

THOSE GOLDEN MOMENTS

Remember this? Melrose Avenue lands the Queen's Vase in 2005 ... at York!

THE Queen's Vase is a race in which the yard has excelled over the years. It was established in 1838 over a distance of two miles, with a gold vase donated by Queen Victoria as the original trophy. When the Pattern was established in 1971, the race held Group 3 status. Relegated to Listed class in 1986, the race was confined to three-year-olds in 1987, and was restored to Group 3 level in 1991.

The yard has won the race no fewer than seven times, with Melrose Avenue being our third winner of the race. For the record, the other winners were And Beyond (2001), Shanty Star (2003), Soapy Danger (2006), Holberg (2009), Namibian (2011) and Hartnell (2014). One more winner would equal Sir Henry Cecil's record of eight winners in the race.

Melrose Avenue was a bay colt by Kris S, foaled in April 2002. Owned by Sheikh Mohammed, he started his juvenile career over seven furlongs in a maiden at Sandown in June 2004. He ran well, but showed greenness in losing his position before staying on in the closing stages to

finish fifth of the 12 runners.

Sent back to Sandown in July, Melrose Avenue made all the running under jockey Keith Dalglish in another seven-furlong maiden, winning by six lengths.

On his debut as a three-year-old, he landed a conditions event at Catterick over a mile and a half on slow ground, his stamina helping him to see off stablemate, Takhmin, the pair a distance clear of the third horse.

Next time out, Melrose Avenue lined up in the Lingfield Derby Trial. After leading the field until the straight, he finished third, beaten a length and a half by Walk In The Park, who went on to finish second in the Derby to Motivator, beating the third horse, Dubawi no less, by three lengths.

In 2005, Royal Ascot was transferred to York during the construction of the new grandstand at Ascot. The Knavesmire course had to be extended to accommodate the Ascot Gold Cup and the other distance events.

Melrose Avenue faced nine rivals at York in the Queen's Vase,

including stable companion Hearthstead Wings. Kevin Darley took the ride on Melrose Avenue, while Joe Fanning partnered Hearthstead Wings.

Peter Chapple-Hyam's Montjeu colt, Mr Vegas, made the running until challenged by the late Pat Smullen on Helvetio three furlongs out. Melrose Avenue had been content to chase the leaders, but as his stamina kicked in in the later stages, he was produced by Kevin Darley to lead entering the final furlong and came home to the roars of the Yorkshire crowd.

AT the post he had beaten Mr Vegas by a length, with Helvetio three lengths back in third. Mark Johnston was delighted that the horse had fulfilled his potential and given the yard its third success in the Vase.

After having an unsuccessful tilt at the Great Voltigeur Stakes back at York, Melrose Avenue was transferred to Sheikh Mohammed's Godolphin operation. Rated 111 by Timeform, there's little doubt that Melrose Avenue shone brightest when chasing the Queen's Vase! ■

Kevin Darley aboard Melrose Avenue with Robynne Watton (left) and Carrie Sanderson

