

# EDITORIAL

Jack Maguire was a friend of mine. He was a wonderful man, an expert handicapper, racing manager, good horseman, always cheerful, knowledgeable, charismatic and dare I say it flamboyantly smart. His kind always were seldom seen. I am sorry he died but happy that he lived a long and fruitful life and that his final illness was not long. In the parting commendation, the Priest said that when Jack met God he would not be meeting someone unknown to him for Jack was a true Christian of deep faith.

What would Jack have said about the situation regarding Corbieewood? Almost certainly it would have been along the lines of: "Come on boys, we've all had some good times at Corbieewood, but now is the time to roll your sleeves up work together and find somewhere else".

To ask anyone who would be in the know what is happening at Corbieewood, the most truthful answer would be in Scots "I dinnae ken". I have been up to Scotland, looked at three potential sites for tracks, spoke at length to Eck Taylor, Alan Muirhead, Fred Hay, Willie Paterson, Jim Kemp, Paul Cullen, Sandy Cassells and Craig Stevenson and the

only news is no real news. The first time I went there I thought "this is a good site for a superstore" and the best I can ascertain is whilst there is no planning application in place nor any deal on a table, the entire area is being looked at for redevelopment. Such schemes take a long time. Three years from talking to building would be fast track. But even the most ardent optimist would realise that this venue's future doesn't look good. Stirling is the spiritual home of Harness Racing in Scotland. Scotland is the historic home of the sport as we know it in Britain. And from Scotland's loins have sprung some of the best men and horses our sport as ever known. No horse ever dominated racing such as the great Hurricane did and methinks the world's greatest driver John Campbell has a strong Scottish connection. Well at least he does! The only solution I see or advice I can offer is to get political support, work together, look for a site and put forward proposals that any future site is for a multi purpose equine sports complex centred around Harness Racing. All these suggestions are in place and no lesser person than Alex Salmond, Scotland's

First Minister is aware of and interested in the future of racing in Scotland. This is not about a bunch of boys messing about with horses it is about history, culture, enjoyment and economics. Bill Farnsworth, Manager of Musselburgh Racecourse, told me some time ago that visitors to a Thoroughbred meet at that Track seldom spent any money in the town, whereas Trotting people never stop spending! The economic impact is not to be underestimated, whether it be mares going to Scottish stallions, yearlings bought from Scottish mares, money spent at hotels, restaurants, petrol stations, feed shops, equipment purchases, employment direct or indirect. It all adds up.

It behoves us all to help Scotland. The Council have decided that in order to help Scottish licence holders the window of opportunity whereby licences renewed early are at the cheaper rate, be extended from the end of February to 1<sup>st</sup> May 2013. This is however only for licence holders living in Scotland. Sorry Mr Jim, you might be a Scot but St Asaph is still in Wales.

The Sire Stakes programme now being run by the BHRC is being put into shape piece by piece. The Calendar gives full details separately. Of course you have to be in it to win it and the offer made by York to host the series for the next three

years adds certainty to the issue. This will be run as a separate entity within the BHRC with full transparency of entries, monies in place, runners and distribution of finances.

There have been a number of rule changes made over the winter and as far as I am aware, the BHRC is the only racing Governing body where anyone can make a rule change suggestion and it ultimately become a rule. However it is a democratic political process and some suggestions make it some don't. I am sad we did not embrace the Canadian rules on whip use, that change died a death I think for the wrong reasons. A controversial change suggested is that to Y16, where if a winner is disqualified as a result of a positive drugs test, the race should not be automatically awarded to the second horse but that placings remain the same, the disqualification stands and that the winnings of the disqualified horse are distributed elsewhere, towards drug testing financing or back to the promoter. This rule change has not been finalised one way or the other. I cannot advise change or continuation with the status quo. There are benefits either way and of course controversy if we choose to change. What I can say is that I am disappointed at the way this debate went.

