



# STABLE *talk*

NARS Newsletter - March 2023



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# GEORGE'S COLUMN

**It is my job to improve your social and economic terms and conditions, among other objectives. In real terms that means I am often seen to be giving various bodies in the racing industry a hard time. If a racecourse doesn't provide a free meal and the standard isn't what we expect it to be, that's an email from me with a demand for improvements. If it is a trainer, I want better terms and conditions, if it is an administrative body, such as the BHA, or the ROA, I call for action in a particular area. It is probably fair to say, not many enjoy opening an email from me. I would prefer that not to be the case, but it is part of running a trade union representing the racing staff.**

However, I am about to change tack. It is not some new year's resolution; it is an attempt to focus on the best aspects of our employment. I will continue to campaign for better terms and conditions but I am also keen to promote best practice where I see it, and the enjoyment working with horses can give us.

Thinking about the job we do, and looking at what it gives us, the list is quite an impressive one. Apart from the fact this is a job we choose to do, usually because we enjoy racehorses, the adrenalin rush of riding work and working outdoors, there are several aspects we can often take for granted. The fact is that a job in racing provides so much more than just doing what we choose to do for a living and getting paid for it. The vast majority of us will have started at an early age, 16, 17, 18 are the most common ages of our newcomers. At that time in life, we seldom have a voice, and if we do, we aren't really heard. Racing can give us confidence, it teaches us to be resilient, you simply won't last if you haven't got that steely resolve. Racing can also bring lifelong friendships; our working day often spills over to our social gatherings. For the first time in our lives, we have a pathway forward that we get to choose. We had no choice about school!

As an industry we have a welcoming approach to each other, we don't judge colour, nationality, or gender, if we do judge at all it is on ability to ride and look after a horse. And the horses don't judge, they don't care how you look or what your view on life is, you start with a blank sheet every lot. That's not to say, every horse is a great ride, some will still mess around, whip around, try to bury you, some will kick, others bite, but that's their character, not a view they have of you as an individual. You will learn respect and discipline, sometimes not in the



professional way I want to see those lessons delivered, but none the less, you will learn. You will also develop skills beyond riding and looking after horses. If you don't think you can learn on the job you can look up Racing2Learn, an online learning platform for racing staff, with over 150 courses you can access free of charge. We have our own dedicated charity in Racing Welfare and a trade union that doesn't require its members to pay a subscription. We have a racing Chaplin, Simon Bailey. There are the Thoroughbred awards, previously the Godolphin awards with £128,000 in cash for winners and the two runners up. At times racing can be like living in a drama show on television, the highs are really high, the lows are equally low. I know we ride out in the freezing cold (I still ride out occasionally) and rain and horses need to be looked after every day, hence working over the Christmas, your birthday, anniversary etc. But we also ride out in the sunshine, travel the Country and often the world.

The industry recognises that we need more staff and we also need to continue to address the work/life balance, but work is underway to improve staff numbers which in turn may help me achieve the work/life balance that we need. One of the challenges we have is that our pool of prospective employees is very small. Racing needs staff of a certain weight, and every generation is getting bigger. They need to be resilient and enjoy physical work outdoors. They need to love horses; those requirements alone diminish our potential workforce. Then there was Brexit making it more difficult to recruit staff from Europe. However, despite all our challenges we have a lot going for us. Let's enjoy the best aspects of our employment, while I will quietly deal with the more difficult aspects trying to further improve our lot.

# NARS LONDON MEETING – EC & RCI'S

On the 1st of November 2022 both the Executive Committee and the NARS Racecourse Inspectors met in a joint meeting to discuss all relevant topics.

Alongside the many NARS Executive Committee members and Racecourse inspectors, this meeting was also attended by Aja Hall, Aja is the head of regulations at the BHA, the NARS Financial trustee, Dave Eva and two other active NARS's trustees, Stephen Padgett and Roderick Duncan. Roderick Duncan is also Clerk of the Course at Huntingdon Racecourse.

