



# 5 OF THE BEST 2025 RACES (UK)

TO FIND CHELTENHAM FESTIVAL WINNERS

FREE GUIDE FROM FESTIVAL TRENDS

# THE WELSH CHAMPION HURDLE

## 2M ½F. CLASS 2 LIMITED HANDICAP HURDLE. Chepstow

*The race was run at Chepstow until 2002 but was discontinued until Ffos Las revived the race in 2011 under its original race conditions. They then changed it to a 2m4f Limited handicap for the 2013-15 renewals. It then became a 2m Limited h'cap and was moved from its Jan/ Feb slot to their mid October meeting and was run under these conditions until 2024. In the latest alteration the race has returned to Chepstow to headline their October meeting and was run for the first time in 2025 as a Limited Handicap over 2M½F*

**Despite the many changes in the race conditions and movement around the racing calendar it still represents a very decent Cheltenham Festival Trial. With 3 Festival handicap winners (12/1, 14/1 & 33/1) and two Champion Hurdle thirds having run here it is very much a race worth noting for later in the Season.....**

Only one runner made it to Cheltenham from the 2024 renewal (Jonjo O'Neill trained 7th Jipcot never threatened when down the field in the Coral Cup) but 5th placed finisher Go Dante would go on to win the Sandown Imperial Cup on the weekend before the Festival. The 2023 winner Nemean Lion would go on to win that season's Grade 2 Kingwell Hurdle but finish only 6th in that year's Champion Hurdle. The 6th home Favoir finished 6th in the County Hurdle, the Irish trained 9th home Effernock Fizz decided to stay at home the following March and won a Listed Handicap Hurdle at Fairyhouse at 33/1 and the last home, beaten favourite Strong Leader would miss Cheltenham but win the Grade 1 Liverpool Hurdle at that season's Aintree Festival. A disappointing 2022 renewal saw the 4 runners from the race that went to the Festival all well beaten in 4 different races. In 2021 the winner Fortune and Glory ran a very respectable 5th in that season's Champion Hurdle at 150/1 while the 6th home Amarillo Sky was 5th in the Grand Annual. The 2020 renewal saw just two runners make it to the Festival the following March with the winner finishing 5th in the Champion Chase at 16/1 and the 4th running third in the County Hurdle at 28/1. Just two runners made it to the Festival from the 2019 running with last home Mohaayed doing best when 10th in the County Hurdle. Silver Streak won in 2018 and at that Season's Cheltenham Festival ran the race of his life to finish 3rd in the Champion Hurdle at 80/1. 5th home Ch'tibello would go on to win the County Hurdle the following March at 12/1. Grand old timer The New One won a thriller in 2017 as a 9yo but was well beaten in the Stayers Hurdle the following March. Remiluc stumbled and unseated rider here that year but more than made up for that mistake when running second at 50/1 in the County Hurdle the following March. Nothing much to report from the 2016 and 2015 renewals although the 2015 winner Silsol did go to Cheltenham the following year to run second in the Stayers Hurdle as the 5/1 favourite. Saphir Du Rheu beat Whisper in the 2014 renewal but while the winner didn't make it to Cheltenham that year the runner up went on to take the Coral Cup at 14/1. Medinas took the race in 2013 and the following month followed up in the Coral Cup at the Cheltenham Festival at an incredible price of 33/1. The third Tanerko Emery finished a creditable 5th in the County Hurdle at 10/1, the 5th Double Ross ran third in the Martin Pipe Hurdle at 14/1 and the 11th Hectors Choice ran 6th in the Plate Handicap Chase at 33/1. Oscar Whiskey was a long odds on winner in 2011 and followed that run up with a decent third in the Champion Hurdle the following month.

## This Season's Race Result

**CHEPSTOW - 12th October 2025 - 9 RAN**

**1ST CELTIC DINO 6/4F      2ND ALEXI 10/1      3RD WILFUL 17/2**

## Runner Analysis

9 runners went to post for this year's renewal and, at the time of writing (early January), 7 of the 9 have come out to run since. This includes the winner Celtic Dino who won at Chepstow as the 6/4 favourite before finishing 2nd in the Grade 2 Ascot Hurdle behind Wodhooh and 4th in the Grade 1 Christmas Hurdle at Kempton where he looked a little outpaced in the final stages eventually finishing 11 lengths adrift of Sir Gino. He's probably caught between being a decent handicapper that's too high in the ratings and one who's not quite Grade 1 standard either and connections could struggle to find an appropriate race for him at the Cheltenham Festival. Runner up Alexi followed up with an easy win in a class 2 handicap at Ascot, an even easier win in the Grade 3 Greatwood Hurdle at Cheltenham before his run came to an end with defeat off top weight in a Premier Handicap at Ascot just before Christmas. Although a decent enough performance under the weight and in the conditions it's probably put paid to any Champion Hurdle aspirations connections may have held and with the 3rd from Chepstow reversing form with the winner in that Ascot race on 12lb better terms it appears he may have reached his maximum improvement for the time being. His conqueror, Wilful, on the other hand looks to be improving nicely and as well as that third at Chepstow and win at Ascot has a 2nd in a big field handicap from last season's Punchestown Festival. Up another 7lb he looks just the type to go well in the Betfair, sorry William Hill, Hurdle at Newbury before going on to the Festival.

