 season.

There was a 'railway' race at Bromley between 1868 and 1870 and again at the short-lived revival in 1880, after which the meeting vanished from the *Racing Calendar*. Although the L.C.D.R. had reached the Kent town in 1858, the opening of the S.E. line to Chislehurst and on to Sevenoaks and Tonbridge in 1868 may have stimulated either company to sponsor a race although, as Bromley was a 'gate-money' course, it is more likely that the 'railway' races were merely topical titles given by the race company.

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<sup>11</sup> See Chapter 3, Text and Note 10 for details of the broad gauge Bristol & Exeter Railway.

<sup>12</sup> The L.C.D.R. was originally incorporated as the East Kent Railway on 4 August 1853 to construct a line from Strood to Canterbury via Faversham, which was completed on 18 July 1860. The company reached Dover on 22 July 1861, by which time its title had been changed, under powers granted on 1 August 1859. From 1 January 1899, the L.C.D.R. joined forces with the S.E.R. to form the South Eastern & Chatham Railway Companies Joint Managing Committee. Although the enterprise was styled the South Eastern & Chatham Railway from August 1900, the two companies were never amalgamated, and preserved their independent directorates until the 1923 Grouping.

The first recorded appearance in the *Racing Calendar* of a race with the word 'railway' or 'railroad'<sup>13</sup> in its title was on 21 July 1836 in the inaugural meeting at Lee, near Greenwich.<sup>14</sup> The 'Railroad Stakes of 5 sov. each, with 25 added, for three year olds and above, heats, twice round and a distance' was undoubtedly inspired by the impending arrival in the area of the London & Greenwich Railway,<sup>15</sup> which had been opened to passengers as far as Deptford on 8 February 1836. Although there is no indication in the *Racing Calendar* as to whether the £25 was donated by the L. & G.R., further research has indicated that it was donated by George Walter, resident director of the railway since November 1835, seemingly at his own expense.<sup>16</sup> The 'Railroad Stakes' once again graced the card on 16 August 1837, but it had vanished by 1838, the year in which the L. & G.R. actually reached Greenwich. It did not reappear, although the Lee races continued until 1843.

Unlike the L. & G.R., the next company in this section, the Gravesend & Rochester Railway,<sup>17</sup> soon fell into the hands of the S.E.R. Originally built along the towpath and through the tunnels of the Thames & Medway Canal, the G. & R.R. was opened as a single line on 10 February 1845 and made its contribution to a tripartite sponsorship at the Rochester & Chatham race meeting on 9 September 1846, in the 'Railway Plate of 35 sov. (15 sov. from the Rochester & Gravesend Co., 10 sov. by Messrs. Giles and Cunningham, and 10 sov. by Mr. E. Winch) added to a sweepstakes of 3 sov. each'.

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<sup>13</sup> The term 'railroad', which we now tend to consider an American usage, was in general use in the early nineteenth century, although by the late 1830s 'railway' was rapidly becoming more common.

<sup>14</sup> See Chapter 10, Text and Notes 90 to 94.

<sup>15</sup> The L. & G.R., which was the earliest line to open in London, was authorised on 17 May 1833, for a 3¼ mile line, built totally on a brick viaduct of 878 arches. The ceremonial opening into the City terminus at London Bridge took place on 14 December 1836, but it was to be two years and ten days before the line was completed to a temporary station in Greenwich, which was replaced by a permanent structure in 1840. In due course the line was leased for 999 years to the S.E.R., which took over its working on 1 January 1845, although the L. & G.R. maintained its legal independence until the 1923 Grouping.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas, R.H.G. *The London & Greenwich - London's First Railway* (B.T. Batsford Ltd., London, 1972) p.55. *Greenwich Gazette*, 23 July 1836, indicated that a 'Railway Plate ... embellished with a reproduction of the London & Greenwich Railway, and the train thereupon' and worth £50, would be given to the race fund for the second meeting on 18/19 August 1836. Rather grandiosely described as the Lee, Lewisham, Greenwich & Eltham meeting, the fixture appeared in the *Racing Calendar*, but neither the description nor the donor of the 'Railway Plate' was recorded there.

<sup>17</sup> A canal had been built in 1824 to link the Thames at Gravesend to the Medway opposite Rochester. This waterway had two tunnels 1,530 and 2,329 yards long, with only a fifty yard gap between them. The Gravesend & Rochester Railway was actually authorised retrospectively, as the canal company had already opened its line along the towpath. In 1846 the S.E.R. purchased the railway for £310,000, and rebuilt it as a double line, which was opened on 24 August 1847. It was not joined to the rest of the railway system until 1849.

The 'Railway Plate' continued to figure in the Rochester racecard for a further eight years, but without reference to any of the sponsors.

There were 'railway' races at Tunbridge Wells (1847-9) and Tonbridge (1854-5), but while both these towns were well into S.E. territory nothing specific occurred at these times, certainly at Tonbridge, to provide impetus for a 'railway' race. At Tunbridge Wells the branch from Tonbridge had been opened to a temporary terminus in 1845, and to a permanent station in November 1846, so this may have given impetus for a 'railway' race in the following August and the next two years.

There was no doubt about the S.E.R. sponsorship at Wye between 1861 and 1863 at £25 and in 1869 at £50, although at present nothing has been identified to cause the inception, interruption or termination of the support, as Wye remained a flat race course for another eight years.

The last entry for the S.E. area - the 'Railway Selling Handicap of 5 sov. each, with 30 added ...' on 6 June 1876 effectively brings this survey back to the starting point at the Lee, Greenwich & Eltham meeting - this time it was merely Eltham. The races had restarted in 1873, and there were up to three meetings a year, but 1876 proved to be the last year, and there was no evidence of direct support by the S.E.R.

On 4 August 1841, the London & Brighton Railway, in anticipation of linking Brighton directly with London by the extension of its line from Haywards Heath in the following month, made a somewhat oblique donation to 'A Sweepstakes of 5 sov. each, with 50 added by the Gentlemen and Officers associated with the Railway Company'. Thus started a seemingly haphazard and sporadic involvement in direct sponsorship by the company and its successor, the L.B.S.C.R. For the next two years there was an anonymous 'Railway Plate of 50 sov.', which disappeared altogether in 1844, to be reborn in the following year. In July 1846 the amalgamation of the London & Brighton and London & Croydon Railways was authorised, and on 7 August there was on the Brighton racecard 'The Railway Plate of 50 sov. presented by the Railway Directors, for which any number of horses the property of the same owner, allowed to start ...'. In 1849 the sum given by the L.B.S.C. Directors rose to £100, but thereafter the support became intermittent and confusing. On 7 August 1850 we have 'The Marine Stakes of 20 sov. each, with 100 added by the Railway Company for two year old colts and fillies', and on the following day 'The Railway Plate of 100 sov. added to a Handicap Sweepstakes of 10 sov. each.' No direct

mention is made of any railway involvement for this latter race or for 'The Railway Handicap Hurdle Race of 5 sov. each, with 20 added, the New Course over six flights of hurdles' on 2 October. It may be tempting to assume that the L.B.S.C.R. did contribute to these races, but with the example of the City of London meeting in mind it may not be so clear cut, particularly as in 1851 there was no 'Railway Plate' at the main August meeting, while the 'Marine Stakes' made no mention of the railway at all. Only at the October meeting was there still the 'Railway Handicap Hurdle Race', this time with the support increased to £50. One of the reasons may well be that in 1851 the L.B.S.C.R. gave £100 to the fund for the new stand, and was thereafter to subscribe £200 annually to the race fund.<sup>18</sup> Certainly nothing at all can be found in the way of direct race support in 1852, but then there were three years (1853 - 55) of a simple 'Railway Plate' of 100 sov. (handicap) before a further five year gap. But on 7 August 1861 there was 'The Railway Stakes of 15 sov. each, with 200 added by the Brighton Railway Company...' and thereafter, except for a 'Railway Plate of 10 sov. each, with 100 added ...' in 1866 and 1867 - nothing!!

The full story of the L.B.S.C. support for Brighton Races was not unfolded in the pages of the *Racing Calendar*,<sup>19</sup> as E.E. Dorling also revealed with regard to Epsom, when he stated 'The London, Brighton & South Coast, for instance in 1849, gave a very liberal subscription towards the races, and did, in fact, provide the entire stakes for one of the races'.<sup>20</sup>

In fact, the first 'Railway Stakes of 5 sov. each with 25 added ...' at Epsom appeared in the *Racing Calendar* for 16 April 1847, no doubt in anticipation of the opening of the L.B.S.C. line to Epsom on 10 May. No mention was made of any L.B.S.C. involvement either for the £25 support (1847 - 50) or for the greatly increased support to a total of £100 (£150 in 1854/5) for the 'Railway' races at both the Spring and Derby meetings from 1851 through to 1858. It was only when the L.S.W.R. opened its line to Epsom in August 1859 that there was some acknowledgement of specific railway support for any races. The one race at the Spring Meeting remained 'The Railway Plate of 50 sov. ...' but the Tuesday and Thursday of the Derby Meeting each saw a 'Sweepstakes of 10 sov. each with 100 added ...' by the 'Brighton Railway

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<sup>18</sup> Gilbert, E.W. *Brighton - Old Ocean's Bauble* (Methuen & Co., London, 1954) p.194.

<sup>19</sup> See Chapter 12, Note 93.

<sup>20</sup> Dorling, E.E. *Epsom and the Dorlings* (Stanley Paul & Co. Ltd., London, 1939) p.62



Company' and the 'South Western Railway Company' respectively. 1860 saw sponsorship both increased and made more explicit. The Spring Meeting had the 'London Bridge Stakes' and the 'Waterloo Plate', each with a £50 addition by the railway owning the appropriate London terminus. Both companies were represented at the Derby Meeting with a handicap race each, called 'The Brighton Stakes' and 'The South Western Stakes', to which £100 was added. The next three years passed without any change, but in 1864 there was only 'The Waterloo Plate' at the spring Meeting, and the L.S.W. support for the 'South Western Stakes' had apparently disappeared, although the 'Brighton Stakes' were still supported by the L.B.S.C.R.

In the following two years only the races at the Spring Meeting reappeared, but neither had any indication of specific railway support. There were no 'railway' races at the Derby Meeting. This situation may well have been occasioned by the opening of the L.B.S.C. Epsom Downs branch on 22 May 1865, just in time for that year's Derby. By March 1867 there had obviously been some move towards a truce, as at the Spring Meeting there was 'The United Railway Stakes of 5 sov. each with 100 added', but no mention of the companies involved. In 1870 - 73 the total support remained the same, but was split into 'The Brighton Railway Plate (or Stakes)' and 'The South Western Railway Plate (or Stakes)'. each with £50 added. This was the last time there was a specific railway company mentioned at Epsom by the *Racing Calendar*, but for a further six years an anonymous £100 found its way to the 'Railway Stakes/Welter Stakes/Plate'.

After that turgid recital it is almost a relief to move to Hastings, where on 28 September 1849 the 'London & South Coast Railway Company (sic)' made a 'one off' donation of £25 to a 'sweepstakes of 2 sov. each. Heats, once round and a distance'. This was probably occasioned by the fact that this meeting marked the only return of Hastings to the *Racing Calendar* between 1846 and 1865.

Lewes was the next meeting to which the L.B.S.C.R. gave its support between 1854 and 1868, with only three years missing from this sequence. The prize for the 'Southdown Welter Cup' started at £50, went down to £25 in 1855, missed a year in 1857, to return in the following year as the 'Railway Nursery Stakes' with £50 added. A further gap in 1862 to 1863 was followed by the sponsorship of a race for £50 at both the April and August meetings. Of these only the August race survived for the

next four years, but without any mention of the L.B.S.C.R. Thereafter no 'railway' races appeared on the card at Lewes.

The shortlived series of meetings at Worthing started in 1860 and for three years were blessed with a 'railway' race to which £20 had been added. In the first year the donation was described as 'the gift of the London & Brighton Railway', which had ceased to exist as a separate entity in 1846. By 1861 the race committee had caught up with events, because the L.B.S.C.R. was credited with the donations, while in the last year, 1862, the £20 had no attribution. Worthing races ended in 1864 apart from a single return to the *Racing Calendar* in 1869.

More surprisingly, perhaps, was the fact that the L.B.S.C.R. sponsored a race at Goodwood to the tune of £100 in both 1864 and 1865. It had been relatively close to Goodwood for many years, but did not improve its accessibility until 1881, when the Midhurst - Chichester line was opened, and Singleton station was provided to cater specifically for the race traffic.

Chronologically the last series of 'railway' races to commence in the L.B.S.C. area were associated with the Eastbourne Hunt meetings held on Bullock Down, near Beachy Head, in April 1866 and 1867, when there was a 'Railway Plate of 20 sov. added to a sweepstakes of 2 sov. for hunters' over a course of about two miles. No acknowledgement was made to the L.B.S.C.R. and, as after the autumn of 1867 hurdle races were not included in the *Racing Calendar* and the same fate befell hunters' races on the flat after July 1871, there was no apparent further involvement until the Eastbourne Hunt Meetings ended in 1875.

Although the L.S.W.R. sponsored races at more courses and over a much longer period than any other company in southern England, it is relatively easy to follow its activities as the vast majority of the individual acts of sponsorship were credited to the railway. It is fitting, therefore, that the distinction of being the first railway company to definitely sponsor a horse race and figure in its title should belong to the London & Southampton Railway, the progenitor of the L.S.W.R. On 20 June 1838, there appeared on the card at Hampton & Moulsey Hunt 'The London & Southampton Railway Stakes of 5 sov. each, with 50 added by some of the Directors and Proprietors of the Railway Company, the winner to be sold for 200 sov. if demanded & c: heats,

once round and a distance'. There was as yet no station at Hampton,<sup>21</sup> so prospective punters had to complete their journey by road from the L.& S. station at Kingston, whence some three weeks previously the hordes had descended on Epsom.<sup>22</sup> The L. & S.R. provided £50 for a race at Hampton in 1839, and then there was a gap of three years before an anonymous 'Railway Stakes of 40 sovs ...' took place over a 1½ mile course. A further gap of three years followed before the L.S.W.R. put up the relatively modest sum of £20. There was no mention of the railway in connection with the £20 donated in 1848, but from 1849 to 1864 the company sponsored a race each year, first for £25 and then from 1850 at £50, the only deviation being in 1852 when two races were supported by the railway company. From 1865 onwards no acknowledgement of a contribution was made, and in some years in the 1870s there was also a 'South Western Stakes' which has been omitted from the analysis. The value of the 'Railway Plate' was raised to £80 in 1877 and to £100 three years later. Seven years at 100 gn. (£105) followed, but on the very last day of racing at Hampton - 15 June 1887 - the sponsorship reverted to £100. As Hampton lay well within the L.S.W.R. territory, despite some gaps and 23 years of anonymity, it is probable that the company supported racing there over a period of almost exactly 50 years.

The next two ventures into sponsorship by the L.S.W.R. were essentially 'one offs'. The company added £20 to the Town Plate at the Portsmouth and Portsea Town & Garrison Meeting on 25 September, 1845, but did not continue this support in the following year. By the time the railway had extended from Havant into Portsmouth on 14 June 1847, the race meetings were defunct. The L.S.W.R. made a donation of £20 to the 'Railway Plate' at Basingstoke on 7 August 1846, and in the very last year of racing at that location, 1850, there was an anonymous addition of £10 to the 'Railway Plate' on 24 September. Portsmouth figured once again, albeit an unattributed donation, some 40 years later when on 11 November 1892 there was a 'Railway Selling Plate of 103 sov. for all ages' at the new racecourse at Portsmouth Park, which had opened on 26 June 1891.

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<sup>21</sup> The L.S.W.R. opened its branch to Hampton Court on 1 February 1849, but other stations close to the course, at Hampton Wick and Hampton, were not opened until 1 July 1863 and 1 November 1864 respectively.

<sup>22</sup> It is surprising that in view of all the efforts to get the L. & S. line open for the 1839 Derby, the L.S.W.R. did not openly sponsor races at Epsom until over 20 years later.

Although the L.S.W.R. did not reach Egham until it opened its line to Ascot on 4 June 1856, it had had relatively close railheads at Chertsey and Staines since 1848. Even earlier than this, on 26 August 1846, it gave part of the prize for 'The Egham Stakes of 5 sov. each, with 10 added from the Fund and 20 by the South Western Railway Company...' In 1847 there was a straightforward 'Railway Handicap of 5 sov. each with 20 added by the South Western Railway Company', but for the next two years, although the race retained the railway title, there was mentioned of a specific donation. But from 1850 to 1864 there is an unbroken run of 'The Railway Stakes of 5 sov. each, with 25 added by the S.W.Rly.Co.' For the years 1865 - 1867, the support is raised to £50, but there is no mention of the railway support, and after 1867 there were no further 'railway' races.

Although the L.S.W.R. had reached Southampton on 10 June 1839, and opened its main line from London 11 May of the following year, it made no immediate contribution to the races at Southampton. Then on 16 August 1847 it added £25 to 'The Railway Stakes of 3 sov. each ...' The next year the contribution was reduced to £20, and thereafter the race meetings were suspended until 1860. In that year the railway sponsorship returned very positively with the 'South Western Stakes of 5 sov. each, with 50 added, 25 by the South Western Railway Company, and 25 from the Fund'. The same procedure was followed in 1861, but in 1862 and 1863 the full £50 was added by the railway company. Thereafter, there was a 'South Western Stakes' with no mention of the railway either in the title or the added money, except for 1869, when it was clearly stated 'with 50 added by the South Western Railway Company'.

The L.S.W.R. reached Salisbury in 1847, and the first race sponsorship of £25 was provided on 27 August of the same year. The company continued to support a race at Salisbury until 1892, by which time it was giving 100 guineas (£105).<sup>23</sup> This sponsorship probably ended because in both 1890 and 1892 the 'South Western Railway Plate' did not attract sufficient starters, and so the company felt that interest was not strong enough to justify further support.

In June 1855, the L.S.W.R. made a contribution of £20 to a sweepstakes at Winchester Races, with a further £20 added from the Race Fund. If this was meant to be the start of a partnership it did not work, at least in the short term, as no further

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<sup>23</sup> There were only five apparent gaps in this long sequence, 1868, 1869, 1877, 1882 and 1887.

donations were made until June 1860, when the L.S.W.R. added £20 and the Fund added £10. Although the name was changed to 'The Railway Plate' in 1862, the same contributions were made, but from 1863 to 1867, although the addition was increased to £40, there is no mention of the L.S.W.R., and thereafter the race was discontinued.

The L.S.W.R. reached Ascot on 4 June 1856 with the opening of the Staines, Wokingham & Woking Junction Railway.<sup>24</sup> Until that date the L.S.W.R. and G.W.R. competed on more or less equal terms for the race traffic, but it had been the latter who had first made the grand gesture of £300, even though from 1852 it had dropped the level to £100.<sup>25</sup> Although the L.S.W.R. reached Ascot some nine days before the race sponsored by the G.W.R., the existing arrangement continued in 1856. But in 1857 the L.S.W.R. and the local company together sponsored 'a Handicap Sweepstakes' to the tune of £300. This was a shortlived gesture as the support was halved in the following year, but the L.S.W.R. gave a £20 donation to the 'Railway Plate' at the Ascot Military Meeting at the end of August. Although the local company had been leased by the L.S.W.R. in March 1858, it only disappeared from the sponsorship roster in 1859, when the latter began to provide £100 for the 'South Western Plate', a handicap race for three year olds and upwards run over the New Mile Course. This basic sponsorship continued up to the end of the 1867 season, although in 1861 the L.S.W.R. supported an additional race at the July meeting with 50 guineas, and in 1866 made a further donation of £100 at the May meeting. But in 1867, the final year of any overt support, this had moved to the Spring Meeting with no donation at all being given during Royal Ascot.

As discussed earlier in the L.B.S.C. section, the L.S.W.R. only started to support racing at Epsom when its line reached the town in 1859, and its sponsorship, generally jointly or in competition with the L.B.S.C.R. has already been described. In 1859 the L.S.W.R. also supported the local meeting at Lyndhurst in the New Forest to the tune of £25. This was a 'one off' occurrence, as it seemed the races would be. But although the meetings resumed in 1863 and lasted until 1871, there was no more support from the railway.

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<sup>24</sup> See Chapter 4, Note 50.

<sup>25</sup> The L.S.W.R. had refused a request to give £100 to the race fund in 1853. *The Times*, 6 June 1853.

The company was far more consistent in its support for the race meetings at Odiham, between Aldershot and Hook, as indeed at Aldershot itself, both of which it sponsored for the first time in 1861. It provided £25 each year at Odiham until 1867 after which this stopped as suddenly as it had begun, although the meetings were to continue with only two gaps. Then in 1878 the L.S.W.R. provided a plate of £100, raising this to 100 gn. in the following year. Thereafter Odiham Races vanished from the *Racing Calendar*. The start of L.S.W. sponsorship at Aldershot coincided with its first recorded race meeting - on 22 July 1861. Its direct support of £25 continued until 1868 with a couple of gaps, and the value of the 'South Western Railway Plate' was reduced to £20 in 1866 and 1868. In 1869, although the value was raised to £30, the race had become merely the 'Railway Plate'. After a gap in 1870 there followed three years of 'The Railway Handicap of 5 sov. each with 35 added ...' over a 1½ mile course. Thereafter there was no further mention of 'railway' races, although flat racing at Aldershot was to continue until 1881.

In 1861, the L.S.W.R. also added £25 to a sweepstakes at the Devon & Exeter County Meeting, which had been revived in the previous year. This donation too was a 'one off', and may very well have been given because the L.S.W.R. was in a period of intense activity in the area. It had reached Exeter in July 1860 and had opened a branch to Exmouth on 1 May 1861, while a connection to the G.W. main line in Exeter would be completed in February 1862.

The next racecourse to gain sponsorship was that at Stockbridge, where, in conjunction with the normal meeting, the prestigious Bibury Club at that time held its races. The L.S.W.R. gave £50 in 1863 and 1864, so having opened a station at Stockbridge in the following March on its line from Andover to Redbridge it would be reasonable to suppose that this sponsorship would continue. But, although a 'Railway Plate' or 'Railway Stakes' continued to show £50 added between 1865 and 1869, there was no mention of the L.S.W.R. Thereafter the 'railway' races vanished from the card, although the Stockbridge meeting was to survive for almost thirty years.

All fourteen courses so far dealt with in this section have had at least one race specifically sponsored by the L.S.W.R., and some over many years, but the last three courses in the area to start 'railway' races can claim no such obvious attribution - they are merely in L.S.W. territory. Guildford races had ceased after 1854, although they had been held for many years previously. There was a single attempt at revival in April

1870, and on the card appeared 'The Railway Plate (handicap) of 50 sov.' over five furlongs.

Sandown Park opened on 22 April 1875, and on the following Saturday there was 'The Railway Handicap Plate of 100 sov.' to be run over five furlongs. After this one instance, there were no further 'railway' races at Sandown Park until 22 October 1885, when there was a 'Railway Plate of 100 gn.' over 7 furlongs. This was continued in 1886, but in 1887 there were two 'Railway Plates', one of 100 gn. in April and one of £100 in October. In 1888 and 1889 there were 'Railway Plates' of 100 guineas at each of the April, June and October meetings, but in 1890 these were reduced to races of '103 sovs.' at the April and June meetings, and with these sponsorship (if any) came to an end.

The new course at Hurst Park, which had opened to National Hunt Racing in 1890 and to flat racing on 25 March 1891, saw on 9 September of that year a 'Railway Selling Plate of 103 sov.' for the first and only time. It might have been expected that the L.S.W.R. would sponsor races at this course, as it was a replacement for Hampton with which it had had such a long association. It is perhaps equally strange that, although the L.S.W.R. provided a special station at Kempton Park from its opening in July 1878, it did not provide any race sponsorship - perhaps the directors thought they had done enough.!!

It can be seen that even if the overall financial contribution of the L.S.W.R. to direct race sponsorship was relatively modest, it was nevertheless more overt and long lived than that of any other company which went to make up the Southern Railway at the 1923 Grouping, with no less than ten separate sponsorships in a peak year such as 1861.

## 2. THE MIDLANDS AND WALES

Within this area just nine racecourses reported 'railway' races on their card, and of these the support for only four can be attributed to a specific railway company. The pattern is interesting with a single instance at Chesterfield in 1839, then a gap until 1850 followed by a whole clutch of races at seven courses until 1865. Thereafter, nothing except on the new enclosed course at Leicester, where a single 'railway' race in 1885 was followed by an unbroken sequence from 1892 to 1898.

The sole example of railway sponsorship at Chesterfield took place on 2 October 1839 with 'A Handicap Sweepstakes of 5 sov. each with 100 added by the Gentlemen of the North Midland Railway ...' This 72¼ mile line was to pass through Chesterfield in its course from Derby to Leeds and was built at enormous expense at just over three years, the total expenditure calculated to the day before its full opening on 1 July 1840 being £2,635,893.<sup>26</sup> Presumably the £100 donated to Chesterfield Races was easily lost in the £18,504 designated as 'salaries, rents and incidentals'. The Directors did not see fit to repent their largesse, even though as the station at Chesterfield was opened on 11 May 1840, the next race meeting would have provided an ideal opportunity to bring the name of the railway once again before the racing public at such a well established meeting.

The donation of £100 was not exceeded at any course in this area until 1885, the support between 1850 and 1865 being in the range £15 to £50. There were two 'railway' races at the September 1850 meeting at Walsall. On the Monday there was the 'South Staffordshire Railway Stakes of 3 sov. each, for three years old and upwards'. Despite its title, there was no added money, but on the following day the 'Handicap Stakes of 2 sov. each' had '25 added by the lessees of the South Staffordshire Railway'.<sup>27</sup> There was in fact only one lessee, John Robinson McClean, the engineer of the line, who had taken on the lease for 21 years from 1 August 1850. He continued to support the Walsall meeting at an average of £20 a year until 1860, apart from gaps in 1851 and 1853. But on 1 February 1861, McClean transferred his lease to the L.N.W.R., although it was not due to expire until 31 July 1871. There was no further railway sponsorship at Walsall.

At Worcester, in July 1851, there appeared a handicap race - 'The Railway Stakes of 5 sov. each with 20 added ...' to be run over a 1½ mile course. The support increased in subsequent years to £25, but went on seemingly without a sponsor and with gaps in 1854 and 1857, until in July 1858 it became the 'Oxford, Worcester & Wolverhampton

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<sup>26</sup> Carter, E. *An Historical Geography of the Railways of the British Isles* (Cassell & Co., London, 1959) pp.58-59. The North Midland Railway amalgamated with the Midland Counties and Birmingham & Derby Junction Railways to form the Midland Railway on 10 May 1844.

<sup>27</sup> The company had originally been incorporated on 3 August 1846 as the South Staffordshire Junction Railway to build an 8½ mile line linking the Oxford, Worcester & Wolverhampton Railway at Dudley to the proposed Trent Valley, Midlands & Grand Junction Railway near Walsall. It amalgamated with the latter company in 1847, took over its capital and powers, and dropped the word 'Junction' from its title. It opened its authorised lines between 1847 and 1850, and extended its activities while McClean was lessee. It was vested in the L.N.W.R. in 1867.



Railway Stakes'. Worcester had been served by the O.W.W.R. since May 1852,<sup>28</sup> and it may be that persistent lobbying had finally paid off. The O.W.W.R. merged with other companies in July 1860 to become the West Midland Railway, and the name of the race followed suit in 1861 and succeeding years. The W.M.R. was leased by the G.W.R. in July 1861, and was fully absorbed by the major company on 1 August 1863. The 'West Midland Railway Stakes' was run for the last time on 1 July 1864. The G.W.R. did not make any further donations, and for the next few years the race became merely 'The West Midland Stakes ... with 25 added from the Fund'.

Between 1852 and 1854 there was at Stourbridge a 'Railway Stakes' (or 'Plate') with £25 added, undoubtedly as a result of the opening of the O.W.W.R., while at Hereford there was a single 'Railway Free Handicap Plate of 50 sov. for all ages' stimulated both by the resumption of racing after a few uncertain years, and the arrival or impending arrival of a number of railways in the town, which had remained isolated from the rail network until 1853.<sup>29</sup> In April 1862, there was a single instance of a 'railway' race at Knighton in Radnorshire, where there had been a meeting for many years and which the railway had reached in March 1861.<sup>30</sup> The identity of the donor of £15 to the 'Railway Stakes' is unknown.

Matters were much clearer at Knutsford, where in July of the same year there was a 'Railway Handicap of 40 sov. ...'. This was occasioned by the arrival of the Cheshire Midland Railway in Knutsford in May 1862, and its impending extension to Northwich on 1 January 1863. Accordingly, in July 1863 the 'Cheshire Midland Railway Handicap of 50 sov.' to be run over a  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile course, appeared on the card. This was to continue for only one year more, as it did not survive the vesting of the local company in the Cheshire Lines Committee on 5 July 1865, the third example in this section of sponsorship ceasing when a local railway was taken over by a major company.

There was a 'Railway Stakes of 5 sov. each with 30 added ..' run over six furlongs at Brecon in both 1864 and 1865, undoubtedly inspired by the spate of railway activity in

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<sup>28</sup> This is the opening date of the line between Stourbridge and Evesham. Midland Railway trains had in fact worked over the O.W.W. Abbot's Wood Junction to Worcester line since 5 October 1850, but no O.W.W. trains had done so.

<sup>29</sup> See Chapter 11, Notes 95 & 96 for details.

<sup>30</sup> See Chapter 10, Note 106 for details.

that relatively remote area<sup>31</sup>, and the need to stimulate some additional support as the long standing meetings were no longer held after 1868.

No further 'railway' races were recorded in the Midlands until 1885 when in July there was a 'Railway Handicap of 100 gn. at Leicester. This then appeared in November 1892 as the 'Railway Selling Plate of 103 sov.' which continued until 1898. Sponsorship by a railway company was, however, unlikely to start at this late date on a commercially run enclosed course.<sup>32</sup> Apart from these late instances and the £100 donation at Chesterfield in 1839, the main railway sponsorship was concentrated between 1850 and 1865. During this period, there were 31 sponsored races for a total of £755 or just over £24 a time.

### 3. NORTH EAST ENGLAND

In this area there was a little cluster of sponsorships in the early 1840s, including the only instance of specific railways being credited with a donation, although it is true that all the racecourses except Sheffield lay within the area dominated by the North Eastern Railway or its antecedents. Donations were infrequent and parsimonious, the highest contributions being two of the earliest.

In April 1840 the races over the sands at Tynemouth were graced with the princely sum of 5 sov. added to the 'Railway Plate for all ages ...' The railway had arrived at North Shields, about a mile away, on 22 June of the previous year, although Tynemouth itself would have to wait until the end of March 1847 before it was connected to the railway system. By this time the Tynemouth races, which appeared in the *Racing Calendar* only in 1838, 1840 & 1841, were long gone.

Over the Tyne, at South Shields, the 1840 race meeting was a three day affair with on 10 June 'The Railway Plate, not exceeding £50 given by the Branding (sic) Junction<sup>33</sup> and Newcastle and North Shields Railway for horses that have run in the present races, two heats'. It would have been more appropriate for the second of the two railways

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<sup>31</sup> The Brecon & Merthyr Junction Railway reached Brecon on 23 April 1863, while both the Mid Wales and Hereford, Hay & Brecon Railways were able to run their trains into the Welsh town in the following year, with the Neath & Brecon Railway completing its line in June 1867.

<sup>32</sup> See Chapter 12, Note 49, for details of contemporary railway developments at Leicester.

<sup>33</sup> The Brandling Junction Railway - to give the correct spelling - was notable in that its initial Act of Incorporation in 1836 was obtained by a private individual, having been promoted to link Gateshead with Sunderland and South Shields. Passenger traffic had been inaugurated over the whole system - except for the Redheugh incline - on 5 September 1839, but it had been opened in stages for freight earlier in the year.

named in the title to have sponsored the Tynemouth race. It may have done so anonymously, but obviously felt that the South Shields meeting was a much more prestigious affair, and in any case the costs of sponsorship could be shared with another railway.

In 1841, the Tynemouth 'Railway Plate' had '10 sov. added', while the South Shields 'Railway Plate', while remaining at £50 had no indication of any donors, and in the following year, the last in which it figured, no value at all was stated, either for stakes or any additional monies. South Shields races then vanished from the *Racing Calendar*, except for a single reappearance in 1847. This time the race was merely 'The Railway Plate of 5 sov.', which was in keeping with the only other two races, 'The Borough Plate of 7 sov.' and 'The Ferry Plate of 5 sov.' which took place on 24/25 May 1847. Still, South Shields had the unique distinction of having a 'Railway Plate' at every meeting recorded in the *Racing Calendar*, although this was matched by Hooley Hill over a shorter period.

On 22 October 1844, there was on the card at Malton, a long established meeting in North Yorkshire, 'The Railway Stakes of 2 sov. each, with 10 added' to be run over a 1½ mile course. Railway fever was in the air, as the line from York to Scarborough, which ran through Malton, would be opened on 8 July of the following year by the York & North Midland Railway.<sup>34</sup> In due course Malton became an important railway junction, as well as a focal point in a racehorse training area. But there was just this one instance of a 'railway' race here, and, as will be recounted in Chapter 9, Malton races appeared for the last time in the *Racing Calendar* in 1862.

On 1 September 1846, there was at Darlington a 'Railway Stakes of 10 sov. each, with 25 added', but no indication as to any specific railway involvement. This was the second and last race meeting at Darlington to appear in the *Racing Calendar*, so no obvious benefit came from it. This was, however, at the height of the 'Railway Mania' and the branch serving the important training centre around Catterick and Richmond - both of which had racecourses - was due to open nine days later. In fact, the next 'railway' race in the immediate area took place at Catterick Bridge on 19 April 1854 when £25 was added to 'The Railway Handicap of 5 sov. for 3 yrs. and upwards'.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> See Chapter 9, Text and Notes 55 to 57.

<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, the Newcastle & Carlisle Railway did give 'the usual contribution of 10 gn. to the race fund' at Newcastle. *Newcastle Journal*, 17 June 1847.

Apart from the formation of the North Eastern Railway, which encompassed almost all the railways in the area under discussion, there was nothing to stimulate a donation.

In September 1856, there was a 'Railway Sweepstakes' at the Hull & Holderness Meeting at Beverley. The £15 donation was anonymous, and there was nothing specific in the railway sphere to spark off this generosity. Two years later at Stokesley, at one of the relatively infrequent meetings, there was a 'Railway Stakes' with the magnificent sum of £7-10/- (£7.50) added - small wonder no one wished to acknowledge it !! The sudden surge of interest in the railway was occasioned by the fact that the line from Picton, on the Northallerton - Stockton line, to Stokesley had been opened on 2 March 1857.<sup>36</sup>

Another fifteen years were to pass before there was any further recorded act of sponsorship, and this was far to the south at Sheffield on 16 September 1873 when £30 was added to the 'Railway Stakes of 2 sov. each'. Nothing of major railway importance was happening in the city or its surrounding area and therefore it was perhaps more logical that the following year the 'railway' race was replaced by the 'Tramway Handicap Plate of 50 sov.', since a horse-tramway had been opened in the city in 1873.<sup>37</sup>

In 44 years, therefore, there were 13 'railway' races on nine courses, of which only one can be positively attributed - if we except the donation made by George Hudson to the Yorkshire Union Hunt meeting.<sup>38</sup> Apart from the early instances on Tyneside all were 'one offs', and even if we add in the donation from Hudson and assume that all races were actually sponsored by railway companies, the total support was only £257-10/- or just ... £5-17/- per annum.

#### 4. NORTH WEST ENGLAND

Eight racecourses in the north west staged 'railway' races over the relatively short period 1842 to 1856, but there was no mention in the *Racing Calendar* of any donation by a specific railway company.

There were two shortlived, but adjacent, meetings in Lancashire, at Hooley Hill (1842 to 1844) and at Ashton-under-Lyne (1845 to 1846). The former had a 'Railway

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<sup>36</sup> See Chapter 10, Note 135.

<sup>37</sup> The Sheffield Tramways Company operated a 9¼ mile standard gauge horse tram system with 53 vehicles by the time it was taken over by Sheffield Corporation in 1896.

Stakes of 3 sov. each with 10 added' for each of the three years of its existence. This was obviously a race filled with uncertainty and not necessarily in the same location, as it was successively 'twice round the course', 'thrice round' (there was only one entry for this) and finally over a 1¼ mile course. Ashton & Stalybridge looked set to take over with its 'Railway Plate of 15 sov. added to a Sweepstakes of 3 sov. for horses which never won 50 sov. including his own stake'. The distance was 'about 1½ miles' and the event took place only twice before the Ashton meeting vanished from the *Racing Calendar*. Although there is no direct mention of its involvement, the likely company would have been the Sheffield, Ashton-under-Lyne & Manchester Railway, one of whose stations, originally known as Ashton & Hooley Hill, was opened on 11 November 1841.<sup>39</sup> At least six trains a day were serving the station by the time the first meeting was held at Hooley Hill.

The next instance of a 'railway' race reported in the *Racing Calendar* was at Radcliffe on 9 September 1845. This course, variously recorded as Ratcliffe Bridge, Ratcliffe and Radcliffe, had opened in 1840 and racing was to continue there until 1876, although the 'railway' races appeared in only two years. The L.Y. Railway line from Clifton Junction, on the outskirts of Manchester, to Rawtenstall opened on 28 September 1846, would have placed some thoughts of railway sponsorship in the minds of the proprietors, and it may be that they were able to move from the 'Railway Plate of 20 sov. for 3 years and above, heats, twice round and a distance', to a more generous 'Railway Stakes of 5 sov. each, with 30 added for two and three years old' over a ¾ mile course - more money for less work!

The year 1846, as well as being the peak year of 'Railway Mania', marked the high point of 'railway' races in the north west - five - no other year had more than two. In addition to the races at Ashton and Radcliffe, £50 was added to the 'Railway Stakes' at Manchester in June, while £20 was added to a similar race at Preston at the end of July. At Gorton, on the eastern outskirts of Manchester, there was a 'Railway Stakes of 5 sov. each' run in heats over a 1½ mile course, but with nothing added. As a station of that name lay on the S.A.M. line mentioned earlier, it may well have stirred

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<sup>38</sup> See Note 3.

<sup>39</sup> The line was not completed until 23 September 1845, by which time Ashton & Hooley Hill had first become simply Ashton in February 1842 and then Guide Bridge in the July 1845 *Bradshaw*. Together with three other companies, the S.A.M.R. formed the Manchester, Sheffield & Lincolnshire (later the Great Central) Railway on 1 January 1847.

some tremor at least in the heart of the racecourse proprietor, but obviously not as far as the railway company was concerned. The race meetings at Preston were a little sporadic after the withdrawal of the Earl of Derby from active involvement, and the railway races occurred in the middle of the longest single run (1845 to 1848), which marked the permanent end of racing in this Lancashire town.<sup>40</sup>

The 'railway' races at Manchester also only lasted for two years, but in 1847 there were two instances - 'The Railway Stakes of 10 sov. each, with 40 added' for two and three year olds over a  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile course at the May meeting,, and 'The Railway Plate of 70 sov.' with heats over two miles, at the September Meeting. A great deal was happening on the railway front in Manchester at this time, but it is difficult to single out any specific trigger point, apart from the overall 'Railway Mania' However, 1846 had seen the last races on the Kersal Moor course, and there was no doubt pressure to maximise revenue on the new Castle Irwell course, to set up which a considerable outlay had been necessary.<sup>41</sup>

The remaining two instances of railway races in the north west occurred at Southport in September 1852 with a 'Railway Stakes of 3 sov. each with 20 added', and at Ulverston in May 1856 with the 'Railway Stakes of 1 sov. each with 10 added, heats, once round and a distance'. The former marked the sole entry for Southport in the *Racing Calendar* during the period under review. There was nothing specific to celebrate in the railway development of the area, except possibly the extension of the railway to the permanent terminus at Chapel Street in the previous year. At Ulverston, there had been an earlier meeting in 1854, so this may have been the result of an attempt by the promoters to get a little extra support from the local company - the Furness Railway. No matter - there was only one further entry in the *Racing Calendar* for Ulverston - and that was in 1873.

To sum up, the vast majority of races and of financial support (£280 out of £350) occurred during the 'Railway Mania' years (1845 - 47). Analysis has shown the

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<sup>40</sup> See Chapter 4, Note 25.

<sup>41</sup> Manchester Central Reference Library, Minutes of Manchester Racecourse Company Ltd., 18 February 1868. The company wrote to both the L.N.W. and L.Y. Railways, asking if they would give a sum of money 'to be run for as a stake', but this did not elicit a positive response, any more than a similar request made to the L. & M.R. by the Newton race committee. Thomas R.H.G. *The Liverpool & Manchester Railway* (B.T. Batsford Ltd., London, 1980) p.180. The directors refused to contribute 'a prize as a cup on the grounds that they had no authority to do so'.

average support to be £23.33 per year or £43.75 per course, spread over a 15 year period.

## 5. SCOTLAND

Although sponsorship in Scotland extended to five racecourses over a period of some 25 years, only two enjoyed any long standing support - Paisley and Ayr - so the story will concentrate mainly on these. One of the other instances can be ascribed to a specific railway company, but all three were single recorded races and will be covered briefly.

The racecourse at Paisley first appeared in the *Racing Calendar* in 1836, and survived for over 70 years. The local railway, the Glasgow & Paisley Joint, supported its local course with only a one year gap in 1853 between 1843 and 1857. Glasgow and Paisley were not linked until 14 July 1840, although the line from Ayr had reached Paisley in the previous year.<sup>42</sup> From a relatively modest 10 guineas added to 'The Railway Stakes' in August 1843, the company would move after two years at £25 to an almost unvaried £50 a year, sometimes supporting two races, and on one occasion three, while in other years the money would be added to the coveted prize of the Silver Bells. These dated from 1620, and were donated by the Town Council of Paisley for the winner to keep for a year, subject to certain safeguards and conditions. The donation of the railway company was clearly acknowledged every year, but this support ended after 1857, first of all because of the suspension of racing at Paisley in 1858, albeit for only one year, after which the meetings became sporadic for a few years.

The Glasgow & Ayr Railway, under its original title of the Glasgow, Paisley, Kilmarnock & Ayr Railway which reached Ayr on 5 August 1839, was in many ways the main progenitor of the Glasgow & South Western Railway. The G. & A.R. (and the G. & S.W.R. thereafter) quite simply gave £50 to support one race each year after 1844, when it gave £25 to each of two races. In two years (1859/61) however, the G. & S.W.R. spread its contribution over two races, and in the last year of sponsorship

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<sup>42</sup> The Glasgow & Paisley Joint Railway, which was the first joint line in the world, was owned between the towns in its title by the Glasgow, Paisley & Greenock and Glasgow, Paisley, Kilmarnock and Ayr Railways. These became part of the Caledonian and Glasgow & South Western Railways respectively in the early 1850s, although the joint line survived as a separate legal entity until the 1923 Grouping.

reduced its support to £30. Thereafter, in 1863 - 64, there were no 'railway' races at all, but in 1865 to 1868 they re-appeared with an anonymous donation of £30. In at least three of the latter years there was at Ayr also a 'South Western Stakes' with £20 added, which together with the 'railway' races would have equated to the original £50. In 1868, at the neighbouring Bogside Racecourse, near Irvine, the Eglinton Hunt Meeting, on Friday 7 May, had on its card 'The Railway Plate (Handicap) of 50 sov. for all ages, about ¾ miles'. This was only the second year of the revived meetings here, but these continued with only seven blank years towards the end of the nineteenth century until 1965.

Working backwards chronologically, the remaining two Scottish courses to stage 'railway' races were Edinburgh and Perth. On 27 September 1866, the Edinburgh & Lothian Racing Club Autumn Meeting held 'The Railway Stakes of 5 sov. each with 25 added, for all ages' over a one mile course, but there was no indication of the donor of the prize. The North British Railway, if a railway was involved, was the most likely candidate, as it owned the branch to Musselburgh where the meeting was held, together with all lines in the immediate area.

Some nineteen years earlier, on 14 October 1847, the card at Perth included 'The Railway Stakes of 5 sov. each, ... with 25 added by the Directors of the Dundee, Perth & Aberdeen Junction Railway Company'. The race, which was for three year olds and above, was not repeated, although flat racing continued at Perth until 1892 and National Hunt Racing survives to this day. The railway company opened its line between Dundee and Perth on 22 May 1847, so it may well have been thought appropriate to bring it into the public eye - even if only once.

Thus in Scotland only the G.S.W.R., its antecedents and jointly owned subsidiary, gave any lasting support to specific races, but the last recorded 'railway' race took place as long ago as 1868. A total of £1,735.10/- was donated to 50 races over a 26 year period.

## 6. EAST ANGLIA

East Anglia and its neighbours, as well as being the last major area to begin sponsorship of 'railway' races, could only muster four courses - even if we include Spilsby in this section of the analysis. Only Newmarket was of any significance but, although it is second chronologically in the list, it will be discussed last.



The seaside course at Great Yarmouth had the 'Railway Stakes of 2 sov. each with 30 added...' on 31 July 1845, and the 'Railway Plate of 30 sov.' on 11 September 1846, with the winner paid £5 after completing the 1½ mile course. Although racing was to continue at this course throughout the nineteenth century, there were no more 'railway' races recorded in the *Racing Calendar*. Railway interest in the area was high, as the opening of the isolated line between Yarmouth and Norwich had taken place on 1 May 1844, with the coastal towns linked to the rest of the national railway system on 30 July 1845.<sup>43</sup> Enthusiasm for railways naturally ran high but did not last, at least as far as race sponsorship or naming was concerned.

Ignoring Newmarket for the moment, the next meeting to provide railway races was Kings Lynn between 1864 and 1866. Neither the support nor the distance were constant in any of the races, so the details are given below :-

22 July 1864 - The Railway Stakes of 5 sov. each, with 15 sov. added, for 2 and 3 year old (Two Year Course)

17 Sept. 1865 - The Railway Hurdle Race of 3 sov. each, with 30 added, heats, about 1½ miles over five hurdles

6 Sept. 1866 - The Railway Hurdle Race of 3 sov. each with 25 added, about two miles over six hurdles.

The railways had reached Kings Lynn as early as October 1846, and by this time the local companies had already been absorbed into the Great Eastern Railway.<sup>44</sup> But additional lines had been authorised in the early 1860s, the Lynn to Hunstanton line being opened in 1862, with the Lynn to Sutton line, later to form part of the Midland & Great Northern Joint Committee system, following in 1865. All this was sufficient to rekindle interest in railways, albeit shortlived.

The racecourse at Spilsby in Lincolnshire had 'The Railway Plate of 10 sov. for beaten horses, about one mile' on 16 July 1867, and 'The Railway Plate of 15 sov.' on 14 July 1868. Spilsby Races were only held for three years (1866 to 1868) and the 'railway' races were definitely stimulated by the cutting of the first sod for the nominally independent Spilsby to Firsby line on 14 March 1867, and its opening just over a year later on 1 May 1868, when there were considerable local festivities.

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<sup>43</sup> See Chapter 12, Note 120.

<sup>44</sup> See Chapter 10, Text and Note 83.

Although the Jockey Club and other notables at Newmarket had a somewhat ambivalent attitude towards the railway, two years after the Newmarket Railway was safely in the hands of the Eastern Counties Railway, the new owners were persuaded to support the activities at the racecourse, which would, as the national railway network increased, provide a lucrative source of income for their company. So on 22 September 1854, the 'Eastern Counties Handicap, a Sweepstakes of 15 sov. each ... with 100 added by the Eastern Counties Railway, for three yrs. old and upwards ...' appeared on the card. By the 1858 meeting, the race had become the 'Eastern Counties Railway Handicap', and four years later its title was changed to the 'Great Eastern Railway Handicap' to reflect the amalgamation of the E.C.R. with other companies to form the G.E.R. By this time the field had risen to 24, and there were 103 subscribers. From 1874 the Jockey Club contributed £100 to the prize money, and ten years later raised its contribution to £200. In 1886, the continued fall in both the number of subscribers and runners caused the support to be increased to £200 from the G.E.R. and £300 from the Jockey Club, and this pattern continued beyond the review period.<sup>45</sup> In this century there were only minor adjustments until the G.E.R. lost its identity as part of the London & North Eastern Railway at the 1923 Grouping.

But even a 60 year unbroken run of sponsorship at the headquarters of British flat racing provided a total of less than £10,000, certainly not enough to fund a single 'Eclipse Stakes' even in the late nineteenth century.

### COMPARISON WITH RAILWAY SPONSORSHIP IN IRELAND

Although this study has clearly shown that direct railway sponsorship of races was very low against the total prize money on offer, and therefore at variance with the statement made by Vamplew in *The Turf*, a comparison has also been made with the findings of Fergus D'Arcy on railway sponsorship in Ireland.<sup>46</sup>

Railway sponsorship in Ireland started in June 1844 when the Dublin & Drogheda Railway added 25 sov. to a handicap race at Bellewstown, followed by a further donation from the same company at Lusk Races north of Dublin in the next month.

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<sup>45</sup> When the G.E.R. became part of the L.N.E.R. at the 1923 Grouping, the race became simply the 'Great Eastern Handicap' with no indication in the *Racing Calendar* of continuing railway involvement, although in due course the added money was raised to £1,000. The 'Great Eastern Handicap' was run for the last time on 2 October 1968.

<sup>46</sup> D'Arcy, F. *Horses, Lords and Racing Men* (The Turf Club, Kildare, 1991) particularly pp.145-151.

Further sponsorship occurred both in Ulster in 1845 and in Carlow in 1846, before the Great Southern & Western Railway sponsored a race at the headquarters of Irish racing - The Curragh.

By 1876 sponsorship had spread across the island and 10 courses receiving a total of £632-10/- are recorded in the *Turf Calendar*. The equivalent in mainland Britain was £330 at only 4 courses, as direct sponsorship as recorded in the *Racing Calendar* was already in sharp decline from the peak of £1,142-10/- donated to a total of 22 courses in 1861. By 1901, the total in Ireland had grown to £903 spread over 18 courses, while back on the mainland there remained only Newmarket with its £200 from the G.E.R. Two things are immediately apparent - the level of 'railway' direct sponsorship was very low in both countries in relation to the total prize money, but was nonetheless proportionally greater in Ireland.

It is possible to get an almost exact comparison between direct railway sponsorship in mainland Britain and in Ireland for the two years quoted by Vamplew. Both the *Irish Racing Calendar*, which listed all races in Ireland, and the Irish reports in the *Racing Calendar*, which listed only races run under Jockey Club rules, have been used to increase the validity of the comparison.

**TABLE 6.4: COMPARISON OF RAILWAY SPONSORSHIP IN MAINLAND BRITAIN AND IRELAND**

Source/Country	1874/6			1901		
	Prize Money (£)	Rail Sponsorship (£)	%	Prize Money (£)	Rail Sponsorship (£)	%
Racing Calendar (Britain)	315,275	350	0.11	493,890	200	0.04
Irish Racing Calendar (Ireland)	30,502	633	2.08	51,281	903	1.76
Racing Calendar (Ireland)	11,200	230	2.00	30,431	375	1.23

Sources: England: *Racing Calendar*, 1874, 1901  
 Ireland: *Irish Racing Calendar*, 1876, 1901  
*Racing Calendar*, 1876, 1901

It can be seen that, although the level of railway sponsorship in Ireland had continued to grow in absolute terms, and was proportionally greater than in mainland Britain, it was still relatively small compared to the total of prize money, particularly for those races run under Jockey Club rules.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter has demonstrated that the level of direct railway sponsorship in mainland Britain, even with all the borderline cases included, would not exceed £1,500 in any one year, and had declined from a peak in 1861 to a single instance of £200 by the beginning of the twentieth century. The survey of general sponsorship of individual races exhibited the same profile of growth and decline, becoming much less significant in absolute terms as race meetings switched more to commercial companies on enclosed courses. The comparison with Ireland has shown a low level of direct sponsorship there, even if considerably higher in percentage terms than in mainland Britain. Despite Vamplew's contention, this study has shown that race sponsorship by railway companies was minimal, and it should be remembered that even in 1905 two thirds of all prize money was provided by owners themselves.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Dalzell, Lord Hamilton of 'The Financial Aspects of Racing', *Badminton Magazine*, XXIII, 1906, p.252.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### JOCKEYS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

#### INTRODUCTION

Writing in the first decade of the twentieth century, the racing historian, Theodore Cook, stated: 'If we consider the position of the best riders at the beginning of the nineteenth century and compare it with what we know at the end, we shall find that the jockey is now usually the master of most employers, and rarely the servant of anyone at all'.<sup>1</sup> In less than one hundred years the jockey had progressed from a relatively humble horse groom to the first sporting 'superstar' - from an era when a £10 tip at the end of the racing season was deemed sufficient reward for a successful jockey - to earnings in excess of £10,000.

This chapter examines that progress in detail, looking first at the life and travels of jockeys in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when long and sometimes frenetic journeys seem to be commonplace. The word 'seem' is used advisedly as this information is gleaned from contemporary accounts or late nineteenth century historians. A similar situation will be apparent in Chapter 8, which deals with racehorses, but there at least the statements and anecdotes can be verified by reference to the *Racing Calendar*. Until 1822 details of jockeys were not recorded, and thereafter only the winning jockey was listed until 1846. Nevertheless, sufficient material exists to set the scene for both a discussion of jockeys' pay and perks in the nineteenth century and an in-depth examination of the travels of champion jockeys from 1849, when the trunk railway network was all but complete, to 1914, when racing was interrupted by the First World War.

#### SOME JOCKEYS' JOURNEYS BEFORE THE RAILWAYS

Jockeys in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had to be men of considerable stamina, for not only did they have to compete in races with multiple heats, they also often had to ride between meetings, unless they were relatively junior and deputed to

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<sup>1</sup> Cook, Sir T.A. *A History of the English Turf* (6 vols.) (H. Virtue & Co. Ltd., London, 1901) p.521. Black, R. *Horseracing in England* (Richard Bentley, London, 1893) p.237 also talks about 'the apotheosis attained by the jockey during Her Majesty's reign ....'

walk with the horses going to the same meeting. Frank Buckle, winner of 27 classic races, whose career of almost fifty years lasted until the 1830s, was frequently cited as an example of exceptional stamina. As a young man he lived at Peterborough, and on several days each week he rode over to Newmarket for trials and races, generally returning home before nightfall - a round trip of about 92 miles.<sup>2</sup>

Even before Buckle, there was pressure on jockeys, at least on occasions, to travel quickly to relatively distant meetings. On 5 October 1764, Joseph Case rode at Lincoln, travelled 108 miles to Richmond in North Yorkshire for a race on the following day, before a further 72 miles to ride at Manchester on the third day.<sup>3</sup> Gentlemen riders like Mr. Tatton Sykes - and in the late nineteenth century, 'Mr. Abington' - also made strenuous efforts to ride at distant meetings. In April 1808, Sykes won the Hunters Stakes at Skipton on the Thursday before riding almost 90 miles to race at Durham on the following day.<sup>4</sup> Even when there was no racing immediately involved, stamina was a key attribute for top jockey. William Clift, five times winner of the Derby between 1793 and 1819 as well as twice victor in the St. Leger, in winter used to ride relays of horses from Liverpool to London carrying the results of the Irish Lottery.<sup>5</sup>

There were of course exceptions, and Sam Chifney Jnr. was one of these. This did not please Robert Robson, the 'Emperor of the Turf', who despised any jockey who did not spend long hours in the saddle each day. 'He was often too lazy to take a mount that involved a long journey from Newmarket, and when he had made an engagement to ride in Yorkshire, the carriage often waited for him in vain at the crossroads, for he was rarely in the coach when he was wanted.'<sup>6</sup>

But within the timeframe of the current study, isolated examples of epic rides can still be quoted. George Calloway, after coming second in the 1832 St. Leger, set off 160 miles to Shrewsbury to take third place in the Gold Cup on the following day,

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<sup>2</sup> Batchelor, D. *The Turf of Old* (W.F. & G. Witherby Ltd., London, 1951) p.81.

<sup>3</sup> Whyte, J.C. *History of the British Turf* (Henry Colburn, London, 1840), I, pp.596-597.

<sup>4</sup> *Sporting Magazine*, 1808, quoted by Fairfax Blakeborough, *J. Northern Turf History*, Vol. II (J.A. Allen & Co., London, 1949) p.88.

<sup>5</sup> Cook, *English Turf*, p.399. This reference is also useful in highlighting a method of disseminating information quickly in addition to those quoted in Chapter 1.

<sup>6</sup> Cook, *English Turf*, p.343.

returning immediately to Doncaster to ride again on the third day.<sup>7</sup> William Day made it clear that such episodes - although perhaps not so rushed - were normal for jockeys in the early nineteenth century who, despite the vagaries of the weather, were to be found 'riding from Exeter to Stockbridge on a small pony with their light saddle tied round their waist after the races, and arriving at the latter place in time to ride there, and then starting in the same fashion for Southampton races'.<sup>8</sup>

Both Calloway and Tommy Lye, the well-known Middleham jockey, travelled over 6,000 miles during a season during the 1830s, and once again Whyte provided examples which help to give credence to these statements, as they can be verified by reference to the *Racing Calendar*. Lye rode two winners in Edinburgh in October 1837, caught the Carlisle coach and, by means of it and posthorses, reached Northallerton in time to ride two more winners on the following day. On the Saturday of the same Northallerton meeting, John Holmes rode a winner, left at 6 p.m. and reached The Curragh on Monday to win the Kirswan (the Irish Oatlands Stakes) on Harkaway.<sup>9</sup> Whyte also described how, in the late 1830s, the Newmarket jockey, Wakefield, travelled 500 miles in five days, during which he spent three nights and two days on the outside of a coach, walked 24 miles in sweaters and rode in six races, three of which he won.<sup>10</sup> Against such determination, the exploits of Captain Becher, who took part in both flat racing and steeplechase meetings around the country, and frequently rode up to 700 miles a fortnight, pale into relative insignificance.<sup>11</sup>

These examples - and there were others - have shown that, when the need arose, jockeys could make quite long and uncomfortable journeys to fulfil their engagements even before the trunk rail network was in place. Before examining in detail the activities of champion jockeys - and others - over a 75 year period to determine how

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<sup>7</sup> Whyte, *British Turf*, I, pp.596 - 597. Even with relays of posthorses, such rides are astonishing as the crack Shrewsbury Wonder coach took 14¾ hours to cover 148 miles over one of the best roads in the country. Rogers, H.C.B. *Turnpike to Iron Road* (Seeley, Service & Co., London, 1961) pp.54ff.

<sup>8</sup> Cook, *English Turf*, p.399

<sup>9</sup> Whyte, *British Turf*, I, pp.596 - 597. Brock, D.W.E. *The Racing Man's Weekend Book* (Seeley, Service & Co. Ltd., London, 1949) p.198 incorrectly assigns these events to 1834, as in that year the Edinburgh meeting was in July and the Northallerton meeting in October. In the 1837 *Racing Calendar*, however, incorrect dates, but the correct days of the week, are given for the Northallerton meeting, but the facts have been verified.

<sup>10</sup> Whyte, *British Turf*, I, pp.596 - 597.

<sup>11</sup> Bird, T.H. *A Hundred Grand Nationals* (Country Life Ltd., London, 1937) pp.40 ff. Captain Becher, who was immortalised when he fell in the 1839 Grand National and had to take refuge in the brook, which ever since has borne his name, (Munting, R. *Hedges and Hurdles* (J.A. Allen & Co.

these changed and to what extent the change was driven by or merely facilitated by the railways, it is appropriate here to review their progress in both financial and social terms.

### JOCKEYS' PAY AND 'PERKS'

While it is true that the official pay for jockeys remained constant during the review period at five guineas for a winning ride, three guineas for a losing ride and two guineas for riding in a trial, well before the end of the nineteenth century these rates were paid 'scarcely ever except to beginners and not very often to them'.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, retainers, extra payments for winning a 'Classic' like the Derby or the St. Leger, to say nothing of presents from owners and income from betting, added greatly to the income of top jockeys as the century progressed. Even taking only the basic payments into account, the earnings gap even among the top few jockeys could be quite wide,<sup>13</sup> driven as it was by the great disparity in the number of rides obtained. This is, however, to some extent academic, as basic earnings for top jockeys were relatively small in relation to their 'perks', and so the spread in total earnings was much greater.<sup>14</sup>

Some random instances of retainers, presents and lifestyle will identify the overall trend, despite the capriciousness of individual owners. A Captain Scott was the first man to give a jockey £500, while Captain Dowbiggen gave Jem Robinson £1,000 for winning the 1827 St. Leger on Matilda, although Robinson was equally glad to receive £50 annually from the Duke of Rutland 'in memory of Cadland's Derby' (1828).<sup>15</sup> He also received a yearly retainer of £25 from a Mr. Rush, and 'two £10 notes' from Lord Jersey for his victories on Cobweb, among them the 1827 Oaks.

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Ltd., London, 1987) p.9, had a railway connection in that, for a period before his death in 1864, he became Inspector of Sacks on the Great Northern Railway.

<sup>12</sup> Blew, W.A.C. *Racing* (R.A. Everett & Co., London, 1900) p.179.

<sup>13</sup> In 1876 Fred Archer would have earned almost £2,500 on basic payments, with the second jockey, Henry Constable, reaching only £1,120. Two years later, Archer earned slightly less, but George Fordham reached barely £900. In 1902, a year without 'super stars', Lane earned almost £2,900, Halsey, the second placed jockey, £2,335, Watts, the tenth jockey £1,750, and Dillon, lying twentieth, a mere £620, but still well above what the average working man would have earned.

<sup>14</sup> Cook, *English Turf*, p.521, also made this point, as did Fairfax Blakeborough, J. *The Analysis of the Turf* (Philip Allan, London, 1927) pp.26 - 27.

<sup>15</sup> Cook, *English Turf*, p.468, but Bird, T.H. *Admiral Rous and the English Turf 1795 - 1877* (Putnam, London, 1939) p.181 says Robinson received '£1,200 from a relative stranger'. For other presents received by Robinson, see *York Chronicle*, 28 September 1827, *The Times*, 24 September 1830 and Vamplew, W. *The Turf* (Allen Lane, London, 1976) p.146.



Huggins, who has done considerable research on jockeys' pay and presents, particularly in the north of England, has determined that, between the 1820s and 1840s, most retainer fees rarely exceeded £50, but after 1850 rose quite sharply.<sup>16</sup> Certainly Elnathan Flatman, the first official champion jockey, would never take more than £50 as a retainer, nor give any information about trials in which he rode, yet still managed to leave £12,000 when he died in 1860, as, like Frank Buckle and Sam Rogers, he took good care of his money. A little later, however, George Fordham, winner of 15 Classics and champion jockey no less than 14 times, for many years received an annual retainer of £1,000 from Mr. Stirling Crawford, but rode for many other owners including John Bowes, whom he met only twice, although he had ridden his horses for nearly 30 years.

Presents also continued to rise - but not in all cases. When Job Marson won the 1851 Derby on Teddington, Sir Joseph Hawley gave him £2,000 which, together with other presents, raised the jockey's earnings from that single race to about £3,000.<sup>17</sup> But when the 18 year old Henry Custance won the same race on Thormanby nine years later, he got only £100 and a lecture on the virtues of thrift from James Merry, who had won £85,000 from the horse. This was the only present Custance received for three years' hard work and regular 'wasting' for his consistently successful master. Years after, Custance commented mildly, 'I can scarcely look on the Scotch ironmaster as a very liberal patron'.<sup>18</sup>

Seven years later fate had a hand in the destiny of Henry Custance, who by then was well known for punishing his mounts. He was scheduled to ride Hermit, who hated him, in the Derby. Hermit burst a blood vessel and it was thought the horse would have to be scratched, so Custance took another mount. In the event, Hermit recovered, and, ridden by John Daley, to whom he took an instant liking, won the 1867

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<sup>16</sup> Huggins, M.J. *Flat Racing and British Society 1790 - 1914* (Frank Cass, London, 2000) p.161.

<sup>17</sup> Blew, *Racing*, pp.179 - 180.

<sup>18</sup> Batchelor, *Turf of Old*, p.180. The story behind this win is worthy of note as it indicates the distance British jockeys went in search of rides, even at that date. As Henry Custance had been working hard on Thormanby with Mathew Dawson, he had reasonable expectations that he would ride the horse in the Derby. Mr. Merry had other ideas, however, and sent for Jack Sharpe who was riding in Russia. Sharpe arrived at Epsom at dawn on Derby Day, went for a workout with Custance and then got somewhat the worse for drink. In consequence, young Custance got his chance, and Sharpe was unplaced on Merry's second string, which Custance should have ridden.

Derby, making his jockey considerably richer.<sup>19</sup> A year later John Wells, riding Blue Gown in the Derby, received from Sir Joseph Hawley what was probably the largest single present ever given to a winning jockey - the entire stakes of £6,800 - described as 'not bad for about three minutes work'.<sup>20</sup>

Although care needs to be taken about the whole-hearted acceptance of some of these anecdotes, there is sufficient hard evidence to show the trend, not only in the earnings of leading jockeys, but also to identify changes in their life style. Certainly by the second half of the nineteenth century, at least at Newmarket, they had their own valet, financial advisers and book-keepers.<sup>21</sup> The concept of a jockey having a valet was too much for a judge in the 1860s, when he was hearing a case where one of the Grimshaw brothers was giving evidence in a case against a railway company.<sup>22</sup> At about the same time, an astonished gentleman even wrote to the newspapers about a crate of champagne he had been at a railway station addressed to a well-known jockey.<sup>23</sup> But not all presents were so glamorous. Fred Archer, in one of his early races at Great Yarmouth, so pleased the farmer who owned the winner the young man had just ridden, that he sent a 'pound of the best green tea' to Archer's parents.<sup>24</sup>

Despite this humble early present, with Archer's phenomenal record of 2,748 winners from 8,084 mounts, all achieved by the age of 29, the age of the star jockey had arrived - with earnings to march. The 'Tinman', so called because of his liking for money (although his generosity towards colleagues less fortunate was also well known) was, once he was established, not keen on retainers which bound him to a single owner, preferring to negotiate his fees on the basis of his achievements. While he only got £500 from the Duke of Westminster for winning the 1880 Derby on Bend

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<sup>19</sup> Chalmers, P.R. *Racing England* (Batsford, London, 1939) p.122. Blyth, H. *The Pocket Venus* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1966) p.200.

<sup>20</sup> Blew, *Racing*, p.180

<sup>21</sup> Acton, C.R. *Silk and Spur* (Richards, London, 1935) p.106.

<sup>22</sup> Blew, *Racing*, pp.113-114. Blew believed that Harry was the Grimshaw brother involved, so this would place the incident before 4 October 1866, as Harry was killed in an accident between Newmarket and Cambridge. Blew recounted the exchange between the jockey and the astonished judge at some length, and continued: 'As a matter of fact, the modern jockey enjoys many luxuries, which a well-to-do professional man has to do without'.

<sup>23</sup> Blew, *Racing*, p.113, but Chalmers, *Racing England*, p.70, tells of an earlier incident with a crate of champagne sent to Bill Arnall, when, after the jockey had boasted of his impending gift, a hamper containing a local Newmarket dwarf, Little Peter, was substituted with hilarious results.

<sup>24</sup> Chambers, *Racing England*, pp.68ff., quoting from Archer's obituary in the *Pink 'Un*, 1886.

Or, his earnings per year easily passed £8,000 - £10,000 and, when he committed suicide in 1886, he was worth £60,000.<sup>25</sup>

Nevertheless, while Cook may complain about 'some £7,000 a year in two hands for three years to a lad of twenty ...',<sup>26</sup> only a very few achieved this each year. In any case, as Blew pointed out: 'What with riding trials and at race meetings, the jockey of today has had more experience in the saddle by the time he is twenty five years old than old men like the Chifneys enjoyed in the course of their whole careers.'<sup>27</sup> The build up of the pressure to achieve this experience will be discussed in the next section.

### CHAMPION JOCKEYS' ACTIVITIES 1849 - 1914

By 1850 jockeys could travel by rail to within easy reach of most major racecourses, although in the case of Ascot this still meant a seven mile road journey. A surprising number of minor meetings were equally accessible, and even if the rail journeys may seem both difficult and circuitous to modern eyes, they were a great improvement on riding long distances in the pouring rain or being jolted about inside or outside a coach over indifferent roads, which might become almost impassable in bad weather.

As mentioned earlier, Calloway and Lye had travelled some 6,000 miles in a season, and, as will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 8, a similar distance was covered in the early 1840s by John Kent, Lord George Bentinck's trainer.<sup>28</sup> These distances provided a useful yardstick for the detailed examination of the races and associated travels undertaken by champion jockeys between 1849 and 1914.<sup>29</sup> A first analysis at ten year intervals between 1849 and 1899 showed a very clear progression in the percentage of days spent racing during the season from 31% (Flatman, 1849) to 71%

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<sup>25</sup> Welcome, *J. Fred Archer* (Lambourn Publications Ltd., London, 1990) p.153. In 1886 the Inland Revenue had assessed Archer's income at £10,000 for that year alone. If we ignore 'one offs', such as Wells' payment for winning the 1868 Derby, Batchelor, *Turf of Old*, p.182, was correct in asserting that 'the really big money did not come in until Archer had made the world aware of the worth of a great jockey'.

<sup>26</sup> Cook, *English Turf*, p.579.

<sup>27</sup> Blew, *Racing*, p.115.

<sup>28</sup> See Chapter 8, note 70.

<sup>29</sup> The official designation 'champion jockey' dates only from 1846, and Nat Flatman was the first recipient of the title. Moreover, it was also only from 1846 that details of all jockeys in a race were given by the *Racing Calendar*, so 1849 provides a convenient starting point. No travelling to and from trials is included, and continental journeys only from their inclusion in the *Racing Calendar* in 1864. For the sake of consistency all journeys to and from 'home' have been calculated from Newmarket, although it is recognised that jockeys such as Wells and Grimshaw were not normally based there. Similarly, any gap of two days or more has been construed as allowing the jockey to return 'home'.

(S. Loates, 1899) and in the amount of travelling undertaken - 4,270 miles and 10,770 miles respectively. Similarly there was an increase from only one Saturday spent racing in 1849 to 31 in 1899. But an increase in the survey to a five year frequency up to 1914 brought a number of new factors into play, of which the most important were the inclusion of John Wells and Jem Grimshaw - two jockeys not based at Newmarket - and the opportunity to compare the activities of George Fordham and Fred Archer at different stages of their careers as well as with each other. As will be seen from the complete analysis in Appendix VI, the inclusion of Wells greatly disturbed the steady progression between Flatman in 1849 and Fordham in 1859, while the activities of Jem Grimshaw ten years later caused some modification of the progression between the 1859 and 1869 championships of George Fordham.

Nat Flatman spent only 75 days racing to gain his 94 winners, while John Wells needed 46 more to ride a mere 82 winners, thus proving not for the last time in this survey that neither effort nor number of races will always produce the ultimate prize. Far more interesting is the fact that Wells visited 39 racecourses against Flatman's 20 - a figure equalled by Grimshaw ten years later, but not surpassed in this survey. But Otto Madden visited 36 courses in 1904, when there were only 49 in operation against 115 in 1854.

The total number of meetings attended by Wells (56) was neither equalled nor beaten until Fred Archer 20 years later, when the first wave of London area courses staging several meetings each year were in full swing. Both Flatman and Wells rode on two days at Egham, but not at Hampton, the only other lesser London area course then open. But whereas Flatman spent 30 days (40% of his racing) at Newmarket, Wells was there on only 21 days (16%), a lower number of days than anyone in the survey, and as a low percentage not surpassed until 1889. Wells demonstrated a much greater mobility - riding at more than three times the number of one and two day meetings, although attendance at meetings for between three and six days was similar to Flatman. Once again, flitting to and from meetings on a daily basis only became really emphasised after the start of the twentieth century. Quite apart from the analysis of the activities of fourteen champion jockeys in Appendix VI, their travel patterns have been depicted graphically in the form of activity charts. Four of these form Appendix VII, and illustrate key points made in this study.

While later leading jockeys, particularly from the 1870s onwards, rushed off to London suburban Saturday meetings after a week at Newmarket or other major meetings, Flatman did not move from Headquarters (unless to ride trials) between the end of the Doncaster meeting on 14 September 1849 until the end of his season on Saturday, 27 October,<sup>30</sup> during which time he rode 30 winners. Flatman's travels may have been somewhat inhibited by the fact that Newmarket had not been connected to the railway network until 1848 and then only via Great Chesterford. His routes to Doncaster and York at this stage were somewhat circuitous - there being as yet no east coast main line, while his best route to Liverpool and Chester would have been via London, or with a coach journey from Newmarket to Watford. He only attended two different meetings in the same week on two occasions, the first being a relatively short trip from Northampton to Croxton Park, which would have involved a road journey from Melton Mowbray. The other occasion was a one day meeting at Derby, with a three day meeting at Brighton on the following day. The journey from Derby to London could be accomplished in 4-6 hours, and there were suitable trains to get him to the capital for a good night's sleep before the journey to Brighton (1½ - 2½ hours depending on choice of train).

But Wells, only five years later, had a much longer racing season, with some seven weeks involving relatively long journeys between meetings on consecutive days, even though by this time the major railway lines were in place. Perhaps the most striking was in August 1854: Wolverhampton (Monday), Egham (Tuesday and Wednesday), Plymouth (Thursday) and Guildford (Friday), although two weeks in September (two days at Pontefract, followed by two days at Leicester and one at Manchester) and (two days at Chester followed by a day at York and then one at Wrexham) would be relatively arduous, although well within the capabilities of the expanding railway system.

Nevertheless, Wells had a number of very easy weeks (at least as far as actual races were concerned), and the same is true of George Fordham in 1859, when he rode 118 winners, 36 more than Wells in the same number of racing days, but in a season some 33 days shorter. About the only weeks of note were in August when he raced one day at Wolverhampton, one at Lewes and two at Reading, and two weeks later with two

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<sup>30</sup> Apart from the one instance at Newmarket, there were meetings on only five Saturdays during the

days at Egham, followed by two at Stockton - all now relatively easy journeys at this stage of railway development in Britain. Fordham also had two days at Hampton in addition to two at Egham and 27 at Newmarket, although at 23% of his total racing days, his time there was only just over half that of Flatman (40%).

In 1864 Jem Grimshaw rode 164 winners in 134 days' racing, which was just under 50% of his total season. He rode in 55 meetings at 39 courses, the same as Wells ten years earlier, but in Grimshaw's case one of these meetings was at Chantilly in France. Although he did have a free day on either side of this engagement the calendar was filling up, but there were still free weeks while some had only two or three days' racing. There were a few relatively hectic weeks, as in May, where a day's racing at Radcliffe (near Manchester) was followed by two at Bath and then two back in Manchester; or in July, where two days at Pontefract were followed by one at Liverpool and then two at Stamford. Journeys such as those from York to Salisbury or Newcastle on Tyne to Worcester were now routine, but Grimshaw now broke new ground by going over to Brecon and Monmouth, no doubt taking advantage of newly opened railways.<sup>31</sup> Grimshaw also raced on two days at Egham and Hampton, but his days at Newmarket were relatively low at only 24.

When we look at George Fordham for the second time in 1869, he had become champion jockey with only 95 winners in 102 days, a mere 36% of his total season. His schedule was much more leisurely than ten years previously, and even his trip to Paris has a free week before it with a day after to recover before Ascot. No journeys put him under particular pressure. 29 days were spent at Newmarket and the build-up of London suburban racing to 11 days was already evident, although these had not as yet started to break into the weekend, the only Saturday racing being at Shrewsbury in March. The end of Fordham's season was almost on a par with that of Flatman in 1849.

At about the same time, Arthur Yates was demonstrating that there could still be mobility without railways. In the early 1920s, he writes: 'I wonder how many, if any jockeys, even in these days of aeroplanes and fast motor transport, have ridden at more than two race meetings in the same day. One afternoon I won a race at Kingsbury,

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whole 1849 season, and that at Epsom had been postponed from Friday because of inclement weather.

jumped into the hansom cab which I always kept in London, and reached Streatham in time to ride in a race there - and be beaten by a short head'.<sup>32</sup> This quotation is not an irrelevance, as it illustrates the build-up of the density of fixtures - both flat racing and steeplechasing - at the first generation of London suburban courses. This was seized on by the Jockey Club and emulated in the more upmarket meetings, such as Sandown Park, to shift the centre of gravity of racing to the south east, without affecting the elitist activities at Newmarket. It also shows that the so-called 'disreputable' courses which sprang up in the 1860s were, with only a couple of exceptions, well supported by members of the Jockey Club and their social equals. As will be demonstrated in Chapters 9 to 12, they did not merit their dubious reputation any more than Egham, Scarborough, Oswestry or Harpenden at various times in their history.

Moreover, for the 1870 season, the Jockey Club, apart from its first stipulations on minimum prize money and prohibition of racing at 'unauthorised' meetings, cut back the racing season by some six weeks, which can be clearly seen from Appendix VI. This, coupled with the opportunities for Saturday racing (Appendix II), which really took off from the 1890s onwards, put pressure on top jockeys, whose needs for speedy long distance travel were admirably served by the railways.

Fred Archer figures three times in the survey, but although the percentage of his racing days remained constant at 57 - 59%, in 1884, when he had 241 winners from 577 mounts, 94 more than in 1874, he actually rode on eleven days less. Nevertheless, the pressure on his weekends built up from six to ten Saturdays, and from two to three Sundays racing in France. His days at Newmarket remained constant, but those at suburban courses increased from 17 in 1874 to 31 in 1879, before dropping back to 20 in 1884, when almost all had closed without an immediate equivalent replacement. The pressure gradually built up with respect to continental travel, for whereas he had at least one free day on each side of his visits in 1874 and 1879, in 1884 Archer had a full week's racing with a London meeting on the Saturday before each of his three visits to France, but at least he managed a free day after them. In 1874, apart from a free week at the beginning of April and a two day week in November, all Archer's

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<sup>31</sup> The meeting at Brecon took place on 20 September 1864, the line from Hereford having been completed in the same month, although part of the Brecon & Merthyr Junction Railway had been open since 1863.

<sup>32</sup> Yates, A. & Blunt, B. *Arthur Yates - Trainer and Gentleman Rider* (Grant, Richards Ltd., London, 1924) p.62.

weeks consisted of between three and six days' racing, but many were in one place, and none required any hectic travelling, the longest journey (apart from those to France) being between York and Reading, with no immediate onward journey thereafter.

It should not be thought that all jockeys, even in the top 'flight', were as busy as Archer, for in 1876 when Archer had 206 winners from 654 mounts, the next best performance was that of Harry Constable with 74 winners from 306 mounts. In 1878 Archer had 229 winners in 619 rides, while George Fordham only amassed 58 from 247 mounts. But, even though Archer was riding over 500 mounts every year, his six-day weeks do not appear particularly hectic as far as travelling is concerned. In 1879, perhaps the only week of note, and the only visit to Scotland by a champion jockey in our survey before 1909, consisted of Tuesday at Lichfield, Wednesday at Chelmsford, Thursday and Friday at Ayr and Saturday at Manchester. In October there was a rather less hectic two days at Brighton, one day at Lincoln and then two back at Lewes.

There were perhaps only two weeks of note in 1884, Archer's most successful season. In April he spent two days at Epsom, one at Thirsk, with two days at Sandown Park before an overnight trip to Paris, while in May a day at Four Oaks Park, near Sutton Coldfield, was followed by three at Manchester, and the Saturday at Sandown Park, before a further visit to Paris on Sunday. He did, however, manage at least one free day before and after each of these sequences.

But with Tommy Loates five years later, the pressure was really on. For his 167 winners he raced on 165 days or 68% of his season, and 33 days more than Archer in 1884. He made only three journeys to France, but rode on 17 Saturdays, spending 35 days at the London 'park' courses. Loates had some tough schedules, but probably none more than in the seventeen day period at the beginning of April 1889, during which he had only one free day and visited Paris twice. The most concentrated part of these activities encompassed ten consecutive days, racing 33 times with only seven winners and travelling over 2,000 miles.<sup>33</sup> Once started on his season, Loates had only a couple of three-day weeks - most involved riding on five or six days. It was this

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<sup>33</sup> Loates' schedule from 2-18 April 1889 was: Northampton (2 days), Alexandra Palace (1), Leicester (2), Paris (1), free day, Newmarket (3), Derby (2), Paris (1), Nottingham (2) and Croydon (2).



unrelenting pressure and pace which was impressive, rather than the journeys encompassed in a single week - e.g. Wolverhampton to Brighton and then on to Doncaster - as these were now easily accomplished by rail.

Not all the top jockeys in 1889 rushed about to the same extent, but Loates' brother, Sammy, himself to be champion jockey in 1899, followed a very similar pattern, but with no continental excursions and more free days. Jack Watts, although he too raced in France, and made a somewhat hectic trip to Scotland (Leicester (Tues./Wed.), Ayr (Thurs.) and Manchester (Fri./Sat.)), set himself a somewhat more leisurely pace than the Loates brothers.

