

THE JUMPING LIFE

JUMPS SEASON 2017/18

The Jumping Life: **Published by Martin Gray for Martin Gray Racing Club Members**

I run a small friendly racing club which provides members with a racehorse ownership experience, regular updates, stable visits, owner's tickets, other National Hunt information and profitable betting advice from less than £20 per week. The retention of MGR club members is running at over 90% over the first three years.

For further information please take a look at my website www.martingrayracing.co.uk,
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Hopefully this free publication may encourage a few jumps enthusiasts who have been thinking about becoming more involved in racing, particularly the jumping scene, to come forward and take the plunge. Who knows how far we may go?

If you could forward this first edition on to your friends and contacts who you know follow jumps racing, it would be much appreciated.

Martin

Contents

	Page
Introduction	2
Betting Approach	2
Beware – Reputational Management Software	3
Store Horse Sales	4
Horses In Training Sales	5
Section 1 Named Horses To Follow	6
Section 2 George Bewley Stable Runners	19
Section 3 Unnamed and Unraced Horses To Follow	21
Summary	25
Glossary of Terms	26
Acknowledgement	26

Introduction

I have published this first ever edition to test how well it is received by enthusiasts of National Hunt racing and would welcome your feedback and comments.

There are already other really good NH publications available and worthy of particular note is the Mark Howard publication 'One Jump Ahead', John Morris' publication, 'Jumping Prospects', Paul Ferguson's 'Jumpers To Follow' and Marten Julian's 'Dark Horses' annual publication. Declan Phelan also does a great job writing about the Irish Point to Point scene. All these publications are a great read, value for money and worthy purchases.

My passion has always been National Hunt racing and these days I am immersed not only in the ownership, racing club and the betting side of NH racing but also increasingly in the bloodstock sales side. The approach I bring which is slightly different to the above publications is by pulling together all areas, that is horse ownership, bloodstock research, sales ring experience and form analysis on the betting side of the sport.

I hope you will find that because my approach is more centered around my own original research and not predominantly skewed by the views and opinions of trainers in particular, that you will find something different within these pages.

My research work is comprehensive and whilst I will absorb and consider a wide variety of information, I never rely on just one source of information in concluding my research findings.

Betting Approach

The approach that I take with most of the 'talking horses' in other publications or from stable reports is to try and see them more as an opportunity to go against the grain and to seek value elsewhere. When Mark or John or one of the other guys heavily touts a horse, especially if it's a young expensive purchase in a top yard, the price will usually be short and placing a value bet difficult. What I try to do is to see the opportunity in that. If an unraced well touted horse has a tendency to distort the betting market, then my approach is often to look for other higher value bets in the same race. Just because an unraced horse has a strong write up and is from a top stable with a name jockey and cost a few quid at the sales, doesn't guarantee it's going to run any faster than the next horse, so spotting the value for me is what it's all about.

Looking back over the last season on the betting side of things, this was the most profitable season for me and for MGR racing club members who follow my betting advice. With the biggest price horses that I bet on, there is every chance that most of the time these horses are going to disappoint – sometimes run shockers and when that happens, the tipster can look really silly and lose credibility. It takes a lot of confidence to regularly tip a horse that's north of 25/1. I often find myself trying to stop people losing money through my tips. By giving them value bets where, if we don't win then I try to ensure that we are not going to lose by picking up place money and sometimes at fairly short place terms. Apart from when we win I always feel better if all or most of our stake money is retained in our pocket for another day rather than the bookmakers.

The concept of tipping out the odd really big price horse is something I haven't favoured doing in the last couple of seasons. Having said that this last year I did back and win a 100/1 bet, a 40/1, a couple of 33/1's and I did tip out 25/1, 20/1 and 16/1 winners through the season. These big price winning bets are few and far between, but when they do come off it can make a huge difference to the

betting bank. The psychology and reputational impact of big priced long losing runs for tipsters and their clients is why most tipsters avoid going there including me!

To make these bets pay, you have to be prepared to see similar bets for a sequence of runs losing and be comfortable and happy with that. Most recreational punters find that difficult to accept as a losing run of bets is demoralising for everyone.

My approach to finding value bets is not rocket science, and I would say it is 80% just plain hard work. I spend many hours researching and analysing information from a wide variety of sources to reach a conclusion which often is 'not to bet today!' The various sources of information I use include Racing Post, Timeform, Irish and UK Point to Point websites, At The Races, Racing UK, Horseracebase, From The Stables, Trainers Quotes, various publications mentioned earlier, trainer stable tour reports, website blogs and my own visual experiences whilst on the race tracks and at the sales.

I then apply my brain to it all and look to see if a 'value bet' is available, more often than not however the conclusion is not to bet....until the time is right!

Beware – Reputational Management Software

Being able to get my bets 'on' with the online bookmakers in particular has become very difficult for me. There's sneaky little products that are downloaded on your laptop or PC (without you even knowing) when you open an online account with most big name bookmakers. One product is called 'IESnare' run by a company called 'lovation'. If you google that and read up on it, what you will find is that the online betting companies that we all use, the majority of them subscribe to this service from lovation. lovation sell the data collected on you to the bookmakers and they track bets you are making. So whilst you may be making a profit with one bookmaker, pretty soon most of the others get to find out and I've had situations where I've opened a new account and tried to place my first bet each way and the bet has been refused and I haven't even won anything. That's the sort of unfair situation punters are up against which I think is fundamentally wrong. If a bookmaker is advertising prices and it's available to the public to be able to bet at those prices, why should they have the ability to stop people placing a bet? My £50 is as good as anybody else's but they don't want my bets. Take a look at the website www.justiceforpunters.org and you will see how big the problem is.

Google IE Snare and lovation and learn how to block or remove this software from your PC, laptop or iPad. Engage the help of an IT friend if required as it is worth protecting yourself from this sneaky underhand practise which should be made illegal.

When I was working full-time and didn't have the time to dedicate, study and research in the same way as I do now and maybe wasn't as experienced. Like most people I was more of a recreational punter, betting for fun, watching the Saturday racing and occasionally, like most people having a nice win, enjoying the fun of it all, even losing wasn't a problem as it was just pocket money bets. For many years when I was doing that and losing I can't remember a bookmaker ever refusing to take my bets. Now I have got to grips with it all and learned when to bet, when not to bet and be much more disciplined and professional in my research, the bookmakers don't want to know. I spend more time messing round trying to get bets on which gets in the way of other things but that's just the way it is for me now.

Store Horse Sales

Buying young NH racehorses at the store horse sales is an expensive exercise and increasingly the cost of young NH store horses are rising. Prices have increased somewhere around 25% in the last two years at the various 3 year old store sales. These sales present the best opportunities I believe of finding nice horses at value money simply because they've never been tried. They are unbroken and it's impossible for the owner of the horse, the breeder or the pin hooker to know what the horse is going to do on the track. You can get some idea of course, particularly through the breeding and physical attributes of the horse. However if you go to a decent race meeting on any one day and you stand next to the winners enclosure and you look carefully at the horses that come in and have won. How many of them are the type of physical specimen that would cost the most money when walking around a sales ring? The answer is probably not that many, maybe a quarter of them and the other three quarters are all shapes and sizes.....make sense of that.

What winning horses do have in most cases is a bloodline and a family which when matched correctly produces winners. That's the main angle that I bring to the sales ring trying to work through all that in some detail and huge time and resource to get an advantage on the day. Despite not spending anywhere near the sort of money that most buyers would spend I have bought some nice horses and there's a lot more youngsters to come through yet. It is still a relatively new venture in my 3rd year and when you are buying 3 year olds for jump racing, it's going to take a few years before you see the full fruits of the labour and of course I am learning a lot on the journey.

Every sale visited, every catalogue researched, every horse examined is a learning experience and I would like to think I am a little wiser this year than in year one. There's no doubt that what we all need is a few breaks, we don't want any bad luck, and a little good luck would be welcome here and there!

The 3rd section of the publication covers mainly 3 year olds who have gone through the sales ring where I've had a liking for the horse and they have probably sold for more money than I've thought they were worth or prepared to pay or could afford. When I know the breeding and physical attributes of these horses well, they are worth following over the coming years, especially the first year or two when they hit the race track as young unexposed types and are a little bit under the radar.

The problem with these 3 year olds is that they are nearly all unnamed, the French horses get named at registration and all the UK horses get named by the owner when they are registered nearer the time when they are ready to run. So the way of keeping track of these horses is quite difficult, what would be useful would be to have a horse tracker system somewhere which worked through the dam name and the year of birth of the horse, that would allow us to track when the horse is due to run.

