

That was 2007, so it was

The Guineas, we knew, was down to just two
Perhaps the best we had seen.
A boxer from Cuba, a holy Roman ruler,
Both Irish, both set for Round Three.

But the best laid plans of horse and of man
Can be scorched in the heat of unfairness.
Lose one young buck, that's desperate luck,
Lose both, that's downright careless.

And if Newmarket beats with four fleeting feet
It's the 1000 Guineas that claims her.
A legend who lives, the only question is:
Would that be the filly or the trainer?

An impressive haul, but two Guineas isn't all,
A brand new approach has beckoned.
The Galileo nous is at home in Glebe House.
Could this be Teofilo the Second?

Royal Ascot arrives, the pride divides,
Shane travels, Ger chained to the sink.
Elletelle the skinner, the Queen Mary winner,
But the new Irish manager? You think?

Yeats and Mahler and Henry the Traveller,
The Ballyroyle winners, well backed.
Aidan decrees a famed 1-2-3
And St James's Palace is sacked.

The drama's begun as the Arc is won
By a poet and a hell of a man.
The masses wait as the stewards debate
For a lifetime. Exhale. Result stands.

The Hennessy feast, a perennial treat,
The grey has them all in a spin.
Twenty lengths clear, he listens, but can't hear
An 11-year-old heart closing in.

And over the last, Salmon's last gasp,
A bid for a place in history.
Never before can a spine-tingling roar
Have carried a horse to victory.

There's no debate on the Cheltenham weights,
You Irish won't fool us again.
You get 7lb, take note, if you travel by boat,
If you come by plane, you get 10.

And it isn't the case that the Champion Hurdle's safe,
As you win it all of the time,
There's a strong temptation to go with 'weight for nation'.
The ridiculous to the sublime.

A National hero lands for a couple of grand,
A cloud with a silver line.
As handicaps go, this is Ireland's Own,
That's six of the best from nine.

Retirement with grace, that's his 57th race,
It makes sense to go out at the top.
Un-Touche-able he remains over Cheltenham's banks and drains,
He made a difference – not difficult to spot.

9th December 2007