

THE SHADE OAK NEWSLETTER: DECEMBER 2018

Health Warning: Do not try to read this Newsletter at one sitting. Read it section by section either on the loo or accompanied by a glass of wine in a comfy chair.

Some may think me a little odd (only some? – EH) but I normally enjoy the winter months. Two days a week are spent hurtling around the countryside on my trusty hunter Sir Francis or his able assistant Percy. Then I pass many happy hours improving Emma's canter-track or creating the new de-luxe tack room that I insist on showing our visitors, all the time looking forward to horses that are due to run, foals about to be born, and mares coming to visit our stallions.

"What a splendid time of year this is," I thought to myself only the other day as I lay at the bottom of a ditch, having been flung there by Percy, before remembering that I really must get around to arranging the 'key-man' insurance Emma keeps pestering me about. Sheer bliss!

But then there comes that dreaded moment when I am locked in the office and told I shall be allowed out only twice a day, for toilet and meal breaks, until such time as the annual Newsletter is written and ready to go to the printers. So here I am, facing up to the immense responsibility of bringing you news of our stallions and giving jolly good reasons why using them will make your dreams come true, as well as relaying interesting and insightful information on what is going on in the NH breeding world at large. Mmm... now where is that 'HELP' button I have to press when I have a problem?

SHADE OAK STALLIONS FOR 2019

We will be standing four stallions this coming season (Dartmouth, Recharge, Scorpion and Telescope, all of whom were with us last year), having lost both Black Sam Bellamy and Fair Mix and not identified any new possibilities. It is easy to find new stallions – we have been offered three in the past few weeks – but **it is not easy to come by ones that meet the stringent criteria we set** and I do not wish to sell nominations to stallions I wouldn't want to use myself.

As a stallion owner I am well aware that breeders are enthused by new stallions and I am regularly asked if we have one. Some stud owners take advantage of this novelty value and thoughtfully arrange a regular flow of new sires to meet the demand. This can be an excellent strategy – for the stallion owner! However, it may be less excellent for those using the stallion, for by the time they come to sell the resulting offspring they can find the sire has been sent to some foreign field and is rapidly being forgotten (assuming anyone had heard of him in the first place), leaving them high and dry.

Shade Oak does not stand stallions to make a quick buck; we **stand** them for the long term and we support them by ongoing promotion, by seeking to sell good foals from our own mares, and by racing some of their offspring ourselves.

The Shade Oak policy is that **we only stand horses that we believe have all the qualities needed to breed high-class NH racehorses**. These include:

- High-class Racing Ability over 1¼ to 1¾ miles, indicating that the horse possesses the ideal combination of class, speed and stamina;
- By a top-class stallion that is likely to have passed on many of the genes necessary for his son to succeed at stud;
- Out of a mare with high-class racing or producing ability or with an outstanding pedigree (giving the same likelihood of favourable genes);
- Possessing the size, scope, looks and athleticism to offer the strong possibility that he will pass these attributes on to his foals.

All of the stallions that we stand at Shade Oak today have all of these qualities. Not all stallions enthusiastically promoted to NH breeders do!

Two years ago Bryan Mayoh gave a talk at our Open Day pontificating (as he is prone to do) on the qualities that his incredibly tedious researches had told him were key factors in predicting the likely success (or not) of an unproven NH stallion. He came up with a scoring system to do this that is so simple that even I can work out the sums. For those not there, or whose minds have understandably erased all memory of this discourse, the details are:

- (1) If the stallion has a best Timeform Rating of 125+ count 10 points; if 120-124 count 5 points; if 115-119 count zero; if < 115 subtract 5.
- (2) If the stallion's best distance is 12 furlongs count 10 points, if 10 or 14 furlongs count 5 points; if 8 or 16 furlongs count zero; if less than 8 furlongs or more than 16 subtract 5.
- (3) If the stallion is by a sire whose stud record would put him in the top 2% of all stallions (such as Sadler's Wells, Danehill, Galileo, Montjeu and Dubawi) count 10 points; if he is by a sire whose stud record would count in the top 10% of all stallions (in which Cape Cross is firmly placed) count 5 points; if in the top 10-25% count zero; if outside the top 25% subtract 5.

The points scores for some leading NH sires of recent years are: King's Theatre, Shantou, Milan, Old Vic: 30; Kayf Tara, Oscar, Westerner, Black Sam Bellamy: 25; Bob Back, Flemensfirth, Winged Love: 20; Presenting, Beneficial, Midnight Legend: 15. Amongst the list of the 30 worst NH sires in the local pedigree analyst's records, only four achieved as much as 15 points; another four scored 10; two produced five points and 20 scored zero or less. So the scoring system is simplistic but it appears to work fairly well.

Our three leading stallions score as follows:

- Telescope (TFR 127, best form 12 furlongs, by Galileo): 30 points;
- Scorpion (TFR 126, best form 12 furlongs, by Montjeu): 30 points;
- Dartmouth (TFR 123, best form 12 furlongs, by Dubawi): 25 points.

Unless you are rather naive you will not be surprised by this, for the excellent reason that I would hardly talk enthusiastically about this scoring system if our boys had scored 5, 0 and -5 respectively. However, a rather more important reason is that, if they had, we would not have acquired them in the first place since I was aware of the correlation before we did. All three were very good racehorses, are by great stallions and showed the combination of cruising speed, toughness and stamina required of both champion middle-distance

and NH horses This is why they are here and this is why we and our partners in these horses use them to cover our own mares!

Far be it from me to point out that the **only** two NH stallions in the country to have scores of 30 points stand at Shade Oak and that one of the only three to reach 25 points is also here (whoops, I believe I just let it slip!) but calculate the scores for yourself and you will see that we do indeed have the best prospects around.

DARTMOUTH

It is difficult to find new things to say about a stallion that is yet to have foals, let alone runners, so much of what follows would also have followed last year. However, what is certainly new is Dartmouth's physique: he has strengthened and filled out considerably and is increasingly becoming a much more impressive individual than you saw 12 months ago.

