

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-107-01385-8 - The Cambridge Companion to Horseracing  
Edited by Rebecca Cassidy  
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THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION  
TO HORSERACING

People have been racing horses for thousands of years, all over the world. Yet horseracing is often presented as an English creation that was exported, unaltered, to the colonies. This *Companion* investigates the intersection of racing and literature, art, history and finance, casting the sport as the product of cross-class, cosmopolitan and international influences. Chapters on racing history and the origins of the thoroughbred demonstrate how the gift of a fast horse could forge alliances between nations, and the extent to which international power dynamics can be traced back to racetracks and breeding sheds. Leading scholars and journalists draw on original research and firsthand experience to create vivid portraits of the racetracks of Newmarket, Kentucky, the Curragh and Hunter Valley, exposing readers to new racing frontiers in China and Dubai as well. A unique resource for fans and scholars alike, this *Companion* reopens essential questions regarding the legacy and importance of horseracing today.

REBECCA CASSIDY is a professor of anthropology at Goldsmiths, University of London. She has written and edited a number of books on horseracing, animal domestication and gambling, including *Horse People* (2007) and *Sport of Kings: Kinship, Class and Thoroughbred Breeding in Newmarket* (2002).

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*Goldsmiths, University of London*



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Steel Heart at the Phoenix Park turned his head forever. He is currently working on a study of French racecourses.

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## HORSERACING: A CHRONOLOGY

- Eighth century BC Homer describes a chariot race won by Diomedes (with some assistance from Athena).
- 16 BC Ovid provides a literary account of a day at the races in book III of *Amores*.
- 1539 Henry Gee, mayor of Chester, replaces a violent football match with a horserace to be run for the prize of a silver bell donated by the Saddler's company on Shrove Tuesday on the Roodee at Chester.
- c. 1560 *The Art of Riding*, an adaptation/translation of Frederico Grisone's Italian work of the same name, becomes the first work concerned with horsemanship to be published in England, reflecting the energetic exchanges of equine ideas and personnel that were taking place between England, Spain and Italy at the time.
- 1585 Horse races at Salisbury were attended by the Earls of Cumberland, Warwick, Pembroke and Essex. Prizes included a golden bell and a golden snaffle.
- 1593 Gervase Markham publishes *A Discourse of Horsemanship*, the first of several works on horses. Markham's *Cavalatrice*, published in 1607, is thought to contain the first instructions for race riding.
- 1619 Salisbury Corporation takes charge of a fund 'for the encouragement of the races'.
- 1654 Cromwell bans horseracing for six months, citing 'the evil use made thereof by such ill-disposed Persons as watch for opportunities to raise New Troubles ... [and threaten] the Peace and Security of this Nation'.

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- 1673 William Temple proposes to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland that three days of horseracing should be held near Dublin.
- c. 1674 Spanker is foaled and is later described as the best horse to run at Newmarket during the reign of Charles II. None of his achievements are recorded.
- 1680 Lord Monmouth, the oldest illegitimate son of Charles II, embarks on his ‘progresses’ around Britain, taking in several race meetings and competing himself, on horses provided by Thomas Wharton. He is arrested and banished in 1682 before leading an unsuccessful rebellion in 1685, after which he is beheaded on Tower Hill in London.
- 1683 Louis XVI hosts a race at Aix–St Germain, which is won by the Wharton gelding racing in the name of Lord Monmouth.
- 1683 The Rye House plot to assassinate Charles II and James, Duke of York, on their way back to London from racing at Newmarket is foiled when the races are cancelled after a fire in the town.
- 1690 The Byerley Turk carries English army officer Captain Robert Byerley (d. 1714) at the Battle of the Boyne. Legend has it that Byerley narrowly avoided capture while reconnoitring thanks to the great speed of his mount. The Byerley Turk dies, having been bred to relatively few mares, in 1703. His most important offspring was Basto.
- 1695 Catholics in England are prohibited from owning horses worth more than 5 pounds by the ‘Act for the better securing the government, by disarming papists’.
- 1704 The Darley Arabian arrives at Aldby Park, Buttercrambe, Yorkshire, England, from Aleppo via Kinsale, Ireland. He is at stud between 1706 and 1715, and his most important progeny were Flying or Devonshire Childers and Bartlett’s or Bleeding Childers.
- 1711 Queen Anne initiates racing at Ascot.
- 1715 Flying Childers is born and goes unbeaten in six races as a six- and seven-year-old, winning him the title of the first great racehorse.



