

PLATE I



EDWARD, 12TH EARL OF DERBY.

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RACING IN SURREY.

BY

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President of the Society.

OUR Editor has asked me to contribute an article to our next volume on this subject, but I fear I must at once say I am no authority, for beyond a few laborious and, I regret to say, not very glorious rides in Oxford "grinds" many years ago, and an occasional modest contribution to the income of that deserving class, the bookmakers, my experience of racing is small indeed.

We may pride ourselves on our Surrey racing record—it may not be as distinguished as that of Cambridgeshire—but our history goes back further than does that of Newmarket, and in the Derby we have the most famous of all races in the world.

In England horse racing is mentioned as far back as the reign of Henry II by Fitzstephen, a monk of Canterbury and secretary to Thomas à Becket, who in his description of London gives an account of races at Smithfield; but by the time of Elizabeth racing seems to have been less in general public favour. It is not mentioned, for instance, among the entertainments provided for the Queen by Lord Leicester at Kenilworth; and Comnenius (*Orbis Sensualium Pietas*) tells us that tilting or the quintain had taken the place of horse racing. However, Messrs. Weatherby record that Queen Elizabeth attended races at Croydon in April 1585, and in 1587 and 1588, and an old work in their possession says that Croydon was "the Ascot of those days." In 1585 a stand was erected for the Queen and the accounts show that "The Apparelers were engaged 6 days making ready the Archiepiscopal Palace and also a standing against the running of the horses."

Regular racing in Surrey seems to have begun in the days of James I. We have never perhaps entertained lively feelings of admiration for that monarch ; but he had his points—he was a good sportsman. He was a keen hunting man and perhaps as keen on racing. He must have inherited his proclivities from his mother who was well known as a rider to hawk and hound, for I am sure that Darnley was no sportsman ! James, according to Youatt, was the founder of racing in Scotland. Racing then was apparently a very popular sport north of the Tweed, for in James' reign it was necessary to restrain big betting by forbidding any person to win more than 100 marks in one bet—any surplus went to the poor.

According to Pownall (*Hist. of Epsom*, 1825) there may have been in Elizabethan days some primitive forms of racing on Epsom, or as they seem then to have been called, Banstead Downs—one form was by means of a drag and a pack of drag-hounds, the horse first up at the finish being the winner ; and the other was the "wild goose chase" which seems to have been a sort of steeplechase—*i.e.* the competitors rode for some conspicuous object in the distance such as a church steeple, or else it seems to have been decided by one man starting in front and the others riding to catch him. Very possibly these were the first attempts at racing on Epsom Downs, and probably also King James replaced them there by more modern methods, for the late Mr. Alfred Watson in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* tells us that James lived much at the Palace of Nonsuch and when there held races on the Downs.

Certainly James instituted or revived the races at Croydon which, with Gatherly, Enfield and Chester, shares the honour of holding the first modern race meeting in England, as racing does not appear to have been started at Newmarket until the reign of Charles I.

James I seems to have understood his business, for the races at Croydon in his day were conducted upon the same principles and with much the same rules as at present. Horses were trained and prepared for racing by food, physic, sweating, clothing and exercise. Weights were carefully adjusted ; the usual weight of the jockeys being 10 stone. James was also a breeder. He bought the Markham Arabian, the first Arab

probably to be imported into this country, and paid £500 for him. The Duke of Newcastle writing in 1658 described him as a little bay horse, not well shaped, who was beaten in every race he ran in—so that in James' time English race-horses had evidently reached some degree of perfection. A circumstance which is further proved by Basompierre, who tells us that in the time of James I many English horses were imported into France, and the English system of keeping and managing horses adopted there.

In these early days the big races were called " Bell Courses " from the fact that the prize used to be a silver bell.

The next reference, after James I's day, to horse racing at Epsom occurs in Clarendon's *History of the Rebellion*. Here he tells us that in 1648 a meeting of the Royalists was held on Banstead (Epsom) Downs under the pretence of a horse race: so that horse racing at Epsom must have been well-established by that time; but the Civil War doubtless hindered the development of racing, and it is not till the reign of Charles II that we hear more of the sport in Surrey. It was at the end of the seventeenth century that the fame of the Mineral Springs at Epsom reached its height. They had first been discovered in the reign of Elizabeth; but it was not till after the accession of Charles II that they became fashionable. Perhaps the vogue of Epsom grew on account of its proximity to London, its natural beauty, its facilities for sport and last but not least, the destruction of Nonsuch Palace. The wonderful palace of Henry VIII was given by Charles II to his rapacious mistress, Barbara Castlemaine. She promptly pulled it down and the building materials were profitably employed by her in constructing the villas and country houses of Epsom. Gambling rooms, bowling greens, assembly rooms and a dancing hall were built—cockfights, and races both for men and horses were held on the Downs. Pepys was a regular visitor to Epsom—so were Charles II and Nell Gwynne—so were Sir Charles Sedley and Lord Buckhurst. On 27th May, 1663, Pepys records " great thronging to Banstead Downs upon a great horse race and foot race." On 25th July of that year he tells us the race was put off because of a sitting of the House of Lords, but it took place five days later. It was a foot race between the Duke of Richmond's

footman, Lee, and a tyler. The tyler won, though Lee was the favourite and heavily backed by the King and the Duke of York.

In William III's reign we have frequent mention of Epsom races in the files of the *London Gazette*. Three meetings were advertised in 1695—

“ On Bransted (*sic*) Downs will be two Plates Run for yearly 3 times successively each plate to be £20 price. The first to be Run for the 14 Feb. next and all the others on May Day and Bartholomews Day in every year till 3 years are expired. Any Horse may run for the said Plate that shall be at any of the Contributors Stables at Carshalton, Barrowshedges or elsewhere 14 days before. The Weight 10 stone. The Stakes 3 guineas for each horse to be put into the Clerk of the Course his Hands 7 days before the Plate Day; otherwise paying five Guineas they may be put in at any time” (*London Gazette*, Jan. 3/7, 1694-5).