The horse tracker I use is on the Racing Post website but there are other ones, if you google horse tracker, the likes of At The Races, Sporting Life, Timeform etc., there are several websites which give you the ability to track horses so that you receive an email when the horse is either entered or declared to run. I prefer to know when it's declared to run because so many horses are entered and get scratched and don't end up running, this waste's a lot of email space.

I keep a close eye on my horse tracker and update it and delete old horses, ones that I've noted have never run, have been injured or retired etc. and this is a useful tool. I strongly recommend that everybody makes use of one of the horse trackers.

I am fairly confident that from the unnamed, unraced list I've identified that a reasonably high proportion of them that end up on the race track will be winning.

I am confident saying that because that is already what has happened with the 3yo's I noted in 2014 onwards.

Looking at the horse sales, an interesting exercise with store horses is if you look back historically; say at the 2012 June Derby and the 2012 August Tattersalls sales which are the two main sales I go to in Ireland every year. Look back at each horse to see how they've performed since, you will get a shock because from the August sale you'll see about 80% of them are no good or have never raced, another 10% sort of average then maybe 8% were very decent and 1% or 2% top class horses.

So understand you are fishing in a big pond and the good catches are very few and far between. The proportion at the Derby sale where the average median sale price is much higher at around 30,000 euro is better as you would expect, but not hugely different. What is a shock is if you look back at and see how much money is wasted and lost and how many expensive horses don't make the grade or even run. The whole store experience is a tough competitive gig, but at the same time such an intriguing complex puzzle, it can become addictive. I just love the whole bloodstock research and store sales experience, and the one thing you can be sure of is if I or the Bewley's have bought a young store horse.....it has a chance!

Horses in Training Sales

A lot of owners and trainers prefer Horses In Training sales and having something with a bit of ready-made form in the book and I can see and understand the logic in that. If a horse is well handicapped and maybe they have come from a stable where they haven't the best statistical record. The horses can likely be improved and if it's on a low handicap mark you can go on a bit of run with it and have a lot of fun. I have done exactly that with Romany Ryme, Chicago Outfit and Whats Up Woody in the last few years who between them won ten races for MGR members.

One of my members is in another racing club with good trainers, Dr Richard Newland, David Dennis and a couple of others and they do quite a bit of that, they'll spend £15,000 or £20,000 and set away with the well handicapped horse and try and nick 3 or 4 races and then move the horse on. I think that's a fair plan, they've had lots of success with it and I will be doing this again myself at some point.

If you are going to hit on a really nice horse that can go a long way then the store horse sales in Ireland or France in my view is the most affordable way you are likely to do that. In effect it's a measure of people's aspirations and ambitions. Are they dreaming big or are they settling for a few handicap wins here and there, I guess a bit of both is the answer here.

Section 1 – Named Horses To Follow

I have a real mix of horses to follow and as I'm writing this I'm reading them off the horse tracker on the Racing Post website.

Before I start on the individual names I'm going to mention my Irish contact who has become someone I rate highly over the years, Jonathan Sweeney. Jonathan trains in County Cork at a place called Kildinian and I've met him a few times at the sales after initially I tried to buy a couple of his horses in the early days, which as it transpires he didn't want to sell.

We've kept in touch and he rings me on a periodic basis for a chat and catch up on the horses. I also do some of the bloodstock research on the horses he is looking to buy or horses that have been sent to him to train by new owners. He trains in a small way with around 12 in total but having said that he's already achieved some impressive results. As young promising trainers go I think he's right up there, his strike rate is very impressive and if you click onto the Racing Post and have a look, under rules in Ireland where it's difficult to get winners, he's had 7 winners in total, 4 in bumpers and 3 hurdle winners with young horses, most of which have been sold on for profit.

His most impressive stats are in the Irish point to point field where over the last five seasons he has sent out 12 winners from only 19 runners, a strike rate of 63%!

Jonathan does well with what horses he is sent, for example he was sent a mare called Minutestomidnight, she won an Irish point to point race and then won a Wexford bumper. Jonathan then sent her to the Punchestown Festival in a Group 3 mare's bumper race where she won again and subsequently sold for £200,000. Jonathan didn't own the horse but that shows you the sort of thing that can be done with a young horse that was purchased as a 3 year old store at a price of 5,300 euro. A nice profit for the owner!

A quick word about the following list of horses. The notion of backing these horses every time they run is just plain ridiculous, a guaranteed sure way of losing money! Knowing when and when not to bet on this list of horses is going to be the key to betting profitably. Sometimes these named horses will win even when we have not backed them on occasions and we need to accept and be ok with that happening. I will be working hard to ensure I spot the right betting opportunities from this list for MGR members.

Alpha Indi: 6yo Bay Gelding by Oscar

James Evans

Has a bit of form behind Crucial Role in the race where Barton Knoll was 2nd and Alpha Indie was only another length behind with a big gap back to the next finishing horse. We backed him next time out on the back of that good run and he disappointed. He was in a maiden hurdle and there was a hot favourite, we backed it without the favourite and he looked like he was going easy and strolled into 3rd place, and then on the home turn completely emptied. Not sure what was wrong that day, the ground was on the soft side which may have had something to do with it otherwise he may have had a breathing problem or just had enough for the season. But certainly he emptied much to my surprise on the home turn. I haven't given up on him; he's reasonably handicapped at 108 and will be better over fences. Already has the experience of 3 placed runs in Irish points to points behind him. Not one that you will be looking to get to the big tracks with but likely to pick up a couple of races for us throughout the season.

Always On The Ball: 4yo Gelding by Kapgarde

Unknown

A French bred, he was at the May 2016 sale so he will now be a 4 year old and sold for £30,000. From a nice family and is worth following. I don't know which trainer he's gone to but we'll be able to track him using his name later in the season.

Arch Dancer: 5yo Bay Gelding by Arcadio

Jonathan Sweeney

Arcadio is Jonathan Sweeney's favourite stallion, he swears by them, thinks they produce intelligent and capable horses if handled correctly. Whilst they are not the most straightforward, once you get them going your way they perform on the track. Arch Dancer won his only start, an eleven runner Irish point to point race by 15 lengths very impressively and is a horse to follow.

Art of Supremacy: 5yo Bay Gelding by Milan

Micky Hammond

This one has mainly poor form from 7 runs. He is however nicely bred and still a young horse. Has just been bought by Micky Hammond, it went through the Doncaster sales and Micky paid £7,000 which based on its form is probably enough. He cost 31,000 euro as a 3 year old store horse at the 2015 Derby sale. Because of his form to date you would think that what Micky paid is about right. This horse could be one of those where if it's given a little break and then brought back slowly. Not a lot of bone about his legs however, he could be one of those typical Hammond handicappers to look for this season. Knowing when Micky's horses are going to perform on the track isn't always easy and like most trainers he does tend to run in and out form throughout the year. When the stable is out of form he's worth avoiding so it might not be the easiest to pull off a bet on this one but I think the horse has something about it. The sire Milan when crossed with the dam sire Un Desperado has produced plenty winners.

Athenean: 4yo Bay Gelding by Westerner

Edward Hales

Trained over in Ireland this one was bought as a store to start with at £26,000 at Goffs UK and then sold on at the August 2016 sales where he fetched £62,000 so quite an increase between May and August considering the horse had never ran. It was purchased by Gigginstown the Ryanair man and has had only one run in a bumper at Punchestown and finished 12th of 23. That doesn't sound very inspiring but it was only beaten by 9 lengths and because it's a well-bred type I expect significant improvement this season.

Ballymoy: 4yo Bay Gelding by Flemensfirth

Nigel Twiston Davies

I like this horse and George was interested in buying him at the Doncaster sales back in May 2017. He is a really nice type who already has a couple of bits and pieces of form in Irish point to point races finishing 4th and 3rd beaten 12 and 15 lengths. On the face of it that doesn't sound great but those races, particularly the last race was a strong race and this horse is nicely bred. Bought by Nigel Twiston Davies for £75,000 it's gone to a top trainer and I have a feeling we will have a couple of wins from him this season.

Banjo Girl: 5yo Chestnut Mare by Presenting

Lucy Wadham

With Lucy Wadham who gets plenty of winners. A nice big mare who has been on a slow upward curve since last year. Last run was in March, very nicely bred and I think this one will do nicely in mare's races. Currently rated 116 so already got form however I still think there's a bit more to come, especially when she goes over fences.

Bararocco: 4yo Bay Gelding by Shirocco

Dan Skelton

Bararocco and is from a very nice family, out of a prolific dam called Berra by Grand Lodge. Dan Skelton went to 72,000 euro to buy this in May 2016 so definitely worth keeping an eye out when it shows up on the track.

