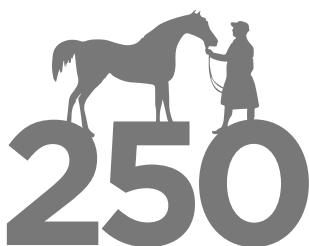




GIMCRACK DINNER



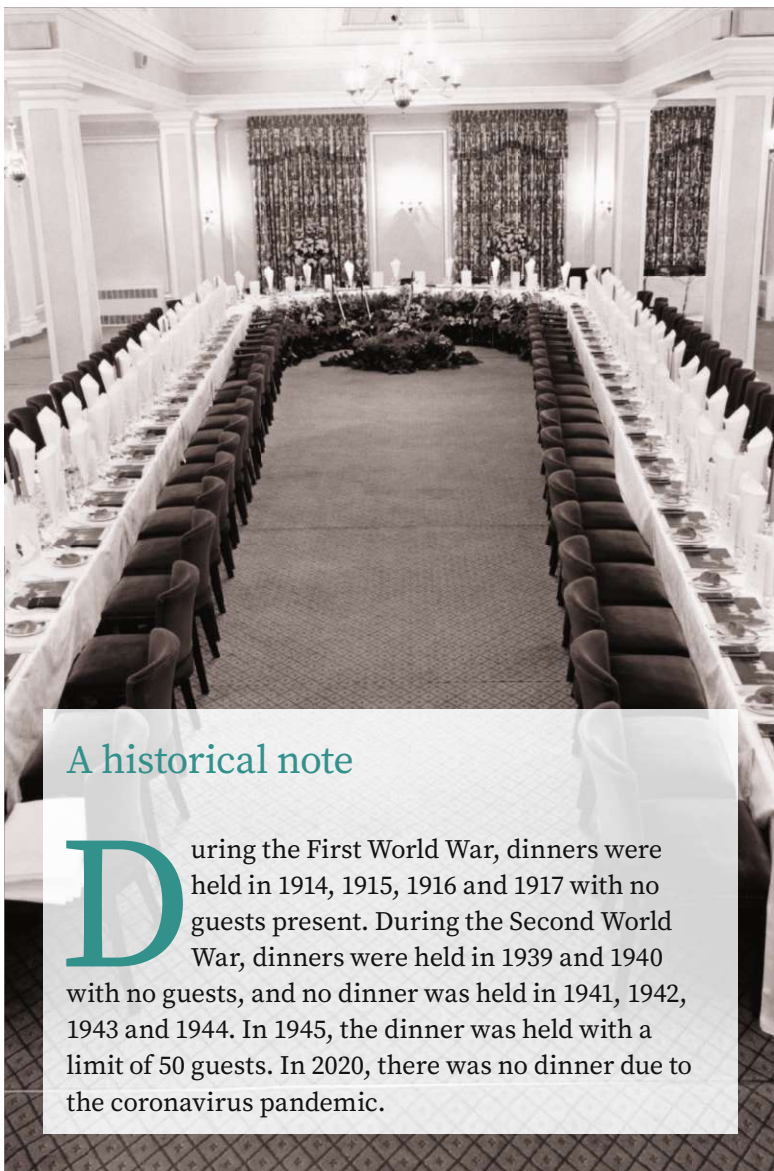
GIMCRACK DINNER

TUESDAY 14TH DECEMBER 2021

Definition of Gimcrack

: a showy object of little use or value

alt: an evening of good company



A historical note

During the First World War, dinners were held in 1914, 1915, 1916 and 1917 with no guests present. During the Second World War, dinners were held in 1939 and 1940 with no guests, and no dinner was held in 1941, 1942, 1943 and 1944. In 1945, the dinner was held with a limit of 50 guests. In 2020, there was no dinner due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Foreword

In July 1889, an article appeared in Baily's magazine of sports and pastimes titled: "An Old Racing Club" about the Gimcrack Club. It was light on details and ends with the following: *"And for the benefit of future generations might we be permitted to hint that it would be desirable if some record were kept of proceedings of so venerable and important a corporation"*. Sadly, very little heed was taken and for the next century information on the Gimcrack Club is sparse and spasmodic.

In anticipation of the 250th Gimcrack Dinner, the York Race Committee has attempted to piece together this short history of the Club, Gimcrack the horse and the Al Basti Equiworld Dubai Gimcrack Stakes as a contest.

For those who may read this in future years and look to update it, copies of the Gimcrack Dinner speeches in the 21st Century are held by the York Race Committee at York Racecourse.

(Any mistakes are to be taken in the spirit of the tales told around the table.)

Contents Page:

Our story is told in three chapters



p6

Gimcrack - The Horse

p20

Gimcrack - The Dinner



p38

Gimcrack - The Race



With sincere thanks to
The Earl of Halifax, Life President and Bridget Guerin,
Chairman of York Race Committee.

Also to David Oldrey, Mike Vince, Jane Richardson,
James Brennan and Jeremy Phillips.

As well as to past authors on the topic,
Major Fairfax-Blakeborough, Judy Egerton,
Messrs Warner & Blake, Alison Kay, York Press,
Punch Magazine, also to Haughton House Hotel.

The painting depicts a white horse in profile, facing left, in a dark, wooded landscape. The horse is the central focus, with its white coat contrasting sharply with the dark surroundings. In the background, a large, dark, multi-story house with a gabled roof is visible, partially obscured by trees. The overall mood is somber and atmospheric, with dramatic lighting that highlights the horse's form.

GIMCRACK

The Horse

Gimcrack by George Stubbs (from The Halifax Collection).



Gimcrack gr. 1760	Cripple gr. 1750	Godolphin Arabian	--
		br/b. 1724	--
	Miss Elliot gr. 1756	Godolphin Blossom	Crab, 1722
		gr. 17--	Blossom's dam
		Grisewood's Partner	Partner, 1718
		gr. 1730	mare by Hutton's Grey Barb
		Caelia	Partner, 1718
		gr. 1742	Grey Brocklesby, 1728

The grand-sire of “the little grey horse” was the Godolphin Arabian, given how he is so celebrated in these parts, it adds a further irony, as Godolphin was the only one of the three foundation stallions NOT to stand in Yorkshire.

Though other offspring of Gimcrack’s dam do appear in the records, probably her biggest legacy is a pencil, pen and watercolour – ‘The Dam of Gimcrack’ by Paul Sandby (1731-1809) which in the Royal Collection.

