

EDITORIAL

Impact: collision, profound effect

Whilst Harness Racing might only be a minority sport in Britain, it's impact (in the sense of "profound effect") on the 10,000 or so people involved directly and indirectly is very substantial. Whether through employment, enjoyment, life direction, selling to, buying from, going to see, taking part or whatever other activity that might flow from it's existence, the effect is profound. We have a farm, because we wanted primarily to keep horses. I became a Chartered Surveyor as a result of going to horse sales and all of you reading this no doubt have stories to tell regarding Harness Racing's impact on you. But what impacts on Harness Racing?

No doubts about it, one of the biggest things to impact on our sport in the last two decades has been the Welsh language programme Rasmus. Many people outside of Wales who would struggle to put together two Welsh words watch every episode and like me, subscribe to Sky TV just to get Rasmus. An internationally award winning programme it promotes our sport to many areas of the world, it gets people to the races, it showcases Wales and things Welsh it has an economic and social impact. It brings people into Wales to race horses, to watch races, to build holidays around the racing, to buy Welsh horses. All these people spend money in Wales. The biggest public gatherings in the beautiful County of Ceredigion are the Harness Races at Tregaron and Aberystwyth. It makes me realise just how close the Welsh language is to my second language French, so that someday I want to learn it. Who knows if I could speak Welsh I could argue with the Master of Tregaron in his mother tongue! And yet the grand plan of somebody somewhere in S4C or beyond is that this influential programme is to be

done away with. Despite detailed argument by John Watkin and Geraint Lewis as well as representations from many licence holders there is little chance of a reprise. However, S4C is a Public Service Broadcast and as such has a duty to the viewing public. This magazine is being sent to every Welsh MP, WAG MP, Councillors, Mayors and many other people of position within the Principality to ask "Can you help us save Rasmus please?" We will not give up the fight.

No one who has visited York Harness Racing Track recently can fail to see the impact Mick Welling is making on improvements to the place and how that will impact beneficially on the sport. He is extending the racing menu by entering into discussions to import French Trotters to run in races for their own kind (being a different breed to the Standardbred) and introduce French sponsorship into the sport. The principle of this particular project has been tried with resounding success in Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, Germany, Majorca/Minorca/Ibiza, Austria and former Soviet Bloc countries such as Serbia as well as Latvia. It paves the way for us to look to Europe for a change, someday hopefully embrace the French PMU gambling system and remind us that despite all the money we have spent buying American horses over the years, despite asking properly and politely we have not received anything by way of sponsorship.

Near Chesterfield in Derbyshire a holiday resort is being built, something similar to but much more expansive than Center Parcs, which will incorporate a 5/8ths mile /1000m AWT which will lock into a huge dome with unbelievable viewing vantage points. The design has been dubbed the "Coliseum Concept" because part of the dome wraps around the track like a Roman Chariot Racing stadium. It will be multi-disciplinary and is being set up to host major racing events. You will never have seen it's kind before. It's impact will be immense and the man behind it Rupert Carr will make

it happen. It will be operated by one of the country's leading Events/Sporting promoters and hopefully will open in late 2017. I have been involved in this project for many years and am so proud that it is going to happen. Just today Peter Bradder of Brywins Tonto fame and I have been discussing and sourcing surfacing stone for the track. If

the Lanark project progresses as Eck Taylor tells me it will, we will have five major venues which coupled with our best grass tracks will enable us to go forward. We have the horses, we have people with the right skill sets. We can do this thing.

Gordon Garnett
