

Racin'



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NMRC CLUB EVENTS QUESTIONNAIRE 2022

Can all members please help the club committee by completing a short online questionnaire to help us understand what sort of events members would like to attend this Autumn and next Spring.

Even if you rarely attend events it will still help us if you can complete it!

For those not on the internet please send your views about stable visits, racecourse events, preview nights, guests speakers etc to NMRC at 53, Dalebrook Rd, SALE, M33 3LB.

The website link is as below:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/PNBCGND>

NATHAN CORDEN

Brian Goodwill has put Nathan Corden 'under the spotlight' in this issue of Racin' Magazine. Read all about his thoughts on horse racing, greyhound racing and even Nottingham Forrest on pages 9-10.



NMRC WEBSITE NOW PASSWORD FREE

All areas of the club website are currently password free at www.northernracingclub.com Given the club's financial losses (due to covid-19) over the last two years a last-minute decision was made (after the last magazine was published) to trial running the website on the 'free version' available from Weebly.

This will be kept under review and any changes to password requirements will be advised to members in due course.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 2** Competition News and Results.
- 3** Origin of the Thoroughbred - GRIY
- 4** Racecourse abandonment policies discussed.
- 5/6** Lester Piggott tribute – Harold Heys
- 7/8** Sulekha Varma (Aintree) interview.
- 9** PTP end of season review – Andy White
- 9/10** Nathan Corden 'under the spotlight'
- 11/15** Gordon Armistead's Racing Diary.
- 16** Marten Julian Book Competition
- 17/18** Brian Barrass (Uttoxeter) interview
- 18** Farewell to Martin Burgess

COMPETITION NEWS

59's DRAW RESULTS UPDATE

The latest '59's' winner is as follows:

June 4th – 24 – Debbie Kirkwood
July 2nd – 01 – Debbie Kirkwood

Debbie (from Merseyside) has two numbers in the draw and to win in consecutive months is about a 900/1 chance! Two £50pm prizes are now heading your way so well done to you!

The winning number is determined by the 'bonus ball' drawn in the UK Lottery on the first Saturday of the month.

Thanks to all who continue to support the draw. All numbers are currently allocated.

HERITAGE HANDICAPS COMPETITION 2022

After 9 weeks of the competition the leaders in the main competition are:

85.35 Mike Campbell
81.3 Helen Goodwill
79.85 Guy Weaver
73.5 Maureen Dawson
55.65 Eddie Carson

In the supplementary 'exactas league' the leaders are:

292.3 Helen Goodwill
129.8 Carol Evans
101.6 Gordon Armistead

ALEX BIRD COMPETITION – 2022

The prize winners for the Royal Ascot Round were:

Winner : **Sam Doyle - £70**

Runner Up: **Guy Weaver - £30**

The final round will cover the last three days of Doncaster's St Leger Festival in September

The leaders in the seasonal challenge after three rounds are:

Maureen Dawson 566.5pts, Ted Halewood 562pts.

In our 'just for fun' football competitions for the 2022/23 season the new details are:

NMRC 'SUPER 6' LEAGUE

Helen Goodwill has restarted the Sky Super 6 league.

<https://super6.skysports.com/>

The name is N & M Racing Club Super League

PIN LTSJPM

All previous members have been automatically entered

NMRC FANTASY FOOTBALL LEAGUE

Details for the fantasy football.

<https://fantasy.premierleague.com>

N & M Racing Club Super League

Code to join this league: **r4yvs1**

Thanks to Helen for setting up this league for NMRC members.

Origins of the Thoroughbred By Charlotte Russell (Go Racing In Yorkshire)

Horseracing is the second most popular spectator sport in the country and nowhere more so than in Yorkshire. The county is steeped in racing history and the industry is worth over £300 million to Yorkshire's economy.

But a lesser-known fact is where the modern-day thoroughbred originated – of course it was in Yorkshire!

“Racing is so prevalent in Yorkshire, but not many people are aware of its contribution to the origins of the modern-day thoroughbred. As a county with nine racecourses, two major training centres, the National Horseracing College, Goffs sales ring and Jack Berry House, it's not surprising to learn that Yorkshire was involved right at the beginning.”

Charles II was responsible for resurrecting the Sport of Kings in the 1660's and while Newmarket became the racing centre, its renaissance began in Yorkshire.

The three founding stallions, The Byerley Turk, Darley Arabian and Godolphin Arabian were either from or have close connections to the white rose county. They were among the Oriental stallions imported to Britain in the late 1600's and early 1700's. The Byerley Turk took up residence with Captain Robert Byerley at Goldsborough Hall near Knaresborough, where he is also buried, while the Darley Arabian was a gift from Thomas Darley to his brother Henry, who lived at Aldby Park, near York.

The Godolphin Arabian eventually made his way into the ownership of Lord Godolphin and lived at his stud at Gog Magog in Cambridgeshire. Lord Godolphin had family and friends in Yorkshire, he was the godfather of Sir Marmaduke Wyvill, from Constable Burton, whose daughter was married to King Charles II's stud master, giving him access to some well-bred mares.

Of all the stallions that were imported, it is the genes of these three stallions that prevailed. They combined to produce the three progenitors, Matchem, Herod and Eclipse. These three horses share 14 common ancestors and the Byerley Turk is found in each of these pedigrees, along with either the Darley Arabian or the Godolphin Arabian.

Today, 95% of all thoroughbreds trace their genetics back to Eclipse through the male tail line and hence the Darley Arabian. The Byerley Turk is represented through Herod of whom, Pearl Secret, a winner of the Beverley Bullet, who stands at Norton Grove stud near Yorkshire, is one of the very few stallions continuing this line. Alarmingly the Matchem line, which descends from the Godolphin Arabian and the Herod/Byerley Turk line are in serious decline.

Go Racing In Yorkshire is keen to promote the Yorkshire heritage of the modern thoroughbred and a dedicated website has been developed to provide more information. Please visit www.yorkshirethoroughbred.co.uk.



RACECOURSE ABANDONMENT REFUNDS

Given the spate of abandonments in recent months I would like to reflect on how this affects the race going public, especially as many UK racecourse attendances are down 25% from pre-covid levels.

Whilst the 'rules' vary from course to course the most common theme tends to be:

1. Full refund if first race not completed.
2. 50% refund if abandoned before 3rd/feature race. However some tracks give nothing if cancelled after the first race.
3. After feature race, no refunds given.

I suspect that many race goers are unaware of the refund rules when they buy tickets with the conditions of sale just accepted without reading.

In winter, does the risk of abandonment affect how racing followers purchase tickets (advance or on the day) or whether they attend at all? If race goers buy on the day do they retain ticket/receipt as proof of entry so you can claim a refund if needed? No doubt some racing fans who have 'lost out' financially due to abandonments will have negatively affected their attendance at future meetings.

WHAT IS FAIR TO BOTH COURSES AND RACEGOERS?