Barton Knoll: 5 year old Bay Gelding by Midnight Legend**Tom George**

My racing club members will be familiar with this horse because we were all over this one back in April at Carlisle for a bet in a race where we backed it in the 'without the favourite' market. Officer Hoolahan was favourite that day and we were on at prices between 7/1 and 12/1; I had one of my good sized bets, as well as the fixed odds straight forecast. The members that day at Carlisle were well pleased when it did the business for us and this is a race where there are another couple of runners I'll be coming back to. Trained by John Mackie and with top owner Simon Clark, I think he has a future eventually as a 3m chaser. I backed and tipped this horse again at 3/1 on its next run at Towcester in May and felt confident that the horse would win. It ran a nice race, just after the last when it looked like it was going to win; a horse came from behind and beat us by a length and three quarters so the bet went down that day. The silver lining in this case is that the winner of the race is also one to follow.

Beach Break: 4yo Bay Colt by Cacique**Donald McCain**

Two weeks ago I was at the Doncaster horses in training sale and as usual at that sale there was some ex flat types being sent from the top flat owners and trainers. This one was owned and bred by Prince Khalid Abdullah and the horse is by the new sire Cacique who is full brother to Dansili who has sired plenty of jump winners. This one won at Catterick over a mile and a half and he would want ground anything between good to firm and good to soft but no softer than that. Whilst not the biggest at 15.1hh, he is quite a strong type and he was bought by Donald McCain for £14,000 to be a hurdler. I can't see this one being big enough to jump fences but I can see him doing a job, I think he could be a 120 hurdler type up north if Donald can educate him to settle in his races once he is gelded. He'll not be going to Aintree or Cheltenham festivals but he'll do a decent job winning a few up north.

Beneagles: 5yo Bay Gelding by Milan**Alan King**

From a good family out of a Bob Back mare and this one cost £50,000 at the Horses In Training sale. Currently rated 127 over hurdles and has got some nice form in the book and I can see him having a good season.

Black Kettle: 7yo Bay Gelding by Robin Des Pres**Rebecca Menzies**

He ran on the 7th September at Sedgefield first time in a chase and I very nearly tipped it out to members. I just felt on the day its price was lower than what I expected for a value bet. I had a modest insure bet 3 places at 9/2 on myself and the horse was beaten a length, finishing second and ran a good race with Brian Hughes up top. The horse used to be trained in Yorkshire by Ronald Thompson and then the owner moved it over to Christian Delcross in Ireland where it had 6 runs, finished 3rd and ran a decent race in the second of those runs. He has a handicap mark of 96 now after he finished 2nd the other day. He was well beat in the other runs in Ireland. The owner then sent it over to Rebecca Menzies; I'd noticed this horse running back in 2015 and kept a track on it. He ran ok in a few bumpers and ran quite a nice race at Wetherby when finishing 5th, he looks a strong type. Running up north in England where he will find opportunities easier....Black Kettle can win some moderate handicap chase races and may progress to be a 115 type this season.

Broom Tip: 5yo Bay Gelding by Flemensfirth**Tom George**

Trained by Tom George a good trainer and has a top owner, Simon Clark the same owner as Barton Knoll. Has had 4 runs, been well beat in all of them but in his latest run behind Longtown at Warwick in a maiden hurdle began to show some promise. This owner doesn't keep them if they don't perform so I do expect this one to step up on what he's done so far today. In the family there's already another Flemensfirth full brother which is a year older called Invitation Only and that one's a Mullin's horse with the Wiley's. Already rated at 140 so plenty of scope for Broom Tip to improve on breeding.

Buckby Boy: 4yo Brown Gelding by Shirocco

Dan Skelton

Buckby Boy is with Dan Skelton who paid £40,000 for the gelding at Doncaster in May 2016. He's by the German stallion Shirocco who is out of Monsun. He had one bumper run in April where he finished 4th beaten 7.5 lengths which was a decent start. I don't think Buckby Boy was that strongly fancied that day as his SP was 9/1. When you take that into consideration I think it was a decent run and I think he's a backward type with lots of improvement in him.

Buck's Bins: 3yo Bay Gelding by Khalkevi

Unknown

3 year old which was named and unless the owner changes its name it's going to be called Buck's Bins. Out of a French family by a stallion called Khalkevi which is fairly new sire and getting lots of winners. He looks to me like he will be a proper soft / heavy ground horse. To look at he's very nice all round and he sold for 36,000 euro in June 2017. I don't know which trainer he has gone to but at least we have a name so we can keep track of him.

Chimes Of Dylan: 5yo Bay Gelding by Court Cave

Neil King

This one has a couple of pieces of just ok Irish point to point form. George looked at the horse at the sales and may have moved in if cheap enough but because he wasn't the biggest he was not prepared to pay a lot. He was knocked down to Neil King for £23,000. By a sire Court Cave who is on a massive upward curve at the moment and seems to be doing really well this last year or two. I think this one is worth keeping an eye on. On the surface he looks just ok however I can see this horse winning some maiden or novice hurdles for the capable Neil King.

Competition: 5yo Bay Gelding by Multiplex

Brian Rothwell

Trained at Malton by Brian Rothwell. Went through the August DBS sales and was unsold at £14,000. I don't think he is the most striking of horses but he has bits and pieces of half decent form including his first bumper run at Wetherby when finishing 2nd. His last outing in August against Macgroaty when he finished 2nd beaten 6 lengths is ok. Was a big price and ran better than expected. I think there are little races up north to be had with this one. Maybe not going to be a 120 rated horse but you might be picking up money around the 100/115 mark.

Cona River: 7yo Bay Gelding by Robin Des Champs

Jonjo O'Neill

This one is with Jonjo Neil, with a top owner, the Bartlett's and I'm not sure what they paid for this one as it was withdrawn from the sales. He's now a 7 year old, only had 3 runs and not pulled up any trees at all but I have watched the horse run and he's a nice big tall type that hasn't really grown into his frame yet. That can be one of the features of young horses by Robin de Champs, some of them seem to take an age to mature but when they do they can do very well. You might remember a horse the Dobbins had called Robins Command, I watched him run in a bumper, nicely bred but looked big and backward and it took forever for that horse to come good. First ran in Feb 2012 and it took until April 2014 for it to win and at that stage the horse was also a 7 year old. Once it did win it went onto win 8 races and ended up with a rating of 132. I'm not saying that Cona River is going to do exactly the same thing but because he's doesn't have a handicap mark at the moment (he'll need another run), Jonjo often does this with his immature horses, just gives them gentle introductions and time and all of a sudden bang, they'll put a run in and look like a right horse. The problem is with Jonjo and these types of horses it is knowing when that is going to happen, it's difficult to predict, so maybe one that I have to tip and he might not win and I have to keep on tipping him until his day comes knowing that when it happens the price will be big enough to return some of the previous losses. It's not a strategy that's popular with the punters or me however I can't think of any other way of addressing the problem.

Crack Du Tay: 5yo Bay Gelding by Ballingarry**Mark Wall**

This quite well bred French horse has disappointed in its career to date having had seven runs and only on its first run at Southwell did it finish in the frame, finishing 3rd. The horse is quite nicely bred and I actually rang the trainer to see if he would be prepared to sell the horse to me because one piece of form was in a class 3 Newbury novice hurdle race where it finished 22 lengths behind High Bridge finishing 6th and that was a decent bit of form. I think this horse just hasn't been right yet, a change of stable may freshen him up. He's still a maiden and has a handicap mark of 105 which looks high considering what he has done, maybe like me the handicapper thinks there's a bit of ability there. A dark one to keep an eye on.

Crucial Role: 5yo Bay Gelding by Westerner**Henry Daly**

The next horse is the horse that spoilt our bet and beat Barton Knoll by a length and $\frac{3}{4}$, a very nice strong looking Westerner which previously had some problems. To show you how unlucky we were it got pulled up in the race before it beat Barton Knoll which was only a week earlier, so from being pulled up Connections managed to get him straightened out and win! I didn't see that one coming but he's a nice type who will jump a fence and with a trainer I rate – Henry Daly. From a nice family and with that form against Barton Knoll which is fairly solid he's one for the list.

Cup Of Ambition: 5yo Bay Gelding by Vinnie Roe**Martin Keighley**

This next one picked has decent Irish point to point form from when he won back in December 2016. He has been a bit disappointing on the track since then with his new trainer Martin Keighley. I still think he'll come good. He's rated 110 at the minute, cost £40,000 which is enough to pay and comes with decent breeding. Has only really had one run under rules with promise which was in April when 2nd in a 4 runner race. I've got a feeling off a mark of 106 I can see this one doing something in the early part of the season.