The leading gentleman rider in 1889, George Alexander Baird, who both rode and raced horses under the name of 'Mr. Abington', rode no less than 61 winners that season, many of them against top class professional opposition. But, although he had the wealth to race where and when he wanted, irrespective of the cost, he would also subject himself to some quite hectic journeys.<sup>34</sup> There was one similar to that made by Jack Watts in which he spent a Tuesday at Leicester, travelled overnight to Ayr, where he rode four winners in three days, before returning south to ride at Manchester on the Saturday. Both Chetwynd and Yates make similar points about Baird's obsession as a competitor, such that he 'thought nothing of chartering a special train to reach some obscure meeting where he had a mount'.<sup>35</sup>

In 1894 Mornington Cannon was champion jockey with 167 winners, and a similar percentage of racing days (66%) as Tommy Loates. Cannon also made three visits to France, but these are not the rush affairs which characterised Loates. He rode on 19 Saturdays, of which ten were at the new 'park' courses in the London area, where he spent a total of 40 days during the season. Although Cannon rode at 72 meetings, these were at only 29 courses - the lowest since Flatman in 1849. There was nothing very exciting about any of his journeys, but his weeks are generally well filled.

Sammy Loates, champion jockey in 1899 with 160 winners, did not race on the continent, but spent 71% of his season at race meetings. He had only five free Saturdays, as he rode 31 times (19 times at London suburban courses). Although he rode at 84 meetings, he visited only 30 racecourses, and his 30 days at Newmarket

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<sup>34</sup> Chetwynd, Sir G. *Racing Reminiscences and Experiences of the Turf* (Longman, Green & Co., London 1891) p.246.

<sup>35</sup> Yates & Blunt, *Arthur Yates*, p.211.

were balanced by 42 at London courses. The recent opening of the Folkestone course at Westenhanger gave him the opportunity for weeks encompassing Wolverhampton, Folkestone and Nottingham, and Warwick, Folkestone and Manchester, all easily achievable by express train.

The pressure continued with the German-born jockey, Otto Madden, champion in 1904, who with 87 meetings at no less than 36 courses, visited just under three quarters of the total venues in existence. What Madden brought sharply into focus was that the number of meetings around London and the south east had increased by almost 50 per cent since 1884, although there was only one more course. Moreover, Madden attended 31 meetings for just a single day - far more than anyone else in the survey until Steve Donoghue in 1914. Generally these were London area meetings at the beginning or end of a week, but in August after a week spent in the London area, he went up to Redcar just for the Saturday. A month later, he rounded off a series of one day visits to Lingfield Park, Pontefract and Folkestone with two days at Manchester. Often these 'flying' single-day visits, particularly to meetings in the north east, were to two or three day fixtures. Notwithstanding this, however, 45% of his time was spent at Newmarket and the lesser south eastern courses, which with ten days at Ascot and Epsom added, accounted for more than half his racing days.

The Australian jockey, Frank Wootton, first became champion in 1909 at the age of only sixteen, but after five years and four championships his flat racing career was effectively over as he was unable to make the weight. Although he had two quite long breaks during the season, he still managed to ride at 79 meetings, including a visit to Chantilly, and his Saturday racing was only marginally less than his peers in the early twentieth century. He was the only champion jockey in this study, apart from Fred Archer, to visit a Scottish course, in a sequence which involved two days each at Warwick, Ayr and Manchester. His one day visits were considerably less than either Madden or Donoghue, and there were no really long journeys involved in these - hence the lower overall mileage.

Although 24 meetings were cancelled in 1914 due to the outbreak of the first world war, with racing suspended totally for much of August, this did not prevent Steve Donoghue from achieving 696 rides at 81 meetings, so his activities and travels can be considered without making any allowances. Although actually born in Warrington, Donoghue was the leading jockey in Ireland during the building of his activities on the

mainland, so it was no surprise that he was the only champion jockey in this survey to visit The Curragh, or indeed any Irish course. He apparently did not make any continental visits during 1914,<sup>36</sup> but, although he chose to follow the spring meeting at York by riding at Salisbury rather than at Doncaster, there was nothing particularly noteworthy in his travels. Nevertheless, like the last five predecessors in this survey, some two thirds of his season was occupied in riding at race meetings, rather than trials.

#### WHERE THEY WENT 1849 - 1914

This section examines in more detail the areas visited by champion jockeys during the review period, and is summarised in Appendix VIII.<sup>37</sup> It emphasises that Flatman, although second only to Archer in the 'wins to rides' ratio, as will be discussed later, was the 'odd man out' in this survey. At first sight, Wells, with only five of his 56 meetings at Newmarket qualified for this title, but his 9 per cent was in fact typical of all other champion jockeys in this study, whereas Flatman's 25 per cent was twice as much as Fordham and Archer in terms of meetings at Headquarters relative to the total number of meetings attended. Similarly, Wells' total of 56 meetings visited against Flatman's 27 is more in line with the champion jockeys over the next 30 years, than with his predecessor. The same can be said of the estimated mileage travelled and the total number of courses visited, although both these were to some extent affected by his inability to obtain as many rides as his peers at any given meeting.

East Anglia, although near to home for the majority of the jockeys in this study, was only visited by five in their championship year, and after 1879 only Great Yarmouth remained open. The visits to Welsh courses, made only by Wells and Grimshaw, were in any case no longer possible after the closure of Wrexham in 1876.<sup>38</sup>

In the north east, only York and Doncaster were consistently visited although from time to time Pontefract, Newcastle, Stockton, Thirsk and Redcar would figure in the champion jockeys' itinerary. But in this study only Archer (1879) and Wootton (1909)

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<sup>36</sup> The *Racing Calendar* had a somewhat truncated report on continental fixtures, but it is unlikely that Donoghue would have raced at any meeting not listed.

<sup>37</sup> No account has been taken of the length of any particular meeting in this analysis.

<sup>38</sup> Archer and Constable did in fact attend the last meeting at Monmouth in 1875, although there were more convenient or more prestigious fixtures held at the same time.

made a trip north of the border, to Ayr, no other fixture being thought worth the effort.

Although the number of racecourses in the north west was also halved from ten to six during the review period, only Chester, Liverpool and Manchester enjoyed real attention, with two or three visits being made to the latter two venues each year.

The Midland courses accounted for between a quarter and a third of most champion jockeys' meetings. Although the total number of courses in 1914 was only a third of those in 1849, the number of visits, apart from Flatman, who made only five, had been buoyed up by the opening of new courses at Wolverhampton and Birmingham which, together with the enclosed courses at Derby, Leicester and Nottingham, had been granted an increasing number of meetings each year by the Jockey Club.

In 1849 there were 16 racecourses in the south west, almost all holding only one fixture a year, but, fifty years later, only Salisbury and Bath remained, with Goodwood on the very edge of the area, providing a total of four possible meetings. All were generally attended by leading jockeys, although there was often a clash for the first two with meetings at York or Doncaster. From 1905, the new course at Newbury, which had several meetings a year, enabled the modest area representation to be maintained in the face of the clashes mentioned above.

In London and the south east, however, although there were between 15 and 29 courses during the period under review, the earlier champion jockeys restricted themselves normally to Epsom and Ascot, with Brighton, Egham, Hampton and Lewes at the lower level. Little if any attention was paid to the country courses in the south east, but in the 1860s a new breed of enclosed courses began to encircle London, mainly south of the Thames. Although often described as 'disreputable', this did not stop the majority being frequented by top jockeys and owners including Sir John Astley. Certainly West Drayton and Streatham were beyond the pale, but in 1869 George Fordham rode at Bromley, Harrow, Kingsbury and Windsor, and five years later Fred Archer had added Alexandra Park and Croydon to the list. From then on the participation of top jockeys at these and the next generation 'park' courses, all of which held several meetings a year, rose from 17 days in 1874 to a peak of 48 in 1904, although all champion jockeys from Mornington Cannon in 1894 were to spend at least 40 days at these meetings, including 30 Saturdays.

Thus there were two events which put the pressure on jockeys, the reduction in the flat racing season by up to six weeks in 1870, and the growth of Saturday racing which had started in earnest in the 1860s, consolidated in the 1870s and 1880s and accelerated in the last decade of the nineteenth century, so that by 1899 Sammy Loates was racing on three times as many Saturdays as Fred Archer 25 years previously.

Racing outside mainland Britain, restricted as far as reports on champion jockeys in the *Racing Calendar* normally to France, and on one occasion each to Belgium and Ireland, was a negligible part of their activities, although a couple of day trips could greatly enhance their yearly mileage total. It should however be mentioned that some British jockeys made a career of riding at continental meetings, and others who fall outside the bounds of the present study visited European courses quite frequently.

### THE WORKLOAD OF TOP JOCKEYS

Despite all his frenetic activity, Sammy Loates, with 160 winners in 1899, was 181 short of Archer's 1874 total, but needed 731 mounts against Archer's 557 to gain his victories. Archer achieved a 43% 'wins to rides' ratio, while Loates registered only 22%. The relatively static Flatman fifty years earlier had achieved 33%, and moreover like Archer had also a 'high rides per meeting' ratio. The latter, in his best year (1884), travelled an estimated 500 miles less than Wells in 1854 for just under three times the winners (241 against 82).

It can be argued that Loates had more competition, and certainly in 1899 four other jockeys, including his brother Tommy, topped the hundred winners mark. In fact in the previous five years, no less than seven of the top twenty jockeys had achieved 100 wins in a season - a total of 16 such years between them. But in 1914, when Steve Donoghue topped the list with 129 winners, not a single one of the top jockeys, including Donoghue himself, had topped 100 wins in the previous five years. Nevertheless, Donoghue still needed 696 rides to achieve his total, even though the second jockey rode only 68 winners.

After being champion jockey in 1899 with 160 winners, Sammy Loates was beaten into second place in 1900 by the American, Lester Reiff. While Reiff rode 143 winners in 553 rides, Loates needed 809 mounts, 256 more than Reiff, to win 137 races. Five of the top ten jockeys were Americans, with John Reiff having 124 winners from 604 rides and Tod Sloan, sixth in the list, with 82 from 310. In fact, in both 1899 and

1902, two years for which detailed statistics are available, the top ten jockeys rode on average about 520 times a season, the average dropping to between 250 and 300 rides for the next ten on the championship list. Danny Maher, who was third in 1902 and champion jockey in 1908 and 1918, rarely topped 500 rides a season. Certainly in the latter years, he, in common with other leading riders, was also using motor cars to reach meetings, at least over shorter distances.<sup>39</sup> Although Frank Wootton, in his brief but meteoric career, topped 600 rides in four of his seasons, by the time Steve Donoghue won his first championship, only three other jockeys topped 400 rides in a season, the highest, Wing, having 236 fewer rides than Donoghue. Certainly the outbreak of war and the cancellation of some twenty meetings made its contribution to an average of only 380 rides among the top ten jockeys, but perhaps some similar sentiments, as will be discussed with regard to racehorses in the next chapter, may have been coming to the fore. 'Nothing sooner tires a man, body and brain, than long and frequent journeys.'<sup>40</sup>

## CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that the railways greatly facilitated the travels of top jockeys, although the relative comfort of this mode of travel militated against the exercise taken by earlier jockeys in the course of their travels, and led to more drastic forms of dieting or 'wasting' for those for whom weight was a problem. But the increase in the workload of top jockeys came from the restructuring of the sport and the lengthening of the working week, and from the analysis carried out it is obvious that, apart from the top half dozen jockeys - and in some extreme cases the champion jockey alone - the number of rides for most of the top twenty was still around the level of Nat Flatman in 1849. Moreover, the ability firstly to obtain a significant number of mounts at any given meeting, coupled with a high 'wins to ride' ratio, was of paramount importance in determining the need to travel within the evolving industry which flat racing had become. The railways were there when needed, but did not drive the upward trend in jockeys' workload and travel.

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<sup>39</sup> Collin, B.M. *J.P. Horning - A Family Portrait* (Orpington Press, Orpington, 1970) p.55. Certainly in 1908 Maher used a motor car to travel the fourteen miles from his overnight lodgings to Doncaster.

<sup>40</sup> Beaufort, Duke of & Morris, M. (eds.) *Hunting* (6th edition) (Longman, Green & Co., London 1891) p.276.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### RACEHORSES AND RAILWAYS

#### INTRODUCTION

The railways revolutionised travel for horses - of that there is no doubt. Until the advent of the steam locomotive, with very few exceptions, horses travelled everywhere on their own feet, whether as packhorses, hauling waggons or coaches, being ridden into battle, in races or on a journey, or taken singly or in a group to racemeetings or horsefairs.<sup>1</sup> As discussed in Chapter 2, road improvements and the acceleration of coach services had enabled men and women - or at least those who could either afford the coach fares or to hire their own post horses - to reduce their journey time over relatively long distances from weeks or days to hours. The railways brought a further major improvement, but this whole process had taken at least a hundred years. For horses the change happened literally overnight, and for many years their horseboxes were often far better than the railway carriages in which some human travellers were transported.

Apart from a few, generally abortive, projects using steam power, horses remained the main motive power for road transport until the arrival of the motorcar and the electric tramcar towards the very end of the nineteenth century. In 1900 there were still some 300,000 horses in London alone,<sup>2</sup> so rail services and facilities were geared both to operate and transport horse vehicles, hence the ease with which horseboxes (and carriage trucks) could be obtained at any station on the railway network for a journey over a long or short distance.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cameron, D.K. *The English Fair* (Sutton Publishing Ltd., Stroud, 1998) pp.94ff. Some horsefairs, like that at Howden near Goole, were linked with race meetings. By the mid nineteenth century its timing had been adjusted to enable horsedealers to attend both the Doncaster September meeting with its associated bloodstock sales, and the Howden fair, to which the G.N.R. ran 'fair specials' for dealers, horses and casual visitors. Barnet horsefair, near London, also coincided with the races there until their termination in 1870, although the meeting had disappeared from the *Racing Calendar* after 1858.

<sup>2</sup> Russell, J. *Great Western Horse Power* (Oxford Publishing Company, Sparkford, 1995) p.71. Jackson, A.A. *London's Termini* (David & Charles, Newton Abbot, 2nd ed., 1985) p.222 states that in 1900, the demands of horse movement provided sufficient traffic for five daily horsebox trains from Waterloo alone, with connections all over the L.S.W.R. system.

<sup>3</sup> Even major railway companies sometimes used horse traction for passenger trains on branch lines until the mid-nineteenth century, while their use on industrial railways and to haul road delivery

Racehorses were necessarily only a small segment of the market served by the railways, but to set the scene for an examination of whether the revolution in horse transport had any major effect on the activities of racehorse owners and hence on the sport itself, this chapter will focus briefly on the movement of racehorses in pre-railway days, and then examine the vehicles and facilities provided by railways for the transport and care of horses.

### RACEHORSE MOVEMENT BEFORE THE RAILWAYS

Whether owners chose to run their horses only at local meetings, save them for prestigious fixtures such as Ascot, Epsom and Newmarket, or pursue a more active interest on one of the regional circuits, there was really only one practical way for them to travel. The horses walked with their grooms, and sometimes with their jockeys, often taking with them all they might need on their journey - food, rugs and some form of basic medication. They were very much at the mercy of the weather, particularly in spring or autumn, while the stabling they might find along their route could be both primitive and expensive. Moreover, if the horse was a favourite in a major race, it could be as much at risk from the betting fraternity or the unscrupulous owner of a rival horse as from any natural hazard. A journey from Newmarket to Epsom took five days to a week, and between Goodwood and Doncaster up to three weeks, depending on the trainer's instructions for rest and exercise en route. After arrival at its destination a top class horse might require a week or two to prepare for an important race, although this was not always possible.

By the mid-eighteenth century there were already numerous racecourses for horses to visit. In 1762, for example, there were 212 races and 49 matches run on 76 different courses.<sup>4</sup> If the number of races seems low, it should be remembered that many of these would be run in two or more heats, so the activity level of a moderately successful horse would have been higher than might at first appear. Even at that time, horses made trips abroad, as Gimcrack travelled to Paris in 1766 to win a wager than he could cover 22½ miles in an hour.<sup>5</sup> The celebrated Pot8os raced 46 times between

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vehicles continued for at least a century thereafter. Horses were also used for shunting at country stations. The last one, employed appropriately at Newmarket, was not retired until 1967.

<sup>4</sup> Churchill, P. *Horseracing* (Blandford Press, Poole, 1981) p.17.

<sup>5</sup> Campbell, A.S. *Horsebreeding Yesterday and Today* (F. & G. Weatherby, London, 1931) p.81.



1776 and 1783, winning no less than 35 races.<sup>6</sup> In the summer of 1778 Captain Hebden's Macheath walked 500 miles and won six £50 plates at Manchester, Preston, Lancaster, Nantwich, Liverpool and Knutsford.<sup>7</sup> In August 1808, the thirteen year old John Scott, later to become a wellknown trainer at Mansfield, and then at Malton in North Yorkshire, was sent by his father from Oxford to Blandford in Dorset, over 90 miles away, with a six year old horse, which he was to sell for £30, if he could 'find a simpleton to pay!!' The old horse, Tenbones, not only won its race, but was sold for £60 and Scott, who had walked through some terrible weather on the outward journey, went back to Oxford by coach.<sup>8</sup>

Different owners and trainers had varying views about the preparation of their horses for an important race.<sup>9</sup> In 1816 Filho da Puta, winner of the 1815 St. Leger, was sent from Middleham to Newmarket many weeks in advance to prepare for a match, which he still lost.<sup>10</sup> Conversely, Admiral Rous revealed how he backed a horse in the 1824 St. Leger, which had walked 200 miles and arrived at Doncaster just one hour before the race, not even having cantered for six weeks.<sup>11</sup> Priam, the 1830 Derby winner, walked from Newmarket to Epsom, with his trainer, Will Chiffney, on foot beside him most of the way, and allowing a clear nine days to prepare for the big race. After his triumph at Epsom, Priam walked to Doncaster for the St. Leger, but, despite meticulous preparation, again supervised by Chiffney, he was beaten into second place by Mr. Beardworth's Birmingham.<sup>12</sup>

In 1836, John Scott sent his three year old filly Cyprian on an epic journey. Having raced at Malton on 14 April, she then walked some 200 miles to Epsom to win the Oaks on 20 May. Cyprian then returned north to win the Northumberland Plate at

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<sup>6</sup> Cook, T.A. *Eclipse and O'Kelly* (Dutton & Co., New York, 1907) p. 220.

<sup>7</sup> Cook, T.A. *A History of the English Turf* (H. Virtue & Co. Ltd., London, 1901) p.202.

<sup>8</sup> Bird, T.H. *Admiral Rous and the English Turf, 1795 - 1877* (Putnam, London, 1939) p.91.

<sup>9</sup> Batchelor, D. *The Turf of Old* (H.F. & G.Witherby Ltd., London, 1951) pp.74-48 discusses the views of Robson, Day, Scott and Kent on the training of racehorses.

<sup>10</sup> Filho da Puta raced only twice in 1814, four times in 1815, winning every race including the St. Leger. In 1816 he raced only five times, at Newmarket, Preston, Doncaster (twice) and Richmond, winning the last three races.

<sup>11</sup> Bird, *Admiral Rous*, p.164.

<sup>12</sup> Batchelor, *Turf of Old*, pp. 68 - 70.

Newcastle on Tyne on 22 June, having completed a 300 mile journey between her two triumphs.<sup>13</sup>

But all the above instances taken from standard works on horseracing history and verified by reference to the *Racing Calendar* focus on specific events which are felt to be remarkable, rather than on the overall picture, and foster the impression of a largely static and localised sport enlivened from time to time by an epic journey. So too, the 'vanning' of Elis from Goodwood to Doncaster to facilitate a betting coup on the St. Leger, although dramatic, was largely an irrelevance without real impact on the ongoing situation except for a few wealthy owners who were then prompted to transport their horses to a few more meetings than would otherwise have been the case.

#### 'VANNING' OF RACEHORSES BY ROAD

In the same year that Cyprian made her epic walk, Lord George Bentinck used a horse-drawn van to take Elis from Goodwood to Doncaster for the 1836 St. Leger. Although horses were already been transported speedily and relatively cheaply by rail, the trunk network was not yet in place, and even when it was, Bentinck also used road vans to take his horses from the railhead to racecourse and stables until the end of his active career as a racehorse owner in 1846. In Scotland, the somewhat slower penetration of railways, particularly on crosscountry routes, except between Edinburgh and Glasgow, caused owners like the Earl of Eglinton to transport horses by road van to fulfil engagements at meetings when there was insufficient time to walk.

The practice of 'vanning' racehorses before Elis appears to have been rare, but two instances are worthy of mention. The great horse, Eclipse, did not start his racing career until he was six years old, and quite apart from his prowess on the course, had a distinguished career at stud after his retirement. There is no reason to suppose that he did other than walk between races,<sup>14</sup> but in 1788, the year before his death, Cook recounted how Eclipse was transferred from Clay Hill, near Epsom, where he had stood at 50 gn. a time, to Cannons near Little Stanmore, 'in a two horse van with the

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<sup>13</sup> Apart from the three races in 1836, the *Racing Calendar* records Cyprian on only two other occasions - in October 1835 at Northallerton where she was third, and another third at York in May 1837.

<sup>14</sup> In 1770, for example, Eclipse raced at Newmarket, Nottingham, York, Lincoln and Guildford, before running again at Newmarket.

groom inside, which is probably the first instance of such a “careful transit”.<sup>15</sup> Some 28 years later Squire Territt arranged for Sovereign to be transported from his Worcestershire base to Newmarket in a cart drawn by oxen. As in the case of Eclipse this was done to avoid tiring the horse rather than for speed. This care did not markedly help Sovereign, who was unplaced in the Cesarewitch, and caused the Newmarket trainers to believe even more firmly in walking horses between races.

John Doe, who had been Territt’s trainer, was at Goodwood twenty years later, and may have given Bentinck some ideas on transport possibilities when the latter was seeking to get better odds against Elis. The story of the ‘vanning’ of Elis has been told many times, but will be summarised here to set right the record in the face of modern works of reference, which misquote the date and misinterpret the strategy.<sup>16</sup>

Although Elis had been beaten by Bay Middleton in the 2,000 Guineas at Newmarket, Bentinck became convinced that his horse could win the St. Leger in the following September. But winning the race was not the only objective for Lord George, who needed a significant financial gain to fund his extravagant lifestyle and his gambling. So he had to get the odds to lengthen, and as part of his strategy he kept Elis training and competing in full view of the touts at Goodwood and other places such as Lewes, where he raced on 10 August.<sup>17</sup> There was at Goodwood a van for carrying prize cattle, and Bentinck arranged for a local coachbuilder to construct a similar van capable of carrying two horses at speed in safety and comfort over a long distance. Gradually the odds lengthened to the 12 to 1 which Bentinck needed, but Elis and The Drummer did not leave Goodwood until the Friday before the St. Leger. The van was

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<sup>15</sup> Cook, *English Turf*, p.311. See also Cook, *Eclipse and O’Kelly*, pp.131-132.

<sup>16</sup> Biddle G. & Simmons, J. (eds.) *The Oxford Companion to British Railway History* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1997) p.210 gives the date as 1839, and states that Lord George’s expense was ‘... to little avail. It took four days to move his St. Leger favourite Elis from Goodwood to Doncaster in a horsebox...’ But in 1836 four days was felt to be an impossible time when the norm was 15 to 20 days, and Bentinck needed to lull the bookmakers into a false sense of security and convince them that he was wasting his £1,000. In 1839 it would have been possible to travel from Basingstoke to London by the L.S.W.R., and from London to Derby by the London & Birmingham and Birmingham & Derby Junction Railways, and even onward to Nottingham by the Midland Counties Railway, if that was felt to be an advantage. Bentinck, as a director of the L. & B.R., would have used this mode of travel, as he could have accomplished the rail journeys in less than a day, even using the slower trains, but he would have needed a different strategy to push up the odds. By 1840 the whole journey, except for some 30 to 40 miles, could have been done by train, and the game would have changed again. So the correct relative chronology of railways and racing is vital to assess both individual events and trends during the nineteenth century.

<sup>17</sup> There are various versions of the story, but the key fact is the transporting of Elis and The Drummer from Goodwood to Doncaster in four days, including a break at Lichfield.

drawn by relays of six horses with John Doe on the box, and averaged 80 miles a day. After a workout for both horses on Lichfield racecourse on the Sunday, the van reached Doncaster on the evening before the big race. Elis did win the St. Leger, and Lord George got his £12,000. His estimated costs for the journey, excluding the vehicle, were £80 - £100, but, in view of other contemporary figures, this may well have been an underestimate, although this would certainly cover the one way trip. Bentinck then decided not to let any of his horses walk between race meetings, and improved versions of the original van were built at a cost of £120 for a vehicle to carry a single horse, and £150 to £160 for a two horse version.<sup>18</sup> Old fashioned trainers still thought that such a method of taking horses to and from races was unnatural, but, although John Kent often suffered personally from Lord George's obsession with 'vanning', he did admit that many young horses had been temporarily worn out or sometimes lamed for life by long journeys on hard and uneven roads, and felt that '... the introduction and universal employment of vans inaugurated a revolution in the management and engagement of race horses'.<sup>19</sup> He was incorrect in this statement, as only the rich could afford 'vanning'<sup>20</sup> and the railways were very soon offering faster long distance transportation at a much cheaper rate. How Kent dealt with the transit of Lord George's many horses by rail and road will be covered later.

### TRANSPORT OF HORSES BY RAIL

The provision by railways of vehicles to carry horses owes more to the requirement to carry gentlemen's carriages than to racehorse transit. Special horseboxes were provided,<sup>21</sup> and, although the basic design underwent modifications and improvements,

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<sup>18</sup> Kent, J. (ed., Lawley, F.) *Racing Life of Lord George Cavendish Bentinck M.P., and other Reminiscences* (Blackwood & Sons, London, 1891) pp. 67 - 68. There is an illustration of Elis and his van facing p.68.

<sup>19</sup> Kent, *Life of Bentinck*, p. 69. See also Fairfax Blakeborough, J. *Northern Turf History*, Vol.II (J.A. Allen & Co. London, 1949) p.163, who stated that in 1840 Andrew Johnstone, the Dumfriesshire owner-breeder, had a van built by Hunnybun & Verdon of Newmarket at a cost of £150 to carry his horses trained at Middleham by Thomas Dawson. In the same year Mathew Dawson took Lord Glasgow's Pathfinder in a road vehicle drawn by four horses from Gullane, not far from Edinburgh, to run in the Derby. Both Pathfinder and the filly, which accompanied him, were successful at the Catterick Bridge meeting on 22 April, but Pathfinder was unplaced in the Derby on 3 June. Speed of transit was not important, as much of the journey southwards from York could have been made by rail in a single day.

<sup>20</sup> A view shared by Sidney, S. *Rides on Railways* (W.S. Orr, London, 1851, rep. Phillimore & Co., Chichester, 1973) p.15.

<sup>21</sup> Horseboxes were not, however, the first purpose built rail vehicles to carry horses. Many early mineral lines were constructed on a slight incline with horses used to haul empty waggons to a

these continued to be built at intervals until the 1950s, while regular transport of horses by rail did not cease until a decade later. Carriage trucks were in everyday use until the First World War, even if by that date they often carried motor cars, a use for which they were easily adapted. Horseboxes were always considered as passenger vehicles, and this was reflected in their relatively luxurious yet practical interiors and the treatment of their occupants.

The Liverpool & Manchester Railway had by 1831 provided open waggons - in some cases 'double deck' - with slatted sides, to carry pigs, sheep, cattle and horses for slaughter. In inclement weather these vehicles were covered with waterproof sheets, and often used to convey carriage horses when horseboxes were in short supply. The horseboxes, which were completely enclosed, accommodated two horses in separate stalls facing the direction of travel and had four windows fitted with swinging shutters. Slits for ventilation were provided at both ends of the vehicle, the inside was well-padded and had a receptacle for food and water, while the side let down for use as a loading ramp.<sup>22</sup> Only a few of these vehicles were built, the last two in 1833, as it was not felt necessary for the short distance between the two Lancashire cities to have such 'elaborate accommodation'. This was understandable, as horses 'carried on the Liverpool & Manchester Railway at first travelled in better conditions than did second class passengers'.<sup>23</sup> By 1835, the L. & M.R. was carrying horses at the following rates between the termini, with proportional reductions for journeys to and from intermediate stations: 10/- for one horse, 18/- for two and 22/- for three, but by 1841 the fares had risen to 14/-, 20/-, and 24/- respectively.<sup>24</sup>

The Grand Junction Railway was equipped to carry horses from its opening in July 1837, the fare between Birmingham and either Liverpool or Manchester being set at

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loading point, when they were sent back by gravity under the control of a brakesman. The horse was then walked down, or sent back in a 'Dandy Cart', which was a waggon with rails round three sides, and an open back where the horse got in. A manger with food and water was generally provided, both as an inducement for the horse to get in, and to reduce time set aside for feeding; as the object of the 'Dandy Cart' was to increase productivity. A diagram of typical vehicles used on the Stockton & Darlington Railway between 1825 and 1841 may be found in Russell, *G.W. Horse Power*, p.9.

<sup>22</sup> Donaghy, T.J. *Liverpool & Manchester Railway Operations 1831 - 1845* (David & Charles, Newton Abbot, 1972) p.64, but Ferneyhough, F. *Liverpool & Manchester Railway 1830 - 1980* (Robert Hale Ltd., London, 1980) pp.116-117 shows an Ackerman print of an L. & M. train, including a more open type of horsebox, although still roofed.

<sup>23</sup> Ferneyhough, *L. & M. Railway*, pp.88-89. Second class carriages were open with unpadded seats until 1834, when a roof was provided, but all were not fitted with side windows until 1840. A new spate of open waggons for third class passengers was unleashed in 1844, and as shown in Chapter 4, notes 35, 36 and 37, racegoers suffered just as much (if not more) as other travellers.

£1-10/- for one horse, and £1 for each additional animal. Both horseboxes and carriage trucks were generally available on demand at major stations, but could be provided at any station, if notice was given on the previous day. This was the usual practice for all railways throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Similarly, passengers intending to take horses or carriages with them were asked to be at the station fifteen minutes before departure, but no charge was made for 'landing or embarking the horse or carriage'.<sup>25</sup> Osborne confirmed the use of horseboxes on the G.J.R. in the report of an accident between Bescot Bridge and Willenhall in February 1838.<sup>26</sup> The London & Birmingham Railway also used horseboxes, as in the same year one was converted to provide the world's first Travelling Post Office van.<sup>27</sup> As early as 1838 notices in the *Racing Calendar* were advocating the use of the railway to carry brood mares to stallions. Horseboxes were normally attached to the slower trains on main lines, or formed part of the 'luggage trains', which carried all the paraphernalia which the rich took with them in those days, and ran as specials behind the expresses.<sup>28</sup>

The first section of the Great Western Railway opened in June 1838, and by the time a through journey between London and Bridgwater was possible at the end of June 1841, a horse could be transported over the whole distance for £3-5/-, a pair in the

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<sup>24</sup> *Bradshaw's Railway Companion*, 1841, p.19.

<sup>25</sup> Webster, N.W. *Britain's First Trunk Line* (Adams & Dart, Bath, 1972) pp.104-105 reproduces a notice dated 7 June 1837, announcing the opening of the G.J.R. on 4 July. It contained the first timetable for the company, as well as its regulations in so far as they affected passengers, their behaviour and belongings. By 1841, however, the cost of conveying a horse was 40/-, and there was no mention in *Bradshaw* of a reduction for a second horse.

<sup>26</sup> Osborne, E.C. & W. *Guide to the Grand Junction Railway* (Simpkin and Marshall & Co., London, 1838) p.142. There was no indication in the report whether the horses killed or injured were racehorses. Serious or fatal accidents involving racehorses seem to have been rare. Black R. *Horseracing in England* (Richard Bentley, London, 1893) p.277 noted that Klarikoff was burnt to death on his way back to Whitewall, near Malton, after the 1861 Derby. Bird, *Admiral Rous*, pp. 55 - 56, recounted how Justice to Ireland was unnerved, if not injured, when his horsebox turned over en route from Newmarket to Doncaster for the 1848 St. Leger. He finished nearly last and walked back to Newmarket. Bird, T.H. *A Hundred Grand Nationals* (Country Life Ltd., London 1937) p. 61. In 1854 Abd el Kader, winner of the Grand National in 1850 and 1851, broke his head collar during the journey to Liverpool and injured himself so badly that he had to be scratched.

<sup>27</sup> Sherrington, C.E.R. *100 Years of Inland Transport* (Augustus M. Kelley, New York 1934, rep. Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., London 1969) p.102.

<sup>28</sup> Study of *Bradshaw* for October 1839, October 1841, July 1845, March 1850 and February 1863 reveals a variety of fare structures and facilities for horse transport on the railways then in existence. The July 1845 timetable already had details of through booking to continental destinations, while conversely the February 1863 timetable had minimal details on horse transport and fares. A similar progression was found in the notices advertising stallions in the *Racing Calendar*, as sending horses by rail became an everyday occurrence.

same box costing only an extra £1.<sup>29</sup> But, according to Russell, the first purpose-built horseboxes were not introduced by the company until 1842.<sup>30</sup> These were not as luxurious as those provided by the L. & M.R. but, because of the broad gauge of 7 ft. 0¼ in., were able to accommodate four horses carried sideways. The short wheelbase gave the occupants a most uncomfortable ride, so later versions were made narrower, and carried only three horses facing the direction of travel.

Although it is not intended to provide a detailed analysis of the horseboxes owned by the various railway companies, both in view of the fragmentary nature of the records and the number of the companies involved, a brief survey of the number and cost of vehicles owned by some railways in the mid-nineteenth century will demonstrate their overall commitment to the transport of horses. By 1845 the G.W.R. owned 96 horseboxes, which had cost £198.17.9d. each.<sup>31</sup> In contrast, the Bolton, Blackburn, Clitheroe & West Yorkshire Railway, which carried racegoers in open waggons not long after its opening in 1848, was able to build horseboxes for about £40 each, although this cost may not have included the wheels and axles, as these were purchased separately.<sup>32</sup> The Newmarket Railway, when its 18 mile line was taken over by the Eastern Counties Railway in 1850, had only six locomotives (all named after racehorses), but no less than 22 horseboxes.<sup>33</sup> The Lancaster & Preston Junction Railway ordered six horseboxes for the opening of its 21 mile line in June 1840, but only five were still in existence when its stock was sold off in September 1849.<sup>34</sup> By the spring of 1854, when open throughout its length, a major line like the Oxford, Worcester & Wolverhampton Railway had only ten horseboxes.<sup>35</sup> A stock return dated January 1850 showed that the East Lancashire Railway had five horseboxes, but

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<sup>29</sup> By 1845, costs could be reduced by one third if horses were sent either by goods train or by the cheap (Parliamentary) trains, which took considerably longer for the journey.

<sup>30</sup> Russell, *G.W. Horse Power*, pp.220-221. A series of drawings, photographs and descriptions of horseboxes, carriage trucks and the later motorised road horseboxes can be found on pp.220-241.

<sup>31</sup> Russell, *G.W. Horse Power*, p.18.

<sup>32</sup> Tattersall, W.D. *The Bolton, Blackburn, Clitheroe & West Yorkshire Railway* (Oakwood Press, Lingfield, 1973) p.48.

<sup>33</sup> The locomotive names were Beeswing, Queen of Trumps, Van Tromp, Flying Dutchman, Eleanor and Alice Hawthorn.

<sup>34</sup> Greville, M.D. & Holt, G.O. *The Lancaster & Preston Junction Railway* (David & Charles, Dawlish, 1961) p.12 and p.59.

<sup>35</sup> Jenkins, S.C. & Quayle, H.I. *The Oxford, Worcester & Wolverhampton Railway* (Oakwood Press, Blandford, 1977) p.43.

seven years later this figure had more than doubled to twelve.<sup>36</sup> Individually, these figures do not seem very large, but when extrapolated across the many railway companies, it is clear that several hundred horseboxes were in regular use by the 1850s. Moreover, as time went on, wealthy racehorse owners purchased or hired horseboxes for their own exclusive use - just as there were once thousands of 'private use' waggons and vans in use on the railways - and these might be painted in a distinctive livery, or have the owner's name inscribed on the door in gold lettering.<sup>37</sup>

Although the rail fares, even for quite long journeys, appear quite reasonable, costs could mount up when incidentals such as road vaning charges were added in. One example recorded for posterity was an account for taking two horses from Newmarket to the Oswestry race meeting in September 1844 and then returning them to Ascot. For this the 'all-up' cost was £51-6-0, and would have been the same if they had returned to Newmarket.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, the railways had for some years been concerned about their liability for any accidents to valuable horses, particularly racehorses.<sup>39</sup> By 1850 *Bradshaw's General Directions for Railway Travellers* contained the following statement: 'Loss of or damages to any horse above the value of forty pounds will not be chargeable to the company, unless a declaration of its value, signed by the owner, or his agent, be given at the time of booking. In which case, sometimes an additional charge to the regular fare, of about 2½ per cent, is made upon the declared value above £40.'<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Rush, R.W. *The East Lancashire Railway* (Oakwood Press, Salisbury, 1983) p.49. In this latter year, 1857, the E.L.R. was an 'interested third party' in an amalgamation between the Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway and the Blackburn Railway (formerly the Bolton, Blackburn, Clitheroe & West Yorkshire Railway, mentioned earlier), to which the local company brought five horseboxes.

<sup>37</sup> Ludlam, A.J. *The Catterick Camp Military Railway and the Richmond Branch* (Oakwood Press, Oxford, 1993) p.33 shows a standard North Eastern Railway horsebox, albeit of a later date, of a type favoured by private owners.

<sup>38</sup> Clwyd Record Office DD/WY/5544. Contained in Henry Scott's bill. The road journey between Newmarket and the railhead at Watford was £6-00 and the Watford-Chester railfare was £14-2-6d. each way. An exactly contemporary railway fare was not available, but travel for two horses and two grooms would have cost £13-16-8 in 1841, so that helps to confirm the seemingly high rail element. The two horses were identified as Rowland and Sir Jasper.

<sup>39</sup> Simmons, J. *The Railway in Town and Country 1830 - 1914* (David & Charles, Newton Abbot, 1986) p. 89, quotes W.U. Sims, Chairman of the G.W.R., who said in 1839: 'Suppose we had to take down all the horses to run for the Ascot Cup, and they received an injury, we should be ruined.' But risks had to be accepted 'for the profits offered by racing business, taken all together, were substantial.'

<sup>40</sup> *Bradshaw's Guide*, March 1850, back of map insert. As early as 1836 Lord George Bentinck had paid 4,000 gn. for Bay Middleton, while Justice to Ireland, involved in a railway accident in 1848, had been bought for the Duke of Bedford by Admiral Rous for £2,500. Full additional cover for the latter, if applied at the stated rate, would have cost £61-10/- in addition to the fare.



The G.W.R. in due course constructed standard gauge horseboxes, which could hold three animals, but even as late as 1860 not all had a compartment for the groom to accompany his charges - a refinement which was gradually being introduced. The Furness Railway vehicles of 1880 onwards certainly had this facility,<sup>41</sup> as did the G.W. broad gauge horseboxes of 1888.<sup>42</sup> These were well padded, and later had modifications such as dividing walls, which could be removed when a mare and her foal were travelling together.<sup>43</sup> Horseboxes varied little in their essentials over the years, but increases in length gave greater stability and more room for the storage of forage, harness and other tackle.<sup>44</sup> Grooms also gained better access to their charges and in due course even the luxury of steam heating.

Railway companies issued detailed instructions for the feeding, watering and exercising of horses during their journey, and did what they could, particularly for racehorses, to lessen the ordeal of travelling long distances in a noisy and bumpy horsebox. Racehorses were generally 'rugged up' and some wore tail guards and masks, which could incorporate blinkers or ear protectors. Straw was often spread over the platform and the loading ramp to prevent horses slipping during wet weather and to make the horsebox appear a less alien environment.<sup>45</sup> Some horses, like the much-travelled Ormonde, appeared unconcerned by railway journeys, but Persimmon, the 1896 Derby winner, had to be virtually lifted into the horsebox at Dullingham station, near Newmarket, and Broomielaw, always a bad tempered horse, kicked a horsebox to pieces en route to Brighton, and never raced again.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Rush, R.W. *Furness Railway Locomotives and Rolling Stock* (Oakwood Press, Lingfield, 1973) p.32 (list) and p.51 (diagram). The Furness Railway possessed 22 horseboxes of this type at the 1923 Grouping.

<sup>42</sup> Russell, G.W. *Horse Power*, pp.25ff. Toilet facilities for grooms were provided in horseboxes built by British Railways in 1954.

<sup>43</sup> Removable partitions could also be useful for horses which did not like to be cramped in their box, such as Sir John Astley's Scamp, who kicked a hole in the side of the box during the short journey from Epsom to Croydon in March 1877. Despite a bad cut to his hock, Scamp won his race. This example is also useful in showing that rail transport was used for a journey of only about ten miles, instead of walking the horse. See Astley, Sir J.D., *Fifty Years of My Life* (Hurst & Blackett Ltd., London, 1894), II, pp. 187 - 188.

<sup>44</sup> Christiansen, R. & Miller, R.W. *The North Staffordshire Railway* (David & Charles, Newton Abbot, 1971) p.244. By 1923 even a relatively compact system like the N.S.R. had 40 horseboxes of this type, as well as seven older vehicles.

<sup>45</sup> Sidney, *Rides on Railways*, p.15 considered a blindfold the best way to get a nervous horse into a horsebox.

<sup>46</sup> Ormonde, who won every race in which he started, had travelled from Argentina to Britain and later went on to the United States. In 1887 he attended a garden party in London and seemed to have a great day out (Cook, *English Turf*, p.636). For Persimmon, see Cook, *English Turf*, p.644, and

Even though there appear to have been no G.W. working horses at Newbury, the company provided a farrier at the station for any emergency shoeing of racehorses, when this traffic built up after the opening of the Didcot, Newbury & Southampton Railway and the Lambourn branch during the last twenty years of the nineteenth century.<sup>47</sup> The D.N.S.R. ran through an important training area, and horsebox traffic was particularly heavy at Compton, Hampstead Norris, and, in later years, Kingsworthy on the southern section.<sup>48</sup> The opening of Newbury racecourse in September 1905 gave further impetus to the traffic, and up to 28 horseboxes could be in use on racedays, attached to passenger trains, or formed up as specials if traffic required it. In 1909, one of the line's less important stations, Upton & Blewbury, outloaded no less than 229 racehorses.<sup>49</sup> After the opening of the Lambourn branch in April 1898, up to six or seven horseboxes were often attached to the regular passenger trains, when there were important fixtures in any part of the country.<sup>50</sup>

While these individual figures may not seem very high, it must be remembered that transit of racehorses would be taking place at dozens of stations to and from both steeplechase and flat race meetings, and the total carried would run into many thousands.<sup>51</sup> Horsebox traffic for major meetings was heavy and concentrated, and Scowcroft has collated some of the data for Doncaster, where the St. Leger Meeting coincided with Tattersall's Bloodstock Sales.<sup>52</sup> In September 1881 there were several trains from Newmarket and the Yorkshire training grounds, and after the meeting three

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Cope, A. (ed.) *Cope's Royal Cavalcade of the Turf* (David Cope, London, 1953) pp.57-59, and for Broomielaw see Chalmers, P.R. *Racing England* (Batsford, London, 1939) p.121, and Blyth, H. *The Pocket Venus* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1966) pp. 175 - 176.

<sup>47</sup> Russell, G.W. *Horse Power*, p.39. As mentioned earlier, the railway companies employed large numbers of horses for hauling delivery vehicles, road omnibuses and for shunting at country stations. In 1894 the Midland Railway had 4,346 horses (Russell, p.162) and by 1907 the G.W.R. had over 3,500 (Russell, p.66). These were not always moved in horseboxes, but in cattle trucks, particularly if the company was buying or selling in bulk. (See Russell, p.156, for a photograph.)

<sup>48</sup> Sands, T.B. *The Didcot, Newbury & Southampton Railway* (Oakwood Press, Lingfield, 1971) p.26. Kingsworthy station was not opened until 1 February 1909.

<sup>49</sup> Russell, G.W. *Horse Power*, p.39. Even so, as Maggs, C.G. *Branch Lines of Berkshire* (Berkshire Books/Alan Sutton Ltd., Stroud, 1993) p.57, points out, this was all dealt with from the passenger platform, as no facilities for horses were provided until 1910.

<sup>50</sup> Price, M.R.C. *The Lambourn Valley Railway* (Oakwood Press, Lingfield, 1964) pp.11-12. The local company officially became part of the G.W.R. from 1 July 1905.

<sup>51</sup> The railways also provided excellent facilities for the transport of huntsmen, horses and hounds. See Russell, G.W. *Horse Power*, p.41; Beaufort, Duke of & Morris M. (eds.) *Hunting* (6th Edition) (Longman, Green & Co., London, 1891) p.278, and Allison, W. *My Kingdom for a Horse* (Grant Richards Ltd., London 1919) p.191.

<sup>52</sup> Scowcroft, P.L. 'Railways and the St. Leger', *Journal of the Railway and Canal Historical Society*, XXXVII, 1983, pp.271-273.

horsebox specials left Doncaster on Friday night and a further four on the Saturday morning. More precise figures are provided for 1903, at least for the bloodstock sales when 717 yearlings arrived in 431 horseboxes from both Yorkshire and Irish stations, and 689 were despatched in 473 boxes, much of this traffic being dealt with at Marshgate Cattle Dock, which, certainly in 1903, was also handling passenger traffic on St. Leger Day. In September 1909 some 600 - 700 horses were handled by the G.N.R. alone for the race meeting and Tattersall's Sales.

Newmarket was a major training centre and hosted both bloodstock sales and between six and eight meetings a year during the period under review. Thus, it sent and received horses from all over the country throughout the year - not just in one or two weeks as at Doncaster and Epsom.<sup>53</sup> The sales in December 1905, for example, attracted considerable traffic, and Horncastle in Lincolnshire, famous for its own horsefair, gives an indication of how racehorse traffic built up from stations throughout the country. Six horses were sent off in two boxes, attached to local passenger trains, while two days later 36 horses went off in 13 boxes together with 38 people making the trip to Newmarket for the sales and the races.<sup>54</sup> Just as horses came to Newmarket, so there was considerable traffic with locally-trained horses to and from other meetings. For example, in 1907, 197 horses and 240 attendants travelled to the Liverpool meetings, and no less than 209 horses, together with 407 grooms and other attendants, were sent off to the races at Derby.<sup>55</sup> Country stations in training areas like Leyburn in North Yorkshire would handle considerable numbers of racehorses in a year, rising from 1,251 in 1868 to 1,539 in 1900.<sup>56</sup> Thus the little streams grew into rivers with tens of thousands of racehorses being handled by the railways by the end of the period under review.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Jackson, A.A. *London's Local Railways* (David & Charles, Newton Abbot, 1978) discusses traffic to Kempton Park (p.71), Hurst Park (p.98) and Epsom (p.134) while Bayles, F.H. *Atlas and Review of British Racecourses* (Equitable Publishing Syndicate, London, 1911) gives considerable, if not always accurate, detail about rail transit of horses across London and to other parts of the country.

<sup>54</sup> Ludlam, A.J. *The Horncastle & Woodhall Junction Railway* (Oakwood Press, Oxford, 1986) p.38.

<sup>55</sup> Paar, H. & Gray, A. *The Life and Times of the Great Eastern Railway* (Castlemead Publications, Welwyn Garden City, 1991) p.42.

<sup>56</sup> Hallas, C. 'The Social and Economic Impact of a Rural Railway: The Wensleydale Line', *Agricultural History Review*, XXXIV, 1986, covers all aspects of the railway's influence.

<sup>57</sup> After the First World War, which severely disrupted racing and the carriage of race horses by rail, the railways rose to the challenge of road transport, providing their own road vehicles and ensuring that new forms of traction, such as diesel railcars, were able to haul horseboxes when required. Even as late as 1930 the G.W.R. alone was handling over 20,000 racehorse journeys a year. See Vaughan, A. *The Great Western at Work 1921 - 1939* (Patrick Stephens Ltd., Sparkford, 1993) pp.90-91.

## RACEHORSE ACTIVITY 1829 - 1849

As mentioned earlier, the overriding impression gained from reading histories of flat racing written about the end of the nineteenth century - and drawn on extensively by later writers - is that of a largely static sport, which remained unchanged until the coming of the railway. The idea of progress and change generated by the rapidly improving road system, and the change in the cultural and social life of the leisured classes and those who had become wealthy through commercial activities, together with the internal changes in the sport driven by the growth in the running of younger horses, are largely played down.<sup>58</sup>

Certainly, although huge crowds came to major events in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, these were dominated by people from within a twenty mile radius, but any change after the railway was merely a question of degree rather than a major shift. Local meetings were well attended by the townspeople and the surrounding area, as it was a free show for most people whether it was a free standing event or associated with one of the fairs or part of the 'Wakes Week' programme. Horses, apart from those travelling laboriously a long distance to major meetings, would compete locally and, if reasonably successful, could run between two and four heats a day, even if there was only one race on the card. But there were many gradations between these two extremes. The regional circuits were not based, as Brailsford has maintained, on the 'long weekend' for walking horses between meetings, as detailed studies show quite clearly a weekly or fortnightly sequence of fixtures in almost all cases.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, something very similar to the spread of meetings at which Brailsford felt a horse could race in one season, after the coming of the railway, had been achieved by Eclipse in 1770.<sup>60</sup>

But, rather than promoting an alternative view using 'history by example', a series of interlocking studies has been undertaken to assess the true effect of railways on the activities of racehorses during the review period. The Introduction has already pointed out that the start of regular approved races for two and three year old horses - particularly the first three 'Classics' in the later eighteenth century - had fostered

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<sup>58</sup> Black, R. *Horseracing in England*, Cook, *English Turf*, Richardson C. *The English Turf* (Methuen, London, 1901)

<sup>59</sup> Brailsford, D. *British Sport: A Social History* (Lutterworth Press, Cambridge, 1992) pp.85 - 87.

considerable growth in the number of such horses racing each year, so that by 1817, well before the railway age, almost 50 per cent of all runners fell into this category. It would remain around this figure, albeit with fluctuations, until 1849, by which time most of the trunk railway system, or at least that part which had relevance to racing - was already complete, with the exception of lines to south and mid Wales.

The relatively modest increase in the number of horses running from 1,239 in 1832 to 1,314 in 1849 does not really reflect the growth in the number of meetings from 140 in 1829 to a peak of 168 in 1839, followed by a fall to 128 ten years later. There had been a gradual decline in the number of races run in heats, as turf reformers - particularly those who were interested in betting, and the increased level of uncertainty in relatively short races for younger horses (and hence better odds) - argued that longer distance races and heats were outmoded.<sup>61</sup> But the effect of this move did not gather momentum until the next decade, when both more races were required to fill the card, and more horses competed in the meetings.

In order to ascertain whether even this modest increase - certainly not a 'revolution' - owed anything specific to the railways, an examination was undertaken of the activities of a broad spectrum of racehorse owners in 1829, 1839 and 1849. Three of those selected, the Marquis of Exeter, the Marquis of Tavistock (later the Duke of Bedford) and Isaac Day were active in all three years, and several others appear in two of the years reviewed. A full analysis is given in Appendix IX.

A detailed appraisal was also carried out of the movement of Lord George Bentinck's horses in his most active years (1838 - 1846), together with those of the Duke of Richmond, after the former had moved back to Goodwood, where the Kents were trainers to both owners. Other owners with only a few intensively-raced horses have been included, to give a representative sample of different types of owners during the review period.

In 1829 the Marquis of Exeter had 13 horses, which ran 47 of their 62 races at Newmarket. Otherwise, apart from his home town of Stamford, he sent horses only to Epsom, Ascot and Goodwood, with just one horse visiting all three of the prestigious venues. On the other hand, Isaac Day raced his six horses a total of 50 times, visiting

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<sup>60</sup> See Note 14.

16 different courses in the Midlands, southern and west England, as well as north and south Wales. No individual journeys between meetings were particularly arduous in terms of the time available to cover the distance. But during the season the mileage was considerable, as four of his horses covered all 16 courses between them. The Marquis of Tavistock also had six horses, but these raced only 19 times in total although they visited seven courses, all within easy reach of Newmarket, the farthest afield being Warwick. More akin to Isaac Day was Mr. Beardsworth, owner of the 1830 St. Leger winner, Birmingham, whose five horses visited 14 courses for 33 races, running mainly in the Midlands, but with excursions to Cheshire and North Wales. One horse, Independence, raced 15 times, but again followed a pattern with ample time to walk between meetings.

By 1839 the Marquis of Exeter had increased both his horses and his activity, but three quarters of his races were still at Newmarket, although Cheltenham and Gorhambury, near St. Albans, had now been added to the courses visited. Only two of his horses raced more than ten times, Bosphorus having the majority at Newmarket, but also making journeys to Epsom, Ascot and Goodwood, while Adman, who had 12 races in all, managed to visit five courses, including the two newcomers. The Duke of Bedford, as the Marquis of Tavistock had become, now had seven horses, which competed in 24 races, just over half at Newmarket. One horse, Gimcrack, visited six courses, with a week to travel from Hertford to Yarmouth for three races, and a week thereafter to reach Chelmsford. He received no help from the railways for, as shown in Chapter 3, East Anglia was practically devoid of railways until the mid 1840s. Isaac Day now had seven horses, but although they visited 14 courses for 41 races, his activity level was lower than in 1829 and his destinations less widespread. The railway undoubtedly helped him to transport Caravan from Egham to Warwick between 29 August and 4 September, the basic fare being in the region of £4, although as demonstrated earlier, this figure could be greatly increased by incidental expenses.<sup>62</sup> A new name in the analysis for 1839 was J.O. Fairlie, who had nine horses which he

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<sup>61</sup> *Sporting Magazine*, July 1848, p.9. In 1820, 52 per cent of races were run in heats, by 1850 the figure was under 20 per cent, and ten years later a race with heats was a rarity at meetings recorded in the *Racing Calendar*.

<sup>62</sup> The journey could have been accomplished by taking either the G.W.R. or L.S.W.R. into London and then travelling on the London & Birmingham Railway to Coventry, which was within easy reach of Warwick. The journey, although achievable on foot, was upwards of 100 miles and only about five days were available for its completion.

raced 47 times at 15 different courses, although he did not visit Newmarket. Owner of the celebrated Zohrab (17 races in 1839) and Pyramid (12 races in 1839), Fairlie appeared to operate in two distinct areas - the Midlands and the South, and Scotland and the border counties - but three of his horses, including Zohrab, spanned both. Leopard had a month to get from Croxton Park, near Melton Mowbray, to Eglinton Park, near Irvine in Scotland, but Zohrab had only three weeks between Cheltenham and Edinburgh, having previously raced at Eglinton Park. Although in 1839 a journey from Birmingham (or even London) to Preston could have been achieved by rail in a matter of hours, it would be another two years before the east side of the country was equally well served. But by the spring of 1841 Zohrab could have travelled by train all the way from Cheltenham to Darlington, although on the west coast his rail journey would have terminated at Lancaster.

The Earl of Eglinton ran his 15 horses in 96 races, of which only two were at Newmarket, and visited 22 courses, mainly in Scotland and northern England, but including Goodwood and Wolverhampton. The railway would have helped take Bellona to Goodwood for 2 August 1839 after racing at Liverpool on 17 July, and would have been essential to take her back up north to the Pottery meeting, near Newcastle-under-Lyme, for 7 August, unless a huge 'vanning' bill was to be incurred, although Eglinton was a protagonist of 'vanning' at least in Scotland. Bellona's next meeting was at Paisley on 22 August, but she may have waited for her stablemate, The Potentate, to fulfil a further engagement at Wolverhampton on 12 August, before heading for Scotland. 'Vanning' northwards from Preston would have been desirable if both horses were to reach Paisley in good time. But 'vanning' was essential to get another of Eglinton's horses, Malvolio, from Kelso after racing on 15 October, to Dumfries, some 80 miles away, to fulfil another engagement on 17 October.

Before passing on to a review of the activities of Lord George Bentinck, it is worthwhile looking at the later years of Mr. Barrow's Catherina, a mare credited with more wins than any other British horse.<sup>63</sup> In 1839 the *Racing Calendar* listed 14 horses which raced 15 times or more during the season. But Catherina raced no less

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<sup>63</sup> *Catherina*, the daughter of the 1816 Derby winner, Whisker, started her long career in 1832, but her appearance in really top class racing circles was limited to the 1833 Oaks, where she was unplaced. She is credited with 79 wins in 176 races, but a detailed examination of her career shows that, due to the predominance of races in heats at that time, she actually had 134 wins in 304 starts. After retiring at the age of 11, she was equally successful as a brood mare, giving birth to nine foals.

than 25 times at 16 courses, ranging from Clitheroe in Lancashire to Tenbury Wells, Bishops Castle and Welshpool, with generally a week to walk between meetings, for the railway would have given little or no help in the locations she visited. 1840 followed a similar pattern, albeit with different courses, but in her last season, 1841, she had 57 starts in 28 races at 17 different courses, with, for example, eight starts in two days at Welshpool, followed by a walk of about 80 miles to Leek to run three heats less than four days later. The mileage in each season was considerable, but only rarely would it have been possible for the railway to curtail her walking, and Mr. Barrow may not have wished to make this outlay, as Catherina only won a total of about £5,000 during her long career.<sup>64</sup>

Money was, however, no object for Lord George Bentinck - at least when he was covering his gambling debts - which was just as well as, after his success with Elis, he had committed himself to transport all his horses by van (and later by train) rather than letting them walk. Once his ownership of horses was accurately recorded in the *Racing Calendar*, it is possible to analyse his activities and place in context any comments made by John Kent.<sup>65</sup> In 1838 Bentinck set up his main stables at Danebury, near Stockbridge - almost equidistant from Salisbury and Winchester, the latter city being linked by rail to London in May 1840. He expended vast sums in providing the lavish facilities he felt were essential for the successful training of racehorses. John Barham Day was in charge of the stables, and in this first year Bentinck ran nine horses in a total of 61 races at thirteen courses. But of these 17 races were at Goodwood and a further 15 at Newmarket, where Bentinck had based some of his horses, although Grey Momus raced several times at both locations. Most of the journeys, which were all in the south of England, could have been walked with ease. But the filly, Chapeau d'Espagne, racing at roughly weekly intervals at Salisbury, Exeter and Weymouth, followed by a meeting at Abingdon two weeks later,

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<sup>64</sup> One of the few opportunities to use the railway for any distance would have been after running at Shifnal on 16/17 May 1839 to walk to Wolverhampton, and take the train to Manchester. The journey would have cost 38/- for Catherina, 10/- for her groom and between 15/6d. and 21/6d, for Mr. Barrow depending on the class of travel - but after all, there was a week to walk there.

<sup>65</sup> Kent, *Racing Life of Bentinck*. Lord George's racing career dated back to 1824, when he rode a winner at Goodwood, but his main interest was gambling on the horses he owned. As his father, the Duke of Portland, hated gambling, Bentinck was forced to mask his interest for many years by running his horses under the names of Lord Orford, Charles Greville (his cousin), Lord Lichfield and the Duke of Richmond, but at least two of these gentlemen took exception to this practice from time to time.



would have felt the benefit of Lord George's insistence on 'vanning', as the embryonic railway system would have been of no real benefit in her travels.

In 1839, however, there was a marked reduction in the race total, with only five entries at Goodwood, because of strained relations with the Duke of Richmond, but 23 of the 44 were run at Newmarket. One horse, Ratsbane, ran a total of 12 times in a six week period during August and September, and Lord George, as a director of the London & Birmingham Railway, would have reduced his 'vanning' bill substantially by using rail to take Ratsbane much of the way from Brighton to Wolverhampton, thence to Blandford in Dorset and back up to Northampton in the space of three weeks.<sup>66</sup> In the next year the number of races at Goodwood had risen to 14 with only 13 at Newmarket out of a total of 57 for his eleven horses. There were now entries at both Liverpool and Doncaster, but the only journey where time was really pressing was the movement of Capote from Newmarket to Liverpool between 9 and 15 July 1840, which required 'vanning' to Watford on the London & Birmingham Railway. The return journey to Danesbury (for Capote was going on to race at Goodwood) could now have been achieved almost wholly by rail, with only three short road transits totalling about 20 miles, compared with some 275 miles by rail.

By 1841 Bentinck was racing 16 horses, of which four were then stabled and trained at Newmarket. He was unhappy with the training carried out by John Day,<sup>67</sup> so, having made his peace with the Duke of Richmond, he arranged to move his horses to Goodwood, even though at Danesbury he was 'literally walking on gold laid out by himself'.<sup>68</sup> All the horses, including yearlings, were transferred in four days using two single and two double vans - a feat which involved Kent in a daily round trip of 106 miles. Kent would have preferred to have walked all the horses together in a single convoy, as he felt this to have been safer and less stressful for the yearlings.<sup>69</sup> This was

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<sup>66</sup> The full programme for Ratsbane was: 30 July - Goodwood, 2 August - Goodwood, 7 August - Brighton, 12 August - Wolverhampton, 14 August - Wolverhampton, 21 August - Blandford (2 races), 28 August - Northampton (2 races), 3 September - Warwick, 5 September - Warwick, 11 September - Abingdon.

<sup>67</sup> There were probably more reasons behind the move, for John Day was sarcastically known as 'Honest', having been involved directly or indirectly in a number of betting scandals where he put his own interests above those of the owners of the horses he was training. See Sylvanus, *The Bye-Lanes and Downs of England* (Richard Bentley, London, 1850) p.176, and Mortimer, R., Onslow R. & Willet, P. *Biographical Encyclopaedia of British Flat Racing* (Macdonald & Jane's, London, 1978) pp.162 - 164.

<sup>68</sup> Kent, *Racing Life of Bentinck*, p. 98.

<sup>69</sup> Hunn, D. *Goodwood* (Davis-Poynter Ltd., London, 1975) p.124.

certainly the major event of 1841, for there was nothing of note involved in the 58 races, of which there were 15 at Newmarket and 18 at Goodwood, apart from Naworth making two journeys to Liverpool.

1842 was the first year in which all Bentinck's horses from Danebury were at Goodwood, and as the Kents were also in charge of the Duke of Richmond's, we can view the totality of the enterprise which they had to control. Bentinck now had 22 horses racing 102 times (29 at Goodwood and 15 at Newmarket), while the Duke had six horses running in 27 races of which eight were at Goodwood. So the Kents had up to 28 horses running in 129 races at 20 different locations (to say nothing of horses merely in training), as even the Goodwood and Newmarket meetings required a certain amount of 'cross travelling'. There were added complications, as the move to Goodwood meant that the distance to the nearest railheads, Fareham (22 miles) and Shoreham (23 miles), had more than doubled against the journey from Danebury to Winchester. This meant a three hour road journey each way, which was not reduced until a few months before Bentinck sold his racehorses. This was a key time constraint, as, apart from the cross-London transit, it was possible to travel from the above stations to Lancaster, Bridgwater and Darlington, as well as many intermediate stations close to racecourses. Moreover, Lord George was always involved in the details of the business, entering numerous horses in races from which they would ultimately be withdrawn, both incurring heavy forfeits, and causing continual rescheduling of the logistics for horses, jockeys and trainers.<sup>70</sup> Complications now also arose with horses running at two different meetings on the same day, e.g. Brighton and Salisbury, but judicious use of both 'vanning' and rail travel could substantially reduce cost and journey time, even if some of the routes then existing appear somewhat circuitous to modern eyes.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Kent, *Racing Life of Bentinck*, p. 112. In 1843, Kent travelled 6,155 miles, mostly by road, and spent £3,600 in travelling expenses alone.

<sup>71</sup> To give two examples: St. Jean d'Acre, having raced at Brighton on 6 August 1842, could have been 'vanned' some 150 miles along the coast to fulfil engagements at Exeter on 17/18 August, or could have travelled directly from Brighton by rail to Taunton with only 30 miles of 'vanning' on to Exeter, although this would have involved the provision of a suitable vehicle at Taunton. Bentinck, because he preferred his horses to spend as much time as possible at their stables, could have returned the horse to Goodwood via Shoreham, sending it onward at the appropriate time by rail from Fareham. Similarly, tasks like getting Yorkshire Lady from Warwick on 7 September 1842 to Doncaster before 12 September and, after a four day stay there, on to Liverpool before 22 September, were becoming easy to achieve by using rail for much of the journey.

Lord George saw 'vanning' as a means of getting horses to the course nearer to the race time, with minimal interruption to their training, but with post horses at 2/- per pair per mile the practice was very expensive, and Kent made the point that Bentinck often had horses transported by van, which were worth less than the horses pulling the vehicle.<sup>72</sup> To quote one example - as it is the earliest instance known to the writer of a specific racehorse transported by rail - Lord George, having bought the former Chifney stables at Headley, near Epsom, paid 15 guineas for a pair of posthorses to take Firebrand from Kingston station (the present Surbiton) to the stables and then to Epsom in May 1842.<sup>73</sup>

In 1843 the Kents had to deal with a total of 42 horses<sup>74</sup> in 180 races, of which 107 took place at Goodwood and Newmarket, but little had changed as far as the other 18 locations were concerned, although Manchester made an appearance, and Gaper raced 15 times, visiting Liverpool twice. The next year saw a combined 48 horses in 220 races at 20 courses, but as 136 of these took place at Goodwood and Newmarket, the overall travelling requirements had changed little since the move from Danebury.<sup>75</sup> In 1845 there was also little change, although new destinations such as York and Canterbury, were added, and there was more emphasis on Chester than in previous years. The same was true of 1846, the year in which Lord George sold all his horses, so that he could concentrate on his political career. The last meeting in which his horses took part was at Lewes on 12 August 1846.<sup>76</sup> Rather paradoxically the great expansion in Bentinck's activities came from 1842 onwards when he had doubled the distance his horse had to travel to and from the nearest railway. Moreover, the greatest increases had come in races at Goodwood and Newmarket, where he had

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<sup>72</sup> Kent, *Racing Life of Bentinck*, p. 68.

<sup>73</sup> Firebrand had won the 1,000 Guineas at Newmarket on 28 April 1842, but only came third in the Oaks a month later. Depending on the exact time of the journey, Firebrand could have used the Bishops Stortford - London line, opened on 16 May 1842, to reduce her journey time considerably.

<sup>74</sup> The numbers of horses quoted do not include all horses owned by Bentinck. For example, in 1843 he had 73 horses in training, but only 28 of these raced.

<sup>75</sup> Naworth raced 18 times in 1844, visiting, in addition to Goodwood and Newmarket, Croxton Park, Bath, Epsom and Liverpool, all easy to reach by rail and a short 'van' journey except for Croxton Park. The quaintly named All round my Hat raced at Liverpool on 17 July, Tewkesbury on 24 July and Goodwood on 30 July - all easily covered by rail except for the onward 'vanning' from Fareham to Goodwood. None of Bentinck's horses had undue pressure, either of unremitting movement like Catherina, or frenetic journeys by rail and on foot like some of Thomas Parr's horses in the 1850s.

<sup>76</sup> The L.B.S.C.R. opened its lines to Chichester, some four miles from Goodwood, and to Lewes on 8 June 1846, so Bentinck had just two months to get maximum benefit from rail travel before he sold his horses.

stables.<sup>77</sup> Most of the other courses formed part of a fairly fixed pattern, although some more distant meetings were added from time to time, but analysis shows that much of the impression of phenomenal activity growth is illusory, as it is concentrated for both Bentinck and the Duke of Richmond on the two main power bases.

Both the lure of the railway and the cost of 'vanning' were lost on the owner of Cure All, winner of the 1845 Grand National, who had the horse walk over 130 miles from his stables near Grimsby to Liverpool, and back again after his win. At this date a short trip over the Humber to Hull would have given access to the railway, by which Liverpool could have been reached in eight hours - instead of nearly as many days. This was probably an extreme case, but horses still had to walk quite long distances - sometimes over 100 miles each way - to reach courses not yet served by railways, unless their owners were prepared to meet the cost of 'vanning'. But those who patronised those distant meetings, with relatively low prize money in most cases, would generally be unable (or certainly unwilling) to indulge in this expense, which could well outweigh the value of any prize a horse might win.

Returning to the survey of specific owners in 1849, the Duke of Bedford, having almost tripled the number of his horses from seven to 20, and quadrupled their races to 98, ran all except ten at Newmarket. So he had become even more static than in 1839, despite the fact that railway had reached Newmarket in 1848. But the Duke liked competing in matches against people of his own class, and since 1840 that skilled handicapper, Admiral Rous, had acted as his 'matchmaker' - an association which was to last for some 20 years and provide the Duke with the major part of his racing activity.<sup>78</sup> Only one of the Duke's horses, Retail, had any significant racing elsewhere, having one race at Stamford, Brighton, Lewes and Bedford, in addition to his ten outings at Newmarket. The Marquis of Exeter, too, had almost doubled the number of his racehorses to 29, but of their 160 races, 98 were at Newmarket and 22 at Ascot, although he had added another five courses, including York and Warwick, to those visited by his horses in 1839.

Meanwhile the Earl of Eglinton had marginally reduced the number of his horses to 12, but more than halved their races to 45, at only 14 courses. Nevertheless, his horses still raced both in the south of England and in Scotland, ranging from Goodwood to

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<sup>77</sup> Bentinck also had stables near Stafford, Doncaster and Epsom.

Stirling. By this time country courses like Kelso were less remote from a railway than Ascot for all its prestige, so access was not really an issue. But the Earl was preoccupied with the success of Flying Dutchman, which won both the Derby and the St. Leger in 1849, and would remain a focal point of his activity until his withdrawal from racing in 1852.<sup>79</sup>

The other longstanding owner still active in 1849, Isaac Day, ran his eight horses 40 times at 17 courses but, although superficially this may seem similar to the 1839 situation with the addition of Epsom and Liverpool, the detail of the less prestigious venues is more akin to 1829. No less than nine courses were not served by railways and he was once again sending horses to relatively remote locations in the West Midlands and the Welsh border country, such as Upton-on-Severn, Leominster and Monmouth.

A similar type of owner to Day, but with everything 'doubled up', was Thomas Dawson. He had 16 horses, which raced 86 times at 28 different courses throughout England and Scotland. He made extensive use of rail travel to move his horses from Goodwood and Winchester in the south to Edinburgh and Perth in Scotland. Reasonable access to all the courses visited was now possible using the train, although Burton Constable and Croxton Park still required road journeys of some eight miles to reach them, but none of Dawson's horses had to make 'rush' journeys, such as those of Thomas Parr a few years later.

Just as Mr. Barrow had Catherina running over 20 races a year, so in 1849 there was Mr. Arrowsmith, based at Thirsk, who owned Lady Hylda and one other horse, which competed only once. Lady Hylda, however, raced 23 times at twelve locations in northern England and Wales, ranging from Chester and Wrexham in the west to Lincoln and Durham in the east. All the locations were readily accessible by rail, and at one to two week intervals there was ample time to return home between meetings, rather than being continually 'in transit' like Catherina.

Mr. Rolt and Mr. Gregory had four horses, each having purchased one from the Marquis of Exeter during 1849. The latter brought Skudar, who after racing for the Marquis at Northampton, Ascot and Epsom, had its horizons expanded, visiting Sutton

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<sup>78</sup> Bird, *Admiral Rous*, p. 55.

Park, near Birmingham, and Marlborough, before racing three times at each of the meetings at Taunton, Reading and Plymouth in just over a fortnight. The G.W.R. could have facilitated the journeys to all the last three venues, as Plymouth had been linked to its broad gauge network since April 1849. Mr. Gregory's other three horses had a more sedate existence, but Loup Garou still ran at Northampton, Bath, Chester and Newmarket, albeit in only one race at each meeting. Mr. Rolt bought Cosachia from the Marquis, and her programme moved from Newmarket and Ascot to embrace Hampton, Brighton, Reading and Egham, although like Rolt's other horses she did continue to race at the more upmarket venues such as Goodwood and Warwick.

This analysis has provided a cross-section of owner types over a twenty year period ranging from pre-railway times to the virtual completion of the trunk rail network except for the very north of Scotland and mid and south Wales. Two key factors are immediately apparent. Firstly, those owners whose stables were at Newmarket were much more static than those who were based elsewhere. This is hardly surprising, as during the review period there were between 30 and 40 days' racing there each year, which tended to monopolise the spring, the month of July and the autumn. Other major courses had between three and six days' racing a year, so, when Bentinck and the Duke of Richmond ran horses 75 times at Goodwood in 1844, this was crammed into four days, while their 61 races at Newmarket were spread over some 20 days, and there were still free days there.

Secondly, there were already in 1829 and certainly in 1839, racehorse owners like Isaac Day, J.O. Fairlie and the Earl of Eglinton, who patronised meetings in widely separated parts of the country, having their horses walked, or in the case of the latter, in the 1839 survey, 'vanned' long distances to meet their engagements. Isaac Day is interesting in that his 1839 activities were more circumspect and upmarket than in 1829, but his 1849 programme contained many meetings still remote from railways, although these may have given him the opportunity to 'cast his net' still further afield. Some owners like the Earl of Eglinton and the Duke of Bedford had regressed to a more static state by 1849, the latter particularly so because his inclinations were so well served by Admiral Rous. The patterns of Mr. Barrow in 1839 and Mr.

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<sup>79</sup> Eglinton was appointed Lord Lieutenant of Ireland in this year, but some authorities, including *The Druid*, considered this withdrawal and the termination of racing at Eglinton Park, near Irvine, to be a 'fit of pique' for his relative lack of success after the triumphs with *Flying Dutchman*.

Arrowsmith ten years later were very similar for a 'one horse' man, but behind the scenes Lady Hylde had more opportunity to return home and 'recharge her batteries', as well as not running so many races in heats as Catherina.

The evidence indicates that, although the railways had greatly facilitated the transport of horses both in terms of speed and relative cost, there was no marked change in the habits of those surveyed, who continued to pursue their selected path, whether static or frenetic. Moreover, for those owners who horses could not return home between meetings, rail travel, just like 'vanning' could be an unnecessary additional cost, if the same number of days and nights were to be spent away from home. So, no 'revolution' yet!

### RACEHORSE ACTIVITY 1850 - 1914

As the study of a broad spectrum of racehorse owners between 1829 and 1849 had demonstrated that the railways had had no significant impact on their behaviour patterns, it was decided to examine whether individual horses raced more than in pre-railway days. The change from long races run in up to four heats to single short races had led to a growth in the number of horses running. But the major increase did not take place until the last decade of the nineteenth century, when the number of runners rose by 76% in ten years, having remained virtually static albeit with some fluctuations, for the previous twenty five.<sup>80</sup> An analysis of the *Racing Calendar* at five year intervals between 1829 and 1914 was undertaken to identify every horse racing 15 times or more in a season. The results for the first twenty years showed that, although the number of horses racing remained relatively stable between 1832 (1,239) and 1849 (1,315), the number of horses racing 15 times in a year had doubled in percentage terms (0.7% to 1.14%) but only one horse, Catherina, in 1839, had run 25 or more races in a season.<sup>81</sup> By 1859 the total number of horses racing had only risen by 25%, but the horses racing 15 times had shown a seven-fold increase, and the associated five-fold percentage rise was maintained in the face of a 54% increase in the number of

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<sup>80</sup> It should be noted, however, that the statistics in the *Racing Calendar*, from which this information is derived, were not consistent throughout the review period, the most important changes being the inclusion of horses in Irish races from 1849, the omission of horses in hurdle races after autumn 1867, and the omission of horses competing in hunters' races on the flat after July 1871. Horses in Irish races were also omitted from the 1903 and 1904 figures.

<sup>81</sup> As Catherina also ran 25 or more races in both 1840 and 1841, it may well be that other horses reached this figure in years not covered by the five year analysis.

horses racing at the end of the next decade. The full five year analysis forms Appendix X, but a summary is given here to place in context the first part of the review period.

TABLE 8.1: SUMMARY OF HORSES RACING 15 TIMES OR MORE 1849 – 1869

<u>Year</u>	<u>Horses racing</u>	<u>Horses racing 15 times or more</u>	<u>%</u>
1849	1,315	15	1.14
1859	1,645	107	6.50
1869	2,539	165	6.50

Source: *Racing Calendar*.

Tranter has stressed the development of horseracing into a national sport as a result of the railway system.<sup>82</sup> But, as demonstrated by the mobility of many racehorse owners, this was already there albeit in embryonic form, and there is no evidence of any significant change up to the mid-nineteenth century. Certainly there were more horses running more frequently, and this phenomenon had become more marked during the next twenty years, but this was also driven at least in part by the demise of races in heats. So was this the start of the ‘revolution’?

Certainly it might be if the exploits of Thomas Parr had been replicated on a wide scale.<sup>83</sup> His name occurred frequently in the analysis of racehorse activity during the 1850s, and in many ways he was an ‘updated’ version of Isaac Day and Thomas Dawson, facilitated by the railways in his desire to give his horses maximum opportunity at all kinds of courses. In 1849 Parr’s horse *The Baronet* raced 23 times, and in the following year *Clothworker* won 16 of his 27 races at 14 meetings. In 1851 *Clothworker* had 33 races at 18 meetings, visiting Weymouth, Ayr and Aberystwyth, and criss-crossing England, Scotland and Wales in the process. Railways helped Parr get his horse from Lewes on 5 May to race at Shrewsbury only three days later, but a course like Aberystwyth was still some 80 miles from the nearest railway, which did not stop Parr visiting it on several occasions. *Clothworker*’s achievements in 1851 were even more remarkable, as he did not race at all between 28 May and 23 July. By

<sup>82</sup> Tranter, N. *Sport, Economy and Society in Britain 1750 - 1914* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998) p.34.

<sup>83</sup> Thomas Parr (1810 - 1880) was a tea-dealer and racehorse owner-trainer with stables near Wantage. With only limited resources he was able to transform seemingly mediocre horses into consistent winners, by subjecting them to hard work and frequent racing. It was said of Parr that he would run his horses every day if he could, and even *Saucebox*, the 1855 St. Leger winner, raced 28 times in that year, visiting no less than 18 courses including Bath, Airdrie and Kelso, a vastly different preparation and ‘follow on’ to other ‘Classic’ winners.



1854, Parr had obtained Rataplan from Mr. Thellusson. The horse was said to be 'lazy and a gross feeder, but tough', and Parr proved the last attribute, but certainly changed the first.<sup>84</sup> Rataplan raced 29 times at 21 meetings ranging from Plymouth to Edinburgh, winning 17 times, and even resale to Thellusson at the end of the season gave no respite. He raced no less than 33 times in 1855 and won 20 of these, but his journeys were well-spaced, and now ranged only from Plymouth to Newcastle-on-Tyne and Carlisle. Meanwhile, Parr had got his own 'iron horse' - Fisherman - who between 1855 and 1859 won 69 of his 119 races.<sup>85</sup> He had no wins as a two year old, but in 1856 he ran 34 times at 15 meetings winning a record 23 times. His travels ranged from Plymouth to Carlisle, although his journeys were reasonably well spaced - at least for Tom Parr. In August 1857 Parr showed what could be achieved by rail by racing Fisherman on successive days at York and Abingdon and, in the following month, at Lichfield, Derby and Weymouth.<sup>86</sup> Earlier in the year he had travelled to Chantilly to run in the 'Prix de l'Empereur', and during a two week stay at Newmarket in October he had an outing to Kelso to run three times in two days, but, despite all this activity, he still managed to win 22 of his 35 races. In 1858, a less frenetic year, Fisherman won 21 out of 32 races. Certainly, Parr showed what could be achieved both by using rail travel, and making his horses walk long distances by road in order to reach remote courses. He took or sent his horses to compete at all kinds of meetings whether prestigious or only - to others - of local interest, and he was really a 'throwback' to a bygone age.

Analysis of another fourteen horses racing 25 times or more during the same period shows quite clearly the survival of the regional race circuits - hardly surprising - as very few established racecourses had yet closed, and there were continual replacements. There was no evidence of an increase in activity brought on by the expansion of the railway system, the key feature to emerge being an increase in the number of races entered at each meeting, as might be expected with the gradual demise of heats. As in

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<sup>84</sup> In 1853 Rataplan had won three races including the Ascot Gold Vase and had been fourth in the Derby and third in the St. Leger. But his sojourn with Mr. Parr meant that he won 42 of his 71 races - packing the majority of these into two exciting years.

<sup>85</sup> Astley, *Fifty Years*, II, p.48. Fisherman was 'the hardest and gamest bit of horseflesh that ever was shod - for he was not often plated... Moreover he often walked or trotted from one racecourse to another for he had a hard master'. Astley was appalled that such a worthy animal finished up in Australia. See also Cook, *English Turf*, pp. 617 - 618.