The £20 Plate is again advertised to be run for at Epsom on August 24 “ being Bartholomew Day ” 1697 (*London Gazette*, July 28-Aug. 1, 1697). Two years later, *i.e.* in 1699, another plate was advertised :

“ On Whitson Monday a Plate of £5 value will be Run for on Branstead (*sic*) Downs, 3 Heats; each Horse to carry 10 Stone and to pay 10/-. No Horse to run that ever run for above £10 and the winning horse to be thrown for at £10 price by the Gentlemen who put in their Horses. The Horses are to be shown that morning before the run at Mr. John Watson's at Barrowshedges when will be good entertainment” (*London Gazette*, May 18/22, 1699).

“ Entertainment ” figures prominently in the early days of Epsom races. The practice was to start racing early in the morning and then to return to the town for a sumptuous dinner, coming back to the Downs in the afternoon.

Carshalton races are heard of in 1695—the plates being run for on May Day and Bartholomew Day.

In 1698

“ The Contributors has (*sic*) Agreed to give another Plate of £20 value to be Run for on the last day of May next ” (*London Gazette*, Ap. 4/7, 1698).

The original Epsom course is marked on the seventeenth-century map of Robert Horden. It is called “ The Race ” and ran in a straight line from Banstead to Epsom Downs. In 1711 Toland in his *Description of Epsom* tells of the “ New Orbicular Course ” from Langley Bottom, behind the Warren

outside the Bushes and round Tattenham Corner. With the advent of the eighteenth century the wells seem to have declined in popularity. Racing continued, however, though it did not attract the attention it had done during the palmy days of the seventeenth century.

Some good horses were bred in Surrey in Queen Anne's reign. Mr. Curwen, the importer of the Curwen bay barb, bought another barb in France from the Count of Toulouse, a natural son of Louis XIV. This animal he sold to Sir John Parsons of Reigate, twice Lord Mayor of London. From him Sir John bred a well-known mare called the Reigate Mare, dam of Cinnamon. A mare belonging to a Surrey breeder named Thurland, was the dam by this barb of Mr. Pantons Molly. She won many races and it is said that the sums she won and received in forfeits were rarely paralleled. She died during her racing career so that she left no progeny.

The earliest documentary and official records of actual races in England begin in 1709 and can be seen in the (abridged) racing Calendar in the possession of Messrs. Weatherby, and in Cheney's records which were published annually between 1727 and 1736. A Surrey owner, Thomas Lord Onslow, ran his horses at Newmarket in 1719. In the King's Plate in October of that year he entered a horse called Grey Commoner, and in the preceding April his horse One Eye beat Mr. Tregonwell Frampton's Potato in a match over 4 miles at 8 st. 5 for 100 guineas. Frampton was "Keeper of the King's running horses" from 1695 to 1728, and one of the most celebrated though sinister figures in early racing history.

In 1727 three regular meetings were held at Epsom in May, July and September, and races also took place at Guildford when it is recorded that the King's Plate was run for: so that it is probable that the meeting had been founded at an earlier date.

We hear again of Guildford races in 1728 when the King's Plate was won by the Duke of Hamilton's Victorious. Epsom races also took place in this year when two Surrey owners ran their horses there—Thomas Lord Onslow entering his grey horse Bumper, which may be the original of a life sized picture of a grey horse that hangs at Clandon, and Lord Baltimore, former Governor of Maryland and for a long time

knight of the shire for Surrey, who ran a horse called Monkey. Some of the conditions of Epsom races appear in Cheney's periodical. One was that horses starting in their events had to be *stabled at Epsom* for 14 days before the first day of the Meeting, and entered 7 days before it.

In 1729 no races are recorded at Guildford. This may have been due to the fact that the Course was being re-made; for Cheney in giving an account of Guildford races in 1730 says that the Course was "rais'd just then by the interest of Lord Onslow."

At this time there seems to have been a marked increase in racing in Surrey for in 1729, besides the May Meeting at Epsom, we first hear of races being held at Wimbledon and Ingfield Green (Englefield Green). After 1730 the record of both Epsom and Guildford races is continuous; and we also hear of meetings at Carshalton, Wimbledon, Limpsfield, Croydon, Cobham-Tilt, Egham, Kingston on Thames and Moulsey in 1730-1737.

A cruel and absurd race took place at Epsom in 1750. A horse named Crop was backed to go 100 miles before another went 80. Both horses were beat early in the race and only able to walk. Crop lost as he had only covered 94 miles when the other had gone 80. The poor beast was sold for £5 and not expected to live, but he not only recovered but lived another eight years and won over £500 in matches.

In 1750 Little Driver won £50 at Guildford and he was fairly frequently successful both at Guildford and at Epsom during his racing career, which lasted till 1755. Little Driver was owned by Josiah Marshall. He was said to be the strongest and best horse of his size ever bred in England, but we hear of these superlative merits in many another animal. However, while on the Turf he won between 30 and 40 races. Another successful horse at Guildford was Careless, bred by John Borlase Warren, but perhaps the most celebrated winner of a Surrey race of those years was the well-known Gimcrack. He was a grey horse by Cripple bred by Gideon Elliott at Murrell Green in Hampshire and bought by William Wildman in 1764. He won his first race in that year at Epsom as a four-year-old with 8 st. 7. On 15th June of the same year he won £50 at Guildford, 4 mile heats weight for age, and in

the same year he was successful for Wildman at Winchester, Bedford, Barnet, Reading and Burford. Next year he was sold to Lord Bolingbroke and left Surrey. In 1766 he was taken to France by Count Lauraguais, where he won a match for him of $22\frac{1}{2}$ miles which he covered within one hour. Gimcrack's racing career lasted until 1772 when he went to the stud and though he served but few mares, his progeny distinguished themselves. He was a small horse, only just over 14 hands, but he was extraordinarily successful. During his whole life he was only beaten ten times in nine years.