Unlike going to many other sports events, theatre etc, racing is a series of events (usually six or seven) so if some races are completed the sport does not feel obliged to make refunds in many instances.

Courses will incur their usual costs, whether or not the meeting is finished, so retention of ticket sales monies is justified in their eyes. However, as abandonments are generally fairly rare should tracks get insurance for this eventuality?

However, there is also an argument to say that some cancellations could be anticipated and that meetings should never have started in the first place e.g. snowing before first race with continued snowing forecast all day. There always seems extra pressure to start 'free to air' televised meetings even when the weather is doubtful.

For flat meetings, slipping on bends could possibly be down to poor track maintenance?

First of all, for winter meetings. Personally, I would prefer to see meetings cancelled earlier in the day to save all concerned the costs of wasted journeys with maybe a deadline of 2 hours before the first race being used if the track is not raceable then. Besides saving the travel costs, those with advance tickets will not lose out if they decided not to risk the potentially hazardous journey as well.

For summer meetings courses should, where possible, run straight track races first as invariably it is the round track races that cause issues. This should ensure that those attending get as much 'value' as possible if the meeting is eventually cancelled.

Many theatres etc will let you 'insure' your tickets in case you cannot attend. Maybe racing should have a similar option for both cancellations and abandonments?

Next, I would like to see all tracks adhere to the same 'industry wide' rules as regards refunds etc.

If more generous refunds cannot be agreed than at present, I would like to see tracks give discount vouchers/codes for future meetings to racegoers who do not get at least four completed races or miss out on the feature race if a late race, such as the Grand National. By doing more for the racegoers, tracks will hopefully retain more customer good will.

No doubt tracks already affected by falling attendances will be reluctant to make any changes, but in the longer term it may help stem the tide of disappointed customer experiences.

What do members think? Share your opinions by e mailing info@northernracimgclub.com

Here are some initial views from members: **Sarah Thurnell** says 'If the meeting is abandoned due to slippery ground conditions such as the recent ones, I feel tracks should be offering full refunds to racegoers (as well as horse connections but I don't know those exact rules). Only in circumstances outside the track's control should refunds be declined. They are responsible for the track, equipment, staff. Possibly a voucher for a replacement ticket rather than cash, but definitely need something. Whilst **Keith Evans** says 'It should be graded to when the abandonment happens just like in Test Cricket'

Lester Piggott – Racing Legend

By HAROLD HEYS

LESTER PIGGOTT, the racing legend, was my hero when I was a young man and I saw many of his greatest races, including the St Leger victory of Nijinsky in September, 1970 which clinched the Triple Crown. It's unlikely that a colt will ever again manage the 2,000 Guineas, Epsom Derby and the Leger treble.

Lester rode more than 5,000 winners worldwide. But I want to tell you about just one of them, a small sprint for three-year-olds at Haydock on a cold afternoon in early October 1970.

Coup for Bolton ace Billy Carr

A few weeks before the race Bolton trainer Billy Carr and his assistant Jimmy Hughes – an old mate of mine – had been lining one up, a real dark horse called Valley Farm. Old Billy knew more about horses than just about anyone in the racing game. Patience was his secret. He'd run decent horses down the field time after time, season after season. And then, when a handicap mark was about where he wanted it, he'd probably stiffen it one last time for an extra couple of pounds off, before the money went down.

Valley Farm, by contrast had almost been a rush job. Debut at Ponte on August 5; a four-horse field of three-year-olds over five furlongs and the Carr filly was 33-1. The racing form book noted that the horse was "bkwd." Stable apprentice Geo. Bell claimed 7lbs and they finished ten lengths behind the third. Billy Carr wasn't disappointed.

A couple of weeks later, Valley Farm was at Haydock in a nothing race over 6 furlongs. Young Bell was again on board and the combination were 50-1 in a nine-horse field. However, the filly ran quite prominently for much of the way till, according to the form book, they were "blkd" and fell back to be a well-beaten sixth. My old mate Jimmy laughed when I read him the bit about being, er "balked." Can't imagine why...

Anyway, it was on to Doncaster on September 12 – St Leger day – and this time little Norman McIntosh rode the 50-1 shot and they finished six lengths adrift of the winner; fifth of seven. Little Norman's 7lb overweight didn't help.

The Haydock target was three weeks away on Friday, October 2, and Billy and Jimmy got their heads together. Jimmy told me: "Billy was a local hero around Bolton. I'd been with him for a few years at his place at Bromley Cross, just behind the Dunscur Arms but by this time he wasn't well. He was ready to retire and Valley Farm was to be his swan song.

"We started to get it fit to run for its life and, over two mugs of tea one morning, Billy told me: 'There's only one man for this job – Lester'."

Jimmy hadn't known they were old pals from way back, but Billy rang Lester and put him in the picture. Piggott didn't hesitate, said Jimmy. He already had a couple of rides booked at Haydock and he knew that if Billy Carr said a horse was fancied, it was probably only a steering job.

Came the day, Billy was laid up at his farmhouse and Jimmy met up with Lester, sporting the Carr colours of brown and orange, in the paddock for the opener, the North Lancashire Maiden Stakes. Billy Carr had bred Valley Farm and he owned it as well as trained it. No one outside the stable had any idea how good it was.

Jimmy didn't presume to offer the jockey any advice. If he had it would probably have been along the lines of the few words to jockey Dennis McKay before another Carr coup at Ayr the previous season. "Don't ... fall ... off."

The Carr gang piled on and even with the Long Fellow on board the price held up quite well. The form book recorded an SP of 7-2 (from 6s) but shrewdies got on at longer odds. Jimmy recalled that the last few quid he had in his pockets went on at 3-1 and he was happy to get that.

Valley Farm lw (looked well) said the form book. It continued: "in tch, effrt 2f out, ro to lead wl ins fnl f." Red Knowe and Tony Murray had led from two out but couldn't cope with the Piggott swoop. Billy Carr picked up £146 10s for first prize money. And he and his team, among them a couple of local doctors who knew him well, picked up a helluva lot more from the battered bookies. I didn't get to Haydock that Friday but I had a few quid on. A dollop, actually.

..... and then Lester was off to the Arc!

The following day Lester Piggott was off on his travels to ride the well-fancied Triple Crown winner Nijinsky in the Prix de L'Arc de Triomphe in Paris on the Sunday. I'd seen Nijinsky's Leger (when Valley Farm ran down the field in the opener – and when nobody who mattered would be looking too closely).

I thought I'd grab a few francs and flew to Paris from Leeds-Bradford on the Sunday morning with a couple of pals – and promptly lost every penny I'd made on Valley Farm as Sassafra and Yves Saint-Martin won the race, pipping Nijinsky by a rapidly disappearing head.



Lester, who died in Switzerland at the age of 86 soon after the June-July edition of *Racin'* was published, went on to firmly establish his place in British racing history. Billy Carr is still remembered in the Bolton area for providing many a winner for local punters, often as the annual "Wakes" weeks approached.

