

Hamilton Park

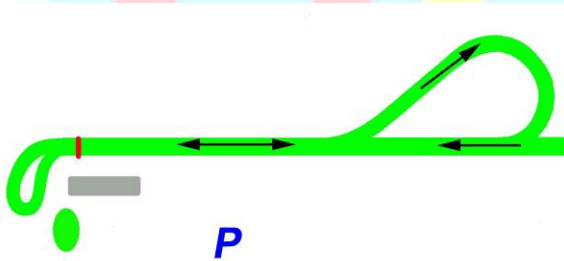
Location, Parking and Access



Hamilton is located 12 miles south east of Glasgow, near to Motherwell. It is close to Junction 5 of the M74, follow the signs for Hamilton on the B7071. The road outside the course is a dual carriageway and lane controls are introduced on race days. Parking is generally on hard standing although it is uneven and puddles seem to be prevalent. Parking is free.

Public transport access isn't easy. From London either fly to Glasgow then take the air-coach to Glasgow Central station. From Glasgow Central (low level) take a train for the half hour journey to either Hamilton West or Hamilton Central (four trains an hour). Hamilton West is the closest station and is about a 15 – 20 minute walk, there is no taxi rank or bus to the course. Hamilton Central is further away but it has a taxi rank (fare about £5) or buses can be caught to the course (£1.25).

Course Layout



The course is basically a straight 6 furlong track with a loop which is used for longer races. Indeed some races start in front of the stand with horses running the 'wrong way' down the track, round the loop and to reappear the opposite way.

There is a very marked dip halfway down the straight providing a strong uphill finish in the final furlong, which can be very testing especially when the ground is soft. Couple this with a steep descent at the beginning of the straight the course is like an equine roller coaster.

Late finishing horses can do well in longer races as jockeys can make use of the undulations on the long run in.

Draw advantage: on all races up to 1m 1f low drawn horses have an advantage. The advantage becomes more pronounced on the straight course when the going is soft. (was the opposite way round prior to the 2011 season when the stall numbering system changed)

Admission

Hamilton operates a dual enclosure policy at its seven major meetings. Members (£23 - £26) and grandstand (£15 - £16).

Annual membership: £199 single, £320 joint and £150 junior (age 17-21)

For the remaining meetings there is a single admission price of £13.

Discounts: Seniors **Students** **Group**

Overview

Hamilton Park was the first course to stage an evening meeting, in July 1947.

The club enclosure has some benches ground level but no seating in the stand itself. It has to be said it is not the grandest of enclosures, most of the viewing is on the flat, well more of a slope which does provide reasonable viewing. There is a small tiered section, most of which is under cover albeit rather exposed.



The Dukes Room Bar and Restaurant has large picture windows with good views of the track. With the exception of about 1 furlong of the loop all the racecourse can be viewed from the tiered stepping and the Dukes Room Bar. Viewing from ground level is surprisingly good as well, helped by the angling of the stand and the slope of the ground away from the stands. Even from the rail there is a good view of the straight course.

The Grandstand enclosure has a very similar layout to the club enclosure, the only difference being a large proportion of the ground level is taken up with the betting ring. As with the club enclosure, with the exception of about 1 furlong of the loop all the racecourse can be viewed from the tiered stepping and the Panorama Bar.

Not many racecourses have flowerbeds surrounding the finishing post, or their name emblazoned as a welcome in white stones alongside the final ½ furlong, but Hamilton is no ordinary racecourse. Unusually the most attractive area of the course is behind the stands, with vast lawns and the attractive parade ring.

All the Scottish racecourses are distinctly different from the rural settings of Perth and Kelso to the coastal settings of Ayr and Musselburgh, Hamilton has nothing distinctive about its location, it's effectively in part of greater Glasgow, but that hasn't stopped it becoming an attractive course.

The enclosures are slightly angled giving a good view of the racing, albeit head on, which is the best that can. There is a good range of catering and even the ubiquitous wagons are of a higher standard than most courses. The stands are good and there are expected taking into consideration the layout of the track.

There are no airs and graces ... what you see is what you get.

