

The Derby goes to Thirsk

Chris Pitt reports on the 2008 Kiplingcotes Derby...

John Thirsk, a joiner from nearby Holme-on-Spalding-Moor, won this year's Kiplingcotes Derby, riding his ten-year-old mare Maisie.

Originally called the Kiplingcotes Plate, England's oldest horse race takes place in the East Yorkshire Wolds, over a four-mile straight course comprising grass verge, tarmac road, a sea of mud and a disused railway bridge. It has traditionally been run on the third Thursday in March ever since its inception in 1519.

The 300-strong crowd who braved the drenching rain and bone-chilling wind witnessed an exciting tussle between Maisie and Cid, the mount of last year's winning rider Liz Stubbings, with Maisie pulling clear close home to win by two lengths. The 2006 winners Etton Lad and Katie Croft were ten lengths further back in third.

Although there have been no bookmakers there for over 50 years, some entrants nonetheless prefer to keep their cards close to their chest. Subsequent investigations revealed Maisie to be Minster Fair, a winner over hurdles at Ayr when trained by Alistair Whillans. As for runner-up Cid, he was previously known as City Music and had won a three-mile hurdle at Hexham for Sue Smith in 2006.

With a winner's prize of just £50 it will never threaten Epsom's Derby in terms of prestige, but it does predate our premier Classic by more than 250 years.

The full finishing order was as follows:

1. Maisie (John Thirsk) (a.k.a. Minster Fair)
2. Cid (Liz Stubbins) (a.k.a. City Music)
3. Etton Lad (Katie Croft)
4. Barney (Laura Crawford)
5. Reindeer Dippin (Heather Buck)
6. Dispol Trump (Richard Lewis)
7. Colleen's Pride (Sharon Porter)
8. May Song (Cathy Featherstone)
9. Ebor (Charlotte Holmes)
10. Minnie (Natalie Arthur)
11. Rupert (David Gough)
12. Delta (Karen Orridge)

(Unofficial runner: Grace (Norman Barratt) – rider did not weigh out prior to race.)

