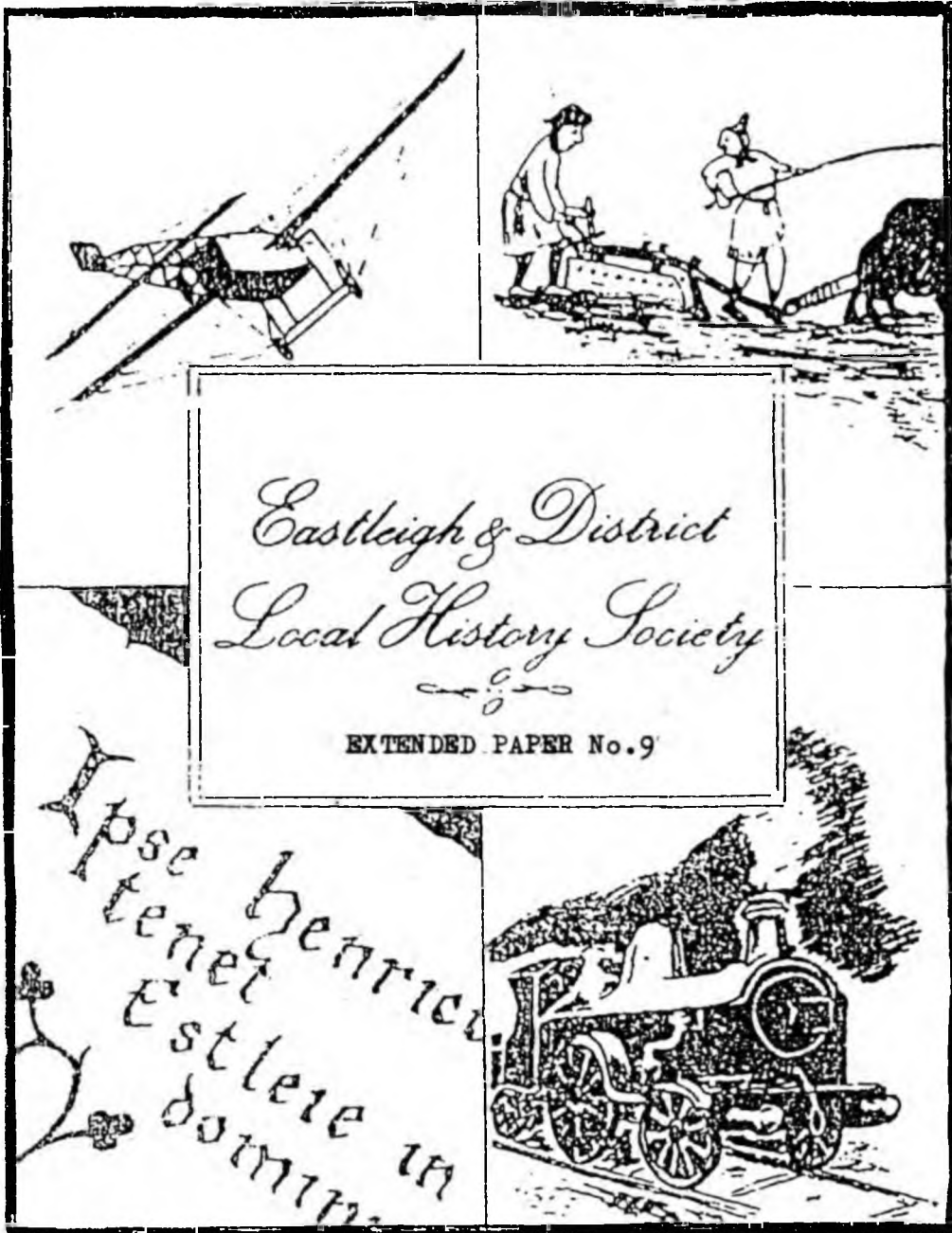


Horse Racing at Chandlers Ford. 1883-1885.



MAP OF PART OF CHANDLER'S FORD 1880-1990

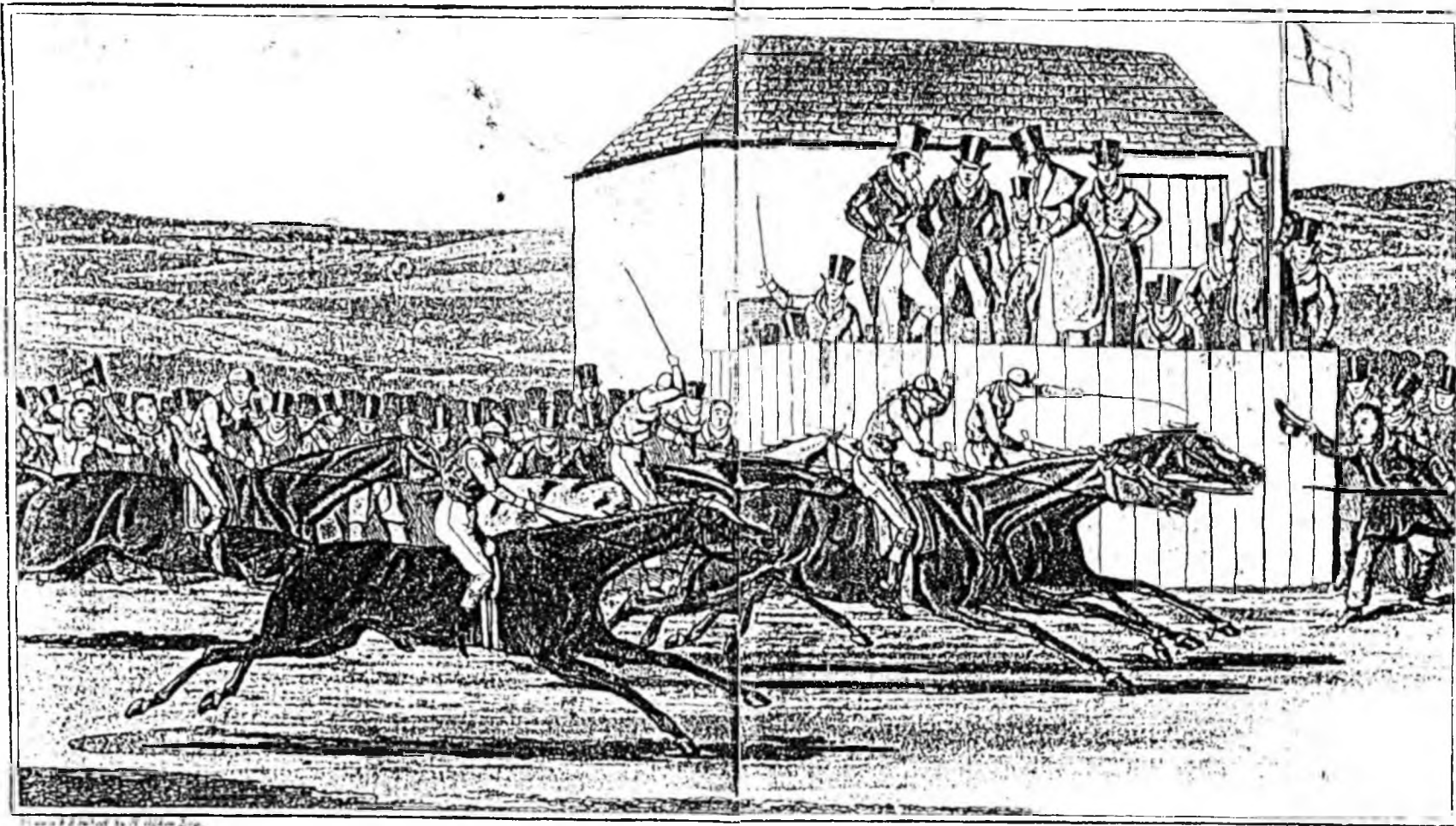
This map shows the area of Chandler's Ford between the Eastleigh and Romsey railway and Castle Lane. It is based on Ordnance Maps dated 1870, 1909 and 1933 and on the Street Plan of Estate Publications Ltd. However, it is updated by a personal survey so that all the features, streams, footpaths and roads are as existing in September 1990. On the map the location of farms, railway sidings and brickyards are shown as they existed by the end of the last century.