1760 – Bred by Mr Gideon Elliott of Murrell Green in Hampshire.

Only a little horse, standing fourteen hands and a quarter of an inch. (A Give & Take plate in 1764 measured him at fourteen hands – probability is that the smaller measurement is correct.) The quarter inch was extremely important as in those pre-Admiral Rous days, horses were handicapped according to height, 14oz for each 1/8th of an inch.

The quirks of history continue because though long linked to a contest for star juveniles, Gimcrack himself only began his career aged four, as was the expectation at the time.

The seeming disconnects between Gimcrack's career and his legacy continue, as he was renowned as a stayer so the majority of his contests would have been over distances far longer than the six furlongs of the Group 2 that carries his name.

*Miss Elliot, the dam of Gimcrack by Paul Sandby
(from The Royal Collection)*



Did You Know?



Gimcrack boasted a career win ratio of 75%,
successful 27 times from 36 starts and only out of the
placings on two occasions.

1764 – owned by Mr Green

Those anomalies set aside, even his first year on the track demonstrated why he continues to be worthy of recognition, nearly 260 years later. For he finished his maiden season unbeaten from seven starts. In a summer tour of the south, he won a £50 plate at Epsom before following up in equivalent races at the now forgotten racing venues in Guildford, Winchester, Bedford, Barnet, Reading and Burford.



Gimcrack on Newmarket Heath with a Trainer, a Stable Lad and a Jockey, 1765

1765 – Owned by Mr William Wildman and then by the 2nd Viscount Bolingbroke

Racing in the name of Mr William Wildman (later to own the famous Eclipse), Gimcrack won one race at the Newmarket First Spring Meet. In a tale still welcomed by many a smaller owner, he caught the eye of one of the eighteenth-century powerhouses, and was sold to Lord Bolingbroke for 1,500 guineas (2021: £137,000). Making an instant return on his investment, at the same meeting, Gimcrack was set up in a 500 guineas match against The Duke of Cambridge's Selim, earning a 250 guineas forfeit from his opponent's owners.

The above painting of Gimcrack was done by George Stubbs RA around that time. The painting shows a 'time-shift' composition in which Gimcrack is seen distantly galloping past the Winning Post well ahead of the field while, on the other, he stands in the foreground being rubbed down, possibly after the victory at Newmarket or perhaps after a trial contest, attended to by his trainer and jockey. Acknowledging those who seek authenticity in their art, the only four horse race won by Gimcrack at Newmarket was on his debut on the course on 9 April 1765, when his owner is recorded as being William Wildman. The decision to switch to the

silks of Lord Bolingbroke may indicate that Stubbs had an astute eye for the commercial every bit as much as for the confirmation.

In a continued nod towards the man who commissioned the work, the background scene shows racing rather than exercising, but there is an absence of spectators and the stand at the finishing line is closed. "As always with Stubbs, there is no crowd: the victory is almost a private affair between the horse, his jockey, his trainer and the stable-lad" observed art historian, Judy Egerton. Others have concluded that the scene was merely a trial, pointing to the absence of a judge in the box and so a more natural lack of spectators. Stubbs painted a replica of this work which is now in the collection of The Jockey Club in Newmarket.

As further evidence that Gimcrack was the talking horse of that year, John Pratt is shown in the saddle wearing the red silks of Mr Wildman. For those seeking a Yorkshire connection, John's Uncle - another John Pratt - married the wealthy Miss Hammond of Naburn, and became a successful breeder and owner – winning the St Leger in 1782, as well as being an early member of The Jockey Club.

The Newmarket campaign of 1765 continued with an impressive victory in good company at the Second Spring Meet. The betting on the match against Ascham, reputedly exceeded £100,000 - a sum approaching £14 million in the modern era.

Astonishingly, in October, he won a 500 guineas match against The Duke of Cumberland's Drone, despite giving him 21 pounds. Two days later the grey lost a similar match against Bay Malton – his first defeat after ten wins. Considering that there was a seven pound weight advantage and that both contests were over four miles, history may treat this "upset" with more kindness than that shown by his supporters at the time.



Gimcrack on Newmarket Heath with John Pratt up – George Stubbs, 1765. (currently in The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge)

1766 – owned by Count de Lauraguais

In recent times, we are used to footballers and even rugby players going to play across the Channel, so it was for Gimcrack when he was purchased by a Frenchman. We know the French love road racing for their cyclists and equine athletes were expected to complete similar challenges, hence Gimcrack's participation in a twenty-two-and-a-half-mile road race, against the clock. After duly winning in under an hour, he returned to England for the following season. A quartet of victories, one in the familiar surroundings of Ascot, others at Wisbech, Marlborough and Wells, masked his worst ever season that included three defeats. No surprise that the British Press were quick to blame the conditions of his year abroad for the dip in form.

1768 – owned by Sir Charles Bunbury

The life of Gimcrack is interwoven with the history of the sport and gossip of his times. Sir Charles Bunbury, yes, the same nobleman who legend have it, lost a coin toss for the naming rights of the Epsom blue riband with the The Earl of Derby, took ownership of the horse. His first wife, Lady Sarah Lennox having written of him,

“ the sweetest little horse that ever was – his name is Gimcrack, he is delightful. Lord Rockingham, The Duke of Grafton and General Conway kissed hands the day Gimcrack ran. I must say I was more anxious about the horse than about the Ministry.”

The match between the husband and wife proved less successful than those undertaken by Gimcrack. Their union being ended by Act of Parliament in 1776 on the grounds of Lady Sarah's much discussed adultery.

Successful over 4 miles at Odsey for Sir Charles, our attention is drawn to a spin (in truth two spins, as it was again over four miles) around the Knavesmire that August in the Great Subscription Plate. He finished fifth to Pilgrim running in the colours of Lord Rockingham, the very same racing enthusiast who founded the Dinner. The seven-pound weight advantage over that trip was evidently too big a margin for even a great horse to overcome.

Did You Know?



Gimcrack won a road race over a distance of twenty two miles, claiming victory with a time of less than a hour





Gimcrack and the Bay Malton



1769 – owned by the 1st Earl Grosvenor

In 1769, now aged nine, he transferred to his seventh owner, Lord Grosvenor. Our equine hero returned to winning ways at Newmarket. At the Second Sprint Meet he downed the colours of Lord Rockingham, as carried by Jack-O in a match over the Beacon Course for 300 guineas, despite giving him 2 stone. Yet again a significant sales price, in this case some 1,200 guineas had seen an early payback.