We also know first-hand that what we were told about his temperament is absolutely true. He is a real gentleman, calm and good-natured. When in training he was a laid-back, rather relaxed individual, but on the racecourse his competitive spirit ignited and he was a tough, aggressive, determined competitor - sounds like the ideal NH racehorse!

Probably the other thing that has changed in the past year, although it should perhaps have been obvious then, is that everyone now knows just how great a stallion Dartmouth's sire, Dubawi, is. The brilliant 2YO Too Darn Hot and one of his likely rivals for top honours next year, Quorto, have seen to that; whilst Poet's Voice's success in siring Prince of Wales and King George VI & Queen Elizabeth S winner Poet's Word has established Dubawi as an emerging 'sire of sires'. He is the major stud competitor to Galileo, who also happens to be Dartmouth's grandsire and Telescope's sire.

Dartmouth's credentials are further burnished by the fact that he is one of the very best 1½ mile horses by Dubawi, whose few NH runners include Two-Mile Champion Chase winner, Dodging Bullets. His dam won Group and Listed races and has also produced both a Group 2 winner and a Listed winner

Now, at the risk of repeating what we told you last year, here is a resume of Dartmouth's other credentials.

Dartmouth won every year from the ages of two to five, from one mile to 1¾ miles, including four Group races. Like Telescope he won the Hardwicke S, though not in a cakewalk from opponents that were clearly far inferior but by a hard-fought head from the six-times Group 1 winner Highland Reel (now standing at Coolmore for five times Dartmouth's fee). He also beat the subsequent Irish St Leger winner Wicklow Brave in the Ormonde S at Chester; took the 1¾ mile Yorkshire Cup over the former St Leger winner, Simple Verse, and narrowly lost the Lonsdale Cup over a two mile trip that was above his optimum.

Watching many of these races (we had targeted him as a potential stallion 18 months before he became available) we noticed two characteristics that stood out: toughness and determination. He came back fighting after some hard races and he simply hated to lose. The photograph of the Hardwicke S finish shows one of the two horses fighting out the finish with his head down doing

everything possible to win. That horse was Dartmouth. He simply out gamed Highland Reel, who was a pretty tough horse himself! As Her Majesty's racing manager **John Warren** commented: "When he outfought Highland Reel to win the Hardwicke in the week of the Queen's official 90th birthday, his 'never say die' attitude gave us all enormous pleasure."

When you track a potential NH stallion you want them to do well in the top Group 1 races – but not too well, for if they win, they are likely to become unaffordable. So, we were relieved with the ride given to Dartmouth when he went off favourite in the King George VI & Queen Elizabeth S, where a horse who loved to battle his way home from the front was ridden for speed at the back of the field, allowing his old rival Highland Reel to win, with Dartmouth a closing third. Travelling to Canada he ran another great race when second in the G1 Canadian Championship behind multiple G1 winner Erupt.

Dartmouth is a dark bay horse, described by his former trainer Sir Michael Stoute as 'a quality, clean-limbed, good-actioned colt with the ideal combination of looks, enthusiasm and soundness, plus an excellent temperament.'

To be successful, jump stallions have to produce horses that are willing to 'go to the limit' in order to win; jump racing is no place for wimps, equine or human! Dartmouth provides this, combined with a calm and relaxed temperament. Accordingly, he is an ideal mating for mares at the extremes of temperament, both ones that don't try hard enough and ones that are too 'hot'. We hope you'll agree that he's not a bad prospect!

TELESCOPE

We have never tried to hide our confidence that Telescope will prove himself the outstanding British NH sire of his era. Having got to know increasing numbers of his foals, if anything our confidence is increasing. They tend to be bold, good-looking and scopey; most are dark bay with white markings on the forehead (he cannot sire a chesnut – although two entries in the Return of Mares mistakenly stated that he has!); and they often have the loose-limbed walk that foal buyers love, since it indicates a potentially good racehorse.

At the recent **Tattersalls Foal Sale** I took four colts, none having the best pedigrees in the sale (in fact my partner in the sire described one's pedigree as 'cr*p'; two as 'moderate' and one as 'half-decent only because the dam somehow produced a reasonable racehorse' – which are actually nicer comments than he sometimes makes about my mares). They were on the first day of the Sale and I have never been so busy, because when foal buyers saw the first one walk they immediately wanted to see the rest.

They walked all day, willingly and confidently, doing show after show. Potential buyers were seriously impressed with the look of these foals, not just the all-important walk but also their tremendous scope. Yes, **with Telescope the scope's not just in the name**. (Boom, boom – companies pay small fortunes to advertising agencies and I made up a slogan just like that!).

The one with the 'half-decent' pedigree, from a mare I bought cheaply because the previous owner regarded her as unlikely to get in foal (she was one of the 'problem mares' I told you about in last year's Newsletter), brought 30,000 euros, whilst the foal that attracted the initial attention on account of

his walk brought the same price. The third (with a 'moderate' pedigree) fetched 15,000 euros. Later on in the Sale a foal owned by Dr Mayoh, from a mare that was a somewhat better racehorse than any of mine, brought 34,000 euros. **Breaking news** of the Goffs NH December Sale sees a further 3 Telescope colt foals sold for €32,000 €25,000 and €12,500.

The key things about all of these foals, shared by most Telescopes, male and female, is that they have 'size and scope' and they 'walk the walk'. In time we fully expect them to 'talk the talk' too, on the racecourse. Telescope's colt foals sold in 2018 have produced a median price of €27,500. For comparison the corresponding figures for other younger stallions are; Walk In The Park €30,000; Soldier of Fortune €24,000; Mount Nelson €23,500; Blue Bresil €23,500; Getaway €18,000; Kingston Hill €14,750; Mahler €12,750; Champs Elysees €10,000; Pour Moi €9,500. Next, try comparing the stud fees!