## HORSERACING: A CHRONOLOGY

- 1715 Lord Derwentwater assembles his forces at Dilston races in Northumbria. Tory gentry also converge on Bath races to take part in the Jacobite rebellion known as ‘The Fifteen’, but they are too late.
- 1727 John Cheny publishes the first annual *Historical Lists* of races; a pedigree index is added in 1743.
- 1730 The Godolphin Arabian produces his first crop for Edward Coke at Longford Hall in Derbyshire. The timing of his arrival in England is obscure. Romantic stories about him pulling a cart in Paris and fighting another stallion, Hobgoblin, for the right to cover Roxana are unsupported.
- 1733 Edward Coke dies and the Godolphin Arabian is passed to his friend, Roger Williams, who sells him to the second Earl of Godolphin. The horse is moved to a stud near Newmarket in Cambridgeshire. The focus of English horse breeding moves south.
- 1750 A reminder of a meeting of the Jockey Club appears in *The General Advertiser*, and Pond’s *Sporting Kalender* refers to a race to be held between horses owned by members.
- 1752 Steeplechasing begins with a race between the parish churches of Buttevant and Doneraile in Cork.
- 1764 Eclipse is born. Unbeaten in eighteen starts, he becomes the best horse of the eighteenth century. Although he was never better than second (most often to Herod) in the leading sire list, he is a tail male ancestor of 95 per cent of modern thoroughbreds.
- 1766 George Stubbs publishes *The Anatomy of the Horse*.
- 1776 First running of the St Leger at Doncaster.
- 1777 The Madras Race Club is formed.
- 1779 The Oaks is staged at Epsom.
- 1780 The first running of the Derby is run over a mile at Epsom and won by Diomed, owned by Sir Charles Bunbury, the first great racing administrator.
- 1790 First publication of the *Irish Racing Calendar* by the Irish Turf Club.

## HORSERACING: A CHRONOLOGY

- 1794 George Stubbs's Turf Gallery opens in Conduit Street, London.
- 1806 George Stubbs dies on 10 July, at the age of eighty-one.
- 1809 First running of the 2,000 Guineas at Newmarket.
- 1810 The first fully sanctioned race meeting occurs in Sydney.
- 1814 First running of the 1,000 Guineas at Newmarket.
- 1825 Brazil's first formal race meeting is held at Praia Vermelha in Botafogo, Rio de Janeiro.
- 1827 Great racing administrator and inventor of the weight-for-age scale in 1855, Admiral Rous arrives in Sydney from England to return in 1829 via a posting in India. While in Australia, he stands an English horse, the well-named Emigrant.
- 1829 The foundation stone for a racecourse at Aintree is laid by Lord Sefton. Historian John Pinfold has suggested that a race in 1836 should be recognised as the first Grand National. Other historians suggest that the first running of the race was in 1839, won by a horse called Lottery.
- 1830s Races are held at Tirranna near Goulbourn, providing a template for picnic racing all over Australia. Tirranna is immortalised by George Lambert in 1929 in a painting that captures the bucolic pleasures of bush racing.
- 1833 Sheikh Maktoum bin Buti, of the Al Bu Falasah sector of the Bani Yas tribe, along with nearly 1,000 tribesmen, secedes from Abu Dhabi.
- 1844 The infamous Running Rein Derby. The winner is disqualified after it is discovered that he is an ineligible four-year-old named Maccabeus.
- 1845 Happy Valley Racecourse is built for the British in Hong Kong.
- 1848 Turf reformer Lord George Bentinck dies at age forty-six.
- 1848 Trollope publishes *The Kellys and the O'Kellys* in which the character of Dot Blake provides an early study of a canny professional trainer.

