

# In the Klarion Spotlight



## THIS MONTH: CHARLIE JOHNSTON

**M**ANY of our readers may know that, before beginning a career as a trainer, Mark graduated with a degree in Veterinary Medicine from the University of Glasgow, and then embarked upon a spell in practice as a vet, prior to the acquisition of his first racing yard at Bank End Stables in Lincolnshire. Mark and Deirdre's eldest son, Charlie, has been interested in all aspects of racing since, as he puts it in this month's Spotlight, 'day zero'. Charlie chose to follow in his father's footsteps by attending the

Glasgow Vet School and he is now in his final year. He's a familiar face on our racecourses as he has been saddling for MJR for some years, and also to television viewers, having been a guest on Channel 4's The Morning Line on a number of occasions as well as being interviewed during racing. A sports addict, he is interested in a variety of sports, and plays rugby for his university team and Wensleydale, his local team. In his lighter days he used to Point-to-Point and rode a number of winners at several northern courses.

**Date and place of birth:** October 4, 1990, in Northallerton, Yorks.

**Status:** Single.

**How, and when, were you introduced to horseracing?** On Day 0...I didn't have much choice in the matter! I learned to read off the back of the Racing Post!

("Actually," Mark recalls, "I'm nearly certain it was the Racing Post that first introduced colours on the back page in 1994. The first words he learned to read were Carson and Hills, both in Sheikh Hamdan's colours.")

**And to MJR?** Same as above, but I have been riding out with the string since the age of 12 and saddling at the races since I was 17.

**What is your main occupation?** Final year student at the University of Glasgow, reading Veterinary Medicine. Holidays are spent with MJR which mainly involves representing the yard at the races and assisting dad at the yearling sales.

**If you could choose any other career, what would it be?** I would have done something finance-related in the City.

**Where do you live and what took you to that area?** I split my time between



Charlie aged seven

Middleham and Glasgow.

**What was your most exciting racing moment?** The whole day, from start to finish, when Attraction won the 1000 Guineas at Newmarket was just incredible.

**What is the best horse you have been associated with?** In my slightly lighter days, I got to ride good

horses such as Pearl Of Love, Soapy Danger and Sea Lord on the gallops.

**Your racing colours, and why did you choose them?** When pointing, my colours were blue with white cross belts and white sleeves, to replicate the Scottish Saltire.

**What racehorse name do you wish you had thought of?** I think Paul Dean's method of naming horses after people that he thinks should have been knighted is fantastic.

**The best race you have won and what it meant to you personally?** I managed to ride a handful of winners point-to-pointing which always gave me a great buzz. Winners for MJR at the top level or at the big festivals mean a huge amount too.

**Choose one race to have replayed on**

**TV.** It has to be Attraction's win in the 1000 Guineas of 2004.

**The race you would most like to win.** The Derby.

**What is your favourite holiday destination?** Anywhere in the Alps with good skiing - and very good après ski!

**Place/s you most want to visit?** Flemington, on the first Tuesday in November, for the Melbourne Cup!



Charlie on board Tacolino

**What is your favourite sport outside racing?** I am something of a sports fanatic and follow pretty much all sports to varying degrees.

**Other recreations?** I play rugby for both University and our local club near home.

**Favourite Racecourse?** Goodwood. Glorious Goodwood is just the most fantastic week of the year. I love every aspect of it, but none more than having winners there.

**Least favourite? Why?** There's no end of tracks I could choose for this, and, sadly, most of our local courses fall into that category. The ground at Thirsk has been bad for a number of seasons and the racing at Redcar is poor.

**What is the last film you saw and film you would most recommend?** I watched 'The Departed' last night, which is different to say the least. 'The Blind Side', a 2009 sports movie for which Sandra Bullock received an Academy Award, is a great film.

**Last book you read and book you would most recommend?** Sadly, going through the Racing Post from cover to cover every day takes up most of my reading time, but I'm now setting about my Christmas present of 'The Racehorse Veterinary Manual'.

**Favourite TV programme?** I like a daily dose of 'The Chase' when I get in on an evening.

**What schools did you attend?** Middleham Primary School and Ripon Grammar School.

**What were your best, and worst, subjects at school?** My best would be Maths and the Sciences, but I hated Art.

**Are you superstitious?** No.

**Lucky number?** 4.

**Two people you would most like to be seated next to at a dinner party?** Ruby Walsh and AP McCoy.

**Do you have any pet hates?** Speed cam-

eras and traffic police.

**Favourite actress?** Angelina Jolie.

**Favourite actor?** Leonardo Di Caprio.

**Favourite author?** Does Steve Palmer from the Racing Post count?!

**Favourite singer/band?** The last gig I went to was Sam Smith, about 18 months ago, at King Tut's Wah Wah Hut in Glasgow, with only about 150 people there. I doubt he'll ever play venues that small again.

**What pets do you have?** None in the flat in Glasgow, but we have three dogs at home.

**What kind of car do you drive?** My Fiesta, 'Racing Stripes'.

**What cd/s do you currently have in your car?** My phone is linked up to my car and I play music through that.

**What station is your radio tuned to?** Radio 1.

**What would be your 6 desert island discs and one possession you would like to have on your island?**

T.I. feat Chris Brown - Get Back Up; Sam Smith - Latch; Mark Ronson - Uptown Funk; Javeon - Give Up; Stevie Wonder - Superstition; Avicii - Dear Boy. Possession? A daily Racing Post!

**A restaurant that you would recommend.** Can't beat our local, The Cover Bridge Inn, with friends on a Sunday night.

**What would you choose as your last meal?** Steak and chips.

**What is your favourite drink?** Well, given the amount of Diet Coke Dad and I drink between us they should probably sponsor the yard. Other than that a pint of Fosters will do.

**Who has had the biggest influence on your life?** My dad.

**What was the best advice you were ever given?** You get out what you put in!

**Tell us something about yourself that we probably don't know.** I follow jumps racing just as closely as I follow the flat.

**Do you have any regrets or things you would like to have done differently?** Definitely not. I am very fortunate and have a fantastic life.

**Do you have a racing hero, human or equine?** Dad and AP McCoy, the two most determined people who have risen to the top as a result.

**Give us some horses to follow in 2015:**

With a higher percentage of 2yos than usual within the string, it will be an interesting and exciting year for the yard. Freight Train and Three Merry Lads are 3yos who suffered injuries last year and could still be anything. Among the juveniles, the unnamed Shamardal filly out of What A Picture has caught my eye at this early stage.



Charlie hoisted aloft as he plays for his local team, Wensleydale RUFC

