

# Ancient Newmarket Heath gets a new hill

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DAVID Allan of Allan Bloodlines writes about the famous training centre at Newmarket, UK, and a new “fittening hill” planned for horses in this historic town. Allan will write a weekly column for Turf Talk, on Mondays.

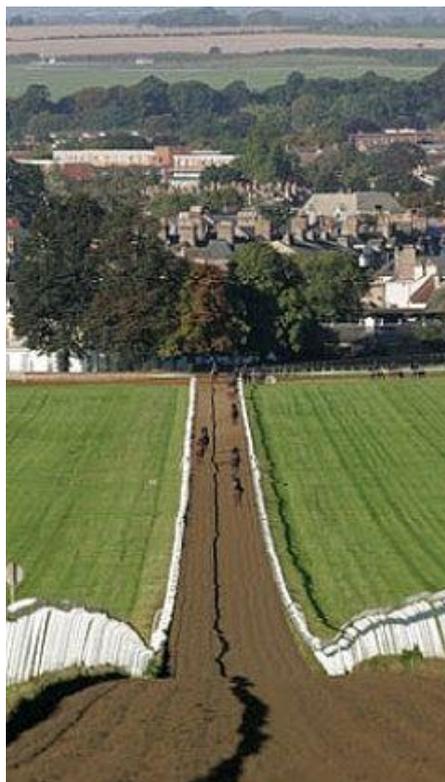
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SA +27(0)21 828 9288 | SA mobile +27(0)72 740 9061  
UK +44(0)1252 646611 | UK mobile +44(0)7774 697640  
davidallan@allanbloodlines.com | www.allanbloodlines.com



*THE gallops in Newmarket Heath take some learning! 2,500 acres of manicured training grounds surround the town offering over 70 miles (112 km) of gallops for the 3,000 horses in training in the town.*

Split into “Bury Side” (seventeen turf gallops and eight all-weathers) and “Racecourse Side” (fourteen turf and eight all-weather) the layouts accommodate strings walking from one side to the other through the busy town on a lattice of horse walks and on the High Street itself. Most of the training yards are in the centre of the town or very close to it, handy for Bury Side. Those on Racecourse Side walk to Bury Side for hills and the Bury Side teams go to Racecourse Side for much but not all fast work.



Warren Hill.

On Bury Side, Warren Hill, Long Hill and Side Hill offer myriad ancient and modern options on turf and polytrack . The busy Al Bahathri polytrack winds by the railway and the evocative Limekilns give seventurf galloping options for different times and conditions. Crowds gather to see the Derby Trial ground in use in May.

Owners love seeing their horses work – many prefer it to racing! Never more than early on the Limekilns before a normal person’s day begins. The invisibly high skylarks’ chorus is the only sound until the thump beneath your feet signals the imminent appearance out of a dip of thoroughbreds working a mile.

Connections keep in mind the relative weights of expert work riders and how hard they are supposed to work, then assess the situation as they flash by watching every stride towards the pull-up areas. Hurry to the warm-down in the shelter of trees to see the effects and hear the riders before they taxi their charges home, letting them stretch their necks and cool down. Owners bond with their horses and their carers when “having a pick of grass” after a wash down at home. Breakfast at the yard sees discussion of plans ahead, formulated together.

Racecourse Side has history in spades. 2,000 years ago Boudica led the local Iceni people to success against the occupying Romans with the great earthwork Devil’s Dyke which borders the July Course blocking chariots. In later history, The Devil’s Dyke had a notch cut out of it to allow heavily laden Wellingtons safe takeoff when “Racecourse Side” was a WWII airfield.



Longhill.

The vast expanse between the straights of the two racecourses provides a training ground that apes the topography of The Rowley Mile and The July Course. Youngster can learn "the dip" or avoid it by working to before it or starting in it. The multiple galloping options each stretch for a straight couple of miles – pick your trip – maybe "Across the Flat" or on "The Summer Gallop", ending as the horses rise to the watchers' skyline and swing left, easing down.

Trainers learn daily what gallops are open, planning their diverse strings the evening before. Turf marked out by the superb squad of Heathmen for use from first light until mid morning is then left for two years before being used again. When the turf is too firm there are peat moss and specially watered gallops as well as the polytracks.

But, as they said in Monty Python – *Now For Something Completely Different*.

Every racehorse training ground in the country has a hill or several hills. Racecourse Side does not have a hill. Racecourse Side may soon have a £10 million fittening hill, especially helping the Hamilton Road trainers. 4½ furlongs (950 metres) long, the gallop is proposed to start at ground level, be taken on the initial rise by a bridge structure, finishing on a mound some 30 metres higher than the starting point. Not quite as steep as Warren Hill, but that may be no bad thing.

King Charles II ("Old Rowley") coped with the Great Plague and the Great Fire of London, the latter in 1666 the year Charles moved the Royal Court to Newmarket. Charles attended training on Warren Hill then. 350 years later, the Newmarket Town Council may approve another hill.

<http://www.turftalk.co.za/ancient-newmarket-heath-gets-a-new-hill/>