The meeting kicked off with a warm welcome from George McGrath, he set out the agenda for the meeting which jumped straight into the topic of racecourse facilities. This topic is always an interesting one, with the RCI's strong opinions and views to making all the racecourse facilities better across the board and uplifting standards wherever they go. Due to the hard work and dedication of the NARS RCI's, the provisions and facilities at all racecourses have seen vast improvements over the past years. The main areas that were discussed at length were overnight provisions, single occupancy rooms and the quality and diversity of food offered during race meetings. The discussions continued as Roderick Duncan gave a deeper insight into how the racecourses are run and the challenges that each racecourse may face when trying to improve facilities. This gave a wider perspective and showed that there are many things that need to be aligned before change can be implemented. This meeting always brings forward the opportunity to regroup, focus and plan for a fully packed schedule of racecourse inspections for the year ahead.

From racecourse reports we moved onto the Executive Committee portion of our meeting. This consisted of a very insightful discussion about the BHA's new Code of Conduct, delivered by Aja Hall. Aja explained how the BHA developed this, how it would be implemented into daily life on a yard and who would be

governed by the Code of Conduct itself. She was greeted with positive responses, along with some more difficult questions delving deeper into the framework and how it will be managed going forward from the NARS Executive Committee members. The attendance of Aja Hall gave the executive the platform to raise any questions or concerns they had and enabled these to be answered straight from the source.

The next topic of conversation was the industry wide pay rise that came into effect on the 14th of November 2022. This was negotiated successfully through all the hard work of those that attended the National Joint Council to better the working conditions of racing staff across the board.

The 2022 AGM was next on the list, this was held in Scotland for the first time. Whilst we were up in Scotland, we took the opportunity to visit Nick Alexander's Kinneston Stables, this embodied the ideals of how a yard should be run, with happy horses and happy staff. The welcoming atmosphere meant that all who attended thoroughly enjoyed their visit. On the evening of the AGM many staff members from the local yards came along and got involved in discussions with questions for the guest speakers and George himself. At this meeting we discussed how the 2022 AGM was a great success, but most importantly how we could take this achievement forward and further improve on this for 2023. The executive put forward the names of some locations that we could possibly visit for the 2023 AGM, these were Lambourn, Middleham and Malton.

Other topics discussed were Sports days, Health & Safety – Hi Vis vests to always be worn when visibility is paramount, along with all PPE and the Lambourn Open Day. These will all be covered in more detail in the next meeting.

# CAREERS IN RACING AND NARS

**Late in 2022 NARS teamed up with Careers in Racing to help promote a career in racing at the Horse of the Year show at the Excel, London. It is not part of NARS role to recruit staff into the industry, that lies solely with the NTF, and Racing schools, but there is scope to work with Careers in Racing when they are promoting their work in equine colleges, career fairs and the likes of the Horse of the Year Show.**

I am aware that many will not advocate a career in racing, but it is not a view I share. Since becoming Chief Executive of NARS, we have seen wages increase by an average of 44% since 2015, just check your wage slip from that time. We have also agreed a 40-hour working week, after 40 hours you should be claiming overtime. Racecourse canteens have improved, meals are free, and staff are better respected than ever before. We still have much to do, but we are making progress and if we want racing to remunerate and look after the staff it is beneficial if trainers can recruit more staff to reduce the pressure on the current workforce.

The experience at the Excel was really inspiring, many kids from the age of 3 or 4 years old to teenagers, enjoyed riding the equiciser and every one of them was surprised at how short the stirrups were as most of them have ponies, but they are not used to riding at anything other than full length. It was both amusing and touching to watch, but what really surprised me was the amount of interest the Careers In Racing stand got, without the equiciser I doubt anyone would have stopped, but with it we often had 20 to 30 in a queue.

It remains to be seen how many kids that were interested actually look at getting into racing but a few were already signed up for a course at one of the Racing schools and we were able to tell them what to expect and especially the difference between a Racing school set up and a fully operational racing yard, one is 10 mph, the other 100mph, and to try to be ready for it. Manning the stand also gave me an insight into how hard they work and the amount they must

cover, as well as NARS, they were also assisted by staff from the National Horseracing College. I hope this will be the first of many occasions when we are able to help promote British Racing and Careers in Racing.