The 4th home Listentoyourheart plodded on at the finish and was subsequently stepped up in trip. She has run 3rd at Plumpton and then improved to win a big pot Windsor Handicap Hurdle on New Years Day over 2m4f. The Skelton's love to target a handicap hurdle at the Cheltenham Festival and off her current mark of 128 she would be of interest if sneaking into the Martin Pipe (2 of the last 5 winners have been female). The 5th at Chepstow hasn't gone on from that race and was last seen well beaten in a class 4 handicap and won't make the cut for any handicap at the Festival off it's current 118 rating. It's a similar story for the 7th and her current rating although she has at least won (class 2) since Chepstow. The 6th home Tutti Quanti though went on to take the Grade 3 Gerry Fielden Handicap Hurdle on his next start and that's a race that has traditionally been a good stepping stone for second season hurdlers. The form of this year's race has worked out well (runner up won next time out) and as one of only a handful of trainers to have won the County Hurdle on multiple occasions he might be worth a look once the entries and weights are published for that particular handicap.

## Ante-Post View

At this stage I'm looking at 3 horses to take from the race; Wilful, Listentoyourheart and Tutti Quanti

I'm not sure where Wilful will end up so I'll probably wait until after Newbury (does have 20/1 quotes for the County Hurdle) while Listentoyourheart surprisingly doesn't have any odds available in any of the handicaps for the moment.

That leaves TUTTI QUANTI who at 25/1 for the County Hurdle might be worth an each way interest at this stage.

# GREATWOOD HANDICAP HURDLE

## 2 miles. CLASS 2 HANDICAP HURDLE. Cheltenham

*A useful pointer to the Festival handicap hurdles and sometimes even the Champion Hurdle....*

2024 winner Burdett Road got to within 9 lengths of Constitution Hill in the Grade 1 Christmas Hurdle on his next start before finishing 2nd to Golden Ace in the Kingwell Hurdle and then 2nd again to that rival in the Champion Hurdle at 66/1. The runner up, Be Aware, weakened up the hill under 7lb more when the 3/1 favourite for the Coral Cup while the 3<sup>rd</sup>, Dysart Enos, was outclassed in the Mares Hurdle. The 9th home Go Dante missed the Festival but after a string of poor runs would come back to form to take the Imperial Cup on the Saturday before Cheltenham. The 10th, Cracking Rhapsody could only manage 7th in the County Hurdle but won a couple of big handicap hurdles either side of that run (Morebattle and Scottish Champion Hurdle). 2023 winner Iberico Lord would go on to win that Season's Betfair Hurdle but pulled up in the Champion Hurdle, a race that the mare, Luccia, would finish 3rd in at 33/1 after her 3rd in the Greatwood. Leau Du Sud pulled up in the Greatwood but came back to form before Cheltenham before running 2nd in the County Hurdle as the 7/2f. Afadil also pulled up that year but also bounced back to run 5th in the County Hurdle at 40/1. There was little to note from the 2022 running with just the 7th home Mark of Gold putting in anything like a respectable run when 7th in the Martin Pipe Hurdle at 25/1. West Cork won in 2021 and then finished 4th in the County Hurdle the following March. That year the fourth home Camprond would go on to finish 5th in the Coral Cup on his next start, the 6th Glory and Fortune would run 5th in the Champion Hurdle at 150/1 but the biggest success story would come from the 7th Maries Rock who won that season's Mares Hurdle at 18/1. 2020 winner The Shunter won by 3 lengths but it was over fences he recorded his biggest success when coming back the following March to win the Plate Handicap as a very well supported 9/4f. The 5th home in 2020 Edwardstone filled the same placing in the County Hurdle at 18/1 The 2019 winner Harambe didn't make it back to Cheltenham for the Festival but 5th home Dame De Compagnie put the race back on the map by winning the Coral Cup as the 5/1JF. Outsider Nietzsche caused a shock when winning in 2018 but runner up Silver Streak caused an even bigger one in that year's Champion Hurdle when running 3rd at 80/1. 4th home Verdana Blue was 5th in the Champion Hurdle The 2017 winner Elgin ran a decent 5th in the Champion Hurdle and the consistent Chesterfield was only 10th here but ran 4th in the County Hurdle at 16/1 but the big player here was the tailed off Mohaayed who though fancied was only 11th. He had got his act together by March though and won the County Hurdle at 33/1. Not a great pointer to the Cheltenham Festival of 2017 with most of the first 10 home flopping in various races but the beaten favourite Winter Escape could only manage 11th here but was 5th in the County Hurdle. The 2015 runner up Superb Story won that Season's County Hurdle at 8/1. 15th home Bouvreuil was runner up in the Novice Handicap Chase at 14/1. In 2013 French import Dell Arca won here and went on to finish 5th in that Season's Coral Cup which is the same finishing position the 4th horse home Flaxen Flare managed in the County Hurdle. The 8th home Get Me Out of Here was just denied in the Coral Cup while 12th place finisher L'Unique was 3rd in the Mares race behind Quevega. Ahyaknowyerself fell but was sent over fences and finished 4th in the Novice H'cap Chase at 33/1. In 2011 6th horse home Via Galilei was 5th at 33/1 in that Season's county Hurdle, 16th Kumbeshwar was 3rd in the Grand Annual Chase and 18th place finisher Son of Flicka won the Coral Cup at 16/1. In 2010 runner up Bothy was also 2nd in the Coral Cup, 6th Get Me Out Of Here was again just denied when a nose second in the County Hurdle and 7th home Orsippus was 3rd at 33/1 in the Coral Cup. The 2009 winner, Khyber Kim, went on to finish 2nd in that Season's Champion Hurdle and the 4th James De Vassy was 3rd in the Coral Cup. The 2007

