

Hexham

Location, Parking and Access



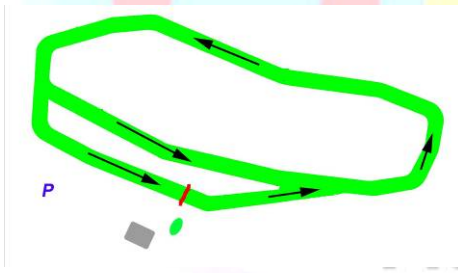
Hexham is located about 20 miles west of Newcastle and the racecourse is located 1½ miles south of the town.

Although geographers will tell you Bath is the highest racecourse in the country, Hexham feels like the highest. I am only half joking when I say it is worth making sure your clutch is in good condition before setting off, as there are some steep hills on the approach to the course.

Parking is on grass and is free.

By public transport the nearest station is at Hexham, on the Newcastle (1/2 hourly) / Carlisle (hourly) line, from where there is a free bus transfer available. A word of warning there is only one free bus transfer each way and when it is full it goes. Coming back you need to be very quickly away after the last to catch it.

Course Layout



Hexham is an odd shaped track with what is effectively two oval circuits sharing the same back straight.

Hurdle races are run entirely on the outer circuit whilst chases are run on the inner circuit, except on the final circuit where the outer course is used. The circuit is about 1½ miles round.

There are some steep undulations, placing the emphasis very much on stamina.

The course is left handed (anti-clockwise) and it stages just jump racing.

Admission

Hexham operates a two enclosure policy. Members costing £18 and Tattersalls £10, seniors £8.

Annual membership: £120 single, £200 double, £105 senior single and £175 senior double

Accompanied under 16's are admitted free of charge.

Discounts: Seniors Group

Overview

If your racing experiences have been confined to the likes of York, Ascot or Goodwood then Hexham will be something of a culture shock for you.

The facilities are rudimentary, shelter limited but don't let that put you off in the slightest.



What you will encounter is a delightful course in an idyllic setting which, many will say, provides the perfect racing experience. Some would say, and it is difficult to argue, that Hexham has the most lovely natural setting of any UK racecourse.

What you will find is a natural amphitheatre offering stunning views of the course, and surrounding area.

Of course the setting comes at a price and that price is you will be at the mercy of the elements, not least the wind the exposed position of the course invariably attracts. However some careful planning of what you wear will easily overcome that slight inconvenience.

The members enclosure is fully in the open with a grass area and sloping embankments. There is a relatively new building housing bars and snack outlets but this is a building with no stepping or viewing areas. The enclosures form a natural amphitheatre and viewing is, on the whole good, the only minor issue being a Tote / Toilet building in front of part of the enclosure which partially blocks the view of the home straight from some vantage points. However it is relatively easy to find a spot with an unobstructed view.

Tattersalls is basically similar with some limited cover coming from what looks a bit like an old school bicycle shed, however it adds extra character to the course. It sounds rudimentary but it somehow does not seem out of place and it adds to the character of the course.

Viewing is again reasonable provided you pick your spot well. There are some garden benches, however these are very quickly claimed and once occupied guarded jealously. If you want to sit you would probably be better off bringing your own seating with you.

Hexham is not your bog standard racecourse, it feels more like a point to point meeting but that is no bad thing and the patrons are generally knowledgeable and friendly.

The midweek meetings are generally quieter and the weekend meetings to attract larger crowds and they can become a tad noisy once the beer begins to flow. Although it has to be noted the weekend I visited coincided with an international football weekend and there was no league football, so I suspect some of the north east football crowd had made the trip to the races.

Let's not beat about the bush - if you go to Hexham races on a rainy day the chances are you will get wet. The quality of the racing is generally not top draw but it can still be competitive and enjoyable nonetheless.

By making the journey to Hexham you will experience racing in arguably the most beautiful setting of any racecourse. You will also experience National Hunt racing as it should be. You will be in the company of true racing fans and, as an added bonus, admission is relatively cheap.

Indeed rustic as their facilities are, the Hexham management team should be applauded for resisting the temptation to go for a boring modern, red brick, stand which would stick out like a sore thumb in such an idyllic setting. The changes that have been made to the course are sympathetic to the environment.

Courses like Hexham deserve to survive and it stages racing in its truest grass roots sense.

If you are ever in the North East try and coincide your visit with a day when there is racing at Hexham. Indeed even if you aren't in the area make a point of visiting Hexham – dress sensibly and you will have a great afternoon's racing.

Catering

There is a Pavilion Restaurant offering a package for £56, including admission and a four course buffet.

Catering is probably not Hexham's strongest point, although (and it took me three visits to discover them) there are some delightful little gems serving simple food tucked away

There is a small cafeteria behind the parade ring, whose tables are quickly filled, but people do tend to move on after eating. Offering a dish of the day £6 (Shepherd's pie with good quality fresh vegetables), Hot Pork Sandwich £4, Salmon Salad £7.75, pint of prawns £5.25 or assorted pies for £2.

Tucked away near the owners and trainers entrance is a little room selling sandwiches from £3.20, soup and a roll for a very reasonable £1.80, pies

for £2 and tea and coffee for £1.50

Due to the course hiding away the delights a little too well the single mobile catering unit does a very brisk trade, with long queues throughout the afternoon. On my first visit the quality of food was appalling, however a new supplier is in residence and the food is of a more reasonable standard. For a single mobile unit it has an eclectic choice ranging from fish and chips (£5), various steak rolls (£4.50), chips (£2), burgers £2.80 (£3 with cheese)/

Bitter and lager were both priced at £3.20, whilst a bottle of water was £1 As I said not a huge range of options but what is on offer is very good value for money.

Biggest disappointment for me is a delightful looking Tearoom, however on my four visits to the course I have never seen it in use – what a pity.

Ancillaries

Bookmakers

A couple of dozen bookmakers were strutting their stuff – OK standing round in the cold. They traded to a very generous over round of only 1.16% a runner. (In one race they were only 0.5%)

Racecard

When the course was first visited the racecard lacked colours. I am pleased to report the course now produce a colour card costing £2, again one of the cheapest around.

It is basic, with no editorial, however it contains all the information required for the races.

Toilets

The toilers are reasonable and are sufficient to cope with the numbers attending a midweek meeting, at the weekend meeting there were queues but not too horrendous. They are clean and the water was very hot!!!

Parade Ring

A small, very basic, paddock which also serves as a pre parade ring. The strangest aspect is that it is located on the side of a hill so the horses, when parading, are alternating between walking uphill and downhill, a strange preparation for a race.



having a look at.

Non Racing Attractions

Hexham is a small, but delightful, market town and well worth a stop off.

The scenery in the area is stunning and should not be missed. If you prefer some razz in your life there is always Newcastle.

Contact Details

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Ownership	Private
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Fixtures 2012

Hexham racecourse, for reasons best known to themselves, have declined to give permission for their fixture details to be used on the site.

Therefore for copyright reasons fixture information will not be provided.

Inspection Dates

<i>Date</i>	<i>Weather</i>	<i>Type</i>
29/09/06	Overcast turning wet after race three	6 jump midweek
21/11/07	Murky but dry. Misty at times	7 jump midweek
07/11/08	Sunny with a chill wind	7 jump midweek
10/10/09	Overcast with sunny spells	7 jump weekend
05/11/10	Gale force winds with rain	7 jump midweek