

Blandford Races.txt

Horse-racing remained popular in Dorset, and in 1729 a proper racecourse was established on the downs at Tarrant Monkton. The Blandford Races, as they were called, had been held as far back as 1603, when the borough, to provide additional attractions for the racegoers, laid on refreshments yielding £82 16s. 3d., and also a play on which a profit of £11 7s. 0d. was made over the six nights. Towards the end of the 18th century the Blandford races became a great social occasion attended by the leading county families arriving in elegant coaches often with as many as five outriders, as was noted by an entry in the diary of Miss Eugenia Wynne for 9 August 1803 when she was staying with her relatives, the Bankes family, at Kingston Lacy. She related that when the races were over, 'we galloped back to Kingston Hall and dressed for the Ball; then we returned to Blandford, where we found a very good ball', returning to Kingston Hall at 4 a.m.