



History of the Grand National
One Scouser's Perspective
4 April 2017

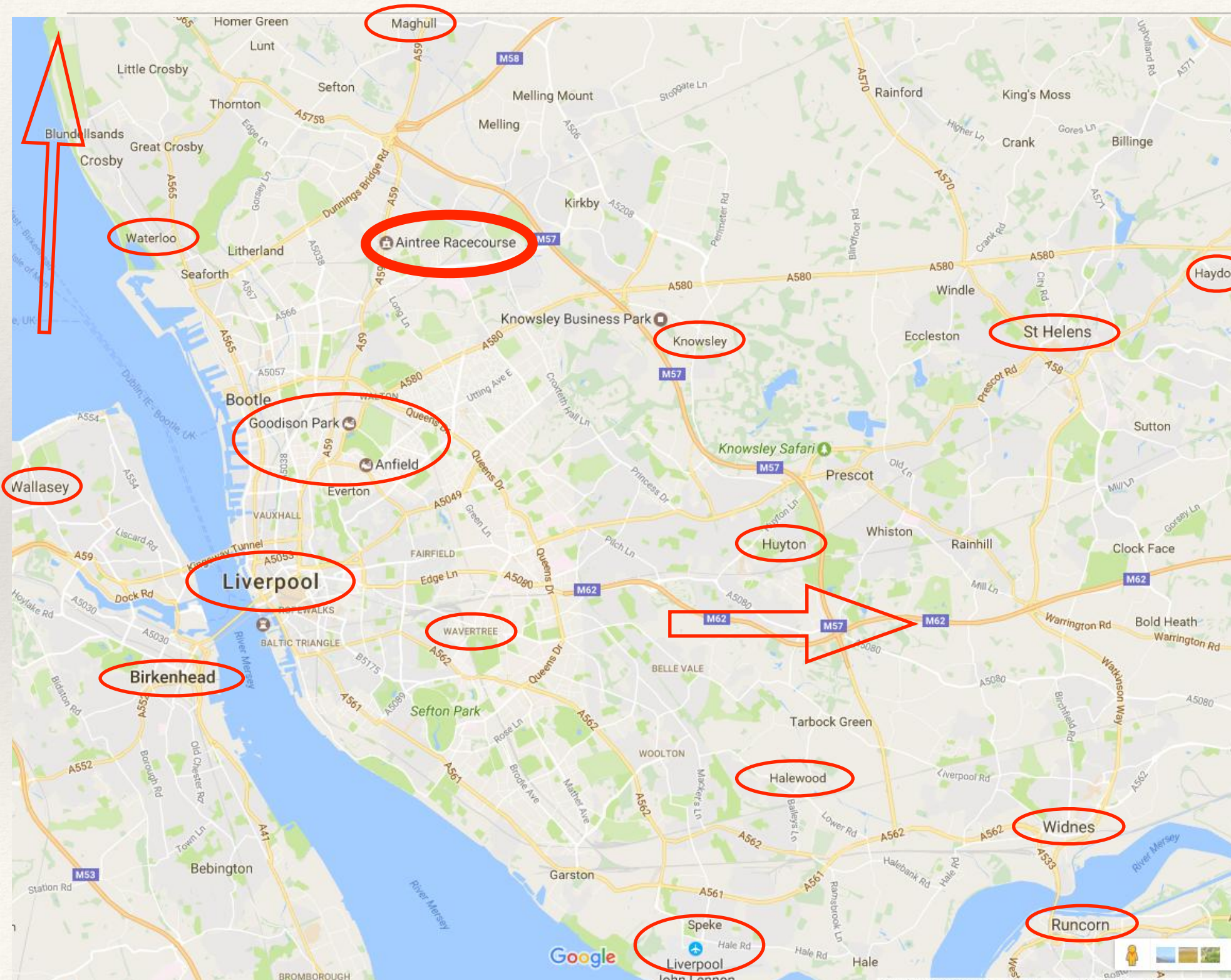
What is it?