<sup>86</sup> In this year Fisherman had the advantage of reaching Weymouth by rail, but on his visit the previous year he had to walk from Dorchester eight miles away.

pre-railway days there were occasional excursions outside the circuits to a prestige course such as Newmarket, or the area covered by the horse might change when it was sold on to another owner.<sup>87</sup>

A third dimension was then added to the analysis - the age of the horses running 15 times or more in a season. This showed that in the period 1829 to 1869, both the increases in absolute numbers and percentages were driven by two and three year horses as might be expected in a sport moving towards shorter races for younger horses in single heats. The overall results can also be found in Appendix X, but a ten year summary is given below:

TABLE 8.2: AGE SUMMARY OF HORSES RACING 15 TIMES OR MORE 1829 - 1869

<u>Year</u>	<u>2 &amp; 3 Yr. old</u>		<u>4 Yr. &amp; above</u>		<u>Total horses racing 15 times or more</u>
	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	
1829	2	25	6	75	8
1839	1	7	13	93	14
1849	5	34	10	66	15
1859	78	74	29	26	107
1869	115	70	50	30	165

Source: *Racing Calendar*.

All this was very logical, even taking into account some of the other influences mentioned above, as the total of two and three year olds racing had increased from 503 in 1829 to 1,515 by 1869, while the number of older horses had only risen from 673 to 1,019. By the end of the century the number of younger horses racing had risen to 2,497, but four year olds and above, at 1,256, were now only a third of the total. It might, therefore, be expected that the upward trends, both in the number of horses racing 15 times a year and the percentage of younger horses would continue, but this was not so. Not only did the total and percentage of horses racing 15 times decrease significantly, the latter almost back to the 1839 level, but the percentage of younger horses with that high activity also reverted back to the 1849 level.

<sup>87</sup> The 14 horses reviewed not only covered a much smaller geographical area than those trained by Parr, but also ran at far fewer meetings. While Rataplan in 1855 (albeit owned once more by Mr. Thellusson) raced 33 times at 21 meetings ranging from Plymouth, Bath and Canterbury to Newcastle on Tyne and Carlisle, Mr. Brown's Angelo competed 35 times at only 11 meetings between Chesterfield and Sunderland, racing a minimum of twice and a maximum of four times at each meeting. In the previous year, Angelo's activities followed the same pattern, although he had a number of owners (ostensibly) as he raced 31 times at 11 meetings ranging from Mansfield and Eccles to Lanark. This phenomenon was also discernible in the analysis of champion jockeys, discussed in Chapter 7, where it also had a major impact on the distance travelled during the season, the key driver being the number of engagements at each meeting.

TABLE 8.3: AGE SUMMARY OF HORSES RACING 15 TIMES OR MORE 1879 – 1909

Year	2 & 3 Yr. Old		4 Yr. & above		Total horses racing 15 times or more	% of total horses racing
	No.	%	No.	%		
1879	49	51	48	49	97	4.6
1889	24	46	29	54	53	2.5
1899	9	29	20	71	29	0.8
1909	12	29	30	71	42	1.1

Source: *Racing Calendar*.

There were several factors which supported this trend. The shorter races which fuelled the betting industry because of the greater uncertainty inherent in them were particularly suited to younger horses. An early success in a race of any real importance such as one of the 'Classics' provided an opportunity to derive a steady income at stud, rather than the expense and uncertainty of achieving further success in racing.<sup>88</sup> There was also in the 1850s and 1860s a growing concern about the excessive running of young horses, so much so that yearling races, although never very popular, were banned in Britain for the 1860 season. A determined effort, led by Sir Joseph Hawley, to limit the racing of two year olds led to a reduction, albeit shortlived, in their season, although all horses benefited from the reduction in the length of the racing year driven through by Admiral Rous in April 1870.<sup>89</sup>

As will be discussed in Chapters 9 to 11, the tightening of the prize money requirements and other rules by the Jockey Club in the 1870s led to the closure of many courses - without any corresponding openings - so by the end of the next decade there was no recognised flat racing in Wales or west of Salisbury, and many long journeys had disappeared even from the itineraries of inveterate travellers. It might be expected that the concentration of courses in London and the south-east and the growth of multiple meetings on the new courses there, would have stimulated owners to run their horses more frequently with reduced travel. But, in contrast to the effect these meetings had on the travels of top jockeys, discussed in Chapter 7, this was not so.

<sup>88</sup> Even the consistent successes of Thomas Parr's horses were all, or mainly, achieved by the age of six, and he was exceptional in running horses so hard for so long.

<sup>89</sup> Bird, *Admiral Rous*, pp. 263 ff. Hawley wanted to cut the season for two year olds back to a July start, at least at Newmarket, where there had been 108 two year old races in 1868. Rous steered through a general reduction in the racing year by moving the start date back from 15 February to 25 March. Even though for the 1869 season, two year old racing was cut back to 1 May with no handicaps to be run after 1 October, this provision only lasted until 1873, but there was an ongoing

Certainly Cook pinpointed that 'moderate thoroughbreds' continued longer in active racing than top class performers, but by the time he was writing (1901) the overall trend of horses 'constantly worried with railway travelling, and perpetually being pulled out to earn their cornbill all over the country until they are worn out and useless...' <sup>90</sup> had returned to that of pre-railway days, and it has been amply demonstrated that those who did compete in many races a year generally had a much easier life than their predecessors. Nevertheless, he was expressing a view prevalent in the latter part of the nineteenth century that too much rail travel was bad for horses. <sup>91</sup> Moreover, recovery time of up to a fortnight after a hard race - let alone any stress caused by travel - was later being recommended as a reasonable recovery time for a horse, with a rider that 'it is better to miss an engagement than run a stale horse'. <sup>92</sup> What would Tom Parr have said?

1889 marked the first year since 1849 when there were no horses running 25 times and only three racing 20 times or more. In that year, as we have seen in Chapter 7, 'Mr. Abington' (George Alexander Baird) drove himself unmercifully all over the country to ride his 61 winners. In contrast, only one of his 52 horses raced even ten times and, in this one case, three of these were at Newmarket. <sup>93</sup> It was also noticeable that the only four horses which were identified as running 25 or more races between 1884 and 1899 only just achieved this rating with 25 or 26 outings, and all were within the northern circuit with only one excursion over the border to Perth, for three races in 1884. <sup>94</sup> Fifteen years earlier the most prolific runners had been reaching over 40 races a season, and while some of the earlier regional circuits may have appeared to merge, it

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benefit from the reduction in the length of the racing season. Even so, *Racing Illustrated*, July 1895, p.317 was still bemoaning the excessive racing of two year olds.

<sup>90</sup> Cook, *English Turf*, pp.576 - 577. Certainly, the analysis of over 100 horses racing 15 times or more between 1904 and 1914 showed that the vast majority won less than five of between 15 and 20 races. Stolen Kiss in 1909 won 10 out of 15 races, as a two year old, but only 3 out of 13 in the following year.

<sup>91</sup> Beaufort & Morris, *Hunting* p.282. 'The strongest constitution and most even temper ever enjoyed by a member of the equine race will not long stand the wear and tear of those frequent rattlings over the rails, and all their inevitable discomforts and mischances.'

<sup>92</sup> *Horsemanship* in Lonsdale Library series (Sealey, Service & Co. Ltd., London 1934) p.234.

<sup>93</sup> Only the Daft One was outside the sedate circuit which went no further north than Liverpool or Manchester. He visited Doncaster, Hamilton Park, Carlisle, Hull, Redcar, Scarborough and Edinburgh, although his journeys followed the outline of the old northern and Scottish circuit, but taking in new courses at Hamilton Park and Hull.

<sup>94</sup> After 1894 no horses in the survey ran 25 times in a season, and after 1904 no horse even achieved 20 outings.

must be remembered that many outlying courses had closed and the merging was rather a reprofiling of the available areas.

## CONCLUSION

Despite the increase in speed and relative cheapness of railway transport of horses, the prime cause behind the increased number of horses running was the change to single heat races over a relatively short distance,<sup>95</sup> which needed more horses to fill the card. Moreover, between 1889 and 1909 there was a 27 per cent increase in the number of meetings, which also contributed to the sharp increase in horses racing. Certainly, the sport was much changed during the course of the nineteenth century, but, while it would be wrong to ignore the all-pervading influence of the railway, the analysis has shown that throughout the review period, it has merely served the requirements of horseowners in following both their own pattern of racing their horses, as well as responding positively to the changes which came from within racing itself. Just as the 1830s saw the whole spectrum of racing from Cyprian to Catherina, so the 1890s had Isinglass with 11 wins from 12 starts in three years and a record amount of prize money by 1894, and Capuchin, Lord of the Manor and Saint Peter with 76 races, but only 14 wins, between them in the same year. The railways were there when the owner wanted them, but they did not dictate the programme for his horses, nor did they fashion the final shape of the sport.

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<sup>95</sup> The decline of races in heats between 1820 and 1860 has been covered in Note 61. Analysis of data from *Ruff's Guide to the Turf* has also shown that the percentage of races under a mile in length almost doubled between 1850 and 1900, again driving the requirement for more horses to fill the card.

**FAILURE OR SUCCESS -  
THE RESHAPING OF FLAT RACING**

## CHAPTER NINE

### THE STAGE IS SET: EBB AND FLOW IN A FREE MARKET - RACECOURSE CLOSURES 1840 - 1869

#### INTRODUCTION

The next four chapters examine in detail both the reasons for the change in the racecourse population between 1840 and 1914, and the correct chronology and influence of the railway on an individual basis. Some statistics, particularly those relating to racecourse and meeting numbers, have been briefly discussed elsewhere, but are reiterated here in order to keep continuity of information and argument within the chapters dealing with racecourses.

The analysis of the *Racing Calendar* between 1774 and 1914 (Appendix I) has shown that in 1834, before the opening of the first trunk railway lines, there were 115 racecourses supporting 134 meetings. Fifteen years later, with main line railways reaching all but the north of Scotland and south and mid-Wales, there were 106 courses and 129 meetings. In 1874, even after the first of the Jockey Club edicts on minimum prize money, and with the greater part of the railway system complete, there were 111 courses and 165 meetings. The number of courses reflected the second 'Racecourse Mania' of the 1860s, which more than offset the losses of the previous 25 years. The much greater increase in the number of meetings showed the impact of the London suburban courses, whose multiple fixtures were continued and extended by the 'park' courses. Ten years later, with the second Jockey Club prize money stipulation in place for some seven years, the number of courses had dropped by almost a half to 57, but the number of meetings only by a third to 109. These new stringent requirements, coupled with local pressure on the London suburban courses, had caused the closure of almost all the latter even before the Metropolitan Racecourses Act came into effect,<sup>1</sup> so that it was not just the traditional courses which had suffered. Thereafter the number of courses declined to 48 by the outbreak of the First World War, with the Jockey Club strictly controlling the licensing of new courses. The

number of meetings, however, climbed back to 134, identical with 1834, the increase being not merely due to the multiple meetings at courses in the south east, but also to additional dates being granted to 'gate money' courses, which had replaced many of the traditional 'open' courses around the country.

The trend to centralisation of meetings, if not of courses, is shown in a regional analysis between 1829 and 1914 (Appendix III). By the end of the period there were two fewer courses in the south east, but three times as many meetings as in 1829, although in Wales no flat race meetings had survived after 1876. But, while at the same date the south west had no less than 17 courses, by 1899 only two - Bath and Salisbury - survived, although there were still many steeplechase fixtures. The two analyses show quite clearly the shortlived peaks of 'Racecourse Mania' in the 1830s and 1860s. The first predated the main 'Railway Mania' of the mid 1840s, but the second was contemporary with the later 'Railway Mania',<sup>2</sup> and was driven by the upsurge in steeplechasing after the formation of the National Hunt Committee in 1866. Almost without exception, the shortlived revival of flat racing at a number of traditional locations after a long gap was in 'mixed' meetings with steeplechases, hurdle races and events for hunters.

These chapters will demonstrate that, despite the undoubted influence of the railway on all areas of Victorian society, there is no direct evidence to support the assertion that railways, or their lack, caused or accelerated the demise of country or less prestigious urban courses. A study has been made of 126 racecourses which closed after holding meetings in ten or more years during the review period, and the reasons for their closure determined where possible.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the 48 courses (including new venues), which survived until the First World War, have also been examined and the factors underlying their survival determined. This is important, as some had quite

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<sup>1</sup> This Act, which required all courses within ten miles of Charing Cross to be licensed by the local magistrates, came into effect in 1879, by which time only Bromley and Croydon were still open, all the more disreputable fixtures having already ended.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 3, Note 11.

<sup>3</sup> Racecourses holding less than ten meetings during the period were not sufficiently stable to be affected significantly by the presence or absence of a railway, and have therefore been omitted from the analysis. Nevertheless, reference will be made to some of these more transient meetings where this is felt appropriate. 'Closure' is defined as disappearance from the *Racing Calendar*, in which approved flat race meetings are reported. It is known that some meetings existed at a lower level before or after any record is found in the *Racing Calendar*, and still more survived as National Hunt meetings. Appropriate reference will be made to these in the text. Similarly, meetings like



chequered careers during the nineteenth century, and in the case of Manchester had suffered no less than three potentially final closures by the turn of the century.

Only two of the 174 flat race meetings in the survey can claim to have been materially affected by the coming of the railway - and then in a physical rather than a commercial manner. Dudley races were forced to move after the 1846 meeting because the land was required for a new railway, but their demise two years later was for other reasons. Similarly the races at Barnet in Middlesex ended in 1870 when a railway was constructed across the course, but this was twelve years after the meeting had vanished from the *Racing Calendar*.<sup>4</sup>

In analysing the chronology of a meeting's final disappearance from the *Racing Calendar*, it was observed that in a number of cases the 'definitive' closure really took place much earlier than the final meeting, which was often a single fixture or a very short run in the 1860s or 1870s after a gap of some twenty years. A further analysis was carried out taking into account those courses which had a gap of at least ten years between the first major closure and any revival of five years' duration or less. Twelve courses are affected by this approach, but even with these 'closures' brought forward in time, well over one third of all final meetings still occur during the 1870s.

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Basingstoke, which held meetings over quite long periods in earlier times: 1753 to 1788 and 1811 to 1829, but only between 1845 and 1850 during the review period, have been omitted.

<sup>4</sup> A similar fate befell three courses which lie outside the scope of the survey. The short-lived flat race meeting at Banbury was ended in 1846, when the course of the line from Oxford cut through its ground, but local support was already waning, due to periodic outbreaks of violence. Brown-Grant, E. 'The Banbury Horse Races' in *Cake and Cockhorse X*, 1986, pp. 26 ff., 68 ff., 110 ff., 190 ff. The steeplechase courses at Brixworth Vale and Daventry came to an end in the same way in 1858 and 1881 respectively. Markham, C.A. 'Flat Racing and Steeplechasing' in *Victoria County History - Northamptonshire II* (Archibald Constable, London, 1906) p.386, Munting, R. *Hedges and Hurdles* (J.A. Allen & Co. Ltd., London, 1987) p.27.

**TABLE 9.1: COMPARISON OF FINAL 'DEFINITIVE' RACECOURSE CLOSURES 1830 - 1909**

Date	Final closure in <i>Racing Calendar</i>		Adjusted for 'definitive' closure	
	No.	%	No.	%
1830 - 1839	-	-	2	2
1840 - 1849	13	10	20	16
1850 - 1859	16	13	19	15
1860 - 1869	17	13	15	12
1870 - 1879	55	44	45	35
1880 - 1889	16	13	16	13
1890 - 1899	6	5	6	5
1900 - 1909	3	2	3	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: *Racing Calendar*. There were no further closures until the outbreak of war.

Before passing onto a detailed examination of the 46 courses which made their final appearance in the *Racing Calendar* between 1840 and 1869, it should be emphasised that the decline in the number of courses from 115 to 48 between 1834 and 1914 masked the fact that a further 268 courses featured, albeit briefly, in the *Racing Calendar* during the review period.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, openings, closures and revivals were not peculiar to the railway age and the eighteenth century provided many examples of the ebb and flow of meetings, which were held on a 'hard core' of no more than 40 courses, with up to a further 80 seeing intermittent use. Even if the effect of the 1740 Act is ignored,<sup>6</sup> seemingly well supported meetings like Oswestry<sup>7</sup> and Marlborough<sup>8</sup> ceased suddenly because the support of the local nobleman was withdrawn; politics or other disputes caused two rival racecourses to flourish in the same time as at Lichfield

<sup>5</sup> Vamplew, W. *The Turf* (Allen Lane, London, 1976) p.35 identifies 186 new race meetings between 1845 and 1869, but underplays the fact that 76 were revivals, particularly during the late 1860s. Moreover, his contention that 'most were commercial speculations' does not stand up to detailed examination. They were certainly not 'nasty little race meetings .....in the environs of cities' as alleged by Thompson, L. *Newmarket: From James I to the Present Day* (Virgin Publishing, London, 2000) p.148. Almost all were in or near small towns, and very few could be described as 'nasty', with the exception of the London suburban courses of the 1860s. Even there, with one or two exceptions, their bad reputation has been much exaggerated.

<sup>6</sup> See Chapter 1, Text and Note 1.

<sup>7</sup> Ruckley, H. *Oswestry Racecourse* (Shropshire Books, Shrewsbury, 1989) p.24. The Oswestry meetings, which lapsed after 1740, were revived under the auspices of Sir Watkin Williams Wynn and Richard Williams, but were discontinued after nine years as Sir Watkin had overstretched his finances on various building projects, although even before that they had been supported by the mayor and other citizens to prevent their suspension.

<sup>8</sup> 'Memorial to the Rt. Hon. Lord Bruce', dated 12 October 1773, recommending that the races should be suspended. As a result, there were no further meetings at Marlborough until 1840.

<sup>9</sup> and Preston,<sup>10</sup> while for many courses there was often a problem 'for want of horses to run'. Rather ironically, it was politics which ultimately put paid to the Preston meeting in the 1830s.<sup>11</sup> This may seem an exceptional reason, but the early nineteenth century provided numerous examples of reasons for closure, which had their counterparts in the period under review. The meeting at Nantwich ended in 1824 because the new lessees decided on a change of use,<sup>12</sup> while in 1833 the upgrading of a canal put paid to Haigh Park, near Leeds,<sup>13</sup> a similar fate befalling the New Barns course in Manchester in 1901, as will be discussed later.

85 race meetings were instituted or revived during the 1830s, of which 67 were started in the latter half of the decade - the first 'Racecourse Mania'. Some only held one or two meetings, and in all 50 courses closed either permanently or for an extended period during the 1830s. Twenty of these did in fact reappear, some briefly

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<sup>9</sup> *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 5 September 1748. 'Whig' and 'Tory' races were held at Lichfield for six years, starting in 1748. See also Kettle, A.J. 'Lichfield Races', *Transactions of the Lichfield & South Staffordshire Archeological & History Society*, VI, 1964 - 5.

<sup>10</sup> Lancashire Record Office DDX 104. Fulwood Moor Race Minutes, 1790 - 1829 and Clemesha, H.W. *A History of Preston in Amounderness* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1912) p.210. 'Whig' races on Fulwood Moor, supported by the Earl of Derby, and 'Tory' races on Preston Moor, supported by Preston Corporation, were held between 1786 and 1791. Thereafter there was only the Fulwood Moor meeting supported by Lord Derby.

<sup>11</sup> Morgan, H.N.B. 'Social and Political Leadership in Preston 1820 - 1860' (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Lancaster, unpublished) p.87. The Preston meeting ended after Lord Derby had withdrawn his support, reputedly because of the defeat of his son, the Hon. E.G. Stanley, in the 1830 by-election. Although the *Preston Herald* of 28 May 1831 had indicated that leading figures might withdraw their support for the races, it was not until 1833 that Lord Derby neither sent horses to the meeting nor subscribed to the racefund. Lord Derby died in 1834, so ill health may have been a factor. For more details, see Hale, R.A. 'The Demise of Horseracing in Lancaster and Preston' (Undergraduate Dissertation, University of Lancaster, 1991) p.48., Hewitson, A. *History of Preston* (Preston Chronicle, Preston, 1883, rep. S.R. Publications, Wakefield, 1969) p.136. See Chapter 4, Text and Note 25 for revival of Preston races.

<sup>12</sup> Hall, J. *A History of the Town and Parish of Nantwich* (Author, Nantwich, 1883) p.218. Despite the support of the eccentric James Mytton, the meeting declined during the early 1820s, and in 1824 Benjamin White, a show manufacturer, and a Mr. Davis, a salt manufacturer, rented the raceground and ploughed it up. Brighton racecourse almost suffered a similar fate in 1798, because the race committee had not paid the farmer who owned the land a 'pipe of wine' to which he was entitled every quarter. Bryden, H.A. & Cuming, E.D. 'Racing' in *Victoria County History - Sussex II* (Archibald Constable, London, 1907) p. 456.

<sup>13</sup> Fairfax Blakeborough, J. *Northern Turf History*, Vol. II (J.A. Allen & Co., London, 1949) pp. 159 - 160, quoting *Sporting Magazine*. The Aire & Calder Navigation was making a new cut to improve the operation of its existing waterway between Leeds and Castleford. Haigh Park racecourse was an early commercial venture opened against considerable local opposition in June 1824. *Leeds Independent*, 16 June 1824, *Leeds Intelligencer*, 24 June 1824. Entrance to the course cost 2d. for pedestrians and between 1/- and 2/6d. for horsemen and various types of carriages. The 1825 meeting reputedly had 100,000 spectators on the second day but, whether this was an accurate assessment, the fixture was to survive, at times with difficulty, until the canal put paid to its career. Although the *Sporting Magazine*, even in 1833, was forecasting a good future for the meeting, the proprietors were unwilling to incur the cost of laying out a new course.

like St. Albans or Bristol, and others for long runs. Taunton, Newton Abbot and Uttoxeter are still with us, albeit as steeplechase meetings, while the flat race meetings at Pontefract and Bogside also reappeared. All this activity took place in a period where there were no significant major railway lines until the opening of the Grand Junction and London & Birmingham Railways in 1837 - 38. The overwhelming factor for survival from one year to another, quite apart from a general interest in the sport in any given area, was to get sufficient money in the race fund from subscriptions, donations and entries to meet the prize money expectations, without the promoters having to dip too often into their own pockets. This situation continued with or without railways, until the Jockey Club tipped the scales against the traditional meetings in the 1870s, aided on the one hand by the greater interest in and the greater 'respectability' of steeplechasing, and on the other by the growth of enclosed courses.

The review of course closures will therefore be conducted in three chapters:- 1840 - 1869 (45 closures), 1870 - 1879 (55 closures), and 1880 - 1909 (25 closures). The key elements for the survival of the remaining 48 courses will be covered in Chapter 12.

**TABLE 9.2: RACECOURSE CLOSURES 1840-1869**

Main Cause	1840-9	1850-9	1860-9	Total
General decline in support or lack of interest	3	3	7	13
End of major patronage	1	-	-	1
Change of owner or end of lease	-	-	1	1
Use for other purposes	1	2	-	3
Competition	2	2	1	5
Financial failure	-	-	-	-
Problems in organisation	2	-	3	5
Religious opposition	-	1	-	1
Jockey Club stipulation on minimum prize money	-	-	-	-
Continuation as 'unauthorised' meetings	1	3	3	7
Continuation as National Hunt meetings	-	2	1	3
Specific cause not identified	3	3	1	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>46</b>

Source: *Racing Calendar*. (This covers only courses having 10 or more appearances 1830 - 1869)

This chart indicates the reason and date of the *final* disappearance of a course from the *Racing Calendar*, and the narrative concentrates on this. A similar chart appears in Chapters 10 and 11, and the information for the whole of the review period will be found in Appendix XI. But, where appropriate, significant interim closures will be discussed to emphasise and place in context key elements of survival, whether permanent or temporary. A chronological summary of all courses closed between 1840 and 1909, together with the opening date of a station up to three miles away, forms Appendix XII.

### GENERAL DECLINE IN SUPPORT OR LACK OF INTEREST

It can be argued with some justice that lack of support (and therefore the necessary cash) was ultimately the underlying reason for the end of any race meeting, given the number which have survived overwhelming reverses because of the efforts of individuals, race committees or companies, whether these have been driven by purely sporting interest, commercial considerations, or a mixture of both. Nevertheless, this

section covers only those courses which, from an examination of the *Racing Calendar* and/or contemporary records, demonstrate dwindling support in patronage, finance or in the number of runners, without any other significant discernible cause for their demise.

Thirteen meetings ended between 1840 and 1869 because of declining support, and these were spread relatively evenly across England, with a slight bias towards the north west Midlands and the Welsh border. With the exception of Newcastle-under-Lyme and Oswestry, all were of relatively recent date, holding their first recorded fixture in the 1820s or 1830s. The small spa town of Buxton in Derbyshire held its first race meeting in 1821, thus increasing the spread of attractions offered to its aristocratic patrons. Cockfighting was an important adjunct to the races, which had a good date in June and support from the Duke of Devonshire, who provided a Gold Cup from 1826 onwards. Examination of the *Racing Calendar* shows a gradual decline coincident with the end of cockfighting in 1835, and by 1839 there were races only for the Gold Cup and the Buxton Plate, although in the last year - 1840 - a £5 hurdle race was added to enliven the proceedings. The nearest the railway got to Buxton at this time was Heaton Norris, some 15 miles away, where a station was opened on 4 June 1840.<sup>14</sup> The next meeting to finish in 1840, after just 10 years, during the review period was at Bishop's Castle, an isolated town near the Welsh border in Shropshire, but with 1,800 inhabitants one and a half times larger than Buxton. The fixture was dismissed by Whyte as 'one day's inferior racing about the middle of July'.<sup>15</sup> But Mr. Barrow thought it worthwhile to bring his mare Catherine in both 1839 and 1840, even though the nearest railheads, at Wolverhampton and Birmingham, were about 50 miles away.

The meeting at Marlow in Buckinghamshire had been established in 1837 for the benefit of local sportsmen interested in both flat and hurdle racing, and the race

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<sup>14</sup> Although Manchester was to be linked with both Birmingham and London by 1838, the route ran due west for 15 miles over the Liverpool & Manchester Railway before heading south, so on 30 June 1837 the Manchester & Birmingham Railway was authorised to provide a direct line to Crewe. This was completed on 10 August 1842. The railway did not reach Buxton itself until 1863, when both the L. & N. W. and Midland Railways opened branches into the town.

<sup>15</sup> Whyte, J.C. *History of the British Turf* (Henry Colburn, London, 1840) I, p.287. There had, however, been races at Bishop's Castle between 1780 and 1785 (*Shrewsbury Chronicle*, 9 September 1780, 3 September 1785) and from 1809 to 1840 (*Salopian Journal*, 26 July 1809, 13 July 1840). Only the later meetings held at Aston Hill were recorded in the *Racing Calendar* from 1830 onwards.

committee managed to keep it going on a two-day basis for eleven years.<sup>16</sup> But interest declined, and its demise may have been hastened by the revival of the Reading meeting in 1843. Although there was no railway to the town, it should not be thought isolated, as it was only five miles from Maidenhead on the G.W. main line, opened in June, 1838.

Flat racing at Taunton in Somerset had been recorded in the *Racing Calendar* since 1799, but was discontinued after the 1812 meeting, much to the chagrin of the local inhabitants, as nearby Bridgwater took the opportunity to revive its own meeting.<sup>17</sup> It was not until April 1825 that any concerted action was taken to restart the races, which took place in the following August. Although in 1826 'some eight or nine thousand thronged the course',<sup>18</sup> by 1838 enthusiasm had waned, and thereafter there were no meetings until 1846 on a course on the Trull Road. Taunton now had at least 10,000 inhabitants and had been on the main railway line from London since July 1842,<sup>19</sup> but the races only survived until August 1852, and Bridgwater once more stepped into the breach.<sup>20</sup>

The races at Eccles, four miles west of Manchester, although they achieved a measure of recognition by the *Racing Calendar* between 1839 and 1856, were effectively part of the Eccles Wakes Week at the end of August.<sup>21</sup> Eccles had been served by the L.& M.R. since February 1831, so the races were easily accessible and for the 1839 meeting the organisers decided to spread the meeting over four days in line with the Wakes but, as there was only one race a day, this stratagem was heavily

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Other meetings, notably at Ellesmere, Market Drayton and Wem, were held over long periods, but rarely found their way into the *Racing Calendar*.

<sup>16</sup> Whyte, *British Turf*, I, p.205. 'Two days' inferior racing towards the end of May. The members of the southern division of the county [MPs] usually add small sums to one of the stakes'. See also Cuming, E.D. 'Racing' in *Victoria County History - Buckinghamshire II* (Archibald Constable, London, 1908) p. 232.

<sup>17</sup> *Taunton Courier*, 12 August 1813.

<sup>18</sup> *Sporting Magazine*, April 1825, August 1826.

<sup>19</sup> See Chapter 3, Text and Note 10.

<sup>20</sup> The current National Hunt course was not opened until September 1927 on land belonging to Viscount Portman, close to the original racecourse in Shoreditch Road.

<sup>21</sup> See also Chapter 1, Note 42. As Sunday was also included in the celebration, the church authorities were concerned about the influence on children - a similar problem being associated with the traditional Whitsuntide race meeting at Manchester, and from as early as 1829 diversions were provided to remove young people from their malign influence. Moss, E. *Eccles and its Wesleyan Sunday Schools* (Taylor, Garnett, Evans & Co. Ltd., Manchester, 1913) p.21. Moss also paints a picture of the races 'celebrated by inordinate and wasteful feasting followed inevitably by heavy drinking and brawling'.

criticised.<sup>22</sup> Thereafter, however, a regular three day meeting provided reasonable sport until decline set in the 1850s, as evidenced by the *Racing Calendar* reports. The last meeting, which took place in September 1856, was marred by a dispute and the committee undertook no further fixtures.<sup>23</sup>

The race committee at Beccles in Suffolk, where the meeting started in 1802, had to struggle in the early days,<sup>24</sup> although there was an almost unbroken run between 1819 and 1849. By 1840, the town had 3,000 inhabitants (about three times the size of Buxton), a theatre and two 'handsome and commodious stands on the racecourse', which was '...near town, extensive and well kept. £80 - £100 is given away by the committee in the two day meeting in September'.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, a cricket match between teams from Beccles and nearby Yarmouth had to be provided as an added attraction. In fact, through all the later years the meeting, although well attended, had to be bolstered up by races for ponies, galloways and donkeys, as well as competitions for teams of carthorses.<sup>26</sup> The Eastern Counties Railway opened its line to Beccles for passengers on 4 December 1854, and the town soon became an important railway junction. All this did not help the races which, after a short-lived revival in 1856 and 1857, were discontinued, the six races at the last meeting attracting only 12 runners.

The meeting held at The Hoo, the home of Mr. Brand, later Lord Dacre, near Kimpton in Hertfordshire, catered almost exclusively for gentlemen riders and farmers of the county. Even in 1840 Whyte felt it was in decline but,<sup>27</sup> as Brand had become Master of Hertfordshire Foxhounds in the previous year, the meetings held at the end of the hunting season survived for another twenty years without markedly altering their format. The arrival of the railway at Wheathampstead, some three miles distant, in

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<sup>22</sup> The *Racing Calendar* listed Eccles in Staffordshire from 1839 to 1847, and in Lancashire in 1848 and from 1850 to 1856. An examination of the race titles leaves no doubt that this was the same meeting. The first race of the first meeting on 2 to 5 September 1839 is enough to verify this.

<sup>23</sup> *Eccles & Patricroft Journal*, 26 May 1922. The last race, which supposedly ended in a dispute, was won appropriately by John Osborne's Tiff, and the meeting was abandoned. Tiff won five of the nine races over the three days - every one he entered.

<sup>24</sup> Bradley, C. 'Racing' in *Victoria County History - Suffolk II* (Archibald Constable, London, 1907) p.382. In 1804 there were only three horses for the two races, one being a walkover.

<sup>25</sup> Whyte, *British Turf*, I, pp. 308 - 309.

<sup>26</sup> Bradley, 'Racing' in *VCH-Suffolk II*, p.382.

<sup>27</sup> Whyte, *British Racing*, I, p.253. 'The races at this place were commenced 1821 by the Hertfordshire Club, and for many years afforded excellent sport to numerous and fashionable visitors, but of late they have lost much of their attraction. The one day's running ... is of merely local interest.'



September 1860 did not halt their decline, although the strong hunt support continued to the last meeting in April 1862.<sup>28</sup>

Far more interesting was the longstanding meeting at Newcastle-under-Lyme, which ended in 1865 after a brief attempt to revive it at Knutton Heath, where it had been originally established in 1788,<sup>29</sup> when Newcastle was still the 'Capital of the Pottery Villages'.<sup>30</sup> The meeting was an important constituent of the Pottery Wakes Week, and when the Heath was enclosed under the Act of 1816, the racecourse was specifically protected, being leased to the Corporation for 13 guineas per annum.<sup>31</sup> All went well until the mid 1840s, when interest in the fixture declined, and the Corporation defaulted on the payments. Although the 1847 fixture was reasonably well attended,<sup>32</sup> the last meeting took place in 1848, the year in which the railway reached Stoke-on-Trent.<sup>33</sup> A public meeting was held to discuss the continuation of the fixture independently of the Corporation,<sup>34</sup> and, despite the opposition of the local clergy and others, race meetings were resumed on 3 August 1850 on a new course at Bootham, near Stoke-on-Trent. This move reflected the gradual emergence of Stoke and Hanley as the main towns in the Potteries. The meetings continued at Bootham until 1858, with nothing until 1864 when there was a well-attended meeting back at Knutton.<sup>35</sup> No reason is given by Adams for its demise in the following year,<sup>36</sup> but the

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<sup>28</sup> The Luton, Dunstable & Welwyn Junction Railway was opened between Dunstable and Luton on 13 May 1858, and throughout on 1 September 1860. It was amalgamated with the Great Northern Railway by the Act of 12 June 1861.

<sup>29</sup> *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 21 July 1788, but see also Chapter 1, Note 19.

<sup>30</sup> Molloy, P. *Recreation in Newcastle-under-Lyme 1837 - 1900* (University of Keele, Keele, 1982) p.3 quoting an observation made by a visitor to the area in 1750.

<sup>31</sup> An Act for Inclosing Lands in the Parishes of Newcastle-under-Lyme, Trentham, etc., in the County of Staffordshire, 1816 (Photocopy in Newcastle-under-Lyme Reference Library). This stated that Knutton Heath could be used for race meetings provided the sum of £13-13/- was paid to the Lord of the Manor at least three days before the meeting, together with three free and transferable tickets. If no tickets were given then a further £1-1/- was payable. If no races were held for five years, the agreement was void and all rights reverted to the Lord of the Manor.

<sup>32</sup> *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 7 August 1847. Despite a good attendance generally, the stand did not fill well and this may show the declining interest of the more affluent patrons, as evidenced by the make-up of the protest meeting in the following year, although the newspaper specifically ascribed their absence to preoccupation with the forthcoming General Election.

<sup>33</sup> The North Staffordshire Railway was authorised in three Acts of 26 June 1846, and its line from Stoke to a junction with the L.N.W.R. at Norton Bridge was opened on 17 April 1848. By the end of 1849 there were some 111 miles of double track opened for public use, but the branch into Newcastle was not opened until 6 September 1852.

<sup>34</sup> *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 5 April 1848. By 1848 the Corporation owed four years' payments, and the public meeting, was attended by 'between one or two hundred persons, chiefly of the operative class'.

<sup>35</sup> *Staffordshire Sentinel*, 24 September 1864.

site was ultimately used for coalmining and this, together with the demographic shift towards the new towns, also hastened its end.<sup>37</sup>

Overshadowed by both Brighton and Lewes, a race meeting at the seaside resort of Hastings had made its first appearance in the *Racing Calendar* in 1826.<sup>38</sup> Described by Whyte as a favourite resort for invalids because of its mild climate,<sup>39</sup> its two-day meeting in September was a little late for the 'Sussex Fortnight', and even 6,000 permanent inhabitants could not support it if others could not be persuaded to come, and the unbroken run of meetings ended in 1846, the year in which the railway reached Hastings. There was a further fixture in 1849, at which the L.B.S.C.R. donated a £25 prize, but even the improved rail links provided shortly afterwards<sup>40</sup> neither stimulated an immediate revival nor supported a later attempt between 1865 and 1867, which, as reports in the local press clearly showed, foundered from a lack of interest.<sup>41</sup>

Newton Abbot, in Devon, is well known today for its National Hunt meetings, but in the nineteenth century it held a few flat race meetings, the first eight between 1835 and 1843. By this time the railway had not even reached Exeter, where there was a long established meeting. Newton Abbot, which the railway reached in 1846,<sup>42</sup> did provide

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<sup>36</sup> Adams, D.W., *Horseracing in Newcastle-under-Lyme* (MS compiled from sources in Newcastle-under-Lyme Reference Library. (Filing Box Class RLG 42.1 - No. 2)

<sup>37</sup> Lester, C.R. *The Stoke to Market Drayton Line* (Oakwood Press, Salisbury, 1983) p.52. Local maps of the late 19th century show a Racecourse Colliery on or near the site of the course.

<sup>38</sup> *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 8 September 1823, reported that a subscription had been opened for 'defraying the expenses attendant on the establishment of Annual Races', the first meeting being held on Bulverhythe Salts between Hastings and Bexhill on 30 October 1823. By 1825 the meeting had moved to August and in the following year transferred to the South Saxons, nearer the centre of Hastings. Baines, J.M. *Historic Hastings* (Cinque Port Press Ltd, St. Leonards on Sea, 1984) p.310, described the 1827 meeting, and Belt, A. (ed.) *Hastings: A Survey of Times Past and Present* (Kenneth Saville, Hastings, 1937) p.231 quoted at length a contemporary report of the meeting on 21/22 August 1836, at which the main civic dignitaries were present.

<sup>39</sup> Whyte, *British Turf*, I, p.333. *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, 9 October 1841 described the efforts made by a Mr. Farncomb and his men to save the meeting after heavy rain. The ground was prone to flooding and this was a major factor in the initial suspension of the races.

<sup>40</sup> The L.B.S.C.R. had opened a branch from Lewes to a temporary station at St. Leonards (Bulverhythe) on 27 June 1846, which closed when the extension to Hastings & St. Leonards was taken into use on 7 November of the same year. This station, which was near the West Marina in St. Leonards, was so renamed on 13 February 1851, when the S.E. R. opened its branch to Hastings from Ashford. This connected with the L.B.S.C. St. Leonards line at Bopeep Junction, while a direct line from Tunbridge Wells was completed on 1 February 1852.

<sup>41</sup> *Hastings & St. Leonards News*, 25 August 1865, recorded the revival on a new course in the valley between Felsham and Grove Farm. The same paper, on 24 August 1866, stated that while there were about 2,900 spectators at the races on the Tuesday, no less than 8,000 attended a fete on the following day. The support declined still further in 1867, and there were no more meetings.

<sup>42</sup> The South Devon Railway, reached Newton Abbot on 30 December 1846, Totnes on 20 July 1847 and Plymouth on 2 April 1849, there having been a station since 5 May 1848 at Laira Green on its outskirts, which was closed when the extension into the latter town was completed.

an alternative while both Exeter and Totnes were struggling or in abeyance, but could not sustain its existence after 1848. Its single meeting in 1868 cannot be regarded as leading into National Hunt racing, as this did not start in earnest until 1880.<sup>43</sup>

Bridgwater in Somerset held its last meeting in September 1868, having had some fixtures in the eighteenth century, and after having capitalised twice on the decline of Taunton. Nevertheless, it had struggled in the mid-1830s, and on this occasion lapsed even before its nearby rival. The Bristol & Exeter Railway reached Bridgwater from Bristol on 14 June 1841,<sup>44</sup> but the revival only came after the final demise of the Taunton races in 1852, Bridgwater managing to sustain a meeting from 1854 without a break until 1868. The Exeter meetings were also suspended between 1847 and 1859 and the end of the Bridgwater meetings came in a further gap (1866 - 1869) although the more recent, and slightly more remote, meeting at nearby Tiverton had started up again in 1867. In common, therefore, with other west country meetings, Bridgwater races ended 'for want of adequate support', even though Heinemann implied that the meetings might have continued 'not under rules'.<sup>45</sup>

The races at Oswestry in Shropshire, which had lapsed in the later eighteenth century,<sup>46</sup> enjoyed an almost unbroken run from 1802 to 1848. The course was difficult of access, being 1,060 ft. above sea level and two miles west of Oswestry. This did not prevent it being a disreputable meeting, although the Watkin Wynn family and local MPs supported it right to the end, and local opinion was sharply divided on it.<sup>47</sup> Difficulty was experienced in getting suitable dates and the meeting latterly clashed with Manchester races and the newly established autumn meeting in Chester. Attendances dropped off in the mid 1840s and the race committee wanted to abandon the meeting,<sup>48</sup> which by 1847 was down to one day, with little support from the gentry. In 1848 the situation was worse with two disputes on the last day so, when the railway

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<sup>43</sup> Smyly, P. *Encyclopedia of Steeplechasing* (R. Hale Ltd., London, 1979) p.189.

<sup>44</sup> See Chapter 3, Text and Note 10. The local company sponsored a race at the 1868 meeting, as recounted in Chapter 6.

<sup>45</sup> Heinemann, A. 'Racing' in *Victoria History - Somerset II* (Archibald Constable, 1911)p. 594.

<sup>46</sup> See Note 7. The Enclosure Act of 1777 had specifically protected the racecourse and this protection was maintained when the enclosure of the surrounding area took place in 1808, a grandstand being erected two years later. *Salopian Journal*, 12 September 1810.

<sup>47</sup> *Oswestry Herald*, 24 September 1822, 1 October 1822, waxed lyrical on its merits. While the Rev. A.A.C. Lloyd of Whittington was vehemently against the meeting seven years later, more than bearing out the comment of the *Shrewsbury Chronicle* in 1820 that the 'course literally swarmed with pickpockets', the race committee at least in 1836 and 1841 supported good causes in the area. Ruckley, *Oswestry Racecourse*, pp. 28 - 29.

arrived at Gobowen, 2¼ miles away, in October 1848, and the branch into Oswestry was opened two months later, the last real meeting had already been held.<sup>49</sup> Although the Oswestry & Llanymynech steeplechases were to prove popular, the gap between the single flat race meeting in 1868 and the start of serious steeplechasing was again too great for this to be considered as a continuation, although there had been a few abortive attempts earlier.<sup>50</sup>

Belford in Northumberland had recorded meetings sporadically in the *Racing Calendar* between 1838 and 1868. The opening of a station on the east coast main line, 15½ miles south of Berwick-on-Tweed, on 29 March 1847 did not appear to have had any effect on the status of the meetings, as there was a gap in the entries between 1842 and 1858. In 1840 Whyte commented that 'Races of an inferior description take place here in September'.<sup>51</sup> And that is how they carried on until the final period of decline.<sup>52</sup>

### END OF MAJOR PATRONAGE

All traditional courses relied to some extent on the patronage of local gentry and aristocracy, but the flat race meeting at Burton Constable in East Yorkshire in the park belonging to Sir Thomas Aston Clifford Constable, only took place between 1838 and 1849, during his tenure as Joint Master of the Holderness Hunt.<sup>53</sup> Although there was liberal hospitality with outdoor sports, music and private theatricals, and in the 1840s the meeting threatened to eclipse that at nearby Beverley, the flat races ended when Sir

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<sup>48</sup> *Eddowe's Journal*, 30 September 1846, 23 September 1847.

<sup>49</sup> Although the first section of the Shrewsbury & Chester Railway from Chester to Ruabon had been opened on 4 November 1846, the extension through Gobowen to Shrewsbury was not ready for public traffic until 14 October 1848. The branch to Oswestry was opened on 23 December of the same year, but no further progress was made westward until 1 May 1860.

<sup>50</sup> The first meeting of the Oswestry & Llanymynech Steeplechases was not until 13 April 1884. These continued, with some interruptions, until 4 May 1940.

<sup>51</sup> Whyte, *British Turf*, I, p.282.

<sup>52</sup> Fairfax Blakeborough, *Northern Turf History*, II, p.31, based his comments on correspondence between Brigadier-General Sir Loftus Bates and Mr. G.D. Atkinson Clark of Belford Hall in 1906. The dates of 1833 - 1863 are at variance with the *Racing Calendar* (unless this is merely a transcription error for 1838 - 1868), but the information on both meetings, balls and assemblies bears out the assessment from the *Racing Calendar* and other sources that the meetings had good local support, a fair number of runners and just 'ran out of steam'.

<sup>53</sup> This name is as Bonnett, F. 'Racing' in *Victoria County History - Yorkshire II* (Archibald Constable, London, 1907) p.493. Fairfax Blakeborough, *Northern Turf History*, II, p.59, gives it as Sir Clifford Constable.

Thomas ceased to be Joint Master.<sup>54</sup> Steeplechase meetings, however, continued at Burton Constable only for another two years.

### CHANGE OF OWNER

Although the longstanding meeting at Malton in North Yorkshire had experienced some interruption in the 1830s and 1840s, it was in the middle of a racehorse training area, and served from 8 July 1845 by the York - Scarborough railway line.<sup>55</sup> It was thus easy of access for both spectators and horses, while its races were graced by top jockeys such as Flatman and Fordham. *Bell's Life* in 1860 was enthusiastic about its prospects, as John Scott - by then a successful local trainer - had spent a considerable sum in improving the course, and 'the sport was quite as good as at many meetings of greater pretensions'.<sup>56</sup>

But fate was soon to take a hand, as Major General Norcliffe, owner of the Langton estate on which the racecourse was situated, died on 8 February 1852, and the property passed to his niece. Her son, the Reverend Charles Best (who assumed the name of Norcliffe), persuaded his mother that the land could more profitably be used for agricultural purposes. The last meeting took place on 22/23 May 1862 and the ground was ploughed up, together with the cricket ground of the Yorkshire Gentlemen and the rifle range of the 1st North Yorks Volunteers. Only the training grounds and gallops were saved.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> The Beverley meeting did not appear in the *Racing Calendar* in 1843 and between 1845 and 1847, but its increased accessibility after the opening of the Bridlington branch of the Hull & Selby Railway on 7 October 1846, coupled with the withdrawal of Sir Thomas Clifford Constable from the Joint Mastership of the Holderness Hunt, influenced the transfer back to Beverley. Fairfax Blakeborough, *Northern Turf History*, II, p.60, indicates that meetings were held at both Beverley and Burton Constable in 1837, but only the former appears in the *Racing Calendar*.

<sup>55</sup> The Y. & N.M.R. had opened its main line to York on 29 May 1839, which enabled through trains to be run to and from London, 217 miles away by the routes then in existence. Journeys northwards could be made over the Great North of England Railway to Darlington, opened to passengers on 31 March 1841. Malton was later connected to a junction with the York - Darlington main line at Pilmoor, south of Thirsk, and southwards to Driffield. This line was opened on 1 June 1853 and, like all railways then in the area, became part of the N.E.R.

<sup>56</sup> Quoted in Fairfax Blakeborough, *Northern Turf History*, II, p.163.

<sup>57</sup> Rather ironically the steeplechase course, laid down by William l'Anson in 1882 after an earlier attempt to promote the sport had failed, also suffered closure shortly after improvements had been made to the training gallops in 1903. Charles Perkins, who some twenty years earlier had been one of the leading lights in the move of Newcastle races to Gosforth Park and was now l'Anson's chief patron, objected to racing taking place over training gallops, and insisted that the meetings should cease, the last one taking place on 3/4 February 1904.

## USE FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Malton could have fitted equally well into this section, but was differentiated from the racecourses discussed here as its demise was caused by a change of owner, rather than just a change of heart or an opportunity to find a more profitable use.

The relatively isolated course at Dumfries in south west Scotland had enjoyed the support of the Caledonian Hunt Club since 1788,<sup>58</sup> and after some gaps during the Napoleonic Wars, had an unbroken run of meetings between 1815 and 1847. A new course was set up in the 1820s but, despite the continuing support of the C.H.C. and noblemen such as the Earl of Eglinton, decline started in the 1830s when, for example in 1836, only four horses belonging to three owners turned up for the two day meeting.<sup>59</sup> The situation became even more critical, and in May 1840 the clerk of the course wrote to gentlemen in the area for 'assistance as we have great need of it at present'.<sup>60</sup> Decline continued, stemmed only by visits from the C.H.C., and donations from them and others. By 1847, the meeting was down to one day, with only six horses belonging to three owners competing, despite two races sponsored by the Southern Meeting (the C.H.C. contribution) and £80 added to The Dumfriesshire Handicap by 'noblemen and gentlemen'. The site was given over to agriculture, and 'when the word was given to cross the road 102 ploughs pronounced its doom'.<sup>61</sup> Neither the proximity nor the arrival of the railway at Dumfries could save or revive the meeting,<sup>62</sup> but the four day meeting sponsored by the Caledonian Hunt Club in 1844 had been able to attract the celebrated mare Alice Hawthorn from near York without any railway closer than Carlisle.

The long-established course at Lancaster had survived the vicissitudes caused by the loss of some of the functions of the county town to Preston and Liverpool, which had

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<sup>58</sup> Fairfax Blakeborough, *Northern Turf History*, II, p.77, attributed the first involvement of the Caledonian Hunt Club at Dumfries to 1792, but the Club had given a 50 gn. plate and allocated the 100 gn. King's Plate to the meeting on 21-24 October 1788.

<sup>59</sup> The meeting, on 13/14 October 1836, clashed with Northallerton. Nevertheless Sim Templeman turned up to ride two winners.

<sup>60</sup> Letter from John Brand to Andrew Johnstone, quoted in Fairfax Blakeborough, *J. Northern Turf History*, Vol. IV (Author, Whitby, 1973) p.323.

<sup>61</sup> The Druid, *Field and Fern* (1865), quoted by Fairfax Blakeborough, *Northern Turf History*, IV, p.332.

<sup>62</sup> The Caledonian Railway had opened its line from Carlisle to Beattock, which passed through Lockerbie about 12 miles from Dumfries, to public traffic on 10 September 1847, just over a month before the final meeting. But it was the Glasgow, Dumfries & Carlisle Railway which opened a branch into the town from the south on 28 August 1848. The C.R. did not reach Dumfries with a branch from Lockerbie until 1 September 1863.

also impacted on its social life. The first meeting after the arrival of the Lancaster & Preston Junction Railway in June 1840 attracted a crowd of between 4,000 and 5,000, including visitors from elsewhere in Lancashire, but although there was a riot a subsequent enquiry implied it was really a protest against the local Liberal Council.<sup>63</sup> The town was now linked directly to London and it gained access to Carlisle in 1846, and Glasgow and Edinburgh two years later. The standard of racing was still good, and further rail connections into Yorkshire enabled not only horses but large number of spectators to attend its meetings.<sup>64</sup> But in 1855 the Duke of Hamilton withdrew the Hamilton Plate, and there was a general decline in subscriptions and support.<sup>65</sup> Worse was to come, however, for William Garnett, who had bought the Quernmore Estate in 1842, which included some allotments on the racecourse, previously the property of the Corporation, decided to turn his land totally over to farming after the July 1857 meeting.<sup>66</sup> Garnett had been a steward at the 1850 meeting, but his decision may have been coloured by recent disturbances at the racecourse - there had been a brawl between navvies and militiamen in 1855.<sup>67</sup> Whatever his reasons, he would not change his decision, and much of the racecourse went under the plough.<sup>68</sup> A 29 year unbroken run of meetings at Stourbridge in Worcestershire ended in 1858 when the course, or at least part of it, was required for housing development.<sup>69</sup> This had been stimulated both

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<sup>63</sup> *Lancaster Gazette*, 25 July 1840, 1 August 1840. The Liberal Town Council had been trying since 1836 to abolish the races. It now tabled a motion specifically for this purpose (Town Council Minutes, 7 September 1840). See Gooderson, P.J. 'The Social and Economic History of Lancaster 1780 - 1914' (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Lancaster, 1975) p.43. The next election re-established a Tory Anglican majority in the council, and the races continued without any interruption.

<sup>64</sup> *Lancaster Gazette*, 18 July 1849, 5 July 1851, the latter recording the arrival of 1,300 Yorkshiremen on a single day of the meeting. Although railways could also take people, particularly children, away from the influence of the races, the practice of the 'Sunday School Treat' or 'Gala Day' had started well before the railway age, *Lancaster Gazette*, 29 July 1831, 9 July 1845, 4 July 1850.

<sup>65</sup> *Lancaster Gazette*, 26 July 1856, but the local railway officials made a donation to the 1856 meeting.

<sup>66</sup> Hale, 'Demise of Horseracing in Lancaster and Preston' pp. 53 - 55, but Clarke, G.C. *Lancaster Records 1801 - 1851* (Gazette Office, Lancaster, 1859) p.VIII, inferred this took place nearer 1857. Despite the title, Clarke discussed later events in his Introduction.

<sup>67</sup> *Lancaster Guardian*, 28 July 1855. Vamplew, W. *The Turf* (Allen Lane, London, 1976) p.37 asserts that many meetings were deserted by traditional patrons because of 'unwelcome spectators brought by the railway.' But instances from before the railway age can also be cited, e.g. Oxford, Morpeth, Oswestry.

<sup>68</sup> Clarke, *Lancaster Records*, p.VIII. See Note 66 above. These are news items extracted from the *Lancaster Gazette*.

<sup>69</sup> Price, Sir R.G. 'Racing' in *Victoria County History - Worcestershire II* (Archibald Constable, London, 1906) p.326.

by industrial growth and the arrival of the railway in the area in 1852.<sup>70</sup> Certainly interest in racing was not dead in the town, as the Stourbridge Hunt held steeplechase meetings at nearby Wassel Grove from 1849 until April 1874, but this cannot be considered as a continuation of the flat race meeting in another guise.

## COMPETITION

The effect of competition is always an element in the life of any race meeting, but in the case of five meetings during the period under review, it was the prime reason for their closure. The foundation of the Pottery meeting in the grounds of Etruria Hall in 1824 was certainly imbued with the spirit of competition, as many racegoers in the area were dissatisfied with the way in which the existing Newcastle meeting was being run. The Pottery meeting had less pretensions than its older rival and, once the initial rancour had subsided, the two existed in tandem to provide four days' racing during Stoke Wakes Week for a number of years. But, although there were upwards of 20,000 people living in the Potteries,<sup>71</sup> there was insufficient interest to keep two meetings going, and the more recent fixture ended in August 1841.

Shifnal, just over 12 miles from Wolverhampton on the road to Wellington, which closed in May 1846 after a dozen years,<sup>72</sup> suffered from being a late comer in an area with several well-established meetings.<sup>73</sup> Even though it had no significant date clashes, its activities reputedly declined although at its last meeting, held three years before the railway reached Shifnal, there were two £100 races. Nevertheless, at the time of its demise, only two of its rivals - Wolverhampton and Stafford - were on a railway line,<sup>74</sup> and the latter was struggling to survive.

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<sup>70</sup> The Oxford, Worcester & Wolverhampton Railway had been opened between Droitwich and Stourbridge on 1 May 1852 and on to Dudley for passengers on 20 December of the same year, freight traffic having commenced just over a month earlier.

<sup>71</sup> Molloy, *Recreation in Newcastle-under-Lyme*, pp. 11 - 14. A number of forces were at work, the growth of Stoke and Hanley, the rise of evangelicalism seeking to regulate the leisure of the working class and divert this away from what were considered 'degenerate' pursuits, and the increasing popularity of other organised games such as cricket. *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 6 August 1836.

<sup>72</sup> *Salopian Journal*, 18 September 1822, recorded a meeting at Shifnal, but neither this nor those in the following two years feature in the *Racing Calendar*. Both *Shrewsbury Chronicle*, 15 May 1846, and *Eddowe's Journal*, 20 May 1846, reported the last meeting in the *Racing Calendar*, but these may have continued until about 1857. Stonehenge, *Manual of British Rural Sports* (3rd ed.) (G. Routledge & Co., London, 1857), p.373. This survival would not be surprising, as the last meeting had £230 of added money for its three races.

<sup>73</sup> These included Wolverhampton, Stafford, Shrewsbury, Wenlock and Bridgnorth.

<sup>74</sup> The Shrewsbury & Birmingham Railway was opened between Shrewsbury and Oakengates on 1 June 1849 and through Shifnal to Wolverhampton on 12 November of the same year. As will be



By far the most outstanding example of closure due to competition occurred at the fashionable spa of Tunbridge Wells, which had added flat racing to its attractions in 1824 (although a less prestigious meeting had existed earlier). With some 10,000 residents in the town during the season, the meetings were well supported. 12,000 attended the second day of the 1834 meeting which was graced by the Duchess of Kent, who donated a £70 cup. But, despite its clashing with the Rochester meeting, plenty of thieves and pickpockets made their presence felt,<sup>75</sup> well before the arrival of the S.E.R. in September 1845, which only added to the ease of access from London.<sup>76</sup> There was no fixture in 1850 but, when the meeting reappeared for the last time in 1851 with all its usual races, it was in September, its normal date in August being occupied by a meeting at Tonbridge (or Tunbridge, as it was called in those days).<sup>77</sup> From the racecard this appeared to be a much inferior meeting, but it took over from Tunbridge Wells until 1856, after which it vanished for five years, although steeplechase meetings had started in that year. The subsequent history and demise of the Tonbridge meeting really belong to Chapter 10, but will be discussed here to preserve continuity and avoid unnecessary repetition. 'Mixed' meetings were held between 1862 and September 1874 but, although prize money averaged £70 - £75 per race, the struggle to meet the Jockey Club stipulation of £50 minimum prize money had led to a decline in the value of the principal races, and both flat races and steeplechases ended, although the course remained listed in the *Racing Calendar* in case of a possible resumption.<sup>78</sup>

Conversely, the Glamorganshire flat race meetings at the small Welsh town of Cowbridge, which ended in November 1855, were inextricably tied in with those at nearby Cardiff, and finally succumbed in the face of their sustained revival. They will,

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discussed later, the railway did not reach Wenlock and Bridgnorth until 1862, yet both these meetings lasted into the 1870s.

<sup>75</sup> Hilton, J. 'A Day at the Races', *Bygone Kent*, XIX, 1998, p.658, for the very detailed 1834 race regulations, and pp. 661 - 662.

<sup>76</sup> The line was completed to a temporary terminus at Jackwood Springs on 20 September 1845, the continuation of the line to its terminus being hindered by a long tunnel, so the permanent station was not opened until 25 November 1846. The continuation of the line southwards to Battle and Hastings took place in 1851 - 1852 after the demise of the meeting.

<sup>77</sup> The racecourse at Tonbridge was quite close to the town's station on the main line from London to Ashford and Dover, which was known as Tunbridge when opened on 26 May 1842. It became Tunbridge Junction in January 1852 and remained thus until May 1893, even though the official spelling of the town's name was Tonbridge from the formation of the Tonbridge Local Board in 1870.

therefore, be discussed in Chapter 10 together with the more important meeting, although included in the analysis for the period 1840 to 1869.<sup>79</sup>

Meetings were held in Crowe Hall Park at Downham in Norfolk at intervals between 1841 and July 1866,<sup>80</sup> but this was not a dedicated racecourse and, through the kindness of its owner, was used for many other events. The railway was opened from Kings Lynn to Downham in October 1846 and through to Ely a year later, giving access to Cambridge and London, with a link to Newmarket from April 1848.<sup>81</sup> As all the lines in the area ultimately became part of the G.E.R., it was surprising to find the advertisement for trains to the 1851 Downham races (not recorded in the *Racing Calendar*) headed Great Northern Railway - East Anglian Lines.<sup>82</sup> Certainly for the last meeting the G.E.R. provided special fares for the 'shoals of visitors', and a 'very commodious Grand Stand was provided'. But while the people may have flocked there, the fields were small, because of the 'great drain on its stables this week for Cambridge and Huntingdon meetings'. The fields became even smaller when late trains caused at least two horses to miss their races.<sup>83</sup>

### PROBLEMS IN ORGANISATION

Four courses closed because of difficulties in arranging meetings, disagreements about arrangements and payments, or the withdrawal of the organiser with no one prepared to take his place.

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<sup>78</sup> Boorman, H.R.P. & Maskell, E. *Tonbridge Free Press Centenary* (Tonbridge Free Press Ltd., Tonbridge, 1969) stated that the races 'attracted the very worst and roughest elements of the times, and the meeting began to get a bad name for rowdiness' so the races were discontinued.

<sup>79</sup> National Hunt races were held at Cowbridge on an annual basis from March 1887 (although there may have been some earlier meetings) and survived until May 1939, the local railway companies providing special fares and excursion trains to the steeplechases, but they can in no way be considered as a continuation of the flat race meetings. A six mile branch from Llantrisant on the G.W. Swansea - Cardiff main line, known as the Cowbridge Railway and worked by the Taff Vale Railway, had been opened in September 1865, but had not stimulated any noteworthy revival in flat racing circles.

<sup>80</sup> Pitt, C. *A Long Time Gone* (Portway Press, Halifax, 1996) p.442, states that the Downham meetings started in 1838, but this fixture is not recorded in the *Racing Calendar*. Pitt does not list the 1841 meeting, which is in the *Racing Calendar*, together with 1842, 1854 to 1862 and 1866.

<sup>81</sup> See Chapter 10, Note 83.

<sup>82</sup> At this time, the G.N.R. had been approached to lease the almost bankrupt East Anglian Railway, which owned all the lines in the area, but the plan fell through. The advertisement, in Kings Lynn Museum, shows that open coaches or waggons were still being used for the cheapest fares.

<sup>83</sup> *Lynn Advertiser*, 28 July 1866. Only six horses took place in the four races for minimal prize money, and one horse won three of these. But the Cambridge and Huntingdon meetings had plenty of races and runners.

Blandford in Dorset had held meetings since at least 1603 until August 1844 on the downs near Tarrant Monkton.<sup>84</sup> Brailsford ascribes its demise to the arrival of the railway at Salisbury, but this event did not take place until almost three years after the last meeting.<sup>85</sup> In any case, the two day meetings were generally held a week after Salisbury to give every reason for going there. As mentioned in Chapter 8, John Scott's father thought it worthwhile to send him in 1808 from Oxford with a horse to race and sell at Blandford, while in later years Lord George Bentinck regularly sent horses to race there. What really caused the problem was the decision of the race committee to hold the meetings from 1841 onwards in October instead of August. Some subscribers to the Foal Stakes in 1842 refused to pay their forfeits on the grounds that their engagements were made for August, not for October. The dispute was referred to the Jockey Club, and both the Stewards and the General Meeting found in favour of the objectors.<sup>86</sup> There was in any case only a single day's racing in October 1842, and when the meeting reverted to August in 1843, there were only four races with small fields. The 1844 meeting had only three races, of which one was a 'walkover', and the others had two and three runners respectively. Thereupon the committee decided to call it a day.

It may well be true that ultimately the racecourse at Dudley in Worcestershire fell prey to the spread of coalmines and ironworks in the Black Country,<sup>87</sup> but the direct cause for the termination of the race meetings was totally different. The two day meeting had been held since 1837 on the west side of the Tipton Road but, after 1846 had moved to a new site across the road as the race ground was needed for the construction of the Oxford, Worcester & Wolverhampton Railway.<sup>88</sup> Both the 1847

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<sup>84</sup> Butler, P.A. 'Sport Ancient and Modern' in *Victoria County History - Dorset II* (Archibald Constable, London, 1908) p.316.

<sup>85</sup> Brailsford, D. *British Sport: A Social History* (Lutterworth Press, Cambridge, 1992) p.85 states that the L.S.W.R. reached Salisbury in 1840. The line from Bishopstoke (now Eastleigh) to Salisbury was not opened until 1 March 1847, while the last race meeting at Blandford took place on 20 August 1844.

<sup>86</sup> *Racing Calendar*, 1842, p.198.

<sup>87</sup> Price, 'Racing' in *VCH - Worcestershire II*, p.326.

<sup>88</sup> *Wolverhampton Chronicle*, 28 July 1847. Hale, M. *The Oxford, Worcester & Wolverhampton Railway through the Black Country* (Author, Dudley, 1995) p. 23. A map from a survey made in February 1845 shows the proposed line of the railway cutting across the racecourse. Although construction was under way by the beginning of 1847, and the section of line between Dudley and Tipton was ready for the permanent way by September 1849, financial problems beset the company. The line from Stourbridge to Dudley was not opened until 20 December 1852 and the Dudley to Tipton section followed on 1 December 1853.

and 1848 meetings on the new course went off well,<sup>89</sup> but there were no races in 1849 because the owner of the land, a Mr. Comeley, was pursuing the clerk of the course, Mr. Challingworth, and another unnamed individual to recover a sum of money owing for work done for the 1848 season. There was no inclination amongst the sporting fraternity to seek a solution or an alternative venue, and the meeting lapsed.<sup>90</sup>

Although Hartlepool's first entry in the *Racing Calendar* was in 1841, a three day meeting was certainly held there as part of the local festivities in 1823.<sup>91</sup> Local rail passenger trains had served Hartlepool for some time, but the linking of the town to the main railway system via Stockton in February 1841<sup>92</sup> may have raised the profile of its meeting if only for two years. Fairfax Blakeborough dismissed the next years, 'as the stakes were so small as only to make it worthwhile for local horses to run.'<sup>93</sup> Even when the meeting returned to the *Racing Calendar* in 1854 there were continuing problems, as it clashed with Stockton and Sunderland. By 1860 Stockton and Hartlepool, now both 'gate money' meetings, were the only fixtures in the county.<sup>94</sup> But there were disputes within the race committee and between the communities of Hartlepool and West Hartlepool about the ownership of the races. A measure of understanding seemed to have been achieved for the 1863 meeting, which was attended by top jockeys, but the total stake money was only £185, even though the local innkeepers had donated £30 and collected much more, so the meeting was terminated.

The railway was still about 25 miles away at Reading when the Hungerford meetings commenced in 1840, but strong support from innkeepers, the local military and the

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<sup>89</sup> *Wolverhampton Chronicle*, 28 July 1847, 19 July 1848.

<sup>90</sup> *Wolverhampton Chronicle*, 18 July 1849. 'Had some respectable parties exerted themselves in the "right quarter", the same ground or ground equally as eligible might have been obtained and the subscriptions of the Rt. Hon. Lord Ward and J. Benbow [the two main patrons] would have been forthcoming. It is a matter of regret that these annual sports should be allowed to die away - as they may not be revived again.'

<sup>91</sup> *Sporting Magazine*, August 1823, quoted in Fairfax Blakeborough *Northern Turf History II*, p.110.

<sup>92</sup> The Hartlepool Railway & Docks Company opened to freight traffic on 28 November 1835 but, although some passenger services were worked by contractors from July of the following year, the company's own services did not start until 1 May 1839. The Stockton & Hartlepool Railway coming from the south opened to passengers on 10 February 1841. The ill feeling between Hartlepool and West Hartlepool over the race meeting mentioned in the text was to some degree mirrored in the railway scene, as the two were not effectively linked by rail until 28 May 1877.

<sup>93</sup> Fairfax Blakeborough, *Northern Turf History*, II, p.110.

<sup>94</sup> Sunderland only held meetings in 1855 - 57, and Durham had a gap in its long run between 1860 and 1862.

town enabled it to grow into a reasonably successful meeting. Nevertheless, when the G.W. branch to the town had been authorised in 1845, the local newspaper commented that 'when the railway reaches this at present almost isolated spot we shall be surprised if there is not a still larger concourse of spectators attracted to watch these popular diversions'.<sup>95</sup> The G.W.R. ran special trains to the meeting on 2/3 June 1848, when there were plenty of entries, but the 1849 meeting only occupied a single day, and there were far less runners than in previous years, with added money of only £85. There were no more meetings for ten years, even though there were many racehorse training stables within easy reach.

The races were revived in 1859 by John Clarke Free, landlord of the Three Tuns Inn at Hungerford, and attracted top jockeys such as George Fordham and the Grimshaw brothers, as well as the owner and rider, Thomas Parr, who had also taken his horses there in the 1840s. Although the catchment area was further extended when the railway was opened to Devizes in 1862,<sup>96</sup> the organisers had difficulty in getting good dates, and in 1864 were allocated 25/26 February. The fixture survived this reverse, but had to struggle against competition from other meetings. The G.W.R. ran special trains, but these brought disruptive elements to the town. The sport of the 1869 meeting was described as 'dull and uninteresting' and the attendance 'very poor', but there were eleven races, twelve runners in the Ladies Plate, and total prize money in excess of £300 on each day. Many courses would have been delighted with this. Nevertheless, Mr. Free decided that the constant struggle to provide a worthwhile fixture was too much. Perhaps the fact that his dog cart had been stolen at the meeting, and then offered for sale outside his own inn in the High Street, was the last straw.<sup>97</sup>

The remote Welsh meeting at Brecon figured in the *Racing Calendar* for the first time in 1825, and enjoyed an almost unbroken run until its demise in September 1868. The races were popular, and even in 1840 the town had over 5,000 inhabitants and the necessary amenities to support the fixture.<sup>98</sup> Railways reached Brecon relatively late if

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<sup>95</sup> See Chapter 5, Note 79, for details of the railway. At this time the race committee often gave the meeting the title 'Hungerford Diversions'.

<sup>96</sup> The Berks and Hants Extension Railway was opened from Hungerford to Devizes on 11 November 1862, Devizes having already been reached from the west on 1 July 1857. A new station was provided at Hungerford when the extension was opened, and the company was absorbed by the G.W.R. in 1882.

<sup>97</sup> Boyd, *The Running Horses*, p.16.

<sup>98</sup> Whyte, *British Turf*, I, pp. 356 -357.

we except the Brecon & Hay Railway of 1816, which had carried passengers since at least 1826. The Brecon & Merthyr Junction Railway was opened in April 1863, and within just over four years the previously isolated town had railways to all points of the compass.<sup>99</sup> But the meeting was already in sharp decline and, if it had not been for officers of the garrison, the end would have come much sooner. In fact, the 1868 fixture almost did not take place as no stewards had been appointed, and only four horses turned up for the two races on the card. The local M.P., although not a racing man, stepped into the breach and, assisted by two army officers, not only got the meeting going, but organised a third race on the day. The whole sorry tale came out at the 'ordinary' after the races; finances were poor and the secretary had had to 'find a lot out of his own resources', and of that he had got tired. After lengthy discussion, nothing was really done to set up the committee as proposed and only one officer accepted the post of steward for the following year. Apathy thus killed the Brecon meeting.<sup>100</sup>

### RELIGIOUS AND ANTI-RACING PRESSURE

Even though other sports had also suffered with the closure at Malton, there was almost certainly some element of anti-racing prejudice on the part of the Reverend Best. But the only meeting to fall to overt religious pressure between 1830 and 1869 was at Stirling in 1854, although it was almost equally important that its main supporter and the architect of its revival in 1837 - William Ramsay - had died four years earlier.<sup>101</sup>

Stirling races had been restarted after 22 years of inactivity and their fortunes were further improved when the Caledonian Hunt Club included the meeting in its itinerary in 1841. The railway reached Stirling in March 1848, linking it not only to Glasgow

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<sup>99</sup> See Chapter 6, Note 31, and Chapter 7, Note 31.

<sup>100</sup> *Brecon County Times*, 19 September 1868. The race meeting was briefly covered, but the report of the 'ordinary' and its abortive discussion took up almost two full columns of the paper.

<sup>101</sup> William Ramsay was associated with both Edinburgh, where he had a house at Barnton, and Stirling, with another house at Sauchie, less than 10 miles from the town. He and his family were involved in all kinds of field sports. Ramsay had also improved communications between the two towns by operating the Tally-Ho coach for more than 20 years. He owned the grandstand on Stirling racecourse (erected before the first visit of the C.H.C. in 1841) and gave financial support to the meeting. He died on 15 March 1850.

and Edinburgh, but also with London.<sup>102</sup> The 1849 meeting was well supported with a £100 Queen's Plate, a £100 gold cup given by the local inhabitants, and a donation of £25 from William Ramsay, while the support of the C.H.C. was to continue for a further four years. But in 1854 an elder of the Free Kirk, Peter Drummond, launched an attack on the immorality of the race meeting and, with William Ramsay dead, there was no one to rally to its defence and the fixture ended.<sup>103</sup>

### CONTINUATION AS 'UNAUTHORISED' MEETINGS

Disappearance from the *Racing Calendar* did not always mean that a meeting had ceased, just as meetings often existed before they were considered important enough to merit an entry, or continued in intervening years between entries. This section deals only with those for which definite evidence exists of a continuation, although it is accepted that other lapsed meetings may also have carried on at a lower and less visible level. It should, however, be noted that, while lack of an entry in the *Racing Calendar* before 1870 merely meant that a meeting was considered as a 'low grade' or 'private' meeting,<sup>104</sup> after that date horses could be banned from recognised fixtures if they competed at 'unauthorised' or 'flapping' meetings.<sup>105</sup>

Social activities were an integral part of the racing scene in country towns like Penrith, where for many years a full programme had been offered, including fox and stag hunting, in a traditional October slot organised by the Inglewood Hunt. The *Sporting Magazine* in 1835 was probably on the mark, when it said that 'the two days' racing presents of itself but little attraction, but yet the meeting is rendered one of the gayest in the north of England by the interest which attaches to the staghunts, which take place at the same time'.<sup>106</sup> The railway reached Penrith on 17 December 1846,

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<sup>102</sup> The Scottish Central Railway was opened from Castlecary to Stirling on 3 March 1848 and through to Perth on 22 May of the same year. It became part of the Caledonian Railway, while the Stirling & Dunfermline Railway, which opened its line from Alloa to Stirling on 1 July 1852, ultimately passed to the North British Railway.

<sup>103</sup> Burnett, J. 'The Sites and Landscapes of Horseracing in Scotland before 1860', *The Sports Historian*, XVIII (1), 1998, p.66. See also Sloan, G. *Stirling Races* (Stirling District Council, Stirling, 1986) p.22.

<sup>104</sup> The *Racing Calendar* reported a dispute at the Chester Autumn Meeting in 1852 over the weight carried by the winner of the Liverpool Hunt Cup at Hoylake earlier that year. The matter was referred to the Jockey Club, which classed the Hoylake races as a 'private' meeting, so the horse was not required to carry the weight penalty it would have incurred for winning an equivalent race listed in the *Racing Calendar*.

<sup>105</sup> *Racing Calendar*, 1870, p.XLV, Rule 74.

<sup>106</sup> Quoted in Fairfax Blakeborough, *Northern Turf History*, II, p.197.

when London could be reached in nine hours by fast train, but it did not help to extend the meetings' run in the *Racing Calendar* beyond 1847, although they were to continue for almost forty years.<sup>107</sup>

Rugeley in Staffordshire had held a meeting since 1824 on land given by the Marquess of Anglesey, and described as having 'one of the most beautiful natural stands in the Kingdom'.<sup>108</sup> By 1838 the fixture had become somewhat sporadic, and was not listed by Whyte. Rugeley was linked by rail to Lichfield and Stafford in 1847,<sup>109</sup> and there was a brief revival thereafter. The last meeting appeared in the *Racing Calendar* in October 1853, but the fixture continued until at least 1860.<sup>110</sup>

The Swansea & Neath meeting was listed for the last time in the *Racing Calendar* in August 1858, after a somewhat sporadic existence starting in 1803. When Whyte discussed the two day meeting in 1840 it was almost in the middle of a 13 year unbroken run on the course on Crymlyn Burrows, a large stretch of land on the Neath Road.<sup>111</sup> But although the meeting in August 1847 was felt to be the best for several years, as were the ordinary, breakfast and ball held in conjunction with the races, and the hope expressed that the 'races of 1848 will prove equally auspicious', no race had more than £25 added and some former supporters, notably the county M.P.s, had withdrawn their support.<sup>112</sup> In the event there were to be no further meetings until 1855, by which time both Swansea and Neath had been linked to the national rail network by the South Wales Railway for three years.<sup>113</sup> The revived meetings had a somewhat higher level of prize money and larger fields, with 4,000 - 5,000 spectators on the first day of the 1858 fixture. All was not well however, and the grandstand was sold on the last day of the meeting, while the newspaper report referred obliquely to 'the objections constantly urged against races or, in fact against any popular

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<sup>107</sup> The last regular meeting was recorded in October 1886, apart from a special meeting to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria, but the Penrith Race Company survived in name for another 50 years. The Inglewood Hunt also held recognised meetings between 1878 and October 1898.

<sup>108</sup> *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 24 July 1824.

<sup>109</sup> The Trent Valley Railway, which provided a 'cut-off' between Rugby and Stafford, avoiding Birmingham and Wolverhampton, and thus accelerating direct trains between London and the north west, was opened on 1 December 1847. Rugeley had a station on this line on which a limited amount of local traffic had started on 15 September 1847. See also Chapter 3, Text and Notes 17 & 18.

<sup>110</sup> Kettle, A.J. 'Horseracing' in *Victoria County History - Staffordshire II* (Oxford University Press, London, 1967) p.152.

<sup>111</sup> Whyte, *British Turf*, I, pp.362 - 363.

<sup>112</sup> *The Cambrian*, 20 August 1847, 27 August 1847. Both contain extensive reports of the races and the associated social activities.

<sup>113</sup> See Chapter 3.



amusements ...'.<sup>114</sup> Thus the race meetings ended, only to be revived at a lower level at least twice. The 1861 revival was of a much lower order 'as the aristocracy did not lend the movement that pecuniary support which was expected'.<sup>115</sup> No more meetings were recorded until September 1864, when a meeting was arranged by local innkeepers and tradesmen on Clyne Common, some four miles from Swansea.<sup>116</sup>

The disreputable meeting at Barnet, in conjunction with the famous fair, ten miles north of London, had survived both suppression by the magistrates in the late eighteenth century<sup>117</sup> and enclosure in the early years of the nineteenth. A study of its race reports shows evidence of decline in support from the late 1840s, despite a number of 'Railway' or 'Railroad' races, stimulated by the opening of the G.N. main line on 7 August 1850, on which there was a station at Barnet.<sup>118</sup> The last meeting under Jockey Club rules was held on 7 September 1858, but racing did not end until September 1870,<sup>119</sup> when the land was needed to provide a terminus for the G.N. High Barnet branch.<sup>120</sup>

Whyte described the meetings at Cheadle in Staffordshire, which appeared in the *Racing Calendar* between 1838 and 1861, as 'one day's inferior racing about the beginning of September'.<sup>121</sup> The opening of the Uttoxeter to Stoke-on-Trent line of the North Staffordshire Railway on 7 August 1848, which had a station at Cresswell, just under four miles from Cheadle, made no difference to the meetings. These became infrequent after 1853, and no longer recorded in the *Racing Calendar* after 1861, but as they continued until 1875, their intermittent appearance may have been due to lack of 'suitable' races, as in the early days of the meeting.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> *The Cambrian*, 3 September 1858. The proposed sale of the grandstand had been advertised in *The Cambrian*, 27 August 1858, and from the tone of the advert it did not appear the stand would be used again.

<sup>115</sup> *The Cambrian*, 4 October 1861.

<sup>116</sup> *The Cambrian*, 5 August 1864, 19 August 1864. There appears to be no report of this meeting, so it may not ultimately have taken place if the required subscriptions did not materialise.

<sup>117</sup> Reputedly founded by the ostlers at various inns in the town to see who had the best horses, unruliness and pranks of almost unbelievable folly led to its suppression. *Sporting Magazine*, 1794, quoted in Jones-Barker, D. *Old Hertfordshire Calendar* (Phillimore & Co. Ltd., London, 1974) p.170.

<sup>118</sup> Barnet station was renamed New Barnet on 1 May 1884.

<sup>119</sup> Forbes, U.A. 'Racing' in *Victoria County History - Middlesex II* (Archibald Constable, London, 1911) p.357.

<sup>120</sup> The High Barnet branch from Finchley was authorised on 16 July 1866 as the Edgware, Highgate & London Railway, being absorbed by the G.N.R. on 15 July 1867. The line was opened after some delay on 1 April 1872, its terminus being approximately where the racecourse had its winning post.

<sup>121</sup> Whyte, *British Turf*, I, p.302.

<sup>122</sup> *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 11 September 1875. The race meetings had been held as early as 1824, see *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 28 August 1824.

The aristocratic meeting at Marlborough in Wiltshire was revived in 1840 after a gap of 67 years, the races at nearby Burderop having provided a substitute between 1811 and 1831, well supported by the local nobility and gentry. The Marlborough fixture, which took place on the common along the Rockley road, was provided with a new grandstand in 1846,<sup>123</sup> but experienced a gradual decline until the last meeting under Jockey Club rules in July 1862.<sup>124</sup> Nevertheless, the course was provided with another new grandstand in 1867, but the meetings finally ended in 1874, when charges for pasturage and other activities on the Common were increased to offset an ongoing loss.<sup>125</sup>

Although the centre of needle and fishing tackle manufacture in the country and only 16 miles south of Birmingham, Redditch had always been something of a backwater and was not served by a turnpike road until 1825. Horseracing was ostensibly introduced in 1838 to raise the tone of sporting activities in the town, and the meetings figured in the *Racing Calendar* from 1839 to 1869.<sup>126</sup> The Birmingham - Gloucester main line passed some five miles from the town by 1840, and within four years there were three stations about the same distance away, although Redditch did not get its own railway until 1859.<sup>127</sup> The meetings were very modest and not always to be found in the *Racing Calendar*, even in their heyday. With prize money generally in the £30 to £40 range and only rarely topping £50,<sup>128</sup> it was no surprise to find its last entry was

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<sup>123</sup> Stedman, A.R. *Marlborough and the Upper Kennet Country* (Author, Marlborough, 1960) p.328. The Race Committee was authorised to erect the grandstand on payment of a quit rent of 5/- per annum and an undertaking that it would not be used as a dwelling. The request for the erection of the stand was minuted in the Borough Council Records for May 1846.

