

# *Druids' Lodge*



Tucked away at the extreme north-west of Woodford is Druids' Lodge which in the early days of the last century was a notorious racing stables known as the "Druids' Lodge Confederacy".

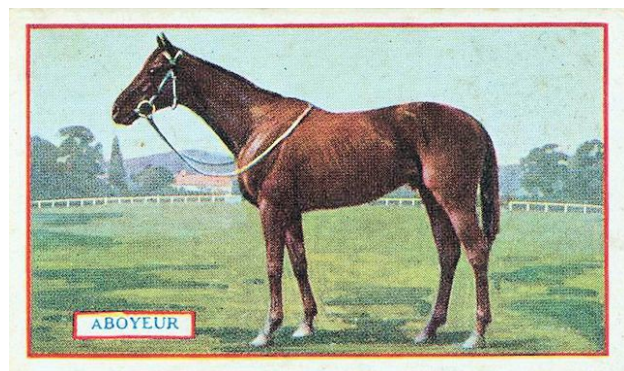
Owned by an eclectic group of gamblers and trainers, they became the scourge of the nation's bookmakers. The group of five was headed by Alan Percy Cunliffe, an Old Etonian, and also included Irishmen Wilfred Bagwell Purefoy, Edward A. Wigan, Frank Forester and Holmer Peard, a noted vet. Their huge coups became the talk of the racing fraternity, shrouded in mystery and speculation.

The remoteness of the stables enabled them to train their horses in complete secrecy; any inquisitive visitors would have been noticed and given short shrift. They bought many horses in Ireland and developed them with Jack Fallon, also an Irishman, as trainer and later in 1906 by Tom Lewis.

They made some spectacular betting coups, making them the terror of the bookmakers. Buying horses for small sums at the sales or horses that had shown little form, they built up their capabilities on the Druids' Lodge gallops entering them in handicap races at weights that made good betting propositions. It was subsequently found that the Confederacy had cleaned up a sum of £100,000 in all, an amount which in today's money that would be in excess of £9.5 million. Hackler's Pride was their most successful horse in terms of winning them the money, but in the 1913 Derby, Cunliffe's horse Aboyeur was declared the winner when Craganour was disqualified.



Hackler's Pride



The 1914-18 war put an end to the Confederacy, the bookmakers breathing a sigh of relief that their nightmare was over. In 1934 James Voase Rank of the flour milling company purchased the stables. Today the lodge survives as a Polo Club.