Dance Of Fire: 5yo Bay Gelding by Norse Dancer**Nick Alexander**

This horse hasn't been on fire! An ex flat horse that has some decent flat form in the high 80's and was purchased from Andrew Balding's stables for Nick Alexander owners at 52,000 Gns and the horse has been disappointing – pulled up, 7th, 5th, 6th, 6th, 4th beaten a fair way in its runs. However I've been watching him closely and I can see a little improvement. I thought the handicapper was harsh to give him an opening mark of 107 so obviously been looking at his flat rating which seems unfair. I can see him improving and he's off 103 now, if that drops below 100, I can see him picking up some low grade handicaps up north where he may go onto be a 120 horse.

Danse Away: 5yo Bay Gelding by Dansant**T J Nagle**

By the little known sire Dansant who gets decent results without having a very high profile. This one had some nice form in Irish point to points, not the biggest horse, about 15.2hh. I was in contact with the owner about possibly buying this one but he was looking for too much money so that didn't come off. He subsequently twice finished 4th in Irish bumpers, on the latter occasion he was a little disappointing but by that time he'd been on the go a while. There's some moderate hurdle races available for this one this season. Whether he stays in Ireland or the owner manages to sell him I'm not sure yet, but wherever he pops up I'll be having a look to see if he's got a chance of getting his head in front.

Diva Reconse: 4yo Bay Mare by Kap Rock**Kim Bailey**

I remember at the Doncaster sales in May 2016 I picked this one out as one I thought was a bit under the radar and I was interested in buying. By this time George wasn't interested in anymore fillies in the yard so he wasn't keen. We did have a look and I kept an eye on it in the sales. I would have probably went to about 10-13k as it was a really nice good looking filly however it sold for a lot more than I was expecting. Aiden Murphy bought it who is the bloodstock agent that represents Kim Bailey and other top trainers and he paid £22,000. She turned up in a bumper and it looked a competitive race so I didn't back her. The mare's run was very impressive, she won by 7 lengths. I remember thinking this could be a right horse, so when it comes to mares hurdle races and eventually chase races I can see this one progressing and doing well. When she won her bumper she beat a well bred horse of Nicky Henderson's called Turn Turk. Whilst I haven't marked him out; he's now rated at 124 and won 2 of his next 3 races and finished 2nd in the other one. That just confirms how strong the Diva Reconse bumper win form is and because Kim Bailey has been very patient by giving the mare a break since February, I think she is going to be very interesting in the coming season.

Drovers Lane: 5yo Bay Gelding by Oscar**Rebecca Curtis**

This gelding by Oscar was highly rated by Declan Phelan, now a 5 year old, nicely bred and cost a whopping £130,000. The point to point form is very good but it's not top class point to point form. So with this one being touted and costing so much money it's probably going to be a very short price on race debut. With Rebecca Curtis now and it might be one of those where we think we can take it on. On the face of it though it could well be a good horse but whether its top class that's another matter. There's a lot of hype behind this one.

Duncomplaining: 8yo Bay Gelding by Milan**William Kinsey**

Has a good owner, David Wesley Yates who has been around a long time, had some nice horses with Nicky Richards over the years including Monet's Garden. This one is with William Kinsey who hasn't pulled up any trees in last couple of jumps seasons with strike rates of 4% over hurdles and 7% in chase races. He doesn't seem to have as many runners these days, based in Cheshire. Duncomplaining is a big horse, I've tipped him once and he finished 5th at Doncaster where we needed a 4th place finish to win the each way bets. The horse cost plenty of money at £48,000 and he's nicely bred. His current handicap chase mark is 105 and I expect that if he drops below a 100 he will be a good thing. Time is running out now, he's now an 8 year old so he needs to get going but maybe the trainer has had something on the yard which has caused a problem. Based on his early runs he should be a lot better than what he's proven on the track so far so I'll be keeping a careful eye on him.

En Passe: 8yo Bay Mare by Flemensfirth**Howard Pauling**

Another ex-Irish point to pointer, trained by permit holder Howard Pauling. He's an English trainer from down South in the point to point field. This one ran in the point to point championship final at Cheltenham, ran a decent enough race and finished 5th so I can see her popping up in a low grade handicap under rules or in hunter chase races. One of the reasons I've picked her out is that she is a half-sister to Casual Cavalier from George's stable. A mare by Flemensfirth, so worth keeping an eye on if the right race opportunity presents itself.

Fernan: 5yo Brown Gelding by Robin Des Champs**Malcolm Jefferson**

A Trevor Hemmings horse with Malcolm Jefferson. Had three moderate bumper runs. Cost £33,000 in the sales as a 3yo store. By Robin De Champs and as we know they can take a bit of time to come good. So the hope here is that's he's going to be a fairly late maturing type. He wouldn't have to step up that much to be a horse to follow so I'm anticipating that's what's going to happen. He's a nice looking horse so hopefully he'll do well for us if we show a little patience.

Fleminport: 4yo Bay Gelding by Flemensfirth

Unknown

This one is interesting and popped up in my work from the Doncaster Horses In Training sales back in May 2017. Really nicely bred with a solid bit of Irish point to point form when it finished 2nd. This one was bought by the McManus's for £140,000, I'm not suggesting he's worth that sort of money, but a really nice specimen with solid form and I think this one will do very well.

Fly Rory Fly: 5yo Bay Gelding by Milan

Nick Alexander

Jonathon Bewley wanted to buy this one at the September 2017 Doncaster HIT sale however we failed as a certain Nick Alexander had deeper pockets and paid £25,000 to secure him. Nicely bred and with some decent form under rules over in Ireland. His run when second of 14 only 12 lengths behind a nice horse called Rathvinden was solid. He's won his maiden hurdle, finished 2nd, beaten a short head in another one, and I believe Fly Rory Fly needs a rest. He has been on the go a while. If the Alexanders give him a good few months off then up north I can see him winning plenty of races. The Alexanders are one of those stables that come in and out of form and can have some quiet spells for a while then suddenly the horses start doing well and the winners bang in. I will have to try to catch this one right, he travels through his races well, however his jumping needs brushing up, he has a problem in that regard and needs some work in this area. This one has the potential to be one of Nick's best horses this season.

Forza Milan: 5yo Bay Gelding by Milan

Jonjo O'Neill

A classy horse, trained by Jonjo O'Neill. He cost 68,000 euro as a 3 year old and has already got some nice pieces of form in the book. The second place finish behind Rather Be reads good and then he won a 16 runner maiden hurdle at Chepstow when 11/8 favourite and is currently rated 128 which tells you a story in itself. Forza Milan I think can progress. By Milan from a nice family and I don't see any reason at all why he shouldn't take higher order. A full brother to the Grand National winner One For Arthur.

Glenforde: 6yo Chestnut Gelding by Flemensfirth

Kim Bailey

Has got little bits and pieces of moderate form. Finished 3rd behind Forza Milan then disappointed on its last run over 3 mile at Chepstow when probably a little high in the handicap and getting near to having enough for the season. Been running on some soft and heavy ground and with it being a young horse it may just have been too much. He is with Kim Bailey and might be the type that needs a run or two to get fit with him being a big horse. I can see him doing better in chase races where he may progress to be a 120 type.

Go Long: 7yo Bay Gelding by Hurrican Run

Evan Williams

This one is plenty high in the handicap and Hurrican Run is not one of my favourite sires. However he looks a right specimen of a horse, a nice strong type. He's won one already, a Doncaster novice hurdle, previously had finished 2nd in the Irish point to point field, disappointed last time out when pulled up in a class 3 handicap hurdle. On a mark of 129 at the minute which is probably a bit stiff but he is a really nice looking horse and I think when he goes novice chasing that's when he'll come into his own. Hasn't been on the track since February this year so I'll be keeping an eye on him if he shows up in a Novice chase or Beginners chase race.

Gowiththeflow: 4yo Bay Gelding by Westerner

Ben Pauling

Bought on the 1st June 2017 for £75,000 and was purchased for Ben Pauling, by Highflyer. This one has nice Irish point to point form, by Westerner and from a decent family. Loch Derg Farmer is his half-brother; Loch Derg Farmer is by Presenting and with Nicky Henderson, won his last race and is a nice horse. Not sure whether the £75,000 is justified but on the list to follow.