That August saw another unsuccessful tilt at the Great Subscription Plate at York, improving to third place on this occasion behind both Chatsworth and the fabulously named, Tortoise.

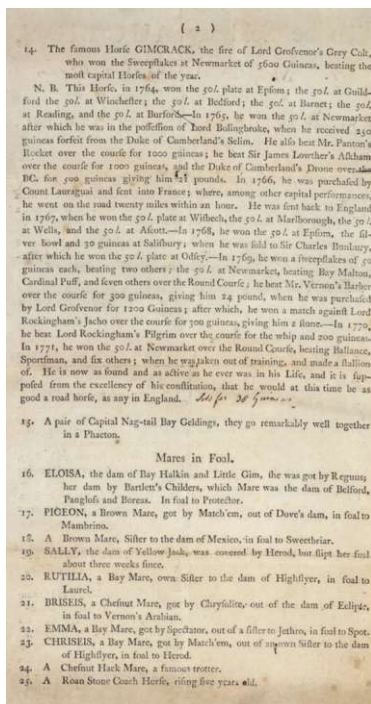
1770

Gimcrack, by now ten years of age, gained his revenge over Lord Rockingham's Pilgrim at the First Spring Meet at Newmarket for the Whip and a purse of 200 guineas. A fifth place in the Jockey Club Plate was only the second occasion, where he was unplaced.

Gimcrack was painted three times by George Stubbs (1724-1806). The one which is used for the tablemats at the Gimcrack Dinner is the 1770 Painting (*See page 6-7) now in The Halifax Collection. In common with many greys, the lightening of his coat from steel grey to almost silver, is captured by the artist.

1771

One last race and one last win awaited Gimcrack in 1771, before he went to stand at Lord Grosvenor's stud, near Newmarket. Given his stature and modest pedigree, he proved only a moderate stallion and by the 1779 season, his fee had fallen from 30 guineas (2021: £2,700) to only 10 guineas (2021: £900). Many consider Lord Grosvenor as the greatest breeder of racing stock of any gentleman in England, and he is said to have spent over £300,000 (call it £42 million today) on his stud farms. Whilst he reaped such rewards, as winning the Derby



three times, in 1790, 1792 and 1794, and the Oaks five times between 1781 and 1799, he also ran up some significant gambling debts. In a lean spell it seems likely that Gimcrack was sold to the Brooke family.

"He is now as sound and active as he ever was in his Life, and it is supposed from the excellency of his constitution, that he would at this time be as good a road horse, as any in England" – Tattersalls' sales sheet of Monday 21 February 1780."

To be Sold by AUCTION,
By **Mr. TATTERSALL,**
Near HYDE-PARK TURNPIKE,
On **MONDAY, the 21st of FEBRUARY, 1780.**
At **TWELVE o'Clock.**

The following very capital Collection of Blood Mares, several of which are in Foal to the most favourite Stallions, together with some Horses in training; likewise a Pair of capital Phaseton Geldings; the famous Horse Gimcrack, &c.

The Purchasers of the Mares, will have the Liberty of sending them to be Covered this Season by Proscott, Sweetwilliam, Mambrino or Justice, free of any Expence, except their Keep, and the Grooms-Fee.

N. B. The Blood Mares have been collected at a great Expence out of the built Stud in England.

Horses in Training.

1. **A** Bay Colt, got by Chymill, out of the dam of Mexico, now rising three years old.

2. **A** Bay Colt, got by Cardinal Puff, out of Elidis, the dam of Bay Harkin, now rising three years old.

3. **A** Brown Colt, rising three years old, got by Sweetshair, out of Princess, which was out of the dam of Herod.

4. **A** Brown Colt, got by Dux, out of Miss Leeds; she was got by Soap, her dam (Miss Wilkinon) by Regulus, now rising four years old.

5. **A** Bay Filley, got by Cardinal Puff, out of Madcap; she was got by Soap, her dam by Cade, out of the Little Hartley Mare, now rising four years old.

6. **A** Brown Filley, got by Match'em, out of Papillon: she was got by Soap, out of Miss Cleveland, and is own sister to Faggertill, now rising three years old.

Barren Mares.

7. **A** Chestnut Mare, three years old, got by Herod, out of the dam of Sweetwilliam.

8. **URANIA**, got by Herod, out of a filly to Pacolet.

9. **TRENTHAM's** dam.

10. **MISS TISS**, a Chestnut Mare, own sister to Pumpkin, Maiden and Count-down.—Not covered last year.

11. **DIZZEY**, a Bay Mare, got by Match'em, dam by Blank, which Mare was the dam of Fido.—Not covered last year.

12. **A** Brown Mare, own sister to Sweetshair.—Not covered last year.

13. **A** Chestnut Mare, intended for the stud; she was got by Syphon, her dam by Blank, grand dam by Bahrham, great grand dam by Old Crab, which was the dam of Doge.

14. **The**

After death, Gimcrack was buried at the home of the Brooke family, Haughton Hall, Shifnal, Shropshire. A small brick and stone pillar marks his grave to the west of the boundary wall of the old kitchen garden. This is a final testimony that he was a special horse - not many equines are remembered in this manner.

Did You Know?