<sup>124</sup> Although Marlborough was in a wellknown racehorse training area on the London - Bristol turnpike, and the impending opening of the G.W. main line, which would have given it a railhead at Swindon, ten miles away from May 1841, may have stimulated the 1840 revival, later railway developments in the area had no effect on its demise. The opening of a branch line into Marlborough itself on 14 April 1864 did not stimulate a revival at a higher level.

<sup>125</sup> A loss of £26 was suffered on the Common, and as an example the charge for pasturage of cows was quadrupled. Despite the statement by Paskin, Sir J., 'Racing' in *Victoria County History - Wiltshire IV* (Oxford University Press, London, 1959) p.381, the grandstand was not demolished in 1876, when the owners, seeing no hope of restarting the races, wanted to sell it. The Borough Council Records for August 1876 minuted a refusal for it to be removed. Moreover, Stedman, *Marlborough*, p.329 stated that the Council agreed that the grandstand could be used for the Severnake Steeplechases held on Whit Monday 1887 and in the following September.

<sup>126</sup> Avery, W. *Old Redditch* (Redditch Indicator Office, Redditch, 1887) p.XVI. The first meeting was held on 17 September 138. Richardson, R. *The Book of Redditch* (Barracuda Press, Buckingham, 1986) p.85 gives the principal sports of the area as bullbaiting, bearbaiting and bare knuckle fighting.

<sup>127</sup> Tolson, J.M. 'Birmingham and Gloucester Loop' in *Railway Magazine CX*, 1964, pp. 810 ff.

<sup>128</sup> Handbill for Redditch Races 5/6 June 1865 and analyses of *Racing Calendar* reports bear out the statement by Price, 'Racing' in *VCH - Worcestershire II*, p.327.

in 1869, before the Jockey Club £50 minimum prize money came into force, although the meetings were to continue until at least 1874.<sup>129</sup>

### CONTINUATION AS NATIONAL HUNT MEETINGS

Although steeplechase meetings took place in many places where flat racing became defunct in the mid-nineteenth century, in only three cases in the period under review is it realistic to state that National Hunt racing was either a continuation of or a direct replacement for racing under Jockey Club rules. But in the period after 1870 the situation became somewhat different.

The small seaside resort of Aberystwyth in mid-Wales had held flat race meetings since 1825 in a meadow some three miles from the town. Whyte was complimentary both about the amenities of the resort and the two day meetings in mid-August, which were 'generally well and fashionably attended', despite being over 200 miles from London.<sup>130</sup> A study of the *Racing Calendar* shows that the meeting, although averaging only four to five races with small fields, was well supported with prizes from M.P.s, tradesman and local inhabitants. But, when in 1847 the meeting took place at the end of September, there was a noticeable decline. In 1849 however, there were two meetings, one in August and one in December with steeplechases and hurdle races. Thomas Parr both entered and rode horses at the latter meeting, and in the next two years, when there was only a single meeting in late November, he rode and won two races each year on his well known horse, Clothworker. Even so, the last meeting in November 1851 attracted only five horses in total, and the single race on the second day was a 'walkover'. But racing was not dead in Aberystwyth, and National Hunt meetings took place from 1855 to 1883. The railways had no part to play in the story of flat racing, as by 1848 the nearest significant railhead was at Shrewsbury, over 80 miles away, although this might have helped Parr to get Clothworker to Worcester in five days. The ongoing success of the steeplechase meetings showed that support

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<sup>129</sup> Land, N. *The History of Redditch and the Locality* (Brewin, Studley, 1984, rev. 1990) p.73. Avery, *Old Redditch*, p. XVI stated: 'This pastime [horseracing] never took any particular hold of the Redditch people as a class.'

<sup>130</sup> Whyte, *British Turf*, I, pp. 357 - 358.

continued regardless of the railway, as Aberystwyth remained isolated until 23 June 1864.<sup>131</sup>

The meetings at Tavistock in Devon, which dated back into the eighteenth century, became rather sporadic after 1840, although flat racing did not end until May 1856. The main railway line from London had arrived in Plymouth eight years previously, but the 16 mile branch to Tavistock did not open until June 1859.<sup>132</sup> Steeplechase meetings had commenced there in 1853, and continued until September 1865.

Haverfordwest also had a long history but, apart from a single meeting in 1862, could be said to have 'died' in 1845. Its meetings had long been the major social event in that part of West Wales, but as they started to falter the Pembrokeshire Hunt arranged a steeplechase fixture in March 1844, which was patronised by 'all ranks of the populace', with 'some eighty four of the fashionable and gentry of the Town and its vicinity' attending a ball in the Haverfordwest Assembly Rooms.<sup>133</sup> Although the next meeting appeared in the *Racing Calendar* when flat racing started up at nearby Tenby in 1847, where it was to flourish for 25 years, the way forward was clear. The railway reached Haverfordwest in January 1854, Neyland two years later, and Milford Haven in September 1863, the same year in which the line between Tenby and Pembroke was completed to the other side of the estuary,<sup>134</sup> but not connected to the rest of the railway system until 1866. Nevertheless, the railway greatly facilitated the movement of horses and spectators in the area, even though a ferry crossing was still involved.<sup>135</sup> Although the closure of Tenby really belongs to the next chapter, it is convenient to cover it here to complete the picture in this relatively remote area and avoid repetition of the railway history. The Tenby meetings, held usually on Wednesday and Friday

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<sup>131</sup> Even when the Cambrian Railway's line reached Machynlleth, 20 miles away, on 3 January 1863, the road journey on to Aberystwyth occupied a further 2½ hours (*Bradshaw*, February 1863).

<sup>132</sup> Whyte, *British Turf*, I, p.230 was disparaging about the Tavistock meeting as, despite its long history, 'The races here have not obtained, as yet, any celebrity'. Steeplechases formed part of the overall race programme, as for the last meeting on 6 May 1856, the *Racing Calendar* reported that there was a steeplechase meeting on the following day.

<sup>133</sup> Howell, D.W. (ed.) *Pembrokeshire County History Vol. III - Modern Pembrokeshire 1815 - 1974* (Pembrokeshire Historical Society, Haverfordwest, 1993) pp. 421 - 422.

<sup>134</sup> The railway history of these towns is quite involved, because of the renaming of stations. Suffice it to say that Neyland was at first named Milford Haven, the latter being originally Old Milford.

<sup>135</sup> The Pembrokeshire Hunt meetings ended on 11 April 1901, to be followed by the Pembroke Hunt on 8 April, 1914, the latter being described by Bayles, R.H. *Atlas and Review of British Racecourses* (Equitable Publishing Syndicate, London, 1911) p. 250, as a 'very uninteresting fixture'.

with other events on Thursday, were not always reported in the *Racing Calendar*.<sup>136</sup> In latter years the 'horses are chiefly bred in the principality, but celebrated racers from England also run here'.<sup>137</sup> The Jockey Club prize money requirements merely accelerated the increasing popularity of the Tenby Hunt meeting and its social events in January, and when the last fixture took place on 1 and 3 October 1872, there was only one race on each day, the remainder of the programme being made up with events for hunters and hurdlers, a total of four horses competing on the flat. The Tenby steeplechase meetings continued to flourish under the aegis of the local hunt with a full programme of indoor and outdoor social events until October 1936.<sup>138</sup>

### SPECIFIC CAUSE NOT IDENTIFIED

This section reviews the seven race meetings for which no specific cause of closure has been determined, in some cases after quite extensive local research. While it is tempting to include meetings which closed before 1870 in the 'General Decline in Support' section and consider those in Chapter 10 as having failed to meet the Jockey Club stipulation on minimum prize money, that would be an unsound conclusion. There is, however, no indication that the railway was a prime cause of the demise of any of the racecourses, which will be covered in chronological order of closure.

The seemingly well supported meeting at Burton-on-Trent in Staffordshire came to an end in August 1840. Racing had been recorded in the town in the eighteenth century, and its revival in 1811 gave rise to an unbroken run in the *Racing Calendar*.<sup>139</sup> Whyte, writing in 1839 - 1840, mentioned not only the amenities of the town and the excellent ale for which Burton was already famous, but gave full details of the races and even how to enter for them.<sup>140</sup> He noted that they took place at the end of August, generally a week after the Wolverhampton meeting, and so fitted well

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<sup>136</sup> But reports for the intervening years can be found in *Hunt's Directory of Tenby 1850* and the *Tenby Observer*.

<sup>137</sup> *Allen's Guide to Tenby 1868 - 70*. This is borne out by reports in the *Racing Calendar*, which also showed that there was little change in prize money offered before and after the coming of the railway.

<sup>138</sup> Pitt, *A Long Time Gone*, pp. 286 - 287.

<sup>139</sup> *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 31 August 1811. Racing had taken place on Outwood Hills until the area was enclosed in 1772. Thereafter the venue was in Burton Lower Meadow. *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 27 July 1822, reported the provision of a new course.

<sup>140</sup> Whyte, *British Turf*, I, pp. 299 - 302. There were ordinaries, balls and plays as supporting attractions. See also Scott's List of Burton Races, 21/22 August 1820, in Burton-on-Trent Public Library.

between that and the nearby Lichfield meeting. As the Derby meeting was currently in abeyance, the only other reasonably local fixtures were at Nottingham and Chesterfield, both accessible by rail at the time of the last meeting on 18 August 1840.<sup>141</sup> In fact, Burton, at the time of its last meeting was linked with all parts of the trunk railway network then open. There appears to have been no logical reason for the termination of the Burton meeting, although land for other sports, such as cricket and football, had been at a premium since enclosure. In 1842 the crescent shaped stone grandstand on the banks of the Trent was demolished and used to build the local Congregational Church.<sup>142</sup>

If the meeting at Ashford in Kent had survived for a further two years, it would have also been on a main railway line from London, which not long thereafter would have linked it with Dover and the Continent.<sup>143</sup> The fixture was of relatively recent origin, first appearing in the *Racing Calendar* in 1826, but well supported in the town, where by the early 1840s there were some 3,000 inhabitants, with another 20,000 in the surrounding rural areas. Assemblies for the meeting, which ended in September 1840, were held in the Town Hall, and there was often a firework display in the evening.<sup>144</sup>

Welshpool in Montgomeryshire, which held its last meeting in October 1846, was of even more recent origin than Ashford, its first mention in the *Racing Calendar* dating from 1837. It was well supported by the Borough Council, tradesmen and innkeepers. The nearest railheads at the time of closure were probably Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Crewe and Chester, but neither the opening of the railway to Shrewsbury in 1848, nor to Welshpool in August 1860, stimulated any revival.

Leominster in Herefordshire held its last meeting in August 1851. There had been a couple of fixtures after the Napoleonic Wars, but thereafter an unbroken run from

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<sup>141</sup> Burton had a station on the Birmingham & Derby Junction Railway opened on 12 August 1839. The Midland Counties Railway Derby to Nottingham line had already opened on 4 June 1839 and the North Midland Railway would open through Chesterfield on 11 May 1840, reaching Leeds on 1 July of the same year.

<sup>142</sup> Owen, C. *Burton on Trent - The Illustrated History* (Breedon Book Publishing Co., Derby, 1994) writes of a petition from groups of locals to the Marquis of Anglesey for the use of 'The Hay', nearer the town than the race course, as a sports ground. This request was granted. See also Underhill, C.H. *History of Burton upon Trent* (Tresises, Burton on Trent, 1941) pp. 149 and 249, and *Burton Observer*, 20 February 1936.

<sup>143</sup> The S.E.R. opened its main line from Redhill to Tonbridge on 26 May 1842, giving access to London over the tracks of no less than three other railways. As described elsewhere, Dover was reached on 7 February 1844.

<sup>144</sup> Bonnett, F. 'Racing' in *Victoria County History - Kent I* (Archibald Constable, London, 1908) p.494. Turner, G. *Ashford - The Coming of the Railway* (Christine Swift, Maidstone, 1984) p.36.

1825 until its demise. Situated on the River Wye it had over 5,000 inhabitants, a theatre and other amenities, with good support from local M.P.s and others for its two day meeting at the end of August. Its relative isolation was ended when the Shrewsbury & Hereford Railway was opened through the town on 6 December 1853,<sup>145</sup> and it may have suffered from competing meetings at Hereford and Ludlow, which were both about 12 miles distant and have National Hunt meetings even today. Although steeplechase meetings were held at Leominster at Eaton Meadows between 1863 and 1883, these are not currently being considered as a continuation of the defunct flat race meeting. Nevertheless the gap between the two is less than several flat race revivals in this survey, and the fixture was sustained for 20 years.<sup>146</sup>

The Holywell Hunt was formed in November 1767 and, despite its name, was aimed primarily at racing with hunting as a secondary interest. The Hunt had a limited membership, but was able to host an unbroken series of meetings from its outset until 1842, attracting owners and jockeys from all over the country.<sup>147</sup> The meeting seems to have flagged a little in the 1830s and had a reputation for 'hard drinking, gambling and riotous behaviour'.<sup>148</sup> In 1840, the year in which the railway reached Chester, 17 miles away, Whyte gave the meeting a full listing.<sup>149</sup> Vesey reports a suggestion that the meetings became too popular and attracted too many undesirables after the coming of the railway, although the nearby coastal resorts would not be reached until 1848, and in any case an October meeting was a little late to attract holiday crowds. Whatever the reason, the meetings ended after 1842, although there was a brief revival in 1851 and 1852.<sup>150</sup>

Sandbach in Cheshire closed in September 1853, having held meetings in twelve years since its first appearance in the *Racing Calendar* in 1838. Whyte listed it as having

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<sup>145</sup> The Shrewsbury & Hereford Railway, discussed in Chapter 3, was opened between Shrewsbury and Ludlow on 21 April 1852 and throughout on 6 December 1853.

<sup>146</sup> For example, the Hereford meeting lapsed in 1853 and did not reappear in the *Racing Calendar* until 1868.

<sup>147</sup> Vesey, A.G. 'The Holywell Hunt', *Clwyd Historian* XXXVII, 1996, pp. 2 - 7 and XXXVIII, 1997, p.21. Three racecards survive in the Flintshire Record Office, D/DM/154/2 (1804), D/LL/466 (1812) and D/HA/1346 (1835). The latter listed the members and the rules, which stated the meeting should take place a week after that at nearby Wrexham.

<sup>148</sup> Vesey, 'The Holywell Hunt', XXXVII, 1996, p.5.

<sup>149</sup> Whyte, *British Turf*, I, pp. 360 - 361. Chester was reached by the Chester & Birkenhead Railway on 23 September 1840, and by the Chester & Crewe Railway on 1 October of the same year. The Chester & Holyhead Railway opened a station at Holywell on 1 May 1848 on completion of its line as far as Bangor.

two days' racing in September but 'the stakes are of a trifling nature'.<sup>151</sup> The town had direct rail connection with London and all main routes when the Manchester & Birmingham Railway was completed on 10 August 1842, although Sandbach station had been opened three months earlier.

Race meetings at Newport in Shropshire, some 20 miles from Shrewsbury, had been established in 1838<sup>152</sup> on a course at the Marsh, where a grandstand was erected in 1839.<sup>153</sup> Whyte gave the population of the town as 2,343, and listed the principal races in the two-day meeting at the end of July. Newport was on the L.N.W. Stafford - Wellington branch which had opened on 1 June 1849, and gave good access to the main railway system. Nevertheless the meetings ended in 1850, with a brief revival in October 1854 and a more sustained effort in 1861, the last meeting being on 18/19 August 1862.<sup>154</sup>

## CONCLUSION

64% of the 46 race meetings in this study had a railway station within three miles before they closed, and several others had stations nearer than Ascot (until 1856), Goodwood (until 1881) and Croxton Park (until 1883). Moreover, this chapter has demonstrated that the arrival of a railway did not stimulate a revival of a meeting, even when there were no counter attractions. Nevertheless, the incidence of racecourse openings and increased numbers of meetings, particularly at London suburban venues, meant that there were 13 more racecourses and 53 more race meetings in 1869 than at the start of the review period. But this sustained growth would be dramatically reversed in the next ten years.

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<sup>150</sup> Mold Public Library. Letter from Lorraine Mason of Weatherbys to D. Davies, dated 6 February 1992. 'I can find no reason for the closure of Holywell, perhaps it was just not profitable enough'.

<sup>151</sup> Whyte, *British Turf*, I, p.224. No reference to the races had been found in any of the histories of the town, Earwaker, J.P. *History of the Ancient Parish of Sandbach* (Author, London, 1890) or Tomlinson, R.W. *History of Sandbach* (Author, Sandbach, 1899), but Massey C. 'History of Sandbach & District Supplement' (Author, Sandbach, 1967) pp. 5 - 6 cites Scotch Common as the scene of 'fairs, rejoicing, public gatherings and amusements', so it is possible the races were held there.

<sup>152</sup> *Salopian Journal*, 27 June 1838. Steeplechases were also held in the same location.

<sup>153</sup> Shropshire Record Office 1101/CXVI.

<sup>154</sup> *Eddowe's Journal*, 11 October 1854, *Newport Advertiser*, 2 August 1862.



## CHAPTER TEN

### THE JOCKEY CLUB TAKES A GRIP – RACECOURSE CLOSURES

1870 - 1879

#### INTRODUCTION

During the 1870s no less than 55 racecourses held their last meetings, nine more than the total of the previous three decades, and over twice as many as were to close between 1880 and the outbreak of the First World War. In a single year, 1876, no less than 18 racecourses closed, more than in any other decade during the period under review. The imposition of a £50 minimum prize per race in 1870 had created a problem for many meetings where such a sum represented the main prize, and the results can be seen in the termination of meetings and the reduced number of races on the card. Moreover, the ‘outlawing’ of any horse participating in an ‘unauthorised’ meeting severed many links between minor meetings and the ‘legitimate’ sport,<sup>1</sup> removing a useful source of funds, riders and horses. Even these measures almost tripled the yearly closure rate, but the Jockey Club regulations, which came into effect in 1877, doubled the minimum prize for races up to a mile, and raised this to £150 for races of a mile and over, as well as imposing a further requirement of £300 prize money for each day of racing. This move caused the mass exodus after the 1876 meetings, either into National Hunt racing or oblivion, and contributed to the closure of the majority of the London suburban courses even before the Metropolitan Racecourses Bill became law in 1879, although local magistrates were also using existing licensing laws against these whenever possible.<sup>2</sup> Analysis clearly shows that all types of courses were affected by the Jockey Club actions, and that almost without exception these had a railway station within three miles well before their final disappearance from the *Racing Calendar* (Appendix XI). The 1870s saw the opening of the first two major enclosed courses in the London area, Sandown Park (1875) and

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<sup>1</sup> *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 28 September 1861, described the races at Wordsley, near Stourbridge, as a ‘meeting which bears about the same relation to ordinary races (e.g. Lichfield or Wolverhampton) as a parish vestry does to the Imperial Parliament’. Nevertheless, in July 1847 the *Wolverhampton Chronicle* gave a similar meeting at Albrighton the same publicity as those at Worcester, Bridgnorth, Liverpool, Ludlow, Lichfield and Nottingham.

<sup>2</sup> Huggins, M.J. *Flat Racing and British Society 1790 - 1914* (Frank Cass, London, 2000) pp. 196 - 197 deals with the passage of this Bill in some detail.

Kempton Park (1878), which aimed to give racing a new image, together with a shortlived attempt at Halifax in Yorkshire (1878 - 1884), which was one of the few courses to be closed because of all-out local opposition, both before and during its brief life.<sup>3</sup> The Jockey Club also tightened its control on the opening of new racecourses, so that while the period 1860 - 1874 saw 73 new appearances (not counting revivals), in the next 15 years there were only seven.<sup>4</sup> In addition, the very high prize money would have prevented many local schemes from proceeding beyond the planning stage, or they would be established as National Hunt or 'unauthorised' meetings.

TABLE 10.1: RACECOURSE CLOSURES 1870 - 1879

Main Cause	Total
General lack of interest/decline in support	6
End of major patronage	3
Change of owner/or end of lease	1
Use for other purposes	1
Competition	1
Financial failure	2
Problems in organisation	3
Religious opposition	-
Jockey Club stipulation on minimum prize money	8
Continuation as 'unauthorised' meetings	4
Continuation as National Hunt meetings	20
Specific cause not identified	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>

Source: *Racing Calendar*. (This covers only courses having 10 or more appearances 1830 - 1879)

### GENERAL DECLINE IN SUPPORT, OR LACK OF INTEREST

It is tempting during this period either to ascribe all closures of flat race meetings to the Jockey Club prize money requirements, or to find a continuation, no matter how tenuous, as a National Hunt meeting. But there were six meetings which could not sustain a short-lived revival or where a detailed examination of race reports has established a definite decline in support over the years. It must be reiterated that this

<sup>3</sup> Fairfax Blakeborough, *J. Northern Turf History*, Vol. II (J.A. Allen & Co., London, 1949) pp. 106 - 108.

<sup>4</sup> One of the seven was the Burgh Barony meeting held near Lowther in Westmorland, which only took place when a new Earl inherited the title. Although recorded in the *Racing Calendar*, this cannot be really considered as an ongoing meeting. There was a single meeting at Newbiggin-by-the-

support was almost totally made up from subscriptions, entry fees and local sponsorship, as the direct contribution from spectators, except in the grandstand or arriving in their carriage or on horseback, was still minimal.

If the meetings set up near St. Albans by Thomas Coleman of the Turf Hotel in that city in 1829 had closed finally after the 1837 fixture, the reason would have been the transfer of the event to the more prestigious Gorhambury Park for the following year.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, even the St. Albans steeplechases were exhibiting signs of decline as early as March 1836, when there were only five entries.<sup>6</sup> The opening in 1837 - 38 of the London & Birmingham Railway, which passed some eight miles away,<sup>7</sup> did nothing to maintain interest, and even steeplechasing fell to a low ebb, although it was revived between 1853 and 1870 on a new course. The arrival of the railway in St. Albans itself at a relatively late date, 1858,<sup>8</sup> stimulated no new flat race meetings. It was only after the opening of the Midland Railway Bedford - London line in July 1868 that there was a revival in 1869 - 70, during which the company sponsored races at both steeplechase and flat race meetings. Neither form of racing continued after 1870, and steeplechasing was only revived by the Friar's Wash fixtures in 1890.<sup>9</sup>

Guildford in Surrey had an unbroken run of meetings from at least 1774 - 1854, although even in 1840 Whyte had commented that 'the races at this place have fallen into insignificance, the only stake mentioned in the racing calendar, run for here annually during the last two years, being Her Majesty's Plate of 100 gns.'<sup>10</sup> The L.S.W.R. reached Guildford from Woking on 5 May 1845 but, although the town

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Sea in Northumberland, and two at Market Rasen in Lincolnshire in connection with the National Hunt meetings, which still flourish today.

<sup>5</sup> Set up in 1838 by the Earl of Verulam, the Gorhambury meeting quickly achieved great prestige, subscribers to the principal race rising to 83 in the following year. Held in May between the last Newmarket Spring meeting and Epsom, it attracted many notables. *Sporting Magazine*, 22 May 1844. The meetings ended after 1845 on the death of Lord Verulam. Part, C.T. 'Racing' in *Victoria County History - Herefordshire I* (Archibald Constable, London, 1902) p.367 stated that meetings were held at Gorhambury Park as a substitute for those at No Mans Land from 1830 onwards.

<sup>6</sup> Munting, R. *Hedges and Hurdles* (J.A. Allen & Co. Ltd., London, 1987) pp. 7 - 9.

<sup>7</sup> The London & Birmingham Railway was opened from Camden Town to Boxmoor on 20 July 1837, the nearest stations to the racecourse at that time being either the terminus or Watford.

<sup>8</sup> The L.N.W.R. opened its branch to St. Albans on 5 May 1858, while the Hatfield & St. Albans Railway linked the city to the G.N. main line on 16 October 1865, and was worked from the outset by the G.N.R.

<sup>9</sup> Edwards, E. *Friar's Wash Point to Point Races* (Flanstead Society, St. Albans, 1996) p.5.

<sup>10</sup> Whyte, J.C. *History of the British Turf*, I (Henry Colburn, London, 1840) p.321. In 1837, this, the only race, was a walkover.

quickly developed into an important railway centre, there was only one further meeting after 1854 - in 1870 - and no interest to sustain a revival.<sup>11</sup>

A much shorter unbroken run from 1833 to 1853 was experienced at the small Worcestershire town of Upton-on-Severn, which in 1840 had over 2,300 inhabitants and boasted both a subscription library and assembly rooms.<sup>12</sup> An examination of the *Racing Calendar* shows that at the meetings in late August or September there were generally three races, almost always with small fields. The last meeting in this long run had a two horse race, a walkover and six runners in the 'Sweepstakes of 10/- each, with a silver cup added.' The arrival of the railway ten miles away at Tewkesbury in July 1840 had made no difference.<sup>13</sup> Neither did the creation of other railheads at about the same distance over the next twenty years. By the time the Tewkesbury - Malvern line had been opened through Upton-on-Severn on 16 May 1864, there had been steeplechases on nearby Fish Meadow for two years. The only meeting with flat races took place on 4 November 1870, and proved to be the swansong of both, despite the claim in the *Victoria County History* that the meeting was 'revived in 1870 with some success'.<sup>14</sup>

Although the first mention of Mansfield races in the *Racing Calendar* during the review period occurs in 1840, meetings had been held for many years on the course on Southwell Road, which had been improved twice in the previous 15 years.<sup>15</sup> Strong support came from the Duke of Portland, the local gentry and the populace in general, while the surrounding area was a not insignificant racehorse training area, John Scott having worked there before he moved to Malton. The course was described as 'of unusual excellence for so small a place' and, although the prize money was not high at first, the meeting attained some celebrity, and horses were sent to it from as far as

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<sup>11</sup> After the opening of this line, which gave the town direct access to London, the L.S.W.R. completed an extension to Godalming on 15 October 1849. This, together with the L.S.W. line to Ash Junction and Farnham and the S.E. lines to Reading, Dorking and Redhill, all opened in 1849, put Guildford on an important east-west axis. Ten years later, Guildford was linked directly with Portsmouth, and in 1865 the L.B.S.C.R. approached the town from the south east with its line from Christ's Hospital, near Horsham.

<sup>12</sup> Whyte, *British Turf*, I, p.338.

<sup>13</sup> The Birmingham & Gloucester Railway opened a branch to Tewkesbury from its main line at Ashchurch on 21 July 1840.

<sup>14</sup> Price, C.T. 'Racing' in *Victoria County History - Worcestershire II* (Archibald Constable, London, 1906) p.326.

<sup>15</sup> Buxton, A.S. *Mansfield One Hundred Years Ago* (F. Willman, Mansfield, 1932) pp. 61 ff. In 1827 - 1828 the improvements to the course were all paid for out of the receipts, still leaving £17 to be

Newcastle'.<sup>16</sup> Although there had been an early horsedrawn railway between Mansfield and Pinxton which had carried passengers since 1832, the modern railway system reached the town in October 1847, when the Midland Railway had relaid the old line and Mansfield was linked with Nottingham, just over 17 miles distant. The meetings ran, albeit with a few gaps, until 1868 when, despite the support of the Duke of Newcastle, support was meagre and the fixture was 'suspended for five years due to a lack of public spirit'. A revival was attempted in 1874 by the licensed victuallers and tradesmen of the town but, although the event appeared to be successful with over 6,000 spectators and special trains from nearby major towns, there was no repetition.<sup>17</sup>

Although Stafford had held a number of meetings in the eighteenth century, there was a major revival in 1806 through the efforts of Joshua Drewry, proprietor of the *Staffordshire Advertiser*.<sup>18</sup> Despite the opening of a new course on Stafford Common in 1820,<sup>19</sup> the meetings had become quite intermittent by the mid 1830s, and the opening of the Grand Junction Railway through the town in July 1837<sup>20</sup> did little to revive their fortunes. In 1840 Whyte described the fixture as of a 'very inferior description',<sup>21</sup> and by 1843 there was considerable local concern about the future of the meetings,<sup>22</sup> which came to an end in 1847. There was an attempt to revive the races in 1874, and National Hunt events were introduced for the 1875 fixture, but there was not sufficient interest to maintain either form of the sport.

Racing at Royston in Hertfordshire,<sup>23</sup> although sporadic, can be traced back to the reign of James I,<sup>24</sup> and by the late eighteenth century the fixture offered some quite

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carried forward to the next year. In 1833, the first year in which the local paper reported the meetings in detail, a race committee was formed and 'teams of inhabitants practically created a new course'.

<sup>16</sup> Groves, W.H. *The History of Mansfield* (Frank Murray, Nottingham, 1894) p.377. Bonnett, F. 'Racing' in *Victoria County History - Nottinghamshire II* (Archibald Constable, London, 1910) p. 395.

<sup>17</sup> *Mansfield Advertiser*, 17 July 1874, *Mansfield Reporter*, 17 July 1874. W.J. Ford of Nottingham made the arrangements which were 'a great success and gave the greatest satisfaction', while 'good behaviour prevailed'.

<sup>18</sup> *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 25 October 1806.

<sup>19</sup> *Staffordshire advertiser*, 17 June 1820.

<sup>20</sup> Stafford became an important junction with the opening of the Trent Valley Railway in 1847, for which see Chapter 9, Note 108. A branch was opened by the L.N.W.R. on 1 June 1849 between Stafford and Wellington, and much later, on 23 December 1867, the Stafford & Uttoxeter Railway was opened from Bromshall Junction on the N.S. Uttoxeter to Stoke-on-Trent line, becoming part of the G.N.R. system on 1 August 1881.

<sup>21</sup> Whyte, *British Turf*, I, p.306.

<sup>22</sup> *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 7 October 1843, 31 August 1844, in which Robert Peel, one of the race stewards, said it had proved 'impossible to place the meeting on a firm and respectable foundation'.

<sup>23</sup> Royston was in Cambridgeshire until 1896.

high prizes under the patronage of the Royston Club and such notables as Sir Charles Bunbury and the Duke of Grafton.<sup>25</sup> The revival in 1836, which 5,000 - 6,000 spectators attended, was mainly for gentleman riders and members of the Royston Club, although there was a farmers' race. This was a good start, but the races 'became in less repute as time went on, and were associated with many disagreeable incidents',<sup>26</sup> disappearing from the *Racing Calendar* after 1839. The arrival of the railway in Royston in October 1850<sup>27</sup> and subsequent extension to Cambridge did not revive the race meetings, although it affected the life of the town quite markedly in other ways.<sup>28</sup> After a further revival in 1867 the meetings at Royston were made up of a mixture of club, hunt and military fixtures. The high point was probably in 1871, when there were seven races and two matches on the card, although there were normally only two or three flat races at the Hunt Meetings. Prize money was low, and local support declined because of 'the scenes of disorder and of shop robberies, which marked the moribund stage of their course'.<sup>29</sup> The last meeting recorded in the *Racing Calendar* was on 7 May 1875.<sup>30</sup>

### END OF MAJOR PATRONAGE

Both the Stamford and Bedford meetings, which ended in 1873 after unbroken runs of more than a century, suffered from the death of a major patron and lack of interest on the part of his successor. Both also give us different insights into the attitude of aristocratic landowners towards the railways. The 8th Duke of Bedford exhibited the

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<sup>24</sup> Kingston, A. *A History of Royston* (Warren Brothers, Royston, 1906) pp. 100 & 163, Raban, S. 'Royal Royston', *Hertfordshire Countryside*, XLVIII, 1993, p.24.

<sup>25</sup> Kingston, A. *Fragments of Two Centuries* (Warren Brothers, Royston, 1893, rep. 1902) p.132. This describes races on Royston Heath in the 1820s, which did not appear in the *Racing Calendar*.

<sup>26</sup> Kingston, *Fragments*, pp. 133 - 134. A more romanticised view of Royston's races can be found in the poem 'Visions of Childhood' by W. Warren Butler, published in 1843, and quoted at length by Kingston.

<sup>27</sup> The Royston & Hitchin Railway was opened from a junction with the G. N. main line to Royston on 21 October 1850, with an extension to Shepreth following on 1 August 1851. These two lines were worked from the outset by the G.N.R. until the opening of the Eastern Counties Railway Cambridge - Shepreth branch on 1 April 1852, when the latter took over the working. The G.N.R. resumed working its own lines from 1 April 1866.

<sup>28</sup> Kingston, *History of Royston*, p.177. 'The first year after the railway to Royston was opened, the price of coal was so much reduced that the gain to the townspeople was calculated to be sufficient to pay all the rates for the year.'

<sup>29</sup> Kingston, *Fragments*, p.135.

<sup>30</sup> Pitt, C. *A Long Time Gone* (Portway Press, Halifax, 1996) p.411, lists the date of the last flat race meeting as 25 November 1875. The National Hunt meetings, which had started in 1868, had already ended on 6 June 1874.

classic traits of antipathy and greed, while the 2nd Marquis of Exeter had both these attributes and more, as he had to get involved personally in the operation of a local railway.<sup>31</sup>

Stamford, in Lincolnshire, had all the attributes of a straightforward country meeting catering both for aristocratic followers with balls, assemblies and the theatre, and for the local country folk. However, the races had in fact been a 'gate money' meeting from at least 1849 (and perhaps even from 1818 when the 2nd Marquis made significant improvements to the course in the grounds of Burghley House and provided it with new entrance gates).<sup>32</sup> Ten gatekeepers were employed to collect a total of £51-13-6d. over the two days of 18/19 July 1849, indicating an attendance in excess of 4,000.<sup>33</sup> The admission charge may have been prompted by the arrival of the railway in the vicinity in 1845, and into Stamford itself in the following year, as the London & Birmingham Railway offered excursion fares for racegoers from many nearby towns.<sup>34</sup> The bypassing of the town by the G.N. main line,<sup>35</sup> which led to the involvement of the Marquis in the operation of the Stamford & Essendine Railway for a period, is worthy of mention in the notes, even if this has no direct bearing on the closure of Stamford racecourse.<sup>36</sup> It was said, however, that the Marquis had to sell his racehorses in 1855

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<sup>31</sup> For other examples, see Bray N. *The Cirencester Branch* (Oakwood Press, Usk, 1998) pp. 7 ff., Tolson, J.M. 'End of an Experiment', *Railway Magazine*, CX, 1964, pp. 742 ff., for details of restrictions placed on the railways by Robert Gordon, a landowner at Kemble. Also Tolson, J.M. 'The St. Helens Railway' (unpublished and unabridged MS) for payment of £5 to John Wilson Patten for every hour a waggon remained in view of his house at Bank Hall, Warrington.

<sup>32</sup> Goodwin, J.M. *Easton on the Hill* (Northamptonshire) (Spiegl Press, Stamford, 1991) p. 20.

<sup>33</sup> Goodwin, *Easton on the Hill*, p.20 and Hance, F. *Stamford Theatre and Stamford Racecourse* (Dolby Brothers Ltd., Stamford, 1970) pp. 20 - 21, where there is a statement of accounts for the 1849 meeting.

<sup>34</sup> The L. & B.R. opened its branch from Blisworth to Peterborough on 2 June 1845, with a station at Wansford about 7 miles from Stamford. This enabled the inhabitants of Stamford to make a day trip to London. The Midland Railway branch from Syston near Leicester to Peterborough passed through Stamford and was opened to a temporary terminus in the town on 2 October 1846. *Stamford Mercury*, 5 May 1848, reported that, although the Stamford - Syston section was opened on 1 May, the temporary terminus remained in use. The permanent station opened on 23 June 1848.

<sup>35</sup> The reputed problem was the Marquis' intransigence over the price for some 40 acres of land between Barnack and Ryhall. According to the *Stamford Mercury*, 4 June 1847, the Marquis was at Ascot races when he rejected the 'ultimatum of the [G.N.] directors'. See also Franks, D.L. *The Stamford & Essendine Railway* (Turntable Enterprises, Leeds, 1971) pp. 5 - 7. The rebuttal of this view by the then Marquis of Exeter can be found in *Railway Magazine* CXII, 1966, p.170. The twin strands of racing and the railway were brought together in a 'political' handbill, dated 18 June 1847, supposedly advertising the Stamford Races in July, but with all races and participants associated with the 'railway question' - the key local issue for the 1847 election.

<sup>36</sup> The Stamford & Essendine Railway, which linked Stamford with the G.N. main line four miles away, was opened without ceremony on 1 November 1856, and worked from the outset by the G.N.R. until the company's disagreement with the Marquis over charges.

to meet financial commitments for the local company in which he was the majority shareholder.<sup>37</sup> After an ongoing battle with the G.N.R. on the terms under which it worked the S. & E.R., the Marquis took over the operation of the railway from 1 January 1865, even though he had to purchase both locomotives and rolling stock to do this. The 2nd Marquis died in January 1867, some seven months before the opening of the S. & E. line from Stamford to the L.N.W.R. at Wansford, with the promotion of which he had been actively involved.<sup>38</sup>

The 3rd Marquis, who lived the life of a playboy in London and on his yachts, was neither interested in the provincial life at Stamford, nor in the chores of running a railway. He withdrew his support for the theatre, which closed in 1871,<sup>39</sup> renegotiated terms with the G.N.R. for the latter to take over the operation of both S. & E. lines in 1872,<sup>40</sup> and closed the racecourse in June 1873, after which it was ploughed up. In a letter to *The Times*, the Marquis said he ended the fixture as the atmosphere and, indeed, the purpose of a country racecourse had gone beyond recall, but, in view of his life style, his words had a hollow ring.<sup>41</sup>

Bedford Races had been supported by the Dukes of Bedford, both in terms of money and horses to run, since the early eighteenth century. The 8th Duke was both antagonistic to railways if they came too near his property and yet willing to profit from them.<sup>42</sup> The arrival of the railway in Bedford on 1 November 1846 had almost halved the journey time and cost to London, while the opening of the Midland Railway

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<sup>37</sup> Bird, T.H. *Admiral Rous and the English Turf 1795 - 1877* (Putnam, London, 1939) p.219, Orchard, V.P. *Tattersalls* (Hutchinson, London, 1953) p.200 are both on the high side when evaluating the Marquis' financial commitment to the local railway, which was less than £50,000, rather than the £75,000 stated. Nevertheless, he did sell his race horses.

<sup>38</sup> The S.E.R. had been authorised on 25 July 1864 to build a line from Stamford to a junction with the L.N.W. Peterborough branch at Sibson, near Wansford. Although trains started to run on 9 August 1867, there were problems with the L.N.W.R., which restricted access to the station at Wansford for several years. It had taken eleven years for the S. & E.R. to get a connection with the Midland Railway at Stamford, opened on 1 July 1867, and it took about the same time to effect a permanent junction with the L.N.W.R. at Wansford on 1 March 1878. Differing accounts are given by Franks, *Stamford & Essendine Railway*, and Rhodes, J. *Great Northern Branch Lines to Stamford* (KMS Books, Boston, 1988), but the inconsistencies do not impact on this study.

<sup>39</sup> Hance, *Stamford Theatre*, p.9 covers the decline and closure of the theatre.

<sup>40</sup> The G.N.R. ran the Essendine line for 50% of its gross receipts, and the Wansford line for 70%. The S. & E.R. was vested finally in the G.N.R. from 1 January 1894.

<sup>41</sup> Quoted in *Baily's Magazine*, October 1874, and Fairfax Blakeborough, *Northern Turf History*, II, pp. 236 - 237.

<sup>42</sup> Cockman, F.G. 'The Railway Age in Bedfordshire', *Publications of the Bedfordshire Historical Record Society*, XXXIII, 1974, pp.5 ff.



Leicester - Hitchin line in 1857 provided a second route to the capital.<sup>43</sup> Bedford was linked to Cambridge on 7 July 1862 and, in addition to the Midland Railway London Extension of 1868, a branch to Northampton was opened on 10 June 1872.

Throughout all this hectic railway activity the Bedford racecourse maintained a relatively uneventful life. It acquired a new stand in 1854, and was visited by famous horses like Fisherman and top jockeys such as Flatman, Fordham and Custance. But the prizes were always moderate in value, even though in 1868 the Bedfordshire Stakes was worth £175. Further decline took place after the 8th Duke's death in May 1872, and in the following year there was only one day's racing at which even the Queen's Plate was a walkover. In 1874 the new Duke decided to withdraw the £50 plate, which his family had donated for more than 100 years. In addition, the raceground was required for the Royal Agricultural Society Show in July 1874. If the 1873 meeting had not proved to be the last it would have been interesting to see whether the L.N.W.R. and M.R. would have left in situ the special platforms each had provided for the week-long show.<sup>44</sup> But Bedford became 'one of those country racecourses, which carried on a more or less fitful existence twenty years ago, and has since vanished from the lists'.<sup>45</sup> Although there had been steeplechasing at various locations around Bedford, which had hosted a prestigious meeting in 1810, and the Grand National Hunt Meeting had taken place in both 1867 and 1868 at Clapham, two miles north of the town, none of the meetings held in the area until the turn of the century had any real affinity with flat racing in Bedford.

There had been a few races near Eastbourne in the early eighteenth century, but none between 1737 and 1866,<sup>46</sup> when the Eastbourne Hunt held a flat race meeting on Bullock Down near Beachy Head, a steeplechase fixture having taken place in the previous year. The course, which was about 1½ miles long, was 'at the angle of 45°', and not easy of access, a fly from the station costing the not inconsiderable sum of

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<sup>43</sup> The Midland Railway Leicester - Hitchin line was opened on 8 May 1857, the journey into London being completed over G.N. metals into Kings Cross. This arrangement caused the M.R. much cost and frustration, and ultimately led to the completion of its own independent route to the capital eleven years later. The Bedford & Cambridge Railway opened its line to Cambridge on 7 July 1862, and was leased in 1865 by the L.N.W.R., which had subscribed £70,000 to the undertaking.

<sup>44</sup> See Chapter 4, Text and Note 67.

<sup>45</sup> Chetwynd, Sir G. *Racing Reminiscences and Experiences of the Turf* (Longman, Green & Co. London, 1891) p.9. He is referring here to a visit to Bedford Races in 1869.

<sup>46</sup> Bryden, H.A. & Cuming, E.D. 'Racing' in *Victoria County History - Sussex II* (Archibald Constable, London, 1907) p. 460.

2/6d.<sup>47</sup> The races lasted only until 10 May 1875 when a Mr. Chambers wrote a piece for the *Sussex Times*, comparing the meeting with the worst excesses of the London suburban courses. He sent a copy to the Duke of Devonshire, persuading that worthy that his £25 donation was being wasted, so he totally withdrew his support. In his memoirs Chambers boasted: '... never more were there any races on Bullock Down. Such is the power of the Press'.<sup>48</sup>

### CHANGE OF OWNER

The Margate or Isle of Thanet races in Kent were established in 1820 to provide an extra attraction for the social calendar, but their fortunes fluctuated, and after ten years they lapsed until 1836. Whyte does not mention them, but in any case they went into abeyance from 1842 for over twenty years.<sup>49</sup> The S.E.R. opened its line from Ramsgate on 1 December 1846, but stimulated no revival, although in 1863, the year in which the L.C.D.R. reached the resort, the meetings started again. Both companies sponsored races in 1865, and thereafter there were two meetings as well as steeplechases in some years on the course at Shottendene Farm. Although the last meeting in August 1871 was well attended by the holiday crowds, the fixture was clouded by the knowledge that the farm had been sold without any replacement in prospect.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> *East Sussex News*, 24 April 1868. The racecourse is clearly shown in Johnson's Panoramic Map of 1889, of which there is a copy in Eastbourne Local History Museum. The area had been well served by railways since the L.B.S.C.R. had opened its line from Brighton to Lewes on 8 June 1846, which was extended to St. Leonards (Bulverhythe) on 27 June of the same year. A branch into Eastbourne itself was opened on 14 May 1849, a new station being provided in 1866.

<sup>48</sup> Chambers, G.F. *East Bourne - Memories of the Victorian Period 1845 - 1901* (V.T. Sunfield, Eastbourne, 1910) p.150 quotes the full passage verbatim. Chambers, a barrister, was greatly involved in public life, being a Local Government Board Inspector, Boundary Commissioner and political speaker, as well as a part-time journalist. He boasted that he had kept accurate diaries since 1 January 1854 (p.2) and had 'acquired my taste for horse-racing and the Turf', when he visited Brighton races in the previous August (p.146). Despite the name of the meeting, there appears to have been no Eastbourne Hunt until 1891. Steeplechases and point-to-point races were held on Bullock Down between 1908 and 1911.

<sup>49</sup> Hilton, J. *Thanet - An Outline History* (Author, Tonbridge, 1982) p.19. Margate had been a popular resort in the late eighteenth century. Many of the 18,000 visitors recorded in 1792 came by steamer rather than by road. Not only the races went through a bad patch - the Theatre Royal, which still survives today, was bankrupt by 1835.

<sup>50</sup> *Keble's Gazette*, 26 August 1871. Social life was still important, with the Assembly Rooms, Theatre, and the Hall-by-the Sea all well patronised. The last attraction, which gave its name to the first race on the card, had been intended to be the L.C.D. terminal station in Margate, but was never

## USE FOR OTHER PURPOSES

It is ironical that Wrexham races were inaugurated in 1807<sup>51</sup> by Sir Watkin Williams Wynn, the 5th Baronet, and then closed twice, in 1858 and 1876, at the behest of later holders of the same name and title. The meeting carried on reasonably successfully for fifty years, during which time the main line railway arrived in the industrial area surrounding the Welsh border town.<sup>52</sup> But, although the race committee supported local charities such as the Dispensary, it was attacked by the clergy, notably the Rev. George Cunliffe, as a disreputable event. In 1857, just after the incorporation of Wrexham as a borough, the then Sir Watkin received two 'memorials', one hostile to the races, the other supportive, and the Town Council passed a resolution asking him to withdraw his subscription and support of the races, to which he agreed on 10 December 1857.<sup>53</sup> After the last meeting in 1858, Sir Watkin established the Bangor-on-Dee steeplechases some six miles away in the following year. The aristocracy transferred their allegiance there and, despite the fact that the railway did not reach Bangor until 1895, the meeting flourished,<sup>54</sup> and is still with us today.

But in Wrexham itself, there was a move to revive the races as a family event - the Wrexham Autumn Sports - the first event taking place on 21 October 1867. Their increasing popularity and sophistication can be followed in the local paper,<sup>55</sup> and by 1870 the races were once more in the *Racing Calendar*. Even though they regained gentry support, they were not always successful. The last meeting took place in October 1876, as in the following year the War Office instructed that some militia should be based at Wrexham, and Sir Watkin Wynn granted them use of the racecourse for bivouac and manoeuvres, thus rendering it unavailable for further racing.<sup>56</sup>

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used by the railway as the extension to Ramsgate was opened at the same time and a through station was provided.

<sup>51</sup> *Chester Chronicle*, 11 September 1807.

<sup>52</sup> The Shrewsbury & Chester Railway was opened from Chester through Wrexham on 4 November 1846, reaching Shrewsbury on 14 October 1848. The Wrexham, Mold & Connahs Quay Railway was opened into Wrexham on 1 May 1866, and in due course the whole area was covered by a mass of industrial lines, many of which supported passenger services. The W.M. & C.Q. line was opened to a new Central station in Wrexham on 1 November 1887, in anticipation of the opening of the Wrexham & Ellesmere Railway, which took place on 2 November 1895.

<sup>53</sup> *Wrexham Advertiser*, 29 May 1858, letter from the Mayor, emphasising Sir Watkin's commitment to the wellbeing of the town.

<sup>54</sup> *Wrexham Advertiser*, 17 March 1860, 19 March 1864, 29 February 1868.

<sup>55</sup> *Wrexham Advertiser*, 10 October 1868, reported between 8,000 and 12,000 at the event.

<sup>56</sup> The south eastern end of the racecourse is still used by Wrexham F.C.

## COMPETITION

Hoylelake in Cheshire was probably unique in the nineteenth century in yielding to a totally different sport - golf - although several racecourses in due course found use as golf courses. The seaside resort had been founded in 1792 when Sir John Stanley built a hotel there, but saw little residential development until the coming of the railway. Although local histories date the first race meeting on a course outside the George Hotel at 1840,<sup>57</sup> the *Racing Calendar* listed a single fixture as early as 1832. The races were promoted by local hoteliers until 1849, when the arrangements were taken over by the Liverpool Hunt Club. There were often two meetings a year with both flat races and steeplechases until April 1876 but, although these at times attracted top jockeys such as George Fordham, they were not always recorded in the *Racing Calendar*.<sup>58</sup> Hoylelake, although less than eight miles from Birkenhead, and connected to Liverpool by ferry across the Mersey, was still quite an isolated location even after the opening of the Hoylelake Railway in July 1866, as this was not joined to the main railway system until January 1888.<sup>59</sup> Horses came by ferry or walked from Birkenhead, but this did not stop an inveterate traveller like Queen of Trumps from competing there in 1866.<sup>60</sup> There was a gradual decline in the number of races from the late 1860s onward, and in the six years before the last meeting in April 1876, there was only one flat race each day. What hastened the demise of the meeting was the establishment in 1869 and rapid growth of the Liverpool Golf Club, which used the same ground and was not prepared to have this churned up twice a year,<sup>61</sup> while posts and rails made poor hazards.

## FINANCIAL FAILURE

The long-established meeting at Knutsford in Cheshire has been placed under this heading because at the time of its demise the grandstand was being run commercially rather than by the race committee itself. This was a key element in the failure of the

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<sup>57</sup> *Hoylelake News*, 14 August 1991. Roberts, S.J. *Hoylelake and Meols Past* (Phillimore & Co. Ltd., Chichester, 1992) p.65.

<sup>58</sup> See Chapter 9, Notes 104 & 105.

<sup>59</sup> For more details, see Highet, C. *The Wirral Railway* (Oakwood Press, Lingfield, 1961)

<sup>60</sup> She ran in 26 races in 1865, 38 in 1866, and 47 in 1867.

<sup>61</sup> The early days, when golf and racing were uneasy bedfellows, are described in Farrar, G.B. *The Royal Liverpool Golf Club* (Willmer Brothers & Co. Ltd., Birkenhead, 1933) Chapter 2. Thompson, P. (ed.) *On the Turf: The Origin of Horseracing in the North West* (Quarry Publications, Bebington, 1991) p.26 has a cartoon of 1869, which already displayed the caption: 'Enter Golf, Exit Racing'.

races, which had taken place regularly on the Heath since the early eighteenth century, and occasionally even before that. The meetings were well supported locally, with attendant cockfights being particularly popular.<sup>62</sup> There were assemblies and ordinaries at local inns and houseparties at nearby Tatton Hall, the home of the Egerton family. Money collected at assemblies during the winter months helped to pay for the races, which until 1836 were organised by the country gentry. Thereafter, the townsfolk were asked to help in the management of the meeting, and to provide some financial support. Although this arrangement worked well enough, there were no races in 1849 and 1850, and the meetings struggled a little,<sup>63</sup> even though there were plenty of spectators during the traditional Wakes Week holiday. The arrival of the railway at Knutsford in May 1862 may have stimulated a more profit-orientated approach, and the railway company certainly supported the meetings for a couple of years.<sup>64</sup>

The Knutsford Grand Stand Company was incorporated on 20 June 1864, building an elaborate two tier grandstand complete with tower in the next year as part of its strategy to make the races profitable.<sup>65</sup> But there appeared to be little support for the company in the area, when 'the sporting giving way to the betting element, deterioration at once set in', as the essence of the meetings on the Heath were felt to be destroyed.<sup>66</sup> But it was not just as simple as that; the minimum prize money requirements and the overcapitalisation of the enterprise gradually brought its financial downfall, and the last meeting took place in August 1873.

In general, the London suburban courses which sprang up in the 1860s were no worse than many others, but in one specific case the bad reputation was amply justified. West Drayton in Middlesex owed its establishment to the quite respectable

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<sup>62</sup> Payne, G.A. *Knutsford* (J.M. Dent & Co., London, 1904) p.28.

<sup>63</sup> Both Payne, *Knutsford*, p.31, and a typed note from Alderman Beswick dated 14 July 1965 (Cheshire Record Office D4222/27) indicate that a race company was formed a few years after 1836. This is not substantiated by Green, H. *Knutsford, its Traditions and History* (Smith, Elder Co., London, 1859, rep. E.J. Morton, Didsbury, 1969) nor by further research. After no meeting in 1849, a race committee was formed following a request by 59 inhabitants of Knutsford to put the races on a sound footing. (Cheshire Record Office D4222/24 Knutsford Race Committee Minutes, October 1849 to July 1852). Some 40 collectors were employed to chase up subscriptions, and the meetings resumed in July 1851.

<sup>64</sup> See Chapter 6.

<sup>65</sup> Goodchild, K., Ikin, P. & Loach, T. *Looking Back at Knutsford* (Willow Publishing, Altrincham, 1984) p.40. Cheshire Record Office D4222/27 contains a balance sheet for the Grand Stand Company up to 30 June 1865, which clearly shows that the races themselves were still run by a race committee. But, as the company was also committed to improving the racecourse and the paddock, the capital was more than doubled from £1,400 to £3,000, which proved a millstone round the neck of the enterprise.

<sup>66</sup> Payne, *Knutsford*, p.31.

races organised by the Uxbridge Yeomanry (later Middlesex Yeomanry).<sup>67</sup> A permanent course was set up in 1865 on meadows south of the G.W. main line (now the site of the Garden City).<sup>68</sup> The station, nearer to the course than the present one, gave easy access for Londoners and brought rowdy and criminal elements in plenty, but within a year the meetings were even more renowned for the corruptness of their organisation. In view of what was to follow it was ironical that the 'new management', George French (who preferred to be known as Count Bolo) and George Fox should be seen as 'passports to a full and legitimate card'.<sup>69</sup> Nevertheless, there were five races on each day of the 1866 Whitsun meeting, some with between 15 and 20 runners, and a £200 match providing added interest. Thereafter the local newspapers - and others - provided an ongoing account of crime and disorderliness, whether at the South Country Hunt meetings or the normal fixtures.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, French was involved in shady activities of his own, and there were also problems with the R.S.P.C.A. and the Jockey Club. In 1876, he was declared bankrupt and the last flat race meeting took place on 6 June, although steeplechases continued until May 1877. In the following September, the rather primitive grandstand was mysteriously destroyed by fire just before the £2,000 insurance policy was due to expire. The insurance company was suspicious, but could not prove any crime had been committed, and had the grandstand rebuilt instead of making a pay-out, even though there was no longer any real use for it.<sup>71</sup>

### PROBLEMS IN ORGANISATION

The meeting at Reading in Berkshire was a well supported society function in the eighteenth century, even though as early as 1788 there were reductions in upper class

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<sup>67</sup> Hearmon, C. *Uxbridge - A Concise History* (Hillingdon Borough Libraries, Hillingdon, 1982, rev. 1984) p.64.

<sup>68</sup> The G.W. main line had been opened from Paddington to Maidenhead on 4 June 1838 with a station at West Drayton. A new station was provided about ¼ mile to the east in August 1884.

<sup>69</sup> *Buckinghamshire Advertiser*, 19 May 1866. 'Perhaps there are few localities for so short a season of renown more thoroughly tabooed in the minds of the race loving fraternity than this place. The absence of horses to contend for the stakes and the absence of some of the stakes after they had been contended for.'

<sup>70</sup> *Buckinghamshire Advertiser*, 18 January 1873, 11 June 1873 (when 10,000 to 11,000 attended the Whit Monday meeting). *The Times*, 17 July 1874. Letter from an American visitor.

<sup>71</sup> Packwood, G.F.L. & Cox, A.H. (eds.) *West Drayton and District during the 19th Century* (West Drayton & District Local History Society, West Drayton, 1967) p.69. Cox, A.H. *West Drayton & Yiewsley through the Centuries* (Hillingdon Borough Libraries, Hillingdon, 1983) p.37. George French (alias Count Bolo) died in reduced circumstances in April 1878.

attendance, because of the attractions of 'differing watering places now in vogue'.<sup>72</sup> Nevertheless, all went well until Bulmersh Heath was enclosed about the end of the Napoleonic Wars, and then there were no races for almost thirty years. The G.W.R. had been open through Reading for over three years<sup>73</sup> when the races were revived in 1843 against quite spirited opposition, with an estimated 10,000 to 15,000 attending the first meeting on Kings Meadow. The opening of other lines made Reading an important railway centre and, as mentioned in Chapter 4, the various railway companies brought large numbers of spectators to the meetings. Even as late as 1872 the Reading races were described as 'in every way a model race meeting', while the August 1874 meeting, with thirteen races over two days, was 'as large as it had ever been since the new course was opened'.<sup>74</sup> Although there was even an extra two day meeting in the following November, the organiser, Mr. Tompkins, who had worked hard to make the fixture a success, decided to call it a day. He cited, as the reasons for his decision, the difficulty of getting a suitable date (although the meeting had enjoyed an August slot almost without exception since its revival), inadequate financial support and insufficient returns for his efforts. He transferred his lease to a Quaker biscuit manufacturer, who was not particularly sympathetic to horseracing. The *Reading Observer*, while appreciating Tompkins' efforts, was glad to see the end of the meeting.<sup>75</sup>

The races on Abingdon Heath had been supported by the Corporation since the early eighteenth century, and during the period under review had enjoyed an unbroken run, with the two day events well patronised by owners, top jockeys and locals alike. The railway came within two miles of Abingdon in June 1844, with the opening of the Didcot - Oxford line, but due to local opposition it was to be a further 12 years before a short branch was opened into the town itself.<sup>76</sup> The railway undoubtedly facilitated

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<sup>72</sup> Diary of Mrs. Lybbe Powys, quoted in Boyd, D. *The Running Horses* (Berkshire County Libraries, Reading, 1978) p.7.

<sup>73</sup> The G. W.R. opened its main line from Paddington to Bristol in stages, reaching Reading on 30 March 1840, with through trains to Bristol starting on 30 June of the following year. the S.E.R. opened its line between Farnborough and Reading on 4 July 1849, although connection was not made with the G.W.R. at Reading until 1 December 1858, passenger services starting on the following 17 January.

<sup>74</sup> Boyd, *Running Horses*, p.15.

<sup>75</sup> Quoted in Boyd, *Running Horses*, p.15.

<sup>76</sup> The Oxford Railway opened its line from a junction with the G.W.R. at Didcot, to Oxford, on 12 June 1844, a few weeks after it had been absorbed by the major company. There was a station known

the movement of horses <sup>77</sup> and helped bring in spectators, but it was Charles Cox, the clerk of the course, who made the fixture a real success by his organisational skills and his development of a good programme. Even though in the late 1860s and early 1870s an examination of the race cards shows some diminution in the level of subscriptions, there were still six races on each of the last meeting in July 1875, with top jockeys such as Constable and Jarvis in attendance. But unfortunately Mr. Cox died and no one could be found to take on his duties, so the meeting ended.<sup>78</sup>

Although less than ten miles north of London, the meetings at Hendon and Kingsbury were in an area relatively devoid of railways, when they started in 1864.<sup>79</sup> Flat race meetings were originally held at Welsh Harp and steeplechase meetings at Mill Hill, but from 23 July 1868, ten days after the opening of the Midland Railway London extension, they were held on a new course at Kingsbury.<sup>80</sup> Thereafter the Albemarle Club meetings, which included steeplechases and hurdle races, as well as the Kingsbury meetings in July and the Hendon meetings in September, took place on the new course.<sup>81</sup> Although the flat race fixtures survived until September 1877, with top jockeys such as Archer and Constable riding there, there was difficulty in meeting the new Jockey Club requirements, and like all Metropolitan racecourses the promoters had the local magistrates breathing down their necks, well before the Metropolitan Racecourses Act of 1879. In fact, the most direct cause of their termination was the

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as Abingdon Road, which was renamed Culham on 2 June 1856, when the short branch into the town was opened, and an exchange station, Abingdon Junction, was provided on the main line.

<sup>77</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 8, Thomas Parr was able to race Fisherman on successive days at York and Abingdon in 1855, while in 1864 no less than 100 horses participated in the meeting.

<sup>78</sup> Ditchfield, P.H. 'Sport Ancient and Modern' in *Victoria County History - Berkshire II* (Archibald Constable, London, 1908) p.307.

<sup>79</sup> Until the G.N.R. opened its branch from Finsbury Park to Edgware on 22 August 1867, on which there was a station at Mill Hill, there were no railways in the area bounded by the L.N.W. main line through Wembley and Watford and the G.N. main line through Finsbury Park. The Midland Railway had stations at both Mill Hill and Hendon, and on 2 May 1870 opened one at Welsh Harp, which closed on 1 July 1903.

<sup>80</sup> The *Racing Calendar*, in describing the Kingsbury course, stated that 'Hendon station on the Great (sic) Midland Railway is within one mile of the course', and perpetuated this mistake throughout the life of the meeting.

<sup>81</sup> Pitt, *Long Time Gone*, p.442, is incorrect in stating that the Hendon meetings continued at Welsh Harp until 20 September 1876. Apart from the last year, 1877, there were both 'Hendon' and 'Kingsbury' meetings, and the *Racing Calendar* stated quite clearly that the 'Hendon' meetings were run over the Kingsbury course. Moreover, the description of the Hendon Course was replaced in the *Racing Calendar* by the Kingsbury Course in 1868.



refusal to grant liquor licences on the course to local publicans, with consequent difficulties in organisation.<sup>82</sup>

### INABILITY TO MEET JOCKEY CLUB MINIMUM PRIZE MONEY

Eight race meetings closed because they were unable to sustain the minimum level of prize money demanded by the Jockey Club, and none appear to have continued as 'unauthorised' or National Hunt meetings. Only Kings Lynn and Tonbridge, which ended in September 1874, and was discussed in conjunction with Tunbridge Wells in the last chapter, succumbed to the 1870 minimum requirements, the remaining six falling foul of the more stringent 1877 minima.

The first to close, because of its lamentably low prize money, was Kings Lynn in Norfolk, which had started a sporadic run of 12 meetings in 1850. The railway had reached the town in October 1846,<sup>83</sup> but although the 1851 meeting, aided by the G.N. excursions, attracted a reported 20,000 spectators, the fixture petered out after a couple of years. There was a revival on 10 September 1862 on a course at West Lynn, where a grandstand was built on the old bed of the river Ouse. But although the G.E.R., probably preoccupied with the impending opening of the line from Kings Lynn to Hunstanton, refused to run any excursions, the G.N.R. once more stepped into the breach, and 10,000 attended the meeting.<sup>84</sup> Thereafter there was only one blank year, 1868, until the final meeting in September 1870, which, according to local press reports, was 'one of the best day's racing seen for many years at Lynn', even though two of the eight races on the card did not fill and there was no race worth over £20. There was a Railway Plate of £10 for ponies (not in the *Racing Calendar*) and a good crowd, notwithstanding the counter attraction of the Sandringham Estate Flower Show.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> *The Times*, 6 July 1877, 14 December 1877. The last Metropolitan Steeplechases were held at Kingsbury on 16 March 1878.

<sup>83</sup> The Lynn & Ely Railway was opened from Kings Lynn to Downham on 27 October 1846, and through to Ely on 26 October of the following year, when the line from Kings Lynn to Dereham reached Sporle. The local company amalgamated with other railways in the area to form the East Anglian Railway by an Act of 22 July 1847.

<sup>84</sup> Richards, P. *Kings Lynn* (Phillimore & Co. Ltd., Chichester, 1990) p.152. The Lynn & Hunstanton Railway was opened on 3 October 1862.

<sup>85</sup> *Lynn Advertiser*, 10 September 1870. Both this and the *Lynn News* of the same date carried detailed reports of the meeting, after which there was a dinner at the Spread Eagle Hotel, showing that even at this late date the social side of racing was not neglected.

The Glamorganshire meetings were held both in Cardiff and at Cowbridge in the eighteenth century, but the former venue proved to be the more resilient, with an unbroken run of meetings from 1798 to 1830. It was then, eleven years before the railway linked it with Cardiff, some 25 miles distant, that the town of Merthyr Tydfil donated a prize at the Glamorganshire meeting, a gesture which it repeated in 1839, after which the Cardiff fixture lapsed for 15 years.<sup>86</sup> The meeting in September 1855 had eleven races over two days, with £100 added to the Cardiff Stakes, and the course description appeared in the *Racing Calendar* for the first time.<sup>87</sup> But this revival lasted only until 1860 and, when the fixture reappeared in 1862, both the prize money and those races which were not dismissed as being 'for local and cavalry horses', were much reduced. 1874 marked a low point with only a match on the first day, and a match and a steeplechase on the second. In 1875, the Corporation tried to breathe new life into the meeting with an £80 plate, but neither this nor the last fixture in May 1876, with four £50 plates and a £100 match, would have met the Jockey Club requirements for the following year, but the description of the Cardiff course was retained in the *Racing Calendar* until 1882 in the hope of a revival.

The race meetings in the city of Gloucester, although reaching back at least into the eighteenth century, had a somewhat intermittent quality throughout their appearances in the *Racing Calendar*. Whyte, while extolling the amenities and cultural life of the city, upbraided its inhabitants for their lack of interest in the meeting, which had caused a sharp reduction in the prize money offered between the 1837 and 1838 fixtures.<sup>88</sup> He was right, for there were to be no more races for 22 years, although there were a few substitute fixtures held at Cheltenham and at Tewkesbury. The 1861 revival lasted only two years, a more determined effort being made between 1870 and October 1876, but the requirements for prize money in 1877 were felt to be unattainable and the

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<sup>86</sup> Cardiff was linked to Merthyr as early as 12 April 1841, but was isolated from the main railway system until 19 July 1852, although the main line of the South Wales Railway had been opened through the city some two years earlier. Thereafter, as befitted a major port and industrial centre, and the focal point of the Western Valleys coal trade, a dense network of railways belonging to a number of companies served the area.

<sup>87</sup> Pitt, *Long Time Gone*, pp. 223 - 225, ascribes the years 1774 - 1803, 1825 - 1839 and 1853 - 1855 to Cardiff. These were in fact the dates for the meetings at Cowbridge, where the last meeting in 1855 coincided with a sustained Cardiff revival. The dates for the Cardiff meetings in the review period were 1798 - 1830, 1836 - 1839, 1855 - 1860 and 1863 - 1876. It will be seen that in some years meetings were held at both locations. See Chapter 9, Note 79 for Cowbridge National Hunt meetings and railway information.

<sup>88</sup> Whyte, *British Turf*, I, p.243.

meeting folded. The coming of the railway in 1840 had stimulated no revival, and Longworth was certainly in error when he ascribed the demise of flat racing in Gloucestershire 'to the distance of our natural down courses from the railways'.<sup>89</sup>

The course at Eltham, some eight miles from central London, which had hosted the Lee, Eltham & Gravesend meetings for nine years in the 1830s and 1840s, experienced a brief revival from 1873 to October 1876. According to Whyte, the Lee meetings had started in 1830, but 'as yet they are merely of local interest',<sup>90</sup> which was not surprising as Eltham remained a rural village until the 1880s. Flat racing ended for the first time in July 1847, two years before the S.E.R. opened its line through Blackheath and Woolwich to Gravesend on 20 July 1849.<sup>91</sup> The nine meetings in these early years may have gained Eltham its place in this survey, but the latter years are of the greater interest. In 1852 William Blenkiron leased Middle Park Farm from the Crown, and by the mid-1860s had the largest stud farm in Europe.<sup>92</sup> There were many notable visitors to the stud and the steeplechases which started on Harrow Meadows from 1866, the flat races only being revived between 1873 and October 1876.<sup>93</sup> No doubt there were some problems, but no more than those associated with the various Eltham fairs which dated from the Middle Ages.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Longworth, T.J. 'Racing' in *Victoria County History - Gloucestershire II* (Archibald Constable, London, 1907) p.298. The Gloucester meetings were run on an easily accessible course by the River Severn. The Burford public meetings were moribund by the early nineteenth century, and the Bibury Club meetings both there and at Bibury itself were all but finished, when the Club moved its principal fixtures first to Cheltenham in 1827 and then to Stockbridge in 1831. The Cheltenham meetings near Cleeve Hill lasted until 1867 and then transferred to Prestbury, where the National Hunt fixtures are still held today. The railway had already reached Tewkesbury before its shortlived meetings were recorded in the *Racing Calendar*, and the Bristol & Clifton meetings on its southern border had finished in 1838, two years before the railway reached Bristol.

<sup>90</sup> Whyte, *British Turf*, I, p.256, but the meeting did not appear in the *Racing Calendar* until 1836, running without a break until 1843 and then only in 1847. The nearby Woolwich Garrison meetings were equally sporadic and plagued with petty theft, a trait often ascribed to the later London suburban meetings, of which the revived Eltham was one. *Kentish Mercury*, 5 August 1843, 16 September 1843.

<sup>91</sup> There was no station at Eltham (now Mottingham) until the opening of the Dartford loop line on 1 September 1866.

<sup>92</sup> Kennett, J. *Eltham in Old Photographs* (Sutton Publishing Ltd., Stroud, 1991) p.19. Many notable horses were associated with Middle Park, whose name lives on in the Middle Park Stakes at Newmarket. Gregory, R.R.C. *The Story of Royal Eltham* (Kentish District Times Ltd., Eltham, 1909) p.294.

<sup>93</sup> Gregory, *Royal Eltham*, p.294. Blyth, H. *The Pocket Venus* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1966) covers the scandal of the Marquis of Hastings, Henry Chaplin and Lady Florence Paget, some of whose events were played out at Eltham.

<sup>94</sup> Cameron, D.K. *The English Fair* (Sutton Publishing Ltd., Stroud, 1998) pp. 176 - 177.

It is difficult to decide whether to equate the final demise of flat racing in Bristol in April 1878 with a decline in interest or difficulty in meeting the Jockey Club requirements. The fixture began in 1827 but, even while Whyte was describing the amenities available in a city with over 105,000 inhabitants which 'affords amusement to a most numerous attendance' at the Bristol & Clifton Races, the last meeting for 34 years had already been held,<sup>95</sup> two years before the G.W.R. arrived in May 1840. Although Bristol rapidly grew into a major railway centre, there was no sustained revival of flat racing. The Bristol & East Somersetshire National Hunt meetings started in 1856, and survived until March 1880. The Bristol & Somersetshire meeting was inaugurated under Jockey Club rules in 1874 but, even though a new course was provided, was only repeated in 1877 and 1878.<sup>96</sup>

Although only about six miles from central London, Streatham did not get its first railway station until December 1856, but by 1868, the year in which both flat racing and steeplechasing started there, it had three, and had become an important railway junction.<sup>97</sup> The Streatham meetings were set up by the Croydon Steeplechase & Hurdle Race Committee,<sup>98</sup> which took over land from Edwin Ives and endeavoured to run five meetings a year, the first taking place on 7 March 1868. Despite their pretentious names, the races offered prizes within the £25 - £100 range, and were not of a very high standard, while sharp practice, violence and disturbances were not confined to the spectators.<sup>99</sup> The meetings were under continual pressure from the Jockey Club and the local magistrates. The last flat meeting in November 1878 was marred by robberies,<sup>100</sup> and any continuance would have fallen foul of the local magistrates, whose powers were to be reinforced in the following year. The last steeplechase meeting was in April 1879.

Odiham, in Hampshire, had held a few meetings in the late eighteenth century but really started again only after the L.S.W. main line, which ran nearby, had been

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<sup>95</sup> Whyte, *British Turf*, I, pp.234 - 236.

<sup>96</sup> Chetwynd, *Racing Reminiscences*, p.148.

<sup>97</sup> Streatham Common, which, until the opening of Norbury in January 1878, was the nearest station to the racecourse, had two small gates installed in its fence to enable racegoers and horses to reach the racecourse without crossing the running lines. Norbury was provided with sloping access to enable horses to reach the station easily.

<sup>98</sup> *Croydon Chronicle*, 21 December 1867.

<sup>99</sup> Brown, J.W. *Streatham Races* (Local History Publications, Streatham, 1990) no page numbers, describes in detail the problems on and off the track.

<sup>100</sup> *Croydon Advertiser*, 27 November 1878.

completed in May 1840. Only three meetings were held at first, but from 1848 there were few gaps until the last fixture in June 1879. There was no station at Odiham itself, but Winchfield was only three miles away,<sup>101</sup> while towns such as Aldershot, Alton and Basingstoke were within ten miles, so there was a reasonable catchment area. Although the prizes offered were generally modest, top jockeys like Fred Archer rode there and, as recounted in Chapter 6, the L.S.W.R. provided prizes of £100 or more in 1878 and 1879 in a vain attempt to offset 'the new regulations enforced by the Jockey Club as to the minimum stakes being provided, [which] killed this old-fashioned meeting, as it did so many in this and other counties'.<sup>102</sup>

### CONTINUATION AS 'UNAUTHORISED' MEETINGS

Airdrie in Scotland, only eleven miles from Glasgow, was well served by railways before its races started their unbroken run between 1853 and 1870.<sup>103</sup> The meetings were popular with the public, well supported by important owners such as James Merry, while Thomas Parr thought it worthwhile to bring his St. Leger winner Saucebox to run there in 1855. In many ways, it personified what the average punter wanted from a race meeting - good sport, modest prizes, excitement and a feeling of involvement with horses and riders alike.<sup>104</sup> The meeting survived an attack from the anti-racing fraternity in 1861,<sup>105</sup> but was unable to sustain the Jockey Club requirements, and continued as a 'flapping' meeting after the July 1870 fixture.<sup>106</sup>

The races at Wilmslow, some twelve miles south of Manchester, were originally part of the Wakes Week festivities held on Lindow Common, and as early as 1810 had some events of a reasonable standard, but not everything.<sup>107</sup> The fixture featured once in the *Racing Calendar* in 1838 but, despite having a station on the Manchester -

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<sup>101</sup> Winchfield, originally known as Shapley Heath, was opened on 24 September 1838.

<sup>102</sup> Bonnett, F. 'Racing' in *Victoria County History - Hampshire V* (Archibald Constable, London, 1912) p.544.

<sup>103</sup> The early railways around Airdrie had provided passenger services, albeit horsedrawn, since July 1828, but the modern era started with the opening of the Airdrie (Hallcraig Street) to Kirkintilloch line on 26 December 1844, although it was not until July 1847 that the gauge of neighbouring railways was changed from 4ft. 6in. to 4ft. 8½in., and services ran through to Glasgow Queen Street.

<sup>104</sup> Fairfax Blakeborough, J. *Northern Turf History* Vol. IV, (Author, Whitby, 1973) p.282.

<sup>105</sup> *Airdrie & Coatbridge Advertiser*, 3 August 1861.

<sup>106</sup> Fairfax Blakeborough, *Northern Turf History* IV, pp. 283 - 284.

<sup>107</sup> Racebill for Wilmslow Races 4 - 6 September 1810, reproduced in *Wilmslow Advertiser* in November 1909. 'Also on each day in addition to the above [the races] there will be wheelbarrow and pig races, quoiting, cricket, wrestling, sporting, dipping, whistling, humming, smoaking (sic!),

Crewe - London main line from 10 May 1842, did not reappear until 1857, after which there were only three gaps until September 1872. Notwithstanding their more upmarket image, the races were considered to be 'of a very inferior character causing much harm to the neighbourhood'.<sup>108</sup> But they survived in their original role until 1880, the racecourse being purchased by the local council for a recreation ground in 1897.<sup>109</sup>

Like those at Wilmslow, the races at Radcliffe (or Radcliffe Bridge) near Bury in Lancashire, formed an important part of the local Wakes Week, and, once they appeared in the *Racing Calendar* in 1840, continued without interruption until August 1876. They had had a somewhat inauspicious start as, at the first meeting in 1839 on a course by the river, the grandstand had collapsed, causing injury to many people.<sup>110</sup> A station was opened at Radcliffe Bridge in September 1846 with 14 trains a day between Bury and Manchester, and the whole area was soon well served by railways.<sup>111</sup> The races led a relatively uneventful life, but in their later years both schools and factories were less inclined to tolerate the absenteeism they caused, and 'sober minded citizens campaigned against the influx of undesirable characters ...'.<sup>112</sup> Moreover, there was pressure from the local cricket club which wished to take over the raceground. All this, coupled with the steep increase in prize money required from January 1877, caused the end of the meetings under Jockey Club rules, but they 'were transferred to Radcliffe Moor where they continued.'<sup>113</sup>

Chesterfield in Derbyshire had been an important meeting since the early eighteenth century, and was well supported by both the town and the local nobility, with an unbroken run of fixtures from at least 1774 until October 1877. The arrival of the North Midland Railway in May 1840 had been heralded by the donation of a £100

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knitting, bobbing, poling, dancing, singing, snuff-taking and pudding eating'. Compare with Eccles, Chapter 1, Note 54.

<sup>108</sup> Earwaker, J.P. *A History of East Cheshire* (Author, London, 1877) p.41.

<sup>109</sup> Pearson, A. *Wilmslow Past and Present* (2nd ed.) (Swain & Co. Ltd., Stockport, 1901) pp. 48 - 49.

<sup>110</sup> Nicholls, Rev. W. *History and Traditions of Radcliffe* (John Heywood Ltd., Manchester, 1910) p.207.

<sup>111</sup> The East Lancashire Railway was formally opened on 23 September 1846 (*Preston Guardian*, 26 September 1846) with public services starting five days later. See Marshall, J. *The Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway* Vol. I (David & Charles, Newton Abbot, 1969) pp. 105 ff. for more details.

<sup>112</sup> Sunderland, F. *The Book of Radcliffe* (Quotes, Whittlebury, 1995) p.98.

<sup>113</sup> Nicholls, *History and Traditions of Radcliffe*, p.207. The local cricket club did not move onto the racecourse until May 1885.

prize at the 1839 meeting, but this was not repeated.<sup>114</sup> At this time Chesterfield was the only important meeting in the county, as Derby was in abeyance and Buxton in terminal decline. The meetings continued in a relatively uneventful manner, and even in 1870, when Fred Archer rode his first winner, there were still five races each day, although the fields were small. But the last meeting had only one day's flat racing, with four races, of which only two met the Jockey Club's new requirements, even though there was £365 added money in total.<sup>115</sup> The steeplechases on the following day were also the last at the higher level. Nevertheless, race meetings continued at Chesterfield for many years thereafter.<sup>116</sup>

### CONTINUATION AS NATIONAL HUNT MEETINGS

The 1870s showed the largest number of established flat race meeting terminations of any decade during the period under review, but no less than 20 (36%) of these continued as National Hunt fixtures for five years or more.<sup>117</sup> Many lasted into the twentieth century, demonstrating the high level of support for horse racing throughout the country. Even a very remote course like Rothbury in Northumberland, which only figured briefly in the *Racing Calendar* between 1869 and 1871, was able to attract crowds to its National Hunt meetings well into the second half of the twentieth century, with race specials running even after normal railway services had been withdrawn.

Bridgnorth in Shropshire, where National Hunt racing survived until May 1939, demonstrated as well as any the ongoing interest in fixtures with modest prize money, which were no longer acceptable to the Jockey Club, as the Bicentenary Cup Chase in 1928, worth £107, was the most valuable race ever run over the former flat race course at Tasley, to which the long lived meeting had moved after 1830.<sup>118</sup> Traditionally support had come from the Corporation, the local gentry and the innkeepers, who played a major part in organising the meetings. The town had many

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<sup>114</sup> See Chapter 6.

<sup>115</sup> Bryden, H.A. & Cuming, E.D. 'Racing' in *Victoria County History - Derbyshire II* (Archibald Constable, London, 1907) p.290 commented that the increased prize money now required 'made an end of Chesterfield as of many other meetings'.

<sup>116</sup> Fairfax Blakeborough, *Northern Turf History II*, p.67, described a meeting at Chesterfield in 1907.

<sup>117</sup> Tenby in Pembrokeshire, where flat racing ended in October 1872, has been covered in Chapter 9 in conjunction with Haverfordwest.

<sup>118</sup> *Salopian Journal*, 13 July 1831.

amenities, and the Corporation, which by 1847 also owned the grandstand, leased out the raceground when this was not needed for the races.<sup>119</sup> The two day fixture gradually declined to a single day in 1850, and the last meeting for sixteen years was held in September 1853. The railway did not reach Bridgnorth until February 1862,<sup>120</sup> but did not stimulate an immediate revival. Flat racing resumed at Tasley in 1869, but proved to be shortlived, the last meeting taking place in March 1871.<sup>121</sup> Although there were 14 runners in the £50 Bridgnorth Tradesmen's Plate, this was the only race on the card under Jockey Club rules.