It is interesting to record that the green coloured areas of woodland and copse are virtually unchanged over the past 120 years; only the south east end of Knightwood has been cut back by recent housing development.

The location of the Race Course is based on several facts but it cannot be guaranteed! The length of the course is known, 2¼ miles. This appears in reports of the racing. Some races were over 1¼ miles. The layout of many well known courses in the country has been studied and the shape of the Chandler's Ford course has been deduced from these observations. Because the Titlark Farm and Small Profits Copses are untouched in area for the whole period of the study, it seems unlikely that the course ran between these copses for two reasons. First, they are bounded by streams and the land would have been particularly boggy and second, because the horses would have been out of sight of the stand and paddock which is known to have been at the east end of Knightwood. Furthermore, the land rises from these streams and would have been more suitable for the course. Near the end of Knightwood there was, until 1984, a disused sandpit which could well have been worked to provide drier material for the paddock and enclosure.

The view from the site of Titlark Farm, on today's Warrior Park Industrial Estate, north and west to the probable site of the racecourse, still emphasises the suitability of the choice of the higher land. Access from the railway station would have been by old footpaths which still exist, from Station Lane, down School Lane and School Close and across the bridge spanning the stream at the back of Monks Brook Industrial Park.

Finally, congratulations to the brewers who chose 'The Cleveland Bay' for the name of the new pub/restaurant in Knightwood Road!



ASCOT RACES. Tom & Bob winning the long odds from a knowing one!

London Publ. by G. & C. Colburn, 22, Abchurch Lane, 1822

19th century print by Henry Alkan showing racing at Ascot

Ascot in 1822 gives an impression of what racing was like at Chandler's Ford in 1883

CHANDLER'S FORD RACES

Many of us love a day at the Races! The evocative names of the racecourses: Epsom, Newmarket, Newbury, Salisbury and so on, conjure up those glorious sunny days when you followed your favourites with tingling excitement as they galloped at full speed towards the winning post. Perhaps you recall that your horse was usually bringing up the rear and almost invariably you lost that bet you placed with complete confidence on the 'dead cert'! Sometimes, and rarely, you had the thrill of a successful day financially. Always you had the pleasure of a day in the fresh air with all the sights and smells and noise of a racecourse.

But who has heard of Chandler's Ford Races? Who can imagine the roar of the crowd, the thunder of hooves, the cries of the punters in that part of the Borough of Eastleigh? It is certain that nobody now living will recall these local Meetings. But it is true that there were splendid and colourful Races at Chandler's Ford! They were held over 100 years ago on the land where now there are the houses and roads of Valley Park. This is the true story of a fascinating part of our town's history. For its background we must look to Southampton, because our own Races started as a consequence of their race meetings having been abandoned.

In the early 1820s Southampton was experiencing something of a revival of its former fortunes as a fashionable resort and spa town. For the well-to-do visitor the town had enjoyed great popularity in the late 18th century. In 1822, as an added attraction to encourage more patrons, a racecourse circuit was laid out on Southampton Common, a grandstand was erected, and two day Race meetings were started. Unfortunately, support fell after about ten years and the meetings lapsed after 1848. In that year the money taken was insufficient to pay expenses! However, with renewed optimism in 1859, after the Crimean War, racing on the Common was revived, but after some early success there were increasing complaints of drunkenness, rowdyism and crime and meetings finally ceased in 1881. For some citizens who enjoyed a flutter it was a sad day and the annual events of the Southampton Race Committee were missed.

Years before the Southampton Races ended in 1881, consideration had been given to holding Steeplechase Meetings in Chandler's Ford and the 'Hampshire Advertiser', on 9th November 1872, reported that racing there was being planned. No further progress appears to have been made at this time but two years later, in 1874, Mr Thomas Chamberlayne, the landowner of Cranbury Park, decided to sell by auction the deed and livestock at his property in Chandler's Ford, called Titlark Farm.

This farm was on the west side of the main road from Southampton, north of Castle Lane, and the farmland was the area now occupied by Chandler's Ford Industrial Estate and by roads and houses in the south part of Valley Park. The map shows the site of the farmhouse and its access from Castle Lane. The first part of the farm road is now a footpath and warehouses in Eagle Close are on land once occupied by the farm buildings.

The sale took place on 22nd September and gave Mr. Chamberlayne the opportunity of letting the farm to tenants. Within a few years, a large area north of the farmhouse was developed for brick making, to clay pits and to the kilns. Indirectly it also led to racing at Chandler's Ford and it is appropriate to introduce two men who played important roles in establishing the Sport of Kings to our neighbourhood.

First, it is proper to mention that Thomas Chamberlayne was not a fit man when he sold the effects of Titlark Farm, and he died just two years later, on 21st October 1876, after a long illness. Born in 1805, he had risen to be a Deputy-Lieutenant for the County of Hampshire. He was descended in a direct line from Count de Tankerville whose younger son, John de Tankerville, was Lord Chamberlayne to King Henry I. Thomas succeeded to the large family estates in Hampshire and Leicestershire in 1834. He was buried at Otterbourne Church on 26th October and was succeeded by his only son, Tankerville. This is relevant to our story because although Thomas had been a liberal supporter of local institutions and clubs, particularly sailing clubs, Tankerville was a keen horseracing man. It was his land at Titlark Farm on which the races at Chandler's Ford were held.

It is now time to introduce our second personality, Mr Albert Stephen Soffe. In March 1869, Albert was a maltster at Compton. We know this because, in that month, he was served with a summons and fined for assault! Thirteen years later it was Albert who was appointed Clerk to the Course and the Stakeholder of Chandler's Ford Races for, by 1882, he was the tenant of the fields and meadows of Titlark Farm.

But in 1872 Albert was bankrupt. For many years he traded as a coal, corn, hay and straw merchant at Eastleigh. His twelve-roomed dwelling house on Station Hill, later called Sainfoin Villa, had stabling for eight horses, a saddle and harness room, office, stores and a weighbridge. The leasehold property had a frontage of 138 feet and was opposite the entrance to the town goods yard at Bishopstoke Railway Station. The premises had a depth of 250 feet (to what became Upper Market Street) and included a foreman's cottage with seven rooms. This business was quite important in Bishopstoke village and in the small hamlets of Eastleigh and Barton which together boasted, at that time, only 100 inhabited houses.

In February 1872, on the announcement of Albert Soffe's bankruptcy, the property was offered 'for sale' to investors, with the additional information that Albert would be willing to carry on the premises at a remunerative rent! In April 1874, another Soffe, Richard, offered for sale 280 tons of coal and coke at his premises, also barrows, screens, weighing machines and bags. Perhaps he worked out of the yard. In September 1874, Albert Stephen Soffe and his wife Amelia suffered a tragedy when their little three year old son, Frederick, died. Albert was quoted in the local newspaper at that date as still being in business at Sainfoin Villa as a coal merchant. In fact, he appears to have continued his large and increasing trade in coal, corn and hay and to have remained in occupation at Sainfoin Villa although the sale of the dwelling house, garden, yard, corn stores and stables was advertised to take place on 18th June 1879. The property was offered in three leases for 1,000 years from the Chamberlayne Estate.