He was a real "dark horse" in a few years before the last war and for more than 25 years after it. I have searched in a vain for a photo of him without success. I have several editions of the Directory of the Turf from his hey-day. Thousands are listed, but I haven't found anything about Billy. He played his cards close to his chest and, more often than not, tucked into a pocket.

Another former champion jockey, Doug Smith, also knew old Billy well. In his autobiography he wrote: "Whenever he was called before the stewards, Billy Carr always had his answers off pat."

Head lad Jimmy Hughes had hoped to follow on from him at Bromley Cross but it didn't work out. He went to live just over the "lump" in Darwen where he became a very successful pub landlord. He has always maintained an interest in racing and, as an owner, has had some good winners – and some very good pick ups. Valley Farm was sold for 4,800gns and went off to stud in Ireland.

MANY racing fans will tell you that Lester Piggott rode his first winner when he was just 12. It was on August 18, 1948 at Haydock Park, the Wigan Lane Selling Handicap, and the horse was The Chase, trained by his father Keith.

- Lester had to wait over a year for his second winner, Forest Glade at Newbury on August 20, 1949. And from then the steady stream of winners – including 20 over hurdles – started to roll.

- The few years before his *final* farewell were hectic. Twelve months in prison for tax fraud, a couple of years training, a handful of amateur rides in charity races, riding again for Vincent O'Brien, a few years back in the saddle before finally calling it a day.

- His last winner on these shores? Palacegate Jack, trained by Jack Berry, also at Haydock, on October 5, 1994. Headed inside the last furlong, Lester rallied him and got up in a finish of short-heads. And his last ride here? Mr Confusion in the November Handicap at Doncaster on November 5. It was his 59th birthday.

- Lester recalled in his autobiography that he had "retired" on an October afternoon at Nottingham in 1985 and "you can't retire twice." By the time he returned from his winter break to the Far East and Australia in April 1995 he had decided he could do with a rest and quietly slipped away from the scene he had graced for nearly 50 years.

- (Photo above): A limited edition print of legend Lester has graced my library, together with the Beswick statue of him on Nijinsky for as long as I can remember.

National Racehorse Week returns for 2022

National Racehorse Week 2022 will take place 10th-18th September with venues including training yards, studs and aftercare centres once again opening their doors for free to showcase the fantastic lives that racehorses lead. With hundreds of events taking place up and down the country across the week, National Racehorse Week is open to all including families and those completely new to racing. Simply enter your postcode into our easy-to-use postcode finder to bring up the events closest to you and book a place for yourself and up to 5 other guests. Please note, this year we have limited bookings to one booking per email.

Full details available at <https://nationalracehorseweek.uk/>

AINTREE'S SULEKHA VARMA CHATS TO PHIL EVANS

Many thanks to Sulekha for agreeing to do this piece for the NMRC magazine.

For those who don't recognise the name, Sulekha took over the role of Clerk of the Course (CoC) at Aintree in 2020, replacing Andrew Tulloch there, and becoming the first ever female CoC at Aintree. The actual job title is Head of Racing (NW) which also includes sharing the CoC role at Carlisle with Kirkland Tellwright (from Haydock Park). Sulekha's wider role also includes running the Aintree International Equestrian Centre, which has a very busy schedule of equestrian events during the year. In addition, Sulekha is also called upon to join working parties on racing related matters and was recently involved in the proposed changes to the 'whip' rules.

By way of background, Sulekha was born in Cardiff in 1985 and subsequently spent much of her early years living in Merseyside and then Scotland before graduating from Durham University. As a youngster she enjoyed pony riding until she was about 16 and her school work then took precedence. Her love of the sport was largely as a result of pony riding and the first Grand National she recalls in any detail was in 1994 when Miinnehomia won for owner Freddie Starr.

After graduating from University, Sulekha took a post graduate course with the BHA and spent a short time working at the Racing Post before moving to Lucinda Russell's yard as a racing secretary. She then moved on to a role with the Arabian Racing Organisation at Newbury. After that her next role was at Haydock Park as a trainee CoC and subsequently held CoC roles at Nottingham, Market Rasen, Huntingdon, Warwick and Hamilton before taking over the 'reins' at Aintree.

As regards the CoC role, Sulekha splits it down into three key areas:

1. Turf Management – albeit this is a joint responsibility with the Head Grounds Person.
2. Race planning – working with other parties such as the BHA and Weatherby's to ensure the race day schedules meet all agreed criteria set by Jockey Club Racecourses.
3. Race day checking – ensuring that all key track personnel are booked, including vets, doctors, ambulances etc. On a good day if all goes smoothly then the rest of the team will look after themselves but if things go awry, such as loose horses, fallers etc, then Sulekha will need to manage the situation from her vantage point and direct those required to where the incident is.

Track watering is a difficult subject for any CoC as if the weather forecasts prove unreliable then the track will become faster/slower than ideal if the 'wrong' decisions are made. Various owners/trainers will also be asking for the right ground conditions to suit their horses! Sulekha described Aintree as being 'like a sieve' in that it will dry up very quickly in the warmer weather. As a rule, the target going for most meetings will be good to soft albeit the June meeting may be run on slightly faster ground to suit the 'summer jumpers'.

At Aintree the worst of the 'Covid' years brought out the best in the team at the track as due to the lack of many furloughed 'casual staff' when racing first resumed, the core team were called upon to multi-task in all sorts of areas where they needed cover – I don't think the racing public realised just how much extra work the racecourse teams were taking on to 'keep the show on the road' after racing resumed. Well done to all concerned!

Sulekha's first Grand National (as CoC) was one to remember as it was won by Rachel Blackmore in 2021 and was the first ever win in the race by a lady rider. It was run with strict crowd restrictions still in place so it was not until the 2022 renewal that she could enjoy the full 'Grand National' experience with nearly 65,000 racing fans in attendance this year.

We then spoke generally about racing attendance figures at Aintree. Compared to 2019 (pre-covid-19) the 2022 attendances in April were down slightly on the Thursday and Friday but up on the Saturday so overall held up quite well. The May/June figures were affected by there being only one 'pop' event this year so a big fall was seen for the May fixture with only 3,000 present in 2022 albeit the June figure of 12,600 was much better than in 2019.

With Aintree being located in a 'football-mad' city, it is no surprise that the autumn attendances tend to be much lower (generally around 5,000-9,000) when the weekend meetings are usually competing with at least one of the local Premier League clubs being 'at home'!

Seats for the 2023 Grand National Saturday are already sold out and Aintree is still seeing strong demand for 'premium experiences' even if some of the general attendances are down this year.



I don't really want to tell Grandma how to suck eggs but surely if Aintree were to race when there were 'International Football breaks' they would potentially be a much bigger audience available locally? The same applies to racing in the summer months when football is 'on holiday'. Apart from the June meeting, there is a big racing void at Aintree between mid-May and late October, whilst down the road at Haydock they are arguably over-raced in the summer.

