Friends of the National Horseracing Museum

Mill Reef with Professor Roberts at The National Stud. c.1973

SPRING 2018 NEWSLETTER
BETWEEN 12 February and 15 March, in the Thoroughbred Gallery, the 50th anniversary of the birth of Mill Reef will be commemorated with a display of some of the most important artefacts relating to his wonderful careers as racehorse and stallion.

Born in America in February 1968, Mill Reef was bred by Paul Mellon and trained at Kingsclere by Ian Balding. The little bay, who never quite reached 16 hands, was a beautifully-bred son of Never Bend and the Princequillo mare Milan Mill. He seemed destined for stardom when he scored a wide-margin debut victory over previous impressive winner Fireside Chat at Salisbury, and the promise was soon realised.

He lit up Royal Ascot with an eight-length win in the Coventry Stakes, and after a gallant short-head defeat by My Swallow in the Prix Robert Papin he returned to England and remained undefeated there in his two-year-old campaign, winning the Gimcrack Stakes by ten lengths, then the Imperial Stakes at Kempton and the Dewhurst Stakes in Newmarket.

Mill Reef’s second season began with a win in the Greenham Stakes before he suffered his second defeat – by his great contemporary Brigadier Gerard – in an exceptional edition of the 2000 Guineas. Thereafter it was triumph all the way.

The Derby was won in exemplary style, and brilliant performances in the company of older horses followed – the Eclipse Stakes at Sandown, the King George VI & Queen Elizabeth Stakes at Ascot, and, capping a wonderful campaign, the Prix de l’Arc de Triomphe at Longchamp.

Everyone longed for a second clash between Mill Reef and Brigadier Gerard, and that seemed to be on the cards when they returned as four-year-olds, but for a variety of reasons it never happened.

Mill Reef proved that he was at least as good as before – better, I thought! – when his third season began with a ten-length victory in the Prix Ganay at Longchamp, and when he reappeared for Epsom’s Coronation Cup his legions of fans expected another easy score. In fact, his training had been interrupted by bad weather that spring, and he managed only a narrow victory.

Balding never had Mill Reef quite to his liking after that, and it turned out that we had seen the last of him on the racecourse. When he was being prepared for an autumn comeback and a second tilt at the Arc, the colt suffered a fractured foreleg in a routine canter at Kingsclere. It took pioneering surgery to save him for stud duties.
The fact that Brigadier Gerard and Mill Reef never had their projected second meeting was an enduring regret for all their fans. Who would have won if it had happened? Opinions were naturally divided.

But when it came to comparing their records as stallions, Mill Reef, who stood at the National Stud, clearly took the palm. Among his progeny there were Derby winners in Shirley Heights and Reference Point, and he twice topped the sires’ list.

It is a remarkable fact that no British-based stallion has reigned as champion since he claimed his second title in 1987.

*Mill Reef’s Post-Operative X-ray. 1972*

The x-ray shows the plate and three screws that locked the fractured segment of cannon bone in place.

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Rachel Hood has taken over from, Stuart Richmond-Watson as Chairman of the National Heritage Centre for Horseracing and Sporting Art Board of Trustees. The photograph below shows Mr Richmond-Watson receiving his leaving present in front of a painting of Colonel Thornton by Philip Reinagle and Sawrey Gilpin at Palace House. The painting is on loan from a private benefactor.

From L to R. Christopher Garibaldi, Museum Director, Rachel Hood, Stuart Richmond-Watson and Christopher Tregoning.

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Museum Events at Palace House—An Evening with Simon Thurley

*King Charles II and the Search for a Country House*

Simon Thurley speaks about Charles II’s quest for the perfect country residence and reveals the role that Newmarket played in his grand plan. Discover over 300 year’s history of this important sporting palace in this fascinating evening lecture.

1 March, 7.00pm – 8.45pm, £15 including a drink

To book follow the ‘What’ On’ link on the Palace House website.

www.palacehousenewmarket.co.uk/visiting/whats-on or phone 01638 667314

This event is organized by the museum. To keep up-to-date with news, events and latest offers from the National Heritage Centre you can subscribe to the email newsletter — type in the link below and add your name and email.

www.palacehousenewmarket.co.uk/visiting/newsletter
Notice is given that the 32nd Annual General Meeting of the Friends of the National Horseracing Museum will be held at the Mews, Palace House, Palace Street, Newmarket on Monday 26th March at 1pm for the following purposes:

To receive a report from the committee
To receive the annual accounts (a copy will be available at the meeting)
To consider any proposal of which due notice has been given

If you would like to attend or have any queries or points you wish to raise please inform the Secretary by email: friends@nhrm.co.uk or writing to the Friends of the National Horseracing Museum, Palace House, Palace Street, Newmarket, Suffolk, CB8 8EP.

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