

Queen of the silver screen joins cast for charity celebrations

■ DAME Judi Dench is expanding her racing repertoire, taking on a new role to add to her lead as an owner and supporter of her local racecourse Lingfield.

The Oscar-winning actress has landed the starring role in a boosted cast promoting the British Thoroughbred Retraining Centre in Lancaster as it gets ready to celebrate its 25th anniversary this year, succeeding the late Sir Peter O'Sullivan as patron of the centre.

"He will be a very hard act to follow," says Dench, who part-owned 2008 Lincoln winner Smokey Oakey. "The centre does very important work finding homes and futures for retired racehorses and, while my work takes me to many different places and countries so that I can never be sure where I will be at any given time, I hope there will be opportunities for me to attend some of the silver jubilee events."

The centre, which hit the headlines in 1994 when taking in former Grand National winner Hallo Dandy, has also appointed ten ambassadors, including Frankie Dettori, John Reid, actor Charlie Lawson, Louise Owen, wife of former England footballer Michael Owen, Aintree chief Rose Paterson, Dinah Nicholson, widow of top jumps trainer David Nicholson, and Smokey Oakey's trainer Mark Tompkins.

The centre has a host of



Dame Judi Dench: hoping to attend jubilee celebrations at the Thoroughbred Rehabilitation Centre

events to celebrate its silver jubilee with the aim of raising £100,000 from 'ride for retraining' events - starting in two weeks' time with the Holker Hall hack from Cartmel racecourse.

Smokey Oakey: landed the 2008 Lincoln for the Oscar winner



Riders pay £15 to take part in the first of a series totalling what amounts to riding round the coastline of Britain - all 7,723 miles.

Dench is also patron of the East Park Riding for the Disabled Group at Surrey-based Littlebrook Equestrian Centre and gave them Smokey Oakey on his retirement.

She has joined Andy Stewart in the ownership of the Paul Nicholls-trained chaser As De Mee, who was fifth in the Grade 1 JLT Novices' Chase at the Cheltenham Festival behind Black Hercules and finished seventh in Friday's Topham.

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