I asked whether flat racing could ever make a return at Aintree in the summer months although Sulekha thought it unlikely stating that the bend in front of the stands would need major work. That said, if bumpers can be run at the track then surely middle to long distance flat races could be run there still (on the hurdles track with hurdles removed) and maybe the old diagonal sprint track (once graced by Red Rum) could be restored?

With just eight days racing a year, Aintree is clearly an under used racing asset, despite it now being one of the best tracks in the UK. It deserves more fixtures and whilst overall the sport clearly needs less fixtures in the current climate, it surely makes sense to use the best racing assets more and the less attractive ones less – in other words some other tracks would need to give up some of their fixtures if Aintree were to expand theirs.

With my 'Desert Island Disc' hat on I then asked Sulekha what she would change at Aintree and racing in general if she had the power and the money available!

At Aintree the change would be to build a new stable yard with more space.

For racing in general it would be to give greater encouragement to get more people interested in racing careers with opportunities to 'learn on the job'. Also to give staff in racing a more sustainable career progression route in the sport as they get older and their work/life balance is re-set, such as when they start their own families.

On behalf of NMRC I wish Sulekha all the best in the future whether at Aintree or elsewhere in racing.

Point to Point – End of Season Review by Andy White

The point-to-point season ended in early June and the championship winners received their awards at the season finale in North Devon.

Gina Andrews was confirmed as the **Women Riders champion** with an impressive 48 winners, 24 ahead of runner up Izzie Marshall. In December, Gina broke Polly Gundrys record of 303 point to point winners on her way to her ninth championship. Her season was completed when **Latenightpass** won the Aintree Foxhunters for Husband **Tom Ellis** who was once again the leading trainer with a record 62 winners.

In the **Men's Championship**, **James King** finished strongly to pull away from Will Biddick and win his second championship with 62 winners. Biddick did manage to ride his 500th winner during the season.

In the Novice riders championships **Charlie Sprake** and **Olive Nicholls** won the respective titles.

Sprake fought off a challenge from Freddie Gordon at the final meeting to secure the championship and he will now become a conditional with Alan King with Gordon joining the Paul Nicholls yard.

In the ladies novice championship it was **Olive Nicholls** with 11 winners, emulating her step sister Megan in winning the ladies title. Rosie Howarth was joint runner up on 9 winners and she missed out after a month on the side-lines with a broken collarbone following a fall in a Sedgfield Hunter Chase in April.

My own personal season highlights were watching **Latenightpass** win the Open race at **Charm Park** near Scarborough in early March which was the perfect preparation for the Aintree success.

Steely Addition a 9-1 winner on his first point start at **Duncombe Park Helmsley** for County Durham trainer Chris Dawson. Steely Addition after a National Hunt career with Phillip Hobbs scored a further four-point wins before an excellent round of jumping under John Dawson in winning the Grassroots Hunter Chase Final at Kelso at the end of May.

A great pointing season is over but it starts up again in late autumn with the Yorkshire season starting in January.

NATHAN CORDEN 'UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT' WITH BRIAN GOODWILL

ONE OF YOUR FUNNIEST MOMENTS ON A RACECOURSE? Probably seeing a fish swim around my ankles in one of the downstairs bars at Southwell after the major flood we had there back in 2007 ... the irony being it was only a stone throw from the fish and chips shop there!

HOW CAN RACECOURSES IMPROVE THEIR MID-WEEK ATTENDANCES?

I think they have to look at pricing. So often you hear or read of moans from the general public about the cost of going racing. It would not surprise me if certain racecourse groups deliberately increase prices to put off numbers attending so they can keep their wage bill to a minimum along with other associated costs. The media rights income they receive is significant and all they're really after.

HOW VALUED ARE OLDER RACEGOERS? MOST PROMOTIONS SEEM TO BE AIMED AT 18-35-YEAR-OLDS?

I think it varies from course to course. For example, at Southwell we truly embraced the older racegoers as they were a constant throughout the year. It was a mini community and I can honestly I loved my time at Southwell as the staff and the regulars were absolutely fantastic. I understand why the authorities are keen to promote to younger age groups as you want to peak that interest as early as you can. However, you cannot forget about your regulars (which traditionally were your older racegoers)

HOW DID YOU START IN HORSE RACING?

In 2004 I decided to leave the family business at Nottingham Greyhound Stadium and having only know greyhound racing from leaving university my initial options were probably a little limited. I became General Manager at Warwick Racecourse in September 2004 ... for approximately 7 weeks! I live in Nottingham and a friend had told me that Southwell Racecourse were seeking a GM and as that was only 12 miles down the road I applied and had 8 very enjoyable years working for Arena Leisure Plc before working under the ARC regime for 2 years. I left in early 2014 for a 6 months stint at Weatherbys before going back to the family business in September 2014.

WHAT DO YOU DO NOW?

Timing is everything and just weeks before the pandemic hit we sold the family business (Nottingham Greyhound Stadium) to ARC and I stayed on there until the end of that year to ensure the smooth running of the English Greyhound Derby. I knew I did not want to stay around so I am currently a part-time consultant to greyhound promoter Kevin Boothby (who runs 4 tracks at Towcester, Oxford, Henlow and Suffolk Downs). I have also set up a business with my son (James) buying and selling greyhounds as well as operating greyhound sales at tracks. We have been going 14 months and things are going very well so if anybody wants to buy a greyhound they can visit our website www.greyhoundtrader.com to get in touch!

WHAT ARE YOUR MEMORIES OF THE SOUTHWELL FLOODS? DID YOU EVER THINK THE COURSE MAY NOT RE-OPEN? During my tenure we suffered two major floods (2007 and 2012) which closed us for a period of time. 2007 was the first time I had ever experienced any degree of flooding and I did not realise the extent of the damage it can cause. I can remember looking around the staff at a meeting and they were genuinely worried about their futures amid rumours the course would not reopen. There was no Churchill style speech from myself but a rather honest assessment to the staff that this was a real opportunity for the course to re-invent itself. I reminded them that the brown carpet tiles in the grandstand had seen much better days even before the flood and everything else around the racecourse was looking tired. They bought into it and soon were coming up with ideas on how we could improve areas. The insurance money paid for the revamp and we were all very proud with the 'new' Southwell

YOU ARE A BIG NOTTINGHAM FOREST FAN. HAVE YOU EVER ASSESSED A TRICKY ISSUE AND THOUGHT "WHAT WOULD BRIAN CLOUGH DO?" I am generally a quiet person so will not offer an opinion for the sake of offering one. If I feel strongly about something I will voice my opinion so the only Cloughie quote relevant there would be "We talk about it for 20 minutes and then we decide I was right"

WHERE WILL FOREST FINISH IN THEIR FIRST SEASON BACK IN THE TOP FLIGHT?