We do not hear much of horses bred in Surrey at this time. Wildman's stable at Epsom was established about 1760, but Lord Portmore bred horses at Weybridge more than thirty years earlier—Young Cartouch, a galloway, stood there and was sire of Silver Leg a winner at Guildford and Epsom in 1747. Partner by Mr. Crofts Partner was bred by Lord Portmore at Weybridge in 1731. Brilliant was another horse bred in the same stable by Crab out of a Godolphin Arabian mare. After a successful racing career he stood as a stallion at Epsom. But in the middle of the eighteenth century there were not many Surrey owners or breeders. Besides Lord Portmore the Onslows had some horses at Clandon. The best were Victorious and Why Not, both of whom won King's Plates at Epsom and Guildford and at other meetings. However, there is no mention of their having trained in Surrey but they had horses with the Duke of Devonshire's trainer at Chatsworth where there are records of trials of their horses.

Benjamin Roger of Mickleham was another Surrey owner. He bought Brabram by the Godolphin Arabian from Lord Godolphin in 1746. He won a good many races for Roger and afterwards stood at Mickleham, going thence to the Leedes Stud at North Milforth, Yorks.

Mr. Blake of Beddington near Croydon was a later breeder. He owned Shark, a big horse of over 16 hands. Shark was by Marske out of a Snap mare. He started in 29 races and won 19.

The races in Surrey were not of a first-rate character at this time, though Epsom still retained its popularity with Londoners, but in 1752 Dr. Burton, who wrote (in Greek) a book with a Latin title *Iter Surriense* said that Epsom races

reminded him of the Olympic Games on account of the number of spectators from London, though how an English horse-race meeting could resemble a Greek foot race meeting he does not say.

It was not till 1769 that we can date the beginning of the real racing fame of Epsom. It was in this year that Eclipse—perhaps the greatest horse that ever ran—won his first race there. Eclipse was so intimately connected with Epsom, both on the Turf and at the Stud, that we may perhaps be pardoned if we give some account of him. He was bred at Cranbourn Paddocks in Berkshire by the Duke of Cumberland of Culloden and Kloster Seven fame, who perhaps did more for the Turf in England in its early days than any other man. Eclipse was by Marske out of Spilletta and combined in his breeding the two great strains of the Darley Arabian and the Godolphin Arabian. There are three principal strains of blood from which the English thoroughbred is descended. The Darley Arabian, imported by Mr. Darley of Buttercombe, Yorks, in the reign of Queen Anne; the Byerley Turk, so called from being Captain Byerley's charger in Ireland in the reign of William III; and the Godolphin Arabian (or he may have been a barb) foaled in 1724 and brought over to England by Mr. Coke of Norfolk. Later he became the property of Lord Godolphin and stood for many years at Gog Magog in Cambridgeshire, dying there in 1753. The Darley Arabian was the sire of Bartlett's Childers out of Betty Leedes and Childers was the grandsire of Marske. The Godolphin Arabian was the grandsire of Eclipse's dam Spilletta. She was bred by Sir Robert Eden. She only started in one race which she failed to win.

Marske had little claim to fame as a racehorse. When the Duke of Cumberland died in 1765 he was sold at Tattersall's for a small sum and covered country mares in Dorsetshire at half a guinea; but in 1767 Mr. William Wildman, a salesman of Smithfield who for many years kept a stud of horses at Mickleham near Epsom and also trained for other people, bought him for £21 and brought him to Surrey. In 1769 he stood at Gibbon's Grove near Leatherhead at 5 guineas, and in 1771, owing to the performances of Eclipse, he advanced to 30 guineas and later he was bought by Lord Abingdon for £1,050—an enormous sum in those days. He stood at

£105 for some time and died in 1779 having become the sire of many good horses.

Eclipse—so called because he was foaled during the great eclipse—was sold as a yearling in 1765 to Wildman. He had heard of the likely colt by Marske and attended the sale to buy him, but when he arrived he found that Eclipse had already been knocked down for 70 guineas. Looking at his watch he discovered that the sale had been started before the time advertised. He, therefore, claimed that it was illegal and insisted that the lots already sold should be put up again. This was done and he secured Eclipse for 75 guineas.

At first it looked as though he had made a bad purchase, for Eclipse was such an unruly youngster and so difficult to break that it was feared nothing could be done with him. He was handed over to an old rough rider—also a notorious poacher who worked him nearly off his legs, riding him about all day and keeping him out all night on poaching expeditions. This heroic treatment made it possible to bring him to the post, but his jockeys could never hold him and all they could do was to sit on his back and let him win his races in his own way. He started in his first race at Epsom on 3rd May 1769—for £50, for horses that had never won £30, matches excepted—5 yrs. 8 st., 6 yrs. 9 st. 3, four mile heats. Eclipse started at 4 to 1 *on*. In 1769 he won at Ascot starting at 8 to 1 *on*: at Winchester he won the King's Plate for six-year-olds at 12 stone (though he was only a five-year-old). Starting at 5-4 *against*, after the first heat he advanced to 10-1 *on*. At Salisbury he won the City Silver Bowl, open to all horses (10 stone) and at Canterbury and Lewes the King's Plates—in all three races he started at 10-1 *on*: in September he won the King's Plate for five-year-olds at 20-1 *on*.

On 17th April, 1770, he appeared at the Newmarket first Spring Meeting where he beat Mr. Wentworth's Bucephalus, 6 yrs., 8 st. 7, over the Beacon Course, Wildman laying 6-4 on him. After the race Wildman sold the whole of his interest in Eclipse to Dennis O'Kelly for £1,155, O'Kelly had bought a half share in him for 650 guineas after his first victory at Epsom. For his new owner during 1770 he won again at Newmarket on 19th April. It was at this meeting that he would have met Goldfinder, another horse who never lost a

race, but Goldfinder broke down at exercise. Goldfinder then went to the stud and stood for fourteen years at Mitcham. On 23rd August Eclipse won the subscription purse at Guildford for 6 yrs. and aged, 4 miles, 9 st. At starting 20-1 was laid on him and in running 100-1. His last race was on 3rd October when he won at 70-1 *on*.