Below are the accounts of Julia Bennet (NARS Vice President, Regional committee member, and Racecourse inspector for NARS) and Greg Davis (Executive committee member, regional committee member and NARS Racecourse inspector) gave when volunteering at the Careers in Racing stand at the Excel.

Julia Bennett: Not being one to shy away from new challenges I signed up right away to do a shift on the Careers in Racing stand at the London Excel centre. I arrived and met Michelle Douglas from Careers in racing followed quickly by meeting my co-workers Amelia from the NHC and Graham, a BHA clerk of the scales. After a very quick briefing, Michelle left and there we were, suddenly realising we are running the stand and there's an enormous number of visitors to speak to. Help!

But, talking about what a career in racing has to offer was so easy and it became a real pleasure to share stories from our funny little world with a whole new audience. The fact that there are so many different ways to be involved makes it a proper "all comers" industry and I for one can easily and honestly share what a good life can be carved out of a career like this. A real highlight for me was a visit from a young lad who started riding at the now infamous Park Lane stables in London and is due to start his time in the pony racing academy next year. What a lovely young man with great riding skills already and a fantastic attitude which will surely take him a long way. I wonder what he might be doing now were it not for finding out about horses and racing.

Greg Davies:

I must have been excited at the prospect of my shift on the careers in racing stand as I arrived rather too early on Saturday morning. The exhibitor area wasn't yet open, but it gave me a chance to find everything in my own time.



Jemma, arriving at the correct time, gave me an insight of what to expect and then Suzie (NHC) joined us.

Jemma was very busy with the equisizer as soon as a queue formed, and the time passed very quickly. Jemma took a well-earned break, and then Suzie and I did a bit with an endless stream of enthusiastic children wanting a spin on our horse.

Suzie has had an interesting career path in racing and teaching. It was good to hear a bit about her work.

I took a spell helping the children on the horse, and I really enjoyed it. Watching their, in some cases, initial apprehension, turn into smiles as they grew more confident.

I did get asked occasionally for details of BRS/NHC by parents with older children, but not a huge amount.

I took a break from the stand around 1pm, as I hoped to sneak a quick look at Charlie Appleby's daughter Emily who was riding in a show jumping class around that time. At that time, Michelle Douglas rang and said she was stuck in traffic and wouldn't make in time for her 2pm slot in the Q & A in the live zone. She asked if we would collectively stand in for her.

Suzie offered to manage the stand, and Jemma and I went to the Q & A. We explained to the MC the slight change of line up, and he was great. The Q & A also involved The Ebony Horse Club, Riding for a Dream Academy, and Careers in Racing.

The microphone was passed around each of us and we were each given a lead in question to respond to. Jemma gave a great insight into her career and the battles that professional female riders faced when she was breaking through.

The other representatives from the Ebony Horse Club and Dream Academy spoke well and it highlighted that if you enjoy something, you can always find a way to overcome whatever barriers or challenges are put in your way.

The spell in the live zone was short and sweet, but afterwards it felt quite good to have stepped up when Michelle needed us to.

My thoughts on driving home. I'd met some nice people. Seen a lot of very happy children.

Volunteering always feels good for the soul, and if even a tiny proportion of the many children who rode our horse that day "get the bug" for racing, it will be a job done!

Roll on next year.



# 2023 THOROUGHBRED INDUSTRY AWARDS

## (FORMERLY THE GODOLPHIN AWARDS)

This year's awards were held at York racecourse, a change from the last two years which were virtual events. Prior to that the awards were held in the Jumeriah Carlton in London.

From a NARS perspective and many across the industry, this is the best awards night in of the year, rewarding those remarkable and most deserving people, those that give love, passion and dedication to the horses in our industry.

With £128,000 in prize money to be distributed across the eighteen finalists across six different categories, everyone was being rewarded in some way on the night.

