

bet365 Cheltenham Trials at Musselburgh this weekend

Captain Cattistock and Mighty Thunder, the last two winners of the bet365 Edinburgh National, are among the thirteen declarations for Saturday's renewal of the near four-mile contest at Musselburgh tomorrow.

The bet365 Scottish Cheltenham Trials over Saturday and Sunday is widely regarded as a prep event for the big jumps festivals at Cheltenham and Aintree in March and April and with prize money just shy of £300,000 over the two days high calibre fields will serve up quality racing at the East Lothian course.

Trained by Fergal O'Brien near Cheltenham, Captain Cattistock scored twelve months ago under Liam Harrison, who is in the saddle again and claims a handy 3lb allowance.

Mighty Thunder represents Milnathort-based Lucinda Russell while Sandy Thomson is triple-handed in the £50,000 contest with Borders National hero Flower Of Scotland, Doyen Breed and The Ferry Master.

Berwickshire-based Thomson, who won the race in 2018 with Full Jack, said: "Flower Of Scotland jumped and stayed really well at Kelso and she should run a big race again.

"Doyen Breed has a touch of class and is running for the

second time since having his wind done and The Ferry Master missed this race last year due to the ground and has been placed in a Scottish National so he should run well too.”

Nayati, ridden by dual champion jockey Brian Hughes, is after more Musselburgh success in the £40,000 bet365 Scottish County Hurdle.

Trained by Donald McCain, he landed the Hogmaneigh Handicap Hurdle over course and distance on New Year’s Day.

Other previous winners at the East Lothian venue include stablemate Collingham, Ruth Jefferson’s Inca Prince and last year’s winner Socialist Agenda, who like Collingham, is owned by Dundee United director Jimmy Fyffe.

Thirteen-time champion jumps trainer Paul Nicholls has eight runners over the two days including Outlaw Peter, co-owned by Sir Alex Ferguson, in the bet365 Scottish Stayers’ Novices’ Hurdle.

Bryony Frost, who recorded her first success under Rules at Musselburgh on this day in 2015, rides Outlaw Pete and is also on board Halo Des Obeaux in the opening bet365 Frodon Novices’ Limited Handicap Chase.

Her Musselburgh strike-rate of six wins from 14 mounts (43%) is the best she has achieved at any of the UK’s jumps venues.

The most valuable race on Sunday is the £40,000 bet365 Scottish Triumph Hurdle, a Listed contest staged over two-miles.

Freddie Robinson (Brian Ellison) and Bringbackmemories (John McConnell) are both course and distance winners already this season while the BHA top-rated runner is Fergal O’Brien’s Fils De Roi, who fell in Grade 2 company at Chepstow last time.

Harry Derham, formerly assistant to his uncle Paul Nicholls, has made a good start to his own training career and he is

represented by Fidelio Dreams in a strong-looking bet365 Scottish Champion Handicap Chase.

Donald McCain-trained Dreams Of Home and Rebeca Menzies' two-time course winner Return Ticket clash again after they came first and second at Kelso in December.

Sandy Thomson will also fancy the chances of improving Carcaci Castle in the bet365 Scottish Supreme Novices' Hurdle with the opposition including General Officer, whose two course and distance wins in November and December were gained by an aggregate of near 22-lengths.

Gates open on Saturday and Sunday at 11am. For further information and to book tickets visit www.musselburgh-racecourse.co.uk



Thrill of the Flat at Musselburgh PHOTO Caledonia Photo