Eclipse won eleven King's Plates, the weights for ten of which were 12 stone, which was one more than ever won by any horse before. He never lost a race and only on one occasion did he not start at odds on (his second race, the King's Plate at Winchester in 1769 when he started at 5-4).

Eclipse's owner, O'Kelly, was a "character." He was generally called "Captain" O'Kelly,¹ but his military rank would seem to have been derived from a similar source to that of the Kentucky Colonels or Sir Harry Scattercash's friends, Captains Quod, Bouncey, Cutitfat and Ladofwax. He was a thorough adventurer and his first escapade seems to have landed him in the Fleet Prison. Getting out of that scrape he set up as a professional gambler both on the Turf and the Green Cloth, but, unlike many of his fraternity, no one seems to have questioned his honesty.

O'Kelly bought Clay Hill at Epsom, a property with training stables and paddocks close to the Course. To his great chagrin he was never elected to the Jockey Club and was thus debarred from entering his horses for the great races at Newmarket; but with his stable of some of the best horses of the time, such as Badger, Brutus, Young Gimcrack, Atom, Tiney and Milksop, he won numerous races all over the country.

O'Kelly seems to have been the first owner to pay a retainer to a jockey for a first call on his services. Hating the members of the Jockey Club because they would not elect him a member, when he engaged his jockey he is said to have offered to double the retainer provided he would enter into an engagement and bind himself, under a penalty, never to ride for any of the *black-legged* fraternity. The jockey, who was probably Wheatley, said "he was at a loss to know whom the Captain meant by the black legged fraternity": O'Kelly replied, "O, by Jasus, my dear, and I'll soon make you under-

¹ Later he became "Colonel" O'Kelly and it is even said that he was occasionally known as "Count."



GIMCRACK.



ECLIPSE.

*From the paintings by G. Stubbs, A.R.A., in the possession of Lieut.-Gen.
Sir Charles and Lady Sybil Grant, The Durdans, Epsom.*

stand who I mean by the black legged fraternity! There's the Duke of Grafton, the Duke of Dorset, etc."—naming the principal members of the Jockey Club—"and all the set of *thaves* that belong to the humbug societies and *bug a boo* clubs where they can meet and rob one another without fear of detection."

When the best six years old horses of the year were entered against Eclipse, for the King's Plate at Newmarket in 1770 O'Kelly offered to take ten to one; he placed them. His bet was taken to an immense amount, and he was called upon to declare. He pronounced, "Eclipse, and nothing else"—implying the rest to be "nowhere"—which was really the case, for Eclipse double distanced¹ the whole field with the greatest ease, leaving himself without a competitor.

Eclipse stood at Clay Hill from 1771 to 1788 after which year O'Kelly took him to Cannons, Middlesex. He travelled in his own carriage. This was the first instance of a horse being "vanned." A van was built for him and drawn by two horses. In the van was a large window whence Eclipse looked forth during his journey. O'Kelly said that Eclipse earned him over £25,000 in fees—more money than any horse had ever gained previously. His produce won during 1774–96 344 races and 11 plates and cups with a total value of £158,047 12s., besides the cups. This was only surpassed by King Herod whose produce in the nineteen years 1771–89 won 498 races, worth £201,505 9s. The old horse died at Cannons on 28th February 1789, surviving O'Kelly by two years. Of him it was written when he died, "He was never beaten, never had a whip flourished over him, or felt the tickling of a spur, nor was he ever for a moment distressed by the speed or rate of a competitor, out-footing, out-striding and out-lasting any horse which started against him."

The blood of the Darley Arabian has been transmitted mainly through Eclipse to the race-horse of to-day. He was sire of Pot8os, King Fergus, Joe Andrews, Saltram, Mercury, Volunteer and Dungannon among many others, the first and last being bred by O'Kelly. Among his remoter descendants

¹ *i.e.* won by 2 distances, a distance being 240 yards. The race was over the Beacon Course, 4 miles 1 furlong and 177 yards. Therefore Eclipse won by nearly 500 yards in a race of 7,437 yards!

were Waxy, Whalebone, Sir Hercules, Camel, Touchstone, Waverley, Hambletonian, Velocipede, Orville, and many other famous horses. Nimrod tells us that O'Kelly was unequalled as a breeder. In 1793 he advertised no less than 46 in-foal mares for sale at Epsom, chiefly by Volunteer and Dungannon. They fetched large prices, many being bought by the Prince of Wales, who was then deeply interested in racing. Soldier's Dam's progeny by Eclipse and Dungannon brought O'Kelly £10,000. Besides his stallions O'Kelly kept more than 50 brood mares at Epsom.

Racing, even in the 'seventies of the eighteenth century, differed a good deal from the sport thirty years later. "Cross and jostle," which in the early days was always allowed, was, however, falling into disfavour and only permitted if expressly named in the terms of a match. O'Kelly at Epsom, as late as 1775, proposed to permit it (and complained that he was not allowed to do so) (*Sporting Mag.* II, p. 333).

Mr. Dorling, the General Manager of Epsom Grand Stand Association, whose family has been for so long connected with the races, has sent me a copy of the programme of the races in May 1777, which is the earliest copy of a race programme at Epsom now extant—for which reason I venture to quote it.

The Stewards were Sir Joseph Mawbey and Thomas Williams. Mawbey was a rich man who inherited from his father-in-law a large distillery at Southwark. He was for many years M.P. for Southwark and from 1780 to 1790 knight of the shire for Surrey. In 1770 he bought Epsom Manor.

EPSOM RACES, 1777.