By July 1880, Albert was the occupier of Titlark Farm because, in that month, he was summoned by Thomas Hill, manager of a brickyard, for assault. Remember he had a similar summons in 1869! In October 1881 he was again before the Magistrates. This time it was to answer a summons by the Inland Revenue for keeping a dog without a licence. He was fined a nominal ten shillings. Further impressions of Albert's personality may be gained from regular reports in the press of his attendance at what may be called social events. For example, he was at the opening supper of the 'Home Tavern' at Eastleigh in May 1880, the December 1881 meeting of the Eastleigh District Conservative Association and he took the Chair at the annual dinner of South Western Railway guards in January 1882 at the 'Home Tavern'. One might deduce that Albert was quite a local 'character'.

After rumours of several years, the first announcement that a Meeting of the Chandler's Ford Steeplechases would take place appeared in the 'Hampshire Advertiser' on 9th December 1882. It was reported that, in consequence of Southampton Race Meetings having been abandoned, a two day Meeting would be held about February in 1883 and the course would be close to the railway. It was to be all-turf (a euphemism for rough grass!) and would have a natural water jump and fences. But Albert Soffe had had an 'oversight'! In January it was noted that he had failed to obtain the consent of his landlord, Tankerville Chamberlayne, to the races! Happily, approval was given and Tankerville became one of the Promoters. Other Promoters were the Earl of Buchan, Sir Hew Crawford Pollock of Renfrewshire, Colonel Johnstone, G.A.E. Mayrick and Arthur Yates. A Handicapper was appointed who was Weatherby of London, C.E. Robinson was Clerk of the Scales, R. Figes was Starter, Stevens were the auctioneers for the horses entered in the 'Selling' Races and, as already recorded, Albert Soffe was Clerk of the Course.

Two weeks later it was stated that the first Meetings would be held on 22nd and 23rd February 1883 and that the South Hants Steeplechases would be under Grand National Rules. One can imagine the scene early that winter as progress was made to prepare the new racecourse, some of it on the low lying boggy ground to the west of the station. Mr Soffe and his men made a commendable effort to drain the ground and to fill up some of the inequalities of the rough grass but it was a difficult task. The track was about 1¼ miles in length and the ‘grand’ stand built for spectators was, perforce, a somewhat ‘rough structure’. An enclosure was made with fences in front of the stand and there was quite a spacious paddock.

During the winter, not only was the racecourse being prepared but at Chandler’s Ford railway station additional sidings had been under construction for handling wagons of bricks brought along a newly laid line of railway on a low embankment across the wet ground from the developing brickworks on the land north of Titlark Farm. The fields must have presented a very animated scene.

In the ‘Hampshire Independent’ on 21st February 1883, the South Western Railway advertised their enhanced train service from Southampton and Bishopstoke to Chandler’s Ford for race goers.

Passengers were charged ordinary fares on Thursday 22nd and Friday 23rd on the trains:-

Southampton	6.55	8.30	10.10	11.35	12.25	12.45	1.10
Bishopstoke	7.15	8.55	10.38	1.55	12.43	1.03	1.38
Chandler’s Ford	7.20	9.00	10.43	12.00	12.45	1.08	1.43

Return trains departed to Bishopstoke and Southampton from Chandler’s Ford at 1.14, 2.45, 5.00, 5.15, 5.30 (special), 5.52, 7.26 and 9.25 pm. The South Western also announced that other specials would run as required and it was later reported that several specials were run: from London, Weymouth, Salisbury, Portsmouth and Southampton, all packed with passengers. The Railway Company regretted that horses could not be loaded or unloaded at Chandler’s Ford. Rather surprisingly for a rural station, Chandler’s Ford only had a small cattle dock and that was on the ‘up’ side.

The ‘Southampton Times’, on 3rd February, advertised accommodation for stabling horses at the New Hut Inn (today’s Beefeater!), with hay, at two shillings a head, also at Ford Farm, close to the station (today the oldest part of Fortunes Court at the corner of Hursley Road and Sutherlands Way). They also stated there would be an omnibus (horse-drawn, of course), from the Royal Hotel’s mews (Above Bar), Southampton at 11.30; fare, two shillings and sixpence.

The first day of the Meeting, 22nd February 1883, dawned a grey day, but fine, and fortunately there was no rain on either day. The spectacle was one not to be missed. Trains were arriving at the station one soon after the other and their passengers were making their way by foot to the course from the down side platform. Many hundreds travelled by road to Chandler's Ford and availed themselves of the special facilities provided by the Railway Company for reaching the course. Unfortunately, the approaches to the Meeting were described as being in a 'lamentable state' with mud several inches deep! The course was, however, in fairly good condition, at least to start with. The course opposite the grandstand, at the Castle Lane end of the site, made a brave spectacle, with a row of carriages lining the rails. From miles around 'the agricultural residents' gathered, in 'excited amazement' at the sight. There were itinerant minstrels, cheapjacks, travelling shows, shooting galleries, a bowling alley and even performing monkeys!

The 'grandstand' was described as 'not very substantial' but the adjoining paddock was well patronised by the betting fraternity. It was also reported that the local police, Sergeant Harrison and his staff, had no difficulty in keeping the ring in good order, with no disturbances.

There were six races on each day, many with local names. On day 1 they were:

The Selling Hurdles	2 miles	4 runners
The Selling Steeplechase	2 miles	
Maiden Hurdles	2 miles	6 runners
South Hants Steeplechase	3 miles	2 runners
Cranbury Park Hunters Steeplechase	2½ miles	10 runners
Farmers and Traders Steeplechase	2½ miles	4 runners

The last race was a particularly exciting event. There were four runners and they raced for two circuits of the course. Two horses were neck and neck to the last jump when Mr Bull's 'Hercules' cannoned and threw his rider!

For each race there was a prize of 50 sovereigns.

Day two's races were all over 2 miles:-

Hursley Selling Hunters Flat Race

Stoneham Selling Hurdles Race

Southampton Handicap

Stewards Steeplechase

Winchester Hunters Hurdles

What did regular punters, the experts, think of the entertainment? According to newspaper reports the *'character of the sport was not of a very high class'* and the attendance was not as numerous as had been expected. It was also noted that the leading country gentry, with few exceptions, were absent. The *'Sporting Press'* did not regard the event with favour and considered the second day not as good as the first, probably because the course was cutting-up and the going was even more difficult. The report in the *'Hampshire Independent'* summarised the conditions: *"No doubt the accommodation for 'man and beast' was too primitive, and the ground was too heavy and treacherous, despite the efforts made to drain and level the course."* Furthermore, doubts were expressed whether the outlay necessary to make a good course was justified. It was not an auspicious start!

The next meeting was held on Easter Monday, 26th March 1883, and there were six events, Hurdles and Galloway Races. (A galloway is a small, strong horse bred in the Galloway district of Scotland; perhaps it was hoped this breed would find the course more to its liking!). After the winter rains, the course was described as *'very heavy going'* and the attendance was not large.

A two-day Steeplechase Meeting was announced for the Whitsun Bank Holiday weekend, 14th and 15th May 1883. The racing was exceptionally good, but once again the attendances were lower than hoped for and the trains were not extensively patronised. Something had to be done and Albert Soffe decided to seek professional advice.

The expert was a man named Robert I. Anson, an acknowledged authority on making Steeplechase Courses. During the early summer, he examined the potential for improving the course at Titlark Farm with Albert Soffe and by the late autumn a number of changes had been made in readiness for the two-day Meeting on 2nd and 3rd October. One feels sure that Albert's attention to improving the prospects for racing was not too diverted by the loss by fire of two large hayricks at the farm on the night of 26th August. The Eastleigh Fire Brigade was called but could not save them.

In readiness for the October Steeplechase Meeting, the course was altered and improved, likewise the stand and general accommodation. The first day, Tuesday 2nd October, was declared the *'best so far'*, the attendance was very good, the *'grand'* stand, it was noted, now had a corrugated iron roof, and there was a refreshment tent. Furthermore, there was no rowdyism. The South Western must have been pleased because they ran several well filled trains from London as well as from Portsmouth and Southampton.