Club and Association reps one week mandated very firmly seem another week to be wavering as to what to do. No one has championed the cause of democracy within our sport more than me. But those holding and exercising voting rights must take their duty very seriously. It is no use going to a meeting on an important issue and saying I think my members want this or that, meetings should have been held and views put forward as democratically directed.

One rule change suggestion put forward recently is that if a person enters the track without the authority of the Stewards on the premise usually of righting some equipment fault then jumping back over the fence into the crowd this is both dangerous and invokes integrity issues. A number of Track, Regional and BHRC Stewards supported this suggestion at the meeting and we are duty bound to examine it. Of course when enacted it will be known as the "Langford Rule" in honour of the gentleman, Jeff Langford who suggested it.

Rumour has it a number of women are out to get me. I have (it's always me by the way) upset Mesdames Bousfield, Forrest, Havard, Jenkins and Lewis. The issue of saddle racing has united this sorority of sainted ladies over the matter of weights. There is a move

being championed by Appleby towards re introducing saddle racing. And a jolly good idea too. Monte racing as it is ubiquitously known in Europe is a big part of the sport especially as it gives girls and lads a chance to ride in races where otherwise they might not get a drive. The Council have decided to give handicap concessions to such racing where a horses mark under driven racing will be unaffected by saddle wins, so in effect a horse could have two marks, say Grade 3 in harness, Grade 5 in saddle if it wins a lot of saddle races. Trotters will be allowed to race against pacers at any grade but under saddle only. Rule M7 should not be enforced in saddle races because from time to time it is good horsemanship to hold the reins in one hand in order to hit the horse behind the saddle cloth so as to encourage the horse to go forward better (my son Oscar's idea endorsed by the Council). Saddle licences, as new licences will be free and after much debate it was decided that the minimum weight to be carried is 10st. This to include saddle but not helmet or body protector. Of course you can put up overweight (and handicap your horse....in Thoroughbred racing it is believed 2lb makes one length difference over a mile). In Wales & Borders our friends there have a

minimum weight of 9st 7lb and in Arab Racing it's 10st. The views of "the ladies" are that weight doesn't matter and you can ride at whatever you want. All I can say is that under saddle, weight matters, all racing jurisdictions have weight qualifications and I "want to do it right". As I write this the Council supported by the Committee have decided on 10st and after further debate we have decided to leave it at that and see how things go. It is the duty of any jockey anywhere in the world, under any jurisdiction to "make the weight" how they do it is up to them ... saddle, weight cloth etc, it is not the duty of the governing body to furnish weights. No doubt the matter will be resolved. Watch this space or the space between my ears after they have blown my brains...out.

Outside of racing I am often asked "do you like horses?" I only like some horses, in fact as the Americans would say "Gaited horses". Call me a Philistine but I wouldn't cross the road to look at a Thoroughbred or a Hanoverian. I have enjoyed riding the odd "Cutting Horse" but I only really like trotters and pacers of whatever breed they may be: Standard bred, French Trotter, the coldbloods of Norway, Sweden and Finland, the Orloff, the Hackney and the gaited horses of America such as the Tennessee Walker or Alabama Racking horse. There is one exception and that is the Andalusian or Pura Reza Espagnol as I believe they are called. Many years ago a black Andalusian called Jardineiro X led the parade at Pikehall. He was later in the day expertly ridden by

Steve Lees and the two put on an amazing show. Properly pronounced Jardineiro he had fought in the bullrings of Spain, one man, one lance, on one horse against a bull. No mean feat. He appeared in the Scottish film Braveheart as the mount of Sir William Wallace played by Mel Gibson. A girl I used to know had a wonderful horse by him. I have always maintained that Jardineiro had the most presence of any horse I have ever met, until now. I have met his equal. Now it is not my place in an editorial to endorse a stallion, but in all the horses I have seen only one is the equal of Jardineiro in terms of sheer presence, that undeterminable quality the French call the "look of Eagles" and that is Mypanmar. He is some horse.

*Gordon Garnett*