"On Wednesday the Seventh May 1777 Will be run for on Epsom Downs the Noblemen and Gentlemen's Plate of Fifty Pounds free for any horse, mare or gelding carrying nine stone. The best of three heats, four miles each heat.

On Thursday the Eighth will be run on the sd Downs the Noblemen and Gentlemen's Plate of Fifty Pounds for five, six years old, and aged horses that never won Thirty Pounds (matches excepted), five years old to carry eight stone four pounds, six years old eight stone eleven pounds, aged horses nine stone four pounds. The best of three heats, four miles each heat.

On Friday the Ninth will be run for on the sd Downs the Ladies' Plate of Fifty Pounds for four years old horses to carry eight stone seven pounds. The best of three heats, two miles each heat.

On Saturday the Tenth will be run for on the sd Downs the Town Plate of Fifty Pounds free for any five, six year old, and aged horses. Five years old to carry eight stone seven pounds, six years old nine stone, aged horses nine stone seven pounds. The best of three heats, four miles each heat. Mares and Fillies to be allowed three pounds for all these Plates.

{ Sir Joseph Mawbey Baronet
and
Thomas Williams Esquire
Stewards."}

Perhaps an even more interesting document, though rather a more lengthy one, is the original article of agreement for Epsom Races in 1778, for which I am also indebted to Mr. Dorling. The Stewards in this year were Robert Hudson and Edward Knipe. The latter was a member of a well-known Epsom family whose ancestor, Edwin Knipe, bought property there in 1669. It will be observed that this document mentions "distant horses." A "distance" is 240 yards and a horse beaten by a distance in a heat, or "distant horse," was disqualified from running in the deciding heat. A "distance" is still described in the *Racing Calendar* as 240 yards, under "lengths of Courses," but does not seem to have been used in any conditions since the practice of running races in heats was discontinued. We have seen how Eclipse "double distanced" all the horses in the King's Plate at Newmarket in 1770. Shady practices on the part of riders, as set forth in the articles of agreement also render a horse liable to become a "distant horse."

"Articles of Agreement made concluded and agreed upon this 26th day of April 1778 between the several Inhabitants of the Parish of Epsom in the County of Surrey for and towards the raising the underment^d 4 several plates

On Wednesday the 27th day of May will be run for on Epsom Downs the Noblemen and Gentlemens Plate of fifty pounds free for any Horse Mare or Gelding to carry nine stone the best of three Heats four Miles each Heat On Thursday the Twenty Eighth will be run for on the said Downs the Noblemen and Gentlemens Plate of 50L for 5 and 6 y^{rs} old and aged Horses &c that never won thirty pounds (matches excepted) five Years old to carry Eight stone four pounds Six Year old Eight stone Eleven pounds and aged Horses &c Nine stone four pounds the best of three Heats four Miles each Heat On Friday the 29th will be run for on the said Downs the Ladies Plate of fifty pounds for four Years Old Horses &c to carry Eight stone seven pounds the best of three Heats two miles each heat On Saturday the 30th will be run for on the said

Downs the Town Plate of fifty pounds free for any five or Six Years old and aged Horses &c five Years Old to carry Eight stone Seven pounds six years Old Nine Stone & aged Horses Nine Stone five pounds the best of three Heats four Miles each Heat mares and filies to be allowed three pounds for all these plates Certificates to be produced under the Hands of the Breeders at the place of entring the ages of all the Horses &c that run for the three last plates No less than three reputed running Horses &c shall start or run for any of the above ment^d Plates The Winner of either of these Plates will not be permitted to start for any o^r dur^g the Meeting All Jockies that ride for any of these plates shall be on the Course ready to weigh half an Hour before the time of start^g or they will not be allowed to ride for either of these plates All Horses &c that shall run for any of these plates shall start exactly at 5 O'Clock in the afternoon All Horses &c that shall run for any of the above plates shall be at Epsom ten clear Days before the first day of Starting and there continue untill the Day of run^g at such of the subscribers Stables in Epsom as shall subscribe four Guineas or Upwards towards these plates and who shall pay the same into the Hands of the Trustees on or before the first day of May next (except such Horse &c as shall enter at the post) and shall enter their Horses at the Bridge Opposite Mr. Morris's Coffehouse in Epsom af^d on the 18th Day of May next between the Hours of twele at noon and 7 in the Evening No Horses &c shall start for any of the above Plates but Subscribers to these plates who shall subscribe 3 Gui^s or Upwards for each Horse &c and pay five Shillings towards the repairs of y^e Rails and 5s to y^e Clk of y^e Course or shall subscribe Six Guineas at the post for each Horse &c & pay 5s towards the repair of y^e Rails and pay half a G^a to y^e Clk of y^e Course All such Subscriptions shall be paid into y^e hands of y^e Trustees on y^e Day of entring all Horses &c If only one Horse &c shall enter for any of y^e above plates the Owners shall receive of y^e Trustees 10L If two Horses &c 5L each All horses &c that shall run for any of y^e above ment^d Plates shall be plated by the subscribing Smiths in Epsom otherwise the owner of the Horses &c to pay two Shill^gs & 6 pence for each Horse &c as shall not be plated by the Epsom Smiths No p'son shall erect any Booth or Shed on y^e s^d Downs for the disposing of Liquors dur^g the above Days who shall not contribute in manner follow^g to wit every P'son who shall erect a Booth or shed who Lives in Epsom to contribute 1 G^a If within Twelve Miles of Epsom 2 G^a and If further than 12 Miles 3 G^a for each booth or shed towards these plates & who shall pay the same into the Hands of the Clk of y^e Course before the breaking up of the Ground otherwise such Booth &c shall be destroyed The Owners of all Horses &c entr^g at y^e post for any of y^e above plates shall give in their Names and pay their Subscription money's &c to the Trustees by One O'Clock at Noon the day before running for such Plates No Match or Sweepstakes will be permitted to be run for between the Heats unless by permission of the Stewards and if any dispute shall arrise the same shall be finally determined by them or whoever they shall appoint The p'sons building Booths &c shall build them on a Strait line the same side of y^e hill the Rubbing House Stands on leading towards Ashtead to be approved