- ❖ Grade 3 Steeplechase Handicap
- ❖ Inaugurated 1839
- ❖ Held at Aintree racecourse in Liverpool
- ❖ 4 miles 514 yards, left-handed turf track, with 30 gruelling fences
- ❖ For 7 year olds and above; max weight 11st 10lbs
- ❖ Most valuable jump race in Europe
- ❖ Purse (2016) £1 million; £561,300 for the winner
- ❖ Last won by *Rule the World*, jockey David Mullins, trainer Mouse Morris
- ❖ Next race 8 April 2017
- ❖ “...a great British sporting institution....” Sir Gerald Nabarro MP 4 July 1967

Agenda

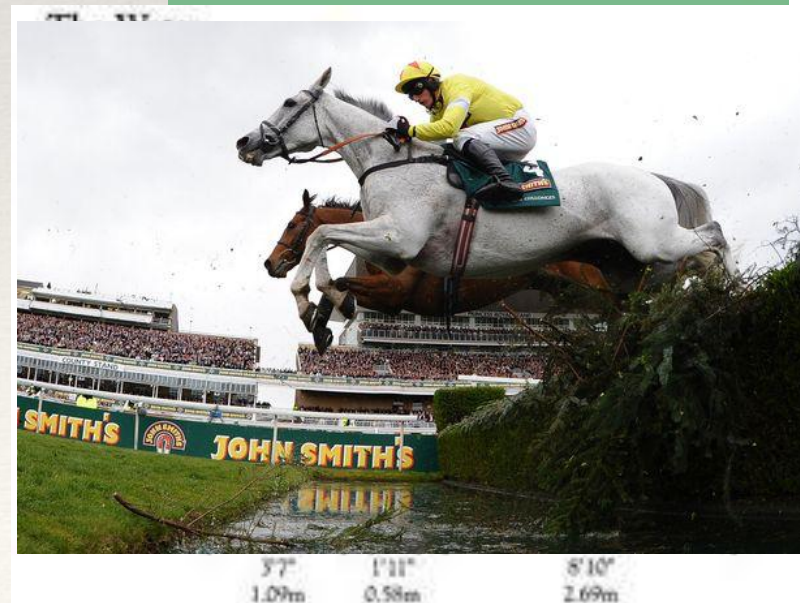
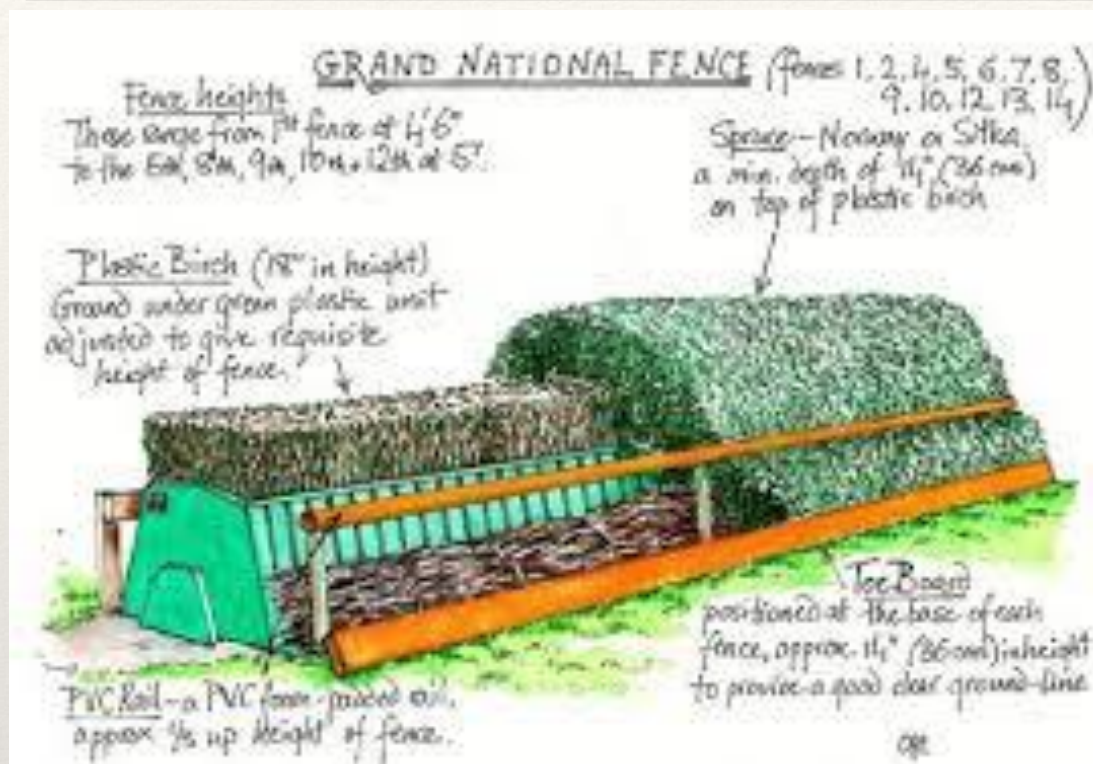
- ❖ Brief description (done)
- ❖ Orientation
- ❖ Origins (1829-1850)
- ❖ The “War Years” 1900-1950
- ❖ 50s and 60s
- ❖ 1970s - “The Red Rum Era”
- ❖ 1980s and 1990s - Emotions run high
- ❖ 2000 - To Date
- ❖ Summary
- ❖ Grand National Stats