I have been really happy with our recruitment policy so far and I think Steve Cooper is doing a tremendous job building a squad who can finish in the top half of the league. I would be over the moon with 10th place but equally I would be happy with 17th in our first season back after 23 years in the wilderness!

HOW DIFFICULT WAS IT RUNNING A RACECOURSE THAT WAS PART OF A POWERFUL ORGANISATION? I experienced both Arena Leisure Plc and ARC during my ten years in horse racing. Hands down it was easier with Arena Leisure as they trusted you to do your job and left you to get on with things. Don't get me wrong you needed to hit the targets but they allowed you to have fun along the way. Their management style really worked for me as you would go the extra mile as you felt valued and trusted. When ARC took over they changed things and all decisions were made centrally which eventually wore you down as no decision could be taken locally. You were micro-managed and you could see staff attitudes change overnight as they were now unwilling to put their heart and soul into the job. It was safe to say I only lasted 2 years with ARC!

WHAT IS THE GREATEST PERFORMANCE YOU HAVE SEEN AT EITHER OF YOUR HORSE OR GREYHOUND RACING VENUES?

Some Picture, in my opinion, was the fastest greyhound of all time. He very nearly achieved the Triple Crown after winning the English and Scottish Derby before finishing 5th in the Irish Derby Final.

CRYSTAL BALL TIME : WHAT POSITION DO YOU THINK BOTH FORM OF RACING WILL BE IN BY 2072. WILL THEY EVEN STILL BE GOING?

Well I will be 99 years old in 2072 so a small chance I can be there to witness whatever lies ahead! Greyhound Racing is probably more at risk than horse racing, however both sports need to head off anti groups to ensure there is a future. I would love to see the modern greyhound track in 2072 have a covered roof so the climate can be controlled ensuring perfect track conditions all year around.

GORDON ARMISTEAD'S RACING DIARY

Friday May 20th Haydock

On official ratings Sense of Duty had twenty-four pounds to find on Flotus in the six-furlong listed Cecil Frail Stakes but the betting indicated she was expected to do so. Before the race she looked a mess sweating and on edge but she knuckled down in the race and outbattled Flotus. She will go up into Group company now and it will be interesting to see if she can step up.

Clenched looked the best filly in the parade ring before the six furlong two-year-old filly's maiden but looked clueless for most of the race before running on. The form is probably moderate but she can win a maiden before long.

The seven-furlong novice two-year-old fillies' race was enlivened by leader Lakota Sioux twirling her tail for nearly the entire race. However she didn't appear ungenue in being beaten only two heads. She is a big two-year-old and should be better for the run. The winner Inanna ran on well to hold the odds on Satirical who was only ridden with hands and heels. Not beaten far in fourth Zephina had already had four races so the bare form is nothing special.

Saturday May 21st Haydock

Everyone seemed to know that Nunthorpe winner Winter Power wasn't going to win the Temple Stakes as she drifted like a barge in the betting. She looked fit enough in the parade ring but was really on edge and ran no sort of race. Indeed she has run nowhere near her Nunthorpe form since and has plenty to prove now.

Winner King's Lynn had only won at listed level before and neither of the placed horses had won at stakes level and the whole race looked substandard.

El Caballo made it six on the bounce in taking the Sandy Lane running on well to hold off Flaming Rib. Whether this form stands up to the Commonwealth Cup we will see. Favourite Go Bears Go looked very small against his rivals in the parade ring and was closest at the finish in fourth.

Mighty Ulysses was very short for the Silver Bowl under top weight supposedly the proverbial Group horse in a handicap. When he came to take it up just inside the two-furlong pole everything seemed to be going to plan. However he couldn't hold off Whoputfiftyinyou who had been under pressure in last place turning in but ran on very well. Whoputfiftyinyou looks like a sprinter in confirmation but obviously isn't as he made in four from four.

Thursday May 26th Limerick

An all-hurdle card.

The main headline of the day was the gamble on the two Emmet Mullins runners. When I checked the prices early in the day Big Jim Dwyer in the claiming hurdle was a 7/2 shot and Shiroccoville in the two-mile six handicap hurdle was at 12/1. By the start of racing they were 8/11 and 4/7. I am not sure it took too much money for the price collapses and the bookies would run scared from any gamble from the stable. In the end the trainer ended up with two lame horses and nothing to show for the double.

The Grand National winning trainer led up the ex-Keith Dalgleish Big Jim Dwyer himself who despite his injury managed to win and was claimed back for the €4K.

Shiroccoville was pulled up with a circuit to go in the 80- 102 two-mile six handicap which was won by Rebellious Gale for the inform Tony Martin. This followed an improved run last time so he looks progressive. Jetango may have finished fourteenth of the fifteen finishers at 50/1 but I will be watching for him some time over the summer as he ran better than that position might imply.

The mare's maiden hurdle had a very short (2/9) favourite for Willie Mullins in Walk in the Moone. She is a big chasing sort but proved very green and didn't have the pace to hold her position two out and was beaten by the Elliot runner Shesadream. It was just ordinary form but fourth home Kelly's Birr will be placed by John Ryan to win over the summer. Back in the Autumn I gave The Big Chap a good write up when he was beaten thirty lengths at Gowran in a maiden hurdle. Dropped into a two-mile three handicap off 95 after some average runs since then he never looked in danger making a fair amount of the running. He will get a decent hike but can only progress and as his name implies he should make a decent chaser in time.

Main race of the day was the first qualifier for the Connolly's Red Mills Auction Hurdle Series. Peter Fahey has won the last two finals and took this qualifier with Rocco Bay. She isn't very big and her rivals were nothing special but she won comfortably.

The Willie Mullins winner in the bumper High City Roller only had one challenger from a long way out in Realistic Optimism. The pair were clear and could be O K over the summer without being anything special.

Friday May 27th Limerick

An all-chase card tonight and the handicaps were very ordinary affairs.

The classiest race was the mare's conditions event over two mile three. Gin On Lime has been a disappointment since I saw her win at Tipperary. I thought she was up to being a contender in the mare's chase at the festival but she missed the meeting and faded tamely at Aintree. She tried to make all here but was joined by the owner's other runner Say Goodbye and outbattled close home. It was only Say Goodbye's second chase. Over hurdles she had been outclassed behind Brandy Love at Fairyhouse in a Grade 1 and maybe she will be better over fences.

Fakiera who had been a promising hurdler for the Elliot stable two seasons ago made his second chase start in the two mile three beginners after one run last November. Jumping well he was running on at the end but couldn't get to the fitter and more experienced Il Courra. He will be better over three and I would assume they will get the third run for a handicap mark before he goes away for the summer.