## HORSERACING: A CHRONOLOGY

- 1849 Foreign Residents Club members pool resources to found Foreign Amateurs Racing Society to stage race meetings in Argentina.
- 1853 Western Australia becomes the first horse to win the English Triple Crown.
- 1856 The first running of the Viceroy's Cup is held at Hastings Racecourse in Calcutta.
- 1857 Longchamp racecourse opens, Paris's first metropolitan track.
- 1858 Exhibition of William Powell Frith's *The Derby Day* at the Royal Academy of Arts, London.
- 1861 The first Melbourne Cup is won by Archer who wins again the following year – the first of four horses to win consecutive cups.
- 1863 The first running of the Grand Prix de Paris, a champion race for three-year-olds held at Longchamp, is won by an English colt, The Ranger.
- 1863 John Hunter and William R. Travers build Saratoga racecourse following the success of a four-day meeting in the town organised by former bare knuckles boxing champion and congressman, John Morrissey. Saratoga claims to be the oldest organised sporting venue in the United States.
- 1864 The first Travers Stakes at Saratoga is won by Travers's horse, Kentucky.
- 1865 Gladiateur becomes the second winner of the English Triple Crown. The first foreign-bred winner of the Derby, he is dubbed 'the Avenger of Waterloo' by the French.
- 1867 Joseph Oller, a Catalonian bookmaker living in Paris, invents the pari-mutuel system of wagering. It is mechanised by Englishman George Julius, who had moved to New Zealand in 1889 when his father was nominated to the diocese of Christchurch.
- 1870 The Jockey Club assumes control over flat racing in Britain.
- 1880 Zola brings to life the excesses of the Parisian racecourse in *Nana*.

## HORSERACING: A CHRONOLOGY

- 1881 Iroquois, owned by tobacco millionaire Pierre Lorillard IV, becomes the first American-owned and -bred winner of the Derby. He also wins the St Leger.
- 1882 The Argentinean Jockey Club is formed following a visit by four founding members to the French Derby at Chantilly. The first Argentinean Derby is run in 1884. The Hipódromo Argentino de Palermo, the first racecourse in Argentina, was established in 1876.
- 1884 Prolific English-born author Nat Gould embarks on an eleven-year sojourn to Australia, during which he chronicles the lives and times of the racing and betting industries.
- 1886 The most brilliant jockey of his generation, Fred Archer, known as The Tinman, commits suicide at age twenty-nine in a fit of depression caused by the death of his wife, Helen Rose. According to local legend, the ghost of Archer is said to ride a grey horse through Pegasus Stables in Newmarket.
- 1886 Ladbrokes is founded as commission agents for horses trained at Ladbroke Hall in Worcestershire. The name Ladbrokes was adopted in 1902 when operations were moved to London.
- 1886 Robert Black describes the Anglicisation of French racing, claiming that trainers in France are ‘English to a man’.
- 1894 Novelist George Moore describes the mortal threat posed by horseracing for servants and stable boys in *Esther Waters*.
- 1894 Alexander Gray’s single-strand barrier is used at a race meeting in Australia. It is used in the United Kingdom from 1897.
- 1903 The Jockey Club bans doping after trainer George Lambton dopes his own horses to draw attention to the problem, brought to Newmarket as part of what Lambton refers to as the ‘American invasion’.
- 1905 Belmont Park opens in New York to a crowd of forty thousand.
- 1906 Sydney, with a population of less than half a million, stages more race meetings (236) annually on the flat than in all of the United Kingdom, with a population of around forty million.