of by y^e Clk of y^e Course All Horses &c that shall run for any of these Plates shall pay or cause to be p^d their subscription Money to John Morris John Cole John Marston who are by these presents appointed Trustees to take the Subscription Monies as also to pay y^e same to the proper p[']son or p[']sons who shall be intitled to receive y^e same And we do Agree to pay our Subscription Money to the s^d Trustees seven days before the first day of this Meeting All Horses &c that shall run for any of these plates & winneth two Heats shall be deemed the Winning Horse &c for the plate he or she runneth for & in case 3 sev^l Horses &c shall win each of them a Heat then those three Horses &c shall start for the fourth Heat and the Winner of that Heat shall be intitled to the plate All Horses &c that shall run for these plates shall run accord^g to the Articles as the Kings plate are And that half an Hour shall be allowed for y^e Running Horses between each Heat to rub And it is hereby Agreed that if any rider that rideth for any of these plates shall or do wip or lay hold of any rider his Horse Saddle or Bridle or upon any of the Heats shall carry less than his Weight or jostle or cross each o^r & shall not ride up to the Weighing post whether he Winneth the Heat or not & there alight from his Horse &c & there be Weighed by the Clk of y^e Course or otherwise shall act contrary to those Articles shall be adjudged & deemed distant Horses &c Or if any Horse &c is distant in running any of the Heats he or she shall not be permitted to start any more for that plate he or she runneth for And it is hereby agreed between the s^d parties to these presents that if any Action or Actions Suit or Suits shall be prosecuted or commenced agst y^e s^d Trustees or either of them concerning these Articles or anything herein contained the Charges & Exp^s the s^d Trustees shall be put to in defending y^e same shall be equally borne & p^d by us whose Names are hereunto subscribed And y^e af^d Trustees indemnified after deducting their own Shares towards y^e same None but subscribers to the Gentlemen & Ladies Plate will be permitted to be in the Stand¹ during the Heats And it is hereby agreed by and between the s^d parties to these presents that in Case y^e above s^d Trustees shall not raise Money sufficient to discharge the above plates the same deficiency shall be p^d proportionably into the Hands of y^e Trustees af^d by Us hereunto subscribing within one month after the last days plate And the s^d Trustees do hereby covenant & agree to pay within One Month after the last Days plate into the Hands of such p[']son or p[']sons as the major p^t of such Subscribers to these Plates shall appoint all such Sum or Sums of Money as shall appear to be then in Hand after the above plates and the Charges thereto are p^d In Witness whereof we have hereunto set our Hands the day and Y^r first above written

Robert Hudson }
and } Esq^{rs} Stewards "
Edw^d Knipe Jun^r }

It was not, however, till the following year (1779) that Epsom races became of first-rate importance. In that year,

¹ The Old Steward's Stand which still exists.

and in 1780, events took place which still render Epsom race-course one of the best known, if not the best known, in the world.

In early days races were always for horses of five years old and over. Younger horses could not stand the gruelling heats of those days. In the middle of the Century (1750), however, the Royal Plates at Nottingham, Guildford, Lincoln, Winchester and Lewes were altered to races for 4 year old 9 st., $2\frac{1}{4}$ mile heats. In the seventeen-seventies the movement in favour of shorter races and of racing colts and fillies grew. In 1776 Colonel St. Leger founded the famous race at Doncaster, and the Oaks and Derby date from 1779 and 1780. Two-year-old racing was authorized at Newmarket in 1770 and the Craven Stakes for two-year-olds established in 1771.

The years 1779 and 1780 were certainly the most momentous in the History of Epsom—perhaps even in the whole history of racing—for in 1779 the Oaks was founded and in 1780 the Derby. The present Lord Derby has been good enough to tell me the hearsay tradition in his family regarding the foundation of the Derby and the Oaks as told him by his father who in turn heard it from his father.

It was the 12th Earl of Derby who was the initiator of both races. His uncle, Sir John Burgoyne the hero of Saratoga, married Lord Derby's aunt. Uncle and nephew lived together a great deal and eventually Lord Derby took from him The Oaks, from which the fillies race at Epsom takes its name. According to the late Lord Derby that race originated from a dinner party at The Oaks at which those present nominated any yearling fillies they possessed, and probably these were added to by entries for friends from outside. In that way the first Oaks was started. It was more or less a sort of private sweepstake. It took on very well and Lord Derby was naturally anxious to institute the race as Bridget the filly he nominated won the first Oaks. A year later the Derby was instituted under similar circumstances. From these two beginnings have grown our present Derby and Oaks, the names of which, certainly as far as the Derby are concerned are perpetuated in every country where there is racing by what one would call the champion race of that country

being named The Derby. There must be millions all over the world who bless the name of Lord Derby and his friends for one of the great holidays of their lives—even though they leave their cash with the bookies!

The foundation of the Oaks and the Derby brought to Epsom all those most prominent in racing; owners and riders as well as horses. Of course, many well-known jockeys had ridden in Surrey before; either Oakley or Fitzpatrick always rose Eclipse. Wheatley rode for O'Kelly, so did South and so did Pratt, Gimcrack's jockey, who once rode eleven races over the Beacon Course at Newmarket in one day. Old William Clift, winner of five Derbys, and the three Arnalls, who between them won eleven, were no strangers to Epsom; but the best-known jockeys to ride at the end of the eighteenth century were undoubtedly Frank Buckle and the elder Chifney. Buckle's riding career lasted from 1783 to 1831. He was the straightest of men and trusted by everyone. His great successes were at Epsom, for he won the Derby five times and the Oaks seven times. In 1802 he backed himself for the double event, to win both the Derby and the Oaks. His Derby mount was the Duke of Grafton's Tyrant and the favourite Mr. Wilson's Young Eclipse. Buckle just squeezed his horse home in front of the favourite, also beating Sir Charles Bunbury's Orlando who was much fancied as second favourite. Tyrant was beaten next year by Young Eclipse, who gave him 4 lb. He is said to have been the worst horse to win the Derby till Aboyeur won in 1913; but Aboyeur only won on an objection, Craganour having been disqualified for bumping and boring. Besides being a jockey, Buckle was an M.F.H., a breeder of greyhounds, fighting cocks and bulldogs, and a great patron of the theatre. Truly a versatile man!