Each person on the shortlist of three had already made it through two stages of the judging, with two different judges at each stage putting them through. Then a final two different judges to select the winner of each category on the morning of the awards. In total, there are 6 different judges for each category. One of the most difficult jobs for the judges is the first stage when we can only judge on the paper nomination. We still get some nominations that are no more than a few lines, others are really well written, but as a judge you are at the mercy of how well written the first nomination is put together.

The Overall Employee of The Year is decided from the winners of the four categories comprising of

Rider/Groom, Dedication, Stud and Leadership. With all judges from the panel deciding on the winner.

Congratulations to all the award winners on the night.

### **David Nicholson Newcomer**

**Winner: Ryan Kavanagh - Amy Murphy**  
Runners up: Amie Grieve - Rose Dobbin, Stephanie Wing - George Scott

### **Leadership**

**Winner: Sarah Guest - John O'Shea**  
Runners up: Jessica O'Keefe - Venetia Williams, Becky Smith - Micky Hammond

### **Rider/Groom**

**Winner: Amy Vickers - Harry and Roger Charlton**  
Runners up: Rita Gillies - Lucinda Russell, Emma Tully - Susan Corbett

### **Stud Staff**

**Winner: Bethan Byrne - Godolphin Management Co Ltd**  
Runners up: Davina Burrows - Deerfield Farm, Andrew Rawlin - Blue Diamond Stud

### **Dedication**

**Winner: Claire Ricks - Marco Botti**  
Runners up: David Crofts - Marcus Tregoning, Patrick McConville - Hascombs & Valiant Stud

### **The Community Award**

**Winner: Gay Kelleway - For her work supporting Ukraine**  
Runners up: Jo Foster - Jo Foster Racing, Margo Walsh - The Jockey Club

### **2023 Employee of the Year**

**Sarah Guest, John O'Shea.**



Ryan Kavanagh



Sarah Guest



Amy Vickers



Bethan Byrne



Claire Ricks

*Congratulations*

Photograph of The Year - Anna Malmenlid



Will Hughes



Shona Murphy



Beth Howard



Karen Davies



Michelle Bentham



Caroline Kelly



Lin Thomson

# MENTAL HEALTH & ADDICTION IN RACING

This is something that apparently is being addressed and has things in place to help lads and lasses in racing when they are struggling and need help, however I strongly believe that what they are currently doing just isn't working or working well enough. Having people sat in an office waiting for you to go out of your way and put effort into taking the first step by starting a conversation isn't enough.

If you do push and ask for help you are then passed onto a therapist or councillor that's unlikely to be face-to-face and probably miles away. These professionals are undoubtedly very good at their job but unless you have lived and worked in the racing industry you will never understand what it's like.

Our jobs are nothing like anything else in the world. I'm not saying working in the industry is bad, I've had some of the best times in my life through racing, but also some of the toughest. Explaining your situation to someone who hasn't lived it is hard, coming up with suggestions like "why don't you speak to your boss and ask if you can just go in at 9am" or other things that could very well help and work in a normal Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm job just can't work in a racing yard.

We need boots on the ground going into yards and being easily accessible for lads and

lasses to talk to about anything. People that know exactly what all these people struggle with and have struggled with themselves, not a suit that hasn't walked a yard in our shoes. Mental health is hard enough to talk about to a complete stranger, let alone drug and alcohol addiction.

I've struggled with both, and I know the only people I could talk to about this were people that had already openly admitted they had a problem and were in recovery as I knew I would not be judged or looked down upon for having the disease of addiction. There has been a lot of drugs and alcohol in racing for a long time and unfortunately, I don't think it's going to go away anytime soon. It is a culture surrounded by drinking and gambling, but we need to do something about helping the people that need it. To not feel like you're being judged and given the help and advice so many clearly need, addictions are not always, but often an underlying problem when it comes to mental health.

