

ROYAL ASCOT.

The new million pound grandstand at Ascot looks down on a sea of hats that must have cost quite a few thousand between them; and under the hats, everybody who is anybody watches the traditional royal procession bowling down the green turf. After a wet start, the sun is shining - as it should do on this gayest of all royal events.

Following the Queen's carriage, the Princess Royal, Princess Margaret and Mr. Armstrong Jones.

Princess Marina - as we may once again call her - threads her way among the hats. And what hats: Royal Ascot lives up to its reputation as a gathering where headgear matters quite as much as the horses; and who knows - 1961 might even go down as a vintage year.

Princess Margaret and her husband make their way towards the paddock before the big race of the day - the Royal Hunt Cup Handicap. The Duke of Norfolk escorts the Queen, followed by Prince Philip and the Princess Royal.

The Royal Hunt Cup has a record entry of 39 starters - and the sunshine after the rain means quite a few revised opinions about their chances.

Johns Court, No.20, and Le Boheme...

The five-year-old lightweight Robson's Choice...

No.39, Cockotale - and 39 starters should be enough to keep any bookie happy. It takes quite a time to get all sorted out - but that's someone else's worry, and meanwhile we can always have another look at the hats.

Le Levanstell, one of the top weights...

King's Troop, followed by the well-backed Binseo, coming up to the tapes. The bookies may be happy with 39 horses, but who'd be the starter?

But in spite of the big field, they're remarkably well behaved - and they come up smoothly...

And they're off!

Well spread out across the course, and nothing to choose yet.

And now they've split up into two groups, and it's developing into a battle on this side of the course, between King's Troop and Robson's Choice.

King's Troop just ahead - and yes, it's King's Troop from Robson's Choice, with Midsummer Night third, and Pheidippides fourth.

The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh go down to the winner's enclosure to congratulate jockey Geoff Lewis on a fine race and a wise decision; he had a choice of mounts from his stable, and he picked the winner. And no embarrassment about receiving the Queen's praise - she had no entry in the Royal Hunt-Cup.

But later on in this fashion crowded day, comes the mount for the Queen's own victory; in the next race Lester Piggot brought her filly "Aiming High" first past the post by half a length, Royal Ascot wouldn't be the same without at least one royal win!