Liverpool



- ❖ City Centre
- ❖ Racecourses
- ❖ Motorways
- ❖ Nearby towns
- ❖ Airport
- ❖ Footy Grounds
- ❖ Others
- ❖ Southport Sands

The 'Mildmay' & 'National' Racecourses



Origins (1829 - 1850)

Founder
William Dean
Hotelier



Land Owner
William Molyneux
2nd Earl of Sefton

- ❖ 7 Feb 1829 Founded by William Dean on land leased by William Molyneux, 2nd Earl of Sefton
- ❖ “Unofficial First Races, held in Maghull?”
 - ❖ 1836 & 1837 won by *The Duke* won ridden by Captain Martin Becher (of Brook fame)
 - ❖ 1838 won by *Sir William*
- ❖ Three catalysts for establishment of The Grand National:
 - ❖ loss of Great St Albans Chase
 - ❖ arrival of the London, Northern, Scottish railway
 - ❖ a formal committee structure led to the race becoming official
- ❖ 1839 much larger field led to first official race - won by *Lottery* ridden by Jem Mason
- ❖ 1840 Edward Topham takes over, making the chase a formal handicap in 1846
- ❖ 1848 Topham takes over land lease and , a century later, the family buys the race outright

The “War Years” (1900-1950)

- ❖ Not a lot (i.e. nothing found) before the Great War
- ❖ War Office took over Aintree for 3 years during WW1
- ❖ An alternative meeting was held at a disused Gatwick track, now the airport
- ❖ 1928 “Billy {William Dutton} boy, you’ll only win if all the others fall down”
 - ❖ In misty conditions and under heavy going, 41 did precisely that.....
 - ❖ including the leader, *Great Span*, losing his saddle at the penultimate fence....
 - ❖*Billy Barton* falling at the last, leaving.....
 - ❖100/1 shot *Tipperary Tim*, ridden by William Dutton, to win..
 - ❖the fewest finishers ever, with *Billy Barton* being remounted to come second
- ❖ 1934, Mirabel Topham took over management of Aintree from “drunken, womaniser husband”
- ❖ Grand National run in 1940, but Aintree commandeered for the rest of WW2.....
- ❖resuming in 1945, when won by *Lovely Cottage*, ridden by Capt Bobby Petre
- ❖ In 1949, Lord Sefton sells Aintree to the Tophams who already owned much land in the area

1950s and 1960s



1953
Mrs Topham introduces
'new' Mildmay Course -
her last real investment?



Trainer Vincent O'Brien's
hat-trick of consecutive winners
1953 *Early Mist*
1954 *Royal Tan*
1955 *Quare Times*