On more than one occasion in the past Hamilton has faced the prospect of closure, luckily it has survived and a significant investment has provided a good infrastructure with which to move forward. In the 1940's it pioneered evening racing and in it's heyday it attracted crowds of 25,000. To be honest if 25,000 turned up now it would seriously struggle to cope but the few thousand who do attend are well catered for.

Hamilton is one of those courses which are the lifeblood of racing and I'm sure the management would agree it doesn't rate alongside the York's, Goodwood's and Ascot's, however it set's a good standard and some of the smaller tracks should look to Hamilton to see how to operate a good racecourse.

Catering

The premier eating location is the Dukes Restaurant in the members enclosure, offering a 3 course meal with a table. Prices for afternoon meetings are £57 (plus VAT), evening meetings £65 (plus VAT) and the "Super Six" meetings £82 (plus VAT) an extra £10 secures a window seat.

Behind the main stand is a Bistro, open to patrons of both enclosures, offering starters from around £3 and main courses from a very reasonable £4 to £7.

Other than these two outlets catering tends to be from the mobile units. There was a very good sweet stall and a very popular chippie with either

fish & chips or haggis & chips for £6. Next door was a stall selling Aberdeen Angus burgers or steak rolls for a very reasonable £4, a healthier Jacket Potato option for £2.50 or a chicken bap for £4.

It has to be said the food isn't the main selling point at Hamilton, sure the food in the main restaurant and Bistro looked appetising to me, but looking at the paucity of diners in the Bistro the fare on offer is obviously not for your average Glaswegian.

Far more popular was the fish and chip stall which had queues all of the afternoon. The barbeque stall was doing a brisk trade, however it was let down by the fact the food is clearly cooked well in advance. On the first visit I tried an Aberdeen Angus Burger and it had clearly been sitting around for some time as it was very dry and frankly most unappetising, indeed it actually ended up in the bin. Being brave I had another attempt at the same on the second visit and this time the quality was better.

Although the food may not be up to scratch, like a large number of racecourses nowadays, Hamilton certainly catered for those who like to obtain their nourishment in a liquid form. No fewer than six bars advertised in the racecard not to mention several kiosks selling alcoholic beverages as well.

Bitter and lager was selling at £3.60 a pint and water £1.50 a bottle.

Ancillaries

Bookmakers

A very large betting ring and a generous over round of around 1.4% a runner.

Racecard

An excellent card, I would say almost perfect. Plenty of information, editorial and enough information for both casual and experienced racegoers.

The best part of the card were the race details themselves. Really well laid out and, most importantly, all the runners details were visible in a one or two page spread, so all the details could be seen without having to turn the page (This included fields with sixteen runners).

Other courses take note, this is what a racecard should look like and they only charge £2 - excellent.

Toilets

There are adequate toilets, which are clean and modern. A plus point is the toilets are a many points around the racecourse making it much easier to find the facilities when needed.

Parade Ring



The attractive paddock is located behind the main stands. It is of a moderate size, however with no seating or tiered viewing it does get very crowded around the rails.

Also for some inexplicable reason when parading before the race the horses do not use the full outside loop of the paddock but they pass behind the winners circle, thus depriving spectators at one end of the paddock of a close view of the horses.

The pre-parade ring is located adjacent to the main ring.

Non Racing Attractions

At the risk of incurring the wrath of the local tourist board Hamilton town does not seem to have much going for it as a tourist attraction.

However Glasgow is only 12 miles away and offers something for all tastes, be it shopping, history, gardens or just eating and drinking.

Contact Details	
	www.hamilton-park.co.uk
	01698 283806
	Hamilton Park Racecourse Bothwell Road Hamilton ML3 0DW

Ownership	Private
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Fixtures 2012
May 6th , 11th (eve), 18th (eve) June 7th, 13th (eve), 20th & 28th (eve) July 3rd, 13th (eve), 14th (eve) & 19th August 4th (eve), 24th (eve) & 30th September 3rd, 23rd & 24th October 1st

Inspection Dates		
<i>Date</i>	<i>Weather</i>	<i>Type</i>
25/09/06	Overcast but warm, some showers later	6 flat local holiday
24/09/07	Overcast with heavy showers	6 flat local holiday
22/09/08	Sunny and warm	7 flat midweek
19/09/10	Overcast with sunny spells	7 flat weekend
15/07/11	Overcast with showers	7 flat evening