



CELEBRATING

A CENTURY OF THE  
Prix de l'Arc  
de Triomphe



MALCOLM PANNETT



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# Introduction

## **How the seventh French Classic came into being**

This is the history of the greatest horse race in France – arguably the world. In its centenary year, what better time to celebrate the heritage of the race that has evolved to become the undisputed horse racing championship of Europe.

The Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe has produced extraordinary drama, some huge shocks, and even some gut-wrenching lows, but above all – and on a regular basis – it has witnessed the exploits of truly great champions.

Before we come on to the inaugural running of the great race we need all the required ingredients to be in place. We need the sport of horse racing to exist in France, we need an organising body, we need a racecourse to run it on and, of course, a great race requires a suitably grandiose name.

## **A brief history of horse racing and the French-bred thoroughbred**

Horse racing has existed in many different forms for hundreds of years; it even featured in the ancient Olympics. In northern Europe in the 17th century it was the Stuart kings of England who laid the foundations of the sport on Newmarket's heath, while not long after in France, Louis XIV staged racing at Versailles.

Modern racing started in earnest with the emergence of the thoroughbred at the start of the 18th century. The thoroughbred as a distinct breed came into being in England by crossing imported Arabian stallions with indigenous mares.

Many stallions were brought to England but in the end, three – the Byerley Turk, Godolphin Arabian and Darley Arabian – were the most successful and as such all racehorses can trace their heritage to one or more of them.

Incidentally the Godolphin Arabian was owned by Louis XV for a couple of years and, apparently, he put him to good use as a carthorse.

The Darley Arabian, though, through the line of Eclipse, is by far and away the most dominant of the foundation sires, with 95 per cent of all thoroughbreds being descended from him.

So the roots of our story date back to 1704, the year that the Darley Arabian arrived in England. If we spin forward a couple of centuries and pass through 18 generations we find Comrade, the first winner of the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe, with only a further seven generations bringing us to Waldgeist, the winner in 2019.

However, that was all in the future when, in 1750, the sport in England moved on to a more permanent footing with the formation of the Jockey Club in London, which provided an effective administration, including a single set of rules and detailed record keeping.

The French equivalent – the Société d'Encouragement pour l'Amélioration des Races de Chevaux en France – would not arrive on the scene until 1833.

This was largely due to the turmoil caused by the French Revolution, which understandably set the development of French racing back a considerable time. In the end it was a case of playing catch-up, with each development in England being used as a template for the French authorities to copy.

The Comte d'Artois, who owned racehorses in France and England, was a major mover and shaker in the sport, championing and promoting racing in and around Paris including at Chantilly.

He regularly accompanied Marie Antoinette to the races, and although she was a famous casualty of the Revolution, he survived. Once the monarchy was reinstated after Waterloo, the Count followed his brother, Louis XVIII, to become king himself, as Charles X in 1824.

Six years later, after the second French Revolution, he was replaced by Louis-Philippe who became the inaugural patron of the Société d'Encouragement, which nowadays has been subsumed under the France Galop banner.

Its mission was, and still is, to improve the quality of French-bred racehorses.

By definition all breeding suffixes refer to the country in which the horse is born in. Thus, a horse with the suffix (FR) must be foaled, that is to say born, in France.

As the French were so far behind the English at that time, they operated a closed shop, meaning only French-breds could run in races staged in France, although French-breds could run in England but those that did were finding it hard to do so with any success.

Many stallions were imported, mainly from England, to strengthen the French stock of which Rainbow, Royal Oak, Gladiator, Sting, The Emperor, The Baron, The Flying Dutchman, West Australian and Flying Fox made significant impacts.

Their offspring, notably Felix, Franck, Poëtess, Monarque, La Toucques and Vermeille, were some of the first French-bred superstars on the track and in the breeding sheds in France. Meanwhile Jouvence, Hervine, Dollar and Fille de l'Air started making successful raids on England, with the latter the first to win a Classic in 1864.

A year later, Gladiateur swept the board *outré-Manche*, winning the Triple Crown, which he followed up the next season by storming home 40 lengths clear in the Ascot Gold Cup.

The French thoroughbreds had come of age and were as good as, and in some cases far better than, the English-breds.

## **Longchamp Racecourse**

Meanwhile in the power stakes, Louis-Philippe's reign had ended with the third French Revolution in 1848, and he was followed by Louis Napoléon, firstly as president of the Second Republic and then as Emperor Napoléon III.

It was he who supported the Société d'Encouragement's hopes of building a racecourse on land that he'd requisitioned as part of his plan to transform the Bois de Boulogne into a Paris version of London's Hyde Park. Longchamp racecourse opened in 1857, taking over the existing programme that had been run at the Champs de Mars course in front of the military school in central Paris – where 30 years later the Eiffel Tower was built.