Harrisons Promise: 5yo Bay Mare by Westerner**Susan Corbett**

An interesting mare from last year. I was at the Newcastle meeting on 7th January and it was one of those horses where the SP was 80/1 and it was readily available at 100/1 and prices like that on the course and I just had a gut feeling about her. She only had this one run (finished 2nd) and is with Susan Corbett who trains in Northumberland. Out of a Presenting mare by Westerner who is one of my favourite stallions and I like the breeding. I backed it without both favourites at 33/1 and at the races I told people that were there that day that I liked it. Later on in the afternoon one of the club members rang me up and asked me about the bumper and I told him to have a little bit each way at 33/1 and sure enough it ran a cracker and finished 2nd winning the bet. She got beat by a good horse Iwalktheline, one of Nicky Richards horses and only beaten a length and 3/4. My club members will be saying 'you didn't tip that one' and I didn't because it's one of these long shots, they are just as likely to finish out the back and you lose a lot of credibility. It takes more confidence than I have to send out tips like that. Harrisons Promise is worth following, only had one run, don't know why it hasn't run again, it's a 5 year old mare so maybe they are just taking their time with her.

Heartasia: 4yo Bay Mare by Presenting**Susan Corbett**

This is another Susan Corbett horse, more of a flat bred by Danehill Dancer but he gets plenty jumpers. Looks like it's an ex flat horse that was maybe backward and didn't come ready in time for the flat trainers. Susan picked it up and has done very nicely with the mare. She had decent enough early runs in bumpers and then won 2 bumpers in a row. She can run in mares maiden and novice hurdles and I can see the horse doing ok. Not saying she is a Cheltenham or Aintree festival type but I can see the horse winning mares races up north. Reported that the horse schools and jumps like a bunny so should be able to maintain its bumper form when it goes jumping.

He's No Molly: 4yo Bay Gelding by Beneficial**Unknown**

Finished 2nd in one Irish point to point run, a nice Beneficial gelding that I was interested in buying at Doncaster back in May 2017. I was surprised that he sold for as much as £75,000. With the O'Toole's so probably going to end up running under rules in Ireland and worth looking out for when he appears on the track.

Jaisalmer: 5yo Bay Gelding by Jeremy**Mark Bradstock**

Trained by the Bradstock's who also train Coneygree and some other good horses. They know how to prep a horse. This one cost £35,000 as a store in 2015 and is now a 5 year old. Bits and pieces of nice form and in particular on its last run at Kempton on good ground when 4 lengths ahead and blundered and unseated the rider at the last. He would have won that day and this one is to follow as I can see him improving. From a family which has already produced a 120 rated jumps mare.

Johanos: 6yo Chestnut Gelding by Limnos**Nigel Hawke**

Won his last 2 hurdle races on heavy ground and as a result has gone up to a mark of 129. He's a nice horse, nice jumper, might find it a bit difficult off 129 but will be going chasing and looks like he'll jump a fence. He cost £23,000 as a store horse. A nice strong animal but maybe riding a little bit high in the handicap now. However when the ground is soft or heavy and other horses can't go through it, I think this horse will and that's when we'll start to get interested.

Lighthouse Warrior: 7yo Bay Gelding by Milan

Jonathan Sweeney

Trained by the very capable Jonathan Sweeney over in Ireland. This one is a brute of a horse at over 17hh. Won his Irish point to point by 8 lengths, just got beat in a Punchestown bumper by a length and ¼ and then won his next bumper outing by 9 lengths. Jonathan Sweeney tried to sell this one at the Cheltenham Horses In Training sale and despite being such a big good looking horse, he passed through the sales ring. Someone could have bought him for only £40,000 which looks cheap now. The form so far may not be the strongest however when you consider the size of the horse and the way he won, he has been impressive. He's much more like a chaser than a bumper horse so the fact that he's been able to show this speed in bumpers means that when they do send him hurdling and chasing he's definitely going to be of interest. All of his races have been on good ground so maybe not one to back in a bog over in Ireland but certainly one to follow.

Loud And Clear: 6yo Bay Gelding by Dalakhani

Iain Jardine

Trained by Ian Jardine who trains in Scotland from where Len Lungo used to train, so he's got some nice facilities up there and some nice horses in training. Loud And Clear is a nice horse who I can see doing well once he goes over fences. He's already won 2 bumpers and one of those was against a nice David Armstrong horse called Donna's Delight. I think Loud And Clear will improve for fences again, needs good ground. So keep an eye on him at 2 ½ mile when he goes chasing and he probably will improve again when he steps up to 3 miles.

Macgiloney: 4yo Bay Gelding by Milan

Unknown

A Milan out of a Presenting mare, this one was a quite cheap store in the Derby June 2016 sale, at only £14,500. He ran in Irish point to points and had 2 runs finishing 3rd and 4th. Ok sort of runs, nothing startling, not enough to stick his head above the parapet, but just nice enough to maybe think this one's a bit dark and with the breeding being as nice as it is, I think this one is worth looking out for. Not sure where it's going to show up, whether still in Ireland or UK but either way it's in the tracker and I'll be keeping an eye on it. I remember looking at it at the sales and thinking it was nice when we were there last year. Its dam has won an Irish point to point and finished placed a few times, it just a nice steady type who looks like he could be flying low.

Mackie Dee: 5yo Bay Gelding by Westerner

John Mackie

£34,000 purchase for John Mackie as a 3 year old. Related to some nice types, half-brothers No No Mac rated 137 and Smiler rated 134. Nicely bred and a good looking horse. Backed this horse last year and he disappointed a little, but yet has run some reasonable races in defeat. Got within 32 lengths of a good horse called For Instance, then within 21 length of Work Du Breatau. Mackie Dee has a handicap mark of 108 and I think that is just about workable, I can see improvement once he matures and his jumping improves.

Minutestomidnight: 6yo Bay Mare by Vinnie Roe

Nick Gifford

Ex-Jonathan Sweeney £200k purchase that has been sent to Nick Gifford I believe and I think she's one to look for when Nick runs the mare.

Mr Big Shot: 6yo Brown Gelding by Flemensfirth

David Pipe

Beautifully bred, 3 wins a row, rated 138 over hurdles with David Pipe. The Pipe stable in recent years has not been the force that it was; they certainly don't have the same numbers in and are not winning races like they used to. This one looks a really nice type, won at Carlisle, beating Skipthescales very easily and I think he is a nice big horse that can go onto better things. He cost only £14,000 as a foal; normally the stores are cheaper as foals, so this is still a fair price to pay. Tom Scudamore says he is a horse with a future.

Mister Malarky: 4yo Chestnut Gelding by Malinas**Colin Tizzard**

This one is with Colin Tizzard, Colin paid £20,000 at the DBS May sale 2016. I remember this one from the sales, a nice looking big horse. He has only moderate form from 3 runs, all bumper runs; last one was in the class 2 Newbury bumper back in March, finished 10th of 20 but only beaten 18 lengths. I think this is one of Colin's typical slow burning types and could have some big improvement to come. So keep an eye when it runs in maiden hurdles or novice hurdles this year. I can't see them persevering with bumpers and he just might be decent value and a little bit dark.

Mon Palois: 5yo Bay Gelding by Muhaymin**Kim Bailey**

He won a Wetherby bumper for me at 9/1 back in February. I had a good bet on that and liked the horse and since has finished 4th in another bumper and has won a maiden hurdle over 2 ½ mile. I'm not sure how much Kim paid for the horse but I can see this horse going on and having a decent season. There's a horse that finished 2nd behind him called A Bold Move, ran ok next time out and Minatore is quite a nice horse from Jonjo O'Neill another J P McManus one and that won its next 2 races and is rated 135 now. He finished behind Mon Palois so there might be some improvement to come from this one.

Not Many Left: 4yo Bay Gelding by Oscar**Jessica Harrington**

There wouldn't be much left in the wallet after buying this one as it cost 150,000 euro after winning his Irish point to point. Could be very good as the race form was strong and the time was decent. By Oscar out of a nice family. He was sold to Jessica Harrington so probably going to run over in Ireland. Going to be interesting but not going to be dark because of the price tag, not under the radar because of the Irish point to point win but none the less could be one of those horses that could go far.

Officer Hoolihan: 7yo Bay Gelding by Kayf Tara**Tim Vaughan**

I previously followed this horse before it bumped into Barton Knoll and that's why we backed 'without the favourite' that day, it was 2/5 at Carlisle. Certainly not my sort of bet but when you combine it in the forecast with a 33/1 shot it's suddenly looks interesting, which is exactly what we did. Officer Hoolihan is a nice big strong looking horse, nicely bred, some decent form in the book and one of the owners I bumped into at Carlisle (in the urinal ha!) suggested that he has a bit attitude and temperament going on. He still did it nicely that day and I think the form is underrated. Rated at 119 I think that once he goes jumping fences he could step up a gear if that settles him down and helps him sort his head out a bit. I think he could be a 130 to 140 horse. With Tim Vaughan who has moved a lot of his horses to be stabled further up his hill to live in the fresher air!