**By Sam Warren**

*NARS would like to congratulate Sam on not only speaking out in support of staff and his own journey, but also for enrolling on a Counselling Course with West Suffolk College, keen to help, learn and understand, looking to help give back to the industry.*

# NATIONAL HORSERACING COLLEGE

NARS has a history of working with both the British Racing School and the National Horseracing College as we deliver a talk to all the graduates getting placed in yards and the current staff on yard managers courses, as well as the secretaries, trainers' modules, and assistant trainers' course. We are also very fortunate to have Stephen Padgett, Chief Executive of the NHC, to be one of the NARS trustees.

For the last two years we have been sponsoring merchandise prizes for the top learners at the NHC on their graduation, so when we were approached with a request to consider funding an improved and updated recreational room in the college the NARS Executive Committee was pleased to be able to help. They considered the fact that the students

would be away from home for the first time and if they can have a space where they can relax or play pool and table tennis it would be so much the better. We will also support the newly installed Smart Boards which are a necessity in any school these days.

We have all seen first-hand the young students coming from the BRS or NHC and how hard it can be for them. I am also aware that it can be difficult to pass on any advice to the younger generation. Please bear in mind those graduates will probably only have about 12 weeks experience on racehorses and many of the ex-racehorses used will not be as challenging as the ones that they are now riding. Please try to be patient, we were at that stage once upon a time as well.

## KNOCK IT OFF.

The cost-of-living crisis has impacted every aspect of our lives, from the fuel in our cars to the cost of a loaf of bread. By now you will have seen the various adverts advising us to try and make some simple changes to the way we might do things at home. Suddenly just turning off the lights when you leave a room, turning down the heating a notch and turning off the telly when you're not watching it or are in the room. As somebody who is guilty of all the above, I have had to change quite a bit, but it does make a difference. So, if turning off the

telly makes a difference just imagine what a difference turning off all the lights in a horse's stables would make as you pull out. Again, I am guilty of not previously thinking about this, the horse walker is a huge user of electricity but that's not something we can turn off, but if I had a pound for every time I saw one walking around on its own I would be rich. If we can take our reduced use of electricity in our homes to the workplace it will help the environment as well as the business.

# NARS 2022 WINNERS'

Chris Durham - Warwickshire  
Richard Conway - Ripon  
Ben Corke - West Berks  
Ryan Tate - Newmarket



# NARS GOLF SERIES

Every year NARS has built on the success of our golf days. In addition to the golf days, we also host sports days and quiz nights. We are keen to hear of any reasonable suggestions for activities and evenings racing staff may enjoy, please email [admin@naors.co.uk](mailto:admin@naors.co.uk) with any ideas.

The golf days allow the staff from a variety of racing yards around the Country to enjoy a friendly but competitive environment with friends on a social occasion, a welcome break away from the constant demands of our working lives.

I am pleased to announce the booking of the popular West Berks GC (May 23rd) as the setting for our first qualifier on the road to the Warwickshire for our final. The staff in and around Lambourn and the M4 corridor enjoy their golf and competition is fierce for a top ten spot that guarantees a place at the Warwickshire for the final.

We then move to Newmarket Links GC (July 10th) for our second round, as it is Newmarket with the largest population of racing staff we are often oversubscribed, our maximum is 40, one year saw 54 entries!

The third qualifier is in the North of England and will be held at a new venue. On the 31st of July. We have selected Darrington Golf Course, as this is more central to the yards based in the North. We had previously played at Ripon GC, a lovely venue and an incredibly warm welcome from all the staff there. However, we have always struggled with numbers in the North, it may be that there are fewer staff who play golf in the North, it could be that they generally work longer hours riding out more lots than would be expected in Lambourn and certainly Newmarket, but in order to get some respectable numbers of players I needed to do something different. If we continue to see less enthusiasm for golf in the North, we will plan another event that might be better received, again, any suggestions are most welcome.

As I said earlier, I am always keen to build on our projects and increase our reach. So, this year, I am reintroducing the racing staff Ryder

Cup competition. We first held this in 2013 and it was a huge success. As the golf days grew in popularity, we struggled with just having 24 golfers enjoying the last golf day, so we replaced it with the Finals which allows for 40 players. We are now in a position due to the generous sponsorship from Morrish solicitors, the Jockey Club and NKT, our independent financial advisors to bring back our Ryder Cup format. This will be a 5th day and is in addition to the Warwickshire Finals Day, which will take place on the 22nd of August.

