

Courses For Horses: A Journey Round Racing In Britain and Ireland

Nicholas Clee

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few mouthfuls of this meal seems to be a symptom of the more depressing aspects of Ayr’.

Given the format of the book, his views are of course subjective, and in this lies the weakest aspect of the book. Happily, there is another more positive aspect to the project; Clee skilfully weaves into the narrative of each visit histories of the racecourses and introduces

entertaining and informative rehearsals of some of the issues facing the sport in recent times. He interviews racecourse officials, commentators, Grand National-winning jockeys and leading trainers, and offers views on racehorse welfare, the whip, alterations to the Grand National, prize-money, and the new stand at the Curragh. It’s all told in a confident style and laced with a gentle sense of humour.

Although the book doesn’t set out to rate the courses he visits, Clee can’t resist naming York and Chester as his two favourite racecourses, and in talking about the Knavesmire track he also discusses some major figures in racing history in Sir Charles Bunbury, Lord George Bentinck and Admiral Henry John Rous.

Given that the book includes a useful glossary of racing terms, I’m tempted to suggest that this book would be ideal for someone who is relatively new to racing but anxious to know more about the sport and the industry that surrounds it. It also includes some fascinating pearls of wisdom; in discussing Doncaster and the St Leger, Clee asserts that no St Leger winner has sired a Group 1 winner for 25 years.

This book makes for an interesting and enjoyable read. It might perhaps have been enhanced by the inclusion of photographs, but for all that readers will find much to enjoy. ■



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