Now the resume of what most of you should know already (but don't hesitate to reread it now – there will be a test at our Open Day). Basically, Telescope, as our incredibly sophisticated but boringly repetitive advertising constantly proclaims:

- Was an **Outstanding Racehorse**;
- Has an **Outstanding Pedigree**;
- Has **Outstanding Looks**.

Telescope's main attribute as a racehorse was his tremendous cruising speed accompanied by devastating acceleration. To a significant extent he stayed well because he found racing over 1½ miles so easy. Like all top-class middle-distance horses, he possessed serious speed, and for the many NH mares lacking that attribute – perhaps game and genuine but without the 'oomph' of extra brilliance he possessed - he is surely a great mating. For anyone remaining unconvinced of this just look at the Youtube video of his seven-length defeat of Group 1 winners Hillstar and Pether's Moon in the Hardwicke Stakes and his smooth triumph in York's Great Voltiguer Stakes. His good second in the King George VI & Queen Elizabeth Stakes to the superb filly, Taghrooda (giving 15lb), and his third to another son of Galileo, Australia, in the Juddmonte International (giving 8lb) weren't bad runs either!

This brings us to the annual paeon of praise to one of the greatest stallions of all time. Telescope's sire, **Galileo**, not only produced the legendary Frankel but has sired three Derby winners amongst 22 Classic winners so far. With a total of 75 individual Flat Group / Grade 1 winners he has surpassed his own sire (**Sadler's Wells**)' record; and he has been Champion Sire in the UK and Ireland ten times, the third best total in history.

Galileo is also proving to be an equally outstanding **sire of sires**, with 13 sons already having produced Group 1 winners. Of those at stud in Great Britain only three (Frankel, Nathaniel and New Approach) were more highly rated than Telescope, and last year's exploits by Cracksman, Enable and Masar clearly advertised the credentials of these three.

The other great influence in Telescope's pedigree is his damsire, **Darshaan**, since Telescope's elegance and quality are reminiscent of others descending from this outstanding sire. Darshaan was also a tremendous broodmare sire,

particularly when crossed with Sadler's Wells - the successful racehorses and stallions High Chaparral (sire of Altior) and Milan came from this cross.

People regularly express fears about 'too much inbreeding to Tele's grandsire, **Sadler's Wells**', who is not only immensely important to modern Flat breeding but also the most influential stallion in NH breeding history, via successful sons such as King's Theatre, Old Vic, Oscar, Kayf Tara, Milan and Accordion, as well as our own Black Sam Bellamy. Consequently, he has numerous grand-daughters in the NH broodmare population. So should grandsons such as Telescope be mated to these mares, creating '3x3 inbreeding' (i.e. the same stallion occurring twice in the third generation of the foal's pedigree)?

Whilst I have suggested before that I would personally be cautious about inbreeding more closely than '3x3', which is the same degree of inbreeding as found in the great Kauto Star (in his case to Mill Reef), others have been more daring and sometimes they have succeeded. Enable herself is inbred 2x3 to Sadler's Wells, as is the Grade 1 winning hurdler Augusta Kate and the brilliant Arkle Trophy winner Footpad. When you consider the outstanding performances of these horses, why be fearful of doubling up on Sadler's Wells via less close (3x3 or 3x4) inbreeding? If sire and dam have complimentary physical and mental characteristics it is unlikely to produce an adverse effect!

Of course, in order to reach the top as a NH sire any stallion (unless his name is Midnight Legend) needs support from good mares. Telescope has received this, covering over 400 mares in his first three seasons, of which over 80 were TBA Elite mares. Amongst Telescope's first three crops of foals we particularly look forward to the racing careers of offspring from:

- Black Type winners **Aimigayle, Alasi, Amaretto Rose, Call Me A Star, Easter Legend, Gemini Lucy, Jaunty Flight, Laetitia, Lifeboat Mona, Molly's A Diva, Pepite De Soleil, Pepite Rose, Santia and Tally Em Up**;
- The dams of the five-time Grade 1 winner **Sizing John** (La Perrotine) and Grade 2 Winners **Southfield Theatre & Southfield Royale** (Chamoss Royale), **Kadarann** (Kadassa), **Songe** (Sierra), **Rathlin** (Princess Timon), **Killala Quay** (Madam Bijou) and **Honest John** (Tintera);
- Siblings or daughters of Grade 1 winners **Sizing John, Carlingford Lough, Thisthatantother, Mighty Man, Lady Rebecca, Shuil Ar Aghaidh, Olly Magern, Blazing Bailey, Central House, Royal Derbi, Breedsbreeze and Shinrock Paddy**.

Given that I haven't even mentioned numerous other Elite mares and siblings or daughters of many more Black-Type winners, this is an outstanding book.

Finally, as Telescope has matured as a stallion he has filled out and strengthened to become a beautiful specimen, with plenty of power, tremendous quality and a great front end. His easy-going, swinging walk never fails to impress and it still gives me a buzz as he 'struts his stuff' whenever I show him to breeders.

No wonder we regard Tele as a near certainty to be a future superstar Jumps sire. Thanks to all of you that have helped get his stud career off to a great start. Your support will not be forgotten when he succeeds!

SCORPION

Scorpion has been described as being like marmite: people either love him or hate him. "I love him," Nicky Henderson told the TBA NH Celebration Dinner in May 2017, "I absolutely love him!"

But then why wouldn't he, because Nicky trains Scorpion's best son **Might Bite**; big, beautiful and (almost) black; brilliant winner of the King George VI Chase, the RSA Chase, the Betway Bowl and the Mildmay Novices Chase (all Grade 1s), and a very game runner-up on totally unsuitable ground in the Cheltenham Gold Cup. Not all Scorpions have Might Bite's ability but very few stallions ever sire one as good in their whole careers. Scorpion did it in his very first crop and, other than Kayf Tara, he is probably the best proven NH stallion in Great Britain today. Sire of the winners of over 1.25 m in 2017/18.