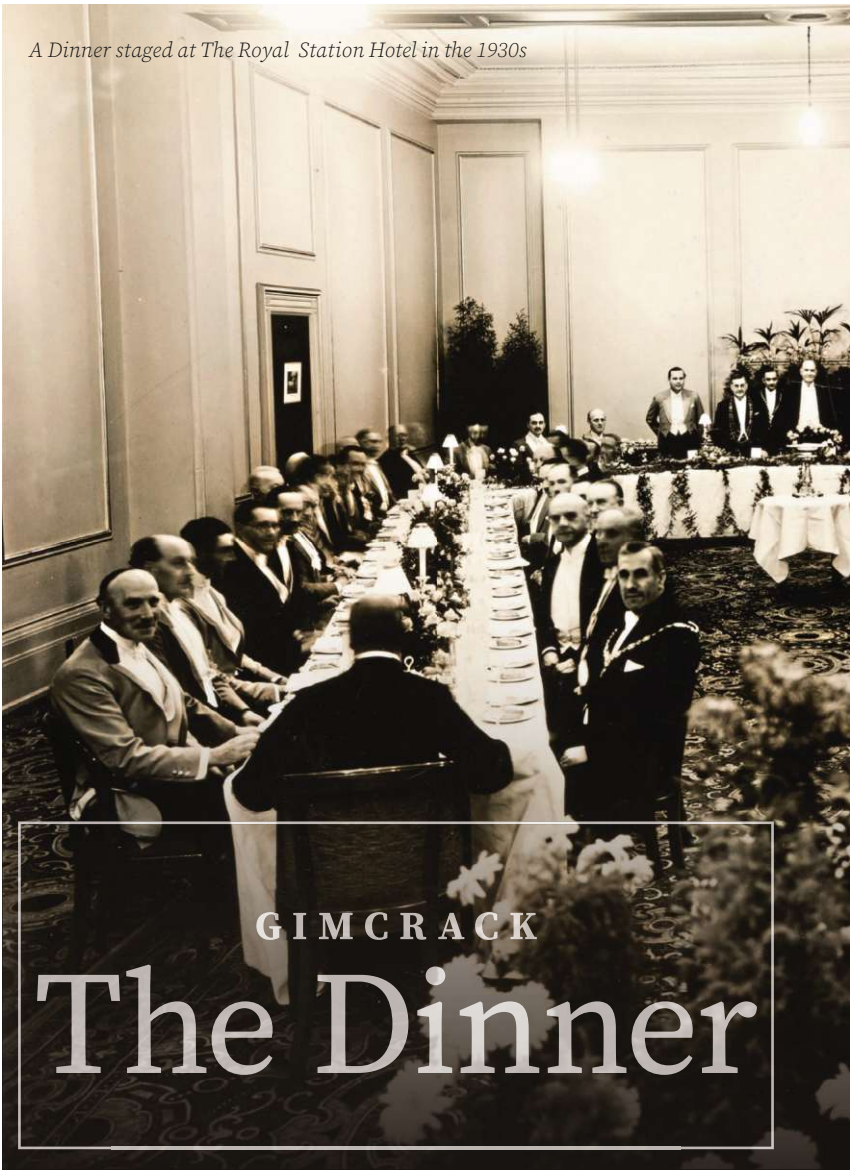
In common with many grey thoroughbreds, the colour of Gimcrack's coat turned from steel grey to near silver, over his racing career.



Gimcrack's burial stone, Haughton Hall, Shifnal, Shropshire

Gimcrack's Race Record

Year	Age	Starts	1st	2nd	3rd	Unplaced
1764	4	7	7	0	0	0
1765	5	6	5	1(match)	0	0
1766	6	1 (time)	1	0	0	0
1767	7	7	4	3	0	0
1768	8	6	4	0	0	1
1769	9	5	3	1 (match)	1	0
1770	10	4	2	1	0	1
1771	11	1	1	0	0	0
Total	--	37	27	7	1	2



A Dinner staged at The Royal Station Hotel in the 1930s

GIMCRACK

The Dinner



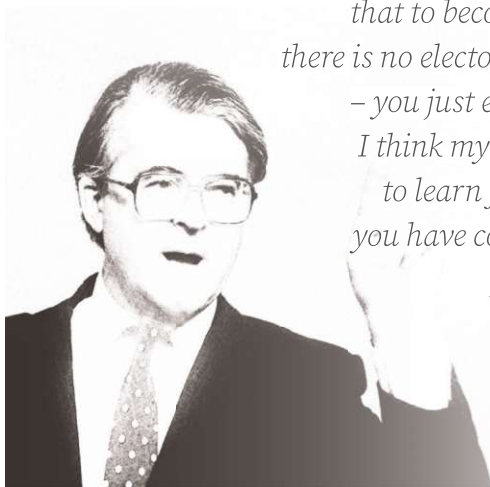
History of the Ancient Fraternitie of Gimcracks

In December 1990, the Rt Hon Kenneth Baker MP and Home Secretary rose to propose the toast to The Jockey Club at the annual Gimcrack Dinner.

In his opening remarks, he said;

“My Lord President, I understand that this is the most important dinner in the racing social calendar. I also understand that it is named after a famous racehorse, which in the 1760s had a great record of winning 27 races. I also understand that this admirable organisation, The Gimcrack Club, has no rules, no ballot for members and no records of proceedings – How sensible. How wise.

I understand, my Lord President, that to become the Lord President there is no electoral process whatsoever – you just emerge, and I must say I think my Party has a great deal to learn from the excellent way you have conducted your matters for the last 200 years”.



Kenneth Baker was correct that records of the Gimcrack Club are sketchy. We know that the first Gimcrack Dinner was held in 1767 and we can guess that it was probably held in the Assembly Rooms in York. We know that Pick's York Racing Calendar in 1767 listed the subscribers to the York Assembly Rooms alongside information on the races to be run and the cockfights to be held. This suggests that the races had increased in popularity, as a County Event, and that the original members of the Gimcrack Club would have been on York Racecourse to watch them.

It is likely that one of the founding members of Ye Ancient Fraternitie of Ye Gimcracks was likely to be the Marquess of Rockingham, who organised the building of the first stand, designed by leading architect John Carr, at York Racecourse and whose horse Pilgrim beat

Gimcrack in 1768 in the Great Subscription Plate. He was also twice Prime Minister and the King's representative at the Treaty of Paris. Gimcrack ran at York but was out of luck on both occasions. The annual dining and drinking club was probably named after Gimcrack because he was regarded with such affection, as loved as the Red Rum or even the Frankel of his day.

In 1789, the Prince of Wales (later George IV) attended York Races with his brother, the Duke of York. His horse, Sir Thomas, won the second race and afterwards he dined at the Mansion House and the following evening at the Assembly Rooms. It is likely that he became one of the early members of the Fraternitie of Ye Gimcracks.

Whatever the reasons behind the Club, the influence of the little grey horse and his legacy have been celebrated at 250 Gimcrack Dinners and it is almost certainly the oldest

sporting club in the UK, if not the world.