Six races were on the card; the Corinthian Selling Hunters Flat Race, the Chandler's Ford Open Steeplechase, the Winchester Hurdle Race, the popular Farmers and Traders Selling Steeplechase and the Bishopstoke Hunters Steeplechase, all over two or 2½ miles and with a good number of entries, particularly in two races, when seven and nine horses ran. Everyone judged it to be a good afternoon's enjoyment, with a respectable company and with the course in capital condition.

Unfortunately, on the second day, it rained heavily! There were only two or three horses entered for each of the six races, there were many fallers and the winner of the South-Western Steeple Chase Plate of 30 sovereigns came in alone! It was not good racing.

However, with the good meeting on 2nd October 1883 in their minds, enthusiastic supporters suggested Chandler's Ford races should be called Southampton New Course to give it a far more important 'appearance'! Another hopeful development was a plan for a new hotel and stables for 30 horses, a little nearer the railway than the then existing off-licence, 'The Oaks', on the main road. In September 1883 'The Oaks' was granted a beer 'on-licence'. The only criticism after the October meeting was levelled, unfairly, against the Railway! It was thought the railway fares should be more generous.

With this successful Meeting over, another two day Chandler's Ford and South Hants Steeplechase event was advertised for February 21st and 22nd of the new year. Stakes to the value of £450 were quoted and no doubt it was expected that a good number of entries would be attracted by this prize money. The Race Committee was not disappointed, fortune smiled and there was good weather for the first day. The attendance also was larger than usual and bookmakers came from London and Brighton. The names of the Stewards testified to the excellent prospects for the Meeting and for the Course. Those listed were the Earl of Buchan, the Marquis of Queensbury, Mr Tankerville Chamberlayne, Sir Hew Pollock, Lord Cardross, Captain C. Vernon-Anson and Colonel G. Johnstone, a veritable galaxy of nobility and gentry. How delighted Albert Soffe must have felt! And one can almost sense his pleasure brimming over when his own horse, Lady Minnie, won the Maiden Selling Open Hurdles, run over two miles with seven horses running.

Once again in 1884, the South Western Railway ran special race trains to Chandler's Ford. Unhappily, the second day of the February Meeting, Friday 22nd, was stormy and very wet and the waterlogged course made going very heavy indeed. In fact, the enclosure round the stand became a bog! Anybody who remembers the brickyards and the meadows of Titlark Farm in more recent times will nod with complete understanding when this description is given of the conditions underfoot following rain.

Albert Soffe's four-year old horse, Lady Minnie, was entered on both days. On the 21st, in the Selling Open Hurdle race she fell and on the 22nd, in the Romsey Open Handicap Hurdles over two miles, she was eighth in a field of nine. One very pleasing visitor was Prince Edward of Saxe-Weimar to give the Races a Royal seal of approval, but the verdict on the two days racing cannot have been too optimistic. Clearly the ground over which the course was laid was liable to make the going extremely heavy after rain but iron hard, like a brick, after a dry spell of weather. Neither condition was good for racing for the safety of horses and riders.

After two more winter months, Spring came to Titlark Farm and the Easter Meeting was held on Monday and Tuesday, 14th and 15th April. Although it was fine, it was cold and rather windy and the attendance was not as numerous as formerly; perhaps other attractions, including a Volunteers Reunion at Portsmouth, kept some of the punters away. On the second day of racing, those scrutinising the card would have noticed that the description of the names given to the races was changed from those very pleasant local names, such as 'Stoneham Handicap' or the 'Bishopstoke Hunters' to those obviously chosen by the gentry. For example there was the Saxe-Weimar Stakes, the Cardross Open Steeplechase, the Buchan Open Handicap Hurdles and the Johnstone Hunters Hurdles. One wonders what the 'agricultural residents' thought of this. Whatever they may have felt about the involvement of nobility, it was a fact of life that the financial support of the well-to-do was needed to improve the Course and, with their backing, the Committee decided to make a number of alterations to the facilities, especially to the enclosure, to improve conditions if wet.

As it happened, the two day summer Steeplechase Meeting was held in favourable weather, on Wednesday and Thursday 4th and 5th June. Perhaps memories of the shocking mud at the February meeting kept long distance visitors away; certainly the attendance was mainly local people who were present to enjoy six races on each of the two days. Sadly for Albert Soffe, his Lady Minnie, due to run for the Farmers Cup on the 4th, was withdrawn. This was particularly unfortunate because the Steeplechase had been given a 50 guinea silver cup, the 'Farmers Cup' by Sir Hew Crawford Pollock, Bart., a Steward of the Course. It was a double-handed vase or goblet mounted on a black ebony stand. One feels that Albert Soffe, who had worked indefatigably to make Chandler's Ford the '*crème-de-la-crème*' of Steeplechases (a press report), deserved it on his sideboard at Sainfoin Villa. Where is it now? On the 5th there was a new race called the Knightwood Open, named after the ancient woods near the course, a pleasing choice for local folk.

During the summer great improvements were made to the racecourse and a considerable amount of money was spent on the work. Quite a large number of mature trees were felled and a steam saw was used to cut the timber to scantlings for a new fence for the paddock. Woodland was cleared to make an alteration to the straight run-in and this necessitated removing the grandstand to higher ground and siting it 150 feet further back from the boggy portion of the ground. High hopes for a good meeting at the first weekend in August were entertained but there was no doubt some disappointment when the racing was not well attended, although it was reported to be "*fairly interesting but hardly up to the average*".

Maybe as a counterpoise to Tankerville Chamberlayne's Cranbury Park Hunters Steeplechase, the Committee introduced into the race-card for Monday 4th August, 'The Sainfoin Open Hurdle Race' and Albert Soffe's newly acquired horse 'Topsy', ran and came in second, but could only manage to be last in a field of three in the Bishopstoke Open Handicap Hurdle on the following day. Further improvements to complete the earlier work followed the August event and had been completed in time for the Steeplechase, Hurdle and Flat Races meeting held on 15th and 16th October 1884. A part of Knightwood copse was kindly given by Tankerville Chamberlayne and was grubbed out to make a decided improvement to the course. The grandstand and the Stewards stand had by now been moved to the new course. Also the drive to the course was well gravelled and a carriage parking fee had been introduced! It cost one shilling (5p) for a four-wheeled and sixpence (2½p) for a two-wheeled carriage. And, to give the finest possible seal of approval to the Chandler's Ford and South Rants Races it was learnt that HRH Prince Edward of Saxe-Weimar had graciously agreed to become a Steward.

It was anticipated that the October meetings would be the best yet held. Chandler's Ford station was predicted to be crowded with race goers; after all, the South Western trains delivered you right onto the course, a great asset. The race card was larger than ever before, seven races on each day. The efforts of the summer were well rewarded with a very good meeting and those who came to Chandler's Ford were impressed by the marked improvements. The Executive were well pleased and announced that they were considering holding coursing meetings and might even form a gun club. They were convinced that the Meetings were rapidly becoming a favourite resort for those seeking a good day out. Albert Soffe now had two horses, Artificer and Bonnie Joey but Lady Minnie reappeared in 1885.

There is nothing like drenching rain to change one's outlook! The racing on 11th and 12th December 1884 was held under these adverse conditions but it was noted that the drainage of the course was much better than hitherto. On Boxing Day there was another Meeting of a new character 'especially for galloways'. It was called the Bishopstoke Galloway Races and comprised seven races suitable for these smaller beasts. The 26th December was a cold day, but being a holiday, there was a fair attendance. The course was in capital order and the sport was judged to be good. The first race was over half a mile on the flat for the Romsey Plate and the second was also a flat race but was over a mile for the Ladies Plate. Then followed the Licensed Victuallers Plate which was over six flights of hurdles, the Sainfoin Plate over four flights in a mile, the Bishopstoke Hurdles over six flights in 1½ miles and ending with the Chandler's Ford Hurdles, six in 1½ miles. So, racing at Chandler's Ford in 1884 ended with quite a satisfactory day.