Flat racing at Abergavenny in Monmouthshire, which started in 1839, was predated by the Abergavenny & Monmouthshire Hunt meetings. The arrival of the railway in January 1854<sup>122</sup> appeared to have very little impact on these relatively modest meetings, which continued with only two blank years until April 1871, after which the National Hunt meetings continued for a further 28 years.

Whitehaven, in the industrial region on the West Cumberland coast, had already been connected to the railway system for five years when its flat race meetings first appeared in the *Racing Calendar* in April 1852.<sup>123</sup> It was even thought worthwhile at that time to publish a lithograph of a race finishing opposite the grandstand on the Harras Moor course.<sup>124</sup> Flat racing continued until 1864, when the West Cumberland steeplechase

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<sup>119</sup> *Eddowe's Journal*, 17 February 1847. Whyte, *British Racing*, I, p.287, writing some seven years previously, had been most critical of this practice. 'The course has become much damaged from being let out to different tenants during the interval [between meetings], who divide it by moveable fences'.

<sup>120</sup> Bridgnorth was on the Severn Valley Railway, which was opened on 1 February 1862 between Hartlebury and a junction ¾ miles south of Shrewsbury, where it reached the joint station by virtue of the running powers granted in the enabling Act. The line was leased to the G.W.R. from its opening, and was absorbed by it in 1872. See Tolson, J.M. 'In the Tracks of the Ironmasters', *Railway Magazine* CXI, 1965, pp. 373 - 378 and 440 - 448.

<sup>121</sup> Pitt, *Long Time Gone*, p.180, states that there was a flat race meeting in 1873, at which the grandstand holding 400 spectators collapsed, luckily without any injuries. This meeting is not recorded in the *Racing Calendar*.

<sup>122</sup> Although Abergavenny had been linked to Hereford by a primitive railway well over 20 years previously, the Newport, Abergavenny & Hereford Railway which used some parts for its own line, was opened on 2 January 1854. The local company passed via the West Midland Railway into the hands of the G.W.R. in 1863. The Merthyr, Tredegar & Abergavenny Railway, which intended to link the towns in its title, was leased by the L.N.W.R. before the opening on 1 October 1862, and vested in the major company by an Act of 1866. It gave Abergavenny two more stations, and provided a link across the upper end of the lines opened along the various Welsh valleys.

<sup>123</sup> The Maryport & Carlisle Railway, opened as far as Aspatria on 15 July 1840 and through to Carlisle on 10 May 1843, linked into the Whitehaven & Maryport Railway (also known as the Whitehaven Junction Railway) when this was opened to Workington on 19 January 1846. Passenger services to and from Whitehaven commenced on 19 March 1847, and the company was vested in the L.N.W.R. in 1866.

<sup>124</sup> Wilson, J. 'Horse Racing' in *Victoria County History - Cumberland II* (Archibald Constable, London, 1905) p.422.



meetings were first recorded, and the whole area surrounding Whitehaven and Workington was becoming crisscrossed by industrial railways.<sup>125</sup> There was a brief resurgence of flat racing between 1869 and April 1872, but the steeplechases, for which a limited company was formed and the course partially enclosed, carried on until April 1890.<sup>126</sup>

Flat races had taken place at Tarporley in Cheshire under the auspices of the Tarporley Hunt Club between 1775 and 1835, with only a few gaps in the early years.<sup>127</sup> In the 1830s they were held on a single day in November with relatively small fields, and even the attendance of leading jockeys such as Sim Templeman could not breathe life into the meeting. The opening of a station at Beeston, midway between Crewe and Chester, and some four miles from the raceground at Cotebrook, in October 1840, gave only a marginal advantage over the canal boats which already plied to the same point.<sup>128</sup> A shortlived revival between 1843 and 1849 was not successful. The November 1847 meeting was particularly bad with two walkovers and one three horse race, while the introduction of hurdle races in the following year did not stimulate any increased interest. Apart from a single meeting in 1873<sup>129</sup> that was the end, but steeplechasing continued to flourish despite changes in venue and date. No doubt the ongoing support of the Dukes of Westmorland both on the course and at Eaton Hall was an important factor in their survival until April 1939, particularly as the meeting was only placed on a full commercial footing in 1926.

The racecourse in the Herefordshire town of Bromyard was reputedly constructed to provide work for soldiers returning after the Napoleonic Wars,<sup>130</sup> but the first series of meetings only lasted from 1820 to 1823. The 1833 revival was more successful and the fixture continued until 1848, even though Bromyard was isolated and there were clashes with other meetings. It should be remembered that at this date even important

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<sup>125</sup> Heading south, the Whitehaven & Furness Junction Railway was opened as far as Ravenglass on 21 July 1849, but a permanent terminal station was not established in Whitehaven until 30 September 1852. The W. & F. J.R. ultimately extended to a junction at Foxfield with the Furness Railway, with which it amalgamated. The two lines at Whitehaven were not linked until 24 December 1874, when Corkickle tunnel was opened.

<sup>126</sup> Fairfax Blakeborough, *Northern Turf History*, II, p.270.

<sup>127</sup> Latham, F.A. (ed.) *Tarporley* (Tarporley Local History Group, Tarporley, 1943) pp. 51 ff. The Tarporley Hunt Club had been formed in November 1762. It was primarily interested in hare coursing, but from 1775 flat racing was staged on a two mile course at Crabtree Green, and in due course a permanent site was found at Cotebrook.

<sup>128</sup> See Chapter 2, Text and Note 16.

<sup>129</sup> Pitt, *Long Time Gone*, p.439, does not list this meeting.

cities nearby - Worcester and more particularly Hereford - were still not served directly by the railway system. Bromyard was still ten miles away from any railway when the meetings reappeared in the *Racing Calendar* in 1867, but the fixture was popular and particularly in 1871 had 'fine weather, a large attendance and good sport, [and] left nothing to be desired'.<sup>131</sup> This meeting had four flat races and three hurdle races, but the following year there was only a single flat race, which attracted two runners. By the last flat race meeting at the end of May 1874 the railway was close to Bromyard, but it would be 33 years before it was linked via Leominster to Shrewsbury and Hereford.<sup>132</sup> This did not inhibit the race organisers, who carried on with steeplechases and hurdle races. By 1884 some 6,000 - 7,000 spectators were being recorded, even though the railway from the west was still several miles away. But the meeting did have difficulty in attracting runners, and better rail connections did not bring better racing so, after some vicissitudes, the last fixture took place in September 1900.<sup>133</sup>

Stokesley in North Yorkshire held its last meeting under Jockey Club rules in June 1874, but National Hunt racing continued at the same time of year for a further seven years. Although its meetings were held at least as early as the mid-eighteenth century when its prizes were 'real and full fifties' as required by the 1740 Act, it also suffered from 'a want of horses' on occasion. In fact, it did not appear in the *Racing Calendar* from 1793 to 1844 although the races played an important role in the local Trinity Fair festivities.<sup>134</sup> Between 1845 and 1874 its meetings were reported intermittently, and

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<sup>130</sup> Pitt, *Long Time Gone*, p.135.

<sup>131</sup> *Ledbury Free Press & Herefordshire Advertiser*, 23 May 1871.

<sup>132</sup> The route of the Worcester, Bromyard & Leominster Railway, authorised on 11 August 1861, took over 35 years to complete. After two time extensions and the abandonment of the western section, on 2 May 1874 the branch from a junction with the Worcester - Malvern line reached Yearsett on the outskirts of Bromyard, and was extended to a permanent station in the town on 22 October 1877. The plan to build the Leominster - Bromyard section was revived and the first four miles to Steen Bridge was opened on 1 March 1884, but Bromyard was not reached until 1 September 1897. The whole undertaking had already passed into the hands of the G.W.R. in 1888.

<sup>133</sup> Price, 'Racing' in *VCH - Worcestershire II*, p.327, stated that the end of the steeplechase meetings was due to a dispute with the Lord of the Manor, so that the course on the downs was no longer available.

<sup>134</sup> Details of races for 1843 and 1845 clearly show the fine and confusing line between 'appearance' and 'non'-appearance' in the *Racing Calendar* during the early nineteenth century. The two racecards were almost identical, the 1843 (which did not appear in the *Racing Calendar*) programme showing marginally more added money. Perhaps at that time one of the main reasons for 'non-appearance' was not sending the details to Weatherbys. No information on either meeting was found in the 'Races to Come' section of the *Racing Calendar*.

the arrival of the railway in March 1857<sup>135</sup> came just before the major gap in the *Racing Calendar* between 1860 and 1867. The railway may have reduced the relative importance of Stokesley for, whereas it was an important staging point for the Leeds - Redcar coach, it now found itself on a railway branch line, even though there was generally a saving in journey time. Although both flat races and National Hunt events were recorded from 1868, there was no change either in the generally low prize money or in the willingness of John Osborne to send horses and top northern jockeys like Chaloner to ride there. The National Hunt races continued until June 1881, but the clerk of the course, H.J. Tweddell, wrote: 'The races became a losing concern after the Jockey Club's rules relegated us to the category of 'flapping'.'<sup>136</sup> The final indignity came when a local joiner took the race committee to court to recover the costs of erecting the grandstand and the attached weighing room.

The meeting at Tenbury Wells in Worcestershire ran without interruption from 1792 to 1863, but in 1840 Whyte commented that while the course was good 'the sport is very inferior',<sup>137</sup> and eleven years later a local newspaper stated that the fixture was 'devoid of interest and, as related to the sport itself, certainly not worth the trouble of getting up'.<sup>138</sup> The elevation of Tenbury to the status of a spa had clearly not improved the view of the meeting, while the curious arrangement of morning and evening races gave every opportunity for drunkenness and unruly behaviour. The arrival of the railway from the west in August 1861<sup>139</sup> did not stimulate any change, and the racecard in 1863, the last year of the meeting's unbroken run,<sup>140</sup> showed no improvement over the 1851 fixture, with three races which had four, two and three runners respectively, although Thomas Parr had two winners. Steeplechases started in

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<sup>135</sup> The North Yorkshire & Cleveland Railway was intended to link Picton, between Northallerton and Stockton on the Leeds Northern Railway, with Grosmont on the Whitby & Pickering Railway. The section from Picton to Stokesley was opened on 2 March 1857 and on to Castleton on 1 April 1861, but Grosmont was not reached until October 1865. The complex history is summarised in Carter, E. *An Historical Geography of the Railways of the British Isles* (Cassell & Co. Ltd., London, 1959) p.258.

<sup>136</sup> Quoted in Fairfax-Blakeborough, *Northern Turf History*, II, p.242.

<sup>137</sup> Whyte, *British Turf*, I, p.338.

<sup>138</sup> *Worcestershire Chronicle* 6 August 1851.

<sup>139</sup> The Tenbury Railway, a 5¼ mile line from Wooferton on the Shrewsbury & Hereford Railway, was opened on 1 August 1861. It was worked by the S. & H.R. for seven years after its opening and, like the latter, was vested jointly in the G.W. & L.N.W. Railways, although by a separate Act of 1 December 1868.

<sup>140</sup> Price, 'Racing' in *VCH - Worcestershire II*, p.326, states that 'Tenbury existed as a little country meeting until 1857 ...', but this is not borne out by the *Racing Calendar*.

1864 when the railway from Bewdley reached the town,<sup>141</sup> and the correspondent from *The Field* was even more complimentary than Whyte: 'There are few better steeplechase courses in England, every bit being over grass.'<sup>142</sup> Although there were flat races on the card only between 1871 and 1874, the steeplechases continued, albeit at times precariously, until April 1904, the value of the 1892 prizes of less than £30 each showing the wisdom and necessity of leaving the Jockey Club fold.

Tiverton in Devon first appeared in the *Racing Calendar* in 1837, and was noted by Whyte as having two days' racing towards the end of August, which was supported by both M.P.s and the local inhabitants.<sup>143</sup> The Bristol & Exeter Railway provided a station on its main line in May 1844, and a branch into the town itself on 12 June 1848. The arrival of the railway did not markedly affect the quality of the meetings, which ended after 1852. There was a brief revival in the mid-fifties, before a more determined restart in 1867, with National Hunt races being added in the following year. Prize money was always a problem and racing under Jockey Club rules ended in September 1874, although steeplechases and hurdle races continued for a further eight years.

The county town of Monmouth had held some meetings in the late eighteenth century, but these started in earnest in 1810 and ran until September 1875 with only a few gaps in the 1830s and early 1840s, before railways could play any major part in its social or commercial life. Despite its relative remoteness the meeting on Chippenham Meadow attracted well-known owners such as Isaac Day in the 1830s and Thomas Parr from the 1840s through to the 1860s, while Lottery, the winner of the first Grand National, graced the fixture in 1841. The railway reached Monmouth in October 1857, but the town did not become an important, though rural, junction until the 1870s.<sup>144</sup> There was still no Severn Tunnel, and the Severn Bridge route only opened on the first day of the last meeting. The awkward journey did not deter Fred Archer and Henry

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<sup>141</sup> The Tenbury & Bewdley Railway was opened on 14 August 1864, and transferred to the G.W.R. under an Agreement confirmed by an Act of 1869.

<sup>142</sup> Quoted in Pitt, *Long Time Gone*, p.153.

<sup>143</sup> Whyte, *British Turf*, I, p.230.

<sup>144</sup> The Coleford, Monmouth, Usk and Pontypool Railway was opened from a junction with the Newport, Abergavenny & Hereford Railway to Usk on 2 June 1856 and through to Monmouth on 12 October 1857. The next railway to arrive in the town was the Ross & Monmouth Railway on 4 August 1873, followed by the Wye Valley Railway between Chepstow and Monmouth on 1 November 1876. To complete the railway scene, the Monmouth & Coleford Junction Railway was opened on 1 September 1883. All these railways in due course became part of the G.W.R.

Constable from attending this, even though there were competing fixtures, either easier of access at Hendon, or more prestigious at Ayr. Nevertheless, the meeting had declined from an average of seven races a day between 1865 and 1870 to only seven races across two days in September 1875, the remainder of the card being made up by hurdle races, as the Jockey Club requirements started to bite. National Hunt racing, which for the first few years occupied the same September slot, survived until May 1933 despite a few problems and blank years - its demise no doubt hastened by the new course at nearby Chepstow.

The small town of Knighton on the borders of Radnorshire and Shropshire recorded its meetings in the *Racing Calendar* from 1801 until April 1876, with 1813 to 1819 being the only blank years. The principal races at its two day meeting were recorded by Whyte in 1840, and Mr. Barrow took Catherina there in both 1839 and 1841. These continued on their uneventful way even after the railway finally reached the town on 6 March 1861.<sup>145</sup> Prior to that the nearest railhead had been at Craven Arms some 12½ miles away, although only since April 1852. The meeting date was changed from June to April and, when flat racing ended in 1876, its April date was taken over by the National Hunt races which had been associated with the meeting since 1868, and were to continue until April 1882.

Cheltenham, leaving aside the special allure of the Grand National at Aintree, is today perhaps the most prestigious of National Hunt racecourses. Yet in the nineteenth century it was a relatively minor flat racing venue until its final meeting in April 1876. The town was a relatively late but rapidly developing fashionable spa, whose population increased from 3,076 in 1801 to 13,388 by 1821,<sup>146</sup> and whose amenities were to reflect the increase in visitors. In May 1814 there was a plan to establish annual horse races in the neighbourhood and the first meeting was held in August 1818,<sup>147</sup> its debut in the *Racing Calendar* being in the following year. The races got a short-lived boost when the Bibury Club held its main fixtures in Cheltenham between

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<sup>145</sup> The Central Wales Railway amalgamated with the local company on 22 June 1863, over two years before it opened its line to Llandrindod Wells on 17 October 1865. In due course the line was extended to Llandovery, whence other companies provided access to Swansea and various South Wales towns.

<sup>146</sup> Hembry, P. *The English Spa 1560 - 1815* (Athlone Press, London, 1990) p.225.

<sup>147</sup> *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 12 May 1814. There was a committee of twelve which, having raised a subscription of £350, got a subscription from Colonel W.F. Berkeley of £1,000 a year, an amazing amount compared to most race meetings. See also *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 15 June 1815, 3 August 1815, 27 August 1818.

1827 and 1831.<sup>148</sup> But, although the town had some 22,000 inhabitants when the railway arrived in August 1840, the meetings ended in 1842. A second railway in the town in 1847<sup>149</sup> had little immediate effect, although there was a shortlived revival between 1851 and 1855. But both William Archer, father of the famous Fred, and Fothergill Rowlands, who lived in the area, had been fostering steeplechasing, and when the meetings were revived in 1867 there were both types of racing on the card.<sup>150</sup> The meetings until this time had been held near Cleeve Hill, some five miles from Cheltenham,<sup>151</sup> but they now moved to Prestbury much nearer the town. Although steeplechases continued after the last flat race meeting, they were not put on a firm and successful footing until 1902.

Flat racing at Cambridge was first reported in the *Racing Calendar* in 1841 with the grandly titled 'Coronation Meeting', but the fixture only lasted three years. When the revival came in 1857, the railway had served the city for twelve years, and Cambridge had been linked directly with Newmarket, 14½ miles away since October 1851.<sup>152</sup> Despite improvements in their arrangements and support from local M.P.s and tradesmen, even the fixtures recorded in the *Racing Calendar* had some races 'too trivial to mention', and an increasing proportion of steeplechases and hurdle races. The 1872 meeting had only one flat race with two runners but, although there was a

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<sup>148</sup> Bibury, the oldest racing club in England, enjoyed extensive royal patronage in the reign of Charles II and stages the most prestigious meetings after Newmarket. By the end of the eighteenth century it was holding its major meetings at nearby Burford, but would not permit these to be recorded in the *Racing Calendar* until 1802. Despite the comments made by Longworth, 'Racing' in *VCH - Gloucestershire II*, p.296, the Bibury Club had moved its meetings first to Cheltenham and then to Stockbridge well before the railway age. The public meetings at Burford ended as early as 1802, although there were some meetings (not recorded in the *Racing Calendar*) in the 1830s and 1840s.

<sup>149</sup> The Birmingham & Gloucester Railway opened between Bromsgrove and Cheltenham on 24 June 1840, and reached Birmingham (Camp Hill) in stages by 17 December of the same year. At its southern end, the B. & G.R. had completed its standard gauge line to Gloucester on 4 November 1840. The broad gauge Cheltenham & Great Western Union Railway reached Cheltenham on 23 October 1847. Other lines later served the town and made it an important rail centre, even before the opening of the 'direct' line from Honeybourne on 1 August 1906, on which the racecourse station was built six years later.

<sup>150</sup> William Archer, after working in Russia, had won the Grand National in 1858 and settled near Cheltenham. See Longworth, 'Racing' in *VCH - Gloucestershire II*, pp. 296 - 297, and Welcome J. *Fred Archer* (Lambourn Publications Ltd., London, 1990) pp. 11 - 12. Fothergill Rowlands, who lived at Prestbury, was instrumental in setting up National Hunt racing as a 'respectable' sport, although it did not really develop as he would have liked. See Munting, *Hedges and Hurdles*, pp. 18 - 19.

<sup>151</sup> The nearest station to the course was Cleeve, opened on 14 February 1843 by the Birmingham & Gloucester Railway.

<sup>152</sup> Financial problems prevented the railway reaching Cambridge for several years, until the Eastern Counties Railway in its rejuvenated form reached the city on 30 July 1845. Cambridge soon became an important junction with lines to Huntingdon, opened in August 1847, and Shepreth (and over the G.N.R. to Hitchin) in April 1852.

final two day meeting in April 1876, attended by leading jockeys, with three £100 plates, one of £75 and two of £50, there was not enough support to meet the increased prize money required in 1877. But the University steeplechases continued to be popular and survived, albeit with some blank years, until 1925.<sup>153</sup>

Ludlow in Shropshire had held regular race meetings since the early eighteenth century until 1864, when there was a three year gap.<sup>154</sup> By 1840 the beautiful and historic town, almost equidistant from Shrewsbury and Hereford, had a population of almost 5,000 and a wide range of social amenities,<sup>155</sup> and the railway linking it to Shrewsbury in April 1852<sup>156</sup> could only have enhanced its attractions. When the meetings restarted in 1868 there was a greater interest in hurdle races and steeplechases,<sup>157</sup> which continued after the last flat race meeting in May 1876, and National Hunt racing still flourishes at Ludlow today.

Another National Hunt venue today is at Southwell in Nottinghamshire, whose debut in the *Racing Calendar* was not until 1856. The flat race meetings were organised by a committee of local sportsmen<sup>158</sup> and appeared only intermittently until 1869 when, supported by hurdle races and steeplechases, there was an unbroken run until June 1876. The railway had reached the area in August 1846, with a short branch into Southwell itself being opened in July 1847, although this latter line had to struggle for its very existence until 1860.<sup>159</sup> The steeplechases also struggled in the early days<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> The meetings were held at Cottenham Pastures, some six miles north of the city, and were served by much nearer stations, at Waterbeach (3 miles) opened on 30 July 1845, the same day as Cambridge itself, or by Oakington and Long Stanton, about the same distance away on the line to St. Ives. Both these stations were opened on 17 August 1847.

<sup>154</sup> This marked the end of John Frail's tenure as clerk of the course and lessee. For more on Frail's activities, see Chapter 11, Text and Notes 51 to 54.

<sup>155</sup> Whyte, *British Turf*, I, p.288. A grandstand had been built in 1820, and a further stand, with seating for 500, was provided in 1855. *Eddowe's Journal*, 8 August 1855.

<sup>156</sup> The northern end of the S. & H.R. was opened as far as Ludlow on 21 April 1852, and completed through to Hereford on 6 December 1853. The station at Bromfield, which was nearer to the course, also opened on 21 April 1852.

<sup>157</sup> *Eddowe's Journal*, 19 October 1870. The Ludlow Race Club was formed in 1871.

<sup>158</sup> Bonnett, 'Racing' in *VCH - Nottinghamshire II*, p.394. Even when the prize money did not exceed £4 a race, they were described as being 'open to all England'.

<sup>159</sup> The Midland Railway opened its Nottingham - Lincoln line on 4 August 1846, with a branch to Southwell following on 1 July 1847. Lack of passenger traffic on the branch caused first a demotion to horse traction, followed by closure to passengers from 14 March 1853 to 1 September 1860, when it reopened with locomotive haulage. The Southwell branch was extended to Manfield on 3 April 1871, thus improving the opportunities for travelling to the meetings.

<sup>160</sup> *Mansfield & North Notts Advertiser*, 13 April 1883, reviewed the reasons for the failure of the Mansfield and Southwell flat race meetings and forecast the same fate for the Southwell National Hunt races, if 'the tradesmen, who benefit by it the most, are too mean to subscribe, and the residents set their faces against it, there can be but one result, and that result has been obtained ...'

and even after the meeting was put on a commercial footing it was said that 'the stakes were still insufficient to induce owners to send horses from long distances, and the event had to depend principally on local support'.<sup>161</sup> This only underlines the key element of survival for all except the most commercialised and prestigious meeting - Southwell is still with us today, and once more staging flat racing.

During the period under review, the Scottish course at Hawick only figured in the *Racing Calendar* between 1866 and 1876, but races took place much earlier as part of the Common Riding of the burgh boundaries and its festivities.<sup>162</sup> Even in 1821 not only local horses took part, but there were entries from Glasgow, Edinburgh and Brampton. The North British Railway reached Hawick in November 1849, and extended southwards 13 years later to form the 'Waverley Route' between Edinburgh and Carlisle.<sup>163</sup> So rail communications were in place before 1866 when the races, although now felt worthy of record, still formed part of the Common Riding ceremony. There was a maximum of three flat races, and it was commented that 'The other races were too trivial to mention'. The meeting did not survive the second Jockey Club minimum prize money ruling and, at the last fixture in June 1876, there were still three £50 flat races as well as steeplechases for hunters. The National Hunt events, including those associated with the Border Hunt Rifles, continued until September 1886, thereafter degenerating into 'flapping' and unauthorised events.<sup>164</sup>

The meeting at Much Wenlock in Shropshire, held occasionally in the eighteenth century, appeared in the *Racing Calendar* continuously between 1822 and August 1876.<sup>165</sup> Examination of race records showed that it had a reasonably uneventful life,

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<sup>161</sup> Bonnett, 'Racing' in *VCH - Nottinghamshire II*, p.394. Hardstaff, R.E. 'Southwell Races' in *Southwell - The Town and its People* (Southwell & District Local History Society, Southwell, 1992, rep. 1995) p.105. After the October 1897 meeting, the National Hunt Committee withdrew the licence and a new course was found near Rolleston Junction station. In May 1898 the Southwell Racecourse Company was set up, and at the first meeting an average of eight horses started in each of the seven races, although the prize money was only between £20 and £40. Despite continual struggles over the next few years, Southwell survived and now has an all weather course, with flat racing restarting in November 1989.

<sup>162</sup> Fairfax Blakeborough, *Northern Turf History*, II, pp. 117 - 120, quoting from the *Sporting Magazine*, 1821 and the *Monthly Chronicle*, July 1887.

<sup>163</sup> The Edinburgh & Hawick Railway, authorised on 31 July 1845, had become part of the N.B.R. well before it was opened to Hawick on 1 November 1849. Its southward extension - the Border Union Railway - was completed in stages, reaching Carlisle on 1 July 1862. It too became part of the N.B. system.

<sup>164</sup> Fairfax Blakeborough, *Northern Turf History*, IV, p.213.

<sup>165</sup> *Salopian Journal*, 11 October 1820, indicated that the revival started in this year. *Eddowe's Journal*, 9 August 1876, reported on the last flat race meeting.



which changed little with the arrival of the railway in February 1862.<sup>166</sup> There was generally a single day's racing in August, a top prize of £50 and three to four races with small fields. The Jockey Club stipulations in 1870 reduced the flat race content to one event, the remainder of the card being made up by steeplechases and hurdle races. After the demise of flat racing, National Hunt meetings continued until May 1939. Even then nothing much changed, as the average prize money was about £45 a race during the last twenty years of its existence.

Although the races at Totnes in Devon started in the late eighteenth century, their first appearance in the *Racing Calendar* was not until 1804. Earle states that 'between 1820 and 1836 there were races with a nominal value of £100 and silver cups of £50', but there is no record of these in the *Racing Calendar* or of any meetings between 1830 and 1835.<sup>167</sup> Thereafter, races under Jockey Club rules were recorded in a total of 26 years between 1837 and 1876, but the steeplechases were definitely the main attraction, as these required the riders to cross the River Dart twice during the race. The course at Broad Marsh was near the South Devon Railway main line, opened as far as Totnes on 20 July 1847.<sup>168</sup> Certainly huge crowds were attracted to the meetings but the railway was only one of the methods used to get to the course.<sup>169</sup> The flat races ended in September 1876, but the 'Derby of the West', with its theatrical performances, fireworks and marching bands, continued as the largest free show in the south west until the race committee introduced an admission charge in 1906. The event survived until 1938, and still attracted quite large crowds, although not at the levels recorded in the 1860s.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Tolson, J.M. 'In the Tracks of the Ironmasters', *Railway Magazine*, CXI, 1965, pp.373 - 378 & 440 - 441. The Much Wenlock & Severn Junction Railway, 3½ miles in length, was opened on 1 February 1862, the same day as the Severn Valley Railway from Hartlebury to Shrewsbury, with which the local company made a junction at Buildwas. The railway was extended from Much Wenlock to Craven Arms on the Shrewsbury & Hereford Railway on 16 December 1867. Pitt, *Long Time Gone*, p.300, quotes incorrect dates both for the opening of the Much Wenlock branch and for the extension to Craven Arms.

<sup>167</sup> Earle, U. *History of Totnes and Bridgetown Races* (Totnes Community Archives, Totnes, 1985) p. 8.

<sup>168</sup> The history of the South Devon Railway has been covered elsewhere, but the opening of the branch from Totnes to Buckfastleigh and Ashburton on 1 May 1872 should perhaps be mentioned as another important National Hunt meeting existed at Buckfastleigh, only six miles from Totnes, from 1881 to 1960.

<sup>169</sup> Spectators coming from the railway station over the Penny Bridge across the Mill Leat had to pay 1d. toll, but those who approached the course from the lower end of the Marsh could avoid this.

<sup>170</sup> Pitt, *Long Time Gone*, p.294. Crowds of just over 8,000 were reported in the 1930s, a far cry from those of the 1860s, but the later estimates may have been more accurate. *Totnes Times*, reporting on the meeting of 11/12 September 1861 which had both flat races and steeplechases on the

The S.E.R. had reached Wye in Kent in 1846,<sup>171</sup> and this may have stimulated George Kennett to arrange a race meeting in May 1849 in the picturesque Fanscombe Valley, some two miles from railway and village. Although this was successful, the meetings did not become an annual event until 1853, and were held on the same day as the village fair. Certainly by 1860 the S.E.R. was providing cheap excursion fares of 5/- from London and, as discussed in Chapter 6, sponsored a race at Wye three times between 1863 and 1870. The meetings had a mixture of flat and hurdle races and, even after the former ended in May 1878, the fixtures were still attracting crowds of about 4,000.<sup>172</sup> A new course was opened in March 1882 close to the station,<sup>173</sup> extra facilities were later provided for race traffic,<sup>174</sup> and the meetings continued more or less successfully until 1974.

The races at Chelmsford in Essex dated back to at least the mid-eighteenth century and, after George III had donated a 100 gn. prize in 1770, had an unbroken run from the start of the *Racing Calendar* in 1773 until September 1879. In 1840, Whyte stated that Chelmsford races 'afford two days' excellent sport to a numerous and fashionable audience'.<sup>175</sup> The arrival of the railway in March 1843,<sup>176</sup> which connected the town directly with London, had little effect on the race programme or the value of the prize money offered for the three or four races each day. Top jockeys rode there, with Fred Archer participating in one day of the final 1879 meeting.<sup>177</sup> But by 1877 the two days of racing had been split into two one-day meetings, that in July concentrating more on

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card, estimated the crowd at 50,000. 'There were some six to eight monster excursion trains, all heavily weighted, whilst the steamers on the river brought a goodly quota, ... as for those arriving by road, every description of vehicle was requisitioned from the stately four-in-hand to the humble costermonger's cart.' Pitt also mentions the existence of a siding behind the grandstand, but does not specify its use.

<sup>171</sup> The S.E.R. opened its Ashford - Canterbury branch on 6 February 1846, but the station at Wye did not make its first appearance in *Bradshaw* until July 1846, although a temporary platform may have been established there as early as April.

<sup>172</sup> *Kentish Express*, 12 March, 19 March, 11 June 1881.

<sup>173</sup> *Kentish Express*, 18 March 1882.

<sup>174</sup> There appears to have been an additional cinder platform on the east side of the line, south of the level crossing. Mitchell, V. & Smith, K. *Branch Lines around Canterbury* (Middleton Press, Midhurst, 1995) no page numbers (plate 17).

<sup>175</sup> Whyte, *British Turf*, I, p.234.

<sup>176</sup> The Eastern Counties Railway, incorporated on 4 July 1836, to build a line from London to Norwich and Yarmouth, had to abandon this plan when it greatly exceeded its authorised capital in getting less than halfway. After some intermediate openings, the E.C.R. reached Colchester on 29 March 1843, a station at Chelmsford being opened on the same day.

<sup>177</sup> In September 1879, Archer thought it worthwhile to ride at Chelmsford in a week which included a day at Lichfield, two days at Ayr and a day at Manchester.

flat racing, and the traditional September date having a bias to National Hunt races. These last continued, albeit with an interruption from 1915 to 1923, until April 1935.

#### SPECIFIC CAUSE NOT IDENTIFIED

There are six meetings for which the reasons for closure between 1870 and 1879 have not yet been determined, despite examination of local newspapers and other contemporary sources. The known relevant information is given in chronological order of the last appearance in the *Racing Calendar*.

Cheney recorded a race at Lyndhurst Forrest (sic!) in September 1727, and 120 years later the New Forest Hunt had a four race meeting at Lyndhurst. But it is not known whether this was stimulated by the opening of the L.S.W. Southampton - Dorchester line - together with a station at Lyndhurst Road - on 1 June 1847. The fixture was not recorded in the *Racing Calendar*, where a single meeting, with one of the nine races sponsored by the L.S.W.R., appeared in 1859.<sup>178</sup> After a gap of three years, the races ran on from 1863 to June 1871, with two meetings in 1865, but then disappeared, almost certainly because of the Jockey Club minimum prize requirements.

The Rochester & Chatham meetings, which were held on the Chatham Lines, a large area above the town originally intended for troop exercises, had a good start in August 1822, with 20,000 spectators, including many from the Garrison and the Royal Dockyard. The twin towns had all the usual social amenities, but also 'floating baths on the Medway' and 'extensive and beautiful promenades'.<sup>179</sup> The London to Gravesend steamers brought crowds of racegoers, including many of the less desirable type, well before the arrival of the railway in the neighbourhood.<sup>180</sup> By the 1840s, certainly, the race ground was private property and a charge made for horses and vehicles, but not for pedestrians - 'the charge of which collection will be applied to the racing fund'.<sup>181</sup>

Although the railway reached Strood on the west side of the Medway as early as February 1845, and a year later brought 7,000 to the races from Gravesend, it was not until January 1858 that there was a station in Chatham, and Rochester had to wait for

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<sup>178</sup> Prior, F.M. 'The High Days of Hampshire Racing', *Hampshire - The County Magazine*, I, 1961, p.27.

<sup>179</sup> Whyte, *British Turf*, I, p.256.

<sup>180</sup> Hilton, J. 'A Day at the Races', *Bygone Kent*, XIX, 1998, pp. 659 ff.

<sup>181</sup> Advertisement for races on 7/8 September 1848.

almost three more years, until December 1860.<sup>182</sup> By this time the unbroken run of meetings, which had been showing signs of decline, had already come to an end in the previous September, reputedly banned for the 'amount of crime and disorder it occasioned'.<sup>183</sup> There was a further single meeting in 1875, held on the De(b)tling Course, some eight miles from Rochester or Chatham, where the Maidstone meetings had been held in the same year.<sup>184</sup>

Walsall in Staffordshire, some eleven miles north of Birmingham, after a few meetings in the eighteenth century,<sup>185</sup> had held races almost without interruption between 1802 and 1876. By 1822 the local newspaper was proclaiming that, not only was the raceground 'kept in better order than any course in the kingdom except, perhaps, Doncaster', but the meeting 'attracted a greater concourse of spectators than the great northern races'.<sup>186</sup> Its popularity may have been affected by the establishment of Wolverhampton in 1825, but Whyte does not make any adverse comments, merely indicating the type of support and the amenities.<sup>187</sup> Walsall was linked with Birmingham in November 1847,<sup>188</sup> and to other towns in due course, but not directly to Wolverhampton until November 1872. But by 1861, it was being said that the Walsall meeting had fallen into 'a low position some years previously, and that the defects of the course were a drawback to its regaining its former popularity'.<sup>189</sup> Notwithstanding the comment in the *Victoria County History* that the last known reference was in 1871, the meetings continued until August 1876.<sup>190</sup> As the prizes for

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<sup>182</sup> See Chapter 6, Text and Note 17, for early railway history. *Chatham News*, 8 September 1860. Many racegoers, particularly from Sheerness, still used the 'capital fast boats of the Medway Company'.

<sup>183</sup> Baldwin, R.A. *The Gillingham Chronicles* (Baggins Book Bazaar, Rochester, 1998) p.266. Nothing specific was, however, immediately reported in the local press.

<sup>184</sup> The Maidstone meetings were held in 1853 - 6, 1863 - 5 and 1875 - 6, with two meetings in the penultimate year.

<sup>185</sup> *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 15 September 1777.

<sup>186</sup> *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 28 September 1822.

<sup>187</sup> Whyte, *British Turf*, I, p.307.

<sup>188</sup> The South Staffordshire Railway was opened from Bescot to Walsall on 1 November 1847. Although there had been a Walsall station on the Grand Junction Railway between 1839 and 1844, this had been opened as Bescot Bridge on 4 July 1837, and reverted to its original name until closure in 1850. The first S.S. Walsall station was closed when the line through Lichfield to Wichnor Junction was opened on 9 April 1849. See also Chapter 6, Text and Note 27.

<sup>189</sup> *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 28 September 1861.

<sup>190</sup> Kettle, A.J. 'Horseracing' in *Victoria County History - Staffordshire II* (Oxford University Press, London, 1967) p.367, bases this statement on *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 4 October 1871, but although there was no meeting the following year, they resumed in 1873. The 1876 meeting was recorded in both the *Walsall Free Press* and the *Walsall Observer & South Staffordshire Chronicle*, 19 August 1876, and the latter felt it 'to be quite as popular as ever, if not more so, but the rough element

the six races on each day were between £30 and £50, the most likely reason for its closure was the increased Jockey Club requirement from January 1877, but this has not been substantiated, despite further searches in local newspapers.

With a flourishing National Hunt meeting on the old flat race course near Exeter, it may seem strange that this is included in the present section, but this did not start in earnest there until September 1898, 22 years after the last meeting under Jockey Club rules had been held. The Exeter races dated from the eighteenth century, but there were two long periods without fixtures, the first at the turn of the century and the second between 1847 and 1859. Although the railway had reached Exeter in May 1844 and was extended to Plymouth by 1849,<sup>191</sup> the racecourse was on Haldon Hill between Kennford and Chudleigh, some five miles from the city. The nearest station was at Starcross, but the majority of racegoers probably continued to travel by road from the city. The revived races only lasted from 1860 to 1865 and, when a further attempt took place in 1870, the total prize money for the three flat races on the card was only £50. The following year there was only one £50 or 50 gn. race on each day, the remainder being National Hunt events. Although there were no races in 1872 and 1874, the race committee made a determined effort to improve the quality of the meetings, with three or four races on each day. But, of the 21 races over the three years, only one topped £100. The last meeting took place in August 1876, so the probable reason for their termination was the increased prize money required in the following year.

There had been races at Coventry in Warwickshire during the eighteenth century, and these were revived on a course at Stoke, beyond Gosford Green, in March 1835, when the one day meeting gave 'excellent sport', a week before the traditional Warwick spring fixture.<sup>192</sup> Coventry was one of the original stations on the London & Birmingham Railway, opened on 9 April 1838, and so was on a major trunk route, not only between the capital and the north west but, because of the manner in which the early railway system developed, also on the only feasible route to the north east for at least ten years. In March 1852, the Coventry meetings moved to a new course near

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unfortunately was that in which the greatest increase of attendants was visible.' The grandstand was sold in 1879.

<sup>191</sup> The South Devon Railway reached Teignmouth from Exeter on 30 May 1846, and the stations nearest to the racecourse were Starcross, opened with the line, and Exminster, opened in July 1852.

Coundon, close to the L.N.W. Coventry - Nuneaton branch, opened on 2 September 1850. In 1863 they switched to October, an unpopular move, and at the first and only meeting, although there was a reasonable crowd, the 'racing was anything but first class and the money seemed exceedingly scarce'.<sup>193</sup> The meeting was revived in October 1874 with six races (including hurdles and hunters' events) on each of the two days and reasonable prize money. It was not however popular in certain local quarters; tradesmen said they got no profit from it, employers complained of it keeping apprentices away from work, a number of people were charged for petty theft, and one newspaper totally ignored its existence. But this was not remarkable in any town which had a race meeting. The last meeting, still seemingly popular, but with quite small fields, was held in October 1876, perhaps because of the increased prize money requirements from the following January,<sup>194</sup> as a major effort would have been necessary to meet the new minima.

The races held in late August on Barham Downs near the cathedral city of Canterbury had been a major social attraction in the area since the early eighteenth century,<sup>195</sup> and from 1833 there had sometimes been a spring meeting, with National Hunt events taking place from 1861. The course had been improved in the 1830s, and with a population of about 16,000 in 1840, the city had all the amenities and special events the racegoer could want. Ignoring the isolated railway opened to Whitstable in May 1830, Canterbury was linked to London, albeit a little circuitously, in February 1846, and in due course the opening of other lines made it a reasonably important railway centre.<sup>196</sup> Nevertheless, the meetings declined somewhat in the 1840s and early 1850s, not helped by a decision in 1847 to ban drinking booths, and were then reduced for a time to a single day. There was then a sustained improvement, even before the L.C.D.R. reached the city, and the 1858 meeting was described as 'the best for twenty

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<sup>192</sup> Cordley, C. 'Racing' in *Victoria County History - Warwickshire II* (Archibald Constable, London, 1908) p.386.

<sup>193</sup> *Coventry Herald & Free Press, and Midland Express*, 9 October 1863.

<sup>194</sup> *Coventry Herald & Free Press*, 21 October 1876. Bramwell, E.B. *Coventry Cameos* (Author, Coventry, 1977) p.76.

<sup>195</sup> Bonnett, F. 'Racing' in *Victoria County History - Kent I* (Archibald Constable, London, 1908) pp. 493 - 495. Elgar, P.G. 'Canterbury Races', *Bygone Kent*, XX, 1999, p.488, illustrates the original Articles and Conditions for racing on Barham Downs, 1678.

<sup>196</sup> The S.E.R. opened its branch from Ashford to Canterbury on 6 February 1846, and extended this to Ramsgate on 13 April of the same year. The L.C.D.R. reached Canterbury from Faversham on 9 July 1860, and the line was extended to Dover on 22 July 1861. There was a station at Bekesbourne,

years'.<sup>197</sup> But in the 1870s the Jockey Club minimum prize money requirements, coupled with the growing attraction of the Cricket Week, generally held in the week preceding the races, began to take their toll both of viability and popularity. The 1877 meeting was once more down to a single day, the Queen's Plate was a walkover and the fields modest. Nevertheless, in the following two years the overall programme was better and, at the last meeting in August 1879, even the Queen's Plate had four runners. There was no indication in the local press that there would be no further meetings.<sup>198</sup>

### CONCLUSION

The 1870s were a crucial decade for the transformation of the racing industry. Until this point, the number of both race courses and meetings, no matter how ephemeral, had been on a generally upward trend since the beginning of the century, and in 1869 there were almost twice as many as there had been in 1799. But now the generally 'laissez-faire' attitude of the Jockey Club had changed and, after the closures in the 1870s caused by the minimum prize money requirements, by the end of the decade there were fewer racecourses than eighty years earlier. On the other hand, the number of race meetings was still 40 per cent up, due mainly to the multiple fixtures at both the remaining suburban London courses and the 'park' courses which were replacing them. This chapter has demonstrated that railway facilities were available for almost all established courses which closed in the 1870s, and has shown that the internal pressures of the racing industry appeared to be the driving force behind their demise. The continuation of so many meetings under National Hunt rules with relatively low prize money well into the twentieth century, indicates ongoing local support, and pinpoints the artificially induced crisis, which ended the flat race meetings. Naturally, fewer courses obeying well-defined rules suited the Jockey Club, and the next chapter will show how its grip was tightened still further through control on the opening of new courses and other restrictive measures.

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much nearer than those in Canterbury, and provided with an extended platform to accommodate the race crowds which took advantage of the special excursion fares provided by both companies.

<sup>197</sup> Elgar, 'Canterbury Races'. p.496.

<sup>198</sup> *Kentish Gazette*. 26 August 1879. 'The sport was of excellent quality, there being good fields and close finishes.'

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### THE RESHAPING IS COMPLETE - RACECOURSE CLOSURES 1880 - 1909

#### INTRODUCTION

After the demise of 55 established racecourses during the 1870s, there were only to be 25 further such closures in the next 30 years. Sixteen of these took place during the 1880s, and almost all, with the exception of Aldershot and Bromley, were relatively long-lived fixtures. But the nine closures between 1890 and 1909 included one of the new 'enclosed' courses - Hamilton Park near Glasgow - opened at considerable expense in 1888. Not included in these figures, because of their very short life, are two further modern courses - Portsmouth Park and Hull - which, despite being close to major conurbations and provided with special railway stations, closed after four and five seasons of flat racing respectively.<sup>1</sup>

But in the last 40 years of the period under review, the rate of new racecourse openings (or major commercial revivals) was just as important as closures in determining the ultimate shape of the racing industry. Until the 1870s the Jockey Club had established a relatively tenuous control over the sport, and a 'free market' generally determined the foundation, revival or demise of even those courses which appeared in the *Racing Calendar*, and which form the subject of this study. The increasing popularity of steeplechasing and the growth of 'mixed' meetings, which combined racing under Jockey Club and National Hunt rules on the same card, had led to a tremendous upsurge in the number of courses and meetings during the late 1860s. Then came the minimum prize money requirements and other controls designed both to trim and differentiate the 'authorised' fixtures from both National Hunt and 'unauthorised' or 'flapping' meetings. Now the Jockey Club was also focusing on the standard of a racecourse, including its ability to provide a straight 'run-in', as well as

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 5 for details of these racecourses, and for the National Hunt course at Keele Park, which opened and closed during the same period. A further National Hunt course with lavish facilities was opened at Clifton Park, Blackpool, in 1911, but went into receivership before being closed by the outbreak of the First World War, despite having the benefit of easy access by electric tram, the main Blackpool railway stations and a nearby public railway halt opened at Gilletts Crossing on 10 October 1913. The race company also paid for the construction of an earth mound alongside the railway to facilitate the carriage of racehorses. Information supplied by Graham Ward, but see also Pitt, C. *A Long Time Gone* (Portway Press, Halifax, 1996) p. 47.



its safety record and the amenities provided. Emphasis on these factors ultimately caused the closure of Northampton and Paisley, and contributed to the demise of Northallerton and Richmond, and the switch of Kelso to National Hunt racing.

Moreover, the Jockey Club was now exercising stricter control on the setting up of new courses. As mentioned in the previous chapter, there were 73 openings (not counting revivals) between 1860 and 1874, but only seven in the next fifteen years. There were really only three major openings - Sandown Park, Kempton Park and Hamilton Park- and if we apply the same criteria, a similar number - Lingfield, Newbury and Hooton Park - between 1890 and 1909.<sup>2</sup> So the erosion of course numbers continued, but meeting numbers increased as the new 'enclosed' courses, particularly in the south east, staged a number of fixtures each year, and those at certain older courses were also increased.

It should, however, be emphasised that major racecourses such as Ascot and Epsom generally only held one or two meetings a year until after the Second World War, and that the commercialisation and enclosure of surviving established courses was spread over many years.

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<sup>2</sup> In addition, Hampton, Newton and Croydon were transformed into Hurst Park, Haydock Park and Gatwick, the first two almost on the same ground, and all with little or no interruption to meetings, so they have been treated as 'continuations' like the new commercial courses at Leicester, Newcastle and Nottingham, and will be discussed in Chapter 12. There were also commercial ventures after quite long lapses on new sites at Folkestone and Wolverhampton, and these too will be covered amongst the 48 survivors in 1914.

TABLE 11.1: RACECOURSE CLOSURES 1880 - 1909

Main Cause	1880 - 9	1890 - 9	1900 - 9	Total
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General decline in support or lack of interest	3	1	-	4
End of major patronage	-	1	-	1
Change of owner or end of lease	-	1	1	2
Use for other purposes	1	-	-	1
Competition	-	-	-	-
Financial failure	2	1	-	3
Problems in organisation	2	1	2	5
Religious opposition	-	-	-	-
Jockey Club stipulation on minimum prize money	1	-	-	1
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Continuation as 'unauthorised' meetings	1	1	-	2
Continuation as National Hunt meetings	6	-	-	6
<hr/>				
Specific cause not identified	-	-	-	-
<hr/>				
Total	16	6	3	23
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Source: *Racing Calendar*. (This covers only courses having 10 or more appearances 1830 - 1909)

### GENERAL DECLINE IN SUPPORT OR LACK OF INTEREST

Although during the eighteenth century there had been occasional racing near Bromley in Kent, some eleven miles from London,<sup>3</sup> the first meeting was not recorded in the *Racing Calendar* until 1851. Thereafter, there was a gap until 1864, when the shortlived suburban courses ringing London were coming on stream. Steeplechases had actually started in 1854, four years before the first two railway stations had been opened in the town.<sup>4</sup> But both branches of the sport were only placed on a firm footing when William Pasley of the White Hart Inn, in conjunction with Messrs. Bridden & Verrall of Croydon, established the Bromley Races & Steeplechases on a

<sup>3</sup> *County Journal*, 27 July 1734, announced a three day meeting on 26 to 28 August.

<sup>4</sup> Although there were several railways within a reasonable distance, the first line into Bromley was opened from Norwood Junction on 3 May 1858 by the West End & Crystal Palace Railway, But, when the Mid Kent Railway extension was opened through to Bickley on 5 July of the same year, Bromley station was renamed Shortlands. Both lines became part of the L.C.& D. system, a new Bromley station being opened on 22 November 1858. The S.E.R. built a line through Chislehurst to Tonbridge in 1868, but did not open its branch from Grove Park on that line to a terminus in Bromley until 1 January 1878.

course at Cooper's Farm, with the intention of holding four meetings a year.<sup>5</sup> Although there were some crowd problems at the first public meeting in November 1864 - mainly caused by Londoners - there were none at the equivalent fixture in the following year. Newspaper reports of later meetings seem at variance both with Horsburgh - and with 'received' opinion - that 'with each succeeding year the scandals associated with the race meetings became more pronounced.'<sup>6</sup>

A fire at the course on 23 October 1873 caused by a young nightwatchman did nothing to help the reputation of the meetings, which continued until May 1876. The increased prize money requirements caused some problems and all flat racing was suspended, apart from a single meeting in May 1880. But more important was the low level of interest in the town,<sup>7</sup> typified by a lack of information in the *Bromley Record*, whose 'Memo for the Month' was directed more to uplifting lectures and similar events. But even the steeplechases, which had still received some mention in the local press, were to finish in April 1881.

The same lack of interest in the local press was also apparent in the last years of the Dover meeting although the local flower show, held about the same time of year, was covered at some length. The races had been established in 1827, but initially lasted only until 1836. As there was no revival until 1849, the fixture was not listed by Whyte, and in the meantime the railway had reached the town in February 1844, enhancing its status as a major gateway to the continent and an important garrison town, whose population almost tripled between 1811 and 1881.<sup>8</sup> The meeting had

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<sup>5</sup> Horsburgh, E.L.S. *Bromley* (Hodder & Stoughton Ltd., London, 1929, rep. Lodgemark Press Ltd., Chislehurst, 1980) pp. 311 ff.

<sup>6</sup> *Bromley Record*, 1 December 1864, 1 November 1865. The Londoners in this case may have come by train, but the races at Barnet, about the same distance from London, was suspended for 18 years after the 1775 meeting because of 'the hooliganism of Londoners come to see the sport'. Jones-Barker, D. *Old Hertfordshire Calendar* (Phillimore & Co. Ltd., London, 1974) p.170. No further crowd problems of note were reported at Bromley up to 1874, but it should be remembered that at this point in Victorian England there was a ground swell of evangelical and non-conformist opinion against traditional popular amusements. The twice yearly Bromley Fair had been suppressed at the Petty Sessions on 23 January 1865 (*Bromley Record*, 1 February 1865), and the land on which the nearby Croydon Fair was held had been taken by the L.B. & S.C.R. for a new line without any new venue being provided. (*Bromley Record*, 1 September 1866)

<sup>7</sup> Bromley in the 1870s was in many ways a depressed area, as, despite a population of over 10,000, there were some 2,000 unoccupied houses. Jackson, A.A. *London's Local Railways* (David & Charles, Newton Abbot, 1978) p.245

<sup>8</sup> Statham, S.P.H. *History of the Castle, Town and Port of Dover* (Longman, Green & Co., London, 1899) p.158. In 1811, Dover's population was 10,247; in 1861, 24,970; and by 1881, 30,270.

originally been held relatively near the town but, after some dispute with the council, was moved to Waldershare Park. The Earl of Guilford spent considerable sums in laying out both flat racing and steeplechase courses together with a grandstand,<sup>9</sup> and creating what the *Dover Express* called a 'miniature Goodwood'. But, as the course was now some distance from the town, support waned and the requirements for minimum prize money were difficult to sustain, while the demise of the Canterbury meeting in 1879 removed a complementary attraction for racegoers. Nevertheless, the last meeting on 26 August 1881, although the 'fields [were] anything but large...', could still offer seven races, of which two were for hunters, but then, like 'the majority of the Kentish meetings ... died a natural death'.<sup>10</sup>

The meeting at the seaside town of Weymouth in Dorset, founded in 1821, had only two blank years in 1851 and 1879 until its demise in 1882. Whyte listed the amenities of the town and noted that the races were 'generally well attended' and the course, 'which adjoins the town, is considered very good'.<sup>11</sup> Although the L.S.W.R. had reached Dorchester from Southampton in June 1847, it was left to the G.W.R. to connect Weymouth to the rail system ten years later.<sup>12</sup> The August races continued to be quite well patronised by both locals and visitors until the 1870s, when, with the Jockey Club's minimum prize money stipulations, an increasing number of low value hurdle and hunter races were required to fill the card. In 1879 the meeting did not take place because the course at Lodmoor had been flooded by extremely heavy rain, but in the following year the race committee, supported by local notables and tradesman, put together an excellent two day programme. Nevertheless, despite an immense number of visitors to the town, only 'a very small proportion found their way to the course.' Although the same newspaper report had spoken optimistically of the intention to lay

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After the arrival of the S.E.R. in 1844, the L.C.D.R. reached Dover from Canterbury on 22 July 1861, but the joint line northwards from Buckland Junction to link up with the S.E.R. at Deal was not opened until 15 June 1881.

<sup>9</sup> Bonnett, F. 'Racing' in *Victoria County History - Kent I* (Archibald Constable, London, 1908) p.494.

<sup>10</sup> *Dover Express*, 2 September 1881.

<sup>11</sup> Whyte, J.C. *History of the British Turf* (Henry Colburn, London, 1840), I, p.232..

<sup>12</sup> The L.S.W.R. had opened its standard gauge line from a junction near Southampton through Brockenhurst to a terminus in Dorchester on 1 June 1847. The G.W.R. broad gauge line from Yeovil through Dorchester to Weymouth was completed on 20 January 1857.

out a new straight mile course,<sup>13</sup> the 1881 meeting almost did not take place through lack of funds. Additional subscriptions were, however, forthcoming and the committee went ahead, although the second day consisted solely of National Hunt events. It had been decided to charge 6d. for entrance to the ground but, as there were only three collection points, the majority of spectators still got in free. Despite timing the first race after the arrival of three London trains, the crowd, particularly on the second day, was not great.<sup>14</sup> Only temporary facilities were provided for the 1882 meeting, but the first day, bolstered up by a £100 match and the 200 gn. Queen's Prize allocated to Weymouth every two years since its increase in value in 1876, had quite large fields. The second day, consisting of hurdle and hunters' races, was not so good, and as the last race was a walkover, 'the sporting fraternity were enabled to get away from the course in good time and catch the 4.50 p.m. train to London.'<sup>15</sup> The newspaper report concluded prophetically, but at the time probably unintentionally: 'With this event the Weymouth and Dorset County Meeting was brought to a close.'

Racing at Huntingdon dated back to the early eighteenth century, and by the time of Weatherby's first *Racing Calendar* in 1773, it was a well established event on Portholm watermeadow below Castle Hill, and 'eagerly anticipated by local people as the major summer festival'.<sup>16</sup> Both Carruthers in 1824 and Whyte in 1840<sup>17</sup> were complimentary about the course but, according to Hudson, the meetings were already in decline,<sup>18</sup> despite the accessibility of the town on the Great North Road. Although the railway arrived in 1847, and a fast direct link with London was in place three years

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<sup>13</sup> *Southern Times*, 4 September 1880. The race committee intended to lease additional land for this course, and to defray the estimated cost of £200 for the drainage etc. of the new course, they requested five per cent from each winner over the two days, the money to be returned if the scheme fell through.

<sup>14</sup> *Southern Times*, 20 August 1881, 3 September 1881. The grandstand was auctioned at the end of the meeting, bidding ranging from 'three half-crowns' to 'eleven guineas'.

<sup>15</sup> *Southern Times*, 2 September 1882. No attempt was made to revive the race meeting but the *Southern Times*, 22 September 1883, reported on the near fiasco of the Town Sports at which there were horse, pony and galloway races over the sands. 'The "sports" were extensively advertised by the railway companies, return tickets being issued at single fares, but even this temptation brought but a limited number of people into the town.' Perhaps the fact that these 'sports' were almost a month later than the races had been, had an adverse effect, but the regatta on the following day was, as in previous years, a success.

<sup>16</sup> Dunn, C. *The Book of Huntingdon* (Barracuda Books, Chesham, 1977) pp. 67-70. Horace Walpole, in one of his letters for 1760, maintained that Huntingdon races ranked with the Derby among the fashionable events of the year.

<sup>17</sup> Carruthers, R. *History of Huntingdon* (A.P. Wood, Huntingdon, 1824) p.300: 'the racecourse is about five minutes' walk from the market place, and allowed to be equal to any in the kingdom'. Whyte, *British Turf I*. p. 254: '.. one of the finest racecourses in the kingdom'.

later, the races ended in 1851. There were moves for an early restart, but nothing happened until 1864, when a revival took place despite a petition to the Duke of Manchester against the reinstatement of the races from 68 prominent citizens.<sup>19</sup> The revived meeting then continued in a relatively uneventful way with only three gaps in 1875, 1879 and 1895, before the final fixture in July 1896. Despite Richardson's dismissive view of this meeting, there was a total of 52 horses in the ten races over two days.<sup>20</sup> But a major contributory factor in its decline had been the setting up of a steeplechase meeting by some local innkeepers and businessmen at nearby Brampton in 1886. Although less conveniently sited for the railway, their perseverance and local support ensured a modest profit by the time the flat race meetings ended.<sup>21</sup>

### END OF MAJOR PATRONAGE

Richmond, in North Yorkshire, could quite easily fit into the previous category, but it was the withdrawal of support by the Earl of Zetland, which ultimately delivered the 'coup de grace'. The racecourse had been laid out in 1765, and the meetings were well supported both by the local gentry and by the Corporation, providing an important focus for social life in the area. It was close to the major training centre at Middleham, and by 1832 Richmond was considered to be in a better state than other North Yorkshire courses.<sup>22</sup> The railway reached Richmond in September 1846,<sup>23</sup> and, although the meeting had some lean times in the 1850s, in 1866 it was said 'as regards the number of entries, the amount of subscriptions or the style of running, no inferiority

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<sup>18</sup> Hudson, N. *Catherine the Great to Wordsworth* (Huntingdon Steeplechases Ltd., Huntingdon, 1985) p. 35.

<sup>19</sup> Huntingdon County Record Office DDM 17/9/7. Contrary to Hudson's view that the petition, which was undated, was presented in 1852, the MS has been dated by its watermark to ca. 1863.

<sup>20</sup> Richardson, C. *The English Turf* (Methuen, 1901) p.152. 'Not much can be written in favour of Huntingdon, ... for many years the meeting has been on the down line, and although Newmarket is not far away, runners have been scarce'.

<sup>21</sup> Minutes of the Waterloo Meadows Association Minutes, 4 February 1897. The declared profit of £70, while perfectly satisfactory for a country steeplechase meeting, where prizes were mostly between £10 and £50, would not have paid for a single race under Jockey Club rules. Despite a few disappointing years, the National Hunt meetings flourished and are still with us today, although a limited company was not formed until July 1930. The nearest station to the Brampton course was on the Kettering to Huntingdon line, but this had been renamed Buckden on 1 February 1868.

<sup>22</sup> *New Sporting Magazine*, February 1832, quoted in Fairfax Blakeborough, J. *Northern Turf History*, Vol. I (J.A. Allen & Co., London, 1948) p.237. Whyte, *British Turf*, I, p. 350, writing in 1840, thought it an 'excellent course'.

<sup>23</sup> The Richmond branch, which was just under ten miles in length, and left the York-Darlington main line at Eryholme Junction (known as Dalton Junction until 1 May 1901) was opened on 10

was manifested as compared with former years. Excursion trains from Newcastle, Sunderland, Leeds and York brought thousands of racegoers...'.<sup>24</sup> But these brought little direct income, as the course was not enclosed at that time, and the Jockey Club requirements of the 1870s meant that more money was needed. In 1880, the Earl of Zetland demonstrated that a deficit of £286 - more than the total receipts from the grandstand - would be incurred from a two day meeting with five races a day at the then current rate of entries, subscriptions and donations. By 1885 the race committee were charging 7/6d. for entry to the stand, and 6d. for the course, the latter figure being doubled in 1889. But, as a local newspaper reported in 1890, even with an estimated 4,600 spectators and the usual sponsors, there was still a large gap to be filled by subscriptions and entry fees.<sup>25</sup> The withdrawal of Lord Zetland's £100 after the refusal of the Corporation to allow him to erect a private stand on the course, would have needed an additional 2,000 spectators to offset the loss. So the meeting ended in August 1891, when a deficit of £96 was incurred. When the possibility of a continuation was discussed, it was revealed that, apart from the donations of Lord Zetland and the local M.P., the rest of Richmond had contributed just £62. Moreover, the Jockey Club required improvements to the course, for which the money would also have to be found, so there were no more meetings.

### END OF LEASE

Like Richmond, Stockbridge in Hampshire had a history reaching back into the eighteenth century with an almost unbroken run of meetings from 1746 until 1898. Its fortunes received a boost in 1831, when the influential Bibury Club transferred its major meetings from Cheltenham, and these, together with the public meetings, formed a coherent two or three day fixture until the end. Stockbridge, whose course was under Danebury Hill,<sup>26</sup> was an important road junction and a staging point on the London to Exeter coach route, one of the fastest in the country. Although the railway

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September 1846, and became part of the N.E.R. in 1854. The racecourse at Catterick Bridge, which is still open, was also served by this branch.

<sup>24</sup> Fairfax Blakeborough, *Northern Turf History*, I, p. 299, quoting a local newspaper report.

<sup>25</sup> *Darlington & Stockton Times*, 19 July 1890. The attendance has been calculated from the accounts: £200 through the turnstiles (4,000) and £225 from the stand (600). The main sponsors were Lord Zetland (£100) and Mr. G. Elliot, the local M.P. (£25).

<sup>26</sup> Whyte, *British Turf*, I, p. 246. The racecourse was formerly on Houghton Down, two miles west of the town, and the Danebury course was relatively recent at that time.

had reached Winchester, about ten miles distant, in 1839, and Salisbury, some 18 miles away, in 1847, there was no line to Stockbridge until 6 March 1865. This relative remoteness diminished neither the stature nor the popularity of the meetings with their mixture of amateur and top professional events,<sup>27</sup> and the increased prize money requirements of the 1870s did not trouble them. But, when the lease came up for renewal, the owner refused to sanction any further racing.<sup>28</sup> The public meetings and the associated National Hunt events, which had been held since 1877, ended in July 1898. The Bibury Club races were transferred to Salisbury for the 1899 season and helped that course survive until the present day.

Although race meetings had been held at Hamilton Park, some eleven miles from Glasgow, during the late eighteenth century, these had ceased in 1811 after a somewhat sporadic existence, despite the support of the Caledonian Hunt Club. It was not until 1887 that a group of whiskey magnates set about reviving the fixture, and asked Sir John Astley to lay out the course and act as its clerk. The first meeting was held in July 1888, a further one in October, and thereafter there were generally three flat race fixtures a year. Astley stated in his autobiography that, although there were a million people within a ten mile radius, the meetings never attracted crowds of more than 12,000, despite the relative ease of travel, and 'the not infrequent holidays enjoyed by the Glaswegians'.<sup>29</sup> As entrance to the course was only 1/-, considerable support from other sources was necessary to find prizes of £750 such as the 'Hamilton Park Stakes'. Small wonder that, when Sir Loftus Bates took over in 1897, he found everything at a low ebb and had to use all his skill and ingenuity to put the enterprise on a sound financial footing.<sup>30</sup> But this was all in vain for, when the lease ran out in 1907, the Duchess of Hamilton refused to renew it on the grounds that gambling was

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<sup>27</sup> Both George Fordham and Fred Archer rode six winners in a single Stockbridge meeting, the former being thwarted in achieving seven, by losing the 'ride off' after a 'dead heat'.

<sup>28</sup> Richardson, *English Turf*, p.154. Longworth, T.J. 'Racing' in *Victoria County History - Gloucestershire II* (Archibald Constable, London, 1907) p.296. Bonnett, F. 'Racing' in *Victoria County History - Hampshire V* (Archibald Constable, London, 1912) p.544.

<sup>29</sup> Astley, Sir J.D. *Fifty Years of my Life* (Hurst & Blackett Ltd., London, 1894) pp.287ff. By then, both the Caledonian and North British Railways had two stations in the town, the first dating from 17 September 1849, and the others opened in the late 1870s.

<sup>30</sup> Fairfax Blakeborough, J. *Northern Turf History*, Vol. II (J.A. Allen & Co., London, 1949) pp.X-XI. Although free stabling had already been provided to attract runners from distant locations, Sir Loftus Bates recounts in his Introduction how he even took control of selling race cards in order to maximise income. This was not so strange as it seems, for by 1860 The Druid estimated that some 800 people were engaged in the trade and 'travel thousands of miles during the year on the rails alone.' Quoted in Ford, J. *This Sporting Land* (New English Library, London, 1977) p.141.



'bad for the working class...'. Bates summed up: 'We paid all our debts, but the shareholders lost their money'.<sup>31</sup> The last meeting was held jointly with the C.H.C. on 30/31 August 1907.<sup>32</sup>

### USE FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Another course which might have been included in the above category, as it closed because the landlord would not renew the lease, was Durham - but in this case there was a specific use for the ground thus freed up. Although the races had been held in various forms since the early seventeenth century, by 1800 Durham was providing not only a splendid social life, of which horseracing was an important constituent, but with it 'all the fun of the fair' for the lower orders.<sup>33</sup> Despite over 10,000 inhabitants in the city, in the 1830s the fortunes of the meeting fluctuated quite markedly from year to year.<sup>34</sup> The railway reached Durham in April 1844, but it was bypassed by the main line for nearly forty years.<sup>35</sup> This did not adversely affect the life of the racecourse, because of its large catchment area in the surrounding mining villages, but a balance sheet of 1859, just before a three year gap in the meetings, shows how fragile its finances were - and this was typical of many meetings at this time.<sup>36</sup> When the races

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<sup>31</sup> Fairfax Blakeborough, *Northern Turf History*, II, p.XI.

<sup>32</sup> This was not the end of the story as the meeting was revived in July 1926 with capital of £400,000. 40,000 attended the inaugural meeting and, although it was to suffer a little in the interwar years from the growing interest in greyhound racing, the fixture has survived until the present day.

<sup>33</sup> Stephens, P.S.T. 'Horse Racing' in *Victoria County History - Durham II* (Archibald Constable, London, 1907) p. 418.

<sup>34</sup> *New Sporting Magazine* in 1835 stated that 'These races, like many other country meetings, are on their last legs,' and deplored the lack of support both for the races and the social events, although 'Saturday being market day with a cattle fair stimulated five or six thousand to attend.' But in the following year the same magazine was full of optimism for the future of Durham races. Hale, R. 'The Demise of Horse-racing in Lancaster and Preston' (Undergraduate Dissertation, University of Lancaster, 1991) p.25 uses the above quotation to infer that Durham races failed in the 1830s, but the only blank years were 1853 and 1860 to 1862, until their demise in 1887. His comments on Morpeth and Middleham also have no basis in fact.

<sup>35</sup> The early history of mineral railways in the Durham area is complex and is not covered in these notes. Although the Durham Junction Railway was opened to passengers on 9 March 1840, it was not intended to run into Durham City, so it was left to the Newcastle & Darlington Junction Railway to open a branch to Durham Gilesgate on 15 April 1844. Nothing significant happened until a branch from Bishop Auckland was opened to passengers on 1 April 1857, and the city at last had a through station. It was, however, not until the Team Valley line was completed on 15 January 1872 that Durham was finally on a major trunk line.

<sup>36</sup> The 1859 accounts show an opening balance of £19-16-4½d. carried over from the previous meeting. The grandstand and tent raised £52 but, although there were subscriptions from over 300 people, the total was only £312-17/-, of which four people had subscribed £100. Entry fees for the runners raised £390 to give a total income of £776-13-4½d. but, after paying the winners and covering

restarted there was always enough support to carry them through, even with the increased Jockey Club minimum prize money requirements, although the course itself had serious deficiencies.<sup>37</sup> Ultimately, the fixture ended in July 1887, when the University authorities refused to renew the lease for the course as they wished to use it as a recreation ground. Some years later, part of the site was used for Elvet railway station, when another branch line was built into the city.<sup>38</sup>

## FINANCIAL FAILURE

In the chapter on race stations and elsewhere, the financial failure of recent commercial ventures like Portsmouth Park and Hull, and the narrow escapes of Folkestone and Hamilton Park have been discussed. Two other meetings - Southampton and Shrewsbury - fall into this category, but there was one further example which was in a class of its own - Scarborough.

A regular meeting had been held near Southampton since the late 1790s<sup>39</sup> but, although this was popular at first, it declined in line with the fortunes of the town as a fashionable resort and appeared for the last time in the *Racing Calendar* in 1810.<sup>40</sup> In 1822 a new course together with a grandstand was constructed on Southampton Common, but once again, although the two day meetings started off well, their popularity declined. By the late 1830s the race committee were finding it difficult to obtain subscriptions or 'attract stewards of sufficient social standing to maintain a gentlemanly atmosphere'.<sup>41</sup> In 1840, the year in which Southampton was linked with London, 75 miles away, the town had some 14,000 inhabitants, and offered superb amenities, including a subscription bowling green, botanic gardens and an annual

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the expenses of running the meeting, there was only £9-12-10d. to carry forward. Small wonder there was then a three year gap.

<sup>37</sup> Radcliffe, J.B. *Ashgill or The Life and Times of John Osborne* (Sands & Co., London, 1900) p.357. Osborne thought that Durham, Paisley and Richmond were the three most dangerous courses in the country. He had an accident at Durham on 20 July 1885. Richardson, *English Turf*, p.121 stated that 'the course was so dangerous that their [Durham races] cessation was no loss to the community'. By 1887 the race committee was charging 1/- admission to the course and 7/6d. for the grandstand. The last meeting had six races each day.

<sup>38</sup> The branch to Durham Elvet opened to passengers on 24 July 1893 and, rather surprisingly for County Durham with its preponderance of mineral traffic, freight services did not start until 1 August 1894.

<sup>39</sup> *Hampshire Chronicle*, 30 July 1796, 1 August 1798, 6 August 1804.

<sup>40</sup> The first report in the *Racing Calendar* was for the 1804 meeting, when there was one major event.

<sup>41</sup> Thomas, S.D. (et al.) *Southampton Common* (City of Southampton Society, Southampton, 1989) p.22

regatta.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, despite whipping up support from the town and its tradesmen, local M.P.s and the L.S.W.R., the race committee were forced to sell off the fittings of the course in order to meet the expenses of the 1848 meeting,<sup>43</sup> by which time the major part of Southampton's rail communications was in place.<sup>44</sup>

The Southampton meetings reappeared in the *Racing Calendar* in 1860,<sup>45</sup> and history repeated itself. This time, however, the decline involved an increase in disorderly behaviour and crime, but this should not be over-estimated, although the meetings lost both the attendance and financial support of many upper class patrons, while suffering repeated onslaughts from the anti-racing group in the town. These problems and the decline into another financial crisis, when a loss of £400 was incurred, which brought about the final closure of the meeting in June 1881, can be followed in the local press.<sup>46</sup>

The survival of the Shrewsbury meetings until the late 1880s owed much to the enterprise and domination of one man, John Frail, over more than 35 years. The fixture dated from the early eighteenth century and had enjoyed excellent local support, becoming a great social event in the area. Part of the racecourse was owned by the Corporation and part by the Mytton family, but in 1831 the latter sold their land and the new owners refused to allow any further racing. So a new course was provided by the Earl of Tankerville on his Whitehall Estate, where the first meeting took place in September 1832.<sup>47</sup> There was then a period of uncertainty when, two years later, the Earl decided to sell the estate, but he leased the course to the race committee for three years to allow them time to find a new site. But in 1838 the Shrewsbury Racecourse

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<sup>42</sup> Whyte, *British Turf*, I, pp.245 - 246.

<sup>43</sup> Patterson, A.T. *A History of Southampton 1700 - 1914* (Southampton University Press, Southampton, 1975) II, p.135. Thomson, *Southampton Common*, p.22. Prior, F.M. 'Great Racing Days of the Past', *Hampshire - The County Magazine*, I, 1961, p.26.

<sup>44</sup> The L.S.W.R. (as the London & Southampton Railway became in 1839) had opened between Southampton and Winchester on 10 June 1839, but the section between Winchester and Basingstoke, which the L. & S.R. had reached in stages in 1838 to 1839, was not completed until 11 May 1840. Southampton was linked to Salisbury on 1 March 1847 and to Dorchester on 1 June of the same year. Finally, on 1 September 1848, the town was linked to Portsmouth and L.B.S.C. network along the south coast.

<sup>45</sup> Patterson, *History of Southampton*, III, p.30, states that the meetings were revived in 1859.

<sup>46</sup> *Southampton Times*, especially 25 July 1868, 18 July 1874, 19 July 1879, 3 July and 14 August 1880, 2 July 1881, and 21 January 1882. During the same period, Southampton's medieval fairs were also coming under attack, and the more pleasurable aspects of these events were either banned or helped into a rapid decline by moving their location or limiting their scope.

<sup>47</sup> *Salopian Journal*, 4 July 1832, 12 September 1832.

Company was set up and bought the site of the course.<sup>48</sup> The enterprise struggled a little until Frail became clerk of the course in 1843. By this time, Shrewsbury had 21,000 inhabitants, a wide range of social activities for the three or four day meetings in mid September, and one of the fastest coach services from London.<sup>49</sup> After the arrival of the railway in October 1848, the town quickly became an important junction and the gateway to mid-Wales.<sup>50</sup> Frail tried to persuade the railway companies to contribute a plate or stake to the races but, although he failed in this, but certainly by 1852 had got them to run cheap trains into Shrewsbury on race days.<sup>51</sup> Frail, a charismatic but unscrupulous character, made the meetings popular with the public, although the unruly elements were not always controlled, and there were a number of scandals associated with handicapping. He became a major shareholder in the Racecourse Company before his death,<sup>52</sup> when his interest passed to his two sons. They were, however, not able to sustain his success and resigned in 1884.<sup>53</sup> Although a new racecourse company was formed in the following year, leasing land from Lord Tankerville to provide a straight mile as now required by the Jockey Club,<sup>54</sup> the last flat race meeting was held in November 1886. The company went into liquidation after the last National Hunt meeting in the following October, and in 1888 the course was sold for £12,000.

There had been racing over the sands at Scarborough at least since the mid-eighteenth century, but in September 1790 the meeting made its last appearance in the *Racing Calendar* for almost 50 years, as only one of the three scheduled days' racing took place. When the revival took place in 1839, racing was still on the sands and subject to the vagaries of the tide.<sup>55</sup> The arrival of the railway in June 1845<sup>56</sup> did nothing to raise

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<sup>48</sup> *Salopian Journal*, 18 June 1834, *Shrewsbury News & Cambrian Reporter*, 23 June 1838.

<sup>49</sup> Whyte, *British Turf*, I, pp.291 - 292. The meetings were later switched to November, but this had no effect on their popularity.

<sup>50</sup> The most important of the six railway lines opened between 1848 and 1866 have already been discussed, when dealing with the closure of other racecourses in the area.

<sup>51</sup> Shrewsbury Public Library - Watton Press Cuttings Vol. VII, p.140, and Vol. VIII, p.144. Angold, M.J. & Gaydon, A.T. 'Racing' in *Victoria County History - Shropshire II* (Oxford University Press, London, 1973) p.179.

<sup>52</sup> *Eddowe's Journal*, 19 March 1879. Frail was at various times clerk of the course at Huntingdon, Northampton, Manchester and Windsor, and lessee of Ludlow racecourse.

<sup>53</sup> *Eddowe's Journal*, 19 November 1884.

<sup>54</sup> *Eddowe's Journal*, 11 February 1885, 11 March 1885, 15 April 1885.

<sup>55</sup> *Sporting Magazine*, December 1830, gave details of a meeting held on the sands, attended by the Duke and Duchess of St. Albans and other nobility, but this was not recorded in the *Racing Calendar*. *Yorkshireman*, 31 August 1839, stated the races started at 11.30 a.m., 'it being the low water'.

the quality of the racing or the consistency of its appearance in the *Racing Calendar*, where it was recorded for the last time in 1851.

The growth of holiday traffic in the 1860s stimulated the formation of a race company with capital of £2,000 to lay out a course on Seamer Moor, three miles south west of Scarborough. The inaugural meeting in August 1868, at which George Fordham won the first race, was a success, and a spring meeting was added in the following year. Rather surprisingly for such an upmarket resort, the races became 'famous for roughs who came from every part of the kingdom.'<sup>57</sup> But if the railways brought them, they could also be used to carry them away in equally large numbers even before the races started.<sup>58</sup> Although violence was an ever-present problem and made headline news, the meetings continued to provide excellent sport. But in due course, Miles l'Anson, the clerk of the course and one of the guarantors of the race company, became aware of considerable laxity in its financial affairs. The local management distributed so many free tickets for the paddock that 'it was looked on as a hardship for anyone to pay'. By 1893, there was a deficit of £150, so l'Anson and his fellow guarantors asked the local innkeepers, who benefited greatly from the races, to make a donation. They refused, and so the last meeting was held in August 1893, the directors managing to wind up the business at a personal cost of about £25 each.

### PROBLEMS IN ORGANISATION

Scarborough may have had a reputation for crowd and crime problems in the late nineteenth century, but the university city of Oxford had enjoyed such renown almost 150 years earlier.<sup>59</sup> The races also formed an important part of the social life of the area, which can be followed from 1753 onwards in *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, but by 1819 the fixture was suffering from those ills which historians are prone to ascribe to

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<sup>56</sup> For details of the railway between York and Scarborough, see Chapters 5 and 9, Text and Notes. Despite the tremendous growth of holiday traffic to Scarborough, in due course served also by lines from Hull, Whitby and Pickering, the station was merely enlarged, and a special station to deal with excursion traffic was not opened until 8 June 1908, by which time the races were long gone.

<sup>57</sup> Richardson, *English Turf*, p.121, witnessed a major robbery attempt. See also *Scarborough Gazette*, 16 September 1886.

<sup>58</sup> Fairfax Blakeborough, *Northern Turf History*, II, p.222, gives details of such an event witnessed by Tim Devereux, a well known Stockton racehorse owner, bookmaker, prize fight promoter and theatre owner, and discusses the practices which led to the meeting's downfall.

<sup>59</sup> Oxford Central Library, *Thomas Herne's Diary*, p.252, 31 August 1732.

the coming of the railway, but in this case were due to the end of the Napoleonic Wars and the increasing speed and comfort of long distance coach travel.<sup>60</sup>

In 1829 there was a determined effort to improve the running of the meeting, and a race committee was set up to oversee all activities.<sup>61</sup> But the long run of meetings ended in 1841, and was not to restart until well after the railway had reached the city in June 1844.<sup>62</sup> There was a brief revival in 1848-49 which marked the start of an acrimonious dispute with the city freemen, when the race committee decided to auction the pitches for the booths. As the course was on common land on Port Meadow, the freemen felt they should not have to pay. A further revival in 1859, when 15,000 to 20,000 attended the meeting, augured well, but trouble flared up again in 1864, when one of the freemen refused to pay for his booth after the races had taken place. Court action proved fruitless, and the race committee threatened to abandon the fixture,<sup>63</sup> but overwhelming public pressure and support ensured its continuance until 1880. Behind the scenes, problems with the freemen continued, not merely about the booths, but also about the interruption to their cattle grazing.<sup>64</sup> But there were other difficulties which caused the August 1880 meeting to be the last. There were financial problems due to the cancellation of the 1879 fixture because of flooding, and the continual pressure to meet the Jockey Club prize money requirements, when almost the sole income from spectators came from the stands and enclosures. Although the *Victoria County History* implied that the railways brought undesirables from large towns and thus rendered 'a well-conducted and pleasant country meeting intolerable to respectable

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<sup>60</sup> *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 7 August 1819; 'We are sorry to observe a less assemblage of company than has been usual of late years both on the Race Course and at the Ordinaries and Balls. We can account for this falling off in no other way than from the injurious practice of many of the English Nobility in squandering their money away in London, or on the continent, instead of residing on their estates, where their presence would not only add a lustre, but would be highly beneficial at all provincial meetings.'

<sup>61</sup> *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 8 August 1829. No less than £90 was raised on the evening the committee was set up.

