

EDITORIAL

There is a common understanding between reporters and journalists that bad news sells better than good and that it's easier to report on. I'm sort of in that situation. An editorial usually takes me ten minutes to knock out once I have the germ of the idea and have planned it out in my head. Not this one, it's the third attempt.

Racing for 2013 got off to a good start with the odd show of the sun accompanying the Penalty Free. Baby Rosa proved she has still got 'IT' by beating the boys in the Senior Welsh Dragon and the local bred Infinatey took the Spring Handicap. The likes of Ayr Mission and Vyrnwy Saddlepan put in good performances at York going under 2 minutes in May, showing great potential for the season there. The races at Tir Prince were also quick paced with Ayr Mission again getting close in 2m1.3 and the great Irish "Dollars" stopping the clock in 2mins dead. All good preparation for the Crock of Gold later in the season. Amman Valley has been resurfaced and work is ongoing on the clubhouse. Racing there is soon to be covered by S4C, which will showcase the great new facilities and venue. Corbiewood, after all the uncertainty, got off the mark on 9th May and with the new track surface racing there is going

well embracing some conditioned racing to accommodate their horses. The fixtures at Haugh Field have given the high grade horses some experience on grass before the likes of Musselburgh and Tregaron are upon us. On the grass in Wales and West the racing was plentiful and well supported, with the Appleby Sunday winner Camden Casanova starting his season there. Also on Sunday at Appleby was the return of the Saddle Racing and everyone liked it. Well done to Lauren Moran and Ladyford Lad on their victory. Will saddle racing continue? It might when people realise that there are horses for courses and that some horses are relatively better under saddle. Girls who might not get a drive will get rides. The rain returned to Harness Racing for the Appleby Spring Monday, but it didn't dampen spirits or the quality of racing. Rhyds Solution beat the previous 2YO speed demon Stamp Hill in the 3YO Championship, and William Greenhorn again did an excellent job of steering the Laidler trained Rhyds Ponder to victory in the Final. The track was extremely chewed up after the Monday but the weather held a whole week for the New Fair Trot. The Pacer that has it all, Stoneriggs Mystery, had his first outing at Appleby New Fair where he won the high grade

handicap with ease from a 30 yard trail. The victor in the New Fair Final was the Lord trained Desert Secret. At Pikehall in June the sun stayed with trotting and Stoneriggs Mystery was out again to strut his stuff with stable companion Springhill Alibi running an extremely impressive race. Last weekend York sold out of racecards early on, there were more people at the track than envisaged. The trotters have also been out in force in the early part of the season, with a very notable field of trotters in Ireland for the framers to choose from. With 19 entries to the Roosevelt Series and entries for both divisions of the Prakas again these will be good preparation races. It's great to see the likes of the Cairns family and Steve Lees returning to the training circuits, currently already third and fourth respectively in the leading trainer statistics this early on, the pressure will be on for the Laidler's (first) and David Bevan (second) as well as all the other professionals. Harness Racing also makes a return to Wolverhampton this season in August. Big thanks to all the organisers for the hard work that's gone into securing the fixture. Please come along and give your support. So with horses going well, mares nursing foals in fields with grass and an air of confidence manifesting itself in a manner missing for years. Here's hoping that the weather continues to support Harness racing in 2013!

Two good friends of mine from Australia, Andrew Kelly

CEO of the Australian Harness Racing Club and Geoff Want (former boss of Sky Australia) now Chairman of AHRC are hoping to visit York on their travels this year. They might be able to get some of our best races gam- bled on within Tabcorp in Australia. York is planning a live stream facility so that would enable transmission. Whether it happens or not is a long shot and would be more of what we can learn than what we can earn. But lets say one of our top races caught hold and we got only 3% of a \$100,000 turno- ver...well you do the math.

There are about 15,000 Finnish people in the UK and they have a Finn day in Lon- don. They like racing. They might like our racing. If a thousand Finns turn up be prepared to party.

I had a very interesting dis- cussion the other day. Whilst I never saw an Icelandic horse race, I have seen lots of pictures of them and talked to my father about them. These 13hh pacing ponies were very popular from about 1890 to 1925. They came over by the boat- load and had to be tried before put in training. There was no guarantee an Ice- lander could pace, they ei- ther did or did not. Those that did made successful race horses. Those that did not ended up down the mine. An in depth scientific study has been done on what makes them pace and the gene for gait identified. Known as DMR3T it has two

variables A and C. All Thor- oughbreds and Swedish Warmbloods for instance are CC. Icelandic horses can be AA AC or CC. The Standard- bred tested, both trotters and pacers were all AA. So obviously A carries the pacing and trotting gait whilst C the galloping gait. French trot- ters can be AA AC or CC. AA's break easier, qualify easier and win more money in juve- nile racing. CC's are bad to get going, few qualify and not many win much money. AC's are not great early on but do a lot better as aged horses outperforming AA's as a group. As the French trotter has Thoroughbred blood a lot closer up in it's pedigree than the Standard- bred that explains the AC and CC groupings. The C variant might add tough- ness.

You would have had to be very ill informed not to real- ise that our horses are going a lot better early on but may- be not as tough as an older horse as they were years ago. Our breed is polarising. I knew a few horses years ago that had "other blood on them". A friend of my fathers had some horses which at the 4th remove had some Irish driving cob in there. My Dad hated "half bred blood". A few were good, one some- how winning Musselburgh, some were OK a lot were junk. We didn't do gene analysis then, they were things everybody wore, you didn't go out "dressed up" in them and some girls looked good in them. It's obvious that selective breeding with

continued inbreeding to horses such as Adios and now Meadow Skipper has resulted in a breed dominat- ed by AA's. Probably all our CC's are gone. But what about AC's? We must still have some because we still have horses that don't do a lot at two and three but come on great after four. I might have one at home... but I just wish it was an AA! Before you phone me at ten to midnight and ask where you can get your horse test- ed please bear in mind I go to bed early, I don't have any contact details for the lab and there is a lot more to this matter than the DMR3T gene sequence! The mes- sage is pretty clear, breed the best to the best and hope for the best!

Sweet dreams.

Gordon Garnett