

**A NEW STATUE OF LEGENDARY JOCKEY LESTER PIGGOTT WILL
BE UNVEILED AT THE VALE & DOWNLAND MUSEUM, WANTAGE
EXACTLY 71 YEARS SINCE HIS FIRST CAREER WIN**

**ACCOMPANIED BY A NEW EXHIBITION:
LESTER PIGGOTT — BORN TO RIDE**



Statue unveiling ceremony & exhibition press preview: 18 August 2019, 12-2pm
Exhibition opens: 19 August 2019

The Vale & Downland Museum is proud to announce the imminent opening of an exhibition charting the **life and times of Lester Piggott** — widely regarded as the greatest British jockey of all time. This fascinating exhibition opens to coincide with the unveiling of a statue of the nine-times Derby-winning rider at the museum in on 18 August. Piggott was born in Wantage in 1935 and the date of the unveiling falls exactly 71 years since his first career win — as a 12-year-old on The Chase at Haydock Park.

The Statue:

- **Renowned equine sculptor William Newton** has replicated 83-year-old Piggott in a stunning **life-size bronze work**.
- The Wantage unveiling is an integral part of a project that incorporates a total of nine statues being sited around the country at venues including Ascot, York, and Newmarket.
- Wantage has been selected as one of the nine sites because Piggott was born in the town's hospital on 5 November 1935 (the first baby to be born in the maternity unit!) and grew up in nearby Letcombe Regis and Lambourn.
- Each statue represents one of Piggott's Epsom Derby winners and appropriately **the first was unveiled at Epsom by Her Majesty The Queen** on Investec Derby Day, 1

June 2019. Lester himself unveiled the second statue in the Brigadier Gerard Garden at Royal Ascot on Tuesday 18 June.

- The 'Nine Statues' project came about from an idea by Wantage-based journalist Neil Morrice who was joined by London art gallery owner Geoffrey Hughes and journalist and author Brough Scott, with the funding for the statues from the St. George family for whom Piggott rode many well known horses, including the dual Gold Cup winner Ardross.
- **Lester Piggott will be unveiling the statue in the courtyard of the Vale & Downland Museum;** the unveiling ceremony at 12 noon on Sunday 18 August will take pride of place in the middle of a summer celebration of Piggott's remarkable achievements in the saddle throughout the country.



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1. Journalist and 'Nine statues' project initiator Neil Morrice pictured with Lester Piggott at the unveiling of the 2nd statue in the Brigadier Gerard Garden at Royal Ascot on Tuesday 18 June 2019.

2. Lester Piggott admiring his statue during an interview with Brough Scott, Brigadier Gerard Garden at Royal Ascot on Tuesday 18 June 2019.

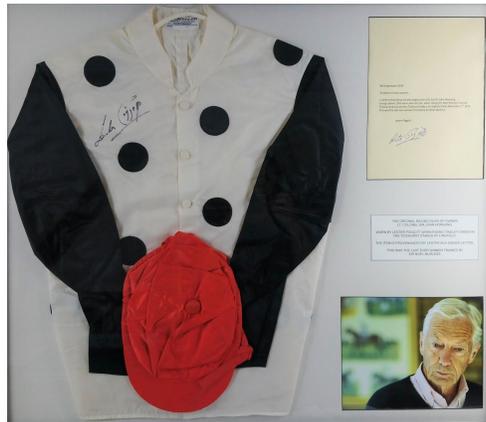
The Exhibition:

Lester Piggott — Born to Ride is a unique exhibition created in conjunction with The Jockey Club. A wonderful pictorial journey through Lester's life explores his early days, family and friends, the owners he has worked for, and the racecourses he has ridden. Displayed alongside pictographic panels will be **unique memorabilia from Lester's career**, on loan from private collectors, rarely on show to the public and brought together especially for this exhibition.

Curator at the Vale & Downland Museum, Suzie Tilbury, commented:

"We're thrilled that the Vale & Downland has been selected as the new home of this captivating statue of Lester Piggott, in his home town of Wantage. Horse racing has long been a very important sport, pastime, and business in the Vale of the White Horse, and we are excited to have this opportunity to highlight this still thriving tradition within our museum. We are especially proud to be hosting this unique exhibition to pay tribute to Lester's long and sparkling

career, as well as shedding light on more personal aspects of his life that helped shape him into a living legend.”



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3. Racing silks of Lieutenant-Colonel Sir John Hornung worn by Lester Piggott when riding Tinsley Green in the Ticehurst Stakes at Lingfield on 2 November 1976

Piggott's Career:

Piggott's life was a compelling mixture of unparalleled success in the saddle, a tangled personal life, and a low point when he was jailed for tax evasion and served one year of a three-year sentence.

But the glittering array of big race triumphs throughout the world sets him apart from any of his peers and he made one of the greatest comebacks of all time when returning to the saddle at the age of 57 to win at the Belmont Park Breeders' Cup in 1990 and pick up another Classic in the 2,000 Guineas at Newmarket two years later.

In a career spanning almost 50 years Piggott, popularly known as 'The Long Fellow', amassed an incredible 4,493 wins and eleven British Flat jockey championships. He notched 30 British Classic wins and completely dominated the golden age of jockeyship through the Sixties and Seventies. He posted 116 Royal Ascot winners and gained the top jockey accolade there more times than any other jockey.

He booted home an amazing eight winners over the four days of the 1965 Royal fixture and won the meeting's blue riband, the Gold Cup, a record 11 times.

Piggott was steeped in racing as the son of Keith Piggott, a National Hunt jockey and Grand National-winning trainer with Ayala in 1963. His grandfather Ernie rode three Grand National winners, and was champion jump jockey the same number of times. He rode his first winner The Chase in the Wigan Selling Plate at Haydock on August 18th, 1948.

He had his first Derby ride aged 15 on Zuccherio in 1951, and gained a first Premier Classic success on Never Say Die in 1954. His other Derby winners were Crepello (1957), St Paddy (1960), Sir Ivor (1968), Nijinsky (1970), Roberto (1972), Empery (1976), The Minstrel (1977) and Teenoso (1983).

The Classics proved the biggest magnet to Piggott, who also won the Oaks six times, the St Leger eight times and the 2,000 Guineas five times. When he first retired in 1985 he had ridden 4,350 races. He retired for a second and final time in 1995.

If pushed, Piggott leans towards the 1968 Derby winner Sir Ivor as the best horse he ever rode, although he has a close affinity to Nijinsky on whom he landed the Triple Crown of the 2,000 Guineas, Derby and St Leger in 1970.

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**FOR MORE INFORMATION, IMAGES, INTERVIEWS
& TO ATTEND THE UNVEILING CEREMONY:**

please contact Hazel at the Vale & Downland museum

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Lester Piggott — Born to Ride

19 August - 21 December 2019

Monday-Saturday, 9.30am-4pm (excludes bank holidays)

About the Vale & Downland Museum

The Vale & Downland Museum is located in the busy market town of Wantage in Oxfordshire, UK. The museum has been nationally acclaimed as an outstanding example of community partnership.

The range of services is very broad ranging, from galleries interpreting the natural history and cultural heritage of the Vale of White Horse region, to changing exhibitions, frequent events for all ages and interests, and a café with a delightful terrace.

It also acts as a springboard for residents and visitors to enjoy and appreciate the countryside around Wantage.

www.valeanddownlandmuseum.org.uk