In 1863, the season prior to Fille de l'Air's Oaks win, the Grand Prix de Paris had been inaugurated at Longchamp. The race for three-year-olds was the first in France open to all countries and was framed to provide a chance for the winners of the Derby and Prix du Jockey Club, as well as the top fillies, to meet.

From its inception, the Grand Prix de Paris was the most prestigious race in the French calendar – only surpassed later by the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe – and it was the first French Classic not to be a copy of a race in England.

The next development was the addition of the Prix du Conseil Municipal to the programme in October 1893, which was launched to celebrate the extension of the lease on Longchamp racecourse.

It was also open to all-comers but this time for the Classic generation and their elders. The prize money was second only to the Grand Prix de Paris and it immediately became the highlight of the autumn programme. However, the race couldn't qualify as a Classic due to its penalty system.

On the resumption of racing after the First World War the French racing authorities decided to be even more ambitious and inaugurate a strictly weight-for-age championship race. The new race would be run on the date of the Prix du Conseil Municipal, which was to be moved back a week.



### **A monumental name**

The Arc de Triomphe, initiated by Napoléon Bonaparte in 1806 and inaugurated by Louis-Philippe 30 years later – in the same year the Prix du Jockey Club was first run – had become one of the leading iconic symbols of Paris. The arch had been, and continues to be, utilised in nearly all of the major events in the city. Therefore, using its name for such a prestigious race would be apt.

After rejigging the racing programme the name of the iconic monument, which had previously been used for a seller, was freed up and given to the race that would become of monumental importance to French racing. Thus in 1920 the seventh French Classic was born.

## INTRODUCTION

Darley Arabian 1700

|  
Bartlett's Childers 1716

|  
Squirt 1732

|  
Marske 1750

|  
Eclipse 1764

|  
Pot8os 1773

|  
Waxy 1790

|  
Whalebone 1807

|  
Sir Hercules 1826

|  
Birdcatcher 1833

|  
The Baron 1842

|  
Stockwell 1849

|  
Doncaster 1870

|  
Bend Or 1877

|  
Kendal 1883

|  
Tredennis 1898

|  
Bachelor's Double 1906

|  
**Comrade** 1917

|  
Bona Vista 1889

|  
Cyllene 1895

|  
Polymelus 1902

|  
Phalaris 1913

|  
Pharos 1920

|  
Nearco 1935

|  
Nearctic 1954

|  
Northern Dancer 1961

|  
Sadler's Wells 1981

|  
Galileo 1998

|  
**Waldgeist** 2014

## Timeline of events

- 1750 Jockey Club founded in London
- 1776 First running of the St Leger
- 1779 First running of The Oaks
- 1780 First running of the Derby
- 1789 to 1799 French Revolution I
- 1806 First running of the Grand Prix, France's oldest surviving race (now the Prix Gladiateur) and the building of the Arc de Triomphe monument commences
- 1809 First running of the 2000 Guineas Stakes
- 1814 First running of the 1000 Guineas Stakes
- 1830 French Revolution II
- 1833 Société d'Encouragement pour l'Amélioration des Races de Chevaux en France founded in Paris
- 1834 The permanent racecourse and training centre at Chantilly is ready for action
- 1836 First running of the Prix du Jockey Club and the inauguration of the Arc de Triomphe monument in Paris
- 1840 First running of the Poule d'Essai (French Guineas)
- 1843 First running of the Prix de Diane
- 1848 French Revolution III
- 1853 First French-bred winner of an English trophy when Jouvence takes the Goodwood Cup
- 1857 Longchamp opened – the future home of the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe
- 1861 First running of the Grand Prix du Prince Impérial (French St Leger), from 1869 renamed as the Prix Royal-Oak
- 1863 Inaugural running of the Grand Prix de Paris, the first race open to all comers
- 1864 First French-bred winner of The Oaks: Fille de l'Air
- 1865 First French-bred winner of the 2000 Guineas, Epsom Derby and St Leger: Gladiateur
- 1872 First French-bred winner of the 1000 Guineas: Reine and the Grand Prix de Deauville is now open to all
- 1883 Poule d'Essai split, to create a race for colts, the Poule d'Essai des Poulains, and a race for fillies, the Poule d'Essai des Pouliches
- 1893 First running of the Prix du Conseil Municipal (open to all)
- 1914 to 1918 First World War
- 1920 First running of Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe (open to all)

1920

# Comrade commands respect

*First honours to cheap purchase trained in Newmarket*

## **Background and fancied horses**

The desire to stage a truly international race was hampered somewhat by the practical problems of moving horses on a French railway system still damaged by war. The network was incomplete and unreliable often leading to long delays – not ideal for transporting potentially fractious thoroughbreds.

With the defection of the 1919 Oaks-winner Keysoe, owned by Lord Derby – the British Ambassador in Paris – there were only two raiders, one from England and one from Italy, to take on the 11-strong home team.