1954 - 1964 Motor Racing
on an inner 3 mile circuit
Held Aintree 200 and
British Grand Prix
(1955, 1957, 1959, 1961
and 1962)



1956?
Devon Loch
incident



1961?
First grey to win since *The Lamb*
in 1868/71
Fred Rimmer paid £2,600 for
10-year old, *Nicholas Silver*, who
won £20,020 prize.
Decoy High Spot nobbled



1967?
Foinavon Incident
100/1 long shot wins
after 44-horse pile up

Devon Loch Disaster - 1956



Foinavon Incident - 1967



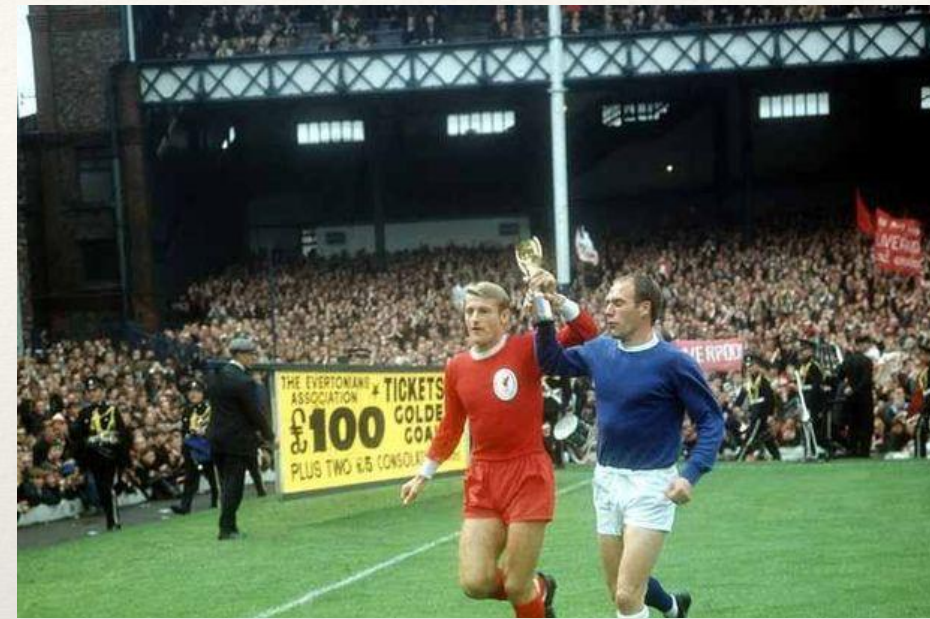
Context - whither Liverpool?



Liverpool FC 1966/67



Everton FC 1966 FA Cup



Roger Hunt/Ray Wilson World Cup 1966



St Helens RLFC 1966/67



1962 Liverpool Inner City Development & Royal Visit 1971



The Players - who is the odd one out?



Owner

LEAVE



Earl of Sefton
Hugh Molyneux
REMAIN



Prime
Minister

REMAIN



Liverpool City
Leader

REMAIN

The Threat of Closure



- ❖ Several consecutive years of “The Last Grand National”:
 - ❖ 1 July 1964 Mirabel Topham gives staff afternoon off, to host press and declare Aintree sold
 - ❖ 1965 to be the last; massive field; race won by *Jay Trump*
 - ❖ 1966 (*Anglo*), 1967 (*Foinavon*), 1968 (*Red Alligator*) and 1969 (*Highland Wedding*) races run under the banner of “probably the last”
- ❖ 1967 Liverpool Council approached PM Wilson (PM and MP for Huyton)
 - ❖ Support in principle from Wilson government
 - ❖ Government grant dependent on negotiations between Council, National Hunt, Topham and Agents
 - ❖ Topham stalls negotiations and her appeal is upheld by House of Lords in March 1966
 - ❖ Lord Sefton leads initiatives to have planning permission rejected
 - ❖ Questions raised in both houses for next three years, to safeguard the future of Aintree
 - ❖ Negotiations rumbled on and, though planning permission never granted, the threat remained for many years
- ❖ Finally, resolved.....
 - ❖ In 1973, when Topham’s sell on-site residence, Paddock Lodge, ending a 159 year dynasty
 - ❖ 1974, Owner and property developer Bill Davies commits Aintree’s future to the Grand National