During these winter months a state of uncertainty appears to have fallen over the Chandler's Ford course. One problem was to attract a sufficiently good quality of entry for the races. The owners of valuable animals did not take kindly to the rock hard or quagmire ground and despite the efforts made to improve the course and accommodation it was still well below accepted standards. So, at the Steeplechase Meeting on Thursday and Friday, 26th and 27th February, a number of races only had two or three runners and this did not make good sport. Furthermore, the second day was very wet after heavy overnight and morning rain. The state of the elements was described as "*dispiriting to a degree*". Pools of water lay on various parts of the track. Clearly, all the hard work to improve the course had not solved the problem and the predictions of the report in the 'Hampshire Independent' after the first meeting in February 1883 were coming true.

The year 1885 was to be the last year of races at Chandler's Ford, partly for the reasons already given. It was not any lack of local support that led to their being abandoned because the last two Meetings were well attended, especially by folk from Southampton.

In spite of the swamped and waterlogged course at the end of the February Steeplechase, the two-day Easter Steeplechase Meeting, on Monday and Tuesday, 6th and 7th April, was enjoyed by an immense crowd, but the Whit Monday Meeting on 24th May, although considered to be an attractive programme was again affected by the weather.

The final Meeting, another Steeplechase event, was held on 26th and 27th June 1885. It was a lovely two days of warm sunshine. The course was hard but the running was good and a large number of race goers witnessed some good races. So, on the late Saturday afternoon, the last race was run. It was the Hursley Open Hurdle Race, two miles, over eight hurdles, and there were five runners. Baron de Brienens's four-year old, Princess Charlotte won at 2 to 1, by five lengths.

There was no announcement in the newspapers that racing had ended and there must be some conjecture in determining why racing was abandoned. The Curator of the National Horseracing Museum at Newmarket has probably provided the explanation and I quote from her letter:-

"In the last quarter of the 19th century, eighty-nine meetings disappeared from the Calendar for two main reasons. First was because they failed to enclose, and, secondly, because a Jockey Club rule forced Race Committees to provide a minimum of 300 sovereigns for each day of racing. Race Committees also had to ensure that each race was worth at least £100 to the winner after 1877. A combination of circumstances obviously forced many minor courses out of racing in these years."

These requirements would have been difficult to follow at Chandler's Ford. The extracts from 'Races Past' published by the Racing Calendar office have a number of references to horses running the 'wrong side of the flag' and being disqualified. The course at Chandler's Ford was not enclosed. Secondly, the small fields for many races were competing for small prize money, usually 40 sovereigns, whereas larger courses, for example Kempton Park, offered 150 sovereigns for the winner. So it must be concluded that Mr Tankerville Chamberlayne and his influential friends found that racing elsewhere was better sport, kinder to the horses, and provided a more acceptable social atmosphere.

There was another factor, the rapid development of the brickyards and kilns to the east of the Course, on the site of today's Industrial Estate. It cannot have been pleasant for race goers to have had the fumes from the kilns blowing across to the grandstand on an easterly breeze.

The production of bricks from the Chandler's Ford clay pits and works was increasing rapidly from 1882/3. Falconer & Tancred, the contractors for the southern end of the Didcot, Newbury and Southampton Railway to Winchester were receiving 100 tons daily of bricks and materials at their yard at Winnal. When Eastleigh's new Railway Works, the Carriage and Wagon Works in Bishopstoke Road were built in 1889, a contract was placed for a million bricks to be delivered at the rate of 35,000 a week. Very large quantities of bricks were used in the construction of new stations and other railway projects and the superb brick built Hockley Viaduct alongside the A33 Winchester by-pass, built in the late 1880s, is a fine example of our local product.

Furthermore, many of the extensive housing developments of this period used Chandler's Ford bricks and countless thousands were exported or sent by rail to London and other parts of the south. Barbara Hillier, in her book, 'The Story of Chandler's Ford' states that 35 million locally made bricks were used for the building of the Courts of Justice in the Strand in London and a statue can be seen there of Mr Bull, the main contractor for the Chandler's Ford brickfields. So rapid was the growth of this major industry that by 1890 Titlark Farm was nearly encircled by the clay pits and the nearest brick kilns and the railway siding were only 150 yards north of the farmhouse! It was not the sort of activity to have in the neighbourhood of a racecourse of quality.

A plan of the racecourse has not been traced. It was, after all, only in use for less than 2½ years and it was altered during that short life. There are certain facts from which the likely layout can be deduced. Firstly, it was about 1¼ miles for a circuit. Secondly, the grandstand in its final position was on the east side of Knight Wood and the home straight was across the east end of the wood. Thirdly, the course had a natural water jump. There is, or was, a stream across the site which discharges into Monks Brook near the railway. Finally, there was easy access from the station. We know too that racing continued to mid 1885 when the brickfield was in active production. We can see from the 25in Ordnance Maps of 1870 and 1895 that Titlark Copse remained unaffected; so did the copse called Small Profits. One would have been tempted to think that Albert Soffe gave this piece of woodland its name as a result of his experience with his horses! But this is not so, because it was labelled Small Profits in the map of 1870. With these indicators in mind the author has drawn a probable layout of the Course reproduced on the map.

To close the story and to show how careful you had to be at 'our races', here are two true incidents.

One of the attractions to punters was, naturally, to place a little bet. At one meeting there was a man with a monkey on his shoulder. The man was selling numbered tickets to correspond with coloured balls in a wicker basket he was holding. When all were sold he said to those gathered around him that he would ask the monkey to pick the winning ball from the basket, fair enough? Yes, everyone cried, what fun! This was done, the prize was won but it was some time before somebody noticed it was always won by the same man! The explanation: the monkey had been trained to pick a ball of a certain colour and the number corresponding with this colour was always 'sold' to the accomplice! The police apprehended the two villains.

The second example concerns a certain farmer. He had proffered a sovereign (£1) for a five shilling (25p) bet. As he held out his hand for the change he was tapped on the shoulder. On turning to see who wanted him he found that the swindling 'bookie' had taken the opportunity to run off with the money. But our farmer friend had run after the thief, caught him and handed him over to the police. He was brought before the County Bench on 24th February 1884 and given two months hard labour. The prisoner then thanked the magistrates and remarked that he had expected a longer sentence than the one imposed, which was 'nothing to him'!

Times have changed, but it is good to look back on those far-off days, over a century ago, in our well loved Chandler's Ford.

JOHN FAIRMAN

October, 1990

Note: There is no statue of Mr. Bull in the London Courts of Justice.

References

1. Public Record Office, Kew. Sections RAIL and MT6.
2. Contemporary newspapers:
 1. Southampton times.
 2. Hampshire Independent
 3. Hampshire Chronicle
 4. Hampshire Advertiser
3. The National Horseracing Museum, Newmarket.
4. The Jockey Club, London.
5. Races Past. Racing Calendar Office, Wellingborough.
6. Bacon's Guide, London.
7. Chandler's Ford 1859-1969. Captain A.A. Fortune
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9. British Rail Archives, Waterloo.
10. Southampton Common. Sheila D. Thomson
11. History of Southampton, 1700- 1914. A. Temple-Patterson

Copies of the cards for the first and last races are appended. The complete series of Race Cards may be seen in the copy of this work in Eastleigh Library.

The footpath from Hursley Road across the railway north of Chandler's Ford Station and across Monks Brook to the racecourse and Knightwood, before houses were built in Shannon Way and Foyle Road. The electricity poles are still in position.