The first recorded venue of the dinner was at the Punch Bowl in Stonegate. It may have been that the very early meetings were punch and wine affairs rather than a dinner, and it was an occasion where arrangements for coming race meetings were decided. Travel was not easy in those days and men slept where they dined. Those responsible for arranging the details of their local race meetings normally made a night of it. The stakes for the following year were decided and the stewards for the year were appointed. Subsequently, the Club met annually at the York Tavern (also known as Harker's Hotel) which was



on the site of the current Betty's Tea Rooms. Here it was recorded in 1870 that "*a most sumptuous repast was partaken by about fifty guests including the whole of the members of the York Race Committee*". In 1870, the post-script to the report on the Gimcrack Dinner held at Mr Matthews' York Hotel was "*It should be added that the dinner was served up in the very best style and with choice wines, and congenial spirits, the evening was marked with great conviviality.*" In 1891, it moved to the Royal Station Hotel (now the Principal Hotel) where it met for almost a century, before moving to York Racecourse for the 200th Dinner in 1970. Today, the York Race Committee take the choice of food and wine for the annual Gimcrack Dinner very seriously indeed. The Racecourse caterers get their very best chefs to provide a tasting menu, at a lunch after the autumn Committee meeting. The Committee then chooses from a large array of



different dishes and wines as to what they want to be served at the dinner. It is during this important tasting session that the invitees to the dinner (that year's Gimcracks) are agreed.

It appears that in the early 19th Century, the popularity of racing at York was in decline and Doncaster was taking over in turf prestige. In 1868, The York Gazette in a report on the Gimcrack dinner records “*From causes unnecessary to enter upon, in 1842 the York Races had fallen materially in reputation. A*

Committee was then formed, of which Mr Roper, their excellent chairman, was a prominent member and from that day to this, the York meetings have gone on increasing in importance under his fostering care and are now second to none in the Kingdom.”

In the first half of the 19th Century, several sporting clubs were formed. It is believed that the Yorkshire Union Hunt Club inaugurated a race meeting in which the first race was the Champagne Stakes, with the condition that

the winner was to give two dozen bottles of champagne to the Hunt Club. This race only survived for a couple of years but when the Gimcrack Stakes was started in 1846, it adopted a similar condition of the winner being required to give three dozen bottles of champagne to the Gimcrack Club. In addition, they had to give a further dozen bottles to the Yorkshire Union Hunt Club.

Like the Ebor Handicap, the Gimcrack Stakes may have been another attempt to lift the prestige of York Races. Particulars of the new race first appeared in the Racing Calendar of 1845 as "The Gimcrack Stakes of 10 sovs each (entry money) with 100 sovs (worth £12,770 in today's money) added by members of the York Gimcrack Club, for two year old colts and fillies. The winner of the Prince of Wales's Stakes to carry 3lb extra, the second horse to receive 25 sovs out of the stakes and the third horse to save his stake. The winning

owner was to give three dozen bottles of champagne to the York Gimcrack Club."

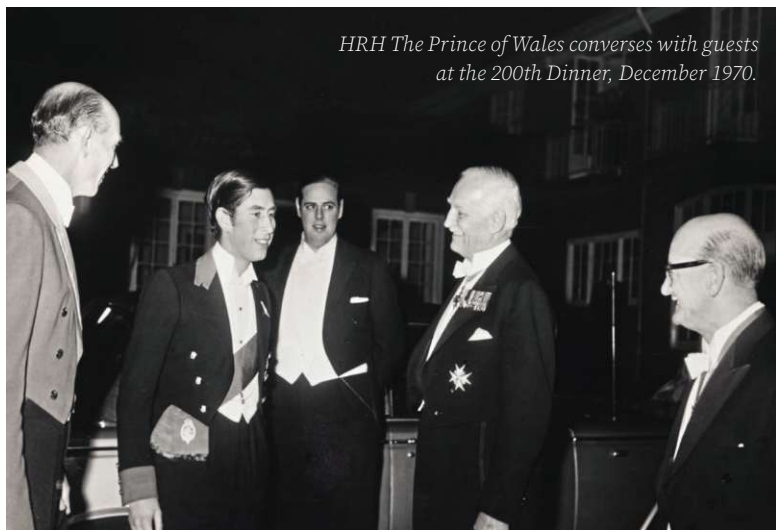
What has been unchanged to this day is the invitation for the owner of the winner of the Gimcrack Stakes to give a speech at the annual dinner on the second Tuesday in December of each year.

Over the years, the dinners appear to have got larger and we expect that the 250th Dinner will have almost 200 guests. Whilst it has always been an opportunity to discuss the racing issues of the day, it appears that over the years, more and more venerable people have attended the dinner. In 1886, the York Gazette reported that "*Alderman Melrose, the chairman of the Fraternitie, as he is also chairman of the York Race Committee, proposed the loyal toasts and in reference to the Prince of Wales (later Edward VII), said that his Royal Highness had not yet visited a race meeting at York but it was hoped he would shortly honour the Knavesmire with his presence*". There is no

record of this Prince of Wales attending racing at York but HRH Prince Charles, Prince of Wales attended the 200th Gimcrack Dinner in 1970 to deliver a speech.

Thumbing through press reports on the Gimcrack Dinner from the mid-1850s onwards, it is possible to pick up some common themes from the speech reports. The most common of all has been the subject of prize money. Though the number of racedays and methods of calculating prize money have

changed in the lifetime of this Dinner, the commitment of those leading York Racecourse has been consistent. In 1863, the added stake money for two meetings a year was £1,610 (£212,447 in 2021 terms). By 1882, it has risen to £5,500 (£694,870 in 2021 terms). In 1939, prize money was £33,550 (£2,303,112) and in 1984 it reached £1 million (£3 million today). In 2019, before COVID-19, the York Race Committee provided its highest ever level of prize money approaching £9 million, including £5 million



*HRH The Prince of Wales converses with guests
at the 200th Dinner, December 1970.*



The table set for the 200th Dinner in the Gimcrack Rooms, York Racecourse.

of executive contribution.

Some of the key developments of racing and the development of York Racecourse are also highlighted in various

speeches made by a wide range of speakers, proving that it has been a forum for raising issues and not just a convivial occasion.

So Now You Know?



- 1846: Winning owner to provide 36 bottles of champagne to the Dinner.
- 1890: Just a dozen required
- 1919: £30 worth of fizz
- Now: Our friends at Moët & Chandon generously oblige

A selection of issues raised in the speeches at previous Dinners.

1866 – A new Subscription Stand announced for York Racecourse with a saloon, private boxes and a terrace for Subscribers to see the course and transact business, with members of the ring below them.