One More Bid: 5yo Chestnut Gelding by Grandera**Mark Wall**

This one is dark and gave me a dilemma as I wasn't prepared to go 'one more bid' when it sold for only 9,500 euros back in 2015 at the Derby sale. George and I liked this horse, it was a big and strong type by an unfashionable sire called Grandera who is a son of Grand Lodge and who many will know was a class horse in his day. From just a nice little point to point family in Ireland, nothing spectacular going on but the breeding mix added up quite nicely. It was bought by an English trainer called Mark Wall who hasn't been going that long and started in the English point to point ranks as a jockey. So far his strike rate with chasers has been good, 17% but with hurdles and bumper runners so far he has not had any winners yet. Until the trainer starts turning out winners in these races we have to be a little bit careful with this one. However because the horse was cheap and I like the breeding, it's going to be a big price on the race track. He was entered up for a couple of bumpers in the spring this year and didn't run because of ground. At least the trainer has been patient with him and he could be a big price but it's going to be risky. It might be one that at a big price we play a bit each way and then see how it goes from there.

Opechee: 6yo Bay Gelding by Robin Des Champs**David Bridgewater**

This horse was not sold at the Ascot Horses In Training sales in August 2017. It was a dispersal sale with the owner passing away, trained by David Bridgewater. This one is by Robin de Champs and looked a nice horse but still quite backward. He's not fully matured yet even though he's now a six year old. Has bits and pieces of ok form, currently rated 97, finished 2nd and 3rd in a couple of races. I just think he needs a little bit of time to fill out and mature and maybe a break will help here. He could be one to keep an eye on in handicaps in the new year. He didn't sell at the sales, passed through at £14,500 which makes me think the trainer wanted to keep him and he's maybe done a deal privately to buy him. This one is dark and will be worth keeping an eye on.

Rakhine State: 4yo Bay Gelding by Arakan**Gordon Elliott**

Sold at the Ascot Horses In Training Sale in August 2017, bought by Gordon Elliott at £32,000. A nice horse, decent breeding, finished 3rd in an Irish bumper race, only beaten by 3 ½ lengths, form ok. I think this one will do well. He has gone to a top yard, but because he was fairly cheap he might not be a huge price in his next few runs so another one I'll be keeping an eye on especially if he comes over to race in northern England where the races are a little easier. Racing in Ireland is more competitive than up north for sure. The bumper run of this one was quite a fast time.

Rath An Luir: 4yo Bay Gelding by Flemensfirth**Unknown**

Another Flemensfirth who was withdrawn in May 2017 from the Horses In Training sale where I'd picked him out and he then went to the Cheltenham premier sale in June 2017 and was unsold at £58,000. I quite like the family and form of this one, 3rd twice in Irish point to points and just a nice horse and worth following. I have never seen the horse but if he looks the part I think he could be good.

Rock My Style: 5yo Bay Gelding by Marienbard**Warren Greatrex**

With Warren Greatrex finished 2nd behind Forza Milan, has a current rating of 123. Some decent form, not by one of my favourite sires Marianbard, has proved a bit of a disappointment so far. This one pulled up last time out in March when it had probably had enough and needed a break. Still only a 5 year old. I can see this one coming right back to form and having a good season.

Shanroe Saint: 5yo Bay Gelding by Saint Des Saints**Unknown**

Not the biggest but has bits and pieces of form and could be a nice one to follow maybe over hurdles rather than fences because of his size. Ok Irish Point to Point form, finished 3rd and only beaten 2 ¾ length on his last run. A bloodstock agent bought this for only £13,000 at Goffs, if he'd been another hand bigger I think he could have fetched £25k. Probably a modest 100 to 120 hurdler if he shows up in UK, but worth a look.

Skipthescales: 5yo Bay Gelding by Winged Love**Martin Toddhunter**

A 5 year old gelding purchased from the Irish point to point field. I suspect cost about £20,000. I backed him on his first run because I thought the breeding was quite nice and he disappointed that day at Carlisle. I think I tipped him that day and he finished 5th, and then he stepped up and improved quite a bit on his next run, again at Carlisle and then in his last race which is the race I've covered quite a bit already, with Officer Hoolihan, Barton Knoll 2nd and Classical Milano 4th, Skipthescales finished 3rd in that race. The first four were 30 lengths clear of the next horse, a Nicky Richards horse which I don't think is pulling up any trees but there was such a long gap behind that day and with the form of the first 3 being good I think there's every chance that this horse will have a good season.

Solway Storm: 7yo Bay Gelding by Indian River**Lisa Harrison**

This is a 7 year old who has had only 3 bumper runs to date. The first one at the end of October 2015, he then had a year off and had another couple of poor bumper runs in October 2016. The first bumper run where I took note of the horse was at Hexham and he ran quite a nice race. A nice looking grey gelding but obviously he's had severe problems and whether he shows up on the track again I'm not sure. If he does then he's going to be a big price and IF he looks anywhere near fit first time out then could be a fun each way bet, no more. Lisa Harrison does a good job with her horses and it would be a big recovery job with this one.

Speredek: 6yo Bay Gelding by Kapgarde**Nigel Hawke**

Nice French bred by Kapgarde, one of the best French stallions around. Won his last 3, all of them over fences and has gone up from a mark of 115 to 135. There might not be that much more to come with him, he's a nice horse, often front runs or up near the front, handles soft ground, wants about 2 mile or 2m2f. I like the horse but maybe he's already been there and done it and might struggle a bit off that. We'll find out as the season goes on.

Sweet As Candy: 5yo Bay Gelding by Morozov**Rose Dobbin**

Bought by Rose and Tony Dobbin for £42,000 in May this year. A former Irish point to point winner, they've paid probably £20k more than I would have. Not sure who the new owner is, maybe the Davidsons who spend a few quid on their horses. This one has a nice bit of form; he won his Irish point to point by 6 lengths and looks big but still ungainly and backward. He might not be one to back in his first few runs and will probably need a bit more time before we see the best of him. Nice enough bred though and not by the sexiest of stallions, Morozov, will get plenty of opportunities up north.

The Mighty Ash: 7yo Bay Gelding by Arcadio**Fiona Shaw**

I studied a bumper race at Wincanton in some detail and although this horse finished 8th beaten 28 lengths it was up there for quite a long way. Because it's by Arcadio I spent quite a bit of time looking at it and I thought its next maiden hurdle race at Exeter lacked any strength in depth, once you took the 1st and 2nd favourite away there wasn't a lot left. I was thinking if the 1st and 2nd favourite were in the first 3 and we could get in the next 3rd, 4th or 5th places with this horse, it was 100/1 without both favourites. I didn't have the guts to tip it out being such a big price. I could easily see it finishing last and getting pulled up as seeing it finish where it did. I was hoping for 4th or 5th, I had a decent each way on at 100/1 and the horse ran a cracker and finished 2nd being easily beat off the Philip Hobbs trained Casper King. I think that form flattered The Mighty Ash a bit; I don't think the horse is anywhere near that class, I just think it was a fairly weak race so I wouldn't be getting too excited about following this one again this season. It's not the best looking horse and nowhere near the specimen of the Arcadio horse George bought back in June which John Wade now owns. I think this one is much more likely to be running in low grade handicaps and may pick up a little race here and there but I won't be rushing to back him.

Tarrona: 8yo Bay Gelding by Kayf Tara**Alan Phillips**

This one brought the bacon home for me at Hereford back in March. It was a big price, I backed it without the favourite at around 12/1 and the horse finished 2nd only beaten 1 ¾ lengths winning the bet. The breeding is a bit stronger than it looks. It fell on its last run, I'm not sure whether it would have won that day or not but it was still in the mix when it fell. He may or may not take to jumping fences, but because he hasn't won a race yet, is still eligible to run in maiden and novice hurdles and capable of picking one of those up.

The Tin Miner: 6yo Brown Gelding by Presenting**David Bridgwater**

He has good owners and the horse cost £40,000 as a store and then Tom Malone bought the horse in April 2016 for £20,000 and it hasn't done an awful lot. He looks a nice big strong horse and when he did run behind Robbin'Hannon on its second last run in a race that had Fortified Bay in I could see a little bit of promise there and haven't given up on him. Allocated a mark of 105 which looks harsh. Not sure what the handicapper was thinking there. From a nice family and should jump a fence in time. If he ran in a weak maiden hurdle again he is one I think could pick up a win and then go on from there.

Top Ville Ben: 5yo Bay Gelding by Beneficial**Philip Kirby**

Formerly trained by Nicky Henderson and was placed in the May Doncaster sales because he is a Million In Mind partnership horse and they sell their horses every year. This one was picked up for £32,000 by Philip Kirby. At £32,000 for a horse rated 130, who won 4 races, 2nd in another, looks like a nice bit of business. Can certainly see this horse winning races up north, it's already been there and done it. Will be keeping a close eye on it. Interestingly he has the horse entered up to run on the flat in the next week and with it winning bumpers it may well do ok but you would expect the way its bred by Beneficial that it's going to be better over hurdles. I don't think he's the biggest, just a nice horse bought at a nice price.