runner up Osana was runner up in the Champion Hurdle and the 13th horse home that year French Saulaie finished 3rd in the County Hurdle at 40/1. In 2005 the 3rd Phar Bleu was 4th in the Coral Cup, the 4th Adamant Approach was 3rd in the County Hurdle at 50/1 and 9th Mighty Man ran 3rd in the World Hurdle.

## This Season's Race Result

**CHELTENHAM - 16th NOVEMBER 2025 RESULT - 18 RAN**

*1ST ALEXI 10/3F*

*2ND HELNWEIN 14/1*

*3RD FAIVOIR 40/1*

## Runner Analysis

Of the 18 runners that went to post just 2 Irish also-rans have yet to race again. The winner was very impressive when scoring by 6 lengths and upwards but seemed to have his limitations exposed when only 3rd in a Grade 3 at Ascot off a 13lb higher mark next time out. It is worth noting though that he did confirm the form with both the runner-up Helnwein, who was 8 lengths further back in 5th, and the third from Cheltenham, Faivoir, who was well beaten and 18 lengths adrift. The 4th and 5th were also well beaten here (6th and 12th) which might lead me to rethink my current position on Alexi. The 7th Dedicated Hero continues to fall down the handicap after failing to beat another rival on his next start at Aintree and is beginning to look very nicely handicapped for a Grade 2 winner. Soft ground is essential for him and he's worth noting for any upcoming handicaps he contests. The 8th home Mirabad has since been sent over fences and caused a bit of a shock when winning a decent 4 runner novice at Exeter as the 14/1 outsider. He followed that up with a good 3rd in the Grade 2 Wayward Lad at Kempton over Christmas and it might be worth keeping him in mind once the Grand Annual declarations are published. Iberico Lord was a no show here and when returning to the track for a class 3 handicap hurdle in December but has slipped down the handicap significantly to sit just 2lb higher than his Betfair Hurdle win in 2024. He also won the Greatwood Hurdle that season and it's worth noting he was sent off at just 11/1 for the 2024 Champion Hurdle. If it came up soft/heavy at Cheltenham he might be worth a second look for the County Hurdle.

10th home Castle Carrock fell on his next start when upped in trip and pulled up after that at Windsor where it looked like his confidence was shot after an early mistake. Gibbs Island won a good handicap first time up this season but struggled here off 8lb more when only 11th and then ran well beaten in 5th (of 6) at Kelso. Decent flat runner Laafi came here with just 2 hurdle runs under his belt but, despite his inexperience, didn't run too badly in 12th. He's since finished 5th of 17 in a Leopardstown Handicap over Christmas and this now Irish trained 6yo is worth keeping an eye on in any big 2 mile handicaps he returns to these shores for. The 13th home Cracking Rhapsody looks to be aiming for a repeat bid in the Morebattle Hurdle in early March and doesn't have a great record at Cheltenham while 14th home Rubber Ball is struggling to rediscover his form from early last year. No Ordinary Joe is a shadow of the horse he was when trained by Nicky Henderson (2nd in the 2023 Martin Pipe) and beat 3 horses here and just one horse home in his 3 subsequent starts. 3rd favourite Serious Challenge weakened quickly at the third last and was pulled up. He has since won a lower grade handicap hurdle for which he received a 5lb hike in the ratings to a mark of 132.

## Ante-Post View

After reviewing the previous renewals of this race and seeing how it has played a part in finding Champion Hurdle places my position has changed slightly on Alexi and his chances for that particular race in March.

I'm going to keep an eye on Iberico Lord and Dedicated Hero, especially in soft or worse conditions, along with the ex-Willie Haggas trained Laafi who is Irish Trained now and looks to have a decent handicap hurdle prize in him.

The one horse I'm interested in at the moment though is Mirabad for the Grand Annual.

# GOLD CUP HANDICAP CHASE

## 3M2F CHASE (CLASS 1 PREMIER HANDICAP). Newbury

*This race has thrown up a lot of Cheltenham Festival winners and places over the last 15 years with the race threatening, on occasions, to be considered a serious early season trial for the Gold Cup. It's a race that deserves a thorough investigation.*

A poor renewal in 2024 saw only a handful of runners make it to Cheltenham that season.

The 2023 running saw Shakemupharry finish 6th but he would go on to win that season's Plate Handicap while 11th home Twig would finish 2nd in the Ultima Chase.

Corach Rambler finished 4th in 2022 but won the Ultima Handicap the following March before following up in the Grand National, both races as favourite. The 10th home that year, Oscar Elite, ran 5th in the Ultima Handicap.

Nothing to report from the 2021 renewal.