1867 – Alderman James Melrose becomes a member of the York Race Committee. He held this position for 68 years and was Chairman for 53 of them. He died in 1929 at the age of 100. The Melrose Stand at York Racecourse today is named after him.

James Melrose, pictured here on the right with John Osborne in the 1920s

1874 – New saddling paddock and weighing room with a jockeys' dressing area. Cost £6,000 (£712,557 in 2021 terms).

1875 – Announced that Queen Victoria had permitted the Queen's Plate to be run only at York and Newmarket every year with prize money of £200 (£24,300) at York.

1877 – James Lowther MP was one of the first speakers to elevate the Gimcrack speeches to a different level of national influence. In his speech, he warns of the public mood of intolerance about the new Suburban (gate-money) race meetings which were infested by disreputable mobs who threatened the lives of the peaceable and orderly inhabitants of suburban districts. In 1879, the Racecourse (Metropolitan) Bill had a second reading which aimed to licence suburban race meetings, mainly around London.

1887 – The Earl of Durham - gave possibly the most explosive of Gimcrack Dinner speeches. Without naming names, Lord Durham accused a fellow member of The Jockey Club of having a stable of horses in Newmarket which were not running according



to their true merits, in order that the owner could make money from betting. The owner in question was Sir George Chetwynd and, after the speech, he demanded either an apology, or a duel. Durham refused both and the matter went before three members of The Jockey Club who considered Chetwynd's demand for £20,000 in damages. Sir George won the legal battle but was crushingly defeated in the war. The Stewards made their view of his behaviour clear by absolving him of any wrong-doing but awarding him not £20,000 but instead, just one farthing. Chetwynd resigned from The Jockey Club and retired from the Turf.



1897 – The Earl of Rosebery (Prime Minister 1894 – 1895) - owner of three Derby winners, made one of the most extraordinary speeches, as illustrated in a Punch cartoon from the time. Lord Rosebery was introduced in effusive terms by his Old Etonian friend, Lord Wenlock, who congratulated him on winning the Gimcrack. In response, Lord Rosebery replied:

“Under those circumstances it is a matter of embarrassment to know what I am to say to you tonight. I cannot extol the merit of the animal which won the Gimcrack Stakes (Mauchline), to which I am indebted for this honour, because except on the occasion when she won this historic event, she has displayed no marked excellence and offers no prospect of it. But after all, I can always give advice. That is the perpetual prerogative of the person who has nothing else to say. I am a little alarmed, I confess, at the juvenile reminiscences of my friend, Lord Wenlock, because I am afraid that it may encourage my sons to take, in their turn, to racing. If I am asked to give advice to those who are inclined to spend their time and their money on the turf, I should give them the advice that ‘Punch’ gave to those about to marry - ‘Don’t’.”



Pictured with guests at the Dinner in the 1920s, is James Melrose (left), a long time Chairman of York Racecourse

1905, 1906, 1907, 1909 – Mentioned mainly because Colonel William Hall Walker MP, later Lord Wavertree, (who, on his death, gave his stud at Tully in Ireland to the Nation... which is now what we know as the National Stud) managed to win the Gimcrack four times and gave four different

speeches. In 1907, having won the race for a third time he opened his speech with the words “Here I am again!” In 1909, he said “It was a curious fact that the winning horse of the Gimcrack Stakes had generally proved to have been afterwards unlucky. The first mare with which I have won it, Colonia, split her pastern in her first race as a three year old, Polar Star, the second winner ran himself to a standstill in the Epsom Cup, and was never the same horse again and Royal Realm had been unlucky ever since winning, in many ways”.

1925 – Mr G H Deane of Tattersalls raised the issue of racing appointing paid stipendiary stewards to assist local stewards.

.....

1928 – Lord Dewar made a winning owner's speech full of epigrams, many of which ring true today - *"On the Turf to him that hath shall be given – the experience of losing"*, *"There is nothing so uncertain as a sure thing"*, *"Cast your bread upon the bloodstock sales and you will be very lucky if you ever see it again"* and *"No wife can long endure a gambling husband unless he is a steady winner"*.

.....

1929 – Sir Clement Hindley, the first Chairman of the Betting Control Board, gave a speech about the recently launched Totalisator, the profits from which were to be devoted to the sport of horse racing and to improvements in the breeding of horses. There were many early problems to be resolved, not least of which was persuading racecourses to build Tote buildings in all enclosures. By the time of the speech, it was operating on 23 racecourses. There was also evidence that the existence of the Tote had increased racecourse attendance. It was also announced that York Racecourse had managed to extend its lease for a further 35 years which enabled it to plan for the installation of the Tote the following year.

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1931 – Viscount Milton of Malton (later Earl Fitzwilliam) gave a speech, aged just 21, and called for lower admission prices and higher placed prize money.

.....

1933 – The Aga Khan became the first overseas owner to address the dinner. He called for more money, better facilities on racecourses and for paid stipendiary stewards.

.....

1936 – Marcel Boussac delivered his speech in French. It is doubtful that many of the guests followed it!

1956 – Another First in that the winner, Eudaemon, was owned by a woman, Mrs Elsie Foster. She had become a millionaire by setting up a scrap metal business by collecting World War II scrap metal, although she later went bankrupt.

In her speech, she called for racing to be concentrated on fewer courses to create better quality. Since then, there have been nine Gimcrack winners owned or part owned by women but only four women have made a speech.

1970 – His Royal Highness, The Prince of Wales rose to make a speech following the winning owner, Paul Mellon, owner of Mill Reef - one of the best horses ever to have won the Gimcrack. However, Paul Mellon's winning speech was a long one. When Prince Charles started speaking, he said that he had been asked to give a speech on 10 December but he was now delivering it on 11 December!

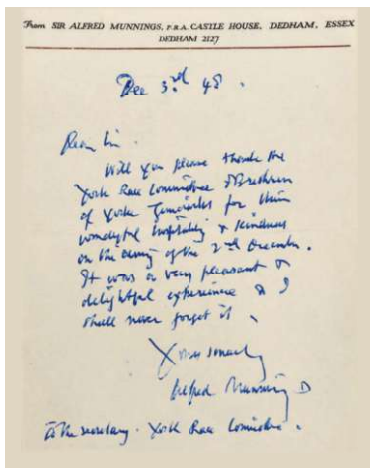




*The Rt Hon Edward Heath,
Prime Minister*

1972 – The Rt Hon Edward Heath, Prime Minister, predicted a prosperous future for horse racing as the On Course betting tax cut “should draw the crowds”.