There were, however, several top-class contestants in the field, and a decent purse including 150,000 francs for the winner. The older horses were set to carry 5kg more than the Classic generation with 60kg and 55kg respectively, while fillies received a 1.5kg allowance carrying 58.5kg or 53.5kg.

Atanik Eknayan, a famous jeweller whose greatest work was cutting the Blue Heart Diamond, was double-handed in the inaugural Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe with Pleurs and Cid Campéador. They had been second and third respectively in the Prix Eugène Adam, with the latter arriving on the back of a two-length success over King's Cross and Tullamore in the Prix du Prince d'Orange.

Although neither individually would have been favourite, Cid Campéador and Pleurs coupled together on the Pari Mutuel Urbain (PMU) headed the market at 2/1. The practice of coupling horses in the same ownership, or sometimes in the care of the same trainer, was a feature of the PMU until very recently.

Next in the market, for the inaugural Arc, were Embry and Comrade, who'd fought out the finish of a fascinating renewal of the Grand Prix de Paris, at the time the most valuable race in France. England's main hope in that race was the Derby-winner Spion Kop, trained by Peter Gilpin, who'd made the arduous journey across the Channel to Longchamp accompanied by his stable companion Comrade.

The race was a tactical affair, with several of the runners seemingly more intent on boxing-in Spion Kop than racing. In the straight, the Prix du Jockey Club-winner Sourbier held sway but was being challenged by Embry, who'd been third at Chantilly.

They fought it out as Comrade, who'd had the benefit of a trouble-free run, waited in third. Embry started to get on top, only to be pounced on by Comrade in the last few strides. Comrade won by a short head, with Spion Cop back in fifth and The Oaks-winner Charlebelle finishing down the pack.

Many onlookers that day thought Embry would gain revenge on Comrade in the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe, especially as he'd subsequently won the Prix Royal-Oak – the French version of the St Leger. As such, Embry was preferred over his rival, being sent off a 2.8/1 chance with Comrade, the sole English challenger, at 3.4/1.

Two more owners were doubly represented and between them they had some of the best fillies around. The American adventurer and businessman 'King' Macomber fielded Vermeille-victor Meddlesome Maid and Battersea, who'd taken the Prix Lupin, while Baron Édouard de Rothschild had Prix de Diane-winner, and Vermeille-second Flowershop, along with 1919 Vermeille and Royal-Oak winner Stéarine.

In addition to Comrade, the only other invader was the winner of the first two runnings of the Gran Premio de Madrid, Nouvel An. French-bred but trained in Italy, he was the rank outsider of the party at 50/1.

## Betting

2/1 Cid Campéador & Pleurs (coupled), 2.8/1 Embry, 3.4/1 Comrade, 12.5/1 Meddlesome Maid & Battersea (coupled), 19/1 Flowershop & Stéarine (coupled), 19/1 Le Rapin, 23/1 BAR.

### Three-year-old form lines (*Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe runners in bold*)

Prix du Jockey Club, run at Longchamp: 1st Sourbier, 2nd Odol, 3rd **Embry**

Grand Prix de Paris: 1st **Comrade**, 2nd **Embry**, 3rd Sourbier, 4th Blue Dun, 0th Spion Kop, 0th Charlebelle, 0th **Flowershop**

Prix Eugène Adam: 1st Petit Palais, 2nd **Pleurs**, 3rd **Cid Campéador**

Prix Royal-Oak: 1st **Embry**, 2nd Zagreus, 3rd As Des As

### Fillies only

Prix de Diane, run at Longchamp: 1st **Flowershop**, 2nd Zilpa, 3rd Take A Step

Prix Vermeille: 1st **Meddlesome Maid**, 2nd **Flowershop**, 3rd Tic Tac

### Older horses and inter-generational races

Prix du Président de la République: 1st **Eugène de Savoie**, 2nd Petit Palais, 3rd **Meddlesome Maid**

La Coupe d'Or, at Maisons-Laffitte: 1st **Le Rapin**, 2nd **Pleurs**, 3rd Imaginaire

Grand Prix de Deauville: 1st **Tullamore**, 2nd Juveigneur, 3rd Caroly

Prix du Prince d'Orange: 1st **Cid Campéador**, 2nd **King's Cross**, 3rd **Tullamore**

**Abroad***In England*

Derby Stakes: 1st Spion Kop, 2nd Archaic, 3rd Orpheus

The Oaks: 1st Charlebelle, 2nd Cinna, 3rd Roselet

**The race**

Longchamp may not have been as crowded as on Grand Prix de Paris day, however, with the sun in evidence the course took in excess of 300,000 francs on the door.

At the off, Nouvel An and Eugène de Savoie were fast away but were soon overtaken by Stéarine who led them up the hill.