Well Above Par: 5yo Bay Gelding by Gold Well**Lucinda Russell**

A Gold Well out of a Presenting mare and has some bits and pieces of just ok form and I think there is a bit more to come from this one. As is often the case with Lucinda's horses, sometimes they can throw in the odd disappointing run but he has finished 2nd and 3rd in his last couple of runs in fairly moderate races. Physically he's a nice horse; he went through the sales at £32,000 being bought by the big Monbeg outfit. Disappointed a little in Irish point to points and has ended up with Lucinda. I'm not sure how much they paid for him hopefully on an upward curve.

What Else: 6yo Bay Gelding by Flemensfirth**Jonjo O'Neill**

A J P McManus horse from a very nice dam Accordello who was trained by the Reveley's and is from the family of Mareello which many of you will remember. Not sure how much he cost but being by Flemensfirth out of a good mare that was rated as high as 130 over jumps, I think he could be a typical Jonjo O'Neil/J P McManus slow steady away progressive type. The horse has already won an Irish point to point by a head. What Else has similar breeding to Allez Cool and his brother Bronco Billy, they are both Flemensfirth horses out of different Accordian mares and with that in mind you would expect they would be slow maturing staying types.

Whiskey In The Jar: 5yo Bay Gelding by Oscar**Dan Skelton**

Interesting horse, trained by Dan Skelton and the winner of a 2 mile soft ground bumper by 7 lengths back in March. From a nice family and I just think he could be really good. I know Dan Skelton rates him. The dam has already produced nice horses with winners rated 130 and 120. There's no reason why this one can't go on to have a very good career. With a top stable so you would expect it to be well prepped and ready first time over hurdles.

Zamparelli: 5yo Bay Gelding by Mahler**Dan Skelton**

This one has been a bit of a disappointment so far. Tom Malone the well-known bloodstock agent bought this one for £30,000 as a point to point winner and since then the horse has had 3 runs. Not a fantastic looking horse and on its first couple of runs under rules looked to me pretty much like one of Dan Skelton's handicapping plot horses. Skelton does this now and then when they are slow developers. They get a decent mark then bang, he knows how to do that well. I'll be keeping an eye on this when allocated a mark then when in a handicap that's probably the time to have a go.

Zolfo: 5yo Grey Gelding by Clowdings**Jennie Candlish**

You won't find many like this in anyone else's publication because his form to date is disappointing. Finished 2nd in an Irish point to point and as a result of that was purchased for £40,000 and that looks expensive now. With a good stable and good owners, they've persevered with the horse and he just hasn't performed for them. Well beat in every run since the Irish point to point run, he's had 9 runs including 5 chase runs since then and now on a mark of only 92. The full brother was a moderate Irish point to point horse over 3 mile and this one has been running over distances between 2m1f and 2m6f. I have a feeling that when he is sent over fences and stepped up in trip he will win a low grade handicap chase race but that's probably his limit, we'll find out later in the season.

Section Two – George Bewley Stable Runners

The Bewley family have been a great help and support to me and Gillian over the last four years. George and Jonathon have attended nearly every sale with me and taught me a lot about what to look for and the whole minefield of things to be aware of at the horse sales. The Bewley's have also done a great job of training our horses. Eleven winners in such a short space of time is a great start for the racing club and it's down to the hard work, knowledge and experience of the Bewley family. Oh and I better not forget thanking Victoria for all the racing administration help and support which can be another challenge!

8yo Chestnut Gelding: Allez Cool by Flemensfirth

He had a bit of a stop start beginning to last season and it's taken George a while to get him straightened out. He produced a couple of decent runs on the track in April towards the end of last season, winning one at Carlisle. I think there is a bit more to come from this 8 year old. He is reasonably handicapped and I think he'll have a good year in staying handicap chases off an opening mark of 106.

9yo Bay Gelding: Casual Cavalier by Presenting

I have always liked this Presenting gelding. Owned by John Wade, the horse is nicely bred and I have tried to buy him off John previously. I've got this feeling that there's a little bit more to come from this 9yo now the stable know him and he has his act together on the track winning 3 last season. I think he can step up another gear and have a good season.

6yo Bay Gelding: Classical Milano by Milan

One of the highlights last season for me from George's runners was the performance of Classical Milano when he won a 3m maiden hurdle at Hexham. This horse was purchased for just £7,500 by Jonathon Bewley at Doncaster sales back in January having previously cost 120,000 euros as a 3 year old store for the now sadly deceased owner Graham Roach.

The horse was part of a dispersal sale from the Barbers who many people will know train and prepare horses for Paul Nicholls as well as pointers in their own right. This one was with young Jack and had three poor runs in English point to point races before being sent to the sales. He is impeccably bred and that's why he would have cost as much as he did as a 3 year old unraced store. I had a look at his video form from his English point to point runs before he went through the sales and based on that you couldn't recommend anyone to buy him. So fair credit to Jonathan as he took the plunge, a gamble at the time and I can tell you now this has paid off. This is a lovely horse and I think he's going to have a strong season and go on to better things, especially when he goes over fences. This one is top of my list of stable horses to keep an eye on.

If you go onto George's new website, www.georgebewleyracing.co.uk and take a look at the gallery you will see Classical Milano winning by a neck at Hexham and right on the winning line if you look into the distance you will see someone rather familiar punching the air shouting in delight. It was a really good win and having been tipped out to the members at 16/1 with 25/1 being available before the off. I had one of my strong feelings this horse was going to win and backed it accordingly giving me one of my best days out racing last year, I was buzzing afterwards!

The third horse that day, Right Of Reply was 15 lengths away and won next time out at Hexham when I tipped him out at the 13/2 early price for members.

6yo Grey Mare: MITCD by Mastercraftsman

Bred by a very good jumps stallion Mastercraftsman which is actually marketed as a flat stallion but is increasingly producing lots of good jumpers. She is not very big and initially I admit to being unsure as to how the mare was going to do. She has had a good first season winning two and has come back in looking strong and better than ever. The owners have been doing bits of work with the horse just keeping her ticking her over the summer and she has come back in looking really well. I have high hopes she'll have a good season off an opening handicap mark of 90.

8yo Bay Gelding: Onderun by Flemensfirth

George bought this horse from Emma Lavelle quite cheaply at the May 2017 Doncaster sales. The 8 year old gelding has mainly been running in class 3 handicap chase races for Emma and lost his way a bit, often running up light between his races. In my view this is exactly the type of horse that George does well with, provided he can keep condition on the horse. If George can work his usual magic like he did with Chicago Outfit and Whats Up Woody for me then I expect Onderun to win races up north this season. One word of caution, this horse must have soft or heavy ground, when the rain's coming down and the muds flying over 3 miles, this is one to keep on side with.

7yo Brown Gelding: Royal Salute by Flemensfirth

Jonathon Bewley went to £16k to secure this good looking gelding at the May Doncaster HIT sale. He is a fine big good moving individual who is currently going great at home. He is for sale and I expect him to be snapped up as soon as someone looks at him and watches him gallop past the other horses at home.

5yo Bay Gelding: Sunny Destination by Dubai Destination

He had a solid bumper run at Ayr first time out, only getting beat a length and a quarter. I think he can go on to better things for his new owner and it would be great to see him progress and win plenty of races this season.

The above are the main ones that I've picked out from George's stable, as always there's others that'll surprise a little through the season and others may disappoint and we'll learn as the year goes on.

I would like to make a special mention of John Wade and Maria Myco who both have been great supporters of George's stable over the last year or so following their own retirement from training. In the early days John and Maria helped me out a lot by selling me some of their horses to get the racing club started.

If it hadn't been for the performances on the track of Romany Ryme, Chicago Outfit and Whats up Woody who together between them had 10 wins for the racing club, I may have struggled to get things off the ground. I would like to sincerely thank them both for their help and support.

Section 3: Unnamed and Unraced Horses To Follow

I think the title here gives us a clue that this list is not the easiest section for keeping track of. I described earlier all we can do here is note the dams name and sire and hope that when you're looking at your bumper, maiden or novice hurdle entries that you see a name you can recognise and see if you can match it up. I'll be doing that, I may miss one or two but I'll catch most of them.

This year we have bought 3 of the best physical specimen stores that we've ever bought.

3yo Grey Gelding Dam: Nanja Monja Sire: Arcadio

George Bewley bought this one which is a big 16.2hh+ and a lovely walker, physically impressive and a great looker. If he can run anywhere as near as good as he looks (and he should be able to) then he could be really nice.