1997 – Sheikh Mohammed Al Maktoum (delivered by Michael Osborne, Chairman of the Dubai World Cup) provided a huge wake-up call to British Racing as he praised British racing heritage, but then threatened to quit Britain unless the prize money improved. In his sights were the UK Government for taking too much out in betting tax and the increasing levels of profits being made by bookmakers.



A thank you letter from celebrated equine artist Sir Alfred Munnings who attended the 1948 Dinner

The speeches in the 21st Century have continued to address topical issues. In 2004, Robin Cook MP, reported that the Tote was to be sold off by the Government, with the sales proceeds going to a racing trust. In 2005, Trevor Beaumont re-iterated how important it was for racing to remain on terrestrial TV, and in 2006, Chris Bell, Chief Executive of Ladbrokes, became the first bookmaker to address the Gimcrack Dinner. In 2012, Rachel Hood, President of the Racehorse Owners Association, became the first woman to give the Industry speech at the Dinner but not the first to bemoan the issue of prize money levels that remain a threat to the future of British Racing. In 2019, Ed Chamberlin, the lead presenter on ITV Racing, explained that his mission was to increase the attractiveness of racing to as wide an audience as possible, by demystifying the jargon

and engaging his audience in all aspects of the sport.

Looking back in 2021 over 254 years which have seen enormous social, economic, and political changes in Great Britain, some things have hardly changed at all for Ye Ancient Fraternitie of Gimcracks. The list of toasts made at each Dinner is largely the same. The quality of the food and wine seems to be as good as ever reported, albeit the number of courses is now four rather than ten listed on a menu from 1899 (*see p25*). Certainly, the conviviality of the annual dinners seems to be undiminished, and an invitation is still regarded as a great privilege.

The Club has grown from what we imagine was a small number of people in 1767 to what we know had become a dinner of around 50 to 60 men in the mid-1800s. By the time the Dinner moved to York Racecourse in 1970, the number of guests had risen to



A recent Dinner in its latest home, The Voltigeur Restaurant.

around 100. It was held in the Gimcrack Rooms (also known as the Gimcrack Restaurant) on a large horseshoe table with guests seated both on the outside and inside of the horseshoe. The guest list consisted of those who had supported York Racecourse and those who were racing

employees or supporters of racing in the County. There were also quite a few friends of the Committee who were involved in other rural sports. This made for a colourful spectacle with many guests in either white tie or their hunting evening dress.

As York Racecourse has



grown to be one of the pre-eminent flat racecourses in the Country, staging races such as the Juddmonte International which was rated the ‘Best Race in the World’ in 2014 and again in 2020, the guest list has expanded and changed. As we sit down to the 250th Dinner, there will be around 200 guests. We will be sitting in the Voltigeur Restaurant,

still in a horseshoe but with a much bigger table, together with around 40 women. We are delighted to welcome racing people, not only from the great county of Yorkshire, but also those who are pre-eminent in our great sport today from all of the many threads and international participants that make up the British Racing Industry.




GIMCRACK

The Race







When a race is first run in 1846 and has been contested over all of the official trips of a mile or less, as well as being switched to being a colts only affair as recently as 1987, there are lots of winners and runners you could talk about. With a well deserved nod to Bahram, the 1934 champion and subsequent Triple Crown winner, we make no apology for focusing on those that many in the room will remember personally.

The year was 1970- a year racing folk will remember for eternity as it saw Nijinsky join the immortals by landing the holy grail of the classic Triple Crown.

But it was also the year another of the greatest horses of the modern era graced the Knavesmire, spreadeagling the Gimcrack field and winning by 10 lengths.

And it very nearly didn't happen.

Mill Reef was the juvenile everyone was talking about. Trained by Ian Balding for American Paul Mellon, he had bolted up on his debut and then had won the Coventry Stakes at Royal Ascot by a distance.

There was real excitement about Mill Reef heading to the Knavesmire- excitement which almost turned to despair, as the rain fell and fell and fell in the build-up. Ian Balding had his doubts about whether Mill Reef should even take part, but Paul Mellon wanted to go for it - bottomless it may have been, but the prestige and stature of Yorkshire's premier two-year-old race won the day, so the Owner's wishes prevailed.

What followed lifted the spirits of tens of thousands of soaked racegoers who had grabbed whatever cover they could.

Mill Reef, distinctive noseband to the fore, like most of the field raced in the centre of the course, and at halfway jockey Geoff Lewis made his move.

ITV Commentator, Tony Cooke, nailed it early

“With two furlongs to go Mill Reef has moved smoothly up and he looks to me to be cantering and now he goes into the lead”

All his rivals could see was a shadow disappearing as Mill Reef powered through the underfoot conditions to a 10-length victory over Green God.

Fifteen months later the enormity of what they had seen in the most memorable of Gimcrack's hit the crowd, who had probably just dried out - the Knavesmire had played host to a horse that conquered Europe winning the Derby, Eclipse, King George and Arc.

Perhaps surprisingly, or in a reflection of new, attractive racing campaigns over shorter trips, he remains the last horse to win middle distance classics after winning the Gimcrack.

Mill Reef may have been the star turn of the 1970's but second, in terms of achievement in that decade is probably the 1973 hero Giacometti. Trained in Sussex by Ryan Price and ridden by

Tony Murray, he had a length to spare over Late Love and Music Maestro. In his classic season that followed, Giacometti joined an elite but probably unwanted club - being placed in all three classics - second in the 2,000 Guineas, third in the Derby, and second in the St Leger. You would suspect connections would have swapped those for one victory!

Mention of the classics and few are won by 15 lengths, but a Gimcrack winner of the 1990's did just that.

Turtle Island, trained by Peter Chapple Hyam and ridden by John Reid arrived for the 1993 Gimcrack, off the back of a win in the Phoenix Stakes. This honours graduate of the Gimcrack produced the most stunning of performances on the soft testing ground at The Curragh in the Irish 2,000 Guineas, beating the rest by that 15 lengths.

