

The David Allan Column

Spring Morning Work in Newmarket



Newmarket, UK: Spring in the hub of horseracing.

IF you get involved with racing horses in the UK, you get to see the country by driving a lot of miles, or from the comfort of a train. With 36 flat courses and 38 for jumping (including 19 that do both), owners, trainers, jockeys and managers cover enormous mileage.

At this time of year, even the embankments on motorways are gorgeous – splashed with brilliant blossom while the purplish twigginess of deciduous trees struggles to come into leaf to join their evergreen neighbours.

Driving to see training is something that counts as well, often starting in the dark. Witnessing training ranks high on the list of reasons for owners to be owners.

The fascination lies in glorious early mornings – or in laughing ironically through poor weather; in every gallop having history; in the weight differences between work riders; in chatting with

them as they warm down off the gallop then again when offering your horse a pick of grass back at the yard; in breakfast in the trainer’s kitchen. Then off and away, analysis complete, decisions made, targets identified. Maybe a spot of lunch or off racing somewhere? Or back to the office.

When I had a bunch of horses in training in North Yorkshire, high up on Sutton Bank, a Manchester couple would without fail drive twice a week 90 miles (114 km) each way to see fast work on the edge of the North York Moors, the other side of the Pennines.

They would leave before dawn and be back at work in Manchester by 10 am. For me, it meant a 4 hour drive the afternoon before, nearly always worth it and not only because of dinner in an **(to page 2)**

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