Rescue and Renaissance



1973 Mirabel Topham sells



1973-1982 Ladbrokes sponsor



1983 Jockey Club buy-out



1984 -1991 Seagram's investment



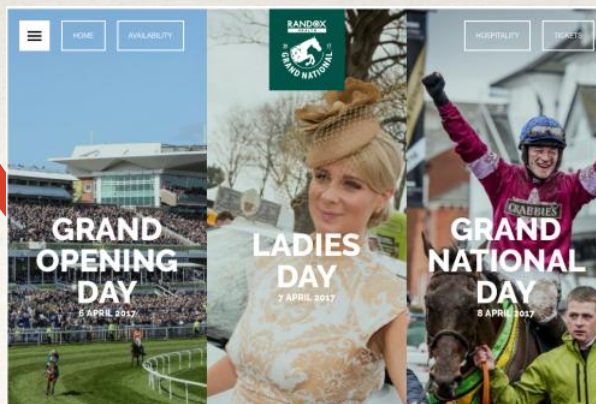
2014 -2016 Crabbie's' investment



2005 -2013 John Smith's investment



1992 -2004 Martell's investment



2017 Randox Health's investment



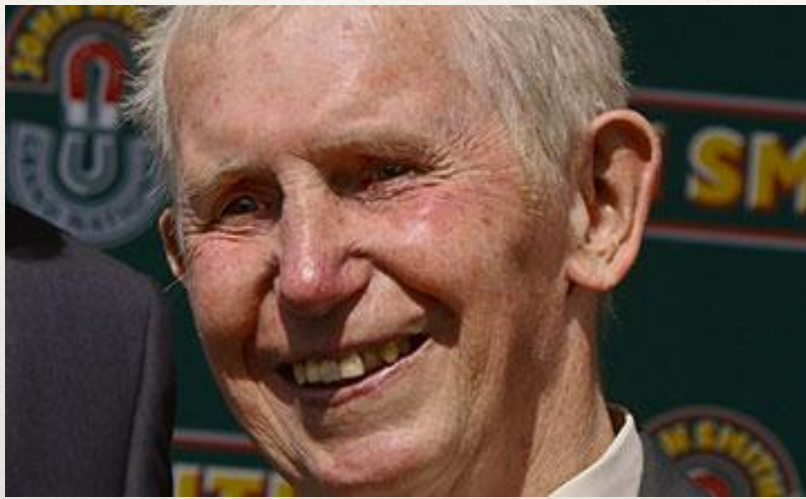
1970s - “The Red Rum Era”

- ❖ Arguably the greatest steeplechaser of all time, certainly at Aintree:
 - ❖ 1973, ridden by Brian Fletcher, beat the much fancied Australian favourite, *Crisp*
 - ❖ 1974, ridden by Brian Fletcher, beat *L'Escargot*
 - ❖ 1975, ridden by Tommy Stack, beaten by *L'Escargot*
 - ❖ 1976, ridden by Tommy Stack, beaten by *Rag Trade*
 - ❖ 1977, ridden by Tommy Stack, beat *Churchtown Boy*
 - ❖ 1978, withdrawn night before the race - 14 years old
- ❖ Bred as a sprinter, from dam, Magic *RED* and sire, Quo*RUM*
- ❖ Bought in Ireland with stable mate *Curlicue* for 400 guineas by Noel Le Mare
- ❖ The two dead-heated in their first race, ironically at Liverpool, over 5 furlongs
- ❖ Ginger McCain fancied *Red Rum* over *Curlicue* to win the National, despite a foot ailment - pedal osteitis - treated by running in sea water on the sands of Southport
- ❖ Ran at Liverpool seven times, winning four and coming second in the other three
- ❖ Buried at the winning post in Aintree



Odd One Out.....Again

Brain Fletcher



Tommy Stack



Lee Mack



1980s and 1990s Emotions run high



1981?
Aldaniti
and
Bob Champion



1983?
Corbiere
and
Jenny Pitman



1990?
Mr Fisk
ridden by
Marcus Armytage
in record
8 mins 47.8 secs



1993?
Keith Brown's last race as starter.
Manages two false starts.
Seven complete the course.
Esha Ness passes winning post first.
Race declared void.
Knighthood out-the-window!