<sup>62</sup> The G.W.R. had failed in its first attempt to build a branch from Didcot to Oxford, but finally prevailed over its opponents, and the line into the city was opened on 12 June 1844. The broad gauge Oxford & Rugby Railway (already part of the G.W.R.) was opened between Oxford and Banbury on 2 September 1850, and on 2 December of the same year the standard gauge Oxford & Bletchley Junction Railway (leased by the L.N.W.R.) was completed to a temporary terminus in the city, a permanent station at Rewley Road being opened on 20 May 1851. The G.W.R. opened a new station in the city on 1 October 1852, when trains could run through from Paddington to Birmingham.

<sup>63</sup> *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 21 January 1865.

<sup>64</sup> *The Oxford Freeman*, XVII, 1948, p.3.

people',<sup>65</sup> this was a facile judgement and is not borne out by Cordeaux & Merry or the records of the freemen themselves.<sup>66</sup>

The race meetings at Egham in Surrey, 21 miles from London, had been held on Runnymede without a break for over a hundred years when they ended in 1884. The course was specifically protected under the Enclosure Act of 1813,<sup>67</sup> and during the 1820s and 1830s enjoyed considerable royal patronage. Indeed, William IV had guaranteed the long term future of the meeting when the lease came up for renewal at Michaelmas, 1835.<sup>68</sup> In the early 1840s the status of the fixture declined, although after the railway had opened to Staines, about two miles away, on 22 August 1848,<sup>69</sup> there were well filled specials to the races in the following year, and in 1850 the local press predicted a recovery in its fortunes.<sup>70</sup> There had always been problems with petty theft and crowd disturbances at Egham, and these escalated after the opening in June 1856 of the railway between Staines and Ascot, on which there was a station at Egham.<sup>71</sup> Despite an increased police presence the situation became more out of control over the years. But it does seem strange in view of the excellent rail connections that the police should have 'walked upwards of some nine miles before arriving for duty at the course'.<sup>72</sup> After the August 1884 fixture, the police refused to attend the races again, and that put paid to the meeting even though arrangements were already in hand for 1885.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Wynter, P.H.L. 'Racing' in *Victoria County History - Oxfordshire II* (Archibald Constable, London, 1907) p.367. Wynter is also incorrect in stating that the last meeting was held in 1878.

<sup>66</sup> Cordeaux, E.H. & Merry, D.H. 'Port Meadow Races', *Oxoniensis XIII*, 1948 (reprint), *The Oxford Freeman XVII & XVIII*, 1948, and *Oxford Times*, 8 October 1910, reporting a meeting between the freemen and the town clerk.

<sup>67</sup> 54 Geo III cap. cliii, which stated that the 'Race Ground shall be kept and continued as a Race Course for the Public Use, at such Time of the Year as the Races thereon have heretofore been accustomed to be kept.'

<sup>68</sup> A 'Loyal Address' acknowledging his help was presented to William IV on the first day of the Egham meeting in 1836. A printed copy of the Address and His Majesty's reply is in the Egham Museum.

<sup>69</sup> It is strange that the L.S.W.R., a sponsor of races at Egham between 1846 and 1867 and always eager to maximise revenue from such events, should miss the 1848 meeting and its attendant traffic by just a week.

<sup>70</sup> Quoted in Lord, M.E. *Egham Races 1734 - 1884* (Egham-by-Runnymede Historical Society, Egham, 1988) p.45.

<sup>71</sup> For the 1856 meeting the L.S.W.R. conveyed 900 racegoers in four trains to the first day, and 2,000 to the second day.

<sup>72</sup> Lord, *Egham Races*, pp.59-62, describes the degeneration of the Egham meeting in some detail.

<sup>73</sup> Statement issued by William Gardner, the last surviving member of the race committee, dated 29 June 1885, in which he stated his withdrawal from any attempt to continue or revive the races. There is a copy in Egham Museum. The finances of the race committee were wound up in 1888, the balance at the bank being £9-5-5d.

Lichfield races had been established in the late seventeenth century and, after their transfer to Whittington Heath in 1702, they were to continue without interruption until their demise in 1894, even supporting rival Whig and Tory meetings at a time when most courses were struggling to meet the stipulations of the 1740 Act.<sup>74</sup> The races were a major social event in the area, with other attractions to suit every taste on or off the course.<sup>75</sup> General Dyott regularly commented on the meetings between 1803 and 1842, which he felt to be generally in decline, and after the 'complete failure of 1836', definitely doomed.<sup>76</sup> But, despite the gloomy predictions of the General and other commentators, the Lichfield meetings outlived those at Rugeley, Hednesford, Burntwood, Brewood and Stafford, as well as the first Wolverhampton races held between 1825 and 1878.<sup>77</sup> The railway reached Lichfield in September 1847, when the line between Rugby and Stafford was opened to local traffic.<sup>78</sup> While the Lichfield meetings may not have regained their pre-eminence in the area, they provided fair sport, sometimes offering two fixtures a year. The end came after the opening of Whittington Barracks in 1890, when the army authorities became unhappy about a race course outside the barrack gates. The last flat race meeting was held in September 1894, the final National Hunt fixture taking place in the following March.<sup>79</sup>

Racing at Northampton was of considerable antiquity and, during the eighteenth century, survived disputes between the Town Council and the landowners, occasioned by the impending Enclosure Act, which was over twenty years in the coming, but ultimately safeguarded the rights of the freemen and the race meeting.<sup>80</sup> In the early nineteenth century, the meeting experienced considerable fluctuations in its fortunes,

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<sup>74</sup> *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 7 September 1747, 22 August 1748, 12 September 1748, 10 September 1750. See also Kettle, A.J. 'Lichfield Races', *Transactions of the Lichfield & South Staffordshire Archeological & History Society*, VI, 1964-5. pp.39-42.

<sup>75</sup> The meetings were reported each year in *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, much as the Oxford meetings in *Jackson's Oxford Journal*. In later years, the Lichfield races were reported in the *Staffordshire Advertiser*.

<sup>76</sup> Jeffrey, R.W. (ed.) *Dyott's Diary 1781 - 1845*, (Archibald Constable, London, 1907) Vol. I, p.237 et passim, Vol.II, p.228.

<sup>77</sup> *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 24 September 1842.

<sup>78</sup> See Chapter 9, Note 109, and Chapter 10, Note 188.

<sup>79</sup> *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 28 September 1895. Parker, A.D. *Lichfield*, (A.C. Lomax, London, 1925) p.74.

<sup>80</sup> The rights of herbage entitled the freemen to use the common for sheep grazing between November and February, when the public was banned from the area. This timing was particularly important in the later nineteenth century when there were two meetings a year, the first one being in March.



the 1830 meeting being particularly bad.<sup>81</sup> But prominent owners like Isaac Day provided runners for some 30 years, and the Pytcheley Hunt meetings helped to boost local interest. Northampton races continued to be popular,<sup>82</sup> even though the inhabitants had successfully prevented the London & Birmingham Railway from running its main line through the town. So from 1838 until May 1845 it was necessary to travel by coach to Blisworth, 3½ miles distant, and a satisfactory link to the west coast main line was not completed until 1881.<sup>83</sup> The races attracted top jockeys and provided a well-filled card with large fields, but by the 1880s there was increasing concern about the safety of the course, which was not always well marked out, and, being on common land, was criss-crossed by footpaths. In November 1901, there was a serious accident involving Sammy Loates, when spectators were killed, and at the March 1904 meeting another accident injured several people in the crowd.<sup>84</sup> On 27 September 1904, the stewards of the Jockey Club informed the directors and the clerk of the course that no more racing would be permitted at Northampton, as the course was felt to be unsafe. No alternative venue could be found, so the November fixture was cancelled, and the races ended.

Racing for the prize of a silver bell at Paisley, near Glasgow, had been established in the early seventeenth century, and became one of the main attractions of the St. James' Fair each August, when there were generally two to three days' holiday. But in the early 1820s the continuing popularity of the races and the lack of a race course in Glasgow led to pressure for improvements.<sup>85</sup> In 1827 the meeting moved to a new course at St. James' Park, and in December 1835, after the races had attracted an estimated 40,000, the race committee obtained additional ground from the Corporation to effect improvements. This bore fruit as Paisley races appeared for the first time in the *Racing Calendar* in 1836, and held their place there with only five blank years until 1907. A short railway linking Paisley to a ferry on the Clyde at Renfrew was opened

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<sup>81</sup> The *Racing Calendar* for 15/16 September 1830 recorded a walkover and a two heat race with three horses on the Wednesday, and stated: 'There was no race on Thursday for want of horses.'

<sup>82</sup> Whyte, *British Turf*, I, pp. 279 ff.

<sup>83</sup> The building of the L. & B. main line has already been covered, but on 4 July 1843 the company was authorised to construct a line from Blisworth to Peterborough. The first section into Northampton was opened on 13 May 1845, reaching Wellingborough and Peterborough on 2 June of the same year. The various branch lines built into the town by the L.N.W. and Midland Railways have been described elsewhere.

<sup>84</sup> Pitt, *Long Time Gone*, p.119.

<sup>85</sup> *Glasgow Chronicle*, 14 August 1821.

on 3 April 1837, with a direct line to Glasgow following on 14 July 1840,<sup>86</sup> and excellent communications in all directions were very soon available in this thickly populated industrial area of Scotland. The races were always popular, even though from time to time there were problems with unruly elements, or a poor supply of runners,<sup>87</sup> as the meeting never featured in the itineraries of the Caledonian Hunt Club.<sup>88</sup> But, although they were able to meet the Jockey Club minimum prize requirements, and in 1899 were still able to offer six flat races a day, plus National Hunt events, the race committee did not carry out necessary improvements, so their licence for the 1900 meeting was withdrawn. The Corporation took over the course, carried out some work, and the licence was restored in time for the 1901 meeting. Prize money was now up to £200 - £250 but, despite the efforts of the new management to improve the amenities, the grandstand collapsed, injuring 40 spectators. This, coupled with other problems with the course, including the lack of a five furlong straight due to space restrictions, led to the last meeting under Jockey Club rules being held in August 1907, and this time there was no reprieve.<sup>89</sup>

#### INABILITY TO MEET JOCKEY CLUB MINIMUM PRIZE MONEY

Racing at Northallerton, the county town of the North Riding of Yorkshire, had long been important on the northern circuit, as it was set in a racecourse training area.<sup>90</sup> In 1809 the view was that its meeting 'was likely to become equal to York in popularity',<sup>91</sup> but thirty years later Whyte was less complimentary.<sup>92</sup> The railway

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<sup>86</sup> The Paisley & Renfrew Railway provided easier access to Glasgow, until the Glasgow, Paisley, Kilmarnock & Ayr Railway was opened. The details of this company, which sponsored at least one race each year at Paisley between 1843 and 1857, can be found in Chapter 6, Note 42.

<sup>87</sup> At the 1863 meeting, all the races - except that for beaten horses - were won either by the ten year old Little Nell or the five year old Fast River.

<sup>88</sup> Fairfax Blakeborough, *J. Northern Turf History*, Vol. IV (Author, Whitby, 1973) p.237 recorded comments made to him by Billy Burne on the way home from the last meeting in 1907. 'For some reason they [the Caledonian Hunt Club] looked on Paisley as little better than a 'flap'. In many ways it was so, but it was always great fun.'

<sup>89</sup> There was, however, a meeting in 1908 under Pony and Galloway Club rules, when the traditional silver bells were competed for, but this was the last fixture.

<sup>90</sup> Ingledeu, C.J.D. *The Histories of North Allerton* (Bell & Daley, London, 1858) p.356. The races, which were normally held for two or three days in October, were established in 1765 on a course close to the later site of the railway station.

<sup>91</sup> Fairfax Blakeborough, *Northern Turf History*, II, p.184, quoting an unnamed source, which also discussed other reasons for Northallerton's popularity.

<sup>92</sup> Whyte, *British Turf*, I, pp. 349 - 350. 'These races, like many others, are most unnecessarily protracted to three days, the list of sport being barely sufficient for two.' This was particularly true of 1838, but there were more races in 1839.

arrived in March 1841, putting Northallerton within 13 hours' travelling from London, and the town quickly became an important rail junction.<sup>93</sup> The races continued with a high level of support and only registered three blank years in the 1860s until the final meeting in 1880. The shortcomings of the racecourse became apparent as fields grew larger, and its narrowness often forced races to be started in two ranks, with subsequent doubt as to the fairness of the outcome.<sup>94</sup> Despite support from the public and top northern jockeys like Osborne, Bruckshaw and Fagan, the race committee had great difficulty in meeting the minimum prize money requirements. Although the races at the last meeting in October 1880 were compliant, the committee decided to call it a day, and the National Hunt events, which had bolstered up the card in the previous three years, also ended.

#### CONTINUATION AS 'UNAUTHORISED' MEETINGS'

Like Northallerton, the races at Morpeth had a history extending back into the eighteenth century, but by the 1820s they were felt to be in decline, despite the donation of a silver cup by the town. In 1831 the *New Sporting Magazine* had a long and gloomy piece bewailing 'the falling off of the patrons and promoters of the Turf in that county' [Northumberland] and the fact that, with a few notable exceptions, 'every horse that ran was the property of persons who pursue the Turf not as amateurs, but professionally.'<sup>95</sup> Certainly in the 1830s the number of races and runners fluctuated considerably, although the town had shown its continuing commitment by donating a £100 gold cup. A spring meeting was introduced, possibly the forerunner of the St.

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<sup>93</sup> The line from York through Northallerton to Darlington was opened on 31 March 1841. The first section of the Wensleydale branch, which ran westward through racehorse training country and ultimately linked up with the Midland Railway at Hawes, was opened to Leeming Bar on the Great North Road on 6 March 1848, but took over 30 years to complete. (For full details see Jenkins, S.C. *The Wensleydale Branch* (Oakwood Press, Oxford, 1993). The Leeds Northern Railway had opened from Melmerby through Northallerton to Stockton on 2 June 1852, passing under the east coast main line, to which a connection was laid in on 1 January 1856. All the above lines ultimately became part of the N.E.R.

<sup>94</sup> Fairfax Blakeborough, *Northern Turf History*, II, pp. 186 - 188 implied that races at Northallerton were 'fixed', and that out of seven races in 1869 five were subject to objections and enquiries. This is not borne out by the *Racing Calendar*, which reports only one objection on eleven races in the 14/15 October meeting. See also Fairfax Blakeborough, J. *Thirsk Races* (T.A.J. Waddington, York, 1924) p.14 for more on Northallerton's shortcomings and malpractices.

<sup>95</sup> Quoted in Fairfax Blakeborough, *Northern Turf History*, II, pp.174 - 175.

Martin's Day races,<sup>96</sup> and in 1840 the first major organised steeplechase in Northumberland took place near Morpeth. So racing definitely enjoyed a high level of interest, with balls and other festivities - even cockfighting - still in vogue.<sup>97</sup> The railway reached Morpeth from Newcastle in March 1847, and four months later it was possible to travel by train from London to Edinburgh, except for the crossing of the Tweed at Berwick. In due course, Morpeth became an important railway junction.<sup>98</sup>

The races faltered a little in the early 1850s, and the racecards show that, while the support of the town and its innkeepers continued, the donations from the M.P.s and local gentry had ceased. There were no further meetings between 1854 and 1869, after which they ran through to 1883 with only one blank year. The races were now held on a new course on Morpeth Common,<sup>99</sup> and the determination to continue was shown by the erection of a new grandstand, the foundation stone being laid by the Mayor 'in the presence of the most influential gentlemen in the county' in September 1875.<sup>100</sup> But the struggle to meet the new minimum prize money was still harder, and even though the committee could mount a quite respectable two day fixture, with four flat races and hunters' races each day, they gave up the struggle after the 1883 meeting. The annual St. Martin's Races continued on the old course well into the twentieth century as a 'flapping' meeting, with plenty of excitement and enough profit to help the aged poor of the district.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> The St. Martin's Day races were instituted as part of the Boundary Riding Ceremony on 3 May 1841, although in the 1835 April meeting there was already a Boundary Cup for Freeman and Free Burgesses of the Corporation.

<sup>97</sup> The Race Card for the Race Meeting on 3/4 September 1845 stated that 'The Ball will be on Wednesday evening in the Town Hall. The Ordinary at the Queen's Head on Wednesday and at the Old Phoenix Inn on Thursday, each day immediately after the races.'

<sup>98</sup> The opening of the east coast main line is covered in Chapter 3. On 1 April 1858 the Blyth & Tyne Railway reached Morpeth, where it had its own station, and a connection to the London - Edinburgh main line. B. & T. passenger services did not run into the main station until 24 May 1880, by which time the company had become part of the N.E.R. Meanwhile, the Wansbeck Railway had been opened between Morpeth and Scotsgap on 23 July 1862 and on to Reedsmouth on 1 May 1865. It became part of the N.B.R. in July 1865.

<sup>99</sup> Fairfax Blakeborough, *Northern Turf History*, II, p.176 ignored the 1869 fixture, stating that the last meeting at Cottiswood [should be Cottingwood], north of the town, was in 1854, and the first on Morpeth Common, in 1871. The old racecourse is clearly shown on a fold-out map of the Blyth & Tyne Railway in Welford, R. Lambert's *Handbook to Tynemouth and the Blyth & Tyne Railway* (M. & W.M. Lambert, Newcastle on Tyne, 1865)

<sup>100</sup> *Morpeth Herald*, 10 September 1875.

<sup>101</sup> Good works must have been imbued in successive Morpeth race committees, for the *Newcastle Journal*, 7 October 1775, recorded a donation of £5 to be distributed among the prisoners in the local gaol, so that 'all ranks of people might partake of the general satisfaction'.

Although races at Perth on Scotland were of considerable antiquity, the *Racing Calendar* first recorded one in 1791, when the Caledonian Hunt Club sponsored a five day meeting there.<sup>102</sup> The next was in 1813,<sup>103</sup> after which there were only four blank years until 1885, despite some early problems with the Club visits.<sup>104</sup> Nevertheless, the meetings continued on a relatively uneventful course both before and after the arrival of the railway in May 1847,<sup>105</sup> although the fixtures graced by the C.H.C. were always more lengthy and prestigious affairs. Despite various commentators in the 1850s and 1860s believing the meeting to be in decline,<sup>106</sup> there were no real problems until the 1880s, when there were four blank years - 1886 to 1889. The 1890 meeting was supported by the C.H.C., but in the following December it was decided that the Club would not visit Perth again.<sup>107</sup> There were no races in 1891, but the final meeting in September 1892 had four flat races and some National Hunt events each day. Pony and galloway racing continued for some years thereafter, and the Breadalbane Plate, with a value of £130, was well above the normal run of even 'approved' steeplechase meetings.<sup>108</sup>

### CONTINUATION AS NATIONAL HUNT MEETINGS

As there was a long gap between the ending of flat racing and the start of National Hunt racing, Perth has not been placed in this category, but six courses which closed in the 1880s were to continue with this type of racing. The first to close, in July 1881, at Aldershot in Hampshire, was a very late starter, and owed its origin, albeit indirectly,

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<sup>102</sup> Cheney had an entry for Perth in 1734, while Fittis, R.S. *Sports and Pastimes of Scotland* (Gardner, Paisley, 1891) p.110 stated that Perth had a race for a silver bell as early as 1613.

<sup>103</sup> Fairfax Blakeborough, *Northern Turf History*, IV, p.166 also described a meeting over the North Inch in 1807, which was well attended by nobility and gentry.

<sup>104</sup> The Minutes of the Caledonian Hunt Club quoted by Fairfax Blakeborough, *Northern Turf History*, IV, p. 165 stated 'Great dissatisfaction was expressed with the ordinaries and charges at the last meeting in Perth [in 1818], and it was resolved that, unless the innkeepers reduced their charges to the amount paid at other places, and paid Gow's Band their proper proportion, the Hunt would not go to Perth again.'

<sup>105</sup> The Dundee & Perth Railway opened its line to a terminus at Barnhill on 24 May 1847, followed by the Scottish Central Railway from Stirling on 22 May 1848.

<sup>106</sup> The Druid in *Field and Fern* (Vinton & Co. Ltd., London, 1865) discussed the October 1863 meeting and described it as being in decline both socially and in racing terms, but examination of the race card shows no less than twelve races and the attendance of the celebrated Caller Ou.

<sup>107</sup> Minutes of the Caledonian Hunt Club, December 1890. 'It was decided that the Hunt should not again visit Perth, and the Secretary was instructed to intimate this resolution to the Secretary of the Perth Hunt'. Pitt, *Long Time Gone*, p. 445 is incorrect in giving the last Perth meeting as 1890.

to the concern of the Prince Consort about the lack of suitable headquarters and training grounds for the British Army. As early as 1847 he had stressed the importance of railways in the choice of location<sup>109</sup> but, although at first his suggestions fell on stony ground, in due course Aldershot was selected.<sup>110</sup> Camps were set up from 1855, and extensive land purchases there were completed in 1861, the year of the first flat race meeting. Naturally the races had a predominantly military flavour, but this did not affect their popularity nor prevent the L.S.W.R. from sponsoring races on several occasions between the opening and 1873. Official steeplechase meetings commenced in April 1867, and ultimately proved to be the more popular. After the end of flat racing, a new course was opened,<sup>111</sup> and there were often up to four meetings a year until March, 1927.<sup>112</sup>

In contrast, the Ipswich meetings, which were to end in April 1883, dated back at least to 1710, being honoured with a 100 gn. Royal Plate as early as 1727.<sup>113</sup> The races flourished throughout the eighteenth century, a Gentleman's Stand being erected in 1776,<sup>114</sup> and although their fortunes fluctuated, there were no blank years in the *Racing Calendar* until their demise. Support from the officers of the local garrison buoyed up its fortunes in the early nineteenth century, and the meetings gradually took on a 'mixed' character with hurdle races and steeplechases playing a part. Neither the coming of the railway in June 1846, nor the development of Ipswich as a railway centre, produced any marked change in the meeting.<sup>115</sup> But the impact of the Jockey

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<sup>108</sup> When National Hunt racing began in earnest at Scone Palace Park in September 1908, the top prizes each day were only £30. Nevertheless, the Perth meeting survives today as an important date in the National Hunt calendar.

<sup>109</sup> Letter from Prince Albert to the Duke of Wellington, 5 November 1847 (Wellington Papers), quoted in Hobhouse, H. *Prince Albert, His Life and Work* (Hamish Hamilton Ltd., London 1983) pp.47-48.

<sup>110</sup> Although the present Aldershot station was not opened until 2 May 1870, the area was already well provided with railways and stations, with the whole of the strategic London - Southampton line through Farnborough being completed on 11 May 1840. Stations at Ash, opened in August 1849, and North Camp, opened in September 1857, underwent a number of name changes, generally including 'Aldershot' in their title.

<sup>111</sup> Flat racing had taken place on Aldershot Heath to the west of the town, but the new course, opened in 1884, was at Tweseldown, near Church Crookham, three miles from Aldershot.

<sup>112</sup> This was not the end of the story for, after the end of open meetings, the National Hunt Committee introduced the Bona Fide Military Meetings, which continued until 1939.

<sup>113</sup> Bradley, C. 'Racing' in *Victoria County History - Suffolk II* (Archibald Constable, London, 1907) p.380 stated that the Ipswich meetings were almost as ancient as those at Newmarket.

<sup>114</sup> *Ipswich Journal*, June 1776. At this time entrance to the Gentlemen's Stand cost 2/6d.

<sup>115</sup> The Eastern Union Railway was opened from Colchester to Ipswich on 15 June 1846, linking the town with London, and thus completing some part of the grandiose but lapsed Eastern Counties Railway scheme of 1836 for a railway from London to Norwich and Yarmouth. Further lines from

Club prize money stipulations can be easily demonstrated by the progression from a two day meeting with five flat races a day, including the 100 gn. Queen's Plate in 1869, to three flat races a day in 1876, of which one was the Queen's Plate, now worth 200 guineas. But in 1877, after the second increase in minimum prize money, there was only a single day with four races, and by 1883 there were just two flat races - the Queen's Plate attracting only two runners.<sup>116</sup> National Hunt racing continued until March 1911, even surviving a move when the old course was required for building land in 1902, and sustaining quite a respectable level of prize money compared with other National Hunt meetings of the time.<sup>117</sup>

National Hunt racing still takes place at Hereford, where flat race meetings were held from at least 1774 without a break until the early 1850s, when the modern railway reached the town.<sup>118</sup> As early as 1831 Hereford had over 10,000 inhabitants, with many amenities including a theatre which opened during race week which 'about the end of August attracted a large and numerous assembly.'<sup>119</sup> After a few lean years, the meetings recovered their popularity and ran through to September 1883, although the increase in prize money requirements caused no meetings to be held in 1877 and 1878.<sup>120</sup> Steeplechases also dated back to the eighteenth century, and these helped to support the flat races until their demise, after which National Hunt racing carried on successfully in its own right.

Flat racing at Plymouth effectively started in August 1828<sup>121</sup> on Chelson Meadow on the opposite side of the River Plym to the town, and continued with only one blank

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Ipswich to Bury St. Edmunds and Norwich were opened on 24 December 1846 and 12 December 1849 by the Ipswich, Bury & Norwich Railway, which amalgamated with the E.U.R. in 1847, becoming part of the E.C.R. in 1854. The major railways in the area were completed by a branch to Felixstowe, opened on 1 May 1877.

<sup>116</sup> *The Field*, 7 February 1885, ascribed the reason for no meeting at Ipswich in 1885 to the loss of the Queen's Plate, as Ipswich was omitted from the new list when the number of recipients was reduced from 28 to 11. But the writer overlooked the fact that there had been no meeting there in 1884, and the Queen's Plate Regulations of November 1875 stated quite explicitly: 'No plate to be given at a meeting not held annually and otherwise supported by public money.'

<sup>117</sup> Bradley, 'Racing' in *VCH-Suffolk II*, p.380.

<sup>118</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 10, Note 121, there were early railways linking Hereford with Abergavenny and Monmouth, which were opened between 1814 and 1829. The modern age began with the arrival of the Shrewsbury & Hereford Railway on 6 December 1853, and by 1864 the town had become an important junction, with three major railway companies operating in the area.

<sup>119</sup> Whyte, *British Turf*, I, p. 248.

<sup>120</sup> Pitt, *Long Time Gone*, p. 441 shows a gap in the Hereford meetings in 1854 to 1867 inclusive, but the only blank years in the *Racing Calendar* were 1852, 1854 and 1855.

<sup>121</sup> The *Racing Calendar* records a Tavistock & Plymouth meeting on 31 July 1810, but this was over Whitchurch Down near Tavistock, and the winner of the only race was disqualified by the Jockey

year - 1845 - until August 1885. The meeting got off to a very good start with numerous valuable prizes, becoming a three day fixture from 1830 to 1843, and supporting an additional day's racing in May from 1840 to 1853. The South Devon Railway reached the centre of Plymouth in April 1849,<sup>122</sup> and ultimately there was quite a complex network of G.W. & L.S.W. lines, although the latter company played no major part in the area during the flat racing era. Plymouth races continued to be well supported both as a social event and by owners such as Thomas Parr, as they provided a better than average level of prize money until the 1870s. But in 1877 the fixture was down to a single day. Even though supported by a Queen's Plate and National Hunt events, the organisers had to struggle to stage even three races with a minimum prize of £100 a race. The fixture was extended to two days in 1882 and 1883, but in 1884 the *Totnes Times* commented: 'Plymouth races seem to be dying out if one is to judge by the small attendances year after year.'<sup>123</sup> There was no Queen's Prize in 1885, so the promoters decided to call it a day. But after a brief gap, the National Hunt races were restarted in September 1888, and did well enough with prizes in the £40 to £100 range. Bayles commented favourably on the meeting in 1911,<sup>124</sup> but fields were dwindling even as he wrote. Nevertheless, the last meeting did not take place until September 1930.

The cathedral city of Winchester in Hampshire had held race meetings without interruption from at least 1753 until 1887, and in 1831 had almost 8,000 inhabitants with the usual amenities including 'hot, cold and vapour baths'. The races were held on Worthy Down, about four miles from the city on the Oxford road, and Whyte felt the principal races important enough to list in his book.<sup>125</sup> Although the railway had reached Winchester in 1839 and the city was linked with London in the following year,

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Club (p.104). The Plymouth & Devonport meeting held at Crabtree in 1827 (and not in the *Racing Calendar*) was described as being more like a circus than a race meeting.

Pitt, *Long Time Gone*, p 259, implies that the 1828 fixture was little better, and that the 100 gn. gold cup presented by the King as Lord High Steward of Plymouth was not donated until 1830, but this is incorrect, as the Gold Cup and the Handicap Shield were already on offer in 1828.

<sup>122</sup> The S.D.R. and its continuation westward have been covered in Chapter 3. The L.S.W.R. did not even make its presence felt in the town until the late 1870s, and its main development affecting Plymouth only took place when an independent branch off its North Devon main line at Lydford was completed to Devonport via Tavistock and Bere Alston on 1 June 1890.

<sup>123</sup> Quoted in Pitt, *Long Time Gone*, p.258.

<sup>124</sup> Bayles, F.H. *Atlas and Review of British Racecourses* (Equitable Publishing Syndicate, London, 1911) p. 250: 'A very interesting little meeting, well supported from all quarters in the west of England. The fields here are unusually large for this class of meeting.'

<sup>125</sup> Whyte, *British Turf*, I, pp. 247 - 248.



if Whyte's estimate of distance was correct, there was to be no station within three miles of the course until the very last years of the flat race meetings.<sup>126</sup> This did not inhibit their success in any way until the Jockey Club stipulations began to bite. The National Hunt fixtures, which were also held on Worthy Down, continued after the last flat race meeting in July 1887 until May 1896.

Racing at Kelso started in earnest in 1760, and by the 1770s it and Edinburgh were probably the most important race meetings in Scotland.<sup>127</sup> Kelso races received a boost when the Caledonian Hunt Club included them in its itineraries. But, despite this and the opening of a new course at Berrymoss in 1823, its fortunes and support fluctuated alarmingly until the meeting was suspended temporarily in 1848.<sup>128</sup> There were no more 'normal' meetings until 1853, by which time Kelso, although relatively remote, was served by railways from two directions,<sup>129</sup> and thus was connected to the main rail system before Hereford, Cardiff and Swansea, and other towns which are of far more importance today. The 1853 revival received plenty of support from the locals - from the Duke of Roxburghe to the innkeepers - but major meetings were only possible with the participation of the Caledonian Hunt Club. By the 1870s some years saw only a single day's flat racing<sup>130</sup> and the meetings ended in August 1888. Steeplechasing had been popular in the area since the mid-eighteenth century, and the

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<sup>126</sup> The opening of the L.S.W. main line has already been covered. Apart from Winchester, the nearest station to the course was at Micheldever, over four miles north. The Didcot, Newbury & Southampton Railway had a long and precarious genesis, but was opened between Didcot and Newbury on 13 April 1882 and on to Winchester (Chesil) on 4 May 1885, with a junction to the L.S.W. main line south of the city being completed on 1 October 1891. The station at Sutton Scotney was within three miles of the racecourse on Worthy Down. The D.N.S.R. was worked from the outset by the G.W.R., which absorbed it on 1 January 1923.

<sup>127</sup> Edinburgh and Kelso were the only Scottish courses listed in the first volume of Weatherby's *Racing Calendar*.

<sup>128</sup> By 1847 there was an obvious lack of runners, and the majority of horses were competing at least twice. So the stewards decided to discontinue the meeting, and in 1848 the *Racing Calendar* carried the following note: 'The usual races at this place were discontinued, but the Duke of Roxburghe, whose property the course is, allowed it to be opened, so that the parties to the Produce Stakes might fulfil that engagement.' In the event, despite ten subscribers, this was a 'walkover', but a sweepstakes for farmers provided six runners, although not thoroughbreds.

<sup>129</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 3, the *Sheffield Mercury* on 9 December 1809 described 'the Great National Design of a Rail Road from Glasgow to Berwick', and a line from Berwick to Kelso was actually authorised on 31 May 1811. But nothing came of this, and it was left to the Newcastle & Berwick Railway to open a branch from Tweedmouth as far as Sprouston, just over two miles from Kelso, on 27 July 1849. The N.B.R. approached Kelso from a junction at St. Boswells, opening a temporary station at Wallace Nick on 17 June 1850, with an extension to a permanent station in Kelso on 27 January 1851 and a further extension to Sprouston on 1 June of the same year.

<sup>130</sup> In 1870 a two day meeting had prizes ranging from £36 to £405, and the three day meeting in 1877 spanned values from £100 to £360. By the last meeting in October 1887 the Roxburghe Handicap provided £240 of the total £610 for five flat races.

formation of the Border Racing Club in 1854 helped to support both these events and the flat racing. The United Border Hunt had held meetings at Spoding since 1868, but a dispute with the landowner occasioned a move to Berrymoss in 1883, and the meetings have continued until the present day.<sup>131</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Thus the 1880s continued to see, albeit at a lower rate, the termination of well established race meetings which, to judge by the ongoing support given to National Hunt or 'unauthorised' fixtures at the same location, could have continued with modest prize money for many years. Almost without exception, there was easy rail access to all courses well before the crucial phase of their existence. It has also been demonstrated that the arrival of a railway did not stimulate any immediate resumption of lapsed meetings, nor did the proximity of a railway station - even a special race station - save some new and highly capitalised racecourses. In essence, the restrictions placed by the Jockey Club on the opening of new courses were far more important in shaping the racing industry than the death of the final 25 courses during the period under review.

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<sup>131</sup> Quite apart from the prize money issue, there were other problems as the Berrymoss course was bounded on all sides by main roads, so the race committee were unable to meet increasing Jockey Club demands on safety, straight run-ins, etc. The artificiality of closures caused by Jockey Club minimum prize money requirements was well demonstrated in 1887, when six National Hunt races grossed £175 against the £610 mentioned in Note 133, which barely satisfied the Jockey Club requirements for five flat races.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### THE SURVIVORS - AND HOW THEY DID IT

#### INTRODUCTION

48 racecourses survived until the outbreak of the First World War. Three - Harpenden, Croxton Park and Hooton Park - did not reopen after the hiatus caused by the war. In the interwar years only one new flat race course, Chepstow <sup>1</sup>, opened and two courses, Derby <sup>2</sup> and Gatwick, did not survive the Second World War. So the actions of the Jockey Club and its manipulation of the underlying trends within flat racing had provided a firm basis on which the sport could build and develop into the multi-million pound business which we know today.

But the surviving courses were not a homogeneous group. There were traditional 'open' courses which had made the transition to 'gate money' courses as part of a gradual evolution, or, like Epsom, had still to make it. Then there were courses which had had to make a rapid change because of external pressures, such as the termination of a lease, or had themselves taken the decision to make all spectators pay as the only means to compete against the new 'park' courses. The problems and commercial imperatives which drove the survivors were the same as those which closed the courses reviewed in the previous three chapters, and clearly demonstrate that for survival the tenacity and perseverance both of individuals and race committees were of paramount importance. The railways may have been an all-pervasive presence, but as in the case of the 126 closures, were neither the vehicle nor the prime factor for survival, as this chapter will clearly demonstrate.

In order to provide a structured review, the 48 courses have been divided into three main types, the first two categories being further subdivided.

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<sup>1</sup> Fontwell Park in Sussex, opened in 1924, was solely a National Hunt course, as was Bournemouth, which no longer survives. Chepstow, opened in 1926 by the Chepstow Racing Company at Piercefield in Monmouthshire (now Gwent), stages both flat and National Hunt racing. An extension of the up platform, with a separate entrance, was provided for the benefit of racegoers about 1930.

<sup>2</sup> In 1942, Derby Corporation refused to renew the lease to the Racecourse Company as they wished to extend the county cricket ground, which was inside the racecourse, and also make more of the site available for public leisure activities. Although this falls outside the review period, it was merely the final chapter in a troubled relationship between the cricket club and the racecourse. In 1895, Derby County F.C., formed eleven years earlier by Derbyshire C.C.C., moved from the racecourse because

**TABLE 12.1: SUMMARY OF SURVIVING RACECOURSES 1914**

<hr/>	
1. Courses with a significant record of racing before 1830	30
<hr/>	
(a) Sudden change during the review period	13
(b) Gradual evolution during the review period	17
<hr/>	
2. Courses with no significant racing before 1830	12
<hr/>	
(a) Sudden change during the review period	5
(b) Gradual evolution during the review period	7
<hr/>	
3. New style 'park' courses with no significant previous history	6
<hr/>	
Total	48
<hr/>	

Source: *Racing Calendar*.

These can be further analysed by regions as in Appendix III, which showed how London and the south east built up supremacy from the 1860s onwards. By 1918, none of the completely new and much vaunted 'park' courses survived except in this area, although Hamilton Park was revived in the late 1920s.

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race meetings interfered with its fixture programme. Ballard, J. & Suff, P. *The Dictionary of Football* (Boxtree, London, 1999) p.174.

**TABLE 12.2: REGIONAL ANALYSIS OF SURVIVING RACECOURSES 1914**

Type	London & South East	East Anglia	South West	Midlands	North West	North East	Scotland	Total
1a.	1	-	-	3	4	3	2	13
1b.	5	2	2	3	-	4	1	17
Sub. 1	6	2	2	6	4	7	3	30
2a.	1	-	-	2	-	1	1	5
2b.	2	-	-	2	1	2	-	7
Sub. 2	3	-	-	4	1	3	1	12
Sub. 3	5	-	-	-	1	-	1	6
Total of Types	14	2	2	10	6	10	4	48
Memo. 1918	14	2	2	8	5	10	4	45

Source: *Racing Calendar*.

Notes: Sub-totals of each type are added to give final total  
1918 situation reflects closure of Croxton Park, Harpenden & Hooton Park.

### COURSES WITH A SIGNIFICANT RECORD OF RACING BEFORE 1830

Thirty courses fall into this category, and this section shows that many of them suffered similar problems to the courses which closed during the review period, but were able to survive by taking positive action, whether quickly or over a number of years.

#### 1. COURSES WHICH UNDERWENT SUDDEN CHANGE DURING THE REVIEW PERIOD

These provide the most striking evidence of the action necessary to avoid closure, particularly as some courses such as Stockton and Manchester had to overcome major problems more than once. While Stockton's meetings did not always recover immediately from their setbacks, Manchester races did not miss a single year, despite two lease terminations and a compulsory purchase. Each racecourse will be reviewed in the chronological order of the first major problem, while the arrival and development of railways in the area will be put in context, together with any issues not covered in previous chapters.

Races in Derby had taken place on Sinfin Moor from the mid-eighteenth century,<sup>3</sup> but in 1803 were switched to The Siddals, much nearer the town. There they continued until 1834, when the owner of the land, Mrs. John Cox, refused permission for any further meetings to be held, and demolished the grandstand erected by the previous owner, Samuel Richardson.<sup>4</sup> There was to be no resumption of racing for ten years. Meanwhile, on 4 June 1839, the Midland Counties Railway had been opened between Derby and Nottingham, and in just over a year the town was linked with London, Leeds and Lancashire, albeit by somewhat circuitous routes.<sup>5</sup>

The suppression of the annual football match in 1845 was one of the triggers for a revival of the race meeting, and the columns of the local newspapers were full of vituperative letters, notices and threats centring on the ownership of The Siddals and the rights of Henry Cox or the freemen to determine whether the races should be held.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless the first meeting took place in October 1845 on a course adjacent to the Midland Railway Derby - Sheffield line and, as it was successful in a modest way, its promoters attempted to add a spring fixture in the 1850s and 1860s. Although the Jockey Club requirements on minimum prize money caused some problems and there were no races in 1877, a great improvement in prize money was evident in subsequent years.<sup>7</sup> Derby was also popular for steeplechasing, the National Hunt Steeplechase being held there five times from 1879 onwards. In 1880 the running of the meetings was taken over by a limited company and a new course laid out on the site. But the local gentry, including the Duke of Devonshire, still supported the meetings, both by running horses and by their own attendance, so that the traditional aspects of the meeting were not totally lost in the new order.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Cheney records an earlier meeting in September 1737, but this was not successful, and the next meeting did not take place until 1748, the 1740 Act on minimum prize money being an additional factor against further meetings.

<sup>4</sup> Letter from W. Eaton Mousley, dated 16 October 1845, addressed to the editor of the *Derby Reporter & Chronicle*. It may be that even in the 1830s an admission charge was made to watch the races, as Mousley stated that Richardson 'sanctioned their [The Corporation and Burgesses] receiving money from the public for going upon the land.'

<sup>5</sup> The opening of these lines, which all became part of the Midland Railway in 1844, has been covered elsewhere.

<sup>6</sup> *Derby Mercury*, 15 October 1845, and cuttings from this newspaper and the *Derby Reporter & Chronicle* (not always dated) held in Derby Local Studies Library.

<sup>7</sup> Prize money (not including any for hurdle race) was £600 in 1876, £1,900 in 1878, £1,400 in 1879 and £3,100 for the September 1880 meeting.

<sup>8</sup> Bryden, H.A. & Cuming, E.D. 'Racing' in *Victoria County History - Derbyshire II* (Archibald Constable, London 1907) p.293.

Although racing at Pontefract in Yorkshire was recorded from about 1720,<sup>9</sup> the definitive date for the modern course was 1790 when the Trustees of Pontefract Park had the raceground drained and relaid. A grandstand was built by public subscription in 1802,<sup>10</sup> and the race meeting benefited first from the support of Lord Darlington (later the Duke of Cleveland) and the Badworth Hunt, followed by that of the Hon. Edward Petre. Bad management by the clerk of the course under the inept supervision of the Trustees and the financial ruin of the main supporter, Mr. Petre, caused the suspension of the meeting after the 1835 fixture.<sup>11</sup> When in 1844 the Trustees suggested the conversion of the grandstand into houses or for the use of those who used the raceground to graze their animals, the shareholders demanded the return of their investment and threatened to demolish the stand to recoup some of their losses from the sale of the building materials.<sup>12</sup> But nothing happened on the racing front until after the opening of the railway linking the town with Wakefield, Goole and Doncaster on 1 April 1848, apart from some realignment of the course to accommodate the line.<sup>13</sup> The races were revived first by a committee of innkeepers and tradesmen in 1851,<sup>14</sup> and then in the following year by some of the leading ratepayers, who took over the responsibility for the fixture from the Park Trustees and

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<sup>9</sup> Padgett, L. *Chronicles of Old Pontefract* (No publisher or date in rebound copy) pp.161 -162 stated that races were held near the Castle in 1648, but Taylor, K. (ed.) *Wakefield District Heritage* Vol. II (Architectural Heritage - Wakefield District Group, Wakefield, 1979) p.148 maintains that these races were held on the Clifford Course near Tadcaster.

Taylor also covers the events leading up to the inception of racing at Pontefract around 1720.

<sup>10</sup> Pontefract Museum Papers 4.96. Report of Trustees' Meeting on 5 October 1802 stated that subscription was only open to owners of estates in Pontefract and Tanshelf, and that repayment was to be with interest out of the profits of the stand.

<sup>11</sup> *Sporting Magazine* 1831, quoted by Fairfax Blakeborough. *J. Racecourses of Yorkshire* (Reid Hamilton Publishers Ltd., London, 1953) p.52, attributed the decline of the meeting 'solely to the negligence of the [previous] Clerk of the Course', but predicted that the new incumbent's 'management of the recent meeting is a guarantee of success'. But not so, as the Trustees could only raise about £65 from the letting of the booths and gambling tables, and this, coupled with the lack of entries and the withdrawal of Petre's support, brought the meeting to an end.

<sup>12</sup> Taylor, *Wakefield District Heritage*, II, p.149, maintains that the stand was demolished, but Fairfax Blakeborough, *Racecourses of Yorkshire*, p.52, states that the threat was not carried out because of the opposition of those who wished the meeting to restart. This view is also shared by Curry, G. *Pontefract Race Company Ltd.* (unpublished MS dated 1995) in Pontefract Museum Papers 4.96. As there is no mention of a new stand being built until 1879, it appears unlikely that the 1802 building was destroyed.

<sup>13</sup> A further station at Tanshelf, much nearer to the racecourse than the original Pontefract station, was opened in August 1871. Other railways in the area helped to provide a comprehensive network for both mineral and passenger traffic, making Pontefract readily accessible for horses and racegoers from both Newmarket and the north.

put it on a more secure financial footing. Steeplechasing was revived in March 1868,<sup>15</sup> and all involved did their best to ensure the profitable running of the meeting, which was helped by the opening of Tanshelf station, and the construction of a new grandstand eight years later. In 1906, Pontefract Corporation took over the race ground from the Park Trustees and leased the course to the race committee on a 'profit sharing' basis, as the fixture had been a 'gate money' meeting for some years, even though it was still possible to get a free view from the hill above the paddock. This may have pleased the townsfolk, but in 1913 the Jockey Club threatened to withdraw the licence unless more money was subscribed to prizes and course improvements. The war intervened before anything could be done either way, but in October 1919 the Pontefract Park Race Company Ltd., led by Sir Loftus Bates, was set up and made a clean sweep of buildings and course in establishing a professional commercial enterprise.<sup>16</sup>

There had been intermittent meetings on the Carrs on the Yorkshire banks of the Tees opposite Stockton since the early eighteenth century. But these were plagued both by flooding and lack of entries, which became particularly acute in the early nineteenth century, resulting in a complete suspension from 1816 to 1824. A revival with a three day meeting took place in August 1825, preceded by a procession, which imparted a suitable carnival atmosphere to the event.<sup>17</sup> Just over a month later, there was further cause for celebration with the opening of the Stockton & Darlington Railway although, as the line was promoted specifically for mineral traffic, passengers were of little account, at least until 1833.<sup>18</sup> Stockton became an important industrial centre served by a network of railway lines, and after the 1838 meeting the raceground was acquired by speculators, originally for a new town, but later used for shipyards.<sup>19</sup> There was no break in the meetings, as John Jackson, the clerk of the course, offered to lease part of

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<sup>14</sup> These events do not bear out the statement made by Bonnett, F. 'Racing' in *Victoria County History - Yorkshire II* (Archibald Constable, London, 1907) p. 509 that there was no interruption in meetings at Pontefract from 1801 until the time of writing.

<sup>15</sup> *Pontefract Advertiser*, 21 March 1868. A racecard of Pontefract Steeplechases on 23 March 1846, for what was basically a point to point meeting, listed one race to be run over Pontefract Park course.

<sup>16</sup> Fairfax Blakeborough, *Racecourses of Yorkshire*, p.53, and Curry, *Pontefract Race Company Ltd.*, no page numbers.

<sup>17</sup> Gill, J. *Racecourses of Great Britain* (Barrie & Jenkins Ltd., London, 1975) p.175.

<sup>18</sup> See Chapter 3.

<sup>19</sup> *York Herald*, 24 November 1838, in lamenting the passing of the race meeting, reported that there were plans for 'a new town to be called South Stockton.'



his land at Tibbersley on the Durham bank, two miles from Stockton.<sup>20</sup> By 1841, at least, an admission charge of 3d. was being made to assist in the provision of prize money.<sup>21</sup> Racing ended after the August 1846 meeting, this time for nine years, as the land was sold because Jackson had died in the previous year.<sup>22</sup> In due course a group of local sportsmen formed a race committee, leased some land at Mandale Bottom, once again on the Yorkshire side of the Tees, and managed to attract forty horses to the ten races at their first meeting in September 1855. The Stockton Grandstand Committee was formed in 1859, and built a stand at a cost of £1,000,<sup>23</sup> which helped to consolidate the growing esteem in which the reborn meetings were held.<sup>24</sup> Huggins has provided a fine analysis of its success during the later nineteenth century, and the conflicting emotions and undercurrents in the town, including the role played by the railway both in bringing people to the meeting and taking others away from its moral decadence.<sup>25</sup> Suffice it to say that, after the Jubilee Meeting in 1905, to which the Jockey Club subscribed £300, the Stockton Race Fund Company was formed to put the meeting on a more businesslike footing.

Manchester races demonstrated perhaps more than any other meeting that a resourceful and energetic race committee could overcome most obstacles, as three times in 55 years the fixture was endangered by the termination of a lease or compulsory purchase. Anti-racing feeling on the part of a new owner was responsible for two closures, and a taste of what was to come was given in the mid-eighteenth century when Dr. John Byrom was able virtually singlehanded to prolong the

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<sup>20</sup> The usual three day meeting took place on 29-31 August 1839, with Mr. Orde's Beeswing winning the Gold Cup.

<sup>21</sup> Greaves, R. *Stockton Racecourse* (Reid Hamilton Publishers Ltd., London, 1953) p.13, quotes at length from the 1841 race bill in which the race committee described the difficulty of raising enough prize money to attract runners, so 'on this account each person going upon the course will be called on to contribute 3d. each day to the support of the meeting'.

<sup>22</sup> Huggins, M.J. 'Stockton Race Week 1855 - 1900', *Journal of Regional and Local Studies*, VI, 1986, p.48, in giving the date of cessation of racing at Tibbersley as 1841, perpetuates the error of Gill, *Racecourses*, pp.199 - 201.

<sup>23</sup> Land was leased from Viscount Boyne, and capital of £800 in £5 shares was raised, the remaining £300 being borrowed from the Darlington District Bank. The venture generated a surplus of £302-12-6d. in the first year alone, and the capital was repaid after 20 years as planned, all yearly surpluses being used to finance race meetings and improvements.

<sup>24</sup> *Middlesborough Weekly News & Cleveland Advertiser*, 8 September 1860, quoting *The Field*, 1 September 1860, which ranked Stockton after York and Doncaster among northern meetings.

<sup>25</sup> Huggins, 'Stockton Race Week' pp.49 - 55.

suspension of the race meeting on Kersal Moor from 1745 to 1760.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, the meeting restarted and prospered, particularly after 1772, when it was moved to Whitsuntide, a traditional Manchester holiday. The Liverpool & Manchester Railway enabled more spectators to reach the meeting, although it does not seem to have attracted special trains in the same measure as the races at Newton or Liverpool. Its popularity was unaffected by the shortlived aristocratic meeting at Heaton Park near Prestwich, about 4½ miles from Manchester.<sup>27</sup> But in 1846, the Reverend Clowes, part owner of the land at Kersal Moor, died, and his heir, Colonel Clowes, did not wish racing to continue there. The last meeting was held in June 1846, but the race committee was able to secure land not far away on the Castle Irwell estate of John Fitzgerald. But, in addition to a rent of £500 a year on a 20 year lease (as against £30 a year at Kersal Moor), the committee had to spend £2,000 in laying out the course and providing access roads, as well as a further £8,000 to build three stands. An admission charge to the course was made, and a commercial attitude was in evidence from the first meeting on 26 May 1847.<sup>28</sup> Racegoers could still use Pendleton station on the Manchester - Bolton line, while the city centre stations were only about two miles away.<sup>29</sup> The meetings were to flourish for nearly twenty years, and by 1861 Manchester was the only course, apart from Newmarket, to hold four meetings a year.

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<sup>26</sup> Ramsden, C. *Farewell, Manchester* (J.A. Allen & Co. Ltd., London, 1966) p. IX, quoting Richard Wright Proctor, author of *The Turf, the Stage and the Ring*. Byrom was the author of the hymn *Christians Awake!* and a pamphlet *A Serious Dissuasive from Horse-racing* (1733).

<sup>27</sup> Set up by the 2nd Earl of Wilton, it was intended to be a private event, but Heaton Park itself being open to the public, several thousand turned up for the first meeting on 27 September 1827. So the Earl decided that only people on horseback or in carriages should be admitted in future, and some bizarre 'carriages' were put together to circumvent this stipulation. Only gentleman riders were allowed to compete until 1835, when admission tickets were also abolished. The meeting was well supported by the local communities, the city of Manchester donating a £200 gold cup in 1831, and its closure in 1838, with an ostensible transfer of races to Liverpool, was not popular. There was no noticeable effect on the race card at Liverpool, apart from the appearance of the Heaton Park Stakes. In view of its short and relatively circumscribed existence, it is strange that Ford, J. *This Sporting Land* (New English Library, London, 1977), p.141, should use this course as an example to demonstrate his (erroneous) point about walking horses between meetings.

<sup>28</sup> *Illustrated London News*, 29 May 1848, described the course as 'one of the finest in England'. The admission charge was to defray a toll of 1d. made by John Fitzgerald for spectators crossing a bridge onto the ground, as Clowes had denied access over his land. *Manchester Courier*, 1 May 1847, 15 May 1847, 22 May 1847. Moorhouse, S. *The North Western Courses* (Field Sports Publications, London, no date) p.15, however, states categorically that 'In spite of all this outlay, however, the financial obligations of maintenance and prize money were met solely by charging those spectators occupying privileged positions in the stands, the "popular" crowd being admitted free of charge. Even at this early stage, Manchester set out to make racing the sport of the "little man"', so the matter of the toll may have been resolved. But for the New Barns Course there was a 3d. entrance charge. *Sporting Magazine*, July 1868, p.5.

<sup>29</sup> See Chapter 3 and Chapter 5, Text and Notes.

But within a few years John Fitzgerald was dead, and his son, who was violently opposed to horseracing, let the race committee know in no uncertain terms both by letter and printed tract that racing would cease at Castle Irwell once the lease expired, as he was neither prepared to extend the lease nor sell the land.<sup>30</sup> The last meeting was on 20 September 1867, but the Committee had been able to purchase 100 acres of land at New Barns in Trafford Park, 1½ miles to the south west of Castle Irwell, and the first meeting was held at the new course on 3 December 1867. Contemporary opinion was united in feeling that Manchester races now had a magnificent setting, good facilities and easy access, but 'the worst course ever invented by the wit of man'.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, the fixture prospered under strong and competent management. The first National Hunt meeting was held there in May 1872, and by September 1888 the Lancashire Plate was the most valuable race in England<sup>32</sup> at £11,000.

But the Manchester Ship Canal opened in 1894, and it soon became apparent that, if it were to realise its full potential and take away trade from Liverpool, extensive dock facilities must be provided at Salford. The racecourse, although retained in the original plans, was, even by 1893, felt to be in a prime site for development. The racecourse directors, with strong finances and plenty of time to negotiate, were able to get a good deal from the M.S.C., although the legal wrangle went to the House of Lords before a final judgement was obtained.<sup>33</sup> They were able to purchase 122 acres of the Castle Irwell estate from the executors of John Fitzgerald and expend £120,000 in providing excellent facilities. Once again, there was no delay in restarting meetings. The very last fixture at New Barns took place in January 1902, the inaugural National Hunt

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<sup>30</sup> The last of these tracts, dated 20 September 1867, and over thirty pages long, is summarised in Ramsden, *Farewell, Manchester*, pp. 16 - 18.

<sup>31</sup> *Black & White Magazine*, 23 September 1887, Pitt, C. *A Long Time Gone* (Portway Press, Halifax, 1996) p.378 and Ramsden, *Farewell, Manchester*, p.19 all quote adverse comments about the course. For rail access until the opening of the Racecourse station in 1898, stations at Cross Lane and Ordsall Lane on the original L. & M. line, and Seedley, opened on 1 May 1882, were relatively close, as was Old Trafford on the Manchester, South Junction & Altrincham Railway, opened in 1849.

<sup>32</sup> Johnston, F. (ed.) *British Racecourses* (F. Johnston's Sporting Publications, London, 1974) p.31. Gate money had been charged from the opening of New Barns, making it the first major enclosed course, eight years ahead of Sandown Park, and a limited company had been formed in the following year. In 1888, the Eclipse Stakes at Sandown Park was worth £10,000, but the Derby only £3,675, the St. Leger £4,350 and The Oaks a mere £2,950.

<sup>33</sup> Makepeace, C. *The Manchester Ship Canal - A Short History* (Hendon Publishing Co., Nelson, 1983) p.43. The company had agreed with the Racecourse Company to purchase the site, but no date had been fixed for this and, when the time came, the latter decided to offer the land to the Trafford Park Estate to get a better deal. The legal case was won by the M.S.C., but the Racecourse Company got £262,000.

meeting at Castle Irwell at Easter 1902, followed by the first flat race meeting in the traditional Whitsuntide slot.

Racing at Bogside, near Irvine in south west Scotland, had taken place intermittently since the seventeenth century with the support of the Earls of Eglinton, but did not figure in the *Racing Calendar* until 1808.<sup>34</sup> Although their support continued, the meeting declined and came to an end in 1830. The fixture was revived six years later as the Eglinton Park Meeting and described by the *Sporting Magazine* as the 'Goodwood of the North Countree'. 1839 was an important year, for, as well as a three day meeting, there were two four mile cross country races in April, which may well have marked the start of serious steeplechasing in Scotland.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, despite the relative remoteness of the area, the railway reached Irvine and Ayr in time for the Eglinton Tournament and Pageant at the end of August.<sup>36</sup> But, while this gave easy access to Glasgow, travel to the south, if not by coach, was by steamer from nearby Ardrossan to Fleetwood, whence from July 1840 there were through trains to London. Although well supported by local gentry and racehorse owners, the meetings ended in 1852, when the Earl of Eglinton, having been appointed Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, sold his horses and retired from the turf.<sup>37</sup> The races restarted in 1867, as the Eglinton Hunt Meeting with both flat racing and 'the premier steeplechase north of the border - the Scottish Grand National'.<sup>38</sup> There were no races under Jockey Club rules recorded in the *Racing Calendar* in the years 1878 to 1884, and the minimum prize money requirements may well have precipitated that. But racing continued from 1885 to 1965 with only minor disruption, despite its relatively unattractive location, and a more prestigious meeting at nearby Ayr. Its future became more secure when John Jackson, a Scottish solicitor and chairman of the Haydock Park Racecourse Company, bought the course and the nearby golfcourse from the Earl of Eglinton, formed a limited company, and made a number of improvements to the course and its amenities.

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<sup>34</sup> There were also the Irvine Marymass races held on the Town Moor each August for over 300 years. See Burnett, J. 'The Sites and Landscapes of Horseracing in Scotland before 1860', *The Sports Historian*, XVIII (1) 1998, pp.66 - 67.

<sup>35</sup> Pitt, C. *Long Time Gone*, p.327.

<sup>36</sup> See Chapter 5, Note 42, for details of the railway.

<sup>37</sup> For criticism of Eglinton's withdrawal from racing, see Chapter 8, Note 79.

<sup>38</sup> Fairfax Blakeborough, J. *Northern Turf History*, Vol. IV (Author, Whitby, 1973) p.206.

Racing on the Town Moor at Newcastle on Tyne dated back to 1721,<sup>39</sup> when the meeting lasted a whole week. The fixture attracted an immense following throughout the eighteenth century, and its attractions were enhanced by the granting of a King's Plate in 1763 and the construction of a grandstand in 1800. By 1840 the town had some 60,000 inhabitants and numerous cultural institutions, including the Theatre Royal capable of holding 1,350 people. The four day meeting at the end of June had many important prizes of which the most valuable was the Northumberland Plate, established in 1833, and known as the 'Pitmen's Derby'.<sup>40</sup>

Newcastle had always been well served by road and water transport, and main line railway communication started relatively early with the opening of the first section of the Newcastle & Carlisle Railway to passengers in March 1835. A dense industrial network quickly evolved, both superseding and complementing the many waggonways and rope-hauled inclines in use from the eighteenth century. The link to London was completed in June 1844 and Edinburgh could be reached by rail, apart from the crossing of the Tweed at Berwick, in March 1847.<sup>41</sup> Rail excursions were run from near and far to the Newcastle meetings, particularly on Northumberland Plate day. The races nearly came to a sudden end in August 1868 when the recently formed Newcastle Grand Stand Company Ltd. was in dispute with the freemen over the right to let booths on the Town Moor.<sup>42</sup> Although this was settled, it gradually became obvious that the old Town Moor course was not really in keeping with modern developments, and, although it survived the various Jockey Club edicts, even crowds

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<sup>39</sup> Charleton, R.J. *Newcastle Town* (W. Scott, London, 1885, reprinted F. Graham, Newcastle on Tyne, 1930), p.355. Until 1751 the meeting took place in the week before Whitsuntide, but was then moved to Midsummer week, and became the nearest thing to an annual holiday for most people in the area.

<sup>40</sup> Whyte, J.C. *History of the British Turf*, (Henry Colburn, London 1840) I, p.283. The Northumberland Plate, a two mile race for three year olds and one of the most testing of the flat racing season, was another relatively short single heat race introduced at the top level before the railway age.

<sup>41</sup> See Chapter 11, Note 98. The minutiae of railway development around Newcastle are covered in Cook, R.A. & Hoole, K. *North Eastern Railway Historical Maps* (2nd ed.) (Railway & Canal Historical Society, Mold, 1991).

<sup>42</sup> *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 26 August 1868. Report on the Special General Meeting of the Company, at which it was proposed that, if it could not resolve the dispute with the Herbage Committee - representing the freemen - over an offer of £300 for the privilege of 'letting the whole of the standage, tentage etc. on the Town Moor', the directors should be empowered 'to make enquiries with reference to the securing of a private course and holding thereon the future meetings'. Middlebrook, S. *Newcastle upon Tyne - Its Growth and Achievements* ( S.R. Publications, Wakefield, 1950) pp. 151 ff. discusses the provisions of the 1774 Act which vested ownership of the Town Moor in the Corporation, but safeguarded the rights of the freemen and others. This resulted from a dispute three years earlier over letting part of the moor.

of 100,000 on an old style 'open' course would not provide the means for survival, so the 1881 meeting was the last. But an estate of some 800 acres, far more than required for a racecourse, had been acquired by a consortium of businessmen, sportsmen and colliery owners at Gosforth Park, about six miles from Newcastle and 1½ miles from the nearest railway station.<sup>43</sup> The high level of capital outlay caused the enterprise to struggle after its first meeting on 10 April 1882,<sup>44</sup> even though it could attract upwards of 50,000 paying spectators on Northumberland Plate day, for what was the most popular northern race after the St. Leger.<sup>45</sup> But finally the new order was successful on what Richardson called 'without exception, the finest enclosed course in the kingdom'.<sup>46</sup>

Racing at Leicester took place for much of the nineteenth century on what became known as Victoria Park, having moved there in 1806 as a consequence of the enclosure of St. Mary's Fields, where the races had been held since 1742. Crump has presented a detailed and enlightening picture of the meeting as well as the political and social life surrounding it, which it is not proposed to reiterate here.<sup>47</sup> During the nineteenth century the race committee, which leased the course from the Corporation, contrived to develop a worthwhile programme, which 'united nobility people in a rare

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<sup>43</sup> See Chapter 5 for the special race facilities established at Killingworth.

<sup>44</sup> Welch, N. 'They're off!', *North Magazine*, 1972, pp.12 - 13. The mansion on the site became the centrepiece of the grandstand, and part was converted into the Gosforth Park Hotel, while the 50 acre lake could be used for skating in winter. In 1889, there were attempts to attract Whitsuntide crowds by balloon ascents. A tea garden was laid out by the tram terminus on the Great North Road, and in 1907 part of the Park was leased to the Northumberland Golf Club. After the First World War the company asked Newcastle Corporation to build a private tramway through the Park to attract racegoers and other visitors. This was opened in 1924. See Bett, W.H. and Gillham, J.C. (ed. Price, J.H.) *The Tramways of North East England* (Light Railway Transport League, London, no date) p.4.

<sup>45</sup> Charleton, *Newcastle Town*, p.356, lamenting the passing of the Town Moor meetings where friends and relations could have an annual 'get together' in holiday mood, described the Gosforth Park meeting as follows ... 'but with the gate money and the extra distance, their popular character is gone. They are race meetings pure and simple, prosaic and materialistic, and strictly devoted to business'.

But as Middlebrook, *Newcastle upon Tyne*, pp. 151 - 152, pointed out, the race meetings were immediately replaced on the Town Moor by an annual Temperance Meeting with foot races, football matches, 'assaults at arms', bicycle matches and other distractions - except alcohol - and this developed into the ongoing festival known as 'The Hoppings'. The annual 'hoppings', held for many years in Tyneside villages, were not such sober gatherings. The Blaydon Races, made famous by George Ridley's song - although they only appeared three times in the *Racing Calendar* - developed from such an event and the atmosphere of their long, but sporadic, history is well captured in Gale, J. *The Blaydon Races* (Oriel Press, Newcastle-on-Tyne, 1970).

<sup>46</sup> Richardson, C. *The English Turf* (Methuen, London, 1901) p.212.

<sup>47</sup> Crump, J. 'The "Great Carnival of the Year" - the Leicester Races in the Nineteenth Century', *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archeological and Historical Society*, LVII, 1982 - 3, pp. 58 - 74.

instance of common enjoyment' and provided a major feature of Leicester's annual holiday.<sup>48</sup> By the time of that comment, the railway had already linked the city to London and much of the country for some seven years.<sup>49</sup> But, although it played a major part in bringing racegoers and taking away those who did not wish to be involved,<sup>50</sup> or have their children corrupted by the races, the railway had no role to play in the demise of the traditional Leicester meeting. Nor did the Jockey Club stipulations on prize money cause major problems for, as Crump has shown, the race committee was successful in raising the 'added money' from £810 in 1872 to £2,110 by 1879.<sup>51</sup> The traditional races looked set to continue indefinitely, but the Leicestershire Club & County Racecourse Company Ltd. set up a modern enclosed course at a cost of £18,000 at Oadby, two miles from the town centre. It obtained a Jockey Club licence to stage meetings from July 1883, and the old meeting folded, as there was no real champion to fight for it. The last races were held in September 1883<sup>52</sup> and their place was taken by other holiday attractions in the town. The new meeting drew relatively few locals, as there was nothing to attract families and the entrance cost was a deterrent.<sup>53</sup>

The meeting at Hampton, some 14 miles from central London, on the Surrey bank of the Thames, had provided enjoyment for many thousands of Londoners since its appearance in the *Racing Calendar* in 1814, whether they were interested in racing or not, as there were many other attractions, and the course was easily accessible by road

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See also Fielding-Johnson, T. *Glimpses of Old Leicester* (2nd ed.) (Clarke & Satchell, Leicester, 1906) pp. 402 ff for personal reminiscences of the race meetings.

<sup>48</sup> *Leicester Journal*, 25 September 1847.

<sup>49</sup> The arrival of the main line railway in Leicester has been covered elsewhere, but there had been an earlier, purely local, line, the Leicester & Swannington Railway, opened on 18 July 1832, which became part of the Midland Railway on 27 July 1846. The former was joined to the other railways with the opening of links to form a line to Burton on Trent, and the M.R. opened a further line from Leicester to Hitchin on 8 May 1857. The L.N.W.R. opened its branch from Nuneaton to Hinckley on 1 January 1862, and completed this to a junction north of Wigston exactly two years later, access to Leicester being over M.R. metals. The G.N.R. opened a branch into Leicester on 2 October 1882 from the G.N. & L.N.W. Joint line, and the scene was completed by the M.S.L. main line to London, opened on 15 March 1899.

<sup>50</sup> Crump, *The Great Carnival of the Year*, pp. 63 ff.

<sup>51</sup> Crump, *The Great Carnival of the Year*, p.72. See also *Leicester Journal*, 5 October 1878, 30 October 1879 and Read, R. *Modern Leicester* (Simpkin, Marshall, Winks & Son, London, 1881) pp. 206 - 207.

<sup>52</sup> *Leicester Journal*, 14 September 1883 described the abortive resistance and the last rites.

<sup>53</sup> Crump, *The Great Carnival of the Year*, p.70. 'It was estimated that three quarters of the 30,000, who visited the first meeting in 1883, were from outside the county'. The nearest station to the new course was at Wigston, but the central stations were within walking distance.

or river.<sup>54</sup> The London & Southampton Railway main line station at Ditton Marsh brought racegoers to within three miles of the course for the June 1838 meeting, and subsequent developments improved the ease of access.<sup>55</sup> 'Appy' Ampton flourished in its modest way, adding National Hunt racing in 1864 and an additional flat race fixture two years later.<sup>56</sup> But although the race committee were able to increase prize money as necessary, the 'open' meeting provided little finance for upkeep and improvement of the course and its facilities. So the Jockey Club in due course considered it unfit to stage further racing, and refused to renew its licence after the 1887 season. But Sandown Park and Kempton Park had shown what could be achieved with a 'gate money' meeting, and it was felt worthwhile to build a new course on the Hampton site despite the closeness of the two recently established venues. So in 1889 the Hurst Park Club Syndicate Ltd. was set up and bought the raceground from its local owner. Despite considerable expenditure and the help of Sir John Astley, the venture originally lacked a suitable straight course, so in the absence of a Jockey Club licence it opened for National Hunt racing on 19 March 1890. The syndicate was, however, soon able to obtain sufficient land for a seven furlong straight course, and the first flat race meeting took place on 25 March 1891. Although good dates were not always available, Hurst Park flourished on Saturday and Bank Holiday meetings, when it was 'reckoned that quite 50,000 pay this shilling toll'.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Dickens, C. *Nicholas Nickleby* (Odhams Press Ltd., London, no date) p.602 revelled in the colourful spectacle, but another unnamed contemporary quoted in Pitt, *Long Time Gone*, p. 340, maintained that, as at Epsom, and unlike Doncaster, the racing is of secondary interest for the majority 'of the many thousands who frequent Molesey Hurst (the actual location of the racecourse and the basis for the name of the replacement course, Hurst Park), comparatively few care a fig which horse wins. They are out for the day, because it is the thing to do ...'

<sup>55</sup> A short branch to Hampton Court from a junction between Kingston (later Surbiton) and Esher was opened on 1 February 1849. *The Times* of 13 February 1849 stated that some trains were horsedrawn. The Shepperton branch, opened in 1864 and also described in Chapter 5, had a station at Hampton, but this was on the opposite side of the Thames to the racecourse. The station at Hampton Court was enlarged in 1899 to provide additional accommodation for racegoers and visitors to the Palace. At one time the construction of a branch line to the racecourse had been considered, but was not felt to be viable because of the high cost of property demolition, so in 1908 extra sidings were provided to hold race trains. A six lever intermediate block post was installed in the staff room at Thames Ditton to facilitate a five minute interval service on race days. Jackson, A.A. *The Railway in Surrey* (Atlantic Transport Publishers, Penryn, 1999) p.180. Jackson, A.A. *London's Local Railways* (David & Charles, Newton Abbot, 1978) p.98.

<sup>56</sup> *Surrey Comet*, 19 September 1868. It may be that the South Western Stakes at this autumn meeting was sponsored by the L.S.W.R., but this has not been verified and has therefore been excluded from the figures in Chapter 6.

<sup>57</sup> Richardson, C. 'Racing' in *Victoria County History - Surrey II* (Archibald Constable, London, 1905) p.511. 1/- was then the standard charge to most courses, but Sandown Park always charged 2/6d.



The old racecourse on the present-day Forest Recreation Ground in Nottingham was opened at the end of the seventeenth century, and was to serve the city well for almost 200 years. On 1 August 1777 a lease was granted to some 'Lords and Gentleman' headed by Lord Edward Bentinck, but this contained a clause stating that in the event of a Town Enclosure Act, the ground would revert to the Corporation. This is exactly what happened in 1845, when the Corporation had to appoint a committee to administer the racecourse and grandstand.<sup>58</sup> The railway had reached Nottingham in June 1839 and it was linked to London just over a year later. Lines to Lincoln and Grantham were opened in 1846 and 1850 but, although the city was soon served by two major railway companies, each had its own station in the city and, when, as mentioned in Chapter 5, the Corporation had put forward a proposal for a central station in 1881, this had evoked no positive response from the companies concerned.<sup>59</sup> The racecourse hosted its first National Hunt meeting on 26 February 1867, survived a number of calls for and debates on its closure and, with W.I. Ford as clerk of the course, led a relatively stable and successful existence. But even within the Corporation there was pressure to discontinue the races and, after a series of abortive attempts, the decision was taken on 5 May 1890 for the Corporation to withdraw from its involvement with the race meetings.<sup>60</sup> The last meeting was held on 30 September 1890, and the Committee was able to settle all outstanding debts and declare a surplus of £950 to be distributed among sixteen charities in the city. A year later, the newly promoted Nottingham and Colwick Park Racecourse & Sports Company requested applications for up to £35,000 of shares, as it intended to lease from the Corporation the 292 acre Colwick Park estate, 1½ miles east of the city centre.<sup>61</sup> The company was granted a licence to hold six days' flat racing by the Jockey Club, with the possibility of racing under National Hunt rules. No expense was spared to ensure a worthy setting

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<sup>58</sup> Records of the Borough of Nottingham, IX, 1836 - 1900, 5 August 1845, 19 August 1845, 19 November 1845.

<sup>59</sup> See Chapter 5, Notes 55 and 56.

<sup>60</sup> Davies, G. *A Touch of Colwick* (Pride of Place Publishing, Chorley, 1994) pp. 51 ff. indicates that the decision was really taken on 2 February 1890, when a drinks licence was refused to the race committee. The committee had been appointed in November 1889 as a first step in the Corporation divesting itself of responsibility for the races. The series of debates and votes on the closure of the racecourse can be followed in Records of the Borough of Nottingham, IX, 1836 - 1900, from about 1880 onwards.

<sup>61</sup> *Nottingham Evening Post*, 26 September 1891.

for the meetings and provide good road and rail access. The first meeting was held on 19 August 1892,<sup>62</sup> and the venture proved very successful.

Racing on the Roodee between the city walls and the River Dee at Chester dates back to the early sixteenth century,<sup>63</sup> making it the oldest location in the country at which racing still takes place. The meetings attracted large crowds, who could get a good view from the city walls, and still can. The Chester Tradesman's Cup, inaugurated in 1824, was the major betting event after the Derby until overtaken by the Grand National. The railway reached Chester in 1840, when lines from Birkenhead and Crewe were opened within a few days of each other.<sup>64</sup> Railways brought even bigger crowds to Chester, but their progress was tarnished by a three train crash in Sutton Tunnel after the meeting on 30 April 1851.<sup>65</sup> The increases in visitors also led to more drunkenness and disturbances, and a strenuous and prolonged campaign against the continuation of the races reached a climax in the 1880s. In February 1888, with the Race Course Company's lease of only £250 a year due to expire in four years' time, the City Council set up a Race Committee to examine the way forward and whether any one body should control the racing.<sup>66</sup> This foresight gave time for a full discussion of the options, and advice was sought from Weatherbys, who recommended against a 'gate money' meeting, but the consensus of those courses which had made the change was overwhelmingly in favour. The last 'open' meeting took place in May 1892, the new Chester Race Company was set up in the following November with capital of £132,000 and, despite the protests of the abolitionists,<sup>67</sup> the first meeting on the 'enclosed' Roodee was held on 9 May 1893. The new venture proved very successful for, as Richardson pointed out, with the demise of the Welsh courses and a dozen

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<sup>62</sup> *Nottingham Evening Post*, 11 August 1892, *Nottingham Daily Guardian*, 22 August 1892 and 'Report of the Directors of the Nottingham and Colwick Park Race Course & Sports Company', 3 December 1892.

<sup>63</sup> The actual date is still in dispute amongst historians, but is not significant for this study.

<sup>64</sup> Railway development up to 1850 has been covered elsewhere. The main railways in the Chester area were augmented by the opening of the C.L.C. branch from Mouldsworth to a separate station at Northgate on 1 May 1875, which was also used by the M.S.L. branch from Dee Bridge via a connection to the C.L.C. at Liverpool Road, opened on 31 March 1890.

<sup>65</sup> *Illustrated London News*, 3 May 1851. *Chester Chronicle*, 10 May, 17 May 1851. See also Chester Record Office X385. Hawkin, W.R. *The Sutton Tunnel Accident on the B.L.C.J.R.* (Typescript, 1991) for more details. Three trains carrying 1,600 passengers crashed on Chester Cup Day, and there were eight dead and more than 60 injured.

<sup>66</sup> Bevan, R.M. *The Roodee - 450 Years of Racing in Chester* (Chester County Publishing, Northwich, 1989) Chapters VII to IX cover these momentous times in detail.

<sup>67</sup> Bevan, *Roodee*, pp. 78 - 79.

others within sixty miles, Chester was now the only surviving flat race meeting in the area.<sup>68</sup>

Racing at Newton, between St. Helens and Warrington, dated back at least to 1678,<sup>69</sup> and was well documented from the mid-eighteenth century onwards. Despite its popularity with the locals and the aristocracy,<sup>70</sup> and the involvement of the course owners - the Legh family - in the accompanying cockfights, the meeting vanished from the *Racing Calendar* from 1817 to 1824. A grandstand was built about 1825, and the course was provided with its own private station seven years later. By 1840, the meeting was attracting plenty of subscribers, including Scottish owners.<sup>71</sup> Newton had all the virtues and vices of the traditional courses,<sup>72</sup> with a 'Race Sunday' like Epsom, and local factories and schools often closed on at least one of the race days.<sup>73</sup> By the mid 1890s the Newton course on Golborne Heath, which was rather cramped by modern standards, was also suffering from the effects of the 'gate money' courses as well as an upsurge of disturbances.<sup>74</sup> So the Haydock Park Race Course Company Ltd. was formed under the direction of John Davies, chairman of the Manchester Racecourse Company, and obtained a lease on 127 acres of parkland at Haydock, about three miles from Newton course.<sup>75</sup> It had been hoped to open the new course in 1898,<sup>76</sup> but the facilities were not ready, so Newton staged two additional meetings, the last in July 1898. Racing at Haydock Park began with a National Hunt fixture on

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<sup>68</sup> Richardson, *English Turf*, p.156.

<sup>69</sup> Newton le Willows Races - History of the Races and other Sports (St. Helens Library A29.8 93280. Photocopy of MS of unknown origin) p.134 quotes an entry from the Newton Court Leet Records, which specifically covered the charges for selling beer at the fair and its associated horse race.

<sup>70</sup> *Manchester Mercury & Harraps General Advertiser*, 18 June 1805.

<sup>71</sup> Haydock Park Racecourse (MS A29.8 HAY L75107 in St. Helens Central Library) p.10.

<sup>72</sup> Rylance, W.M. *The Light of Day - Tales of Old Newton Races* (J. Walker & Co. Ltd., Warrington, 1935) pp.5ff. highlights the local colour and gives an insight into the tricks of the many charlatans and sideshows at the races. 'There was more life to the square yard at the Old Newton Races than there was to the square mile at Chester' (p.6). On 'Race Sunday', the locals came to the raceground to enjoy the fair and sideshows, even though there was no racing, so they could have the added pleasure of walking over the racecourse itself.

<sup>73</sup> Wisewell, E.A.A. *Items of News about Haydock to 1900* (Local History Library, St. Helens, no date) p.10 quotes a newspaper report about clergymen and Sunday School teachers taking their charges to the races on 12 June 1875, so that they could enjoy the fresh air and the spectacle.

<sup>74</sup> Thompson, P. (ed.) *On the Turf - The Origins of Horseracing in the North West* (Quarry Publications, Bebington, 1991) p.24. Drunkenness and pickpocketing led the magistrates to refuse alcoholic licences for 1885. But Thompson also states (incorrectly) that the meetings ended in 1895, because of the 'increasing difficulty of transporting horses and people to the meeting...'

<sup>75</sup> *Haydock Park Souvenir Magazine 1991* (Kingfisher Publishing, Newbury, 1991) p.8. (Ref.A29.8(P) 94571 in St. Helens Central Library)

<sup>76</sup> *Warrington Guardian*, 17 July 1897.

10 February 1899, and the first meetings under Jockey Club rules were held in May and August.

Racing at Carlisle, on the English - Scottish border, is of considerable antiquity with probably the oldest extant racing prize, the silver bell donated by Lady Dacre in 1599.<sup>77</sup> The races at first took place on the Kingmoor, north of the River Eden, but by the early eighteenth century these meetings had been largely eclipsed by those on The Swifts on the other side of the river.<sup>78</sup> The latter were well supported by the locals - nobles and commoners alike - and were granted a 100 gn. King's Plate in 1763, an important Gold Cup race being inaugurated in 1815. With the completion of the Newcastle & Carlisle Railway the race committee moved the 1839 meeting from October to July in the hope that placing it after the Newcastle fixture in late June, would increase support.<sup>79</sup> Carlisle quickly became an important railway centre with no less than seven companies building lines or having running powers into the city.<sup>80</sup> With the establishment of the Cumberland Plate in 1842 and the continuing attraction of wrestling, Carlisle quickly became the principal - and gradually the only - meeting in the area as others closed. But it suffered some decline in the 1860s, when the attacks of the anti-racing lobby headed by Dean Close were at their height.<sup>81</sup> Although the fixture survived both these and the increases in minimum prize money demanded by the Jockey Club, this led to the enclosure of the course by 1884,<sup>82</sup> but the continuing success of the meeting saw the addition of a two day spring fixture in the 1890s.<sup>83</sup> In

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<sup>77</sup> Wilson, J. 'Horseracing' in *Victoria County History - Cumberland II* (Archibald Constable, London, 1905) pp. 440 - 441. Similar prizes were provided elsewhere, notably at Lanark and Paisley - added money for the latter being provided from time to time by railway companies.

<sup>78</sup> Racing continued on the Kingmoor well into the nineteenth century, even though the lease of the ground by the Corporation had led to the virtual enclosure of the racecourse. In the 1860s the freemen tore down the fences and held their own meeting. See Ferguson, R.S. & Nanson, W. (eds.) *Some Municipal Records of the City of Carlisle* (C. Thurman & Sons, Carlisle, 1888) pp. 94, 100, 118, 142.