The 2020 winner missed Cheltenham to head for the Grand National but the runner up Aye Right was 3rd in the Ultima. The 9th Black Op ran a decent 7th in the Gold Cup at 125/1

The 2019 winner missed Cheltenham to run in the Midlands Grand National (Pulled Up) but the runner up The Conditional won the Ultima Handicap at the Festival at 15/2.

The 2018 winner Sizing Tennessee didn't run again that Season but the race still proved a great pointer to that Season's Festival with 4th home Beware The Bear winning the William Hill Handicap Chase at 10/1 and 8th home Flying Angel running 5th in that same Festival race at 25/1. The Young Master pulled up here but was 3rd in the Kim Muir at 22/1

2017 winner Total Recall fell in the Gold Cup but 6th home Missed Approach continued the fine tradition of this race providing Cheltenham winners when taking the Kim Muir handicap at 8/1. Double Ross was 4th in that race at 40/1 having pulled up here. Singlefarmpayment fell here but ran 5th in the Tuesday handicap chase at the Festival at 8/1.

The 2016 winner Native River won the Welsh National next time out and went on to run third in the Gold Cup. 10th home Un Temps Pour Tout won the 3m handicap chase on the opening day of the Festival ( a race he had also won in 2015).

Previous Gold Cup winner Bobs Worth was 6th in 2015 but managed a decent third in the World Hurdle at 33/1. The Young Master unseated rider but managed 3rd in the 3m1f Grade Handicap at 14/1 while If In Doubt pulled up but finished 3rd in the Pertemps Handicap Hurdle

The 2014 Many Clouds ran 6th in the Gold Cup but on his next start won the Grand National. The 7th horse home, The Druids nephew, won a Grade 3 handicap chase at that Season's Cheltenham Festival and the 8th went on to finish runner-up in the Gold Cup.

In 2013 the 8th place finisher Lord Windermere won that Season's Gold Cup at 20/1 and the 10th Same Difference ran 5th in the Kim Muir.

The 2012 winner Bobs Worth won the Gold Cup on his next start, the third horse home, First Lieutenant, ran second in the Ryanair and the 7th Fruity O'Rooney ran 5th in a handicap chase. In 2011 the 7th horse home was The Giant Bolster and that season he went on to finish runner up in the Gold Cup at 50/1, the 12th Balthazar King won the cross country chase and although Billie Magern pulled up here he later finished 5th in the JLT Handicap Chase.

In 2010 Denman ran 3rd under a big weight in the Hennessy and the following March ran 2nd in the Gold Cup.

In 2009 Denman won under a big weight and again finished runner up in that Season's Gold Cup just in front of Mon Mome at 50/1 who had pulled up in the Hennessy. Another to pull up in the Hennessy was Offshore Account but he went on to finish 4th at 33/1 in the William Hill Trophy Handicap.

The 2008 running saw 4th home Dear Villez run 4th in the William Hill Trophy Chase. Unseating rider in the Hennessy that year was Big Bucks who went on to win that Season's World Hurdle and the first of his 4 staying titles.

2007 was the year Denman exploded on the scene when winning the Hennessy under 11-12 and winning the Gold Cup the same season beating stablemate Kauto Star. The 9th Bible Lord ran 4th in a Grade 3 handicap. New Alco pulled up but got his act together to run 2nd in a Grade 3 handicap.

## This Season's Race Result

### **NEWBURY - 29th NOVEMBER 2025 RESULT - 24 RAN**

**1ST PANIC ATTACK 16/1    2ND THREE CARD BRAG 25/1    3RD THE CHANGING MAN 8/1**

## Runner Analysis

A poor return from last Season's result doesn't put me off including this race as it has a long history of providing Cheltenham Festival winners.

The first 4 home have yet to re-appear, and I'll come to them later, but 5th home Pic Roc was a huge disappointment when only 9th of 12 as the 3/1 favourite in the Ascot Silver Cup. The form of his wide margin win in a beginners chase at the start of the season wasn't franked by the runner up on any of her subsequent starts and he may not be that well handicapped at the moment. The 6th however, Katate Dori, ran a great race to finish second at Cheltenham on New Years Day when giving way only in the last half furlong. Not surprisingly he is quoted for the Ultima Handicap on the opening day of the Festival but I am quite surprised you can get as high as 33/1 on his chances (20/1 generally). Just behind him in 7th was Hyland who had finished a 15 length 2nd to Katate Dori when the pair met in the Ladbrokes Trophy Handicap Chase at Kempton last February. The Henderson 9yo reappeared with a staying on, close 4th in the Ascot Silver Cup and looks to me as a perfect fit for the Kim Muir over a slightly longer trip at the Festival (a race Henderson has won twice and had 5 places). Intense Raffles was 8th before pulling up in the Welsh National and it seems a long time since his Irish National win. Even with the handicapper relenting a bit he still sits 11lb higher than for that Fairyhouse win.

A very interesting runner is the 9th home Riskintheground who made a very pleasing start to his season at Newton Abbot when defeating the 12lb superior on ratings, long odds on favourite Blueking d'Oreux while actually giving that rival 12lb! He probably didn't stay the

3m2f here on his next start (Grade 2 handicap winner over fences at Cheltenham in April of last year over his optimal 2m4f). He then made a bad mistake at the third last on his following run at Cheltenham, off a 3lb higher mark, before weakening in the last half furlong. Back down to 142, Dan Skelton is beginning to get him nicely handicapped and I'm convinced all roads are leading to the Plate Handicap. If he can get another couple of pounds shaved off his rating he will be a very exciting bet for that particular Festival race. If he gets him down to 139 I'm all in!

