

RaceTech

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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A golden celebration for starting stalls

Newmarket's Moet & Chandon July Festival meeting marks an important milestone in racing's history this week when RaceTech celebrates the 50th anniversary of the introduction of starting stalls.

On 8 July 1965 Newmarket's Chesterfield Stakes, a race for two-year-olds and won by Track Spare ridden by Lester Piggott, made racing history by becoming the first horserace in Great Britain to be started from stalls.

After further tentative use at Newmarket during the remainder of the 1965 season, stalls were formally adopted as the fairest method of starting races on the Flat and were rolled-out across 135 racedays the following year.

Under the dynamic management of RaceTech their development has continued and in 2014 more than 4,000 races were started from stalls with some of the world's most valuable bloodstock expertly loaded by a team of skilled and dedicated professionals who can number up to 150 at the height of the season.

As part of the golden anniversary celebrations at the July Course RaceTech's CEO, Brad Higgins, and fellow directors will be hosting some of the stalwarts of stalls teams past and present including 84-year-old retired stalls hander Dennis Cutts, and former stalls team leaders John Bartlett, Ted Jackson and Charlie Tidball.

Higgins said, "The introduction of starting stalls was a radical but necessary step for racing to take in the mid-60s, and RaceTech is proud to have continued to develop and refine the systems and processes that get around 4,000 races successfully underway annually with barely an incident.

"The loading process is a tough and highly-skilled job and we are delighted this week to have the opportunity to direct some of the attention towards the people who are continuously at the sharp end and whose work is respected and admired around the world."

Channel 4 to feature stalls handlers

Mark Wilson, currently a deputy team leader and training rep who will be attending with his father Brian, also a retired handler, is set to play a unique role in the celebrations.

Wilson will be putting former top jump jockey, Mick Fitzgerald, through his paces at the British Racing School on Tuesday after the Channel 4 presenter 'volunteered' to undergo the training required to qualify as a 'pusher'. If successful Fitzgerald will join the stalls team at Newmarket next week to assist with a load which will be broadcast live as part of Channel 4's coverage of the meeting.

Andy Peverell, RaceTech's Racing Operations and Safety Manager said, "We employ more than 100 seasonal handlers and all applicants must demonstrate that they have previously worked with horses. Mick clearly has a terrific head start in that respect, although our own safety and welfare policies and those of the BHA must be universally applied, so there may well be a lot to learn even for someone with Mick's considerable experience and horsemanship.

"We are delighted that Channel 4 have chosen to feature the stalls teams this week and give them some of the profile they richly deserve."

Stalls handlers at Newmarket's Moet & Chandon July Festival will be wearing gold skull caps in recognition of landmark celebration.

Ends.

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Stalls Stats

- Newmarket's Chesterfield Stakes on 8, July 1965 was the first race in Britain to be started from stalls
- Four coach loads, several private cars and 500 racegoers on foot made their way to witness the start
- Alec Marsh was the licensed starter in charge
- The race was for two-year-olds over a distance of five furlongs and won by Track Spare ridden by Lester Piggott
- Third in the race Great Nephew went on to sire two Epsom Derby winners – Grundy and the ill-fated Shergar
- There are 34 sets of stalls in regular use in Britain
 - 22 sets of 10-bay stalls
 - 3 sets of 14-bay stalls
 - 7 sets of 17-bay stalls
- Dimensions - The internal length is 2.45m,width is 0.9m
- Starting stalls are made by Steriline in Adelaide, Australia
- Each set takes up to eight weeks to manufacture, six weeks to ship and up to six days to assemble
- Each race meeting on the Flat requires a minimum of 11 fully trained and BHA accredited stalls handlers

- RaceTech stalls handlers have travelled as far afield as Saudi Arabia to deliver bespoke training programmes

About RaceTech

RaceTech is the leading technical facilities company providing innovative solutions to the horse racing industry since 1946.

RaceTech first developed photofinish technology in the 1940s and is still dedicated to providing leading edge technology for raceday solutions including the operation and maintenance of audio visual systems, closed circuit television, public address and radio communications. Its Outside Broadcast Units supply pictures for terrestrial and satellite broadcast, and provide coverage for every horse race run in Britain for the sport's integrity service. In addition, the company pioneered the introduction of starting stalls to Flat racing in the United Kingdom and continues to provide and operate stalls in the UK and overseas. Recent innovations include a multimillion pound investment in HD technology and sponsorship of pony racing to encourage young people in the sport.

www.racetech.co.uk