View looking south west across the railway from South Millers Dale. The south east corner of Knightwood is seen between the centre and right of the picture. The race course had its grandstand on the higher ground in the centre. See the map.

From the grandstand and paddock across the course

The corner of Knightwood cleared to improve the racecourse in 1884, now Foyle Road, Rothsbury Drive and Wyre Close.

Photographs taken by John Fairman in February 1985

FEBRUARY, 1883.

CHANDLER'S FORD AND SOUTH HANTS MEETING.

THURSDAY, February the 22nd.—A Hurdle Race of 50 sov. for horses that never won a hurdle race on tury; the winner to be sold by auction for 100 sov., if entered for 50 sov. allowed 7lb; entrance 3 sov.; two miles, over eight hurdles (47L.)

Mr Bantley's Mitylene, by Dindin, 4 yrs, 10st 7lb (50L.) - Davis 1
 Mr J. Lotheren's Harobell, 4 yrs, 10st 7lb (50L.) - owner 2
 Mr Bristow's Concochment, 4 yrs, 10st 7lb (50L.) - Wootoby 3
 Mr W. G. Head's b. m. by Lord Lyon, out of Lady Bothwell, 6 yrs, 12st (50L.) - owner -
 Mr J. Mackintosh's b. c. by Henry, out of Lady Bothwell, 4 yrs, 10st 7lb (50L.) - Leat -
 Mr J. Hampton's Limerick Lass, 4 yrs, 10st 7lb (50L.) - J. Smith -
 6 to 5 agst Mitylene, 3 to 1 agst Harobell, and 6 to 1 agst the Lady Bothwell colt. Won by six lengths.—Mr Mackintosh ekimed Harobell.

The South Hants Handicap of 5 sov. each for starters, with 50 sov. added; entrance 3 sov.; three miles (2 subs.—62L.)
 Mr J. Mackintosh's Rose of Richmond, by Mount Palestine, aged, 12st 7lb - Nicholls 1
 Ed Wolverton's Lottery, aged, 12st 7lb - Childs 2
 7 to 4 on Rose of Richmond. Won by half a length; Rose of Richmond fell.

The Cranbury Park Hunters' Steeple Chase of 50 sov.; entrance 3 sov.; two miles and a half (47L.)

Mr G. Ingram's Stanwick, by Kaunda, aged, 10st 7lb - Mr E. P. Wilson 1
 Mr E. Peller-Johnson's Columbine, 6 yrs, 11st 7lb - Mr J. Beasley 2
 Capt. Armitage's Tame Vixen, aged, 10st 7lb - owner 3
 Mr J. C. Allen's Kink, aged, 10st 7lb - Mr A. E. Friend -
 Mr A. Hind's Pat, 6 yrs, 10st 7lb (car. 10st 11lb) H. Wilson -
 Mr N. Home's Sitting Bull, aged, 10st 7lb (car. 11st) - Mr Mansland -
 Mr J. Stratton's Tom King, 6 yrs, 10st 7lb (car. 11st 13lb) - Mr Cowley -
 Mr J. R. Tylor's Ixnidid, aged, 10st 7lb - Chesterman -
 Mr W. Wood's Judy, aged, 10st 7lb - Stapley -
 Mr A. Mackenzie's Blarney, aged, 10st 7lb - Mr Flack -
 6 to 4 agst Stanwick, 7 to 2 agst Columbine, and 6 to 1 Blarney. Won by three-quarters of a length, a bad third; Tom King fell.

The Farmers' and Tradesmen's Plate of 40 sov. for maiden hunters; four yrs old, 12st, five, six, and aged, 12st 7lb; entrance 2 sov.; two miles and a half (58L.)

Mr Cleeve's Banishment, by Y. Melbourne, aged - Mr W. M. Elliot 1
 Mr C. Keeping's Golden Butterfly, aged - Mr Cowley 2
 Mr J. E. Cartwright's Chance, 6 yrs - Mr Lotheren 3
 Mr Bull's Hercules, 6 yrs - owner -
 6 to 4 agst Chance, and 6 to 4 agst Banishment. Won by a neck, a bad third; Chance fell, and Hercules did not pass the post.

The Selling Hurdle Race of 50 sov.; the winner to be sold by auction for 100 sov., if entered for 50 sov. allowed 7lb; entrance 3 sov.; two miles, over eight hurdles (47L.)

Mr R. Thirlwell's Caballo, by Nancham, 4 yrs, 11st (50L.) - J. Smith 1
 Mr White's Pibroch, aged, 12st 11lb (100L.) - Mr Pigott 2
 Mr J. Hampton's Limerick Lass, 4 yrs, 11st (50L.) - Chesterman -
 Mr Salway's Cherry Pie, aged, 12st 4lb (50L.) - owner (disq.) 2
 2 to 1 agst Limerick Lass, 3 to 1 each agst Cherry Pie and Caballo, and 4 to 1 agst Pibroch.—Cherry Pie came in first by five lengths, but was disqualified for having run at a meeting not under Grand National Hunt Rules, and the race awarded to Caballo, who came in second, Pibroch being a bad third; Limerick Lass fell and did not pass the post.

FRIDAY.—The Winchester Hunters' Plate of 50 sov.; those entered to be sold for 150 sov. allowed 7lb; entrance 3 sov.; two miles, over eight hurdles (47L.)

Mr A. Yates's Merry England, by Victorious, aged, 12st 3lb (150L.) - Mr Hanbury 1
 Capt. Burke's Viceroi, 6 yrs, 12st 3lb (150L.) - Mr Lotheren 2
 Mr A. Yates's Abclard, aged, 12st 3lb (150L.) - Childs 3
 Capt. H. Armitage's Tame Vixen, aged, 12st 10lb - owner -
 Mr W. Wood's Judy, aged, 12st 10lb - Stapley -
 Mr J. C. Allen's Kink, aged, 11st 7lb (150L.) - Mr A. E. Friend -
 Capt. Bathurst's Planché, 5 yrs, 11st 7lb (150L.) - Vincent -
 6 to 4 on Merry England, and 6 to 1 each agst Planché and Viceroi. Won by four lengths, a bad third; Planché and Tame Vixen went the wrong course.

The Stoneham Selling Hurdle Race of 50 sov.; the winner to be sold by auction for 100 sov., if for 50 sov. allowed 7lb; entrance 3 sov.; two miles, over eight hurdles (47L.)

Mr Bentley's Mitylene, 4 yrs, 10st 7lb (50L.) - Davis 1
 Mr R. Thirlwell's Caballo, 4 yrs, 10st 7lb (50L.) - J. Smith 3
 Mr A. Yates's Lauceston, aged, 12st (50L.) - Childs 3
 Mr W. Higgins's Ada Macgregor, aged, 12st (50L.) - Mr Lotheren -
 Mr F. R. Hunt's Norah, 6 yrs, 11st 9lb (50L.) - Vincent -
 7 to 4 on Mitylene, 5 to 2 agst Norah, 8 to 1 agst Lauceston, and 10 to 1 each agst Caballo and Ada Macgregor. Won by three lengths, a bad third; Norah did not go the course.

The Southampton Handicap Steeple Chase of 50 sov.; the winner to be sold by auction for 100 sov., if claimed at sale to be sold for 50 sov. allowed 7lb; entrance 3 sov.; two miles (47L.)

Mr F. R. Hunt's Norah, by Vanderdecken, 6 yrs, 10st 10lb (100L.) - Mr Lotheren 1
 Mr J. Mackintosh's br. c. by Henry, out of Lady Bothwell, 4 yrs, 10st (50L.) - Leat 2
 Ed Wolverton's Lottery, aged, 12st 7lb (100L.) - Childs -
 Mr D. Coles's Hythe, aged, 10st 4lb (50L.) - J. Smith -
 Even on Lottery, 2 to 1 agst Norah, 6 to 1 agst the Lady Bothwell colt, and 10 to 1 agst Hythe. Won by two lengths; Hythe bolted and Lottery fell, neither passing the post.