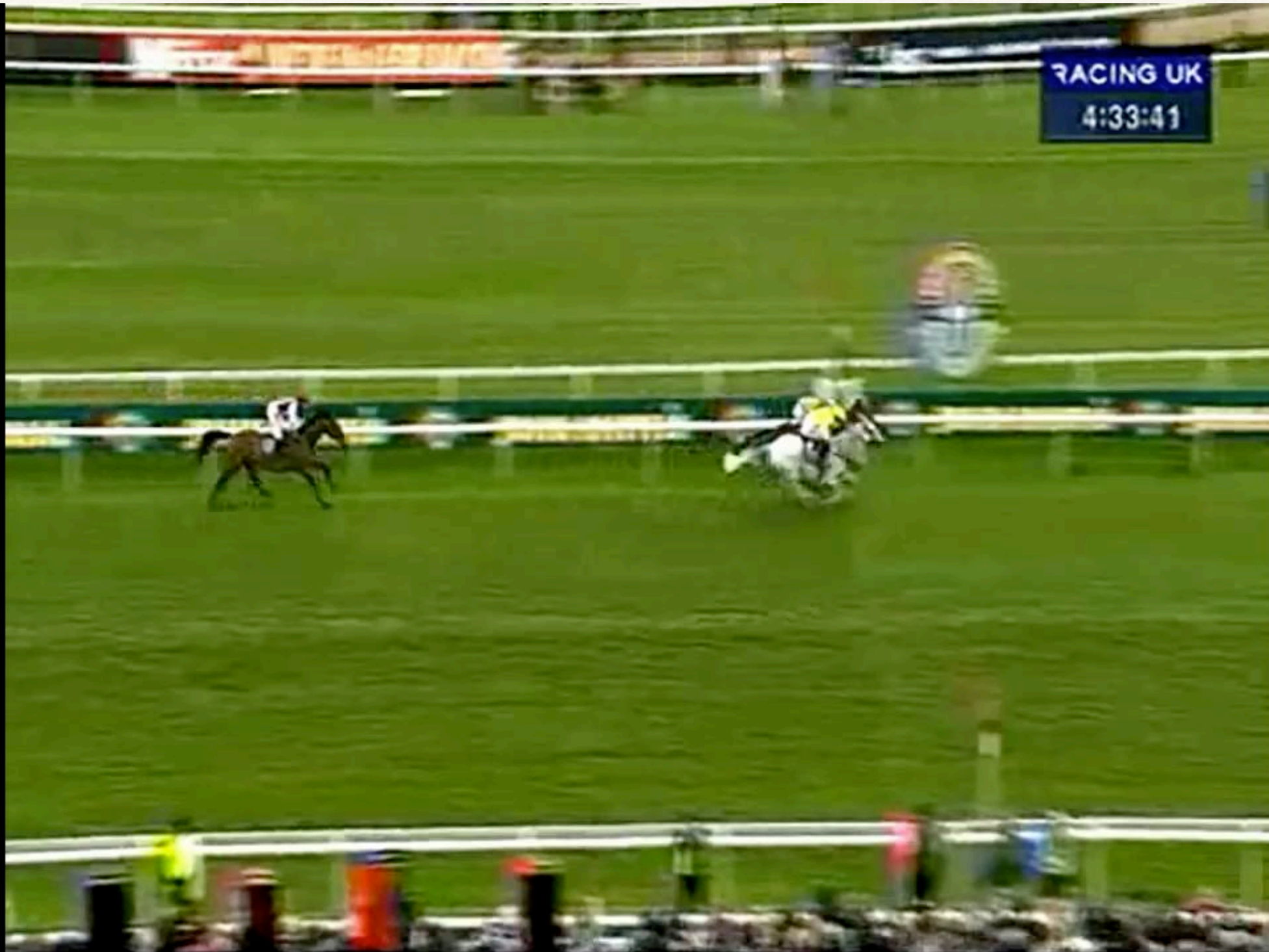


1997?
60,000 spectators evacuated after IRA bomb threat.
Race run on Monday, with 14/1 *Lord Gyllene* ridden to victory by Tony Dobbin
Adelphi Hotel charges £100 per night for a mattress, no bed.
Welcome to Liverpool!