Sam Chifney, the elder, was the Prince of Wales's jockey and was mixed up with the disagreeable episode which caused the Prince's retirement from Newmarket. He continued to ride for him, however, and was often seen in Surrey. At Guildford he rode the Prince's horse Knowsley in the King's Plate. Knowsley was said to be the hardest puller that ever wore a bridle, and Chifney was said to have the finest hands of any rider. The horse was brought out with a tremendous curb, like a Mexican bit. "Take that silly gimcrack away

and bring me a plain snaffle," said Sam. Some of the spectators thought there would be trouble: but with Chifney up, the horse went perfectly well and won the Guildford King's Plate in a canter.

Gentlemen riders were scarcer at Epsom than at Newmarket, but were by no means unknown. There were Tom Bullock, one of the finest riders in England till he broke his thigh by his horse cannoning against a post: Lord Sackville (afterwards Duke of Dorset) who rode for the Prince; his brother Lord George Germaine; Sir Tatton Sykes; Delmé Radcliffe who often rode in the Oaks and appeared regularly at Egham as well as at Epsom: Hawker, said to be as good as Sackville; Probyn; Lord Delamere; and many others who were well able to challenge Buckle or Chifney. But the most celebrated gentleman rider in England was "Old Q," the Duke of Queensberry, who was supposed to be the wickedest man in England. As a matter of fact Queensberry's reputation suffered from his health and vigour. He lived to a great age and was able, owing to a vigorous constitution, to follow courses which in his youth were looked upon as proper and suitable to a young gentleman, but which public opinion was apt to condemn fifty years later!

The foundation of the Oaks and the Derby brought the whole of the racing world and the fashionable world in throngs to Epsom. George IV, after his quarrel with the Jockey Club and his desertion of Newmarket, was a great supporter of country races, Brighton and Lewes being among his favourites, also Bibury when he stayed with Lord Sherborne, and Guildford when he stayed at Clandon. He won the Derby in 1788 and was a regular frequenter of Epsom. The royal family hitherto had not been frequent visitors to the Downs. The Regent's Grandfather "Fred who was alive and is dead" was often at Epsom and lived at the Durdans, but racing did not interest him greatly; he used the Downs for hawking. He attended Guildford races, however, as the guest of Lord Onslow. Shortly after the present house at Clandon was built Evelyn tells us that a great entertainment was given there after which H.R.H. attended races on Guildford Downs. The Prince Regent's brother, the Duke of York, was equally devoted to the Turf, but though he won the Derby he was

not particularly successful as an owner. The Prince's taste for racing brought to Epsom his extravagant and eccentric friends, some of whom were themselves racing men though not all. Foremost perhaps was Charles James Fox, staking as heavily on his rather indifferent horses as he did on cards and dice at Brooks's; Richard Lord Barrymore and his brother Henry—Hellgate and Cripplegate as they were called—Henry because of his lame foot, the other for even more obvious reasons. Their sister came with them, known as Billingsgate since the flowers of her speech transcended even those of Letty Lade, recently the wife of 16 String Jack the Highwayman, after whose very proper extinction at Tyburn she married Sir John Lade, perhaps the most recklessly extravagant of all the Prince's friends. Lade's devotion was more to the Road than the Turf as was that of Tommy Onslow, though the latter was a member of the Jockey Club also. Lade owned and ran horses on the Turf. There were for instance Guildford and Fordham by Mambrino; but the best of all was Crop who started favourite for the Derby in 1781 but was beaten by O'Kelly's Young Eclipse.

Lade was a nephew of Thrale, Dr. Johnson's friend, and was a Surrey man, for both the Lades and the Thrales were brewers in Southwark whence Lade derived his wealth. Young Lade must have shown a precocious taste for spending for Johnson wrote a poem on his coming of age in which these lines occur:—

“Wealth, my lad, was made to wander
Let it wander as it will
Call the Jockey, call the pander,
Bid them come and take their fill.”

Lade ruined himself twice, for he inherited a second fortune after squandering his first. Then he became “Gentleman Coachman” to the King (George IV) and died at Egham in 1838, full of years if not of honours.

But we must turn from the Prince's curious friends to the more serious racing men.

First of all came Lord Derby, founder of both Oaks and Derby. Derby devoted himself from early years to racing, so we are told in the *Complete Peerage*. He won the Derby with Sir Peter Teazle in 1793. Sir Peter was said to have

been the most successful horse of the time at the stud after Eclipse and Herod. He broke down as a four-year-old and stood afterwards for many years as a stallion. Lord Derby, it is said, refused £10,000 for him.

Sir Charles Bunbury has always seemed to me rather a sinister figure. He was a dour man. It was due largely to him that the quarrel arose which caused the Prince of Wales to quit Newmarket. Nimrod does not fail to criticize the running of Bunbury's own stable. He owned Eleanor, one of the very few mares to win both Derby and Oaks, the best mare of her day. She was beaten at Huntingdon by a very ordinary mare called Two Shoes, odds 10-1 on Eleanor. A week later at Egham she beat a first-rate horse called Bobadil—betting 10-1 *on* Bobadil. But all this is forgotten scandal and it is very unlikely indeed that Bunbury was personally responsible. He did much to modernize racing and was responsible for encouraging three-year-old and two-year-old racing, and for shortening distances. He was very successful on the Turf—especially at Epsom, and won the Derby three times. He was perhaps less successful as a breeder and he was unlucky in that Smolensko, his best horse, died young. He was said to be as old-fashioned in his methods of keeping young stock as he was revolutionary in racing reform.