Willie Mullins supplied the 10th home with O'Moore Park, who was 2nd to Riskinthe ground at Cheltenham last April following a 3rd in the Novice Handicap Chase at last year's Festival and has since run 5th of 28 in the Paddy Power Chase at Leopardstown over Christmas. With good form at the meeting he is another of high interest for any of the handicap chases come March. Down in 13th was last season's Great Yorkshire Chase winner Annual Invictus who was making his seasonal debut. After that win at Doncaster he ran an unlucky 7th in the Kim Muir after being badly hampered by a faller at the 5th last. He rounded his season off with an excellent second in the Gold Cup Handicap Chase at Sandown. With form like that and with the benefit of a run it was particularly disappointing to see him run so poorly on his next start when finishing 5th of 6 at Newbury last time out. Dropped 3lb in the ratings and 6lb in total this season he's now on the same mark as his Doncaster win and connections must be eyeing up a return to the Kim Muir to settle some unfinished business (3 winners of that race since 2013 have won off the same mark as his current 137 rating).

On his first start for 213 days and carrying topweight of 12-00 it was no surprise to see Monty's Star race towards the rear throughout (he's no Denman after all!) He's since finished 5th in the Grade 1 Savills Chase over Christmas and last year's Gold Cup 4th and Irish Gold Cup 3rd will no doubt return for the Cheltenham Gold Cup again this year where he'll no doubt run well but finish just outside the placings (again). 15th home Moon d'Orange is now either incredibly well handicapped, and part of some big Cheltenham handicap plot, or he's lost interest in the game and has gone. Knowing his Irish trainer John McConnell it's probably the former and after a crafty campaign over hurdles and fences he's got his handicap mark back down to the one Moon d'Orange won the big handicap chase on Cheltenham Trials Day off at this time last year. Noted staying on up the run in last time out at Cheltenham on New Years Day I wouldn't be surprised to see him find improvement in any race he contests at the Festival this year.

16th home Victorino has always shown his best form at Ascot and a repeat bid for the Grade 3 Handicap at that course in mid-February looks his most likely target this year. He was pulled up in the Ultima Handicap at last year's Festival and makes very little appeal for a repeat bid this season. Last to finish was Grandeur d'Ame who has since run 3rd in a Grade 3 Handicap Chase at Cheltenham on New Years Day for which he even managed a 2lb drop in the ratings. Alan King must be over the moon with that as it now brings him back to the same mark as his last win, a Chepstow handicap chase in October 2024. He did manage 2nd behind Moon d'Orange on Trials Day last year at Cheltenham off a 4lb higher mark before blowing the start in the Ultima handicap on his following run when racing off 7lb more than his current rating. He does tend to run well at Cheltenham, especially when it's soft, and will be of huge interest if returning for Trials Day.

Last year's Ultima winner Myretown was sent off favourite here at Newbury but fell at the 9th fence having worryingly jumped left at his fences from the start. He hasn't been seen since and I'd like to see how he gets on when returning before making any decisions on his Festival chances this year. Percevall Legallois pulled up and looks too high in the ratings for handicaps but not good enough to contest top Graded races and is of no interest for Cheltenham. Paul

Nicholls has failed to find the key to Inch House since getting the horse from Jonjo O'Neill and after pulling up here ran a well beaten 4th at Cheltenham on New Years Day. Blizzard of Odds also pulled up and then was beaten 59 lengths in a handicap chase over Christmas.

The Doyen Chief lost all chance at the start and was quickly pulled up. He did little to redeem his reputation when carrying his head awkwardly in the final stages of a Grade 3 Handicap at Cheltenham in mid-December but got his act together a couple of weeks later when battling on bravely to land a gamble at Kempton. He now puts himself firmly in the frame for the Festival H'caps although I think a return to Kempton in February will be first on the agenda.

Of those that have yet to run since, we have all of the first 4 home. Winner Panic Attack was following up her win in the Paddy Power and has been a revelation over fences since switching to Dan Skelton. Her main target is reported as being the Grand National but the trainer hasn't ruled out a trip to Cheltenham for the Mares Chase for which she is currently a generous looking 12/1. Like the winner, the runner up Three Card Brag had also won at Cheltenham on his previous start when taking a 3m1f class 2 handicap at the October meeting. The form of that race has worked out fairly well and he seems to go on any ground but he may be just a little too high in the handicap now to be competitive in one of the Festival Handicaps. Third home The Changing Man is a very consistent handicap chaser but does seem to find winning difficult with nine 2nd or 3rd place finishes from his 14 starts. He's another that tends to go well at Ascot but did run second in the 3m1f Ultima Handicap Chase behind Myretown on the first day of last year's Festival. That's a race winners tend to have run in previous renewals of and depending on how he goes between now and then may be of interest at 20/1. Gorgeous Tom is usually to be found contesting the Graded chases but did well on his first start in handicap company over fences when weakening only on the run in to take fourth. He may sit a couple of lbs higher in the ratings than is ideal for a typical Ultima winner but Beware the Bear did win off 151 in 2019 having also run 4th in the Newbury Chase earlier in the season. The one big problem we do have with him though is that despite the Irish dominance of the Cheltenham Festival meeting over the last decade or so the Ultima Handicap has proved beyond reach for Irish trainers/horses since Tony Martin won in 2006 with Dun Doire (51 losers since).