<sup>79</sup> Hall, R.A. 'Horse Racing in Cumbria: The Development and Survival of Racing in Carlisle 1580 - 1900' (Undergraduate Dissertation, University of Lancaster, 1992) p.11.

<sup>80</sup> The opening of the principal lines to Carlisle has been covered in Chapter 3, or in discussing other racecourses in the area.

<sup>81</sup> *Carlisle Journal*, 10 June 1864. The Reverend Francis Close had previously been Vicar of Cheltenham, and his influence there had been among the reasons for the lapse of flat racing for some years after 1855. He was a leading member of the Lord's Day Observance Society founded in February 1831, and had been involved in many battles with the railway companies over the running of Sunday trains.

<sup>82</sup> Admission to the course was originally 6d., but rose to 1/- in line with the generally accepted admission charge to enclosed meetings. *Carlisle Journal*, 10 July 1885, noted the disappearance of the usual carnival atmosphere prevalent at 'open' meetings. This was also evident at the enclosed courses at Leicester and Newcastle.

<sup>83</sup> *Carlisle Journal*, 24 April 1903.

1904, however, after some disagreements with the race committee, the Duke of Devonshire finally refused to renew the lease on The Swifts for further racing<sup>84</sup>. But, as this outcome had been obvious for some time, the committee, having formed a company for the purpose, had been able to purchase some farmland at Blackwell, two miles south of the city, on which a new racecourse was constructed.<sup>85</sup> Although racing was able to continue in 1904 without a break, the move to Blackhall was not popular, and the new course experienced a serious lack of support. By 1906, the company was in financial difficulty and had decided to sell the course and the farm. The meeting was saved by Sir Loftus Bates and Charles Henderson (owner of the National Hunt Course at Hexham), who formed the Carlisle (New) Racecourse Company Ltd. They raised fresh capital, remodelled the course, improved road access and 'the railway company was induced to be more helpful'.<sup>86</sup> The meeting struggled until 1914, but is still with us today.

Racing at Ayr in south west Scotland had taken place since at least 1698<sup>87</sup> on a course between the mouth of the Doon and the southern outskirts of the town. It was a popular meeting and, after the founding of the Caledonian Hunt Club, hosted its prestigious Western Meeting on a regular basis. The railway had reached Ayr in August 1839<sup>88</sup>, and, despite the deficiencies of the old course, which had very tight turns and a straight run in of only a quarter mile, it became the only Scottish fixture regularly patronised by leading English jockeys. It continued to be popular with racegoers and owners alike, and even Richardson felt that it alone of the Scottish courses had something to offer to the English racing fraternity.<sup>89</sup> Nevertheless a new

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<sup>84</sup> Neither Hale, 'Horseracing in Cumbria', p.11, nor Fairfax Blakeborough, J. 'Fifty Years of Racing at Blackhall' *Cumberland Evening News*, 29 June 1954 (Carlisle Central Library 1 BC 798.4 7842) p.1 is specific about the nature of the dispute with the Duke of Devonshire. Discussions with local historian, Denis Perriam, in September 1999 failed to produce any further information.

<sup>85</sup> The property purchased was Blackhall Farm, from which the course takes its name but, as it is in the village of Blackwell, the latter name is also used. This can cause confusion.

The nearest station to the new course was at Cummersdale, opened by the Maryport & Carlisle Railway in October 1858, about a mile away by road, but much nearer across the fields. *Carlisle Journal*, 10 January 1902 hints at a possible new station there, but this was not built.

<sup>86</sup> Fairfax Blakeborough, '50 Years of Racing at Blackhall', p.1. Bird, J. 'Cumberland Evening News Racegoers' Guide' in *Cumberland Evening News*, 1 July 1964 (Carlisle Central Library 1 BC 798.4 10072) was more specific: 'the L.N.W.R., on being approached, agreed to co-operate in the matter of race trains'. Even 10,551 through the 1/- turnstiles on the first day and 6,092 on the second would only raise £832-3/-, against a minimum £600 for prize money alone.

<sup>87</sup> Rickman, J. *Horse Racing* (Peter Garnett Ltd., London, 1952) p. 14.

<sup>88</sup> See Chapter 6, Text and Note 42.

<sup>89</sup> Richardson, *English Turf*, p.216. Even Scottish owners like Lord Rosebery, whose horses were trained in England, at Newmarket or elsewhere, thought it worthwhile to send runners to Ayr.

course was set up on about 150 acres of the Craigie Estate, within five minutes' walk of Ayr station, and the first meeting was held on 18 September 1907.<sup>90</sup>

## 2. COURSES WHICH EVOLVED OR MODERNISED GRADUALLY

Seventeen courses fall into this category and the juxtaposition of major meetings like Ascot and Epsom with 'run of the mill' fixtures such as Bath, Beverley and Yarmouth shows quite striking similarities in their development and problems. In view of the difficulty of deriving a reliable chronology for the start of the more ancient meetings, this section will be covered in geographical areas. This approach can be also quite revealing, but the key focus is their development during the railway age and whether the railway was an overriding factor in their problems or success.

### London and the South East

Three of the five courses to be discussed under this heading - Lewes, Brighton and Goodwood - fit well together as their fixtures formed the 'Sussex Fortnight', a high point of the social round in late July and early August. The first two courses were only eight miles apart and of these, Lewes was by far the older as its meetings predate their first appearance in Cheney in 1727. There were regular two or three day meetings at Lewes throughout the eighteenth century, while those at Brighton only started in 1783, as the then Brighthelmstone began to develop as a sea bathing resort and came to the attention of the Prince Regent. The Lewes meetings began to decline during the Regency and the reign of George IV and, by 1840, were in serious trouble.<sup>91</sup> The railway from London reached Brighton in September 1841, but Lewes was not linked to the rail network until June 1846.<sup>92</sup> The East Sussex Hunt, however, was by then holding its fixtures at Lewes, and certainly by 1855, the regular meeting had moved back to two days. A spring meeting was added in 1864, and later, despite the Jockey Club minimum prize money requirements, there were three fixtures a year. The racecourse, which was high on the downs one mile west of the town, with a steep

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<sup>90</sup> The land on which the course was laid out was owned by R.A. Oswald and J.A. Campbell. Admission to the course was free at first, the grandstand could hold 7,000 and there were soon four fixtures a year.

<sup>91</sup> Bryden, H.A. & Cuming, E.D. 'Racing' in *Victoria County History - Sussex II* (Archibald Constable, London, 1907) p. 455.

<sup>92</sup> The opening of the early railways from London to Brighton and Lewes has already been covered. Suffice it to say that, as Brighton was linked to most towns along the Kent and Sussex coast by the late 1840s, and that by 1882 Lewes was an important railway centre at the hub of six routes.

climb and no public access road, continued to flourish as an 'open' meeting. Even in 1906, it could still support its three fixtures and provide over £3,000 prize money for the Lewes Stakes alone, the race being worth £2,245 to the winner. Meanwhile Brighton, although still fashionable, had only two meetings, and really owed its survival, at least in part, to the L.B.S.C.R., which had given significant financial support over the years, as well as transporting thousands of racegoers.<sup>93</sup> Richardson took the view that 'considering the course is absolutely the worst in the Kingdom it is wonderful that any of the popularity is left', particularly as it was also 1½ miles from the town and 384 ft. above sea level, while Brighton itself was 'a capital place to live out of during the race week'.<sup>94</sup>

Goodwood, which first appeared in the *Racing Calendar* for April 1802, although there had been a meeting in the previous year, owed its survival to three men, the fifth and seventh Dukes of Richmond and Lord George Bentinck. But the third Duke established the meeting, when those at nearby Petworth had finished,<sup>95</sup> and the fourth instituted the Goodwood Cup in 1812, moving the fixture date to July two years later.<sup>96</sup> Although the races, despite their relative inaccessibility, had always attracted fashionable support from among the sporting fraternity, the fifth Duke, once he succeeded to the title, 'turned the Goodwood meeting into a social occasion of such splendour and appeal that nobody who was anybody, but nobody, could miss it and be sure that it did not matter'.<sup>97</sup> Richmond brought John Kent, Senior, over from Newmarket as early as 1823, but it was a number of years later that his long and not always harmonious association with Bentinck focused on the improvement of the

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<sup>93</sup> Gilbert, E.W. *Brighton - Old Ocean's Bauble* (Methuen & Co., 1954) p.194. Brighton had lost the support of royalty and aristocracy by the middle of the nineteenth century, the Queen's Prize being withdrawn in 1849. The meeting was near collapse, but a new race committee was formed and a new grandstand erected in 1851, to which the L.B.S.C.R. made a donation. The company's longstanding financial support of Brighton races has been covered in Chapter 6.

<sup>94</sup> Richardson, *English Turf*, pp.157 ff. On the other hand he considered that Lewes 'was just about as prosperous as any south of England fixture'. It is interesting to see such views expressed by the normally snobbish Richardson, as both courses had problems of accessibility from their towns and were frequented by roughs, pickpockets and razor gangs, although he stressed only the problems at Brighton. Still, with day return tickets to Brighton at 3/-, he probably had a point. Nevertheless, for those prepared to change trains at Brighton, the short branch to Kemp Town, opened for public services on 2 August 1869, had reduced both the distance and climb to the racecourse. *Brighton Examiner*, 3 August 1869. The formal opening did not take place until 6 August, but the L.B.S.C.R. had wanted to maximise revenue for the three day meeting, which started on 3 August 1869. See also Tolson, J.M. 'The Kemp Town Branch', *Railway World*, XXXI, 1970, pp.346 ff.

<sup>95</sup> Hunn, D. *Goodwood* (Davis Poynter, London, 1975) pp. 73 ff.

<sup>96</sup> Hunn, *Goodwood*, p.80.

<sup>97</sup> Hunn, *Goodwood*, pp.98 ff.

Goodwood course, its facilities and the way in which the sport was conducted there. A grandstand capable of holding 3,000 was constructed and the involvement of Bentinck also brought substantial increases in the value of the stakes.<sup>98</sup> Although until 1846, when the L.B.S.C.R. reached Chichester, some four miles from Goodwood, the nearest railheads had been at Fareham and Shoreham, over 20 miles from the course, this had neither deterred the racegoers nor the railways from offering inducements - the L.S.W.R. providing free transport of horses and carriages to and from Fareham. Whatever the problems, it was a great improvement over making the whole journey from London by road.<sup>99</sup> Greater accessibility helped the meeting keep going after Bentinck retired from the Turf in 1846, and the Duke closed his stables and sold his horses in 1854. The sixth Duke, who inherited the title in 1860, was not so interested in racing, but his public spiritedness and generosity kept the fixture going until the advent of the seventh Duke. He revitalised the meeting, providing a new stand in 1904, and also recognising the need to provide accommodation and even repair facilities for that new mode of transport - the motor car.<sup>100</sup>

Racing on Ascot Heath commenced in August 1711 at the express wish of Queen Anne, but only became a major event under the patronage of the Duke of Cumberland. After his death, it was switched to June to fit in with other entertainments in the area, and in Regency days the pattern for the four days' racing evolved, although the Ascot Gold Cup was not established until 1807.<sup>101</sup> The future of racing at Ascot was safeguarded in the 1813 Enclosure Act, when the race ground was assigned to the Crown. In the 1820s the first permanent stand was erected, and the first royal procession took place in 1825. Attendance at Ascot was normally for the full duration of the meeting, as its distance from the capital made a day trip difficult except for a few hardy horsemen. The railway, which edged its way towards the course between 1838

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<sup>98</sup> Bryden & Cuming, 'Racing' in *VCH - Sussex II*, p. 458. The stakes rose from £4,275 in 1832 to £10,295 in 1839, £18,270 in 1841, £23,949 in 1842 and peaked at £24,109 in 1846, but after the retirement of Bentinck from the Turf and his death in 1848, their value had dropped back to £13,215 by 1851. Hunn, *Goodwood*, p.134 presents a similar trend, but his figures are given to the nearest thousand pounds.

<sup>99</sup> Hunn, *Goodwood*, pp.111 ff. and discussion in Chapters 4 & 5. Nevertheless, Cook, T.A. *A History of the English Turf* (6 vols.) (H. Virtue & Co. Ltd., London, 1901) p.624 commented that 'the railway journey is long and the course is a long drive from the station'. See also Jordan, S. *The Bognor Branch Line* (Oakwood Press, Oxford, 1989) pp. 7 ff. for the development of Bognor for Goodwood racegoers, both before and during the early days of the railways.

<sup>100</sup> Hunn, *Goodwood*, pp.150 ff.

<sup>101</sup> There had been an earlier Gold Cup race in 1772, but this was a walkover and did not survive.



and 1856, gave the opportunity for large numbers to attend the meeting, although for the wealthy the country house party style underwent little change.<sup>102</sup> But, even while the first stretches of railway were under construction, Ascot was already being reprofiled in the face of much criticism. In June 1836 *The Times* carried a piece entitled 'Suggestions for Reconstructing Ascot', and many of these were quickly addressed.<sup>103</sup> A key element was the building of the grandstand in 1839, paid for by subscriptions, which once repaid left all receipts to be devoted to the race fund, as were any surpluses during the repayment period.<sup>104</sup> The next stage was the start of the Royal Enclosure, from which all outsiders were barred in 1863, and new races and stands were established to help maintain the meeting's pre-eminence. Separation and sophistication, including a greater emphasis on descriptions of ladies' fashions in press reports, became the hallmarks of the event, with the increasing numbers of middle and working class racegoers almost an irrelevance. The income from the grandstand catered for an improved level of prize money, but even this did not prevent the Jockey Club from belabouring the Grandstand Trustees, an ongoing feud which, just before the First World War, resulted in court action.<sup>105</sup>

Although both Henry VIII and the Stuart monarchs had indulged in horseracing near Epsom, it was as a spa that the Surrey town first achieved fame. But by the early eighteenth century, when the horse races held there were felt worthy of repeated mention, it was already in decline as a watering place.<sup>106</sup> So it was with the foundation of The Oaks (1779) and The Derby (1780) that Epsom achieved lasting fame.<sup>107</sup> Moreover, its closeness to London and a well populated south east attracted large

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<sup>102</sup> See Chapter 4.

<sup>103</sup> *The Times*, 4 June 1836, 4 July 1836, 25 August 1836. The complaints had included the condition of the approach roads, the stands, the course itself, the presence of 'gambling hells', beggars, planning of the race programme, prize money levels, delays of up to two hours in starting races and the mismanagement of homegoing crowds - a quite comprehensive list !!!

<sup>104</sup> The grandstand, which held over 2,000 spectators, cost £8,100, paid for by subscription shares of £100. These were paid back at £5 per annum over 20 years and, as no dividends were paid, surpluses were generated on an ongoing basis from its opening on 28 May 1839.

<sup>105</sup> Laird, *Royal Ascot*, pp.175 ff.

<sup>106</sup> Hembry, P. *The English Spa 1560 - 1815* (Athlone Press, London, 1990) pp. 104 - 110.

<sup>107</sup> Wynn Jones, M. *The Derby - A Celebration of the World's Most Famous Horse Race* (Croom Helm, London, 1979) pp. 47 - 48, quoting *Bell's Life in London*, 1823. 'By the one o'clock race there must have been eighty thousand people assembled on the Downs - what they went for is best known to themselves, but certainly not more than one twentieth saw the race'. By the beginning of the twentieth century the crowds may have been much bigger, Richardson, *English Turf*, p.88, somewhat optimistically mentioning a million, but those who watched the Derby were still outweighed by those who did not, while, whatever the total numbers, the railways only brought a fraction of the crowd.

crowds, even if they saw little of the racing, and the Sunday before the May meeting became an event in itself. The arrival of the various railways and their effects have already been discussed, so this section will concentrate on the operation and problems of the meeting which, despite its prestige, was just as exposed to the whims of the landowners and lack of basic financial stability as a humble country meeting, even if the sums involved were much larger. John Briscoe, the Lord of the Manor, not only allowed the race to take place on his land, but for many years also made a generous donation to the race fund. Problems had really started with the formation of the Epsom Grand Stand Association (E.G.S.A.), and the full opening of the stand in May 1830.<sup>108</sup> Henry Dorling, as clerk of the course, later took a lease on the grandstand, introduced the Great Metropolitan Handicap (1846) and the City & Suburban Handicap (1851) as the principal attractions of the spring meeting, as well as revamping the Derby Course in 1847.<sup>109</sup> But by the 1860s there were concerns for the continuation of racing at Epsom, because of disagreements with both John Briscoe and Edward Studd, who had become Lord of the Manor of Weston. Happily these were resolved, but financial problems remained, and even in the 1880s the income to the race fund was only £10,000 from the E.G.S.A., £300 from John Briscoe, £200 every second year for the Queen's Plate, and £30 each from the L.B.S.C. and L.S.W. Railways.<sup>110</sup> The E.G.S.A. ploughed little, if any, money back into the course and came under fire from the Jockey Club, because of the insecurity of the racecourse tenure. But in 1888 Dorling and the E.G.S.A. succeeded in purchasing the Walton Estate to safeguard at least some part of the meeting.<sup>111</sup> Meanwhile, the prize money

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<sup>108</sup> The machinations went on for a number of years and have been well covered elsewhere, notably in Hunn, D. *Epsom Racecourse - Its Story and its People* (Davis Poynter Ltd., London 1973) pp. 54 ff. The enterprise was not profitable for several years, as even the more affluent racegoers were not prepared to pay 5/- unless they could see both the saddling enclosure and the races starting on time. This was only achieved when Henry Dorling became clerk of the course and the E.G.S.A. had to pay for it. Whyte, *British Turf*, I, pp.318 - 319 stated that the stand could hold 5,000 with a further 2,500 on the roof. By 1840 there was also an admission charge of 1/- to the paddock to 'stare at the nobility'.

<sup>109</sup> These two races were popular with London publicans, who opened subscription lists in their hostelries. But the Gaming Act of 1854 made it illegal for publicans to handle bets, so this ceased, although the races continued. The reforms and improvements finally made the grandstand profitable but, when the E.G.S.A. wanted to double the cost of his lease, Dorling merely became its manager, but was in no way subservient to the E.G.S.A.

<sup>110</sup> Hunn, *Epsom*, p.108. Apart from this ongoing donation and the sponsoring of individual races, discussed in Chapter 6, the L.B.S.C.R. supported the autumn meeting when it was reinstated in 1886, but this lapsed after three years. See Richardson, *English Turf*, p.115. Hunn, *Epsom*, pp.111 - 112.

<sup>111</sup> Hunn, *Epsom*, p.112. This cost £20,000 for the 205 acres, but saved £1,000 a year in rent.

for the Derby had been declining from an average of £5,600 in the 1860s to £5,500 in the 1870s and £4,800 in the 1880s, with runners down to single figures. So the Jockey Club, conscious of the £10,000 races at some courses, got the E.G.S.A. in 1890 to guarantee a minimum of £5,000 for the Derby.<sup>112</sup> Even so, by 1900 the Derby was worth only £5,410, The Oaks £4,550 and other races less than £1,000 each. But in 1902, the E.G.S.A. obtained a 106 year lease of all the Epsom Manor land used by them so, although there were certain obligations laid on them, they now had control of Epsom Downs. Nevertheless, it took until 1925 to acquire the freehold and, despite gradual improvements to stands and the provision of additional enclosures, racing at Epsom remained a free show for the masses until well after the Second World War.

### South West England

By 1914, only two of the 25 courses active in the south west in 1869 were still in business. The Bath fixture survived despite a decline in its fortunes and a somewhat difficult access, as it was 790 ft. above sea level and 2½ miles from the city, because it remained true to itself as a 'country meeting' and provided an enjoyable level of sport for all types of patrons. Although Bath races had started in 1728, they did not move to Lansdowne until 1811,<sup>113</sup> by which time the social life of the fashionable spa was highly structured, with horseracing as an integral part of the entertainments offered during the season.<sup>114</sup> Whyte, writing in 1840, the year in which the G.W.R. reached Bath, recorded two meetings a year and excellent amenities in both town and course.<sup>115</sup> Two years later there was only one meeting, but top jockeys still thought it worth a visit, although its patronage became more localised. When, in 1901 Richardson wrote somewhat disparagingly of its facilities and its relative inaccessibility, it was still an

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<sup>112</sup> Wynn Jones, *Epsom*, p.121. Acworth, writing about this time and quoted by Jackson, *London's Local Railways*, p.133. 'The Derby is not what it was. Year by year its importance, or at least its relative importance, diminishes'.

<sup>113</sup> Pitt, *Long Time Gone*, p.459.

<sup>114</sup> Hembry, *English Spa*, pp.132 - 158 covers social life in Bath during the eighteenth century, while pp. 311 - 312 deal with later problems caused by competition at home and abroad.

<sup>115</sup> Whyte, *British Turf*, I, pp.294 - 295. The construction of the G.W. main line between Paddington and Bristol has already been discussed. The Midland Railway branch from Bristol to Bath, opened on 4 August 1869, to some degree duplicated existing lines of communication, but a new catchment area was opened up by the Somerset & Dorset Railway, which reached the city from Evercreech Junction on 20 July 1874. The name was changed to the Somerset & Dorset Joint Railway when the company was leased to the Midland and L.S.W. Railways for 999 years from 1 November 1875.

'open' meeting and carrying on in its unpretentious way, despite fixture clashes with more 'upmarket' meetings such as Doncaster and York.<sup>116</sup>

Salisbury, where the course is some three miles south west of the town, also survived as a traditional 'open' meeting. Racing was first recorded in 1585<sup>117</sup> and took place at various locations over the years. The meetings were supported from the early days by the Corporation, and this was still apparent in the nineteenth century. Although local support was important for its survival, the meeting had boasted a 100 gn. Royal Plate since the early eighteenth century and, when the L.S.W.R. reached the town in March 1847 it was to provide sponsorship consistently until 1893.<sup>118</sup> There was some evidence of decline towards the end of the nineteenth century, and it may have ultimately gone the way of Winchester, with which it shared the Queen's Plate between 1876 and 1887. but the refusal of the landlord at Stockbridge to renew the Bibury Club lease, brought this important fixture to the city in 1899 and safeguarded the existing meeting.<sup>119</sup>

### East Anglia

The meeting at Yarmouth in Norfolk was well favoured with the amenities and attractions of a flourishing market town and a seaport, with a growing holiday trade even before the railway arrived in 1844.<sup>120</sup> This never completely supplanted the river

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<sup>116</sup> Richardson, *English Turf*, p.149.

<sup>117</sup> Benson, R, & Hatcher, H, *Salisbury* (John Bowyer Nicholls & Son, Trowbridge, 1843) p.294. Paskin, Sir J. 'Racing' in *Victoria County History - Wiltshire IV* (Oxford University Press, London, 1959) pp. 379 - 380, gives much detail on its early years. See also Curling, W.R. *British Racecourses* (H.F. & G.W. Witherby, London, 1951) p.121.

<sup>118</sup> The L.S.W.R. opened its line from Bishopstoke (now known as Eastleigh) near Southampton to Salisbury on 1 March 1847, while the G.W.R. reached the city from Warminster and Westbury on 30 June 1856. The L.S.W. line from Andover was opened on 1 May 1857, and this was extended from Salisbury to Yeovil and Exeter between 2 May 1859 (when the present station replaced the original Milford terminus) and 18 July 1860. The city was thus on the main line from London to the west country, and connection to Poole and the Dorset coast was provided by the opening of the Alderbury Junction - West Moors line on 20 December 1866.

<sup>119</sup> Richardson, *English Turf*, p.154, after writing somewhat disparagingly of the Salisbury meeting, expressed the hope that the coming of the Bibury Club might raise both its tone and its profile.

<sup>120</sup> Whyte, *British Turf I*, p.278, writing in 1840, stated that Yarmouth was quite a sizeable town with a theatre and public rooms for balls and concert. Gill, *Racecourses*, p.243, points out that the future of the meeting was prejudiced in 1843, when the magistrates placed a short-lived ban on betting on the course or in the town hostleries. Although Yarmouth had been the ultimate destination for the abortive E.C. line from London, it was left to a small local company, the Yarmouth & Norwich Railway, to link the towns in its title on 1 May 1844. Yarmouth was connected to the main system on to London on 30 July 1845 via Cambridge through a number of companies which, together with the local line, would form part of the G.E.R. Other lines were built to Yarmouth, most of which became part of the G.E.R., but a section of what became the Midland & Great Northern Joint Committee line linking Yarmouth to Norwich and Melton Constable was opened in August 1877. The Norfolk &

boats and ferries, which carried racegoers to a convenient landing stage near the course. The two day meeting was held each September on the South Denes, which had been leased by the Corporation to a group of innkeepers as early as 1715. The races first appeared in the *Racing Calendar* in 1810, and were supported not only by locals of all classes but by holidaymakers including Newmarket trainers, who could try out their horses in a congenial and relaxed atmosphere before getting to the serious business of their own autumn meetings. Its ability to attract all kinds of people was particularly important in the 1870s, when country meetings were under threat from minimum prize money requirements, and the continuing support from Newmarket ensured good fields for relatively modest prizes, even before any form of general enclosure brought added revenue.<sup>121</sup>

On the other hand, Newmarket did not encourage large numbers of spectators, particularly of the lower orders, to attend its meetings until the last thirty years of the nineteenth century. Racing there dated back to the reign of James I, and was put on a regular footing after the Restoration by Charles II, who donated a Royal Plate (which he won on one occasion). It is not intended to repeat here the history of the meeting or that of the Jockey Club, which became associated with Newmarket in 1752 and helped make it the headquarters of flat racing, although, as discussed in Chapter 1, it did not effectively control the sport as early as some authorities would have us believe.<sup>122</sup> Even so, in the eighteenth century and the early nineteenth, Newmarket had an average of seven meetings a year, when other important courses might hold two or three at the very most. In support of this pre-eminence, the Jockey Club, both on its own initiative and with the help of the fourth Duke of Portland, was by 1819 the virtual master of Newmarket Heath.<sup>123</sup> Although Newmarket was traditionally a

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Suffolk Joint Railway, owned by the G.E. and M. & G.N. Railways and linking Yarmouth and Lowestoft by a direct route, was not opened until 13 July 1903.

<sup>121</sup> Richardson, *English Turf*, p.155. Gill, *Racecourses*, p.231. The course was moved to the North Denes after World War One, when the original land was required to improve facilities for the local fishing industry.

<sup>122</sup> Onslow, R. *Headquarters - A History of Newmarket and its Racing* (Great Ouse Press, Cambridge, 1983) and Mortimer, R. *The Jockey Club* (Cassell & Co. Ltd., 1958) cover all these aspects in detail.

<sup>123</sup> The Duke also improved the Heath by clearing gorse and scrub and setting parts to grass from 1820 onwards. He established the right of the Jockey Club to warn people off Newmarket Heath by bringing a successful action for trespass in 1827, and four years later provided the money for the Jockey Club to buy the freehold of the Coffee Room and adjacent land. The Club in due course purchased Bury Hill and Warren Hill but, although they managed to obtain a lease of the Lime Kilns

stronghold of matches and longer distance races, the inauguration of the 2,000 Guineas in 1809 and the 1,000 Guineas five years later, helped strengthen the trend towards shorter races. The establishment of the Cesarewitch and the Cambridgeshire Handicap in 1839 ensured that Newmarket remained in the forefront of flat racing with its stables, training grounds and bloodstock sales. But racing there was a highly mobile activity - self supporting and watched by relatively few people. In 1840 Whyte was pleased that 'no crowds, no booths impede the view ... The number of spectators rarely exceeds five hundred, and they are mostly of the highest classes, the majority on horseback ...'<sup>124</sup> As discussed in Chapter 4, the situation was little changed by the 1860s, although the railway had reached Newmarket in 1848.<sup>125</sup> The Jockey Club's relationship with the railways was always a little distant and ambiguous, despite Newmarket having the most consistent and long-running instance of railway race sponsorship. Rail travel, particularly to and from Newmarket, was felt desirable for the upper classes and the horses, but not for the masses, while the physical layout of Newmarket's railways caused operating problems under pressure, with none of its stations really near to the course.<sup>126</sup> Flat racing as a whole may owe a great deal to Sir Charles Bunbury, Lord George Bentinck and Admiral Rous, but it was the latter who took a grip of the Jockey Club's finances<sup>127</sup> and hence of Newmarket, so that it could continue its traditional way of life for so long, holding both modernisation and excursionists at bay. But the impact of the enclosed 'park' courses, with a level of prize money far above its own minima imposed in 1877, made the Jockey Club examine ways of improving both revenue and facilities. So an increasing amount of enclosure was undertaken in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and by 1894 there was a £10,000 race at Newmarket - the Prince of Wales Stakes. Nevertheless, in 1901 Richardson could still write that there were only 'three days in which the Newmarket crowd is enormously augmented by a section of the general public, who

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in the 1880s, they could not purchase the freehold the gallops until 1930. Tyrrel, J. *Running Racing* (Quiller Press, London, 1997) pp. 24 - 30.

<sup>124</sup> Whyte, *British Turf*, I, pp. 207 - 209. But 'A Yorkshireman at Newmarket' in *Sporting Magazine*, December 1831, p.174 bewailed the fact that there were 'no shows, no theatre, no balls, no breakfasts, no ordinaries, no ladies and very few gentlemen. Nothing but race, race, race and bet, bet, betting.'

<sup>125</sup> *Cambridge Chronicle*, 8 April 1848 did, however, announce the running of a special train to the meeting on 11 April, one week after the opening of the line.

<sup>126</sup> Railway development at Newmarket is covered in Chapters 4 and 5.

never go there without occasion ...'<sup>128</sup> But the inherent strength and attraction of Newmarket lay not least in that it was the major training area in the country, so there were almost always sufficient runners - and hence income - to support its many meetings.

But, lest it be thought that everything in Newmarket was a success - with or without the railway - mention must be made of the short-lived National Hunt course on the Cambridge Road, which just as accessible as its illustrious neighbours. Laid out at great expense by Colonel McCalmont and opened in November 1894, it did not long survive the death of its founder and closed in December 1905.<sup>129</sup>

### The Midlands

The meeting at Worcester was (and still is) held on common ground at Pitchcroft on the banks of the River Severn. By 1837, there was a flat race meeting in the summer with steeplechases in the late autumn,<sup>130</sup> while the town had a wide selection of amenities to provide a comprehensive social life for racegoers.<sup>131</sup> The railway at first bypassed Worcester, so the county town was not connected to the network until October 1850, much later than many more remote locations, and its other main rail links were not completed until over ten years later.<sup>132</sup> The involvement of the Earl of Coventry from 1858 onwards helped increase both support and standards, so the meeting was easily able to survive the Jockey Club prize money requirements.<sup>133</sup> The

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<sup>127</sup> Tyrrel, *Running Racing*, p.40. In less than 30 years Rous increased the rents from lands at Newmarket from only £3,000 a year to £18,000.

<sup>128</sup> Richardson, *English Turf*, pp. 46 - 47, also stated that for much of the season there was little attraction for 'the Londoner, who can see 100 days' racing on his own doorstep. Sometimes the attendances are so weak that one would think it could not possibly pay to run the special express trains'.

<sup>129</sup> Pitt, *Long Time Gone*, p.116. Apart from the death of its chief supporter, 'the general public got a marvellous view of the races from the Cambridge Road, and did not need to come in', quoting Captain Nick Rees, clerk of the course at Newmarket.

<sup>130</sup> Price, Sir R.G. 'Racing' in *Victoria County History - Worcestershire II* (Archibald Constable, London 1906) p.326. Until 1880 the steeplechase course was one of the finest in England, but then the natural fences were replaced, and the racing became more 'artificial and circumscribed'.

<sup>131</sup> Whyte, *British Turf*, I, p.339.

<sup>132</sup> The Birmingham - Gloucester Railway was, as recounted elsewhere, opened in stages during 1840 - 41 and bypassed Worcester by four miles, so it was not until 5 October 1850 that a line was opened into the city from Abbot's Wood Junction. This was worked by the Midland Railway on behalf of the Oxford, Worcester & Wolverhampton Railway until the latter's lines to Stoke Prior, and between Stourbridge and Evesham, were opened in February and May 1852 respectively. The Worcester & Hereford Railway was also opened in stages between July 1859 and September 1861, by which time both the latter companies were part of the West Midland Railway (a sponsor of Worcester Races), and leased to the G.W.R., which absorbed the W.M.R. in 1863.

<sup>133</sup> Price, 'Racing' in *VCH - Worcestershire II*, p.326. In 1837 23 horses competed in a two day programme of seven races. By 1853, 86 competed in 11 races with £350 added money, the

Corporation then obtained an Act of Parliament to gain complete control of the raceground, which was then fenced in, leased to a committee to run the grandstand, and the fixture became a 'gate money' meeting. Richardson was dismissive, describing the meeting as 'not important' with 'small handicaps and selling plates in the ascendant'.<sup>134</sup>

The adjacent county town of Warwick also had a long established meeting, which in the 1830s and 1840s (together with Coventry from 1835) marked the start of the flat racing season.<sup>135</sup> Its two meetings a year were well patronised, particularly by visitors from Leamington Spa, whose closeness caused the railways some problems with station names for the next 100 years.<sup>136</sup> The popularity of the Warwick races continued, but its nature changed from mainly 'well-dressed crowds of the fashionable order', to 'all sorts and conditions of men, including a large proportion of the labouring classes'.<sup>137</sup> Richardson recorded its decline in importance, but admitted that its three meetings were still popular,<sup>138</sup> as indeed its fixtures still are today.

Racing on Lincoln Heath had taken place from at least the late sixteenth century,<sup>139</sup> but in September 1773 the meeting moved to the Carholme, about a mile from the city, where it would continue for over 190 years. Although the fixture was well attended, the first grandstand was not erected until 1826, and the following year it was described as an 'austere meeting', as it lacked an attendant fair.<sup>140</sup> Nevertheless, the races had a number of disturbances, for in 1831 there was a major riot involving over 500

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Worcestershire Stakes alone having 23 starters. By 1870, there were 78 starters for 14 races in two days, with £730 added money in the summer meeting, while 61 horses competed in the flat races at the autumn fixture, even though the emphasis was on steeplechasing.

<sup>134</sup> Richardson, *English Turf*, p.155.

<sup>135</sup> *Bell's Life in London*, February and April 1842, was a little disparaging: '... although possessing little interest, Coventry and Warwick are always in some degree worthy of the passing interest of the turfite, as being the first regular meetings of the year and proclaiming that "the season has begun"'. Whyte, *British Turf I*, pp. 335 - 336 in 1840 had been complimentary, particularly about the course, which had been recently improved.

<sup>136</sup> See Chapter 4, Note 31.

<sup>137</sup> Cordley, C. 'Racing' in *Victoria County History - Warwickshire II* (Archibald Constable, London 1908) p.386. Sidney, S. *Rides on Railways* (W.S. Orr, London, 1851, rep. Phillimore & Co., Chichester, 1973) p.113, even in 1850, commented on the decline of town and race meeting, saved only by the attractions of mediaeval buildings, the river and the proximity of Leamington.

<sup>138</sup> Richardson, *English Turf*, p.173.

<sup>139</sup> Lincoln City Papers (Hist.MSS Com. Rep. XIV pt.8.p.106) recorded that in 1597 the Corporation resolved to give £20 for a plate to ensure that the races became a permanent event.

<sup>140</sup> *Lincoln and Lincolnshire Cabinet & General Intelligencer* (1827) quoted in Pitt, *Long Time Gone*, p.368.



people.<sup>141</sup> The meeting was very popular even in pre-railway days, as there was an ever-improving coach service, and when the railway reached Nottingham, some 33 miles distant, in 1839, the two forms of transport brought the city within ten hours of London. The Midland Railway reached Lincoln on 4 August 1846, and in due course the city was served by four railway companies with lines radiating to almost all points of the compass.<sup>142</sup>

Meanwhile the first steeplechase had been run at Lincoln in February 1843, and the famous Lincolnshire Handicap made its appearance in August 1849 meeting. The race only moved to its familiar spot in 1857, when the August fixture was abandoned in favour of the spring meeting, which had itself only been inaugurated four years previously.<sup>143</sup> The Lincoln meeting now signalled the start of the flat racing season, and the railways not only provided numerous specials for this fixture, but also connecting services to the Grand National meeting at Aintree.<sup>144</sup> In 1896 the race committee, mindful of the need to update the course, yet wishing to preserve its traditional aspects, formed the Lincoln Race Committee Ltd. Two new grandstands were built in the following year, and by 1906 there were three fixtures a year.

### North East England

Racing had taken place at Doncaster since at least 1595,<sup>145</sup> and the events were recorded throughout the seventeenth century in the books of the Corporation, which still remains the owner of the course. The fame and prosperity of the meeting grew throughout the eighteenth century and by 1776, when the three year old race which became the St. Leger two years later,<sup>146</sup> was held for the first time, Doncaster was the premier meeting in the north of England, so the Corporation took steps to ensure that

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<sup>141</sup> Pitt, *Long Time Gone*, p.368.

<sup>142</sup> The M.R. was followed by the G.N. line from Boston and Werrington Junction near Peterborough on 17 October 1848, and extended from Lincoln to Gainsborough on 2 April 1849. Meanwhile the M.S.& L.R. had built a line from Grimsby to a junction in Lincoln with the M.R., whose station it shared. The layout in the city became quite complex, with the G.E.R. ultimately reaching Doncaster via Sleaford and Lincoln by virtue of its joint line with the G.N.R., which on 15 April 1867 opened a branch from Grantham to Lincoln via Honington.

<sup>143</sup> The Lincolnshire Handicap was poorly supported in its early days, and was only saved by the collection of £1,000 by the bookmakers to add to the prize money, as the race was a 'nice little earner', since there was no recent form on which racegoers could base their speculations. In due course, to win this and the Grand National became an important 'spring double'.

<sup>144</sup> Richardson, *English Turf*, p.161, remarked on the provision of special trains, and also the lack of lodging in Lincoln, which militated against large numbers of 'the better class of racing people' attending the meeting. This is not borne out by other contemporary writers. See Chapter 5, Note 86.

<sup>145</sup> Gill, *Racecourses*, p. 66.

<sup>146</sup> Named after Lieutenant General Anthony St. Leger, who lived at nearby Park Hall.

this continued. The races had been held on Cantley Moor, but in 1778 the Corporation laid out a course and constructed a grandstand on the Town Moor.<sup>147</sup> There was also a full social life, with theatrical performances, cockfights, all the fun of the fair and the development of the Bloodstock Sales, which became one of the most important in the world, being held to coincide with the September St. Leger meeting. This was the only Classic to be run in the north, but over the years other important races such as the Great Yorkshire Handicap were added to the card. A spring meeting was inaugurated in 1850, but this was never as important as the traditional September fixture. Steeplechases were added to the spring meeting between 1850 and 1855, but abandoned in favour of a separate meeting for devotees of jump racing, although this also lapsed between 1911 and 1946. The growth of the Doncaster race traffic on the railways has already been covered in detail,<sup>148</sup> but the nature of the northern crowd did not change and the majority still were keen to see the St. Leger. Even at the end of the nineteenth century, less affluent racegoers would walk through the night from Sheffield or Leeds to get a good place on the rails or save up to go in the paddock. It was essentially a serious meeting - by this time there was no fair as at Epsom, but that did not stop the beer flowing.<sup>149</sup> Although Richardson, writing in 1901, described the Doncaster meeting as providing a good standard of racing with 'no niggardly policy with regard to the prizes offered', in 1906 the Jockey Club had to insist that the value of the St. Leger must be made up to £6,000, irrespective of the number of subscribers, to make its value go some way to equalling its prestige in the face of the high prizes offered at enclosed meetings.<sup>150</sup> Nevertheless, in the following year the Jockey Club did sanction an autumn meeting, which was held for the first time in November 1908.

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<sup>147</sup> Fairfax Blakeborough, *Racecourses of Yorkshire*, p.7 quotes a resolution of Doncaster Corporation in 1778 that 'the setting out and direction of making a new course for the races on Doncaster Common and a commodious stand should be referred to the Marquis of Rockingham, Peregrine Wentworth, Esq., and Childers Walbrook Childers, Esq. The expenses to be paid by the Corporation.'

<sup>148</sup> See Chapters 4 & 5.

<sup>149</sup> Richardson, *English Turf*, pp. 128 ff.

<sup>150</sup> This was not the first time the racing establishment had taken issue with Doncaster Corporation over its attitude to prize money. Admiral Rous in his book *On the Laws and Practice of Horse Racing* (Baily Brothers, London, 1850) pp. 2 - 6 had attacked the Corporation for not increasing prize money when it had made a profit of £50,000 over ten years, and even expected race winners to give back some of the prize money for 'expenses'. But this surplus was used to reduce the town rate bill, and thus benefit the local populace. Gill, *Racecourses*, p. 66 quotes a threat made earlier by Bentinck on behalf of the Jockey Club in 1841, if the Corporation did not raise its contribution from £500 to £1,000. 'We know we have the power to destroy and annihilate your races, and we are determined to

York races had an equally long and aristocratic history, with Queen Anne running her horses there in 1712. By 1731, when the meeting moved to the Knavesmire, where it is still held, the event could last upwards of a week, and this pattern continued through much of the eighteenth century.<sup>151</sup> In 1753, a subscription was started for the construction of a grandstand on a 99 year lease from the Corporation, and the building was completed in the following year. 1791 saw the inauguration of the spring meeting and regular meetings for two year olds. A somewhat bizarre event took place at the 1804 August meeting, when Mrs. Thornton rode a match against Captain Flint, at which an estimated 100,000 were present, and the 6th Dragoons were called in to keep order.<sup>152</sup> The railway reached York in 1839, and within a very few years the city was linked to all parts of the country, enabling participants and spectators to reach the meetings very easily,<sup>153</sup> and also find a variety of social events to divert them.<sup>154</sup> Two additional races, the Great Yorkshire Stakes, and the Great Yorkshire Handicap, were established in 1843, when the spring meeting was dropped, only to be re-established in 1851, with additional races, such as the Gimcrack Stakes.<sup>155</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century little had changed, the Corporation kept the course in good repair, while the county families still supported the meeting, by running horses, subscribing to races and giving house parties for fellow racegoers. There might be a few less coaches on the course as time went by, but the mixture of people was the same, as was the relaxed atmosphere,<sup>156</sup> while profits continued to be ploughed back into the fixture.

Beverley, nine miles from Hull and some 30 from York, where the races were founded in 1730, had by 1840 nearly 7,000 inhabitants, and all the amenities of an important market town, including a theatre which was open during the three day meeting each July. The course at Westwood, to which the meeting moved in 1767,

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do so unless you are disposed to make annually so liberal a contribution as we think in justice and fairness you ought.'

<sup>151</sup> Bonnett, 'Racing' in *VCH -Yorkshire II*, pp.508 - 508.

<sup>152</sup> *York Herald*, 25 August 1804. A year later Mrs. Thornton beat the celebrated jockey, Frank Buckle, in a similar race. The size of the crowds may have been surpassed by the attendance for the match between Flying Dutchman and Voltigeur in 1857, but indicates the pulling power of major events before the railway age. For the latter event and comments on travel, see Bird, T.H., *Admiral Rous and the English Turf 1795 - 1877* (Puttnam, London, 1939) p.103.

<sup>153</sup> The development of the major railways at York has already been covered.

<sup>154</sup> Whyte, *British Turf*, I, pp. 352 ff.

<sup>155</sup> This race, important though it was, demonstrates how the traditional meetings fell behind enclosed courses in terms of prize money. In 1883, the Gimcrack Stakes was worth £200 to the winner, by 1887 £300 and in 1906 only £1,000 - but this does not seem to have inhibited the popularity of the York meeting.

was owned by the Corporation,<sup>157</sup> and had 'an elegant and commodious stand'.<sup>158</sup> The meetings went into decline during the mid 1840s at about the time of the arrival of the railway in October 1846,<sup>159</sup> but this was mainly due to the influence of Sir Thomas Clifford Constable and the Holderness Hunt, whose meeting had started in Beverley in 1837, but which had been transferred to nearby Burton Constable.<sup>160</sup> From 1848, Beverley enjoyed an unbroken run of meetings, although a build-up of anti-racing feeling around the turn of the century caused the race committee to examine the possibility of moving to another site. The problem receded and the fixture continued on a largely open and free ground until 1935, when a small limited company was set up to control the racing, and the course was finally enclosed.<sup>161</sup>

A more surprising survival, perhaps, was Catterick Bridge in North Yorkshire, founded in April 1783, although there had been racing in the area for many years previously. Only five miles from Richmond and eight from Northallerton, both of whose racecourses closed in the late nineteenth century, it was in a sparsely populated area, and its meeting at Easter was not part of the Yorkshire summer circuit. But it was supported vigorously right through the nineteenth century by the Lawson family, on whose estate at Brough Park it was held, as well as by the Dukes of Cleveland and Leeds. Moreover, it was very close to the Great North Road, as well as to the training grounds around Middleham and Richmond, so it gave the trainers there an opportunity to give their charges an early runout. The course was improved in 1813, and both its Gold Cup race and contests for cases of claret and brandy proved popular with the sporting fraternity. Catterick Bridge was connected to the main rail network in September 1846, when the Richmond branch was opened.<sup>162</sup> It benefited from excursion trains from York, Leeds and Newcastle on Tyne,<sup>163</sup> while the railway made

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<sup>156</sup> Richardson, *English Turf*, p.137 ff.

<sup>157</sup> Fairfax Blakeborough, *Racecourses of Yorkshire* p.59. The Corporation charged only 6d. a year rent as it felt the course to be an 'integral and essential part of the life of the town'.

<sup>158</sup> Whyte, *British Turf*, I, p.341.

<sup>159</sup> The Hull & Selby Railway had opened to passenger traffic between the two towns in its title on 2 July 1840. Its branch from Hull to Bridlington, which passed through Beverley, was opened on 7 October 1846. On 1 May 1865, Beverley was linked to Market Weighton, providing a more direct route to York and Selby. The company became part of the N.E.R. in 1872.

<sup>160</sup> See Chapter 9.

<sup>161</sup> Fairfax Blakeborough, *Racecourses of Yorkshire*, p.60.

<sup>162</sup> See Chapter 11, Note 23.

<sup>163</sup> Richardson, *English Turf*, p.147. But even before the railway, the meeting had been well supported locally by all classes of society, who made the journey in carriages, 'four in hands', dog carts, on horseback or on foot, just as to the nearby Northallerton and Richmond meetings.

the training grounds around Malton and Beverley, as well as those further afield, more readily accessible. Although it had been enclosed since 1888, in 1901 its facilities were still felt to be 'primitive', but in 1906 Sir Henry Lawson provided a new stand and an entirely new course was laid out a few years later. It attracted people, because it ran one of the few combined flat and jump meetings, so that attendances 'are far beyond what might be expected at such an out-of-the-way place.'<sup>164</sup> To safeguard its future after the First World War, a private company was formed in 1923, and a start made on a new steeplechase course in the following year.<sup>165</sup>

### Scotland

No courses in north west England and only one in Scotland - Edinburgh - fell into this category. Racing at or near Edinburgh was of considerable antiquity, and the most important fixtures took place on the sands at Leith until 1816,<sup>166</sup> when the meeting moved to Musselburgh Links, some five miles from the city. This was ostensibly because of the construction of Leith Docks, but was really to increase the respectability of the fixture and to support the move to races for younger, lighter horses, as the damp sand often made the going unacceptably heavy.<sup>167</sup> Although the Caledonian Hunt Club now included Edinburgh in its itinerary, so the fixture enjoyed the many prestigious activities and the financial support associated with this, the distance from the city caused some general diminution of interest, particularly in the 1830s. But the strength of the race committee pulled it through, even in the face of the competition from the revived Leith fixture. Musselburgh was linked to Edinburgh by rail in July 1847, only marginally later than the opening of the east coast route to London.<sup>168</sup> The Edinburgh meeting continued to flourish and is still with us today, although Richardson was quite dismissive of it.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Richardson, *English Turf*, p.147. But Catterick Bridge was easily accessible by road and rail, although not patronised by many southerners.

<sup>165</sup> Fairfax Blakeborough, *Racecourses of Yorkshire*, p.45.

<sup>166</sup> Burnett, 'Sites and Landscapes of Horse Racing in Scotland', p.62.

<sup>167</sup> Burnett, 'Sites and Landscapes of Horse Racing in Scotland', p.65. Racing was revived on the sands at Leith between 1836 and 1859, but was not of sufficiently high quality to be recorded in the *Racing Calendar*.

<sup>168</sup> Edinburgh was linked with Glasgow by rail on 21 February 1842, and the N.B.R. opened its line to Berwick on 22 June 1846. It was from this line that the branch to Musselburgh was opened on 16 July 1847, offering a regular service of seven to eight trains a day. The details of the Caledonian and N.B.R. routes from Edinburgh to England have been covered earlier.

<sup>169</sup> Richardson, *English Turf*, p.216.

## COURSES WITH NO SIGNIFICANT RACING HISTORY BEFORE 1830

Eighteen courses were established either just before or during the period under review. These consist of three almost equal groups: those which experienced some major upheavals resulting in closure and removal to another location, and those which developed gradually and survived without sudden significant change. Then there were the new wave 'park' courses, starting with Sandown Park in 1875, although some transitional courses dating from the 1860s and early 1870s may also be thought to fall into this group. All courses in these three groups will be covered in chronological order of their first meeting.

### 1. COURSES WHICH UNDERWENT SUDDEN CHANGE DURING THE REVIEW PERIOD

Five courses fall into this category, of which the first was at Wolverhampton, one of a number opened during the reign of George IV. Its first meeting was held on the Broad Meadows to the west of the town in August 1825, a grandstand was erected two years later,<sup>170</sup> and by 1834 it was said rather optimistically to be the 'first [most important] meeting in the interior of the kingdom'.<sup>171</sup> As it rose in importance, the other meetings in the area went into decline including that at Lichfield, whose star was soon felt to be totally eclipsed, although it survived until 1895, outliving the first Wolverhampton meeting by seventeen years<sup>172</sup> The G.J. main line, opened in July 1837, had a Wolverhampton station at some distance from the town, which would become an important railway centre,<sup>173</sup> but the main developments took place from 1849 onward. Although the meeting, like many others in the 1850s, was described as being in decline, even with the added attraction of steeplechases,<sup>174</sup> the fixture survived until September 1878. The race committee's lease was due to expire in the following year, so the

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<sup>170</sup> *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 20 August 1825, 11 August 1827. The Broad Meadows had originally been swampy ground known as Hungry Leas, and was drained at great expense to the race committee.

<sup>171</sup> *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 16 August 1834.

<sup>172</sup> Nevertheless, the second Wolverhampton racecourse was ultimately the only one in Staffordshire, whereas in 1838 there had been no less than thirteen - more than in any other county in England at that time.

<sup>173</sup> After the Wolverhampton race meeting in 1872, the G.W.R. complained that the L.N.W.R. had put a temporary booking office in place to subvert racegoers from going to the G.W. station. More details of the development of railways in Wolverhampton can be found in Perkins, T.R. *The Railways of Wolverhampton*, *Railway Magazine*, XCXVIII, 1952, pp. 448 ff. Christiansen, R. *Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain - The West Midlands* (David & Charles, Newton Abbot, 1973, rev.ed. D.St. John Thomas, Nairn 1991) p.106.

<sup>174</sup> *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 14 December 1850. Sidney, *Rides on Railways*, pp. 133 - 134.

Town Council persuaded the Duke of Cleveland to lease 50 acres to them for the construction of what ultimately became West Park.<sup>175</sup>

But the desire for racing was not dead in the town, and in 1887 the Wolverhampton Race Course and Dunstall Park Club Ltd. was formed to buy 130 acres of Dunstall Park for £36,000 and construct a new course there.<sup>176</sup> In fact, a two day meeting under National Hunt rules had been held in the park in October 1886. Although of relatively low standard with a top prize of only £70, the meeting showed that the land was suitable for racing. It had been intended to open in April 1888, but the first flat race meeting did not take place until August, with the first National Hunt fixture in April 1889.<sup>177</sup> Three years later, there were four jump and two flat race meetings,<sup>178</sup> and the fixture has continued to flourish until the present day, helped for many years by the nearby station, to the construction of which the race company had subscribed £500.<sup>179</sup>

Although it is tempting to regard Birmingham, like Leeds, Sheffield, Bristol and Glasgow, as unable to support a race meeting for any length of time before the establishment of Bromford Bridge in 1895, there were two often intertwining strands of continuity throughout much of the nineteenth century. Flat race meetings were concentrated generally at Sutton Coldfield, about seven miles north of the city, with a number of steeplechase meetings around Solihull, a similar distance to the southeast.

<sup>180</sup> Flat races were held between 1844 and 1850 at Sutton Park near Sutton Coldfield,

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<sup>175</sup> *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 8 September 1877. Mander, G.P. & Tyldesley N.W. *History of Wolverhampton* (Wolverhampton Corporation, Wolverhampton, 1960) p.164, Upton, C. *A History of Wolverhampton* (Phillimore & Co. Ltd., Chichester, 1998) pp. 98 - 99, Onslow, R. *One Hundred Years of Racing at Dunstall Park 1887 - 1987* (Wolverhampton Racecourse plc., 1987) p.2. Although the Duke of Cleveland was not a benefactor, as he proposed leasing the land for 63 years at £300 for the first 42, £350 for the next 21 and an option to purchase at £400 an acre thereafter, the council voted to accept this offer with alacrity in September 1877. The West Park, known originally as the People's Park, was opened in June 1881. In 1893, however, the East Park was made possible by the donation of 25 acres each from the Duke of Sutherland and Sir Alfred Dickenson.

<sup>176</sup> Onslow, *100 Years at Dunstall Park*, p.2. Dunstall Park was owned by Alexander Staveley Hill, who wanted to sell up and move to nearby Oxley Manor, because a railway line had been authorised to run through the park. No concrete evidence has yet been found to support the latter assertion, so the powers may have lapsed.

<sup>177</sup> *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 18 August 1888, 27 April 1889.

<sup>178</sup> Kettle, A.J. 'Horseracing' in *Victoria County History - Staffordshire II* (Oxford University Press, London, 1956) p.367, quoting *Kelly's Directory for Staffordshire*, 1892.

<sup>179</sup> As Dunstall Park station, which opened for regular passenger traffic on 1 December 1896, appeared to have no major facilities specifically for racegoers, it was omitted from Chapter 5. Its first use for a race meeting was on 26 December 1896.

<sup>180</sup> Rather paradoxically the first notable flat race meetings in the Birmingham area took place between 1835 and 1840 near Olton reservoir, not far from Solihull, the initial fixture attracting an

and supported by owners such as Thomas Parr. But, although at first there were quite large fields, enthusiasm waned, and after their demise there were only sporadic meetings at various places around the city for the next eighteen years.<sup>181</sup> The first flat races at Sutton Coldfield did not have the benefit of a railway close by, but, when the meeting was revived in July 1868 on a new course on the west side of Sutton Park, the town had enjoyed a rail connection to Birmingham for some six years.<sup>182</sup> Sutton Park had many other attractions apart from the race meeting, and provided an ideal outing for Birmingham families. Although the first meeting had been marred by a fight between rival gangs, the fixture continued until August 1879, less than two months after the Midland Railway had opened a line through the town with a station well situated for the next stage in the saga.<sup>183</sup>

Popular as the old fixture had been, the sport had moved on, and so a 246 acre estate at Four Oaks Park, just north of Sutton Coldfield, was purchased for £60,000 by John Seymour. A further £40,000 was expended in laying out the course and its amenities in conjunction with a Race Course Company formed to operate the meetings.<sup>184</sup> The first was a steeplechase fixture in March 1881, and included the Grand National Hunt Steeplechase, which attracted estimated crowds of 15 - 20,000. The first flat race meeting was in April and for the next eight years there were five meetings under

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'immense number of visitors', according to the *Birmingham Journal*. But, even though the London & Birmingham Railway had a station at Hampton in Arden within five miles of the course by 1838, and between 1837 and 1840 Birmingham had become the focal point of trunk railway lines in England, the meeting folded in the latter year. Whyte, *British Turf*, I, pp. 334 - 335, dismissed these meetings as 'attracting a poor attendance both of company and horses, the stakes being few and of trifling value for so large and wealthy a town'. Equally perversely, the first recorded steeplechase meeting took place in 1836 at Great Barr, out towards Sutton Coldfield.

<sup>181</sup> Pitt, *Long Time Gone*, pp. 315 - 325, discusses these meetings. Two worthy of note, both steeplechase meetings, were at Knowle, close to the G.W. Banbury - Birmingham line, opened on 1 October 1852, which attracted a crowd of 20,000, and at Aston Park on 26 March 1855, where an estimated crowd of 60 - 80,000 broke down the turnstiles in protest against an admission charge of 1d. After the meeting, which was extremely fraught, a mob of several thousand spectators decided to re-enact the Battle of the Alma. This Crimean War battle had taken place on 20 September 1854, and at the time of the meeting the Theatre Royal in Birmingham was staging a representation of the event. Pitt also mentions the steeplechases which took place at Moor Hall Park, north of Sutton Coldfield, between 1857 and 1873, and terminated when the land was required for building purposes.

<sup>182</sup> The L.N.W.R. opened a branch from Aston to Sutton Coldfield on 2 June 1862, and the station was about 1½ miles from the course.

<sup>183</sup> Originally authorised as the Wolverhampton, Walsall & Midland Junction Railway, the line between Walsall and Water Orton Junction had been vested in the M.R. before it opened on 1 July 1879.

<sup>184</sup> John Seymour had been clerk of the steeplechase course at Olton near Solihull from 1875 to 1880, when it fell victim to the greater attractions of the course at Hall Green, which could attract crowds of 20 - 30,000, despite a two to three mile walk from the nearest station, and survived from 1871 to 1910.



Jockey Club rules each year. But, despite the extension of the L.N.W. line from Sutton Coldfield to Lichfield on 15 December 1884, and the provision of a public station at Four Oaks, together with a new road to facilitate access to the course, the meetings did not attract 'either the best class of racegoer, or the multitude'.<sup>185</sup> Financial troubles, including a summons for non-payment of rates, caused the *Racing Calendar* to record in September 1889 that, until the accounts of the meeting held on 22/23 August were settled in accordance with the Rules of Racing, there would be no more meetings. The Race Company was wound up in August 1890, and the estate sold to the Marquis of Clanricade.

Birmingham finally got a permanent and successful race course when John and Stanley Ford, with the backing of a new company, secured a lease on part of the Earl of Bradford's estate at Bromford Bridge, where a special racecourse station was provided. It had been intended to open at Easter 1895, but harsh weather prevented this, so the first flat race meeting took place in June, with National Hunt starting later in the year.<sup>186</sup> The course - particularly the placing of the stands - was praised by Richardson, who bewailed the fact that it had difficulty in getting good dates and clashed with London fixtures.<sup>187</sup> Nevertheless, good local support and large fields ensured its success.

Races at Ripon were held in a number of locations between 1664 and 1714, when the Corporation ordered a course to be formed on the High Common,<sup>188</sup> and the meetings continued until 1826 before the course fell foul of a local Enclosure Act.<sup>189</sup> No further meetings took place until 1836, when a local publican, Mr. Haygarth, held some races in his fields. This encouraged 'several respectable individuals to form themselves into a committee' and set up a course on the north bank of the River Ure relatively close to the future site of the railway station. The first meeting was held on 21/22 August

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<sup>185</sup> Pitt, *Long Time Gone*, p.320.

<sup>186</sup> Despite this, a further steeplechase course was opened at Shirley, also near Solihull, in 1899. Access to this meeting and that at Hall Green (Note 184) was improved when the G.W. North Warwickshire line was opened, with stations at both places, on 1 July 1908. The Shirley meeting survived until 1940.

<sup>187</sup> Richardson, *English Turf*, p.203.

<sup>188</sup> Harrison, W. (ed.) *Ripon Millenary Record* (Harrison, Ripon, 1892) p.89. The Corporation gave further instructions for the course to be levelled in 1721.

<sup>189</sup> The closure of the theatre in the same year and the lack of any immediate attempt to find an alternative venue, were indicative of a general decline in the social life, particularly since the death of leading members of the Aislabie family, which had supported the meeting for over 100 years.

1837,<sup>190</sup> appearing in the *Racing Calendar* in the following year, and the races continued on the same site until 1864, after which they were moved south west of the city to Red Bank off Whitcliffe Lane. The lack of a railway had not concerned the race committee, and it was not until 1848 that Ripon was linked northwards to Thirsk and southwards to Harrogate, with direct line to Leeds in the following year.<sup>191</sup> The organisers of the races, which traditionally had been closely linked with the St. Wilfrid celebrations, made several attempts to break the connection both before and after the move to the Red Bank course,<sup>192</sup> where a grandstand was built by public subscription,<sup>193</sup> the first meeting taking place in August 1865. In May 1880 the Ripon Race Course Company was formed and the standard of the meetings improved, despite the defects of a 'small and inconvenient course behind the town',<sup>194</sup> constrained by the River Skell and subject to unacceptable bunching on tight corners. This course was used until 1899, when the present course was set up on the Boroughbridge Road, equally far from the station. It opened on 6 August 1900<sup>195</sup> and, despite being 'the

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<sup>190</sup> Harrison, *Ripon Millenary Record*, p.158. See also Thomson, C. *The Book of Ripon* (Barracuda Books Ltd., Chesham, 1978) p.100, for an illustration of the Notice reporting the committee meeting on 5 August 1837, at which the decision was made to restart racing in the city. Whyte, *British Turf, I*, p.350, was complimentary about the course, which had been 'much improved lately and is in excellent order.'

<sup>191</sup> The Leeds & Thirsk Railway opened its line between Ripon and Thirsk to passenger traffic on 1 June, 1848. Although the line ran into a separate station at Thirsk, a connection was made to the York - Darlington main line. The L. & T.R. was opened from Wormald Green through Harrogate to Weeton on 1 September 1848, the intervening section between Ripon and Wormald Green following twelve days later. Direct access to Leeds was achieved, when the line was completed from Weeton on 10 July 1849. The L. & T.R. changed its name to the Leeds Northern Railway in 1851, becoming part of the N.E.R. in 1854.

<sup>192</sup> This relationship seems to have been somewhat fraught, because in 1847 the committee set up their own procession two weeks earlier than the official event, and there were two processions until the creation of the August Bank Holiday in 1871. See Taylor, M. *The Story of Ripon* (Author, Ripon, 1998) p.20. In 1893 the St. Wilfrid Procession was held a week earlier 'for the convenience of the racing authorities, but had adversely affected the citizens and trade', so the festivities reverted to the Bank Holiday. In the following year 7,060 visitors arrived by rail (although not all destined for the races), by nine excursions and six relief trains. See Ellis, E., Mauchline, M., Pearson, T. and Whitehead, J. (eds.) *A Ripon Record 1887 - 1986* (Phillimore & Co. Ltd., Chichester, 1986), p.5. But in January 1901, when the organisers of the St. Wilfrid's Procession asked for support for that year's event, the directors of the Race Course Company declined to spend 'shareholders' money' for this purpose.

<sup>193</sup> The grandstand, for which the foundation stone was laid by the mayor on 13 February 1865, cost £2,800 and the subscribers had a metal pass to gain free entry for 15 years. In 1880 the newly formed Race Course Company bought the stand for £2,000, raising 400 shares of £5 each. See Ripon Public Library Sport File 1/3, 1/8. The structure was redundant after the 1899 meeting, and became first a convalescent home and then the Ripon Cathedral Choir School.

<sup>194</sup> Bonnett, 'Racing' in *VCH - Yorkshire II*, p. 509.

<sup>195</sup> Ellis, Mauchline, Pearson & Whitehead, *Ripon Record*, p.20, stated that opening festivities took place on 28 June 1900, and that a steeplechase meeting was held in the following October. There was, however, no meeting recorded until August.

least popular of all Yorkshire courses',<sup>196</sup> quickly got an additional fixture and has survived to the present day.

Although racing at Lanark was of considerable antiquity, its occurrence appears to have been sporadic and lapsed for long periods. The first meeting during the review period was held in September 1852 and not recorded in the *Racing Calendar*, but in the following year had ten races, although that for the Silver Bell was a 'walkover'.<sup>197</sup> The railway had reached the vicinity of Lanark in February 1848, and a short branch into the town itself was opened in 1855, the year in which Thomas Parr's Fanny Grey won the Silver Bell.<sup>198</sup> The meeting was run by a syndicate of local innkeepers and tradesmen, who collected most of the stake money, ensured that all spectators paid for entry, and called on the local gentry for assistance when there was a shortfall.<sup>199</sup> It managed well enough, even though in 1873 it could only muster £395 of added money with 44 runners. Its fortunes improved from 1880 onwards when the Caledonian Hunt Club included the meeting in its itinerary, but by 1903 the syndicate was really struggling to promote an adequate fixture. In the following year Lord Hamilton of Dalzell and Lord Newlands put up guarantees against further losses, and Sir Loftus Bates became clerk of the course, and made his usual improvements. But the death knell sounded in 1907, when the insurance company declined to issue cover against accident.<sup>200</sup> So the Lanark Race Course Company was formed with capital of £5,000 to lay out a new course and provide the necessary facilities. The first meeting took place in September 1909, although the 'old guard' had ultimately managed to run meetings in 1907 and 1908. As a booster to income Bates undertook to host the International Aviation Week in August 1910, for which the C.R. provided a special station. This then served race meetings for over fifty years

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<sup>196</sup> Richardson, *English Turf*, p.146.

<sup>197</sup> The race for the Silver Bell at Lanark was reputedly instituted in the reign of William the Lion (1165 - 1214) but, although seventeenth and early eighteenth century records mention this from time to time, the meetings in the *Racing Calendar* for 1785 and 1788 have no such race. The bell was rediscovered when the Burgh Council offices moved to High Street in 1836.

<sup>198</sup> The Caledonian Railway's first Lanark station was on its main line between Carstairs and Castlecary, opened on 15 February 1848. It was renamed Cleghorn Junction on 1 January 1855, prior to the opening of a branch to a terminus in Lanark itself on 6 June of the same year. It became simply Cleghorn, when the C.R. opened its line from Lanark through Sandilands to Muirkirk on 1 April 1864.

<sup>199</sup> Fairfax Blakeborough, *Northern Turf History*, IV, p.77.

<sup>200</sup> Fairfax Blakeborough, *Northern Turf History*, IV, p.80.

until the closure of the Lanark - Muirkirk line in 1964, although the racecourse itself survived until October 1977.

Horse racing at Croydon, some ten miles from London, had taken place during the reign of Elizabeth I,<sup>201</sup> but meetings thereafter were only infrequently recorded until steeplechasing started in earnest in 1858.<sup>202</sup> Organised by John Verrall - also to be involved with Bromley and other suburban courses - these meetings gradually moved up-market, and the fixture on 21/22 April 1864,<sup>203</sup> three weeks after the opening of the Addiscombe branch, set the tone for subsequent meetings. Faced with the sale of the raceground to a speculative builder in 1866, Verrall and the race committee obtained land between Stroud Green and Addiscombe on a fourteen year lease.<sup>204</sup> The first flat race meeting took place on 29 to 31 May 1867 with the Duke of Hamilton as one of the stewards.<sup>205</sup> But the flat races flourished - by 1870 there were nine meetings a year, which soon reduced to a more sensible five or six - while the steeplechases soon ranked second only to Liverpool in National Hunt circles. Woodside station, very convenient for the course, was opened on 1 August 1871.<sup>206</sup> While this took traffic out of the town, it did not prove popular with the local inhabitants, who experienced an upsurge in problems with the more unruly racegoers. It has to be said, however, that, contrary to the prevailing view, apart from a few untoward incidents, there were no more general crowd problems at Croydon than any other racecourse, and the meeting was supported by many Jockey Club members both as owners, participants

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<sup>201</sup> Colthorpe, M. 'Queen Elizabeth I and the Croydon Horse Race, *Surrey Archeological Collections*, LXXVII, 1986.

<sup>202</sup> The *Racing Calendar* recorded a single flat race meeting in June 1841 on Croydon Common, north of the town. The steeplechases which, despite entrance to the ground costing 6d., attracted anything between 5,000 and 20,000 spectators, including train loads of Londoners, were held near Selhurst until 1860, when they moved to Park Hill, near Addiscombe.

<sup>203</sup> Beavis, J. *Croydon Races* (Local History Publications, Streatham, 1999) covers its history in detail. The railway had reached Croydon on 5 June 1839 with the opening of the London & Croydon Railway, and the town gained a second station on 12 July 1841, when the London & Brighton Railway was opened from Norwood to Haywards Heath, and on to Brighton on 21 September of the same year. A complicated series of junctions evolved over the years enabling routes in all directions to be serviced, including the branch to Epsom Town, opened on 10 May 1847. The S.E.R. made incursions into the area somewhat later, but of its lines only the branch from New Beckenham to Addiscombe, originally Croydon (Addiscombe Road), opened on 1 April 1864, will be mentioned here, as it provided a more convenient station for the upgraded racecourse.

<sup>204</sup> *Croydon Chronicle*, 17 November 1866, 1 December 1866.

<sup>205</sup> Johnstone, K.N. 'Croydon Races' (abridged by S.B. Hamilton), *Proceedings of the Croydon Natural History and Scientific Society Ltd.*, XVI, 1975, p.70. Entrance to the racecourse cost 1/- as at the previous steeplechases from April 1864 onwards (*Croydon Chronicle*, 23 April 1864).

and officials. By 1876, there were 17 days' racing at Croydon (including steeplechases), although there were occasional problems with small fields. But the main threat to the meetings came from the opponents of racing, and the Metropolitan Racecourses Act of 1879 gave them some leverage. The meeting was successful on its next few applications for a licence particularly so in October 1881, when two very senior police officers stated that Croydon races were 'conducted in a more orderly manner than at any place near London'.<sup>207</sup> In October 1883, despite raising the course entrance from 1/- to 2/6d. in an attempt to deter the rougher element and paying £600 towards the town rates, the race course authorities saw their licensed days reduced from 17 to nine,<sup>208</sup> and the anti-racing faction continued to attack. Their chance came when, as a result of the Local Government Act of 1888, Croydon became a County Borough and the responsibility for issuing licences passed to it. On 9 October 1889, the licence for the following year was refused. Although a nine month licence was granted on 13 January 1890, Verrall and his associates knew they had to find a new location, and so less than a month after the last meeting on 25/26 November 1890,<sup>209</sup> they had purchased part of the Gatwick estate, some 16 miles to the south, where they set up a new racecourse adjacent to the London to Brighton main line. As described in Chapter 5, the L.B.S.C.R. built a station for the racecourse, but horses had still to be dealt with at Horley, about a mile to the north.<sup>210</sup> Richardson was full of praise for the new venture,<sup>211</sup> which held its first meeting in October 1891, but Bayles was less impressed.<sup>212</sup> Nevertheless, the racecourse continued in use until the Second World War.

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<sup>206</sup> The station had a high arch on the down side so that horses could be ridden directly from the platform to the road. The station was extended when the joint L.B.S.C. and S.E. line from Woodside to Selsdon Road was opened on 10 August 1865.

<sup>207</sup> Beavis, *Croydon Races*, p.42.

<sup>208</sup> *Croydon Chronicle*, 6 October, 1883.

<sup>209</sup> *Croydon Advertiser*, 18 January 1890, 29 November 1890. The last flat race meetings were in fact on 14/15 October 1890. The effects were sold off on 6 December 1890. The local paper proclaimed Croydon 'the undoubted pioneer of gate money meetings, which have worked such a vast and salutary influence on the welfare of the turf ...'

<sup>210</sup> The passenger station at Horley, one of the original 1841 stations, was replaced on 31 December 1905 by a new station some distance to the south. The old station, however, remained open for freight and horsebox traffic.

<sup>211</sup> Richardson, *English Turf*, pp. 194 - 195.

<sup>212</sup> Bayles, F.H. *Atlas and Review of British Racecourses* (Equitable Publishing Syndicate, London, 1911) pp.78 ff.

## 2. COURSES WHICH EVOLVED OR MODERNISED GRADUALLY

Seven courses fall into this category, the last three being regarded as a transitional stage into the final category of modern enclosed 'park' courses. Croxton Park, however, midway between Melton Mowbray and Grantham, first appeared in the *Racing Calendar* in 1821 and, apart from two blank years soon after, the meeting ran without a break from 1827 until April 1914.<sup>213</sup> A one day meeting, generally just after the Northampton spring fixture, it owed its continued popularity to providing both a social occasion and a 'mixture of top flight professionalism and sporting traditionalists'.<sup>214</sup> It certainly needed some attraction as, even after railways had been opened through Melton Mowbray and Grantham in 1846 and 1850 respectively, the course was still some eight miles from the rail network. Nevertheless, top jockeys such as Flatman, Grimshaw and Fordham, rode there regularly.<sup>215</sup> Several race specials were run to a meeting at Croxton Park on 5 April 1883, when the G.N. branch to Waltham-on-the-Wold was opened to traffic, but the behaviour of the racegoers almost brought about the termination of the meeting.<sup>216</sup> Nevertheless, they continued without interruption, thanks to the generosity of the Duke of Rutland, and sterling work by the G.N.R. in coping with the excursions from various Midland towns and their London connections.<sup>217</sup> Richardson, however, dismissed the meeting as of 'purely local interest' and stated that 'the scene of the action is a long way from a railway station, and by no means easy to reach',<sup>218</sup> In contrast, ten years later, Bayles thought it 'a most enjoyable termination to the hunting season', and paid tribute to the hospitality of the local nobility and the excellent rail services provided.<sup>219</sup> So the

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<sup>213</sup> There must have been earlier meetings, as one of the races, the Billesdon Coplow Stakes, was in its third year. There was a meeting scheduled for 8 April 1915, but this was cancelled before the Jockey Club, at the request of the Government, banned all meetings from 24 May 1915.

<sup>214</sup> Pitt, *Long Time Gone*, p.56. The programmes featured both flat racing and National Hunt events.

<sup>215</sup> See Chapters 4 and 5. For more information, see Franks, D.L. *G.N. and L.N.W. Joint Railway* (Turntable Enterprises, Leeds, 1971) and Walker, C.P. 'The G.N. & L.N.W. Joint Line through Leicestershire', *Railway World*, XXIV, 1963, pp. 323 ff.

<sup>216</sup> *Mansfield & North Notts Advertiser*, 13 April 1883, in reviewing the demise of meetings at Mansfield and Southwell, stated that the Croxton Park meeting had ended, because the Duke of Rutland had 'put his foot down', as 'many crowded excursions came from all parts and the scene on the course was a complete orgie (sic.)'. The blame was ascribed to the 'misconduct of Nottingham twist hands, Sheffield cutlers and Northampton cobblers'.

<sup>217</sup> See Chapters 4 & 5.

<sup>218</sup> Richardson, *English Turf*, p.172.

<sup>219</sup> Bayles, *Atlas*, p.51. *Melton Mowbray Mercury and Oakham & Uppingham News*, 9 April 1914, indicated that there were a greater number of spectators than in recent years, but the races were more open because leading jockeys had favoured the competing meeting at Newbury. Franks, *G.N. and*

meeting continued on its uneventful way until its career was ended by the outbreak of war.

Although there were reports of horse racing in the Liverpool area from the sixteenth century onwards,<sup>220</sup> there were no regular meetings of note except at Ormskirk,<sup>221</sup> until John Formby organised races on his property at Maghull, between Liverpool and Ormskirk, in 1827. But by 1835, these had been eclipsed by those established at Aintree by William Lynn, proprietor of the Waterloo Hotel in Liverpool. The first summer meeting was held at Aintree in July 1829, while Lynn was still associated with the Maghull course, on part of which the first major steeplechase in the Liverpool area was held in February 1836, while the Great Liverpool Steeplechase, held at Aintree in the following year, attracted immense crowds.<sup>222</sup> Liverpool quickly eclipsed St. Albans as the major steeplechase meeting in the country. But in 1839 Lynn had to retire through ill health, and a syndicate of gentry and nobility was set up with 1,000 shares of £25 each to form the first proprietary race course in the country.<sup>223</sup> The inauguration of the Grand National, with its attraction for spectators and gamblers alike, ensured the success of the 'mixed' meetings held there.<sup>224</sup> The Topham family gradually assumed a leading role in the conduct of the meetings and in 1873, on the death of Lord Sefton, Edward Topham took over the lease of the course.<sup>225</sup> Richardson had nothing but praise for 'the finest steeplechase course in the world', as well as for the variety and quality of rail services, which at the end of the nineteenth century brought the crowds, but more particularly 'the right people' to Aintree.<sup>226</sup>

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*L.N.W. Joint Railway*, p.43, recorded that excursions continued to run until 1914, although these were not advertised in the Leicestershire press after 1903.

<sup>220</sup> Moorhouse, *North Western Courses*, p.5.

<sup>221</sup> The Ormskirk meetings ended in 1815 as a result of a local Enclosure Act.

<sup>222</sup> *Liverpool Standard*, 1 March 1837. The details of rail services and facilities have been covered in Chapters 4 & 5. For more comments on crowds in the late 1830s, see Whyte, *British Turf*, I, p.261.

<sup>223</sup> Whyte, *British Turf*, I, pp.260 - 261, described the course as being enclosed by a rail 1½ miles in length, with a straight run-in of 1,200 yards, a four storey grandstand capable of holding 2,000 and six 'common stands', which could accommodate 6,000 people. There were also stables for 50 horses.

<sup>224</sup> Sidney, *Rides on Railways*, pp. 160 - 161 felt Liverpool races 'chiefly matters of business, something like Newmarket, with the addition of a mob! They attracted gamblers, particularly from Manchester, in the wake of cotton speculation, which is gambling.'

<sup>225</sup> Moorhouse, *North Western Courses*, p.9.

<sup>226</sup> Richardson, *English Turf*, pp. 165 - 170. In addition to the special stations described in Chapter 5, the L.Y.R. also used the horse dock and the outer face of the island platform at Sefton Arms station to provide additional passenger facilities on Grand National Day. Spectators also used the trains stabled in Fazakerley Sidings as impromptu grandstands, and some latter-day railway tickets actually bore the warning: 'Standing or sitting on the roofs of the railway carriages is prohibited.'

The somewhat fraught early history of the meeting at Harpenden has been covered in Chapter 4.<sup>227</sup> But by 1902 the *Victoria County History* was asserting that it had the 'reputation of being a small meeting with a well-behaved local crowd, differing much from the rough crowd of a few years back, who turned the Harpenden meeting into a byword of ruffianism.'<sup>228</sup> This transformation was reputedly achieved by 'trainloads of special police, drafted into the area to handle the large crowds and watch for unsavoury characters'.<sup>229</sup> Whatever the reason, the meeting enjoyed an unbroken run from its inception until the First World War, attracting visits from top jockeys, despite occasional calls for its suspension. It was well served by both the G.N. & Midland Railways,<sup>230</sup> and remained an old style 'open' meeting, but able to pay its way, despite alleged date clashes<sup>231</sup> and the increasing displeasure of the Jockey Club, until its final fixture in May 1914.<sup>232</sup>

Although the first meeting at Thirsk in North Yorkshire did not take place until March 1855, the area already supported meetings at Ripon and Northallerton, and it was in the middle of an important training area, with the traditions of the celebrated but long-defunct races at Hambleton still important to those nearby. By the time a new race meeting was mooted in 1853, Thirsk had been served by the main railway line from London to Scotland for twelve years and had a branch through Ripon and Harrogate linking it to Leeds and the industrial areas of the West Riding.<sup>233</sup> The course was laid out on the property of Squire Frederick Bell between the town and the railway station. This was an ideal location and the whole enterprise was very much a local affair, with the first clerk of the course a tallow chandler and the second a

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<sup>227</sup> See Chapter 4, Text and Notes 56 - 59.

<sup>228</sup> Part, C.T. 'Racing' in *Victoria County History - Hertfordshire I* (Archibald Constable, London, 1902) p.368.

<sup>229</sup> Anon., *Harpenden - A Picture History* (Harpenden W.E.A., Harpenden, 1973) p. 35. This was in striking contrast to the attitude of the police at Egham. See Chapter 11.

<sup>230</sup> Special fares and trains were provided by both companies, with through workings from Newmarket. The race card for 27 May 1905 actually quoted return train times by both routes to London, and by G.N. trains to Hatfield, Hitchin and Cambridge.

<sup>231</sup> Part, 'Racing' in *VCH - Hertfordshire I*, p. 368, asserted that 'of late years the number of race meetings has so increased that several of the races are held on the same day (as Harpenden)'. Examination of the *Racing Calendar* showed that little changed between the 1870s and the 1890s, the Friday meetings clashing with Manchester and Salisbury, and occasionally Doncaster. The change to Saturday meetings actually improved the situation, eliminating all clashes except for an occasional one with Hamilton Park, but certainly none in the Midlands or south east.

<sup>232</sup> Brandreth, E. *Harpenden Races* (Harpenden & District Local History Society, Harpenden, 1981) p. 17.