Scorpion's ability as a sire is unsurprising because he was a top-class racehorse, by a great stallion, from a sire-producing family and is a lovely-looking horse. His regular jockey Johnny Murtagh once pointed out, he is a very intelligent horse. He sees things before other horses do and he reacts to them quickly; and this sometimes takes those dealing with him unawares. But he possessed serious racing ability and he passes this on to many of his stock.

In thoroughbreds the horse's natural tendency to race fast has been heightened by intense selection for over 350 years. Yet even now, whilst some horses just go through the motions, others want to or even have a need to race. You can teach a racehorse to settle, to switch off and relax but you cannot teach a racehorse to race it is something already built into their DNA. I had 2 full sisters, one won her first 3 races, often finishing completely exhausted with her effort, whilst the other completed near the rear, often still enthused with energy, she fancied carrying on. She just simply did not get it! Scorpions do get it, often giving their all readily and they are what it says on the tin 'racehorses'.

Scorpion is by a great stallion in **Montjeu**, not only sire of four Derby winners and grandsire of another but also of dual Champion Hurdler, Hurricane Fly, and sires of top-class NH winners Walk In The Park (Douvan and Min) and Authorized (Nichols Canyon and Tiger Roll). His dam is by a grandson of **Alleged** from the family of our own **Alflora**; and he is a scopey, quality horse with a good walk.

Scorpion was a very good racehorse from three to five, from 1½ to 1¾ miles. As well as wins in three Group 1 races, the St Leger, Grand Prix de Paris and Coronation Cup, he also placed a close second behind Hurricane Run in the Irish Derby and Yeats in the Irish St Leger, giving each a really tough race.

Before he arrived at Shade Oak he had been represented by Grade 1 Hurdles winner, **Don't Touch It**, Grade 3 Chase winner and G1 Hurdle second, **Tell Us More**, along with several Graded and Listed winners. Then **Scorpiancer** won a Grade 1 Hurdle in the USA, followed by the remarkable ascent of Might Bite, scarcely heard of until he was almost eight years old.

Scorpion's most promising youngsters today include the chasers Just A Sting, Station Master and the belated Whatcombe Heights; the hurdlers The Big Bite

(regarded by his connections as a live Cheltenham prospect and whose next stop is likely to be the Grade 1 Tolworth Hurdle), Derrinross (a Grade 3 winner), Danny Kirwan (“I strongly believe he will develop into a Graded performer” – Paul Nichols) and Anytime Will Do (“Three from three for us and can make the step-up in grade” – Dan Skelton); and Listed Mares Bumper winner Time To Chill. Scorpion’s stock often take time to mature, as has Might Bite, but all of the above are younger than he was when first showing signs of serious ability. Perhaps one or more will do the same.

We have had outstanding stallions in England, like Kayf Tara and Midnight Legend, under-rated for much of their careers; and we now have such as Telescope and Dartmouth that are at least as promising as any in Ireland...And there is Scorpion, a stallion that has proven ability to breed a top-class horse; has sired numerous other good performers; who was a top-class racehorse with a very good pedigree; and who breeds good-looking stock. If you want to use a proven stallion, there are very few better proven than him - and none are better value!

RECHARGE

Recharge unlike all the other stallions at Shade Oak has no Sadler’s Wells in his pedigree and for those who think you can have too much of a good thing he also represents a real bargain in today’s stallion market. Why do I say this, I hear you ask?

Well firstly he was a good racehorse, winning Group 3 and Listed races but unfortunate enough to come up against Fame & Glory when second in a 10-furlong Group 1 race and encounter Sea The Stars, Mastercraftsman and Fame & Glory (twice more) when placed in other Group races.

Then he is a son of Cape Cross, sire of two outstanding Derby winners (Sea The Stars and Golden Horn) and broodmare sire of two others (Australia and Masar) out of Rebelline, a tough and high-class mare who won the Group 1 Royal Whip in Ireland; and he is a correct, good-looking, quality individual and another very good walker.

Perhaps most importantly of all, he is showing **serious signs of outperforming his opportunities**. Early in his career Recharge covered books of mares that in both quantity and quality left something to be desired, both at Shade Oak and in France. (Incidentally, I must inform those concerned readers that were keen to organise a charity concert on our behalf after reading last year’s tidings of our difficulty in getting paid for Recharge’s stint in France that, though we have still not received the outstanding sum, I am hoping that the Government will hold back the requisite amount from the £39 billion they intend to donate to the EU).

Despite this, of the 10 offspring for which the Racing Post has published ratings, nine were rated at 90 or above, with five rated 100+ and two 120+. For Getaway, whose oldest runners are the same age as Recharge’s, the comparable figures are: 90+ 66% (vs Recharge 90%); 100+ 46% (vs 50%) and 120+12% (vs 20%).

Yes, I know that Recharge’s figures are from a small sample (I know this because the person that gave me the data consistently tells me so) and I am not saying that Recharge is better than Getaway (last advertised for 7,500

euros to a book strictly limited to all the mares he can cover); but I am saying that Recharge is a heck of a lot better than most stallions plying their trade as NH sires today. For someone trying to breed a decent horse at a moderate cost, he is a serious option!

WE WANT YOUR MARES!

Well of course we want your mares because it is how we make our living. But more than that, we want your best mares because they will help us make our stallions, so we are offering special incentives for them to visit our boys.

Firstly, though, some background. As some of you know, I keep a scrupulous record of the best racemares in Great Britain, Ireland and France. I do this because extensive research has taught me, so I am told, that the best racemares are most likely to become the best broodmares, whether for Flat breeding or NH. It is not a certainty and many lesser mares have bred good racehorses, but these are the most likely to.

The other mares that are 'most likely to succeed' are those that have already produced a good horse. In each case the reason is the same: these horses have proved, either via their own racing ability or that they have passed on to their offspring, that they possess many of the genes needed to produce a good horse. Mares that are half-sisters of good winners, or daughters of such, or from 'good families', may possess such genes – but they have not proven that this is the case. Good racemares and good producers have!