## HORSERACING: A CHRONOLOGY

- 1907 Toasted by the Protestant students of Trinity College and running with a rosary in his bridle, Orby becomes the first Irish-trained horse to win the Epsom Derby.
- 1908 The original stands in the Hipódromo Argentino de Palermo are replaced by a Beaux Arts tribute designed by Louis Faure-Dujarric.
- 1913 Suffragette Emily Davison dies after throwing herself in front of the king's horse in the Epsom Derby.
- 1913 The first totaliser system is installed at Ellerslie Racecourse, Auckland, New Zealand, and is manually operated. The second, at Gloucester Park Racetrack in Western Australia, is electrically driven.
- 1914 AB 'Banjo' Paterson hangs up his guitar long enough to write the first sociology of Australian racing, referring to the *cognoscenti* as 'knowledge boxes' and bemoaning the influence of 'the machine' (the pari-mutuel).
- 1915 Regret becomes the first filly to win the Kentucky Derby.
- 1918 Five hundred ninety people are killed in a fire after a temporary grandstand collapses at Happy Valley Racecourse, Hong Kong.
- 1919 Sir Barton is the first horse to win the American Triple Crown. After eleven unsuccessful seasons at stud, he served at the U.S. Army Remount service before being bought by a rancher from Wyoming.
- 1920 First running of the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe at Longchamp is won by an English-bred and -owned colt, Comrade, ridden by the Australian Frank Bullock.
- 1924 First running of the Cheltenham Gold Cup is won by Red Splash.
- 1924 Skull caps become compulsory for jump jockeys in the United Kingdom after amateur rider Captain 'Tuppy' Bennett is killed at Wolverhampton racecourse after being kicked in a fall from Ardene in the Oteley Handicap Steeplechase.
- 1925 Gordon Richards wins the first UK jump jockeys' championship.

## HORSERACING: A CHRONOLOGY

- 1926 UK trade papers agree on a starting price system to be determined by the betting market on course.
- 1926 Winston Churchill introduces a tax on betting, which is abandoned three years later. It was reintroduced in 1967.
- 1927 The Epsom Derby is broadcast on the radio for the first time.
- 1927 The first running of the Champion Hurdle at Cheltenham is won by Blaris.
- 1929 The UK Tote operates for the first time at Newmarket and Carlisle.
- 1930 Phar Lap wins the Melbourne Cup at 8-11.
- 1930 Irish Hospital Sweepstakes legalized by Public Charitable Hospitals Act.
- 1932 The first televised Epsom Derby.
- 1932 Australia mourns Phar Lap, aged only five, as he dies in the arms of his groom, Tommy Woodcock. Despite being born in New Zealand, Phar Lap had come to represent Depression-era Australia, battling back from finishing last in his first race to winning the Melbourne Cup and thirty-six of his other fifty starts.
- 1932 Golden Miller records the first of five consecutive triumphs in the Cheltenham Gold Cup.
- 1934 William Hill is founded as a telephone and postal betting service.
- 1934 Shirley Temple makes her debut in the film version of Runyon's *Little Miss Marker*. The shocking story of a little girl left as collateral with a bookie operating among the New York demimonde is leavened by the curls and dimples of the original child star.
- 1935 Foxbridge is imported to New Zealand from England. His progeny dominate New Zealand racing in the 1940s.
- 1935 *National Velvet* is published. Generations of girls grow up dreaming of winning a racehorse and riding it in the Grand National.

## HORSERACING: A CHRONOLOGY

- 1939 Clay Puett's electric starting gate is used at Landsdowne Park, Vancouver. The design remains basically the same to this day. Starting gates were not introduced by the English Jockey Club until 1965.
- 1942 Wartime restrictions, including a ban on midweek racing and one raceless Saturday a month, are introduced in Sydney. Similar measures are enforced across Australia. The last-ever meeting is held on a Sydney 'pony' racecourse.
- 1943 A wartime restriction on fuel prevents Kentucky breeders from transporting their yearlings to Saratoga to be sold. Instead, a sale is held in a tent in the track paddock at Keeneland. Keeneland develops to become the most important sales company in the world.
- 1947 Sayajirao wins the St Leger for the Maharaja of Baroda, ridden by Australian Edgar Britt.
- 1948 *King of the Wind* adds another layer to the fantastical stories that surround the origin of the Godolphin Arabian. Author Marguerite Henry merges half-truths and fiction to dramatic effect.
- 1953 Vincent O'Brien trains the winners of the Cheltenham Gold Cup (Knock Hard), the Aintree Grand National (Early Mist) and The Irish Derby (Larkspur). He also wins the Grand National in 1954 (Royal Tan) and 1955 (Square Times).
- 1955 The not-for-profit Greater New York Association (which became the New York Racing Association in 1958) is created.
- 1957 Bookies begin to bet 'each way' in Sydney.
- 1961 Betting shops are legalized in the United Kingdom. Cash betting off course is decriminalized overnight.
- 1961 Northern Dancer, the most successful sire of the twentieth century, is foaled in Canada. Having failed to meet his \$25,000 reserve price as a yearling, he is retained by Windfields Farm for whom he wins fourteen out of his eighteen starts, including the Kentucky Derby and the Preakness. He stands at Windfields Farm in Maryland until his death in 1990.

