

Sprint Into 2016 With A Thrilling Day At Musselburgh Racecourse

✘ I always enjoy a trip to Musselburgh races. Despite my penchant for selecting horses who have an aversion to going past the finishing post ahead of the others, it's a grand day out with an atmosphere you simply don't get by watching the races on the television at home or in the bookies.

For the last two years I have attended Musselburgh's New Year's Day meeting and had a thoroughly enjoyable time (as did the bookies at my expense) I'll be going along again this New Year's Day and fun lovers can continue their festive party this Friday by joining the New Year's Day event at the East Lothian racecourse.

The annual fixture is one of the highlights of the Scottish racing calendar and is constantly growing in popularity, thanks to the reputation of the 5 star attraction just six miles from the capital city (and there is plenty public transport available)

Now organisers have promised to kick start 2016 in style and the forecast is that the January 1 event will be the best to date – not least because it marks the start of the racecourse's landmark 200th anniversary year.

Sarah Montgomery, Senior Operations and Commercial Manager at Musselburgh Racecourse, said: "For us there is even more than usual to celebrate because New Year's Day also marks the start of our Bicentenary year.

"We're immensely proud to have reached such an amazing milestone so we are hoping people from Musselburgh, Edinburgh

and the surrounding area will turn out in numbers to help us celebrate.

“It is a fantastic day out for families, groups of friends, sports lovers and anyone looking for a great way to bring in 2016. It’s already one of the most popular dates in our busy racing calendar and on January 1 there will be plenty for our visitors to see and do.”

As is always the case at Musselburgh Races, visitors to the Totepool New Year’s Day Race Meeting will enjoy the warmest of welcomes, with the first 200 guests getting a special First Foot surprise. All visitors will have the chance to purchase mulled cider and a delicious traditional haggis roll to enjoy in the New Year’s Day heated marquee.

The raceday is one of the Feature Fixtures at Musselburgh and guaranteed to provide thrills. Indeed, the feature races – the Totepool Hogmaneigh Handicap Hurdle and Totepool Scottish Premier Steeple Chase – are broadcast live on Channel 4 Racing although, in my view, there’s nothing to beat the atmosphere of ‘live’ racing.

A seasonal twist to the afternoon is the chance to soak in the atmosphere of one of the most historic amateur athletic events in the world, the 147th New Year Sprint, which attracts athletes from across the country to compete for the £4000 prize money. The 110m race is the most enduring open athletics event in the UK and has been staged in Scotland annually since 1870.

Added to the wealth of attractions on the day, a number of lucky racegoers won’t even have to worry about transport on New Year’s Day – as the racecourse has laid on special First Foot double decker buses from Edinburgh city centre and from Galashiels.

There is limited availability and bookings are strictly first come, first served. Places can be booked online for £5 return

(Edinburgh) and £10 return (Galashiels) with the purchase of admission tickets. The shuttle services will deliver racegoers to the venue ahead of the first race at 12.25pm and will depart the racecourse for the return journey following the final race which takes place at 3.20pm.

Sarah Montgomery added: "The New Year's Day fixture is always a fantastic way to usher in the New Year and this promises to be the best yet.

"For those wanting to continue the party, it is the place to be. Yet for anyone who is feeling a bit jaded by the festive excess, or for those who have made New Year resolutions, then it is also the ideal day out, offering a bracing event to blow away the cobwebs, with plenty of fresh air and inspiring sporting achievement."

Musselburgh is firmly established as one of the UK's most stylish racecourses, hosting 28 Flat and Jump meetings each year, including the hugely popular Stobo Castle Ladies Day.

The 5 star VisitScotland venue is popular with racing enthusiasts and is also firmly established with both families and corporate clients.

Events like the Totepool New Year's Day Race Meeting and the Scottish Cheltenham Trials in February are helping it attract a more diverse audience.

Now, if only I could pick a winner or two this Friday. Any tips gratefully received...

For further information and to book tickets visit www.musselburgh-racecourse.co.uk

Musselburgh Racecourse's Facebook page can be found at www.facebook.com/MusselburghRacecourse

Twitter: @musselburghrace