The Stowarde' Handicap Steeple Chase of 50 sov.; winners extra; entrance 3 sov.; two miles (47L.)

Mr A. Yates's School Girl, by D'Estournel, 6 yrs, 12st 2lb - Mr Hanbury 1
 Mr J. Mackintosh's Rose of Richmond, aged, 12st (incl. 7lb extra) - Nicholls 2
 6 to 4 on School Girl. Won by forty lengths.

CHANDLER'S FORD AND SOUTH HANTS MEETING.

FRIDAY, June the 26th.—A Hunters' Flat Race of 40 sov.; the winner to be sold by auction for 100 sov., if for 50 sov. allowed 14lb; entrance 3 sov.; two miles (37L.)
Mr R. Thirlwell's Highdown, by High-thorn, aged, 11st 10lb (50L.) - Mr A. Thirlwell 1

Mr T. Field's Minnie, 5 yrs, 11st 8lb (50L.) - Mr S. J. Woodland 2
Ld Wolverton's Poetess, 4 yrs, 12st (100L.) - Mr Waller 3
Mr S. Savage's Petunia, 4 yrs, 11st 7lb (50L.) - Mr C. Beard -
Mr E. Ratcliffe's Romeo, aged, 11st 10lb (50L.) - Mr Grieve -
7 to 4 agst Romeo, 3 to 1 agst Minnie, 4 to 1 each agst Highdown and Poetess, and 6 to 1 agst Petunia. Won by three-quarters of a length, two lengths between the second and third.

The Buchan Hunters' Steeple Chase of 40 sov.; entrance 3 sov.; two miles and a half (37L.)
Mr L. E. Smith's Chorister, by Castaway, aged, 11st 7lb - Escott 1
Ld Wolverton's Llanvaches, 5 yrs, 11st 7lb - Noyce 2
Mr J. Duncan's Little Harry, 5 yrs, 11st 7lb - J. Page 3
Col. Cumberlege's Lancer, 6 yrs, 11st 7lb - R. Wheeler -
Mr C. A. Stevenson's Oceana, aged, 11st 7lb - Mr Felton -
Mr J. Fisher's Warrior, 5 yrs, 12st 7lb - Mr C. Whitton -
Mr G. H. Shepherd's The Nightingale, 6 yrs, 11st 7lb - Capt. E. R. Owen -
2 to 1 agst Little Harry, 3 to 1 agst Llanvaches, and 5 to 1 agst Chorister. Won by two lengths, a length between the second and third.

The Cardross Open Hurdle Race of 40 sov.; the winner to be sold by auction for 100 sov., if for 50 sov. allowed 7lb; entrance 3 sov.; two miles, over eight hurdles (37L.)
Mr G. Trimmer's Ixia, by Blue Gown, 4 yrs, 10st (50L.) - Sensier 1
Baron de Brienon's Princess Charlotte, 4 yrs, 10st (50L.) - Childs 2
Mr R. Thirlwell's Glen, 4 yrs, 10st (50L.) - Mr S. J. Woodland 3
Mr O. Archer's Topsy, aged, 11st 7lb (50L.) - A. Hall -
Mr W. Kilby's Craig Glas, 5 yrs, 10st 10lb (50L.) - Didman -
Mr C. A. Stevenson's Rappel, aged, 11st 7lb (50L.) - Mr Felton -
Mr S. Woodland's Mandolina, 4 yrs, 10st 7lb (50L.) - J. Page -
2 to 1 agst Ixia, 4 to 1 agst Mandolina, and 6 to 1 agst Rappel. Won by four lengths, three lengths between the second and third.—The winner was sold to Mr Duncan for 80gs.

The Johnstone Hunters' Hurdle Race of 40 sov.; the winner to be sold by auction for 100 sov., if for 50 sov. allowed 9lb; entrance 3 sov.; two miles, over eight hurdles (37L.)
Mr J. A. Wilson's Amnesia, by Thunder, aged, 11st 11lb (50L.) - Sensier 1

Mr R. Thirlwell's Highdown, aged, 11st 8lb (50L.) - J. Page 2
Mr S. Savage's Petunia, 4 yrs, 10st 9lb (50L.) - Escott -
Mr J. Fisher's Prime Minister, 4 yrs, 10st 2lb (50L.) - Mr Grieve -
Mr G. H. Shepherd's Spider, aged, 11st 8lb (50L.) - A. E. Friend -
Mr T. Field's Minnie, 5 yrs, 11st 5lb (50L.) - Didman (disq.)
2 to 1 agst Minnie, 3 to 1 agst Amnesia, and 4 to 1 agst Spider. Minnie came in first by a length, but was disqualified for having run at a meeting not under Grand National Rules, and the race awarded to Amnesia, who came in second, Highdown being a bad third.—The winner was sold to Mr S. Woodland for 78gs.

The Cranbury Park Hunters' Steeple Chase of 40 sov.; entrance 3 sov.; two miles (37L.)
Capt. Rogers's Damsel, by Lowlander, 6 yrs, 12st 4lb - Capt. E. R. Owen 1
Mr Anderton's The Saint, 6 yrs, 12st 5lb - Mr C. E. Hartopp 2
Mr J. Fisher's Warrior, 5 yrs, 12st 11lb - Mr Whitton 3
Capt. Rogers's Greek Fire, 4 yrs, 10st 12lb - Escott -
Ld Wolverton's Julius, aged, 13st - Childs -
Mr A. Yates's Scur, 4 yrs, 10st - Dollery -
Mr Barton's Penitent, 5 yrs, 11st 8lb - Sensier -
6 to 4 agst Damsel, 3 to 1 agst Julius, and 5 to 1 agst The Saint. Won by three lengths, a bad third.

The Southampton Hunters' Flat Race of 40 sov.; entrance 3 sov.; two miles (37L.)
Mr W. Gilbert's Flor d'Inde, by Alvarez, 5 yrs, 11st 7lb - Mr O. W. Waller 1
Mr L. E. Smith's Otis, 6 yrs, 11st 7lb - Mr C. Beard 2
Capt. E. R. Owen's Exposure, 4 yrs, 11st - owner 3
Capt. Darby's Modjaska, 5 yrs, 11st 7lb (car. 11st 12lb) - owner -
Col. Cumberlege's Lancer, 6 yrs, 11st 7lb - Mr S. J. Woodland -
6 to 4 agst Otis, and 3 to 1 each agst Flor d'Inde and Exposure. Won by a length and a half, a bad third.

SATURDAY.—The Carington Hunters' Flat Race of 40 sov.; the winner to be sold by auction for 100 sov., if for 50 sov. allowed 14lb; entrance 3 sov.; two miles (37L.)
Ld Wolverton's Poetess, by Polbrarch, 4 yrs, 11st (50L.) - Capt. F. J. Jabor 1
Mr S. Woodland's Sultan, aged, 11st 10lb (50L.) - Mr C. W. Waller 2
Mr R. Thirlwell's Highdown, aged, 11st 10lb (50L.) - Mr A. Thirlwell 3

11 to 8 on Sultan, 2 to 1 agst Poetess, and 6 to 1 agst Highdown. Won by three-quarters of a length, three lengths between the second and third.

The Stowards' Hunters' Steeple Chase of 40 sov.; entrance 3 sov.; two miles (37L.)
Mr L. E. Smith's Otis, by Bustard, 6 yrs, 11st - Escott 1
Capt. S. M. Rogers's Damsel, 6 yrs, 12st 5lb - Butcher 2
Mr J. C. Allen's Sagamore, 5 yrs, 10st 10lb - Mr Whitton -
Even on Damsel, and 6 to 4 agst Otis. Won easily by a length and a half.