Saturday May 28th Punchestown

A good class two-mile handicap chase opened things up. I thought this was a big step up in class for Espion Du Chenet who had won for me at Thurles in February but even from three pounds out of the handicap he proved up to the task. The De Bromhead mare Zarkareva looked outstanding in the parade ring returning after five months off and made most until the last. She doesn't win enough but should find a race soon on this form. Embittered is another who doesn't win enough and a mistake two out did for him here. I have long thought he needs two and a half but who am I to tell Joseph O'Brien anything.

I thought Naughtiness was the one for the mare's bumper at Aintree where she ran no sort of race but she had since won her maiden hurdle easily. She was odds on for the two-mile four novice against one of Willie Mullins second string mares Heia. She proved no match as Heia strolled away in the straight.

The conditions two-mile four hurdle went to Francois for a trainer I knew nothing about in Mary Ellen Doyle. This was just her second winner under rules although she and her husband run a successful pointing yard. It was a second winner on the day for Donagh Meyler who rode a good winner for me on Lord Scoundrel in the Galway Plate a few years ago and does very little wrong when he has the chance.

After seeing a Grand National winning trainer leading up at Limerick we had a winning jockey doing likewise here with Slippers Madden leading up for his father Boots in division 1 of the two-mile maiden hurdle. The first division had 134 rated Tax For Max in it and he finally settled better to win nicely at 3/10. There were some decent sorts behind. Runner up Esperti can win one of these easily while the third Folio was a big chasing sort from the Elliot yard. Folio's owner Walters Plant Hire had their first Irish trained winner the week before in No Risk No Fun for Willie Mullins and this one although already seven years old should win a race. Fourth home Virtual Oscar was another decent sort and any of the placed horses could have probably won division two. That went to the Elliot runner Showbusiness who had looked pace less when I saw him at Clonmel in the autumn and had been no better on his runs since. After this race he was deemed surplus to the needs of The Bective Stud operation and at Ascot Sales on May 30th was transferred to Sid Hosie's expanding yard for £30K. Here he beat Ballybough Native who cost a chunk after his point win and is already looking expensive. In third was mile flat racer Luke Short who came to win it but either found nothing or didn't stay.

The bumper was a very good heat for the time of year. Demandrivingdouvan was favourite after a point win for Mary Ellen Doyle. He changed hands privately after that and Davy Russell turned up to represent his new American owners with four kids in tow. He watched from just in front of me and seemed pleased enough with second but not as pleased as owner/trainer Barry Connell who was just behind me and roared his Marine Nationale home big time. The third Halibut had placed at the festival here. Fourth was a Willie Mullins runner Spread Boss Ted and eighth was Kik Badger who had run well when placed to classy sorts in the main part of the season.

Sunday May 29th Punchestown

The card opened with a couple of decent enough two-mile summer maiden hurdles.

A big priced winner for Gordon Elliot in the mare's hurdle with Return to Base after a year off. Runner up Mitva who I saw win her bumper at Thurles needs to improve her jumping while there was more promise from the third Lislucky.

Beyond Ambition placed in the slowly run graded mare's bumper at the festival here was disappointing being well beaten in fourth.

Elliot and Jack Kennedy doubled up in the gelding's race with Salvador Ziggy who had won a bumper for another trainer last summer. The runner up Another Choice also won his bumper in the autumn and both will presumably be on the go over the summer months. The rest were well beaten off.

The three-mile beginners chase was a good race but was interesting for another reason. Keith Donoghue who of course rode Tiger Roll to his Cheltenham cross country wins was having his first ride for Gordon Elliot since the trainer got his licence back. After giving what I assumed were the riding instructions Elliot promptly turned his back on Donoghue so whatever the fall out was about the trainer is still not happy with his former jockey.

Winner Panda Boy who won a Pertemps qualifier at Christmas before disappointing afterwards jumped really well here. He looks a chaser and trainer Martin Brassil who does not over race his horses could well turn him into an Irish National candidate next April as he looks a real stayer. Runner up Caesar Rock will win one of these but third home Everglow seems to be happy following others. Tullybeg had a couple of goes at chasing last Autumn and was my Cheltenham nap for the Pertemps final but was knocked out of it early on. He jumped well here before tiring from the home bend and needs another run for a mark over fences. I thought the Mullins first string Lord North was a surprising favourite. He is a third season novice but clobbered one early on and was never a factor before pulling up a mile from home.

Fire Attack got a flyer in the two five handicap chase and was never really challenged. The placed horses are handicapped right up to the limit but he could easily be aimed at the Galway Plate in which owners Gigginstown and trainer Joseph O'Brien have a good record.

Pink in the Park had been in against the best mares in bumpers and duly took the winners of one mare's bumper. She didn't look great beforehand and probably wasn't at her best. Runner up for the third time Gaoth Chuil is a half-sister to decent hurdler Dewcup.

Monday May 30th Ballinrobe

Two days before June and the full winter gear was out as it was cold and wet. A good crowd nevertheless for another all-hurdles card.

The first three in the two miles two maiden hurdle will be racing around the country tracks over the summer. Ballybaun Star won with a fair bit in hand from favourite Spick and Span but the runner up and third Barbaha Queen can each win a maiden.

The four-year-old conditions hurdle over the same distance saw Boodles/ Fred Winter eighth Prairie Dancer make all to hold the fairly exposed Douglas Dc who took six goes to break his maiden. The winner could well find his way to the Galway Hurdle but might struggle there.

Again over the same distance the feature mare's handicap hurdle saw Gjoumi and Hidden Land both running far too free and going clear. A second wave of Ena Baie and Blanketontheground chased and caught up but they had made there try to early and Two Shoe Tom who had taken her time swooped from the last. Most here have plenty of ability but its hard work to get them to run a proper race.

A tremendous finish to the 80-109 handicap again over the same trip with a length covering the first four. Trevena found a gap on the inside which shouldn't have been there to collar my fancy Peace Party who looked all over the winner fifty yards out.

Story Rory in division 1 of the 80-95 two-mile six handicap brought me a change of luck and he always looked like the winner beating favourite Lady L'lermon with the rest in another county. It was a double for Tom Gibney and Darragh O'Keefe. Division 2 went to It's Time Again but I will be watching for third home Chapel Street in the next few weeks. Aime Desjy the Mullins runner in the bumper hadn't run for exactly a thousand days but that didn't stop him as he cruised in. A big chasing sort already seven he will no doubt be on the express course to fences next winter.

Tuesday May 31st Ballinrobe

The courses big day of the season with the €60K Mayo National as the highlight. Willie Mullins runner Rock Road hadn't run in a chase for two years and his second in the Adare Conditionals Hurdle final at the Punchestown was only his second run in that time. From six pounds out of the weights under seven-pound claimer Kieran Callaghan he helped force the early pace before dropping just behind the leaders. When he went for home three out he soon had it won for the jockeys first win in a chase. Runner up Ilikedwayurthinkin jumped well for him while old timer Peregrine Run ran a

stormer in third. Fully Charged who had been looking a bit of a reformed character downed tools when he couldn't have an easy lead while Max Flamingo was very disappointing.

