

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF KINGSTON BLOUNT RACECOURSE

The first meeting at Kingston Blount took place on May 5<sup>th</sup> 1971. It was opened as a replacement for the old Crowell racecourse, just a few miles down the road. The course at Crowell was on land owned by Joe Hill, a familiar name to aficionados of the sport – the father of champion point-to-point trainer Alan, based at nearby Aston Rowant and grandfather of jockey (also) Joe.

The land on which the racecourse stands was owned by Colonel Arthur Clerke-Brown, and now belongs to his daughter Angie Murray. In 1971, the land was farmed by Jack Stevens, and is now managed by his son Michael outside the racing season, so the family connections have continued through the generations.

The winner of the first ever race held on the course was Periscopic Angle, ridden by Chris King. Like the aforementioned families, over 40 years later Chris is still very much involved with the sport, and frequently runs horses at Kingston Blount.

While the Hill family are most synonymous with the course (as well as Alan and son Joe, Alan's wife Lawney and daughter Gaby have all ridden winners there) the most successful jockey at Kingston Blount is Jimmy Tarry, who amassed a total of 46 wins. Many of these have been on homebred horses in the famous red, white and blue colours.

Notable horses who have run on the course over the years include Spartan Missile, Elmboy, Fine Lace and Bon Accord and no mention of Kingston Blount would be complete without referring to the horses known as the "apples", owned by Christopher Marriott and trained by wife Fran. Christopher rode in races at the course in four decades, mostly on horses who descended from their flagship mare Windfall. The most successful of these were Great Granny Smith and Prince Pippin, on the latter of whom he won the Oxford University Hunt Club Members race in 1987 and 1988.

Since 1997, when Arthur Clerke-Brown passed away, the Kingston Blount Racecourse Committee has been run first by Rodney Mann – who is still closely involved – and now by Stewart Nash. Local trainer Alan Hill is responsible for maintaining the course, ground and fences.

Kingston Blount is a left-handed track, one mile three furlongs round, with eight fences. The layout of the course has remained mostly unchanged over the years, although there used to be four fences – rather than the current three – in the back straight, of which the open ditch (now the last fence before the Crowell Knoll hill) was the third.

Four meetings are held at Kingston Blount point-to-point course during the season – the Kingston Blount Racing Club meeting (formerly the Oxford University Hunt Club) in early March, two meetings of the Kimblewick Hunt in April and May and the Berks & Bucks Draghounds point-to-point on the late May Bank Holiday weekend.

Kingston Blount enters its 45<sup>th</sup> season of racing this year. Roll on the Golden Anniversary!