## HORSERACING: A CHRONOLOGY

- 1962 The first running of the Washington International takes place at Laurel Park.
- 1962 Vincent O'Brien wins the first of six Epsom Derbies with Larkspur, owned by Raymond Guest, U.S. ambassador to Ireland.
- 1963 The Betting, Gaming and Lotteries Act is passed, regulating betting in the United Kingdom, including defining the role of a 'bookmaker', until it is superseded by the 2005 Gambling Act.
- 1964 Arkle wins the first of three consecutive Cheltenham Gold Cups.
- 1964 Russian champion Anilin is allowed to run in the Washington International. He finishes third in 1964 and second in 1966.
- 1970 Nijinsky wins the English Triple Crown for trainer Vincent O'Brien.
- 1973 The first of Red Rum's three victories in the Grand National. In addition to winning in 1974 and 1977, he finishes second twice.
- 1976 The first yearling to be sold for more than \$1 million goes through the Keeneland July Sale. Canadian Bound was sold by Nelson Bunker Hunt and bought for \$1.5 million by a Canadian syndicate. He raced four times, without success.
- 1976 Wray Vamplew publishes *The Turf* and establishes a new direction for the study of horseracing.
- 1977 The trifecta comes to Australian racecourses.
- 1980 Irishmen Tommy Ryan and Joe Byrne are banned from riding in Britain for an unprecedented three months for misuse of the whip at the Cheltenham festival.
- 1981 Shergar wins the Epsom Derby by a record margin. In 1983, he is kidnapped from the Aga Khan's Ballymany stud by the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA). No ransom is paid, and his body is never found.
- 1981 First running of the Japan Cup. Participants were restricted to those trained in Japan, the United States, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and India, or by invitation. This restriction was dropped in 1982, but the race remains an invitational.



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- 1984 Dawn Run becomes the only racehorse to have won both the Champion Hurdle and the Cheltenham Gold Cup. She also is the only horse to have won the English, French and Irish Champion hurdles.
- 1985 Seattle Dancer, a colt by Nijinsky, is sold at Keeneland for £13.1 million, the highest price ever paid for a yearling at public auction, and the high-water mark of the 1980s bloodstock bubble during which ten colts by Northern Dancer and his son Nijinsky realised \$4 million or more each.
- 1990 U.S.-bred, Irish-owned Danehill becomes the first high-profile shuttle stallion, covering mares in both hemispheres. He goes on to be leading sire in Australia on nine occasions, in Britain and Ireland three times and in France on two occasions.
- 1993 The International Federation of Horseracing Authorities is established.
- 1993 Mark Wallinger acquires the racehorse which he names A Real Work of Art.
- 1994 Balanchine provides the first Group One winner for Godolphin.
- 1994 The National Lottery is launched in the United Kingdom. Bookies face extra competition, initially from prize draws and, after 1995, scratchcards.
- 1995 Happy Valley Racecourse is rebuilt.
- 1995 Northern Irish jockey A. P. McCoy begins his unbroken dominance of the British jump racing championship.
- 1996 Inaugural running of the Dubai World Cup, with prize money of \$4 million, a figure intended to ensure the participation of the top U.S. horse and eventual winner, Cigar.
- 1996 Frankie Dettori wins all seven races on the card at Ascot. Bookmaker Gary Wiltshire sells his house and car in order to pay back the £800,000 he owes to winning punters.
- 1997 The Grand National is postponed after two coded bomb threats are received from the IRA.
- 1998 The first of Istabraq's three consecutive victories in the Champion Hurdle at the Cheltenham Festival.