The Bishopstoke Open Handicap Hurdle Race of 60 sov.; the winner to be sold by auction for 50 sov.; entrance 4 sov.; two miles, over eight hurdles (56L.)
Mr A. Yates's Lady Minnie, by Cathedral, 5 yrs, 11st 13lb - Sensier 1
Mr S. Woodland's Andrea, aged, 12st 3lb - Didman 2
Mr W. A. Kilby's Bertie II, 6 yrs, 11st 9lb - Billinge 3
Mr W. Rowe's Squegee, 4 yrs, 11st - Escott -
7 to 4 agst Squegee, 2 to 1 each agst Andrea and Lady Minnie, and 10 to 1 agst Bertie II. Won by a length, three lengths between the second and third.—The winner was bought in for 95gs.

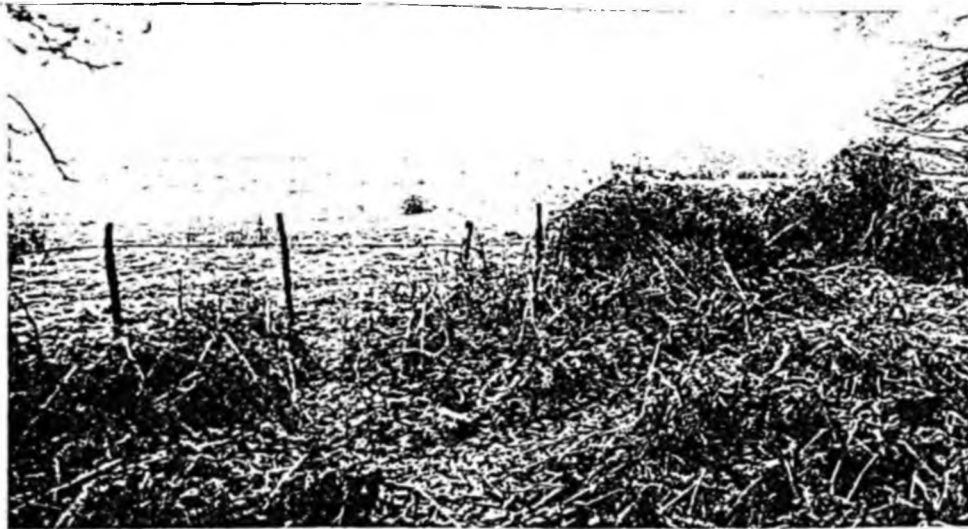
The Sanfoin Hunters' Hurdle Race of 40 sov.; the winner to be sold by auction for 100 sov., if for 50 sov. allowed 9lb; entrance 3 sov.; two miles, over eight hurdles (37L.)
Mr S. Woodland's Amnesia, aged, 11st 8lb (50L.) - Mr S. J. Woodland 1
Mr Barton's Penitent, 5 yrs, 11st 5lb (50L.) - owner 2
Mr R. Thirlwell's Highdown, aged, 11st 8lb (50L.) - J. Page 3
Capt. Darby's Modjaska, 5 yrs, 12st (100L.) - owner -
Mr J. Fisher's Prime Minister, 4 yrs, 10st 2lb (50L.) - Carlton -
2 to 1 agst Amnesia, 7 to 2 agst Modjaska, 4 to 1 agst Penitent, and 6 to 1 agst Highdown. Won by four lengths, a bad third.—The winner was bought in for 101gs.

The Wolverton Hunters' Steeple Chase of 40 sov.; entrance 3 sov.; two miles (37L.)
Mr Anderton's The Saint, by Ascetic, 6 yrs, 11st 7lb - Mr Hartopp 1
Mr J. Duncan's Little Harry, 5 yrs, 11st - J. Page 2
Ld Wolverton's Llanvaches, 5 yrs, 11st - Sensier 3
Capt. Rogers's Damsel, 6 yrs, 11st 7lb - A. Hall -
Mr C. A. Stevenson's Oceana, aged, 11st - Mr Felton -
Mr L. E. Smith's Chorister, aged, 11st - Escott -
5 to 2 each agst Damsel and Chorister, 100 to 30 agst Llanvaches, 4 to 1 agst Little Harry, and 5 to 1 agst The Saint. Won by eight lengths; Oceana bolted.

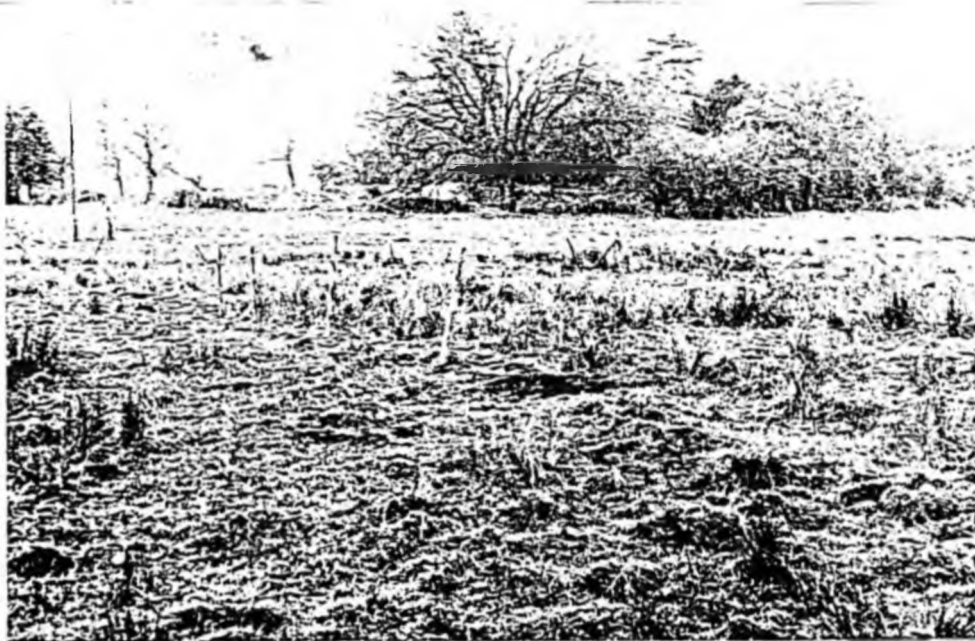
The Hursley Open Hurdle Race of 40 sov.; the winner to be sold by auction for 100 sov., if for 50 sov. allowed 7lb; entrance 3 sov.; two miles, over eight hurdles (37L.)
Baron de Brienon's Princess Charlotte, by Martyrdom, 4 yrs, 10st (50L.) - Childs 1
Mr R. Thirlwell's Glen, 4 yrs, 10st (50L.) - J. Page 2
Mr S. Woodland's Elphinstone, aged, 11st (50L.) - Didman 3
Mr C. A. Stevenson's Rappel, aged, 11st 7lb (50L.) - Mr Felton -
Mr W. A. Kilby's Craig Glas, 5 yrs, 10st 10lb (car. 11st (50L.) - Billinge -
2 to 1 each agst Glen and Princess Charlotte, and 4 to 1 each agst the others. Won by five lengths, a bad third.



View looking south-west across the railway from South Millers Dale. The south-east corner of Knightwood is seen between the centre and right of the picture. The racecourse had its grandstand on the higher ground in the centre. See the map. Photograph taken on 1st May 1984 by J.R. Fairman



From the grandstand and paddock across the course
Photograph taken on 21st February 1985 by J. R. Fairman



The corner of Knightwood cleared to improve the racecourse in 1884, now Foyle Road, Rothsbury Drive and Wyre Close. Photograph taken by John Fairman, 21st February 1985.