The other chase on the card was a good class two-mile beginners. Sole Pretender made it fifteen wins in his career making all and jumping super. His trainer Norman Lee had gone a long time without a winner but can always rely on his stable star over the summer months. Runner up Eskylane who was Davy Russell's first ride of the new season has never lived up to his initial promise but ran well and should do well at a level over fences.

Bet365 Chase winner Hewick was trying to exploit his lower hurdle mark in the two six handicap and he looked to be on his way as he forged clear. He was caught right on the line and returned with the jockey off as if he had gone wrong. The Shark Hanlon picked up his front foot and a twisted racing plate dropped off. The winning owner of Metersandmasks celebrated like it was the Gold Cup. His horse will stay three miles with no problem and is an improver. Third home Digby did nothing wrong.

Birdie Blitz took the three-mile one handicap hurdle for a change of luck for trainer Aidan Howard who had had eleven second places from twenty odd runners over the last two months without a winner. Jockey Simon Torrens was champion conditional in season 2020/21 before a big dip last season but is already half way to last season's total with seven wins.

The two Mullins runners in the bumper both came on from Punchestown. Both looked to need a trip as they were run out of it by 33/1 shot Art of Silence. It looked a fairly ordinary contest.

Wednesday June 8th Haydock

The three novice races were the most interesting. The mile three race for older fillies had two well-bred animals in Mimikyu a full sister to Journey and Time Lock whose dam is a full sister to Time Test. They turned in a really good battle with Mimikyu who was getting eight pounds just prevailing. Both should be group performers later in the season.

The six furlong two-year-old race went to Changing Colours but it was the second and third Revision and Novaportian on debuts who caught the eye. I liked Harlem Nights in the parade ring and the two-year-olds of new trainer James Horton are needing a run.

Time Lock's two-year-old half-brother took the seven-furlong race well despite being green and will improve for it. Another James Horton debutant Nights in Cairo again caught the eye in the parade ring and ran well in fourth.

Saturday June 18th Haydock

Fairly moderate stuff but Dornoch Castle the winner of the seven furlong two-year-old novice race looked above average. A very big animal for his age he made all and was kicked clear two furlongs out striding out in pretty impressive fashion. The opposition was no great shakes but the runner up was beaten four lengths and it was twelve lengths back to the third horse. It will be interesting to see how he goes on.

The other winner of note on the night was Definite in the ten furlong all aged handicap. A three-year-old gelded son of Kingman he was another big sort and again he made all off a low mark of 71. He will get further and come the autumn when the horses in training sales come around he looks the sort the jump trainers will be interested in.

Saturday July 2nd Haydock

Just an average Lancashire Oaks but with a good winner in Free Wind. Having got into a barging match on the rails within the last two furlongs she had to be taken back yet still won going away without having a hard race. She improved all last season and she looked better still here and a crack at a Group 1 in the Yorkshire Oaks would seem the way to go. Runner up Sea La Rossa had the run of the race and just wasn't good enough. Eshaada won a Group 1 at Ascot last Autumn but favourite that day Snowfall was well below her top form by then and she looked one paced at this level here. The less said about the steward's decision to suspend winning jockey Rob Havlin the better and the fact the suspension was overturned before the appeal says it all.

Gaassee was a crazily short price for the Old Newton Cup and supporters knew their fate a fair way out as he was well behind early on and met trouble in running in the big field. Winner Get Shirty has really improved as a six-year-old and ran out a good winner. He looks certain to go on to the Ebor and even with another rating rise will be a contender there.

Friday July 8th York

I wasn't too sure about Flotus when she ran at Haydock in May but she went on to run very well in the Commonwealth Cup and bolted up here in the Group 3 six-furlong Summer Stakes. She may well step back up to Group 1 again. The two just behind her in the betting Zain Claudette and Benefit looked really well but ran poorly.

The main contenders for the five furlong two-year-old novice fillies' race both came from the Queen Mary. A couple of noses separated Yahsat and The Platinum Queen there but the latter turned that small margin around and had this won some way out. She will no doubt be up into at least listed company next time. The Johnston newcomer Can To Can looked in need of the run and was well beaten while the other newcomers looked pretty moderate.

Asaassi looked a nice sort before the ten furlong three-year-old handicap and defied top weight well enough. It wasn't the greatest race but he showed a good attitude.

Friday July 15th Haydock

A far from stella card.

Batal Dubai took the six-furlong novice easily. Only two had run before and they had been well beaten so it is hard to get a handle on the race but it didn't look anything special. Third home Tantalus was one of those that had run and he ran OK here in third and could be one for nurseries at a modest level.

The three-year-old plus seven-furlong maiden looked poor beforehand. Newcomer Floral Splendour took it easily but we will need to see her again to have any idea of her level.

Three years after winning three on the bounce Arctic Fox has sprung back to life following up a win here two weeks ago by strolling home in the mile six handicap. It probably looked better than it was.

N & M RACING CLUB COMMITTEE/OFFICIALS 2022/23

Phil Evans	Chairman & Satnaps	0161 973 5921	info@northernracingclub.com
Helen Goodwill	Membership & HH Comp	0161 928 0213	cheshirecherry@hotmail.co.uk
Ken Unsworth	Newsletter Production	0151 526 9107	ken_unsworth@yahoo.co.uk
Dave Bates	Stable Visits	01925 574140	bates270@btinternet.com
Richard Mattinson	Treasurer	01772 322095	rmattinson@virginmedia.com
Michael Wheeler	Alex Bird Competition	07367 903903	mikewheater.nmrc@outlook.com
Mark Banks	Alex Bird Competition	07745895779	zafonic93@gmail.com
Gordon Armistead	Racecourse Reporter	01257255782	gpa.shlab@btinternet.com
Andy White	Yorkshire Area & P.T.P.		andy.white21@outlook.com
Judith Bradley	Social Media		j_bradley_uk@yahoo.co.uk
Angela White			angelawhite55@outlook.com
Charles Rear			charlesworear@gmail.com
Kieran Rowbottom	Hon President	01606 46765	kieranrobot07@gmail.com

Next copy deadline for Racin' will be Sunday 25th September

MARTEN JULIAN BOOK COMPETITION

Thanks to Marten and the team for providing two great prizes for our book competition. To enter please answer the question below and send entries (1) By e mail to info@northernracingclub.com or (2) By post to NMRC at 53 Dalebrook Rd, Sale, Greater Manchester M33 3LB. Closing date is Monday 5th September.

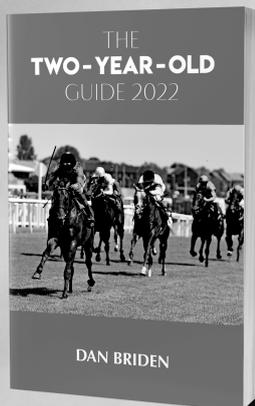
Question: STRADIVARIUS has been a top stayer on the flat scene for the last five seasons. But when the horse has lost, who has won the most of these races? Is it (a) TRUESHAN or (b) KYPRIOS. NB this includes the latest defeat in the 2022 Goodwood Cup.