Finally, Resplendent Grey didn't run to his best here, when only 11th, having shown an improving chase profile over the previous 12 months. He had ended last season winning the Gold Cup Handicap Chase at Sandown's end of season meeting and then won an intermediate Listed Chase at Carlisle first time up this Season. He had also kept on well to run 4th behind Welsh National winner Haiti Couleurs in the Novice Handicap Chase at the Cheltenham Festival giving that rival 7lb. He's another that may be too highly rated for one of the handicaps but is worth keeping an eye on once his trainer gets him back on the racecourse.

## Ante-Post View

Plenty to look out for in the coming months with O'Moore Park, Moon D'Orange, Grandeur d'Ame and The Changing Man of particular interest with regard to Cheltenham in any race they contest between now and then.

I'll await for Hyland and Annual Invictus to be added to the betting lists for the Kim Muir before backing either of them and I'd be quite interested in backing Panic Attack for the Mares Chase if Dan Skelton confirms that race as a short term target or we can get NR – No Bet at around 10/1. Otherwise I may leave her until the day of the race.

One horse who I'm definitely going to bet though is the same stable's RISKINTHEGROUND for the Plate Handicap at 33/1 and then I'm going to have a small each way bet on KATATE DORI for the Ultima Handicap also at 33/1

# FIGHTING FIFTH HURDLE

## 2miles HURDLE. GRADE 1. Newcastle

*An amazing trial for the Champion Hurdle having provided the 1-1-1-2-2-3-2-2-6-3-1-0-6-3-2 (6)-1-7 over the last 18 years. Forget the rank outsiders and just consider the fancied horses who run in the Champion.*

We had a good winner in Sir Gino in 2024 who proved more than able as a substitute for stablemate Constitution Hill but after being sent over fences on his next start we didn't see him again until the following Christmas. The runner up Lump Sum ran well in the Betfair Hurdle next time out but also missed Cheltenham after flopping in the Imperial Cup. 5th home Take No Chances contested the Mares Hurdle at the Festival that Season and ran well to take 3rd behind Lossiemouth at 22/1. 6/5 joint favourite Mystical Power ran no race at all when 6th and hasn't been the same horse since failing to beat a rival in any subsequent race including pulling up in the Stayers Hurdle the following March. Not So Sleepy won a dreadful renewal in 2023 when the race was switched to Sandown (see below). Constitution Hill beat Epatante in 2022 before putting up a scintillating performance in the Champion Hurdle with his stablemate nowhere to be seen on this occasion. Epatante had won in both 2020 & 2021 (dead heated) and although unable to repeat her 2020 Champion Hurdle win did finish 3rd and 2nd in the Big One those same seasons. Not So Sleepy was the dead heater in 2021 but was nowhere near here that rival in the Champion Hurdle the following March although he did come back in 2023 to cause a shock in the Fighting Fifth as an 11yo. There was another big shock in the 2019 renewal as Cornerstone lad turned over the 2/13 favourite Buveur D'Air in the heavy but couldn't repeat the performance at Cheltenham when pulling up in the Champion Hurdle. That made it two poor renewals on the bounce for the Fighting Fifth form as in 2018, despite Buveur D'Air bursting the Samcro bubble, he fell in the 2019 Champion Hurdle when attempting a treble in that race. He had made short work of dispatching the Fighting Fifth field in 2017 at odds of 1/6 and went on to retain his crown the following March although he had a real battle at Cheltenham to land the odds as the 4/6 favourite. Flying Tiger got within 5 lengths of the winner in third and ran 4th in the Kingwell Hurdle the following February but flopped when sent off the 8/1 favourite for the County Hurdle finishing 16th of 24. In 2016 Petit Mouchoir fell when going well but won his next 2 starts in Grade 1 company before finishing third in the Champion Hurdle. Apples Jade was second here but won the Mares Hurdle the following March. The 2014 third horse home Arctic Fire went one better in that Season's Champion Hurdle when finishing runner up to Faugheen. 2013 winner My Tent Or Yours also finished 2nd in the Champion Hurdle after his win here the previous November. The 2012 winner Countrywide Flame didn't quite emulate that pair but still placed a respectable 3rd in the 2013 Champion Hurdle at 16/1. 2011 winner Overturn was another horse to finish second in the Champion Hurdle the same season as was Peddlers Cross in 2010-11. Binocular was sent off at 4/5 in 2009 but could only manage 5th place but by the time Cheltenham came around the following March he was back in form and took the Champion Hurdle at 9/1. 2008 winner Punjabi did the Fighting Fifth/Champion Hurdle double that Season and caused a bit of a shock whilst doing so at 22/1. The 4yo Katchit could only finish 3rd in this race in 2007 but won the Champion Hurdle as a 5yo the following March. Of the also rans, in 2010-11 Nearby finished last of 5 here but 3rd at 66/1 in the County Hurdle & Arcalis ran 4th here and 5th in the County Hurdle in the 2006/07 Season.