A seeming anomaly of the Gimcrack is the relative lack of Irish trained success. Back in the 1970's it went across the Irish Sea twice in three years as the 1974 renewal went to Steel Heart for Dermot Weld and Lester Piggott and then Kevin Prendergast saddled Nebbiolo to land the prize - and he was to follow up in the following year's 2,000 Guineas, flooring the subsequent Derby winner, The Minstrel, in the process. There was no further Irish success for more than 20 years, until Aidan O'Brien repeated that feat of wining it twice in three years. In 1999, it was Mull of Kintyre and, more memorably in 2001, with Rock of Gibraltar. Both were ridden by Mick Kinane and it is a surprise to many that after 20 years 'The Rock' remains the last horse to take the Gimcrack Trophy back to the Emerald Isle. Part owned by Sir Alex Ferguson, Rock of Gibraltar went on to set a record of seven consecutive Group 1 victories, including the Anglo Irish 2,000 Guineas double.

The Al Basti Equiworld Dubai Gimcrack is a jewel in the crown of Yorkshire Racing so you'd expect that from Malton to Middleham



'The Rock' remains the last horse to take the Gimcrack Trophy back to the Emerald Isle.

and any other places with a stable in the White Rose County, the desire to land the coveted prize has always been so strong.

Back in the mid 1950's Charles Elsey sent out three winners in a row from his Malton base, thanks to Eudaemon, Pheidippedes and Be Careful. That remains a post war record, with Richard Hannon with three winners in four years between 1988 and 1991, the closest to equal it.

The Brothers Easterby have both celebrated victory; 1979 saw Sonnen Gold, under Mark Birch put Peter's name in the lights, Mick followed in 1986, thanks to Wiganthorpe, ridden by Willie Carson.

And Mark Johnston saddled Shaweel to win in 2008, the year the race had to be switched to Newbury after the infamous deluge that claimed the entire Ebor Festival. Thankfully, the Dinner in his honour was served closer to home.

Did You Know?



Kevin Ryan's four wins puts him level with Richard Hannon senior at the top of the modern-day record of winning trainers - times have changed- in the late 1800's a William l'Anson junior saddled seven winners

But it is Kevin Ryan who is the most successful of the current Yorkshire trainers, with a tally of four wins and plenty of placed horses as well. The Ryan years began in 2005 when Amadeus Wolf, under Neil Callan, stormed home to beat his old rival, Red Clubs, and followed up in the Middle Park Stakes at Newmarket that September. Blaine was next in 2012, despite going into the race having won his only previous start - a maiden at the John Smith's Cup meeting the previous month, but he prevailed under Philip Makin's urgings in a photo at the expense of the Kingsley House runner, Heavy Metal. Win number three came 12 months later when



Connections of Emaraaty Anna pose for the camera s in 2018

Neil Callan was back on board, this time with Astaire. Team Ryan were back in the winner's enclosure in 2018 thanks to Emaraaty Ana, ridden by Frankie Dettori. It proved to be one of the strongest renewals of recent years. Third home was Shine So Bright, who returned a year later to edge out Laurens in that thrilling renewal of the Group 2 Sky Bet City of York Stakes. Even further down the field that afternoon was the Richard Fahey trained, Space Traveller, whose three-year-old haul included the Group 3 Jersey Stakes at Royal Ascot and the Group 2 Boomerang Stakes during Irish Champions Weekend.

He wasn't the first horse trained by Richard Fahey to be placed in the Gimcrack and go on to even better things. Think back to 2015 when Fahey ran a 25-1 outsider named Ribchester. It was only the second start of the Ifraaj colt's career and he came within a length of the William Haggas trained winner, Ajaya. Ribchester was to go on to land the Mill Reef Stakes on his final start at two, the Jersey Stakes and Prix Jacques le Marois at three and in a glorious four-year-old career won a trio of Group 1 prizes, the Lockinge, Queen Anne and the Prix du Moulin.

Fahey's name does appear on the winners' Roll of Honour as the handler of one of the two winners in the past decade who went on to land Group 1 sprints later in their career. Sands of Mali arrived on 2017 Gimcrack Day at York having won a small Tuesday evening race at Nottingham on his previous start, of course Paul Hanagan was on board the 14-1 shot in a race so open they went 9-2 co favourites in a field of ten. His Classic season took in being second in the Group 2 Sandy Lane Stakes at Haydock the following June, before finding only Sir Michael Stoute's Eqtidaar half a length too good in the Commonwealth Cup at Royal Ascot. But he was to return to the Royal Heath in triumph, when landing the Group 1 sprint on British Champions Day that October.

Did You Know?



The enhanced sprinting programme created for three-year-olds including the creation of the G1 Commonwealth Cup and upgraded G2 Sandy Lane Stakes, had its genesis in the Gimcrack Dinner speech given by the owners of 2007 winner, Sir Gerry.

It has taken all sorts to win the Al Basti Equiworld Dubai Gimcrack through the years - some from smaller yards have claimed the prize too, with Alan McCabe having probably the biggest win of his training career sending out Caspar Netscher to win - and he went on to claim the following year's German 2,000 Guineas.



Godolphin's Blue Point gave Charlie Appleby and William Buick their only Gimcrack so far, in 2016

Blessed with more benign weather and benefitting from improved turf husbandry, in recent years it has simply been a question of speed that has won the day, no more so than when

Godolphin's Blue Point clocked up the fastest time this century at 1 minute 9 seconds. Blue Point, described by his jockey immediately afterwards as one of the best juveniles he had ever ridden, never raced over further than the Gimcrack distance. He was retired after he had proved himself one of the best sprinters in decades in winning a second consecutive Kings Stand Stakes at Royal Ascot, and followed it up four days on in the Diamond Jubilee Stakes, meaning a career of more than two and a half million pounds secured.

The Gimcrack is one of the races everyone wants to win - the Roll of Honour bears nearly all the greats over approaching two hundred years, that neither Sir Michael Stoute nor Ryan Moore have yet to do so shows that sport always offers new mountains to climb. For owners it is so special, much as modern race fans treasure the emotion of broadcaster Oli Bell, when his family landed the Gold Cup at Royal Ascot with Big Orange, for a previous generation the smile is the same when recalling then BBC Racing Correspondent, Julian Wilson, calling home the 1977 winner, Tumbledownwind, a colt in which he had a share.

We all await what the future holds for the 2021 winner of the Al Basti Equiworld Dubai Gimcrack Stakes, Lusail, a second winner in the past three years for trainer Richard Hannon and indeed for those increasing speedballs to come. They certainly have some memorable acts to follow and some fine traditions to uphold.

Thank you for your support





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