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Other publications worth a mention are **THE WEEKEND CARD** published every Wednesday and for point-to-point enthusiasts **THE POINT-TO-POINT RECRUITS** which is an annual publication.

Further details of all publications can be found on the Marten Julian website – link details above.

BRIAN BARRASS (UTTOXETER'S GM) CHATS TO PHIL EVANS

First of all can I thank Brian for giving up some of his valuable time to talk to me – I hope it was worthwhile for you as well! For those that do not know the name, Brian took over at the helm at Uttoxeter in June 2021 after long term manager David MacDonald left. Brian's previous role at Uttoxeter was as Chief Accountant and he was effectively David's right hand man.

Brian is aged 40 and hails from Yorkshire and prior to moving to Uttoxeter in 2015 he held posts at Huddersfield Town, Doncaster Rovers and Doncaster Racecourse.

My first question to Brian asked what he considered as the biggest challenge Uttoxeter was facing at present. 'Attendances' was the immediate response. Although 'high ticket' events were largely faring well Brian was disappointed that some mid-week fixtures had seen a decline this year after the initial euphoria seen in 2021 when courses were allowed to drop most covid-19 restrictions in the summer months. The 'Ladies Day' attendance was also down this year but Brian felt it was affected by the extra 'Platinum Jubilee' bank holiday fixture just a few days earlier.

Brian had seen the NMRC prompted article in the Racing Post recently concerning the apparent lack of 'seniors concessions' at some tracks and confirmed that a £5 on the day discount still applied to the general and centre course areas if paying on the day. Although not discussed fully at the time, it would surely help attract more 'seniors' if the discounts were shown more clearly on the course website and, even better, if the tickets could be booked online in advance!

Brian also mentioned that about 60% of his annual members are 'seniors' so this is probably the most economical way of going racing regularly at Uttoxeter as membership also gives entry to other ARC tracks. Full annual membership is £330pa (concessions £310) and a half year membership is currently available from 1st July at £185.

Given the success of GRIY (Go Racing In Yorkshire) I posed the question whether a similar GRIM (Go Racing In Midlands) might help boost attendances in the region. OK, the name may need tweaking, but the concept is something that racecourses in the area might like to consider? If attendances in the sport are falling by around 25% overall this year, then some new initiatives are surely worth looking at?

Although this comment applies to many other courses as well, I still think it would be appropriate to show all 'on the day' prices on the Uttoxeter website as well as the 'advance booking' prices so that the 'discounts' on pre bookings are easier for customers to understand. Also, beware of the fulfilment fee added at the checkout for advance bookings – one of my pet hates!

For any seniors visiting Uttoxeter during the warmer weather I can recommend the centre course option as there is a covered outdoor area, plenty of seating and access to bar, bookies etc. There is also an indoor bar area for the colder months! As racecourse food prices are often mentioned in the media nowadays, it was good to see that centre course customers could bring own picnics etc into the course.

The most enjoyable aspect of the job for Brian was 'seeing the smiling faces of the race goers at the end of the day' and knowing that he and the team had given everyone a good day out. I suspect the biggest smiles will be from those who have backed a few winners as well though!

I was hoping to get a bit closer to the actual funding of a typical raceday at Uttoxeter as I am sure most racing fans don't really appreciate this side of things. Due to the fact that a lot of the financial affairs of ARC tracks are managed centrally, this was not something that Brian could fully answer albeit it seems that generally the admission monies are used to fund all track related costs whilst media rights, sponsorship monies and levy board



support are used towards the prize money for the races.

The topic of 'pop concerts' was also discussed. At Uttoxeter there is only one a year and this is usually a financial success. Some other themed days also have a 'DJ Set' which is a slightly lower key event but popular with the younger folk! Brian's view was that these events will attract younger people into the sport longer term. As the new whip rules were announced on the day we spoke I asked Brian if he had any views on the finer details yet – as he had yet to fully digest his main response was that he supported anything that improved animal welfare in the sport.

On the topic of animal welfare, given the hot weather in early July, I posed the question whether summer jumps racing could generally have earlier/late start times (mainly evening racing but possibly lunchtime starts as well) to avoid the peak heat of the day. Whilst racing fixture dates etc are managed centrally by ARC, Brian was aware that extra steps were being taken to ensure horse welfare was not compromised in hot weather and some steps were taken to ensure longer races we generally run later in the day. A couple of weeks after our chat several meetings in the UK were cancelled due to the heatwave and one track, Cartmel, moved its start time to 12 noon.

Next I asked Brian if he had the power to change anything in racing what would he change in the sport as a whole and what would he change specifically at Uttoxeter?

'Anything I could change in racing – shorter working hours on race days for all involved!'

'Anything I could change at Uttoxeter – Even though our parade ring is visible to both Grandstand and Premier customers It would be great if our pre parade ring was visible as well. '

As most readers will know, Uttoxeter's big race of the year (Midlands Grand National) is run on the Saturday after Cheltenham finishes in March. However, with rumours rife that a fifth day of the festival is likely, in the not-too-distant future, I asked Brian whether he had yet put in place a contingency plan in case they are taken on 'head-to-head' by Cheltenham in the future. The short answer was 'no' albeit possibly any such discussions are still on a 'need to know' basis.

During our chat I mentioned that the racing club is no longer interested in running its own ownership groups although we do support ownership provided by third parties (such as the stables we visit each year). We now act primarily as a 'racing supporters' group and encourage race day events and general interest in the sport via a racing magazine and plenty of racing facts and figures on the club's website.

It is the aim of NMRC to increase its membership in the Midlands and we hope that in future we can explore mutual areas of benefit with Brian and the team at Uttoxeter so we can visit them more often!

FAREWELL TO CLUB STALWART – MARTIN BURGESS



The club was saddened to learn of the death of 'life member' Martin Burgess on the 6th June 2022, just before his 80th birthday. Martin (and Jennifer) were staunch supporters of club events and had booked on the club's spring stable visits just before Martin's health rapidly declined.

His last club event was at our Aintree preview in April and he rarely missed any of the club's Cheltenham preview events and almost always won a raffle prize at them! He loved to quiz the panel members at these events and until fairly recently would also make the annual pilgrimage to the 'Festival' in March with family and friends.

Many club members will know Martin from Haydock Park or Ludlow where he was an annual member together with Jennifer.

Like many avid racing followers, Martin embarked upon the quest to visit all the UK racecourses but fell just one short, with Sedgefield being the only course he never managed to visit.

For those who chatted to Martin over the years, he loved to share tales about his dad, Harry Burgess, who was an excellent footballer in his day, winning the league with Chelsea and also winning four caps for England.

Our condolences go out to Jennifer and devoted son Andrew. R.I.P. Martin.