# This Season's Race Result

**NEWCASTLE - 29th NOVEMBER 2025 RESULT - 5 RAN**

**1ST GOLDEN ACE 22/1      2ND ANZADAM 11/4      3RD NEMEAN LION 40/1**

## Runner Analysis

We ended November thinking we were set for a very exciting race that would tell us all we needed to know for this season's Champion Hurdle but instead we got a result that has clouded the market considerably and left the future of superstar hurdler Constitution Hill very much up in the air. Nicky Henderson's runner was sent off the 6/4 favourite but inexplicably fell once again, making it only as far as the 2nd flight. Henderson will have to pull out all his magic if he's to get his stablestar to even run at Cheltenham and perform some sort of miracle for him to win it. However if he pulls it off we'll all be sat unable to forgive ourselves for not taking the 16/1 currently available.

With the favourite gone it looked as though it was just a formality that Dan Skelton's The New Lion would now take the race, go to the front of the market for the Champion Hurdle and head to Cheltenham in March with the world at his feet. But in another ugly twist, as the 6yo lead the field down to the second last, he became the second casualty of the race and came crashing down. And what do you know? Golden Ace, for the second time in her last two starts, took full advantage of both the top 2 in the betting falling to win a Grade 1 Hurdle. She held off Willie Mullins' Anzadam, who had looked pretty menacing as he made smooth headway at the 3rd last, but ultimately couldn't reel in the game Jeremy Scott mare up the run in. Nemean Lion plugged on for third although he was only beaten 1<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> lengths and was hampered most by the fall of Constitution Hill.

Golden Ace has since finished runner up to Sir Gino in the Christmas Hurdle but does seem to come alive in the Spring and, despite those fortuitous wins, could be underestimated come March. Runner up Anzadam was sent next to the December Hurdle at Leopardstown over Christmas where under different tactics tried to make all the running. He was a spent force by the last flight and had no match for Lossiemouth's turn of foot up the run in and had to settle for a weakening 4th place. He has shown all his best form on soft/heavy ground and if it comes up wet at Cheltenham this year I wouldn't rule him out making a better fist of it there. Connections of Nemean Lion probably curse there are no suitable two and half mile hurdle races at the Festival as he tends to get outpaced over 2 miles but doesn't quite get 3 miles either. A repeat bid in the National Spirit at Fontwell will probably be his '*Cheltenham*' again this Season but I'd love to see him contest the Coral Cup.

## Ante-Post View

I'm so, so tempted to back Constitution Hill at 16/1 for the Champion Hurdle but perhaps his task is too much for even Nicky Henderson to overcome and I'll have to leave it. I think we need to see how The New Lion gets on when returning to the track before betting him and until we know the likely ground conditions I can't seriously back Anzadam.

Given the record of the Fighting Fifth as a Champion Hurdle Trial I'm going to simply back the winner to repeat her heroics from last Season and have an each way bet on Golden Ace at 16/1

# TINGLE CREEK

## 2miles CHASE. GRADE 1. Sandown

*A superb race trial for the Champion Chase with 5 of the last 12 winners of that race having run here (1 exception won the Ryanair) and the 1-2 being provided on four separate occasions.*

2024 winner Jonbon followed up with a win in the Clarence House at Ascot before running second in the Champion Chase. He made an uncharacteristic mistake at the 9th fence that day which probably cost him all chance of winning. Quilixios finished second at Sandown but fell when still in with a chance at the last at Cheltenham the following March. Third home JPR One was another to make a costly mistake at Cheltenham, this time in the Grand Annual when blundering at the second last. Solness was 4th at Sandown but subsequently took two Grade 1 chases in Ireland before returning to these shores to run 4th in the Champion Chase. Master Chewy fell but stayed upright to take a Grade 2 at Newbury the following February. He was then upped in trip for the Ryanair but didn't quite get home and finished 5th. Jonbon also won in 2023 but had to miss Cheltenham before winning end of season Grade 1's at both Aintree and Sandown. Edwardstone was an impressive winner in 2022 but his career has been on a serious downward trajectory ever since and could only manage 5th at Cheltenham in the Champion Chase a couple of months later. Greaneteen finished 2nd and 3rd in the same two races while Shiskin was 3rd and 2nd. Greaneteen had won in 2021 but 4 of the 5 runners didn't go to Cheltenham leaving last home Cancun Pour Soi to fly the flag for the Tingle Creek. Sent off 8/1 he still had the lead when coming down at the 9th fence. Champion Chaser Politologue won the Tingle Creek in 2020 but was forced to miss the defence of his Crown that following March. His stablemate runner up Greaneteen ran a respectable 4th at 50/1. Defi Du Seuil won a thrilling race from Un De Sceaux in 2019 but ran inexplicably badly in that Season's Champion Chase when 2/5 favourite but the 5th home here Politologue upheld the great record this race has by taking the honours in that race at 6/1. 2018 winner Altior went on to take the Champion Chase that season at 4/11 where he beat the 2017 Tingle Creek winner Politologue and the 4th from this race Sceau Royale. 2017 winner Politologue could only manage 4th in the Champion Chase that Season but reversed form with the Champion Chase runner up Min when winning the Grade 1 at Aintree over 2m4f. Un De Sceaux bounced back from a poor run in a French Grade 1 hurdles race to win here in 2016 and went on to win that Season's Ryanair at 7/4. The 5th home Sir Valentino ran 3rd in the Champion Chase. 2015 winner Sire De Grugy could only manage 8th in that Season's Champion Chase but the unlucky runner up Special Tiara went on to finish third in that race. The sixth home Third Intention ran 4th in the Cross Country Chase. 2014 winner Dodging Bullets beat Somersby here and went on to win that Season's Champion Chase from the same rival. The 7th God's Own ran second in the Arkle at 33/1. It was a similar story in 2013 with Sire De Grugy beating Somersby in both the Tingle Creek and Champion Chase. The 2012 winner Sprinter Sacre also won that Season's Champion Chase but 2011 winner Sizing Europe could only finish 2nd that Season. 2010 winner Master Minded sunk as the 2/1 fav. for that Season's Champion Chase but the race did throw up the third in the Ryanair Chase (Kalahari King) and the 40/1 winner of the Grand Annual (Oiseau De Nuit). Dual winner Twist Magic never really got to grips with Cheltenham but the 2009 renewal saw the 4th Big Zeb and 2nd Forpadydeplasterer finish 1-2 in the Champion Chase while the 2007 runner up also filled that position in the 2008 Champion Chase. The 2008 Tingle Creek went to Master Minded who also won the Champion Chase that Season. Kauto Star was another dual winner for Paul Nicholls but it was only when he was upped in trip to win the 2007 Gold Cup did we see him reach his full potential. The 2006 renewal did however provide the winner and 2nd of that Season's Champion Chase as runner up Voy Por Ustedes went on to take the race with Dempsey running 2nd at 20/1 having fallen at Sandown.