I informed my members about this horse when I came back from the sales in Ireland, I sent out information on breeding, some photographs from the sales and within a few weeks the horse had been sold. John Wade bought the horse privately off George and I'm excited about what the horse can do in the future.

3yo Bay Gelding Dam: True Britannia Sire: Scorpion

I bought this one myself, a Scorpion Gelding, 16.2hh+ and a right stamp of a NH horse. A lovely moving horse that looks every inch a future chaser. The Scorpion gelding's dam is called True Britannia and she was a four time flat winner at up to 1m 2f and from 6 runs over jumps she won two and was second three times and third in a class 3 race, rated at 120. The dam is well bred and I'm confident that the breeding match with the Scorpion sire will work out well. A half-brother by Gold Well has already had a good career start winning two and placing 2nd from 3 runs and cost Charlie Longsdon £85,000.

3yo Bay Gelding Dam: Dew On The Grass Sire: Kalanisi

I bought another big 3yo gelding 16hh from a lovely family which is currently with Brian Harding for breaking. Brian retired at the end of April this year. A great jockey and horseman, Brian had been with Nicky Richards forever, associated with some of the best horses in the business such as One Man, Brian rode hundreds of winners. His business now is breaking and pre-training the young store horses and Brian and his partner do that full time. The Kalanisi gelding I bought in August 2017 is a nicely bred first produce. Ironically the dam Dew On The Grass is a full sister to a past Nicky Richards' trained horse called Grand Theatre, he was rated 138 as a young horse and sadly broke a leg first time out in a novice chase, the jockey was, you guessed, Brian Harding. Hopefully the impressive bloodline lives on and the above is a first produce which is something I'm quite keen on taking a risk with and will be with Brian until around the end of September 2017 and then I will come up with a plan going forward. I viewed this horse last week with George and he looked impressive.

3yo Gelding Dam: Lady Roania Sire: Westerner Cost: 30,000 Euro
Breeding mixes up nicely and should do well.

3yo Gelding Dam: North Star Polly Sire: Presenting Cost: 30,000 Euro
A half-brother to a couple of nice types, one already with Warren. He has moved in again take note!
Bought by Warren Greatrex.

3yo Gelding Dam: She's On The Case Sire: Witness Box Cost: 54,000 Euro
A nice strong looking Shantou gelding and breeding mixes up nicely. Bought by Highflyer.

3yo Gelding Dam: Terracotta Queen Sire: Sans Frontieres Cost: 14,000 Euro

By a new stallion called Sans Frontieres and this one is quite strong, plenty bone but unspectacular to look at and if he'd been cheap enough I may have took a chance. He's about 15.3hh, big enough and this one sold for 14,000 euro. If he'd been a little bit better on the eye I would have had a go however I still expect him to do well on the track.

3yo Gelding Dam: Satco Street Sire: Doyen Cost: 40,000 Euro

I was surprised how much he sold for because he was not the biggest at 15.2hh however he was a strong good looking type. From a nice family and with that breeding he could do well.

**3yo Gelding Dam: Sience Fiction Sire: Coastal Path Cost: 17,000 Euro
Named: Espagnol**

The next one was French bred and to be honest whilst I've noted this one to watch, I would be happy to take him on until he shows us what he can do because I just didn't like him. He had an odd mad look and a bit attitude; the people were frightened of him who were trying to put the head collar on. He was only 15.2hh and I was really surprised when he sold for 17,000 but the breeding is really nice so if the new owner gets him sorted out he could turn out ok.

3yo Gelding Dam: Cara Mara Sire: Flemensfirth Cost: 30,000 Euro

The next one was a nice big horse, not the biggest front engine compartment which put me off a little, but very nicely bred from a nice family. This one is 16.2hh and if his engine compartment had been bigger he would have been a 50,000 euro horse.

3yo Gelding Dam: Dubh Alainn Sire: Sans Frontieres Cost: withdrawn

This one was withdrawn so I never had the chance to view him. I like the breeding so will be keeping an eye out for him and he is dark.

3yo Gelding Dam: E Mac Sire: Presenting Cost: 42,000 Euro

This one was nice enough and from a good family. At 15.2hh though he looked expensive to me. He is still on my list though! Bought by Gerry Griffin probably for Nicky Richards.

Unnamed and Unraced 4yo Horses From The Various Sales In 2016 To Note Include: -

4yo Gelding Dam: Supreme Dipper Sire: Kalanisi

At the Derby June sale last year George bought a very nice big strong Kalanisi gelding which is now a 4 year old. This horse is also owned by John Wade and he's another good looking horse from a nice family who I have high hopes for.

4yo Gelding Dam: Jenna Marie Sire: Winged Love

Jonathon Bewley also owns a nice looking Winged Love 4yo gelding (which is for sale) and I'm looking forward to seeing him on the track. He is strongly built and from a really nice family.

4yo Gelding Dam: Cindy's Fancy Sire: Brian Boru

I also own a 4yo Brian Boru Gelding which is 16.1hh, a nice big free moving horse and he threw Grant Cockburn off his back a few weeks ago so we decided to ease up on him. He needs a little more time so we'll probably bring him in again at the turn of the year with a target to have him ready for the track Spring 2018. There's no rush with these young horses, having put the time and effort and money into them, if they need extra time then that's what we do and as long as we get there at the end of the day that's what matters.

4yo Bay Gelding Dam: Rags Lady Sire: Beneficial

This one is trained by Jonathan Sweeney, bought as a 3year old store for about 15,500 euro last year. From a family where the dam has already produced winners bred the same way. Jonathan always makes sure his young horses are properly prepared for the track. This one is worth looking out for when it runs in a bumper race over in Ireland. If it runs in an Irish point to point race it will probably win or go close but we can't bet in point to point races over there when based in the UK which causes a bit of a problem.

4yo Bay Gelding Dam: Arcuate Sire: Stowaway Cost £15k

A nice family and a little dark at this price – should stay well and handle soft ground.

4yo Gelding Dam: Samandara Sire: Black Sam Bellamy Cost: £32k

Bought by Jack Barber for plenty money but nicely bred. Could run in English point to points first before hopefully moving into training with a top trainer.

4yo Gelding Dam: Bobs Lass Sire: Gold Well Cost: £24k

Nice enough family and I like Gold Well as a sire, should do well.

4yo Gelding Dam: Kerrys Girl Sire: Oscar Cost: £27k

Dam was in training with Paul Nicholls and won a novice hurdle and placed a few times.

Bought by Highflyer.

What you'll see from the previous list is quite a variety of horses from a variety of sales at varying prices. These are not the typical horse lists you would read in other publications, as a result we should be able to find some value on many of these.

The approach I use has been successful for the last 4 years so let's hope now I've put it down in black and white for others to read that's it's going to be successful again this jumps season. I wish you the best of luck!

Summary

Well I hope you've enjoyed reading the first ever edition of 'The Jumping Life'. If you are used to reading other jumps publications what you will notice is that they focus a fair bit on horses which the respective trainers report as being nice types, after often costing a few quid through the sales ring.

How often are trainers at least initially wrong in their assessment of unraced horses and end up being disappointed in certain horses and pleasantly surprised by others.....often in my experience. How much time do other authors spend researching new young National Hunt stock and then personally observing their preferred horses at the various store sales?

Most approach the job in a different way to me, not better or worse just different.

If you've enjoyed reading this publication and would like to be more heavily involved with Martin Gray Racing through the jumps season then drop me an email: martin@martingrayracing.co.uk or give me a call on 07704 578516.

If you visit my website www.martingrayracing.co.uk you will see that you can join the MGR club with a 5% share from less than £20 per week.

MGR members of course receive other National Hunt information and news updates as well as my betting advice through the season.

If you would just like to be placed on a distribution list for the next edition of 'The Jumping Life' just drop me an email with your contact details, it would be good to hear from you.

Martin Gray

Glossary of Terms

Store	A young unraced, unbroken race horse usually aged from foal to three year old.
Pin Hooker	Agents who buy young stores, look after them and bring them on and sell them as older stores usually for financial profit.
Dark	A horse that is not likely to have a high prominence in betting markets and may be able to perform better than anticipated.
Under the radar	Not easily detected as an obvious one to back.
Bloodstock Agent	An agent who represents owners or trainers or themselves to buy racehorses usually at the sales where they often select which ones to buy.
Mark	A handicap rating allocated by one of the BHA Handicappers
BHA	The British Horseracing Authority
NH	National Hunt

Acknowledgement

To my ever patient wife Gillian who has had the hard job of working my poor draft efforts into shape.