So, if you want to demonstrate that a stallion can sire top-class horses to help him attract good books of mares later on, the best method is to get him as many good racemares or proven broodmares as you can early in his career. This is what we are seeking to do with Dartmouth and Telescope in particular.

A major means of attracting high-class racemares and broodmares to visit British stallions is **the TBA / HBLB NH Elite Mares Scheme**. This provides free or heavily subsidised nominations for Elite Mares visiting eligible British-based stallions, to encourage such mares to be covered over here. If you have a broodmare that was a good racehorse (with an Official Rating of at least 130 and aged 20 or under) or a broodmare of any age that has produced a gelding rated at least 145 or a mare rated at least 135, you can benefit from this scheme. You just have to be a member of the TBA.

The Scheme has done a great deal to help British stallion studs to stand high-class stallions – not least ourselves. In 2018 fewer Elite mares than ever before visited Irish stallions.

This reduction in the use of foreign stallions has meant that there is increasing pressure on funding for the Elite Mares Scheme, and in future either the criteria or the awards may have to be reduced – so use it whilst you can; such generous terms may not be available forever.

But **we want your Elite Mares** to visit our stallions, particularly those young enough for their stud careers to benefit from the top-class winners we expect them to produce. To encourage this, we have a stonking deal for Category 3 Elite Mare owners! For Telescope and Dartmouth, there will be a **50% discount** on the additional fee, i.e. only £500 is payable for a mare holding a £2,000 voucher. Scorpion is at an age where he will benefit less from winners

produced by 2019 coverings, but we will still offer a significant discount on the 'additional fee' payable on £2,000 and £3,000 vouchers. Please call us to discuss.

But **we also want high-class mares just short of 'Elite' level** for our younger stallions. After all, the dams of Coneygree, Sizing John and Thistlecrack were all good winners without reaching an Official Rating of 130+. So, if you want to send a mare rated 120+ (or who has produced a mare rated 125+ or a gelding rated 135+) to Telescope, Dartmouth or Recharge, we will offer a **25% discount** on the stud fee, i.e. you get Telescope or Dartmouth for £2,250 and Recharge for £1,500.

Even if you don't have such a mare, we still have a deal for you. Make a booking to any of our stallions before 1st February and we will give you an **'Early Booking Discount' of 20%** off the stud fee (N.B. This discount is NOT in addition to any of the above). If you want to book three or more mares to our stallions (in any combination) call us and we will offer a **'Quantity Discount'** so long as they all turn up for covering.

Finally, if you are looking for a **'Special Deal for Filly Foals'** please call us to discuss. We can agree a stud fee for your mare on one of the above bases and the deal is that if you agree to pay a particular amount above the stud fee for a colt you can pay the same amount below it for a filly. So, for a negotiated fee of £2,250 for a particular mare then if you agree to pay £3,000 for a colt you pay only £1,500 if you get a filly. This is a sort of 'insurance policy' that we are able to offer because, overall, we expect to produce as many colts as fillies so we won't lose; but from your point of view the extra you pay for a colt may be more than offset by the saving on a far less valuable filly.

We have heard suggestions that some studs (particularly in Ireland) agree a discount on the advertised fee plus an additional 50% discount for a filly foal, so why don't we do the same? There is a simple reason: our advertised fees are realistic in the first place, not inflated like pre-'Black Friday' retail prices so that 'super deals' can be offered to the unwary.

Can you get both a discount and a 'half-price filly deal' on some stallions? Well, if you choose one that is yet to sire a Grade 1 winner but stands at a fee of 7,500 euros, or another whose sole Grade 1 winner was rated 10lb below Scorpion's best but is advertised at a higher fee than was Kayf Tara until he had been Champion NH Sire seven times, or a newly retired stallion quoted at a higher fee than Telescope despite a considerably inferior rating and pedigree, the answer is: 'Probably' - because the advertised prices are elevated in the first place. (Good word, 'elevated' - much more polite than the one I first thought of). Is this a good deal? Probably not – for the same reason!

I feel optimistic about the coming covering season because most of the proven stallions in Great Britain, Ireland and France are either ageing or deceased and the 'semi-proven' stallions in both countries are more 'semi' than 'proven', whilst our younger stallions are as good or better than any of their competitors.

So why are we offering such great deals? You have the answer already. We believe in our stallions. To prove their abilities we need their runners to succeed on the racetrack. For that to happen we need them to cover suitable

mares in sufficient quantity. **We want your mares** and we are offering super deals to make sure we get them!

Finally, let me say a few words about **loyalty**. When a breeder uses one of our stallions early in his stud career he is showing a belief in his potential that deserves our **loyalty** in return. When one of our stallions 'makes it big', as Telescope is beginning to and Dartmouth surely will, we will owe a debt of **loyalty** to the people that helped us in the early years and they will get the best deals available. We will do this because we want to reward the breeders that helped our stallions become established, rather than those that choose to jump on the bandwagon when it is already rolling merrily along.

Last year Shade Oak stallions covered 408 mares as against Overbury's 316 and Yorton's 270, the three accounting for around 75% of the British NH / DP broodmare band. Without Black Sam Bellamy it will be difficult for us to match last year's total, but we certainly intend to try.

RACING YOUR JUMPS MARES

I have written before about the improved situation for Jumps mares, which makes it far more possible for breeders to race them and test their abilities before deciding whether to breed from them. The key improvements have come from NH MOPS and the enhanced Mares-only Racing Programme.

If the British-bred Premium Scheme comes into being then **NH MOPS** will effectively become part of it, with mares nominated to MOPS from the crops of 2012 to 2016 eligible for increased prizes in more races without any further nomination payments. Slightly different arrangements will apply for foals of 2017 and 2018 but there will be a real advantage for MOPS-nominated ones.

However, as I wrote earlier, it is not certain that BBPS will receive the requisite approval. If it doesn't MOPS will continue, so in either case **make sure that you are a TBA Member and nominate your filly foals of 2018 to MOPS before the closing date of 31st January 2019**. If you miss this date you could miss out on big prizes down the line. Contact the TBA Office at 8, The Avenue, Newmarket, Suffolk, CB8 9AA.