<sup>233</sup> The opening of the York - Darlington main line on 31 March 1841, and of the Thirsk - Ripon branch on 1 June 1848, have been covered earlier.



schoolmaster.<sup>234</sup> Although a fatality at the first meeting gave the local vicar some ammunition in his anti-racing crusade, the mixed flat and hurdle programme, with a cup for half breed horses, was very popular.<sup>235</sup> But the meeting had problems, even though its main cup races brought out large fields of well bred hunters,<sup>236</sup> at least until the National Hunt Committee caused these to be discontinued.<sup>237</sup> With the efforts of Miles l'Anson and others, the Thirsk meeting survived until the First World War, but its days as 'rural primitive sport without thought for parade, luxury or financial return' were over.<sup>238</sup> After the end of the war Sir Loftus Bates set up the Thirsk Race Company, and swept away the old order, the first meeting in the new facilities being held in August 1924.

The races at Datchet Mead, near Windsor predated other meetings in Berkshire, and were often patronised by royalty. Although the modern meeting, held on Clewer Meads, right on the river bank, dated only from 1866, by the 1880s it had built up to between four and six flat race fixtures a year, as well as National Hunt racing. Activity remained at that level for the rest of the review period and, although the standard was generally modest, the cards were well filled and attracted a good following. Two railways had had terminal stations in the town since 1849,<sup>239</sup> and the course could also be reached by steam launch from Staines and Maidenhead.<sup>240</sup> Both railways were well versed in handling crowds for Ascot, and keeping the tight schedules with meticulous attention to detail for Royal Trains, so Windsor races normally presented few problems.<sup>241</sup>

Despite its name, Alexandra Park was really the last of the London 'suburban' courses to be opened, rather than the first of the new style 'park' courses. Its first meeting in June 1868 attracted 40,000 spectators over the two days, so that it was fortunate that the G.N.R. had managed to complete a major enlargement of its Wood

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<sup>234</sup> Fairfax Blakeborough, J. *Thirsk Races* (T.A.J. Waddington, York, 1924) p.15.

<sup>235</sup> Allison, W. *My Kingdom for a Horse* (Grant Richards Ltd., London, 1919) p.42, provides reminiscences of the early days when his father's partner, Mr. Arrowsmith, trained his horses on the local racecourse. Arrowsmith was the owner of Lady Hylde, who raced 23 times in 1849. (See Chapter 8)

<sup>236</sup> Bonnett, 'Racing' in *VCH - Yorkshire II*, p. 509.

<sup>237</sup> Richardson, *English Turf*, p.146.

<sup>238</sup> Fairfax Blakeborough, *Thirsk Races*, p.19.

<sup>239</sup> See Chapter 4.

<sup>240</sup> Bayles, *Atlas*, p.205, described how racegoers from either the G.W. or L.S.W. station could save themselves a considerable walk by paying 2d. to cut through the mill yard at Clewer.

Green station in the same month.<sup>242</sup> Within ten years the racecourse, and the Alexandra Palace complex on the hill overlooking it, would also be served by two terminal branches.<sup>243</sup>

The Alexandra Park meetings restarted after a lapse of three years in July 1872, and the course was able to survive both the various Jockey Club edicts and the yearly licensing by the Metropolitan magistrates until its closure over 90 years later. By the 1880s there were often six meetings a year, although these were generally at the four or five level during the review period. The course was eventually managed very efficiently by Pratt & Co., who were also involved with Folkestone, Gatwick and Lewes, and carried out useful improvements within the limited space available. The venue had a somewhat ambiguous reputation with jockeys, and spectators had a less than complete view of the races from the stands. But, with the formation of the Metropolitan & Country Racing Club in 1897,<sup>244</sup> the programmes were completely revamped, and the 'rough element controlled with a strong hand'<sup>245</sup>.

The meeting at Redcar on the east coast of North Yorkshire, close to the mouth of the Tees, had been a rough and ready affair across the sands with prizes in the £10 to £30 range, but very popular and readily accessible from Teeside and other areas, once the railway had been opened to the town in June 1846.<sup>246</sup> But with its extension to Saltburn in August 1861, and the development of that resort, there was a pressing need to improve the standard of Redcar races. Although the meeting only appeared in the *Racing Calendar* in 1868 and 1870, this was the 'last gasp' of the old style meetings rather than the start of the new regime, as even then some races were 'too insignificant

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<sup>241</sup> See Chapter 4, Text and Notes 89 & 90. Facilities at the G.W. station in Windsor were improved in 1902 when four platforms were lengthened.

<sup>242</sup> Wood Green station, opened on 1 May 1859 on the G.N. main line to Scotland had already been renamed Wood Green (Alexandra Park) on 1 August 1864. In addition to the 1868 station extension mentioned in the text, a further platform was added for Enfield line trains in 1889, and the station underwent more construction work in the following year, which improved the handling of both commuter and race traffic.

<sup>243</sup> See Chapter 6, Note 10, for details of these branches.

<sup>244</sup> Forbes, U.A. 'Racing' in *Victoria County History - Middlesex II* (Archibald Constable, London, 1911) p.265. Bayles, in his *Atlas* published in the same year, pp. 15 - 17, stated: 'This Metropolitan makeshift of a race meeting is the delight of the cockney', despite entrance to the course being 2/6d. It was, however, by then the only race meeting within the London boundary.

<sup>245</sup> Richardson, *English Turf*, p.196.

<sup>246</sup> The Middlesbrough & Redcar Railway was originally authorised to build a line from Middlesbrough through Redcar to Saltburn, but in the event only the section between the places in its title was opened on 3 June 1846. The extension to Saltburn was not opened until 19 August 1861, when the original terminus at Redcar was replaced by a through station on the new line.

for inclusion'.<sup>247</sup> Two local publicans were instrumental in setting up the meetings and enlisting the help of Lord Zetland and other landowners, so that land was obtained close to the station, the course laid out, and a grandstand built in time for the first meeting in August 1872. Progress thereafter was swift - the single day meeting had become two days in 1876, a spring meeting was added three years later, and a third meeting followed in 1880. The spring and summer meetings developed quite distinct prize structures and clientele. The Whitsuntide fixture had relatively modest prizes of £100 and £150 by 1903, while the August meeting had two £500 prizes and a total of £2,700 in prize money. The latter had become the most important Yorkshire meeting after the main meetings at Doncaster and York.<sup>248</sup>

### NEW STYLE 'PARK' COURSES

Although Sandown Park, opened in April 1875, ushered in new concepts in spectator comfort and entertainment, it was neither the first 'gate money' course nor the first 'park' course. It could be described as elitist - 'a garden party with racing thrown in' - but the avowed intention of its founder was to provide a better atmosphere for all classes of racegoers.<sup>249</sup> A club was formed for the wealthier patrons, who each received two ladies' badges, and more could be obtained for a reasonable sum. Comfort, luncheon and music were all available, and paid dividends in attracting female support. As recounted in Chapter 5, the nearby station at Esher had been extended to provide facilities for race specials, some of which were for the sole use of club members. But, for the less affluent, entry to the course was not cheap - 2/6d. against the more usual 6d. or 1/- - Sandown Park quickly built up to five flat race meetings a year, but was also a very popular National Hunt venue. The inauguration of the £10,000 Eclipse Stakes in 1886 put the Classics under pressure and, although it did not always fill in its early days, Manchester, Leicester, Kempton Park and even Newmarket were all driven to stage races of that value (or above) for relatively short periods during the next ten years. But not everyone was pleased with the layout of the course,

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<sup>247</sup> Bonnett, 'Racing' in *VCH - Yorkshire II* p. 509.

<sup>248</sup> Fairfax Blakeborough, *Racecourses of Yorkshire*, p.27. Even Richardson, *English Turf*, pp. 143 - 144, bewailed the fact that Redcar's August meeting often clashed with Kempton Park, so that southern racegoers did not always give their support to the northern circuit after the 'Sussex Fortnight'.

<sup>249</sup> Many of its innovations were foreshadowed by the short lived Hippodrome at Bayswater (1837-41). See Whyte, *British Turf*, I, pp. 275 - 277.

possibly because the stands were about a quarter of a mile from the finish. Before it was reconstructed, some commentators felt that 'Sandown Park is undoubtedly the most popular enclosure in the kingdom, and yet its course is in many ways quite the worst'.<sup>250</sup>

The second of the 'park' courses, and like Sandown about 15 miles from London, was Kempton Park, near Sunbury. Opened in July 1878,<sup>251</sup> it was quickly provided with a special station on the L.S.W. Shepperton branch.<sup>252</sup> Although well laid out and furnished with every amenity, particularly for the 'better off' racegoer, it did not have the pretensions of Sandown Park, and this was reflected in the course entry price of 1/- . Normally during the period under review there were five or six flat race meetings and the same number of National Hunt fixtures, but in some years as many as eight meetings under Jockey Club rules took place. Kempton Park made a major contribution to the growth of Saturday racing, with the consequent pressure on leading jockeys, and its Bank Holiday meetings were particularly well supported.

The next two 'park' courses in chronological order of opening were Hurst Park and Gatwick, but these have already been treated as continuations of Hampton and Croydon. The next new course to be addressed here was at Lingfield (or Lingfield Park), some three miles north of East Grinstead. Richardson regarded Lingfield as the 'presumed' successor to the steeplechase meeting at Edenbridge,<sup>253</sup> and this was reflected in the fact that it opened first to jump racing in 1890, with flat racing following in May 1894. The course had a fine setting, enhanced by superb gardens, and close to Lingfield station, to which it was connected by a 'pleasant pathway'.<sup>254</sup> Notwithstanding all these advantages, the venue was new to followers of flat racing, and a little more remote from London than its fellows, so it struggled a little at first, but was soon staging five or six flat race meetings a year, complemented by a similar number of National Hunt fixtures.

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<sup>250</sup> Richardson, C. 'Racing' in *Victoria County History - Surrey II* (Archibald Constable, London, 1905) p.508. Nevertheless, Allison, *My Kingdom for a Horse*, p. 225. felt that Sandown Park was the salvation of racing in the neighbourhood, as the 'old suburban courses had become so scandalous as to be almost unendurable'.

<sup>251</sup> Forbes, 'Racing' in *VCH - Middlesex II*, p.265 errs in stating that Kempton Park was not opened until 1889.

<sup>252</sup> See Chapter 5, Text and Notes 24 - 27.

<sup>253</sup> Richardson, *English Turf*, p.195. National Hunt meetings at Edenbridge, about two miles north east of Lingfield, were held from 1869 to 1891.

Although sporadic flat race meetings at Folkestone had been recorded in the *Racing Calendar* between 1850 and 1854, and again in 1867 to 1870, these were not sufficiently frequent to merit inclusion in an earlier section. So the course constructed at Westenhanger, about five miles west of Folkestone, is considered to be a completely new venture. Situated close to the existing Westenhanger station, opened in 1844, the course was inaugurated for National Hunt racing at the end of March 1898, the first flat race fixture not taking place until August, although these quickly rose to three or four each year during the review period. At first the enterprise looked destined for failure, but enterprising management provided free stabling, fodder and accommodation for lads, while the S.E.R. provided support and encouragement in various forms.<sup>255</sup> This helped owners to send horses, for which they would not normally wish to incur travelling expenses,<sup>256</sup> so that, while the prize money was low even by 1906 with £300 as the major prize, the fields were well filled and the meeting survived.

There had been intermittent meetings near Newbury in Berkshire during the eighteenth century, and a concentrated attempt to set up a high class fixture was made between 1805 and 1815 with all the appropriate social attractions, including performances by stars of the London stage.<sup>257</sup> In view of the large number of racing stables which developed in the area, it seems strange that no serious attempt was made to restart the meetings until John Porter, having retired from a most successful career as a trainer, put forward a plan for a racecourse on a stretch of land south of the G.W. Reading - Newbury line, just west of the town. Although this may have been thought a great asset for the area, and had in fact been mooted as early as November 1897 when

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<sup>254</sup> Richardson, 'Racing' in *VCH - Surrey II* p. 512. For the railway facilities, see Chapter 5, Text and Notes 59 & 60.

<sup>255</sup> See Chapter 5, Text and Note 64.

<sup>256</sup> Bonnett, F. 'Racing' in *Victoria County History - Kent I* (Archibald Constable, London, 1908) p.498 and Richardson *English Turf*, p. 198. Bonnett stated that the S.E.C.R. (as the S.E.R. was known from 1900 when it operated with the L.C.D.R. via a joint committee) was the only railway company to offer free transport for racehorses to and from meetings, but a similar facility was provided by the G.E.R. for the National Hunt meetings at Bungay in Suffolk.

<sup>257</sup> Meetings took place between 1805 and 1812 on Enborne Heath, south west of Newbury, on land belonging to the Earl of Craven, and then up to 1815 on Woodhay Heath, where a more ambitious programme was offered. Thereafter there were no major flat race meetings around Newbury until 1905. For more details see *Racing Calendar 1805 to 1815*, Ditchfield, P.H. 'Sport Ancient and Modern' in *Victoria County History - Berkshire II* (Archibald Constable, London, 1908) p.308, and Boyd, D. *The Running Horses - A Brief History of Racing in Berkshire from 1740* (Berkshire County Libraries, Reading, 1978) pp. 9 - 10.

Stockbridge was known to be closing,<sup>258</sup> with Lloyd Baxendale, the owner of the land, an enthusiastic supporter, the Jockey Club at first refused to grant a provisional licence. Extensive lobbying, and even an approach by King Edward VII, was necessary before a licence was granted. The G.W.R. was, however, most supportive and provided a special station.<sup>259</sup> 15,000 spectators were at the opening day on 26 September 1905, and the large fields were equally encouraging.<sup>260</sup> A steeplechase course was provided in the following year, and by 1907 there were fixtures for much of the year. Both racecourse and station are still in use today, despite near obliteration by a railway installation during the second world war.<sup>261</sup>

The last course in this survey - Hooton Park in Cheshire - did not survive the First World War and its requisitioning by the War Office, although its final meeting was not until April 1915. It had been opened for National Hunt racing in May 1899, and up to five meetings a year were being held when flat racing started in 1906. Bayles was full of praise for its attractions and ease of access,<sup>262</sup> as it was about 1½ miles from Hooton station on the Birkenhead - Chester line, opened on 23 September 1840,<sup>263</sup> on which there were regular trains to and from London. Nevertheless, like a number of racecourses including Clifton Park and Gatwick, Hooton Park became an airfield, although it ultimately disappeared under the Vauxhall car plant.<sup>264</sup>

## CONCLUSION

This section has demonstrated that the problems encountered by the 48 courses which survived until the First World War, were very similar to those which caused the 126 closures reviewed in the previous section. The key element in survival was the determination of those involved to keep going. The railways were there as facilitators, but were in no way instrumental in failure or success.

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<sup>258</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 18 November 1897 '... in the immediate neighbourhood of many noted training grounds, and being only an hour's run from Paddington by express train'.

<sup>259</sup> See Chapter 5, Text and Notes 78 - 80.

<sup>260</sup> Rickman, *Horseracing*, p.167.

<sup>261</sup> In August 1942 it became a U.S. Army railway marshalling yard. There were 22 miles of sidings and over 200,000 cubic yards of hardcore on the site but, despite all the odds, it was reborn as a racecourse and held its first meeting under Jockey Club rules on 1 April 1949. The racecourse station also survived and more surprisingly became a regular public station on 16 May 1988.

<sup>262</sup> Bayles, *Atlas*, pp.199 ff.

<sup>263</sup> By the time Hooton Park was opened, it was possible to travel by train to and from Liverpool, as the Mersey Railway had opened its link to the Birkenhead - Chester line on 15 June 1891.

<sup>264</sup> Pitt, *Long Time Gone*, p. 91.

## CONCLUSION

Flat racing in 1914 was very different in form and essence from the sport in 1830. But was this achieved by evolution or by revolution - and were the railways the driving force? Vamplew and most other sports historians certainly seem to think so.<sup>1</sup> But the writer contends that the changes, radical as they were in retrospect, were achieved by a mixture of evolution and revolution, both coming largely from within the sport itself - with the railways acting as facilitators rather than prime movers. Moreover, railways really had little direct impact on the short revolutionary phase of flat racing development during the nineteenth century, their major contribution - however immediate and striking in its own right - being to assist in the gradual evolution of the sport.

To underpin this view, there has been detailed research into events and trends within flat racing prior to the review period, so that the twin themes of continuity and change could be placed in the correct perspective and context. Certainly, the railways revolutionised travel for horses, but not necessarily the plans and activities of their owners. Moreover, the move to the racing of younger horses had started in earnest in the mid-eighteenth century, and had accelerated from 1790 onwards. By 1817, some 45 per cent of all horses racing were two and three year olds, and this level would remain remarkably consistent for a further thirty years.<sup>2</sup> Thereafter, it is true, the figure rose to 70 per cent, but this was driven both by the need for more horses to fill out an afternoon's sport following the demise of races in heats, and the increased number of shorter races - generally with larger fields - at the new enclosed courses mainly in the London area. The railways were there to transport the horses, but the trends were driven by the increased interest of the general public in betting, as the availability of up-to-date information on race form and results was facilitated by the spread of the electric telegraph,<sup>3</sup> a development fostered by, and almost exactly contemporary with, the growth of the trunk railway system.

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<sup>1</sup> Vamplew, W. *The Turf* (Allen Lane, London, 1976) p.36, Vamplew, W. *Pay Up and Play the Game* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988) p.47, Brailsford, D. *British Sport: A Social History* (Lutterworth Press, Cambridge, 1992) pp. 85 ff., Tranter, N. *Sport, Economy and Society in Britain 1750 - 1914* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998) p.34.

<sup>2</sup> Whyte, J.C. *History of the British Turf* (Henry Colburn, London, 1840) I, pp. 134 - 135 was already bemoaning this trend and the practice of putting successful three year olds to stud.

<sup>3</sup> Huggins, M.J. *Flat Racing and British Society 1790 - 1914* (Frank Cass, London, 2000) pp. 27 ff.

Comparative chronology is a vital tool in determining the cause and effect of trends and events in flat racing in relation to the development of the rail network, whether the closure of an individual racecourse,<sup>4</sup> the transport of horses by road or rail,<sup>5</sup> or the decimation and reprofiling of an entire sport during the 1870s and 1880s. These topics have been covered in the body of the thesis and the resultant conclusions stated, so it is not proposed to reiterate these in detail. But the views expressed by Tranter in a recent social and economic history of sport cannot go unchallenged: ‘... in the brief period encompassing the third quarter of the nineteenth century, the sport [horseracing] was transformed by the effect of rail travel on the mobility of horses, jockeys, officials and spectators from a localised activity of mediocre standard to a thoroughly commercial and professional recreation, based around a calendar of major meetings, drawing their participants from all parts of the country.’<sup>6</sup> This quotation, which encapsulates the views of many sports historians, provides a useful backcloth against which to review the conclusions of this thesis.

Here, even before there is any discussion of the involvement and effect of railways, the chronology is faulty. Up to 1870 flat racing had continued to evolve naturally with a minimum of restraint, and it was only in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, precipitated by the actions and decrees of the Jockey Club, coupled with the parallel development of ‘new style’ enclosed courses, that the transformation was achieved. The various individual assertions within the statement can also be challenged and disproved. Racing at the top level was not a ‘localised activity’, as throughout the nineteenth century there was always ‘a calendar of major meetings’; seven or eight meetings at Newmarket, together with Ascot, Epsom and Goodwood, and, perhaps a little below them, Doncaster, York, Liverpool and Manchester. Leading owners, horses and jockeys, wherever they were based, visited all of these regularly, although it is true that those based in the north tended to be more circumscribed than those at Newmarket or from the south. But nothing was intrinsically changed at these major

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<sup>4</sup> Brailsford, *British Sport*, p. 85. For Blandford, see Chapter 9, Text and Note 85. Nottingham Racecourse station is another case in point, see Chapter 5, Text and Notes 55 - 58.

<sup>5</sup> Chapter 8, Text and Note 16. Bentinck would have adopted a totally different strategy to lengthen the odds against Elis for the St. Leger, if this had been in 1839 rather than in 1836. Holland, A. *Stride by Stride: The Illustrated History of Horseracing* (Macdonald, London, 1989) p.106 fails to recognise that railway horseboxes predated the use of road vans as a means of transporting racehorses at speed, so the date of 1825 quoted has no relevance or substance.

<sup>6</sup> Tranter, *Sport, Economy and Society*, p.34. Also Ford, J. *This Sporting Land* (New English Library, London, 1977) p.141.



venues until the 1870s, and thereafter only gradually, while the second rank courses were still there to form a core of some forty to fifty meetings a year. The trunk railway system was effectively completed in the fifteen years between 1837, with the opening of the Grand Junction Railway,<sup>7</sup> and 1852, when the South Wales Railway was connected to the main network. Later developments with any relevance to flat racing, except perhaps the lines through mid-Wales, either duplicated or enhanced the existing principal routes.

So, if the railway was responsible for all Tranter has claimed,<sup>8</sup> why did racecourses proliferate, particularly at the lower levels, continuing their upward trend of the previous 70 years to reach 136 in 1869, only to be more than halved in just ten years? As demonstrated in Chapters 9 to 11, the Jockey Club engineered this from 1870 onwards by an effective restriction of trade and activity, destroying the free and natural ebb and flow life cycle of the lesser traditional racecourses. Moreover, by also eliminating a large number of long-established courses, their actions ultimately led to a greater degree of localisation than in earlier times. Flat racing in Wales came to an end in 1876, and in the south west, where there had been 25 courses in 1869, there were only nine a decade later. By the end of the century there were only two, and none further west than Bath and Salisbury.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, the increasing number of fixtures allocated to the new courses within 25 to 30 miles of London meant that by 1909 there were three times as many meetings in that area as there had been in 1829, although there were two fewer courses. The change was identified by Richardson in 1901, for there was little attraction for 'the Londoner, who can see 100 days' racing on his own doorstep...' to go elsewhere - and in this case he was talking about Newmarket, rather than some remote course.<sup>10</sup> This was certainly true, if betting and the excitement

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<sup>7</sup> In many ways, 1837 was a much more significant date than either 1825 (opening of the Stockton & Darlington Railway) or 1830 (opening of the Liverpool & Manchester Railway), for it was only then that long-distance rail travel became a reality. What should also not be forgotten is that main line railways, and particularly steam locomotives, had taken over thirty years to reach this stage, but transport development had not stood still, with massive improvements in road construction and the speed and comfort of stage coaches.

<sup>8</sup> See also Vamplew, *Pay Up and Play the Game*, p. 47 where it is stated that 'from the mid 1850s they [railways] encouraged a structural shift in the organisation of racing, ....'

<sup>9</sup> The artificiality of this situation, driven almost wholly by financial pressures created by the minimum prize money requirements, can be judged by the number of courses which continued to flourish - or were reinstated - under National Hunt Rules. There was the tight little group of Totnes, Newton Abbot, Buckfastleigh and Exeter, with Plymouth to the west, and, later, Taunton to the east. All survived well into the twentieth century, and three are still with us.

<sup>10</sup> Richardson, C. *The English Turf* (Methuen, London, 1901) pp. 46 - 47.

derived from it were the only interests of the racegoer - for once a course was enclosed there was little else to attract a family group - hence the continuing attraction of 'Derby Week', for those who just wanted a good day out.

There is also no evidence that 'proximity to a railway soon became crucial to the success of a course'.<sup>11</sup> The arrival of the railway did not stimulate the revival of a declining or recently defunct meeting, nor did the provision of a dedicated racecourse station guarantee success, as was demonstrated at Hull, Portsmouth Park, Keele Park and other venues. Why did Keele Park fail, when Woore, somewhat further along the Stoke to Market Drayton line and more remote from the railway itself, continue to flourish into the second half of the twentieth century? One reason was the greater level of expense incurred at Keele Park, but the underlying problem was that support from owners and spectators was poor. Portsmouth Park, only 15 minutes from Portsmouth by train, was another case in point. In some instances, as at Weymouth, visitors came to the town by rail, but could not be enticed onto the racecourse.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, there is little evidence to support the statement made by Brailsford and Vamplew,<sup>13</sup> among others, that the railways were responsible for the closure of many country and less important town courses. This has been amply demonstrated in Chapters 9 to 11, where the causes of closure have been defined and analysed. Richmond and Catterick Bridge were on the same branch line, opened in 1846, off the York - Darlington main line. Richmond closed in 1891, because of the withdrawal of support by the Earl of Zetland, which reflected the attitude of many of the residents in this fair-sized market town.<sup>14</sup> Catterick Bridge had a much smaller community, but the ongoing support of the Lawson family and the locals ensured its survival, despite its relative remoteness - at least from a Londoner's perspective.<sup>15</sup> It has also been shown that proximity to a major city with multiple rail access was not in itself sufficient for success or even for survival.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Tranter, *Sport, Economy and Society*, p. 34.

<sup>12</sup> Chapter 11, Text and Notes 13 - 15.

<sup>13</sup> Brailsford, *British Sport*, p. 85, Vamplew, *Turf*, pp. 36 - 37.

<sup>14</sup> Chapter 11, Text and Notes 22 - 25.

<sup>15</sup> Chapter 12, Text and Notes 162 - 165. Richardson, *English Turf*, p.147.

<sup>16</sup> This was true of Leeds, Sheffield, Bristol, Glasgow (to some extent, as Paisley was only about seven miles away), and even of Birmingham until the establishment of Bromford Bridge in 1895.

While the contrast between the 'mediocre standard' of early racing and the 'thoroughly commercial and professional recreation',<sup>17</sup> seems obvious on the surface, it was not just the difference between a few older horses fighting their leisurely way through up to four heats of two miles or more, and often occupying a whole afternoon in the process, against relatively large fields of mostly two and three year olds galloping through five or six shortish sprints in the same time. A professional approach to the sport started quite early, whether with the improvements at Ascot in the late 1830s, the attempts of Lord George Bentinck to raise the standard of conduct at race meetings - improving starts and timekeeping and attacking corruption - or Admiral Rous with his expert handicapping techniques, which, barely modified, are still used today. All these contributed to the growing professionalism of the sport, but had nothing to do with the railways. Since at least the late eighteenth century there had been a commercial approach associated with the erection of grandstands and the recovery of their capital costs, together with the charges elicited for refreshments booths, drinking dens and gambling tents - although on many courses the latter were supposed to be banned, but still paid a surreptitious rent. This having been said, the average race committee really only wanted a good day's sport and all expenses settled without dipping too much into their own pockets - with ideally a small surplus towards the following year's meeting. But consider the case of Manchester. In just over 20 years the committee moved from a rent of £30 a year in 1846 to £500 a year after £10,000 initial expense in 1847, only to be forced into the purchase of 100 acres and the full costs of laying out a course and its attendant buildings in 1867 - so a growing commercialism was absolutely imperative. There was no railway involvement here, just the termination of the lease, and the whole process had to be repeated at the end of the century.

But, having established the course to cater for the betting public, more races needed more prizes and more entries to pay for these. Even 6d. or 1/- entrance charge to the course with a crowd of 10,000 only yielded £250 or £500, and a two day meeting needed £1,000 to £1,500 if there were five races a day. Vamplew has argued that 'the railway companies helped raise the level of prize money from £198,990 in 1843 to £315,272 in 1874. They did this indirectly by bringing in more spectators and directly

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<sup>17</sup> Tranter, *Sport, Economy and Society*, p. 34.

by sponsoring races.’<sup>18</sup> But this was not so. Firstly, the chronology is wrong. Within this time frame the vast majority of racecourses did not charge for entrance to the ground, although other charges were gradually increased, and this was particularly true of Epsom and Doncaster where the big prize money was paid during the first seventy years of the nineteenth century. Both has always enjoyed large crowds, but, while the railway greatly increased the attendance at Doncaster, at Epsom only a fraction came by train, even though over 250,000 might on occasion attend. But the contention of the effect of the ‘direct’ contribution from race sponsorship can more easily be disproved - not merely for railway companies - but for all types of sponsorship. As both commercialism increased and the anti-racing pressures exerted on public figures, such as MPs, grew during the second half of the nineteenth century, there was a marked diminution in this type of support. The detailed examination has been reviewed in Chapter 6, and it is sufficient to summarise here the amount of prize money and railway sponsorship (in brackets) at the dates mentioned by Vamplew: 1843 - £198,990 (£110.10/-), 1874 - £315,272 (£350) and 1901 - £493,890 (£200). General sponsorship was also in decline, but here it is more difficult to be precise, because of the carry-over of ‘sponsorship’ titles into commercially-funded races. From the research carried out, a maximum figure of £25,000 (5.1%) in 1901 can be postulated, but a more likely level would be in the range £1,000 (0.2%) to £10,000 (2.0%), as the only three confirmed sponsorship sums for that year amounted to £800 in total. Moreover, in 1905 two thirds of all prize money still came from subscriptions by owners themselves.<sup>19</sup>

Returning finally to those other two travellers - horses and jockeys - research has shown that while the railway greatly facilitated the speed and comfort of their journeys, the requirement for these rested with the owners and the evolution of the sport which from the 1860s onwards gave both participants a six-day week. The railways had made no real impact on the habits of a wide spectrum of racehorse owners, as discussed in Chapter 8, and commercialism more than altruism drove the trend to retire successful horses at an earlier age and reduce the travels of the less successful,

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<sup>18</sup> Vamplew, *Turf*, p. 32.

<sup>19</sup> Dalzell, Lord Hamilton of ‘The Financial Aspects of Racing’, *Badminton Magazine*, XXIII, 1906, p.252. Commercial sponsorship would not become a major factor in horseracing for well over fifty years. Munting, R. *Hedges and Hurdles* (J.A. Allen & Co. Ltd., London, 1987) p. 75.

although as Cook pointed out, it was this last group which suffered the most.<sup>20</sup> The railways were still there and even expanding, but the requirement itself had diminished. Conversely, the pressure on leading jockeys - but possibly only the top ten - increased once again in the last thirty years of the century, when the Saturdays on which the champion jockey was racing grew from six in 1874 to 31 in 1899, and remained at this level until the First World War. But again this is a function of the sport itself and, as the analyses in Chapter 7 have clearly shown, even as early as 1854 a jockey, if he could not optimise his work pattern with sufficient rides at each course, condemned himself to excessive travelling. The railways might contribute to his suffering, but they did not cause it.

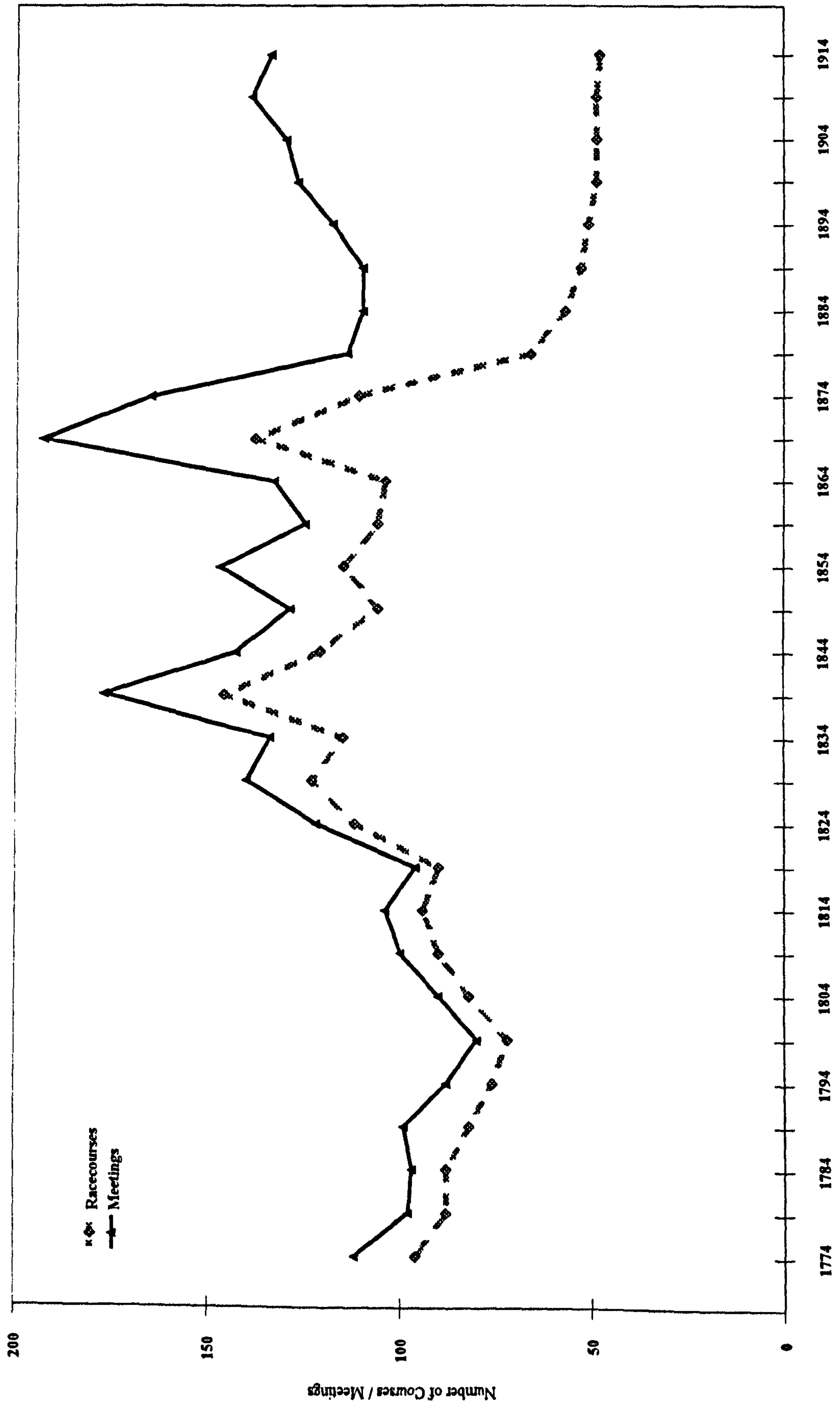
In fact, as the writer has attempted to show in this study, the railways contributed many things to the development of flat racing during the nineteenth century, and certainly facilitated and assisted certain trends and events. But the weight of evidence demonstrates that most change came from within the sport itself. The seeds may have been sown earlier, but the action did not start until 1870 when the Jockey Club finally made its previous tenuous control a reality, and within less than twenty years had totally reshaped the industry - for this is what it had become - and made it fit to survive in the twentieth century.

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<sup>20</sup> Cook, T.A. *A History of the English Turf* (H. Virtue & Co. Ltd., London, 1901) pp. 576 - 577.

# **APPENDICES**

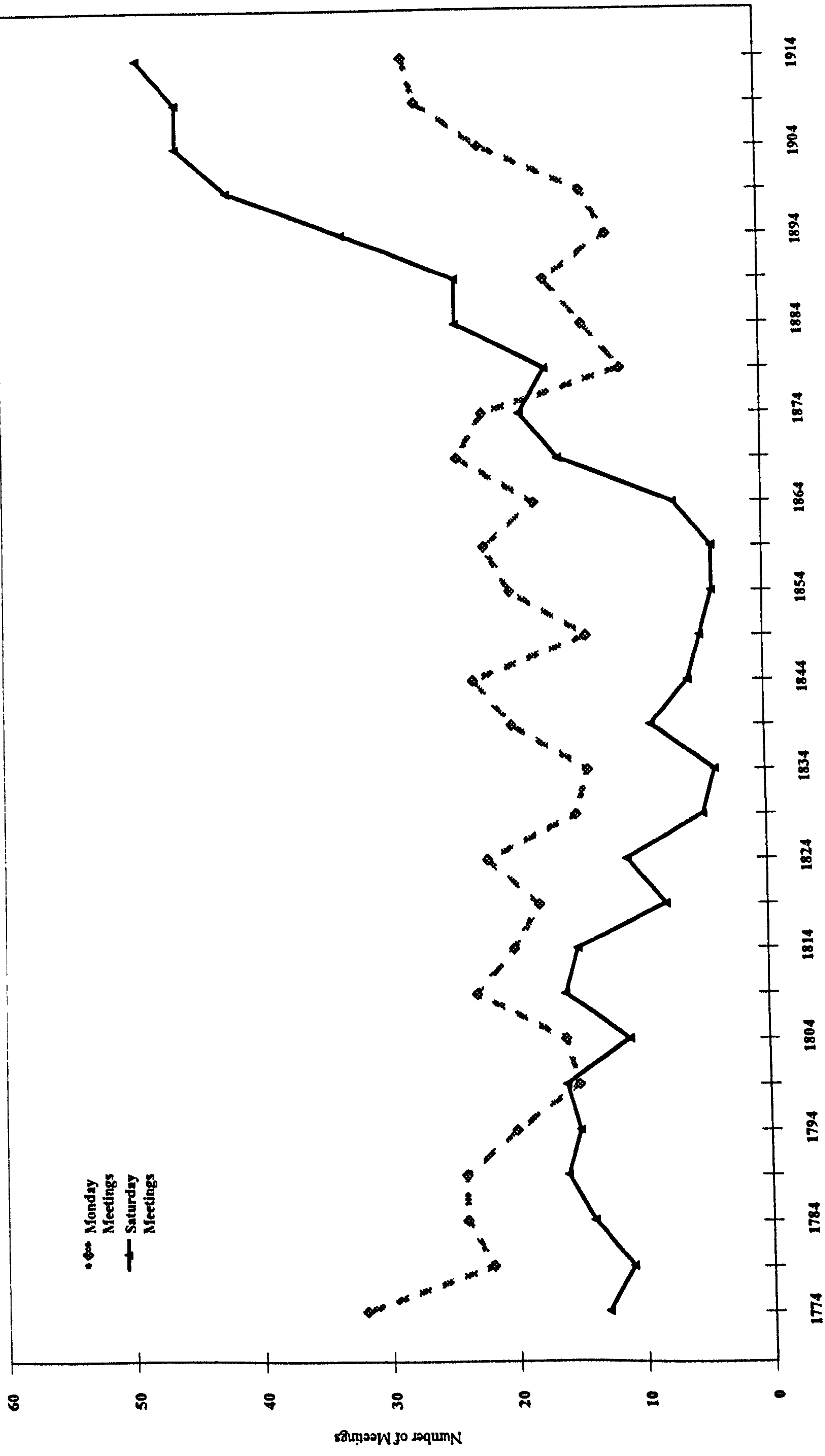
Racecourses and Race Meetings 1774 - 1914



Note: 1914 Figures include 24 scheduled meetings cancelled due to outbreak of war.

Source: *Racing Calendar*

**Analysis of Flat Race Meetings on Monday & Saturdays 1774 - 1914**



Source: Racing Calendar



**Regional Analysis of Racecourses and Meetings 1829 – 1914**

Area	London & S.E.		East Anglia		South West		Midlands		North West		North East		Wales		Scotland		Total	
	C	M	C	M	C	M	C	M	C	M	C	M	C	M	C	M	C	M
1829	16	18	6	12	23	24	36	40	14	15	14	17	8	8	6	6	123	140
1834	16	19	5	11	20	25	30	32	19	20	13	15	7	7	5	5	115	134
1839	20	22	6	12	22	25	50	55	11	21	14	18	14	14	9	10	146	177
1844	17	22	7	15	12	14	40	44	15	17	13	14	8	8	9	9	121	143
1849	19	23	6	12	16	19	29	32	10	15	15	16	6	7	5	5	106	129
1854	21	25	8	14	11	13	32	39	13	20	15	21	7	7	8	8	115	147
1859	15	17	7	13	17	18	28	33	9	12	18	20	6	6	6	6	106	125
1864	22	26	6	12	14	15	24	31	9	16	16	19	6	6	7	8	104	133
1869	27	55	7	15	25	27	32	40	10	14	18	23	6	6	11	13	136	193
1874	19	42	6	14	17	18	29	38	9	12	19	26	4	4	8	11	111	165
1879	14	36	4	10	9	10	12	18	5	10	16	23	0	0	6	7	66	114
1884	12	33	2	8	5	6	13	25	5	9	14	22	0	0	6	6	57	109
1889	10	32	2	8	3	4	13	27	5	9	14	22	0	0	6	8	53	110
1894	12	43	2	9	4	5	12	26	5	10	10	17	0	0	6	8	51	118
1899	13	48	2	9	2	3	11	29	5	12	10	18	0	0	6	8	49	127
1904	13	49	2	9	2	3	11	29	5	11	10	20	0	0	6	9	49	130
1909	14	54	2	9	2	3	10	28	6	13	11	24	0	0	4	8	49	139
1914	14	51	2	9	2	4	10	28	6	13	10	22	0	0	4	7	48	134

Source: *Racing Calendar***Key**

C = Number of Racecourses

M = Number of Meetings

**Notes**

1914 figures include 24 scheduled meetings cancelled due to outbreak of war.

**Special Racecourse Stations & Stations with Additional Facilities  
for Racegoers & / or Racehorses**

Racecourse	Station Name(s)	Class	Railway	First Meeting Date
Ascot	Ascot West	S	LSWR	Before 1899
	Ascot Racecourse Platform	S	LSWR	13/06/1911
	Ascot	E	LSWR	18/06/1878
Ashey (IOW)	Ashey Racecourse	S	IWCR	April 1882
Birmingham	Bromford Bridge (1)	S	MR	09/03/1896
Bogside (Irvine)	Bogside (2)	S	GWSR	After 1885
	Bogside Racecourse			
Cheltenham	Cheltenham Racecourse Platform	S	GWR	13/03/1912
Croxton Park	Waltham-on-the-Wold (3)	S	GNR	05/04/1883
Derby	Racecourse Horse Dock (4)	H	MR	1855 / 6 ?
	Derby Racecourse Siding	H	GNR	16/03/1885
Doncaster	Cherry (Tree) Lane	S	GCR	16/09/1851
	St. James Bridge			
	St. James Station			
	Marshgate Sidings/Station	S	GCR	11/09/1860
	Shakespeare Sidings	S	GNR	11/09/1860
	Goods Sidings			
	South Dock			
	Locomotive Sidings	S	GNR	15/09/1863
Epsom	York Road	S	GC/H&BR	09/09/1919
	Epsom Downs	E	LBSCR	30/05/1865
	Epsom Racecourse			
	Tattenham Corner	E	SECR	04/06/1901
Folkestone	Tattenham Corner (5)	S	SECR/SR	29/04/1919
	Westenhanger Racecourse (6)	E	SER	30/03/1898
Gatwick	Westenhanger Racecourse	S	SER	By 1907
	Gatwick	S	LBSCR	07/10/1891
Goodwood	Gatwick Racecourse			
	Singleton	E	LBSCR	26/07/1881
Haydock Park	Haydock Park Racecourse	S	GCR	10/02/1899
	Haydock (Racecourse)			
Hedon (Hull)	Hedon Racecourse (7)	S	NER	24/08/1888
Keele Park	Keele Park (8)	S	NSR	26/10/1896
Kempton Park	Kempton Park	S	LSWR	18/07/1878
Lanark	Lanark Racecourse Halt	S	CR	27/09/1910
Lingfield Park	Lingfield (9)	E	LBSCR	16/05/1894
Liverpool	Aintree (Racecourse) (10)	S	CLC	13/07/1880
	Aintree Cinder Lane	S	LYR	27/03/1890
	Aintree Racecourse			
	Aintree Sefton Arms (11)	E	LYR	?
Manchester	Agecroft (12)	S	LYR	30/08/1838
	Agecroft Bridge			
	Racecourse (13)	S	LYR	11/04/1898
	(Pendleton) Brindle Heath (Racecourse)	H	LYR	By 1904
Newbury	Newbury Racecourse	S	GWR	26/09/1905
Newcastle (on Tyne)	Killingworth Sidings Platform (14)	S	NER	By October 1903
Newmarket	Newmarket Warren Hill	S	GER	21/04/1885
	Newmarket High Level (15)	H	GER	15/04/1902

Racecourse	Station Name(s)	Class	Railway	First Meeting Date
Newton	Newton Racecourse (16)	S	Private line from LNWR	20/06/1832
Nottingham	Nottingham Racecourse	S	GNR	19/08/1892
	Nottingham Racecourse Siding	H	GNR	19/08/1892
	The Hall Sidings			
Plumpton	Plumpton (17)	E	LBSCR	After 1884
Portsmouth Park	Farlington Race Station (18)	S	LBSCR	26/06/1891
	Farlington			
Redcar	Redcar (19)	S	NER	After 1872
Rothbury	Rothbury	S	NBR	24/04/1900
Sandown Park	Esher	S	LSWR	20/04/1882
Stratford on Avon	Stratford on Avon Racecourse Platform	S	GWR	06/05/1933
Wetherby	Wetherby Racecourse	S	LNER	c.1924
Wycherley Park	Paulsgrove Halt	S	SR	28/06/1933
York	Holgate Excursion Platform (20)	S	NER	28/08/1861
	York Racecourse			

### Key

Class of Facilities are :

- S = Special station/platform separate from normal station
- E = Extra platforms / facilities as part of main station
- H = Stations/facilities catering for horses and attendants only

### Notes

Special station names varied from time to time, and those known have been listed

Railway initials are for major pre-grouping company only, ignoring timescale, except for openings after 1923

Opening (and, where applicable, closure dates) are for first (and last) meeting when the facility was used - not official opening or closure date

### Comments

1. First flat race meeting, 6 April 1896
2. Became regular public station 1 June 1894, last meeting 5 April 1894
3. The station was also used for Waltham carnivals and horsefair each September
4. Meetings on 12 March, 28/29 August 1855, and 19 February, 4/5 September 1856.
5. This is the same station as above, but was used only for race specials from outbreak of war until electric train services started in 1928
6. First flat race meeting 17 August 1898
7. Closed between May 1895 and August 1908. Final closure September 1909
8. Last meeting 17/18 October 1906
9. First steeplechase meeting 1890, first flat race meeting 1894, when extra facilities were in place
10. Last use on 10 August 1884 before opening to normal passenger services on 1 September 1884
11. Possibly added when station rebuilt in 1912, but may be earlier
12. May have been used for meeting on 5-9 June 1838. Superseded by Pendleton by 1843
13. Although in use for the last flat race meeting on 21-23 November 1901, there were two further National Hunt meetings on 10/11 December 1901 and 1/2 January 1902, before the opening of the Castle Irwell Course
14. Opened between 1882 and 1903
15. Originally the passenger terminus of the Newmarket Railway
16. Probably closed before last meeting in July 1898
17. Plumpton Racecourse was opened in 1884
18. Closed 28 June 1894, but used for National Hunt meetings from April 1899 to outbreak of First World War
19. Used also for holiday excursions
20. May have been used on 14/15 May 1861

Direct Sponsorship of Flat Races by Railway Companies 1831 – 1911

Area	London & South		Midlands & Wales		North East England		North West England		Scotland		East Anglia		Total	
	No.	£	No.	£	No.	£	No.	£	No.	£	No.	£	No.	£
1831	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0
1836	2	75	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	75
1841	1	50	-	-	2	60	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	110
1846	5	405	-	-	2	25	5	115	3	100	1	30	16	675
1851	8	300	1	20	-	-	-	-	2	75	-	-	11	395
1856	7	305	2	45	1	15	-	-	2	100	1	100	13	565
1861	18	968	1	25	-	-	-	-	2	50	1	100	22	1143
1866	15	705	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	55	2	125	19	885
1871	6	230	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	100	7	330
1876	4	230	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	100	5	330
1881	2	208	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	100	3	308
1886	3	315	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	200	4	515
1891	1	105	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	200	2	305
1896	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	200	1	200
1901	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	200	1	200
1906	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	200	1	200
1911	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	200	1	200

Source: *Racing Calendar*

### Comparison of Champion Jockeys' Activities 1849 – 1914

Champion Jockey	E Flatman	J Wells	G Fordham	J Grimshaw	G Fordham	F Archer	F Archer
Year	1849	1854	1859	1864	1869	1874	1879
Number of Winners	94	82	118	164	95	147	197
First Meeting	28 Feb.	1 Feb.	8 Mar.	26 Feb.	16 Feb.	24 Mar.	25 Mar.
Last Meeting	27 Oct.	16 Nov.	18 Nov.	24 Nov.	25 Nov.	27 Nov.	22 Nov.
Length of Season (Days)	242	289	256	273	283	249	243
No. of Days Racing	75	121	117	134	102	143	144
% Total	31%	42%	46%	49%	36%	57%	59%
No. of Saturdays Racing	1	2	1	2	1	6	9
No. of Sundays Racing	-	-	-	1	1	2	1
* 6 Day Meetings Attended	1	1	1	1	-	1	-
* 5 Day Meetings Attended	3	1	3	3	4	1	1
* 4 Day Meetings Attended	4	7	6	8	4	11	10
* 3 Day Meetings Attended	6	6	6	4	7	9	9
* 2 Day Meetings Attended	8	20	21	30	15	28	29
* 1 Day Meetings Attended	5	21	12	9	15	8	13
Total Meetings attended	27	56	49	55	45	58	62
Av. length of Meeting (Days)	2.8	2.1	2.4	2.4	2.3	3.0	2.3
No. of Courses visited	20	39	35	39	31	38	34
No. of Days (%) at Newmarket	30 (40%)	21 (17%)	27 (23%)	24 (18%)	29 (29%)	30 (21%)	29 (20%)
+No. of Days (%) spent at suburban / park London courses	2 (3%)	2 (2%)	4 (3%)	4 (3%)	11 (11%)	17 (12%)	31 (22%)
Total miles travelled (approx.)	4,270	9,775	7,200	8,830	6,625	8,550	9,080

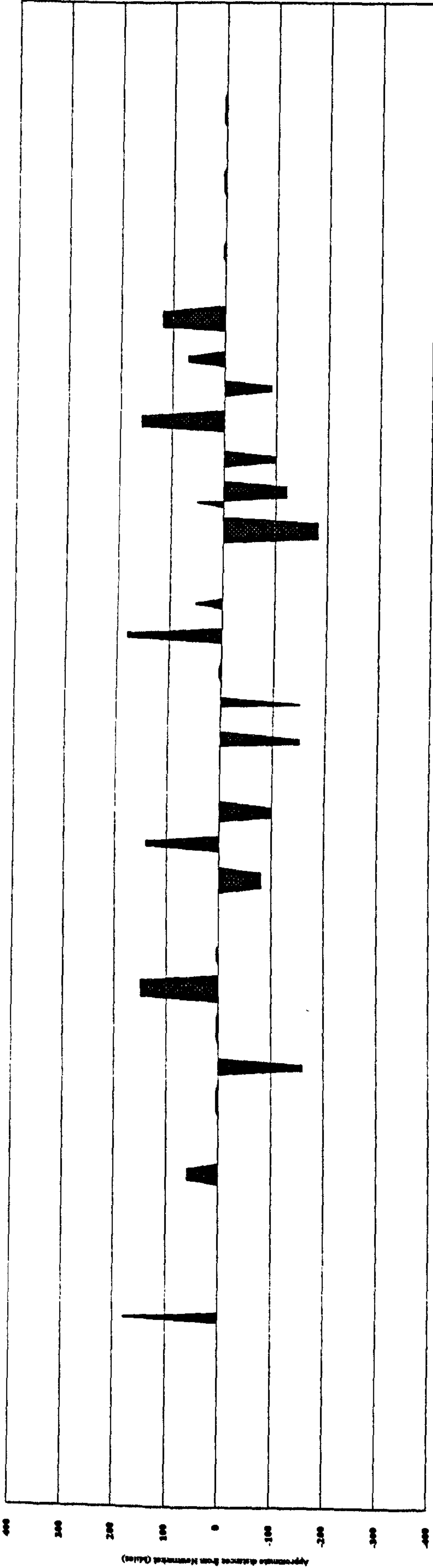
Champion Jockey	F Archer	T Loates	M Cannon	S Loates	O Madden	F Wootton	S Donoghue
Year	1884	1889	1894	1899	1904	1909	1914
Number of Winners	241	167	167	160	161	165	129
First Meeting	24 Mar.	25 Mar.	26 Mar.	20 Mar.	21 Mar.	22 Mar.	23 Mar.
Last Meeting	6 Nov.	23 Nov.	24 Nov.	25 Nov.	19 Nov.	27 Nov.	28 Nov.
Length of Season (Days)	229	244	244	251	245	251	251
No. of Days Racing	132	165	161	179	172	167	164
% Total	58%	68%	66%	71%	70%	67%	65%
No. of Saturdays Racing	10	17	19	31	30	27	30
No. of Sundays Racing	3	3	3	-	2	1	-
* 6 Day Meetings Attended	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
* 5 Day Meetings Attended	2	2	-	-	-	-	-
* 4 Day Meetings Attended	9	6	9	10	10	8	11
* 3 Day Meetings Attended	10	15	14	14	11	13	13
* 2 Day Meetings Attended	21	35	32	38	35	37	26
* 1 Day Meetings Attended	14	17	17	22	31	21	31
Total Meetings attended	56	75	72	84	87	79	81
Av. length of Meeting (Days)	2.5	2.2	2.2	2.1	2.0	2.1	2.0
No. of Courses visited	31	34	29	30	36	30	30
No. of Days (%) at Newmarket	29 (22%)	28 (17%)	30 (19%)	29 (16%)	29 (17%)	25 (15%)	29 (18%)
+No. of Days (%) spent at suburban / park London courses	20 (15%)	35 (21%)	40 (25%)	42 (23%)	48 (28%)	43 (26%)	40 (24%)
Total miles travelled (approx.)	9,220	10,575	10,330	10,770	10,430	9,305	9,865

Source: *Racing Calendar***Notes**

\* No. of days attended by jockey. Any days jockey is either not racing, or racing elsewhere, are ignored.

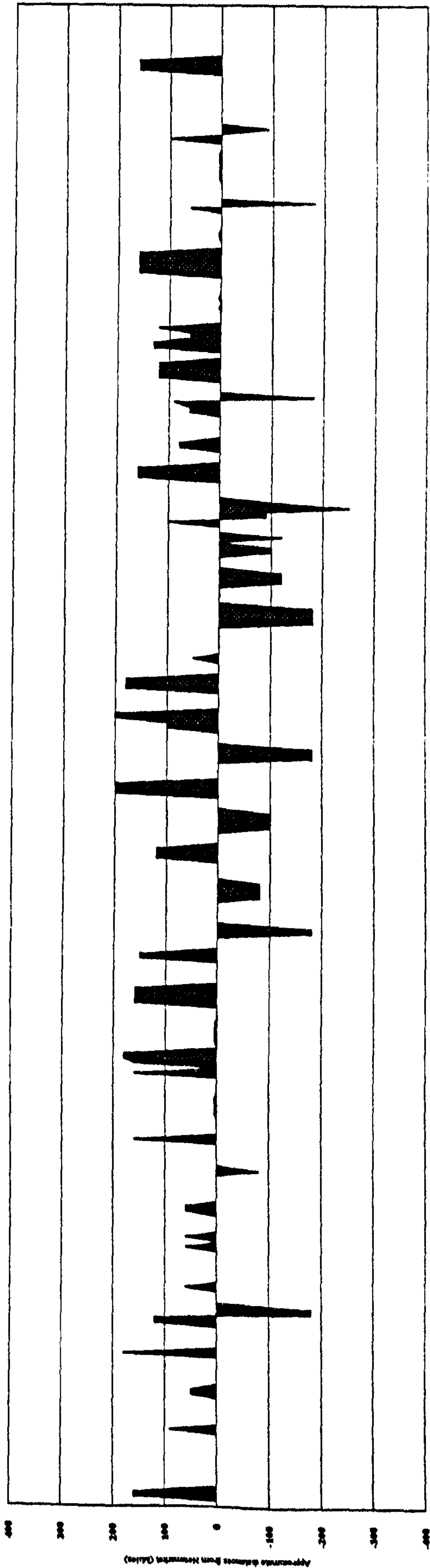
+ This covers such racecourses as Egham, Croydon, Kingsbury (Hendon), Hampton, Harrow, Windsor, Gatwick, West Drayton, Kempton Park, Sandown Park, Lingfield Park, Hurst Park and Alexandra Park.

E. Flatman - Travel Activity Chart 1849



Activity: 28th February - 27th October 1849  
Statistics: Wins 94, Days Racing 75, Miles Travelled 4270

J. Wells - Travel Activity Chart 1854



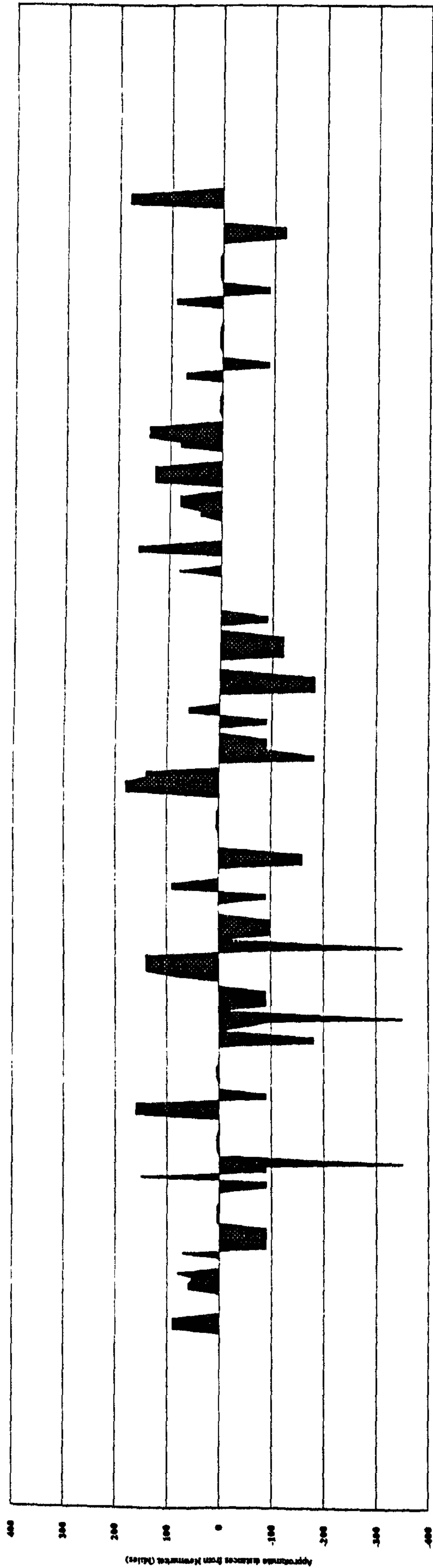
Activity: 1st February - 16th November 1854  
Statistics: Wins 82, Days Racing 121, Miles Travelled 9775

Notes

'0' = Newmarket, Racing at Newmarket = 5 miles on scale, '+Miles' = Distance north of Newmarket, '- Miles' = Distance south of Newmarket

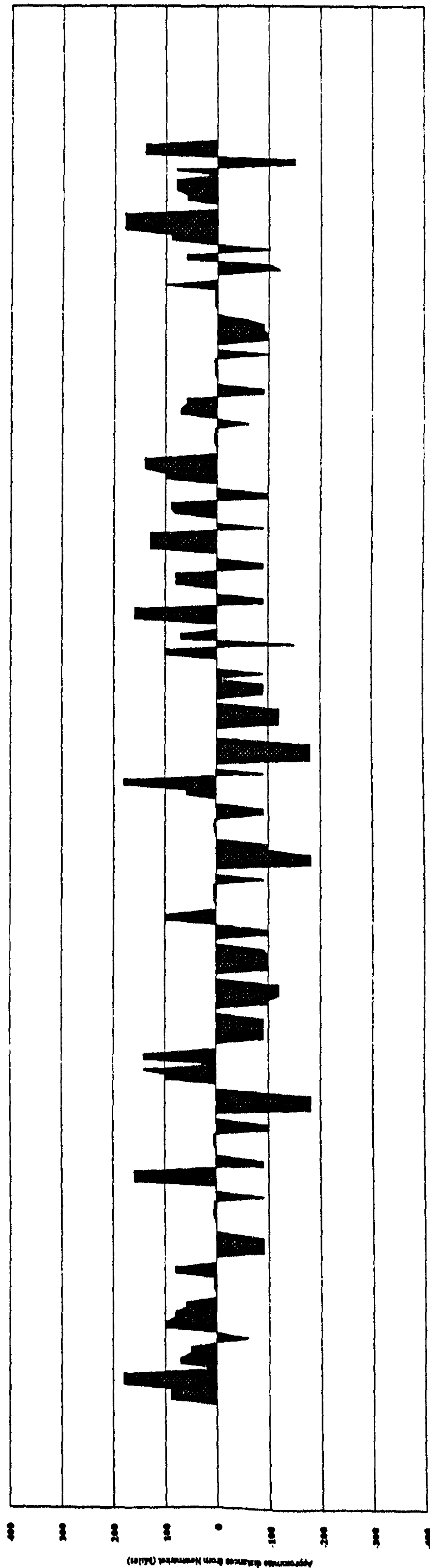
Source: Calculated from Racing Calendar

**F Archer - Travel Activity Chart 1884**



Activity: 24th March - 6th November 1884  
Statistics: Wins 241, Days Racing 132, Miles Travelled 9220

**S Loates - Travel Activity Chart 1899**



Activity: 20th March - 25th November 1899  
Statistics: Wins 160, Days Racing 179, Miles Travelled 10770

**Notes**

'0' = Newmarket, Racing at Newmarket = 5 miles on scale, '+ Miles' = Distance north of Newmarket, '- Miles' = Distance south of Newmarket

Source: Calculated from *Racing Calendar*

Regional Analysis of Meetings Visited by Champion Jockeys 1849 – 1914

Champion Jockey	E Flatman		J Wells		G Fordham		J Grimshaw		G Fordham		F Archer		F Archer	
Year	1849		1854		1859		1864		1869		1874		1879	
Area	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Newmarket	7	25	5	9	6	12	5	9	6	13	7	12	7	11
East Anglia	-	-	-	-	2	4	-	-	1	2	-	-	2	3
London & South East	5	19	9	16	8	16	9	16	15	34	16	28	225	40
South West	4	15	7	13	7	14	6	11	5	11	6	10	3	5
Midlands	5	19	16	28	17	35	20	36	10	22	18	32	13	21
North West	4	15	9	16	3	7	6	11	4	9	7	12	7	11
North East	2	7	9	16	6	12	6	11	3	7	2	3	3	5
Wales	-	-	1	2	-	-	2	4	-	-	-	-	-	-
Scotland	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2
Ireland / Belgium / France	N/A	-	N/A	-	N/A	-	1	2	1	2	2	3	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>100</b>

<b>Available Meetings</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>355</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>54</b>
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Champion Jockey	F Archer		T Loates		M Cannon		S Loates		O Madden		F Wootton		S Donoghue	
Year	1884		1889		1894		1899		1904		1909		1914	
Area	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Newmarket	7	13	7	9	8	11	8	10	8	9	7	9	8	10
East Anglia	-	-	1	1	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
London & South East	18	32	29	39	32	44	39	47	41	47	37	47	36	45
South West	4	7	4	5	4	5	4	5	4	5	4	5	5	6
Midlands	15	27	20	28	16	22	23	27	22	25	18	22	19	23
North West	6	11	7	9	7	10	7	8	6	7	7	9	9	11
North East	3	5	4	5	2	3	2	2	4	5	4	6	3	4
Wales	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Scotland	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-
Ireland / Belgium / France	3	5	3	4	3	5	-	-	2	2	1	1	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>100</b>

<b>Available Meetings</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>110*</b>	<b>74</b>
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Source: *Racing Calendar***Notes**

\* In 1914 there were to be 134 flat race meetings, but 24 were cancelled because of the outbreak of war.



Analysis of Selected Owners' Activities 1829 – 1849

Owners Name	Year	Horses	Total Races	Races at Newmarket	Total Meetings	Meetings at Newmarket	Courses Visited	Main Area Visited
Marquis of Exeter	1829	13	62	47	11	7	5	Newmarket, Epsom, Ascot, Goodwood, etc.
Mr Beardsworth	1829	5	33	0	15	0	14	North West and Midlands
Mr L Day	1829	6	50	0	18	0	16	Midlands, South and West
Marquis of Tavistock *	1829	6	19	8	10	4	7	Newmarket and local meetings
Marquis of Exeter	1839	16	74	55	13	7	7	As 1829, but more courses
Mr L Day	1839	7	41	3	16	3	14	As 1829, but also Newmarket and Goodwood
Mr Barrow	1839	2	26	0	16	0	16	North West and Midlands
Mr J.O. Fairlie	1839	9	47	0	16	0	15	South, Midlands and Scotland
Earl of Eglinton	1839	15	96	2	23	1	22	Scotland, North, but also Newmarket/Goodwood
Marquis of Tavistock *	1839	7	24	13	11	5	7	Newmarket and local meetings
Mr Arrowsmith	1839	1	3	0	2	0	2	North
Marquis of Exeter	1849	29	160	98	18	7	12	As 1839, but with York, Warwick, Huntingdon, etc.
Mr L Day	1849	8	40	2	20	2	17	As 1839, but Epsom and Liverpool
Mr T. Dawson	1849	16	86	2	30	1	28	Everywhere
Mr Arrowsmith	1849	2	24	0	12	0	12	North
Mr Gregory	1849	4	22	4	13	2	12	South, West, Newmarket and Chester
Mr Rolt	1849	4	37	12	17	7	11	Newmarket and South
Earl of Eglinton	1849	12	45	4	16	2	14	As 1839, but less busy
Duke of Bedford *	1849	20	98	88	14	7	8	Newmarket and little else

Source *Racing Calendar***Notes**

\* By 1849 the Marquis of Tavistock had become the Duke of Bedford

Collectively, in 1829, 41 of the 123 courses were visited (33%)

Collectively, in 1839, 61 of the 146 courses were visited (42%)

Collectively, in 1849, 57 of the 106 courses were visited (54%)

Analysis and Age Profile of Horses Racing 15 Times or More per Year 1829 – 1914

Year	Total Horses Racing	Horses Racing 15+	%	Age Profile of Total Horses Racing				Age Profile of Horses Racing 15+ Times			
				2 & 3 Yrs	%	4+ Yrs	%	2 & 3 Yrs	%	4+ Yrs	%
1829	(1,166)	8	0.7	(503)	43	(663)	57	2	225	6	75
1834	(1,239)	6	0.5	(545)	44	(694)	56	1	17	5	83
1839	(1,213)	14	1.2	(541)	45	(672)	55	1	7	13	93
1844	(1,289)	16	1.2	(597)	46	(692)	54	3	19	13	81
1849	1,315	15	1.1	683	52	632	48	5	34	10	67
1854	-	78	-	-	-	-	-	37	47	41	53
1859	1,645	107	6.5	1,081	66	564	34	78	74	29	26
1864	1,948	107	5.4	1,212	62	736	38	63	59	44	41
1869	2,534	165	6.5	1,515	60	1,019	40	115	70	50	30
1874	1,965	113	5.8	1,282	65	683	35	54	48	59	52
1879	2,113	97	4.6	1,477	70	636	30	49	51	48	49
1884	1,982	50	2.5	1,412	71	570	29	25	50	25	50
1889	2,131	53	2.5	1,539	72	592	28	24	46	29	54
1894	2,906	41	1.4	2,034	70	872	30	21	51	20	49
1899	3,753	29	0.8	2,497	67	1,256	33	9	29	20	71
1904	3,019	40	1.3	2,038	68	981	32	17	42	23	58
1909	3,850	42	1.1	2,422	63	1,428	37	12	29	30	71
1914	3,906	21	0.5	2,508	64	1,398	36	8	38	13	62

Source: *Racing Calendar*

**Notes**

Brackets indicate that totals for 1827, 1832, 1837 & 1843 have been used for 1829, 1834, 1839, & 1844, as no figures are available for these years.

No total for 1854, as the 'Racing Calendar' has no figures between 1849 & 1859

1904 does not include horses racing in Ireland.

**Analysis of Causes of Closure of Established Racecourses 1840 – 1909**

Main Cause of Closure	1840 - 9	1850 - 9	1860 - 9	1870 - 9	1880 - 9	1890 - 9	1900 - 9	Total	%
General decline in support or lack of interest	3	3	7	6	3	1	-	23	18.2
End of major patronage	1	-	-	3	-	1	-	5	4.0
Change of owner or end of lease	-	-	1	1	-	1	1	4	3.2
Use for other purposes	1	2	-	1	1	-	-	5	4.0
Competition	2	2	1	1	-	-	-	6	4.7
Financial failure	-	-	-	2	2	1	-	5	4.0
Problems in organisation	2	-	3	3	2	1	2	13	10.3
Religious opposition	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	0.8
Jockey Club stipulation on minimum prize money	-	-	-	8	1	-	-	0	7.1
Continuation as 'unauthorised' meetings	1	3	3	4	1	1	-	13	10.3
Continuation as National Hunt meetings	-	2	1	20	6	-	-	29	23.0
Specific cause not identified	3	3	1	6	-	-	-	13	10.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Notes**

This covers only courses having 10 or more appearances in 'Racing Calendar' 1830 - 1909, hence the 1840 start date.

'Closure' indicates last appearance for flat racing.

Chronology of Last Meeting in 'Racing Calendar' 1840 – 1909

Racecourse	Years Open 1830-1909	Closure Date	Arrival of Railway	Reason for closure (or continuation as 'unauthorised' or National Hunt)
Buxton	11	18/06/1840	1863	Decline in support. Too early for railways to have any effect.
Bishops Castle	10	09/07/1840	1866	Decline in support. Too early for railways to have any effect.
Burton-on-Trent	11	18/08/1840	1839	Nothing specific, but increasing interest in participative sports; grandstand demolished 1842.
Ashford	11	09/09/1840	1842	Specific cause not identified.
The Pottery	12	04/08/1841	1848	Competition from Newcastle meeting, & lessening of interest due to demographic change
Blandford	15	29/08/1844	1860	Difficulty in attracting runners after disagreement on forfeits due to date change.
Shifnal	12	14/05/1846	1849	Competition from well-established meetings in immediate area
Welshpool	10	21/10/1846	1860	Specific cause not identified.
Marlow	11	05/08/1847	1873	Decline in support, possibly affected by revival of Reading in 1843.
Dumfries	18	13/10/1847	1848	Required for agriculture, but scarcity of runners had been a problem
Penrith	15	28/10/1847	1846	Continued at a lower level until at least 1886
Dudley	12	18/07/1848	1850	Dispute with owner over payment for work.
Burton Constable	12	12/04/1849	1864	Withdrawal of patronage when owner ceased to be Master of the Hunt
Leominster	22	07/08/1851	1853	Specific cause not identified
Tunbridge Wells	20	11/09/1851	1845	Competition from the Tonbridge meeting, which replaced it.
Aberystwyth	22	20/11/1851	1864	Steeplechasing continued until at least 1883
Taunton	16	24/08/1852	1842	Intermittent support and decline despite main line railway. National Hunt racing started 1927.
Holywell Hunt	15	20/10/1852	1848	Specific cause not identified.
Sandbach	12	28/09/1853	1842	Specific cause not identified.
Rugeley	11	07/10/1853	1847	Continued at a lower level until at least 1860
Stirling	18	12/10/1854	1848	Religious anti-racing pressure after death of main patron
Glamorganshire (Cowbridge)	13	07/11/1855	1865	Lapsed on revival of meeting at Cardiff, but National Hunt continued until 1939.
Tavistock	17	06/05/1856	1859	Steeplechase meetings continued until 1865.
Eccles	17	03/09/1856	1831	Decline in support and general disorderliness
Lancaster	27	09/07/1857	1840	Used for agriculture by long-standing owner of the land
Beccles	21	09/09/1857	1854	Decline in support, always a struggle to survive
Stourbridge	29	13/07/1858	1852	Required for housing development
Swansea & Neath	16	31/08/1858	1850	Continued at a lower level until at least 1864.
Barnet	18	07/09/1858	1850	Continued at a lower level until 1870, when land needed for a railway station
Cheadle	12	10/09/1861	1901	Continued at a lower level until 1875, as they had between 1824 and 1837
The Hoo (Herts)	30	26/04/1862	1860	Decline in support, although still a meeting for gentlemen riders
Malton	27	23/05/1862	1845	Used for agriculture by new owner
Marlborough	22	25/07/1862	1864	Continued at a lower level until 1874
Newport (Salop)	16	19/08/1862	1849	Specific cause not identified.

Racecourse	Years Open 1830-1909	Closure Date	Arrival of Railway	Reason for closure (or continuation as 'unauthorised' or National Hunt)
Haverfordwest	15	20/11/1862	1854	Steeplechase meetings continued until 1901, with those at nearby Pembroke lasting until 1914
Hartlepool	12	28/07/1863	1839	Disagreements in race committee and local community on ownership of meeting.
Newcastle-u-Lyme	27	20/09/1865	1852	Decline in support, due to lesser importance of Newcastle, & possible pressure for use as coal mine.
Downham	12	25/07/1866	1846	Competition and low level of support.
Hastings	21	21/08/1867	1851	Decline in support, even good rail connections having failed to stimulate a revival
Newton Abbot	10	14/08/1868	1846	Decline in support, but possible effect of nearby meetings. Ultimately set up National Hunt meeting.
Bridgwater	22	08/09/1868	1841	Decline in support, even with excellent rail access - possibly continued at a lower level.
Brecon	38	14/09/1868	1848	Problems in organisation.
Oswestry	20	18/09/1868	1863	Decline in support. Meetings effectively ended 1848.
Belford	11	21/09/1868	1847	Decline in support, unaffected by arrival of railway
Redditch	21	17/05/1869	1859	Continued at a lower level until at least 1874
Hungerford	21	25/08/1869	1847	Organisational difficulties, and withdrawal of chief promoter
St. Albans	10	07/06/1870	1858	Decline in support. Meetings effectively ended 1837, due to transfer to Gorhambury
Airdrie	18	15/07/1870	1844	Continued at a lower level
Guildford	26	25/08/1870	1845	Decline in support. Meetings effectively ended 1854.
Kings Lynn	12	08/09/1870	1846	Unable to meet Jockey Club minimum prize money requirements.
Upton-on-Severn	21	04/11/1870	1864	Decline in support. Meetings effectively ended 1853
Bridgnorth	26	28/03/1871	1862	National Hunt meetings continued until 1939
Abergavenny	21	28/04/1871	1854	National Hunt meetings continued until 1889.
Lyndhurst (New Forest Hunt)	10	28/06/1871	1847	Specific cause not identified.
Margate (Isle of Thanet)	16	21/08/1871	1846	Raceground sold, but already in decline
Whitehaven	16	24/04/1872	1847	National Hunt meetings continued until 1890
Wilmslow	14	05/09/1872	1842	Continued at lower level until 1880
Tenby	10	03/10/1872	1863	National Hunt meetings continued until 1936
Stamford	44	22/07/1873	1846	End of patronage, following death of 2nd Marquis of Exeter
Knutsford	42	08/08/1873	1862	Failure of race company
Bedford	44	01/10/1873	1846	End of patronage, following death of 8th Duke of Bedford
Tarporley	12	05/11/1873	(1840)	(Railway about 4 miles away - no change) National Hunt meetings continued until 1939
Bromyard	23	28/05/1874	1874	National Hunt meetings continued until 1900
Stokesley	10	01/06/1874	1857	National Hunt meetings continued until 1881
Tenbury	37	25/06/1874	1861	National Hunt meetings continued until 1904
Mansfield	25	13/07/1874	1849	Decline in support and general lack of interest
Tiverton	27	10/09/1874	1848	National Hunt meetings continued until 1882
Tonbridge	19	11/09/1874	1842	Unable to meet ongoing Jockey Club minimum prize money requirements, and crowd problems
Reading	32	11/11/1874	1840	Withdrawal of organiser and transfer of lease
Eastbourne Hunt	10	10/05/1875	1849	End of major patronage and support

Racecourse	Years Open 1830-1909	Closure Date	Arrival of Railway	Reason for closure (or continuation as 'unauthorised' or National Hunt)
Abingdon	46	27/07/1875	1856	Death of organiser, and no one willing to take on his duties
Rochester & Chatham	32	28/08/1875	1858	Specific cause not identified. Really ended 1860
Monmouth	41	24/09/1875	1857	National Hunt meetings continued until 1933
Stafford	16	29/09/1875	1837	Decline in support . Meetings effectively ended 1847
Royston	13	23/11/1875	1850	Decline in support
Knighton	47	07/04/1876	1861	National Hunt meetings continued until 1882
Hoylake	22	08/04/1876	1866	Competition from Royal Liverpool Golf Club, which used same ground from 1869
Cheltenham	34	20/04/1876	1843	National Hunt meetings still continue today
Cambridge	18	26/04/1876	1845	National Hunt meetings continued until 1925
Glamorganshire (Cardiff)	25	03/05/1876	1840	Inability to meet Jockey Club prize money requirements from 1877
Ludlow	44	05/05/1876	1852	National Hunt meetings still continue today
West Drayton	12	06/06/1876	1838	Financial failure
Southwell	12	08/06/1876	1847	National Hunt meetings still continue today. Flat racing restarted in 1989
Hawick	11	20/06/1876	1849	National Hunt meetings continued until 1886
Radcliffe	37	04/08/1876	1846	Continued at a lower level .
Wenlock	47	04/08/1876	1862	National Hunt meetings continued until 1939
Walsall	41	15/08/1876	1847	Specific cause not identified.
Exeter	28	23/08/1876	(1846)	(Railway about 5 miles away until 1882.) Specific cause not identified. National Hunt racing did not start until 1898.
Totnes	26	08/09/1876	1847	National Hunt meetings continued until 1938
Gloucester	18	04/10/1876	1840	Inability to meet Jockey Club prize money requirements from 1877
Coventry	31	17/10/1876	1838	Specific cause not identified
Wrexham	36	20/10/1876	1846	Used as barracks and training ground for militia
(Lee, Gravesend &) Eltham	13	21/10/1876	1866	Inability to meet Jockey Club prize money requirements from 1877
Hendon & Kingsbury	14	20/09/1877	1867	Refusal of magistrates to grant drinks licence and inability to meet Jockey Club prize money requirements
Chesterfield	48	10/10/1877	1840	Continued at a lower level until at least 1907
Bristol	12	23/04/1878	1840	Unable to sustain Jockey Club prize money requirements
Wye	27	29/05/1878	1846	National Hunt meetings continued until 1974
Streatham	10	01/11/1878	1856	Unable to sustain Jockey Club prize money requirements, and refusal of licence to continue
Odiham	32	24/06/1879	1838	Unable to sustain increased Jockey Club prize money requirements
Canterbury	50	20/08/1879	1830	Specific cause not identified.
Chelmsford	50	18/09/1879	1843	National Hunt meetings continued until 1935
Bromley	15	07/05/1880	1858	Decline in support.
Oxford	35	20/08/1880	1844	Organisational problems of various types
Northallerton	48	22/10/1880	1841	Inability to meet increased Jockey Club minimum prize money requirements, and some course deficiencies
Southampton	31	28/06/1881	1839	Financial failure.
Aldershot	20	23/07/1881	1849	National Hunt meetings continued until 1927.

Racecourse	Years Open 1830-1909	Closure Date	Arrival of Railway	Reason for closure (or continuation as 'unauthorised' or National Hunt)
Dover	38	26/08/1881	1844	Decline in support after move out of town, and difficulty in meeting Jockey Club minimum prize money
Weymouth	51	28/08/1882	1857	Decline in support.
Ipswich	54	03/04/1883	1846	National Hunt meetings continued until 1911
Morpeth	37	10/05/1883	1847	Continued as an unauthorised meeting.
Hereford	48	28/09/1883	1853	National Hunt racing still continues today
Egham	55	20/08/1884	1848	Organisational problems mainly associated with crowd disturbances
Plymouth	55	27/08/1885	1849	National Hunt meetings continued until 1930
Shrewsbury	57	05/11/1886	1848	Organisational and financial problems following death of John Frail
Winchester	58	13/07/1887	(1839)	(Railway not within 3 miles until 1909.) National Hunt meetings continued until 1896
Durham	54	19/07/1887	1844	University authorities refused to renew lease
Kelso	55	28/08/1888	1850	National Hunt racing still continues today
Richmond	62	07/08/1891	1846	End of major patronage, but also decline in local support
Perth	54	23/09/1892	1847	Continued as unauthorised meeting. National Hunt meetings did not start until 1908
Scarborough	33	26/08/1893	1845	Financial difficulties, with crowd violence and crime a contributory factor
Lichfield	65	26/09/1894	1847	Objections from the army, whose barracks were nearby.
Huntingdon	52	23/07/1896	1847	Decline in support, also affected by establishment of steeplechase course nearby
Stockbridge	69	07/07/1898	1865	Refusal of owner to renew lease for racing
Northampton	75	31/03/1904	1845	Jockey Club refused to sanction further racing on safety grounds
Palsley	67	09/08/1907	1837	Jockey Club refused to sanction further racing on safety and other grounds
Hamilton Park	20	31/08/1907	1849	Refusal of owner to renew lease. Racing restarted 1926.

**Notes**

'Years Open' indicates number of years meeting appeared in 'Racing Calendar'

'Closure Date' indicates last appearance in 'Racing Calendar'

'Arrival of Railway' date is for station within 3 miles of course.

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