2000 - To Date



Closest Recent Finish



2013 Champion - Auroras Encore



Summary

- ❖ The Grand National is unique
 - ❖ UK's premier steeplechase; largest prize in jump racing; international acclaim
 - ❖ Gruelling 4.5 mile course, 2 circuits and 30 testing fences
 - ❖ The pinnacle of a three day event in April each year, pitting between 30-40 horses against each other
- ❖ Humble origins of 'well-to-dos' in North Liverpool
- ❖ Topham legacy of mixed fortunes; lows of 60/70s; highs of 90s and beyond
- ❖ Crazy often emotional incidents: *Tipperary Tim*; *Devon Loch*; *Foinavon*; *Aldaniti*; *Corbiere*; politics; false starts; a bomb scare; stacks of passion capturing the imagination and hearts of racegoers and non-racegoers alike - epitomised by, in my view:.....

Grand National Stats

Records

Leading horse:

- [Red Rum](#) – 3 wins ([1973](#), [1974](#), [1977](#))

Leading jockey:

- [George Stevens](#) – 5 wins (Freetrader, [1856](#); Emblem [1863](#); Emblematic, [1864](#); The Colonel, [1869](#), [1870](#))

Leading trainers:

- George Dockeray – 4 wins ([Lottery](#), [1839](#); Jerry, [1840](#); Gaylad, [1842](#); Miss Mowbray, [1852](#))
- [Fred Rimell](#) – 4 wins (E.S.B., [1956](#); Nicolaus Silver, [1961](#); Gay Trip, [1970](#); Rag Trade, [1976](#))
- [Ginger McCain](#) – 4 wins (Red Rum, 1973, 1974, 1977; [Amberleigh House](#), [2004](#))

Leading owners:

- [James Octavius Machell](#) – 3 wins (Disturbance, [1873](#); Reugny, [1874](#); Regal, [1876](#))
- Noel Le Mare – 3 wins ([Red Rum](#), 1973, 1974, 1977)
- [Trevor Hemmings](#) - 3 wins ([Hedgehunter](#), [2005](#); [Ballabriggs](#), [2011](#), [Many Clouds](#), [2015](#))
- **Fastest winning time:** Mr. Frisk ([1990](#)); 8 minutes 47.8 seconds
- **Oldest winning horse:** [Peter Simple](#) ([1853](#)); aged 15
- **Youngest winning horse:** Alcibiade ([1865](#)), Regal ([1876](#)), Austerlitz ([1877](#)), Empress ([1880](#)), Lutteur III ([1909](#)); all aged five
- **Oldest winning jockey:** Dick Saunders ([1982](#)); aged 48
- **Youngest winning jockey:** [Bruce Hobbs](#) ([1938](#)); aged 17
- **Longest odds winner:** Tipperary Tim ([1928](#)), Gregalach ([1929](#)), Caughoo ([1947](#)), [Foinavon](#) ([1967](#)), [Mon Mome](#) ([2009](#)); all 100/1
- **Shortest odds winner:** Poethlyn ([1919](#)); 11/4
- **Largest field:** 66 runners (1929)
- **Smallest field:** 10 runners ([1883](#))
- **Most horses to finish:** 23 ([1984](#))
- **Fewest horses to finish:** 2 (1928)
- **Most rides in the race:** 20 ([A. P. McCoy](#), [1995-2015](#)), ([Richard Johnson](#), [1997-2016](#))
- **Most rides without winning:** 20 ([Richard Johnson](#), [1997-2016](#))