As regards the **NH Mares Racing Programme**, there is increasing evidence that more mares are being put into training because of it. Well I certainly believe there is, because whenever a mare we have in training is entered for a race there seem to be about 30 other entries. Recently, we had a real 'first' – the Listed Mares Bumper at the Cheltenham meeting in November attracted more runners than the Listed Open Bumper at the same meeting!

The **Mares Black-Type Programme** has continued to develop, now with 35 races and counting. These comprise 5 NH Flat Races (one a Grade 2), 3 Juvenile Hurdles (one a handicap), 8 Novice Hurdles (two at Grade 2 and one handicap), 8 Open Hurdles (one Grade 1, two Grade 2 and one handicap), 3 Novice Chases (one a handicap) and 8 Open Chases.

There continues to be a problem with field sizes in chases, just as for Open events; and possibilities that might be explored are to run some with different terms (perhaps increased penalties for winners or allowances for novices running in Open races) or have a greater number of handicaps carrying Black-Type. We want to see the Dawn Run Novices Hurdle at Cheltenham become

a Grade 1 (and even be won by an English-trained horse!) and the introduction of a Mares Chase at the Festival, 'The Girls' Gold Cup'.

However, the fight for 'Jumps Mare Opportunities' is far from won. Whilst tv pundits that used to criticise the alleged uncompetitiveness of mares-only races (clearly without ever trying to win one themselves) now comment favourably on how well-contested they are. Jumps mares still suffer from nonsense from the media. A few months ago, A.P. McCoy was moaning about how uninteresting the Mares Novice Hurdle at Cheltenham is, whilst we regularly get complaints about why top mares run in the David Nicholson rather than the Champion or Stayers Hurdles. Funnily enough, the 1000 Guineas or Oaks are never subjected to the same half-baked nonsense.

Then a couple of weeks ago, when Apple's Jade and La Bague Au Roi won Grade 1 and 2 Open events, we had calls for the sex allowance to be removed. This allowance has been in place for thirty-odd years in NH races, and without it Dawn Run would have been unlikely to become the one horse in history to complete the Champion Hurdle / Cheltenham Gold Cup double. I don't recall the same complaints then (and Dad tells me there were none when Sceptre and Pretty Polly dominated Flat racing from 1902 to 1905).

So why pick on mares now, when only three have won the Champion Hurdle and one the Gold Cup since the allowance was brought in? Knowledgeable commentators should celebrate their occasional successes in mixed company instead of making 'smart-alec' comments about the weight allowance. The only one really interested in NH breeding, Nick Luck, already does!

Not only do Mares Black Type events provide decent prize-money but a mare that wins one becomes a far more valuable breeding proposition, with her foals in greater demand at the Sales. So, whether you are primarily an owner or a breeder, race mares! They offer your best chance of enjoying racing, perhaps in partnership with friends, without costing a fortune.

THOSE WE HAVE LOST

During the year we had to say farewell to two stalwarts of the stud, **Black Sam Bellamy** and **Fair Mix**. The latter had been showing signs of age for some time but Black Sam's rapid deterioration due to congestive heart failure came fairly suddenly, just as he was beginning to prove himself the top-class Jumps stallion we always thought he would and attracting the quality of mares he had long deserved.

Last season brought his first NH Grade 1 winner, the Ascot Hurdle winner, **Sam Spinner**; whilst in France **Galop Marin** has developed into the best hurdler now around, winning the G1 Grand Prix d'Automne Hurdle (one of only two Grade 1 any-age hurdles run in France) by 15 lengths, the G2 Prix Leon Olry-Roederer Hurdle for the second time, this time by an astonishing 20 lengths, giving weight all round; plus two Grade 3 hurdles at Auteuil. His winnings total almost £650,000. All of Black Sam's recent NH runners were sired after his move to Shade Oak. I expect to see many more winning big races in the future with the likes of Kateson, Tidal Flow, Black Pirate, Captain Cattistock, etc.

In contrast, **Fair Mix** sired what was almost certainly his best offspring in his very first crop, the brilliant **Simonsig**. When Simonsig followed up his 7 length win in the Baring Bingham Novices Hurdle at Cheltenham with an Arkle Trophy victory a year later, we little thought that he would never win another race – or that Fair Mix would never sire another Grade 1 winner - but the first proved to be the case and the second may well do so.

Cocktails At Dawn probably had the class to reach the top but his jumping let him down, whilst only Unowhatimeanharry beat **Fagan** in a Cheltenham Grade 1; but we are running out of candidates for a new Simonsig. Still, one can dream, and recently a horse named Southfield Stone, bred and owned by Angela Yeoman, followed up a first bumper win with a most impressive hurdles debut, so just maybe...?

Regardless of whether this happens, Fair Mix did produce one outstanding horse, which is more than most stallions manage, and he has left horses that have excelled in other disciplines, whether ROR, eventing, dressage or hunting (including Emma's hunter 'Dickie').

We were touched by the numerous kind messages received after we announced their deaths. Thank you.

WHAT IS HAPPENING WITH THE BRITISH-BRED PREMIUM SCHEME?

