

# WELCOME TO THE CLUB

*The Royal Ascot Racing Club celebrated its 20th birthday in 2018. Its founder, the Hon Harry Herbert, spoke to Terry Redhead about another fantastic year, while looking ahead to season number 21*

**T**he Royal Ascot Racing Club sparked its way through its fantastic 20th anniversary season last year, but is still intent on looking ahead and moving forward.

“It was an amazing year for the club, one to remember. Let’s hope we can have another stellar year in 2019,” said its founder and Club Racing Manager, Harry Herbert. There were plenty of highlights, culminating in a tremendous home win for Projection in the Bengough Stakes at Ascot.

“To win a group race in front of our club members at Ascot has to be special and Projection managed just that. It was an

absolutely fabulous occasion,” said Herbert.

Projection, now five, is trained at Marlborough by Roger Charlton. It was a terrific performance to land the Group 3 in October, after which the gelding returned to Ascot for the British Champions Stakes over six furlongs.

“He is so consistent. He was fifth in the Diamond Jubilee but beaten only a couple of lengths and then was unlucky in the QIPCO British

Champions Sprint Stakes, which just wasn’t run to suit,” said Herbert.

Headway, a three-year-old filly trained by William Haggas at





#### LEFT TO RIGHT

*Club horse Projection wins The John Guest Racing Bengough Stakes in 2018;  
A statue of the Club's most successful horse, Motivator;*

Newmarket, was another highlight. She won at Lingfield and was eighth in the Jersey Stakes at the Royal Meeting.

“She was a lot of fun before we sold her – for a lot of money I might add – to Hong Kong,” added Herbert.

Now four, filly Snow Wind was another runner trained by Haggas. “Snow Wind won twice in the summer, at Chester and Ripon, and was lots of fun, and Production, then a two-year-old colt, won [on his debut in a maiden] at Ascot, which means so much to our members,” said Herbert.

Richard Hannon trains Production, who has done well over the winter. “They are really big moments from the 2018 season and, of course, there was our party at The Savoy where we showed Motivator on the big screen. That was just magical,” added Herbert.

Motivator remains the benchmark for the club. The Michael Bell-trained colt won the 2005 Epsom Derby under jockey Johnny Murtagh, carrying the famous club colours of white with dark blue armlets and dark blue cap to their greatest triumph.

Bell is also responsible for the club's other horse, three-year-old colt Platform Nineteen.

He was slightly disappointing in his only run at Newbury in October, but the club is hopeful there will be more to come when he steps up in trip to middle distance races.

#### NEWCOMERS FOR 2019

The club has two new two-year-olds to look forward to and Herbert can hardly wait. Buying horses is never a straightforward business, one he admits gets more difficult as the years go by. Herbert works with his brother-in-law, John Warren, racing and bloodstock advisor to Her Majesty The Queen. John's son, Jake, is also involved in a hugely expensive and time-consuming business. Warren and Herbert have, for 20 years, carried the responsibility of buying the Royal Ascot Racing Club's bloodstock and have had incredible success.

From the population of European racehorses, less than five per cent are able to be competitive in Group races, also known as Pattern races or Black type races – the top contests. However, over the last 20 years, a quarter of those bought to run in Royal Ascot Racing Club colours have moved into the elite echelon.

“It's enormously hard to buy the horses

we want and it becomes more difficult as the years go by. But John's record has stood the test of time,” insisted Herbert.

Now the pair, along with the rest of the club, are hoping to have unearthed two more gems for 2019. Prestigious is a two-year-old trained by Archie Watson in Upper Lambourn. She is a precocious Camacho filly and an exciting prospect for a trainer new to the Club. “Archie has done fantastically well and has been so impressive, and our members will love trips to Lambourn on stable days,” said Herbert. “He has been particularly impressive with two-year-olds and we all hope that will continue with this lovely filly.”

The other horse is Coincidence. “He is a beautiful, very athletic two-year-old Teofillio colt in training with William Haggas,” said Herbert. “He has had plenty of chill time, but we are hopeful there will be good things to come from him.”

Haggas, along with his wife Maureen, have been responsible for several of the club's horses. Herbert noted: “They are so attentive to every detail. They leave no stone unturned to get the very best out of every horse they deal with. Coincidence looks magnificent.” ◉