Bunbury won the first Derby with Diomed, bred by Richard Vernon by Florizel out of a Spectator mare. We have not many details of this historic occasion. There were thirty-six subscribers to the Derby and 17 to the Oaks, so the first Derby was worth 1,075 guineas. There were nine runners and the second and third were O'Kelly's Budrow, and Spitfire. The meeting began on Wednesday, 3rd May, and lasted four days. The old-established "Noblemen and Gentlemen's Plate" of £50 in two 4-mile heats occupied the first day. On the Thursday the Derby was run, and one other race in three 4-mile heats. On the Friday Tetotum, a daughter of Matchem, won the Oaks, and on Saturday was run the Town Plate, a race of 4-mile heats.

Besides the racing there was a great Cocking match, the Gentlemen of Surrey challenging the Gentlemen of Middlesex. Lord Derby was as keen on Cockfighting as he was on racing. He had a special breed of fighting birds at Knowsley and it



SIR CHARLES BUNBURY, M.P., 6TH BART.

From the painting by George James, in the possession of the Earl of Ilchester.

is said that his love for cockfighting was so great that he once turned his drawing room into a cockpit.

In the eighteenth century racing and cockfighting were very much connected. In Cheney's early racing calendar almost if not quite as much space is devoted to the records of the birds as of the horses. There was scarcely ever a race meeting but a cocking match was attached to it, and this would particularly be the case in small Surrey country meetings like those at Egham, Cobham, etc., where the squires drank their ale, fought their game birds and raced their hunters.

The Duke of Grafton and his brother Henry Fitzroy were regularly on the Downs. The Duke won the Derby four times and the Oaks no less than eight ! Then came Christopher Wilson who won both Derby and St. Leger with Champion ; Richard Wilson ; Colonel Mellish, an artist, a farmer, a coachman and a sprinter, and many others. Sir Gilbert Heathcote was another regular visitor to Epsom. He later came to live there and bought the Durdans. Heathcote is the only connection that Surrey can claim with the early days of steeplechases. In 1792 the *Druid* records the first steeplechase in England—they were already well-known events in Ireland. The race took place in Leicestershire from Barkby Holt to Coplow and back. Charles Meynell won, Lord Forester was second and Gilbert Heathcote third. In later life Heathcote became perpetual steward of Epsom with Baron de Tessier, an Englishman of French ancestry, who was created a baron by Louis XVIII.

The Derby of 1782 was won by Lord Egremont's Assassin. Lord Egremont won the race five times, the last time with Lapdog in 1826. It is said that Lapdog was a four-year-old substituted for the real horse by the trainer without, of course, Lord Egremont's knowledge. Egremont raced with his brother Charles Wyndham, and besides their successes in the Derby they won the Oaks three times with fillies of their own breeding.

In 1783 there were but six runners, of which four were sons of Eclipse. Saltram by Eclipse out of Virago won, the property of Mr. Parker, afterwards Lord Boringdon. Serjeant, another of Eclipse's sons, won the race next year for O'Kelly, and for the next few years no notable horse but Sir Peter

Teazle won the Derby, and we do not come to another great horse till the Duke of Bedford won with Skyscraper in 1789. Such is the brief history of the first Derby decade. It would be wearisome in an article of this kind to proceed further. Anyone, however, who wishes to study the subject further cannot do better than turn to *The Romance of the Derby* by Edward Moorhouse.

In writing of racing in Surrey Epsom is apt to loom so large that it overshadows the other meetings; but it is doubtful whether, before the institution of the Derby and Oaks, Epsom was more important than Guildford or Egham. We have seen how racing at Guildford took place in the early days of the eighteenth century. The King's Plate at Guildford was one of the only 11 King's Plates in the country,¹ so it must have been reckoned an important meeting. The King's Plates of £105 were paid for from the allowance for the Master of the Horse's Department. The race then was for six-year-old horses, 10 st., 2-mile heats, altered in 1744 to 2¼-mile heats and in 1750 to 2½-mile heats for four-year-olds, 9 st.

The course can still be traced. It is partly on Clandon and partly on Merrow Downs. It is circular and there is a steep and trying hill. In view of its proximity to Clandon the Onslows had a good deal to do with these races, as we have already noted, and frequently officiated as stewards, but with the exception of those in the earlier part of the eighteenth century they were not keen racing men. George 1st Earl of Onslow appears as a steward in an old race card in my possession, but he was no sportsman and I should imagine attended the races from a sense of duty and with intense boredom. As the Prince of Wales often came to Guildford races and always stayed at Clandon for them, old Lord Onslow probably felt bound to support them.

Egham races were run at Runnymede close to Windsor, and were strongly supported by the Royal Family. In its best days the Egham Meeting was a three day affair and there were good races—the Gold Cup, the Surrey and Middlesex Stakes and the Magna Charta Stakes. The course was a good

¹The others were three at Newmarket and one at Nottingham, Lincoln, Winchester, Lewes, York and Black Hambleton.

one, flat or nearly so, rather oval in shape and short of two miles by 66 yards. Being so close to the river it was on occasion flooded and the going must have been liable to be heavy.

We have noted that there were a good many Surrey race meetings before 1750. Whyte tells us that after that date the number of Meetings declined all over England. Thus in 1780 it is recorded that in Surrey the only meetings that took place were at Epsom, Egham and Guildford.

After the close of the Napoleonic Wars racing revived considerably, but the only new meeting instituted in the early nineteenth century was Reigate. It is not, however, my intention to carry the history of Surrey racing further than the beginning of the century : if I did I fear I should unduly tax both space and the patience of my readers.

May I, in conclusion, offer my thanks for the help they have given me to Lord Derby, Messrs. Weatherby and Mr. Dorling.