

Go racing to start off 2019

Musselburgh Racecourse expects to start 2019 on the right foot with a capacity 5500 crowd at the Betway New Year's Day meeting.

Advance ticket sales point towards a sell-out crowd but there will be tickets available at the turnstiles on the day. A promising weather forecast, two £30,000 races on the six card fixture, the 150th running of the New Year Sprint athletics race, along with street food vendors and live music, have combined to whet the appetite for those looking to start the year in style.

Previous winner Aristo De Plessis is among a field of ten runners in the line-up for the £30,000 Betway Hogmaneigh Handicap Hurdle (2.15). Trained by James Ewart, the Langholm raider was sent off favourite prior to his all-the-way success in the 2016 renewal of the two mile event.

Jim Goldie, the winning trainer last year with Sir Chauvelin, this time relies on Get Out The Gate, a course and distance scorer in maiden company in early December.

Irish interest comes in the shape of James Nash-trained Scheu Time who boasts winning form at Ayr and Thurles in 2018.

Edinburgh owner Gerry McGladery is aiming to be leading owner at his local track and his colours are carried by Normal Norman trained in Newmarket by John Ryan, while Carluke trainer Keith Dalgleish, who enjoys plenty of success at Musselburgh on the Flat, saddles Chica Buena who has won his last four races.

In the £30,000 Betway "Auld Reekie" Handicap Chase, Warwickshire trainer Olly Murphy will be hoping for a repeat performance from last year's winner Knockgraffon, who is partnered by Aidan Coleman and is appearing for the first time in 228 days following wind surgery to improve his breathing.

The field also includes Charlie Longsdon's Forth Bridge, owned and bred by the Queen. The Royal runner is no stranger to Musselburgh racegoers as his three previous visits have resulted in two wins and a second with one of the victories coming in the 2017 Scottish Triumph Hurdle Trial Juvenile Hurdle.

Kajaki is one of the most interesting horses on parade all day as he put his unbeaten jumps record on the line in the Betway Heed Your Hunch Handicap Hurdle. Trained by Kevin Ryan and ridden by Brian Hughes, he has won both starts over hurdles at Wetherby and Sedgefield. Two-time course winner Nendrum, representing the in-form

combination of Sandy Thomson and Rachael McDonald, rates as the main threat as he was well clear when falling at the final flight over course and distance last time.

Racegoers who book tickets online before midnight (31 December) can enjoy a £5 discount on the £35 admission price. Children aged 17 and under are admitted free. For further information visit www.musselburgh-racecourse.co.uk