## This Season's Race Result

**SANDOWN – 6th DECEMBER 2025 RESULT – 5 RAN**

**1ST IL ETAIT TEMPS 8/11F      2ND JONBON 3/1      3RD L'EAU DU SUD 7/2**

## Runner Analysis

A decent renewal that saw Il Etait Temps confirm his previous course and distance superiority over the aging Jonbon. That made it 6 wins in his last 7 starts for the Willie Mullins 8yo with his only defeat coming in the Arkle at the 2024 Cheltenham Festival where a couple of rare, costly mistakes put paid to any chances he had. His jumping isn't usually an issue and to my eye he is the one they all have to beat in the Queen Mother Champion Chase.

Jonbon kept up his incredible record of having never finished outside the top 2 in any race he has contested but with 4 second placed finishes in his last 5 starts his crown of invincibility has definitely been removed. A step up in trip looks likely for him now and quotes of 16/1 for the RyanAir seem very generous to me given his two attempts at that sort of trip (both at Aintree) have seen him win against genuine RyanAir winners and placers.

L'Eau Du Sud was back in third looking unable to match his runaway success against Jonbon in the Schloer Chase in November. I'm willing to put the big turnaround in form down to the changing ground conditions as Dan Skelton's runner does seem to have a big preference for soft, or worse, ground. He has won on good / good to soft but his record on soft since racing over fences is 1-1-1 and his best two runs over hurdles came when the ground was riding heavy.

Libbery Hunter has yet to prove he can compete in this sort of Grade since moving out of handicap company and remains in limbo with the handicapper unwilling to drop him from his current 151 rating. Last home Boothill on the other hand has been handed a major lifeline by dropping the 11yo to a very attractive 145 rating. He hasn't seen a mark like that since winning at Ascot in November 2022 and ran third in a Grade 2 Handicap over Christmas off 149. There's still time for a swansong from Harry Fry's classy 2 miler and I wouldn't rule out a spirited effort in the Grand Annual if given the opportunity.

## Ante-Post View

I haven't given up on L'Eau Du Sud reversing form should it come up soft but at the moment it does look like IL ETAIT TEMPS is the one they're all going to have to beat at Cheltenham. 3/1 is available in a couple of places and looks fair to me.

I think I'll also suggest an each way bet on JONBON for the RyanAir at 16/1. Should connections send him for that race there is no way he'll be those odds on the day and 10yo's have won this race on 3 separate occasions including one trained by Nicky Henderson.

# EARLY ANTE-POST LUCKY 31

A lot can happen between now and March and we haven't got the protection of Non Runner – No Bet yet, so I'll keep the stakes low with a small Lucky 31 that has big returns potential.

But....

A 50pEW Lucky 31 will return over £700,000 at these stakes!

A 25pEW Lucky 31 will return over £350,000 at these stakes!

And even a small 10p EW Lucky 31 returns over £140,000

BETTING SLIP	
FOR BETTING ON ALL EVENTS	
Stake & Selection	Time & Meeting
CHAMPION HURDLE GOLDEN ACE 16/1	
CHAMPION CHASE IL ETAIT TEMPS 11/4	
RYANAIR CHASE JONBON 16/1	
PLATE HANDICAP CHASE RISKINTHEGROUND 25/1	
COUNTY HURDLE TUTTI QUANTI 25/1	
<b>50P EW LUCKY 31</b>	
All bets subject to rules	
TOTAL STAKE	<b>31 : 00</b>

Please Note:

**This is a high risk bet so please bet only what you can afford to lose**

**Good Luck!**