

EDITORIAL

“My father contended that a man wasn’t bad, just because he liked horses a lot.

So I’ve followed his pretext and from a lad have worshipped a horse that could trot”

Those words, preserved in a needle-point embroidery and hung, framed over the door of my good friend Richard Stone’s study at his house in Scott County Kentucky emphasise the love some of us have for the gaited race-horse. Richard has known and worked with the best. He looked after Alert Bret when he beat Nero in their epic race at the Red Mile, cared for Bret Hanover and Abercrombie, worked at a senior level at Castleton before it went into the Ryan family empire and houses Thoroughbredss. He has been to the Red Mile more times than many but when he showed it to me, there were weeds growing through the hallowed straights of the track. Our sport is on the decline in Kentucky but resurging in Ohio with a new track being built. But all of that is irrelevant. What is happening here? We have the possibility of two new tracks at Lanark and Chesterfield. Records fall regularly...Rhyds Art, Rhyds Rainbow, Stoneriggs Mystery and SJ’s Wildcat in Ireland. But prize money never grows.

Of course you know the answer. We do not have either off track betting or totalisator facilities, yet. A few weeks ago I was invited to the At The Races Office in London to discuss Live Streaming of racing through them to bookmakers on line facilities. They like what we have and what we do. This is a long term

option. They believe that in a few years time the bookmakers shops will be dead (along with their patrons) and this will be the preferred online opportunity. Should they take the “product” they need more “form”. The work that Barry Delaney, Kirsty and me did over the winter of 2013 -14 to develop a download racecard which has stacks of information on it goes a long way to providing what punters prefer. But whether they get it or not is hit and miss. Some tracks use it some don’t. I don’t know why they don’t but they each have their reasons. The BHRC has invested in promotion, mainly electronic through Facebook and we see new faces at the tracks and are often asked about form. We can answer them but we shouldn’t have to, Do promoters want more people going through their gates? Do they want them coming back? Does anybody read the Calendar?

Despite doing business for years and years with USA and Canada sponsorship is sparse. A few French trotters are bought and the French subsidise races for these horses. The prize of course is the day when the PMU (French Tote) put a full card on their system bring probably €50-€75k in purse money for 8-10 races...trotting not pacing but not exclusively French horses. That’s some way down the line for both Britain or Ireland but it is achievable. However, the PMU will want “form”. Why are we so against using it? Go figure as the Yanks say.

Winter must be coming because people are starting talking about handicapping. Bob Lee has the best solution, “you can have anything you like so long as my horse stops off the front”. The trotting version of “f..k you Jack, I’m alright!” Much to commend it, to the person who

benefits. I had a long and interesting discussion with Frank Huschka a few weeks ago. He wants some relief for Jack Frost a good but not great horse. Competitive but not winning much. So I put it to him, that if the horse was in a Conditioned Race for aged pacers who had not gone better than 2:00 in their last five races nor won more than £250 would he be competitive? Yes! He replied. Would you take £5000 for him... an even more resounding yes came out. Will you take £1000? NO! came back quickly. What about £3000we'd think about it very seriously was the reply. So would you put him in £3000 claiming races says I? Yes again was the response. So why don't we run claiming races? You handicap the horse yourself and trade is stimulated. You all know my views on the subject. We will not grasp the nettle.

I have been to Ireland a couple of times to race our filly. Difficult for us but warm welcomes and some interesting discussions. Ireland is committed to getting their results to the same

standard we have ours and the IHRC will be working with us in November to achieve that end. Regular IHRC/BHRC meetings are planned to take the sport forward together. However it is the "can do" attitude of the Irish, their commitment to improvement, their pulling together so admirably shown in the Vincent Delaney Memorial weekend and the Christopher Dunne Memorial weekend that impresses and enthuses so much. Thank you very much both Dunne and Delaney families, you honoured your lost ones and honoured the sport so very well.

Where we go is up to us. We could do very well but that depends on working together, promoters, licence holders and governing bodies. That's what we don't do well.

Gordon Garnett