The Ryder Cup Day will be played on the 26th of September at The Vale. This is down the M4 and actually in Wales, it is the host to the Welsh National (golf, not the racing National!) and is a PGA course. I have challenged the PJA, professional Jockeys Association to our contest and await their response. I like the idea of racing staff taking on their fellow professionals, the Jockeys. The 12 players from NARS will be the top ten from our final's day at the Warwickshire, a Captain (playing or non-playing) and one wild card pick.

If the PJA cannot accept our challenge, I will review the qualifying criteria for racing staff, with an option for more players to qualify for the Ryder Cup day from the qualifying days. My preference is to challenge another association within racing. We can also look at a North versus South, but we have previously struggled with players from the North. Either way, this is an exciting addition to our golf days.

I hope it is well received and enjoyed by all the hard-working racing staff.

Tuesday 23rd May - South Qualifier  
West Berks

Monday 10th July  
Midlands Qualifier - Newmarket

Monday 31st July  
North Qualifier - Darrington

Tuesday 22nd August  
NARS Final - Warwickshire

Tuesday 26th September  
NARS Ryder Cup - The Vale

# NARS EDUCATION PROGRAMME



## ANNA MALMENLID AWARDED PHOTOGRAPH OF THE YEAR FOR 2023

The National Association of Racing Staff hosted their second annual Photography Exhibition for those that completed the Equine Photography course in January. An evening for the eight students to showcase the work they have produced during the ten-week course.

The course began in September and whilst some afternoons were in the classroom, we were very fortunate once again to have some fantastic trips out for the students to put their skills to the test.

The trips included on the course firstly began with an afternoon at Tattersalls, an opportunity to take all different types of pictures, then followed an afternoon at the Rowley Mile racecourse and some faster paced photos. The next trip was a very wet morning on the gallops here in Newmarket before heading on to James Fanshawe's Pegasus Stables. The final visit of the course was a trip to Dalham Hall Stud, the highlight however was the

staff there parading a couple of the stallions for the students to photograph.

The course wouldn't be what it is without the help of those opening their doors and allowing our students to take the photos they can, so a huge thanks go out to Tattersalls, Newmarket Racecourse, Jockey Club Estates, James Fanshawe, and the team at Dalham Hall Stud.

Each student was tasked with whittling down what they had taken to selecting their six best photographs, with one of those to be put forward as their number one, which was displayed on a canvas for the evening.

The first award of the Evening was a People's vote, giving all the guests in attendance an opportunity to pick their best canvas, and with all the votes counted it was Karen Davies from Racing Welfare who secured that prize.



The two main awards of the evening were judged by Dan Abraham, the racing industry renowned photographer and Deborah Barton the Assistant Principal for Adult Learning at West Suffolk College.

The award for Best Portfolio, covering all six photos on display went to Beth Howard. Beth has recently begun a new role with Amo Racing. She produced a good variety of pictures and the skills learned on the course are now being put to good use in her new position.

The main award of the night was the 2023 Photograph of The Year, and this went to Anna Malmenlid who currently works for Dylan Cunha. Anna was recovering from a broken ankle last year when she saw the photography course advertised and she decided to jump at the opportunity. Anna showed great progression throughout the course and went on to produce a brilliant reflection picture of Dubawi.

The main prize of a colour printer was donated by Canon, who also supply the cameras and lens at a really competitive price (NARS supply the equipment, we never charge the staff for anything). The course itself wouldn't be possible if it wasn't for the funding and support from the Racing Foundation, as well as the delivery of the course by West Suffolk College and tutor Phil Morley.

Congratulations to all eight students for completing the course and producing some fabulous pictures.

For anyone wanting the same course in your area please get in touch, we have the equipment and as long as we have enough uptake, we can bring this to you!





**nars**

National Association of Racing Staff