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- 2000 Betfair launches, offering its first market on the Oaks, won by Love Divine.
- 2001 Racing fiction gets its own equine narrators. *Horse Heaven* provides a nod to *Black Beauty* by reflecting on a horse's-eye view of racing in the United States and Europe.
- 2001 The UK government introduces a gross profits tax scheme designed to encourage the largest betting operators to return from their offshore locations. At the 2002 British Horseracing Board AGM, then-chairman of William Hill, John Brown, describes it as the 'single most important and influential development in betting and racing in 30 years'.
- 2002 In-running betting is offered by Betfair.
- 2003 Betfair agrees on a Memorandum of Understanding with the Jockey Club. The MoU allows the Jockey Club to request information that enables them to identify individuals behind activities that gave rise to a strong suspicion that the Rules of Racing have been broken.
- 2004 Australian Racing Board CEO Andrew Harding describes permitting betting exchanges as 'a suicide pill'.
- 2004 Emirates, the Dubai national airline, secures sponsorship of Arsenal football club's stadium and becomes a commonplace brand encountered throughout the sporting media.
- 2004 Ladbrokes' CEO Chris Bell tells the BBC's Money Program that 'at least a race a day, if not more, is now being corrupted by the availability of laying horses to lose on betting exchanges'.
- 2004 Kieren Fallon drops his hands, losing a nineteen-length lead on Ballinger Ridge at Lingfield Park. Sean Fox falls off Ice Saint at the first at Fontwell six days later. The two events prompt a flurry of media reports about corruption in racing, focusing particularly on the role of the recently established betting exchanges and their facility to bet against horses.
- 2005 The Gambling Act transforms laws dating back as far as 1845 and attempts to future-proof gambling regulation under the guidance of the newly created Gambling Commission.
- 2006 Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum becomes ruler of Dubai upon the death of his brother, Sheikh Maktoum bin Rashid Al Maktoum.

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- 2007 Turf TV/Racing UK is created with the intention to foster competition in the market, on the basis that racecourses would be paid more for their rights if rival broadcasters had to bid against each other for contracts.
- 2008 Former Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, tells the Mahon tribunal that substantial amounts of sterling deposited into his account are racecourse ‘winnings’.
- 2008 The Green Monkey retires. Bought in 2006 for a record \$16 million, he ran three times without winning. He joins Snaafi Dancer, bought for \$10.2 million in 1983, as an example of a famous, and expensive, failure. Snaafi Dancer was unraced and suffered from fertility problems.
- 2009 Mark Wallinger is selected as the winner of the Ebbsfleet, Kent, public art competition, for his 50-foot-high sculpture of a white horse.
- 2010 A joint venture between the two British broadcasters, Racing UK and At The Races, called GBI, is formed to sell picture rights internationally.
- 2010 A law is passed in France whereby horseracing can only be bet on through the totalisator system or PMU.
- 2010 According to the BBC, 4,618 thoroughbreds are slaughtered in abattoirs in Ireland, casualties of overproduction and the economic crisis.
- 2010 Dick Francis, jockey and novelist, dies.
- 2010 Meydan opens. Sixty-seven million square feet of luxury and technology set new standards for racecourse construction, reinforcing the ongoing relevance of the connection between the fortunes of Dubai and international horseracing.
- 2011 Australian trainer Bart Cummings tells *The Racing Post* that racing in Ireland ‘isn’t worth two bob’.
- 2011 Betting firm BetFred buys the Horseracing Totalisator Board and with it the right to provide pari-mutuel betting in the United Kingdom.
- 2011 Queen Elizabeth II visits the Irish National Stud.