On the descent, King's Cross, Cid Campéador and Comrade moved up the order. Approaching the home straight Stéarine dropped out and King's Cross took over in front, slipstreamed by Comrade, with Cid Campéador and Pleurs just behind and Embry showing up on the outside.

Then the drama unfolded as King's Cross, who was trying to give away 5kg to his immediate pursuers, wavered off a straight line. Frank Bullock took his chance pushing Comrade through on the rail arriving there ahead of Cid Campéador, who then had nowhere to go. Pleurs was also slightly hampered.

From then on the contest was over and the son of Bachelor's Double dominated his rivals cruising home, heavily eased down, to score by a length with plenty in hand. King's Cross – who was also a decent hurdler with some good form at Auteuil – held on for second place ahead of Pleurs, followed after a gap by Meddlesome Maid, the disappointing Embry, who flattered to deceive, and Battersea.

The hard-luck stories concerned Cid Campéador, who had been short of room on the rails, and Meddlesome Maid. Depending on which account you read, the latter may have been kicked by Comrade in the preliminaries and/or brought to her knees when crossed by a rival entering the straight. Whichever, she certainly didn't have the best of luck and deservedly gained some recompense in the Prix de Conseil Municipal seven days later.

Comrade was generally seen as a worthy winner. Undoubtedly he had received the breaks in running but Comrade had asserted with such superiority that no one could argue that he was a fortunate winner.

The underlying purpose of running an international race is to beat all-comers and be proclaimed overall champion. The downside is that an interloper might win. Luckily Comrade was partly owned by a Frenchman and so the home team gave Evremond de Saint-Alary's charge a rousing reception.

But a French-trained winner was the goal. In the very next race after the Arc a two-year-old called Ksar finished second in the Prix Saint-Roman. Ksar wouldn't finish second in the Arc.

### **Post-race**

The enterprise shown by Peter Gilpin had paid off and his Grand Prix de Paris-winner had netted another worthwhile prize. But, then again, Gilpin had always been enterprising; his whole training empire had been built on the success of a horse called Clarehaven, who'd landed a massive gamble in the 1900 Cesarewitch for him and owner Ludwig Neumann.

Gilpin, who is best remembered for training Pretty Polly to win the Fillies' Triple Crown in 1904, named his stables situated on Newmarket's Bury Road after Clarehaven, and they are now home to a certain John Gosden.

In 1918, when one of Neumann's Irish-bred yearlings failed to raise a bid at the Newmarket Sales, Gilpin, through loyalty to his owner, raised his own hand to purchase the son of 1909 Irish Derby-winner Bachelor's Double for 26 guineas – and yes that horse became Comrade.

After winning all of his three outings as a two-year-old, Gilpin sold a half-share of Comrade to Evremond de Saint-Alary, who'd been a top owner in France for over 30 years. And the rest, as they say, is history.

Comrade had taken his unbeaten run to six but that sequence came to an end shortly afterwards in the Champion Stakes. Over a reduced trip that probably didn't suit him, Comrade finished ahead of Spion Kop but had to be content with second place behind Derby-third Orpheus.

Comrade wasn't a great success at stud and died prematurely in 1928, with Bonny Boy II, who won the Ebor Handicap the year after his sire's death, his best progeny.

The Prix Comrade, honouring his memory, which was run for many years at Maisons-Laffitte, now takes place at Saint-Cloud.



**Result****1920 Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe**

Longchamp. Sunday, 3 October 1920

Weights: 3yo c: 55kg, 3yo f: 53.5kg, 4yo+ c: 60kg, 4yo+ f: 58.5kg

**1st Comrade (IRE)** 3yo c 55kg **3.4/1**

by Bachelor's Double out of Sourabaya (Spearmint). Evremond de Saint-Alary / Peter Gilpin / Frank Bullock

**2nd King's Cross (FR)** 6yo h 60kg **33/1**

by Alcantara II out of Kizil Sou (Omnium II). Charles Liénhart / Jean Lieux / Marcel Allemand

**3rd Pleurs (FR)** 3yo c 55kg **2/1 fav** (coupled with Cid Campéador)

by Prestige out of Idunno (Orme). Atanik Eknayan / Paul Pantall / E. Bouillon

Runners: 13 (FR 11, GB 1, ITY 1). Distances: 1, hd. Going: good. Time: 2m 39s

Also ran: 4th **Meddlesome Maid (FR)** 3yo f, 5th **Embry (FR)** 3yo c, 6th **Battersea (FR)** 3yo c, 7th **Le Rapin (FR)** 4yo c. Unplaced: **Nouvel An (FR)** 5yo c, **Tullamore (FR)** 4yo f, **Stéarine (FR)** 4yo f, **Cid Campéador (FR)** 3yo c, **Eugène de Savoie (FR)** 3yo c, **Flowershop (FR)** 3yo f (13th).