Over the past few months you may well have read reports in Thoroughbred Owner Breeder magazine about a proposed Premium Scheme for British-bred horses, the so-called BBPS (catchy title, isn't it?). This scheme would combine elements of the present 'Plus10' that applies only to Flat horses and the NH Mare Owners Prize Scheme (NH MOPS) that I hope you are all aware of, but it would be bigger and better than either. In particular:

- It would only be available to **British-bred or sired horses** (unlike Plus10, which is open to British and Irish-breds);
- It would offer **bigger prizes** (for NH horses hoped to be up to £15,000 for wins in Mares-only Bumpers, Class 1-4 Novice Hurdles and Chases and Class 1-2 Open Hurdles and Chases);
- It would offer **additional prizes** (for NH horses hoped to be up to £10,000 for wins by geldings or mares in Open Bumpers, Class 1-4 Novice Hurdles and Chases and Class 1-2 Open Hurdles and Chases);
- **100%** of these prizes would go to horses that are both British-bred and British-sired, but prizes would be reduced to **50%** for British-bred horses by stallions standing abroad or Foreign-bred horses by stallions standing in Great Britain.
- A degree of **'self-help'** would be required in order to persuade the funding authorities to support the scheme, so that nomination fees of £150 would be required for foals and £200 for yearlings, with 2YO or 3YO nominations costing £300 or £350, just as are required for Plus10.
- However, payment of the Foal Nomination will give a **breeder's prize** of 10% of the sum awarded (up to £1,500 for a winning filly), whilst payment of the yearling nomination could earn the breeder another 10% of the

prize. The scheme's author wanted to call it 'GB BOPS' (Breeders' & Owners' Prize Scheme) but others preferred the more boring one. Had it in fact been called 'BOPS', I would have referred to it as the 'Bet on your Own Produce Scheme'. With odds of over 8-1 the first time a mare runs and a free 8-1 bet every time she races afterwards, I think it would have been a jolly good title, brought to you by 'Marketing Guru Pete'.

We were very much hoping to announce in this Newsletter that the Scheme had been approved, so all British thoroughbred breeders could look forward to a much brighter future in which there would be a positive advantage for owners to buy and race British-bred, British-sired horses.

But as someone once attempting an even more difficult mission once said: "Houston, we have a problem." (I think it was Tom Hanks.) When the proposal went to the 'Shadow Racing Authority' (well-named since it now appears likely to have as much substance as a shadow) to ask for a small part of the funding generated by the extension of the levy to offshore betting, it faced competition from requests for other 'good causes' – though in my view none so good a cause as encouraging British breeders to supply rather more than one-third of the horses racing in NH races in this country, which is the case today.

There were also fears that income from Picture Rights would fall because of betting shop closures resulting from the reduction of the maximum stake on Fixed Odds Betting Terminals (FOBTs) coming in April, so levy money might be needed to support general prize money.

What fascinating stuff this racing politics is (and I should know because I've regularly had to stick my fingernails into my palm to stay awake when I've been told about them). Anyway, as I write we are unsure whether the Levy Board, the Shadow Racing Authority or both will take the decision; in what decade the decision will be taken; and if the decision will be 'yes', 'no', or 'if you reduce the 'costs'. Otherwise, everything is perfectly clear.

Hopefully we will get a decision early in 2019; hopefully it will be positive with the scheme offering prizes along the lines described above; and hopefully it will be introduced in time for the NH season of 2019/20 - with British-bred, British-sired MOPS-eligible mares receiving bigger prizes in more races.

'Hope' is the key word; and, whether or not we get this scheme agreed now, I hope that the TBA will continue to fight the cause. If and when it succeeds British breeding will be afforded a long-needed advantage over its nearest competitor (which presently enjoys the benefit of selling into a large market supported by betting on British races whilst contributing zilch). This advantage will be greater if breeders have used British-based stallions to produce their foals (including foals produced by 2019 coverings).

Had we received the hoped-for approval I would undoubtedly have counselled you to (a) Nominate all your horses as a 'bet on your own produce'; (b) Come to our Open Day where the good doctor would talk about his new baby, receive your acclamation and answer questions; and (c) Think really, really carefully before using an Irish- or French-based stallion because, not only do most cost far more in stud, veterinary and transport fees than sending your mare here, but also if you produce and race a filly you will lose prize-money of £7,500 every time she wins.

In fact, given that I believe that the scheme will be approved sooner or later (hopefully sooner), my entirely unbiased advice would be that you should send your mare here anyway.

KEEP, FOALING & FERTILITY

Those of you that have read this Newsletter before will be familiar with most of the contents of this section, because there is only so much one can say about looking after mares, getting them pregnant, keeping them that way and then helping them produce and rear healthy foals. However, for the benefit of new readers and to butter up our absolutely brilliant vet (who does almost as much to get your mares pregnant as our stallions), please forgive the repetition - and skip it if you find it boring. Here goes, complete with some brand new jokes I just thought up...

One of the most important of our services is **Boarding** for mares and young stock. We will look after your mares and your youngsters throughout the year, organise any necessary veterinary and farriery treatment, ensure that the mare is supervised at all times prior to foaling, carry out any actions required to ensure optimum health in her foal, and finally prepare her for covering to a stallion of your choice.

We take particular pride in; '**The Shade Oak Fertility Service**' that we offer for mares that board with us. This comprises all **Pre- and Post- Covering Treatments** for your mare, an inclusive **Veterinary Package** as an alternative to the 'pay as you go' option, and a **Foaling Service** supervised 24 hours a day by experienced personnel headed by our Foaling Manager, Keith Warburton, who I am proud to announce has now delivered over 1000 foals during his time here and a record of 140 in the 2018 season. His knowledge, conscientiousness and dedication are outstanding.

We also believe that our Fertility Service gives you the very best chance of getting your mare in foal and keeping her that way. If you decide to 'do it yourself' then hopefully some of the details below will help you do it better – but we hope you will choose to leave it to us.

Every year we keep statistics on 'in foal' rates for mares boarded here against mares walked in, and every year tells the same story. For mares kept here our 'strike-rate' of getting mares in foal on the first cover is over 80%; for walk-ins it struggles to reach 50%. Same stud, same stallions, different approach: very different results! Unless you have a really good vet that visits every day to scan and wash out after covering (and daily veterinary visits for a small number of mares can become expensive) walking-in may well be a false economy in which trying to save a little money can cause a lot of wasted journeys, repeated veterinary visits and later foalings perhaps even causing the mare to miss a season entirely.

We have a dedicated, top-class vet who visits every day, resting only to take enormously long holidays just as soon as the stud season finishes, Fyrnwy Equine Group partner, **John Spencer MRCVS**. John is a leading equine fertility expert, regularly lecturing on the subject all over the country, including in Newmarket and he is constantly devising and testing new approaches to treat problem mares.

Your local vet may be good at his job, but very few look at hundreds of mares every covering season and so develop the degree of expertise that John has. I know that John takes a certain modest pride in his analytical and intellectually rigorous approach to achieving and maintaining pregnancies in difficult mares, but as a long-time admirer I can't help thinking that if his arms weren't quite so long he wouldn't be quite so good.

It can be expensive to get mares scanned every day, but this incurs no extra cost with our Veterinary Package. In contrast, several times a season we experience 'money-saving walk-ins' that are arranged after a vet has looked at a mare and suggested that she will be ready to cover in two or three days time. This might be a good guess but it is a guess. In these circumstances even the best vets can't always be right; as a result we have on occasions had a mare arrive for covering when she isn't even in season. In such cases it isn't just the stallion that gets p*ss*d off! Looking at the mare one day and then arranging a covering two or three days later is simply not as effective as scanning every day, seeing the progress of the mare's follicle and then assessing the optimum time to cover her.

John is undoubtedly one of the best there is and we are delighted that in 2019 we continue to be the only thoroughbred stud to have his services.

We make very little profit on our keep charges (in fact our Accountant regularly lectures me on the matter), whilst Mr Spencer's major source of income appears to be the stud fees he charges for the services of the cute little doggy that accompanies him on his visits, so I am not talking out of either my pocket or his when I ask you to consider whether any potential savings on keep fees and transport are sufficient to offset the greatly increased probability of repeat visits, a late foal or no foal at all.

GETTING PROBLEM MARES IN FOAL

I have talked before about the intricacies of getting 'problem mares' in foal. Typically, these are older mares that have developed conditions that make it difficult or impossible for them to become pregnant unless they are treated. I won't go into the intricacies of the treatments, partly because its quite technical but mainly because I am trying to encourage you to send your older mares here.

Quite simply, these days most fertility problems have a solution; it is really a case of whether the potential value of a foal justifies the cost and effort needed to treat the mare's condition. In recent years we have purchased several such 'problem mares' whose racing or breeding records or close relationships to top-class horses justified trying to produce foals from them, or gone into partnership with their owners on a shared foal basis. Most have subsequently produced good foals, some valuable.

So, the simple message is: **If you have a good mare that is proving difficult to get in foal, don't give up.** Call us and we can discuss how she might be given a further chance, either by our purchasing the mare outright (for a reasonable sum!) or forming a partnership with you.

KEEPING MARES IN FOAL

We used to feel that once a mare was safely in foal it was a case of 'job done', now wait for the foaling.' However, every year there are cases of 'early abortion' or 'slipped foal' or 'dead foal' etc. There still are, but we know more and more about the reasons for these unfortunate happenings and there is more and more we can do to address them.

The most important activity involves regular scanning of the mare after October 1st by a vet that knows how to identify developing problems.

VIEW OUR STALLIONS AND FOALS AT GOFFS UK DONCASTER SALE

The Goffs UK January Sale at Doncaster has now replaced the former Cheltenham stallion parade in November as the prime venue where NH breeders (and potential buyers of their stock) can view a wide selection of British stallions. Its great advantage over Cheltenham is that stallions can be viewed individually, with as much scrutiny as is required, at any time of day(light). There is also an opportunity to look at a wide selection of 2018 foals entered in the Sale, many by the stallions being shown. **Doncaster on January 23rd** really should be a 'must visit' if you can make it.

Dartmouth, **Scorpion** and **Telescope** will all be shown You can discuss mating plans, obtain the 'Early Booking Discount' referred to above, and if you are fortunate enough to own an Elite Mare complete your nomination form and hand it to the TBA there and then. The stallions on show will be located in the 'A' or 'B' boxes to the left (as you walk in) of the Parade Ring.

We also intend to sell a number of foals that we regard as rather special, mainly by Telescope. These will include a really good-looking colt out of the top-class racemare **Pepite Rose**, a strapping colt from the Listed-winning Alflora mare **Mizzurka**, and a handsome colt from our Elite mare **Reverse Swing**, dam of 145 rated chaser Monbeg Legend. Take a look at these too, or better still bid on them: they are all lovely walkers and really good prospects.

THE SHADE OAK OPEN DAY

Once more we are holding our Annual Open Day in February, on the 14th of that month in fact. There are several reasons for this. The real one, of course, is that being an old romantic I like to celebrate Valentine's Day ("Emma, February 14th is Valentine's Day, isn't it?") and we thought you too might want to make a really romantic gesture by buying the most important female in your life the Valentine present of her dreams: yes, a romantic liaison with the Shade Oak stallion of her choice.

We should also have some nice foals to show you, including some of the first Dartmouth's along with handsome Scorpion's and the expected selection of bold, beautiful Telescope's. Finally, there is a chance we will have a positive decision about the Premium Scheme by then and we (and by that I mean someone other than me) can tell you all about it and answer any questions.

So, make a diary note of the very start of the covering season (if I can hold our boys off that long), February 14th 2019 at 11 a.m. Everyone that receives this Newsletter is most welcome to attend. You will be receiving an RSVP nearer the time, to which you are asked to respond if you intend to come.

Please come if you can; all the stallions will be paraded and various proud mares and their lovely new foals can be viewed. The new foals will, of course, all be by our stallions. There will be food and liquid refreshments, along with an informative talk about the British-Bred Premium, Scheme if it has been approved or something else if it hasn't.

If you are unable to come on that particular day don't worry. We will be delighted to show our stallions whenever it is convenient to you, along with any new foals produced by them. Just give us a call to make arrangements. We very much hope to see you either here, at the sales or on the racecourse during 2019. And a Happy New Year to everyone!

There, that's it for another year... "Right, darling, FINISHED! Yes, I know I've only been in here for 30 minutes; I don't hang around when I'm having fun, as you might vaguely recall. Now, please, LET ME OUT!"