

Ludlow

Location, Parking and Access

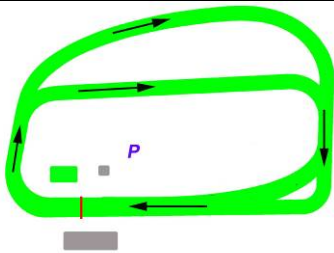


The course is located about 2 miles north of the town and access is signposted from the A49. Ludlow is 24 miles north of Hereford, 39 miles north west of Birmingham and 29 miles south of Shrewsbury.

The approach to the course itself is actually quite surreal as the access roads actually criss-cross the course, on non-racedays and between races these are "normal" local roads. Parking is in the centre of the course on grass, more accurately on the golf course.

Ludlow station on the Newport (Gwent) – Shrewsbury line is 2 miles from the course. There is a single free connecting bus leaving the station ¼ past the hour before the first race, returning after the last race.

Course Layout



Ludlow is a jumps course with an inner and outer circuit sharing a common home straight. The inner, chase, course is 1½ miles round, whilst the outer, hurdle, course is just under 1¾ miles round. The course is generally flat and right handed (clockwise).

The chase course is quite tight with stiffish fences, however despite the tight turns the course does seem to favour the galloping type of horse.

The relatively long run-in of almost a furlong can produce some good finishes from running on horses.

Admission

There are three enclosures at Ludlow. Members (£20), Grandstand (£16) and Course (£10).

Annual membership: £180

Discounts: Seniors Group

Overview

Ludlow has the most amazing grandstand, which wouldn't look out of place on any coastal towns promenade.

Whether it is ideal as a 21st century racing grandstand is another issue, however the course is constrained in there is a railway line running immediately behind the stand so any scope for redevelopment is limited

and would probably also result in the course having to be realigned. I have to add the view from the roof is pretty impressive though.

Having said that, on balance, it is no bad thing to have such an eccentric stand.



The stand, with its cast iron colonnades and flat roof is shared between the Members and Grandstand enclosures. There are a couple of cosy bench seats at the rear in both enclosures and a few rows of seats in the members side.

Viewing from the stands themselves is generally good, although there are some "blind spots" as the result of the infrastructure of the building and the integrity tower. The golf club clubhouse obstructs the view turning into the back straight of the chase course and of the 2 mile 5 furlong chase start. Having said that there is a big screen and plenty of TV monitors allowing viewing of the entire race.

The highlight of the stand though must be the flat roof which, as I have already said, provides excellent views of the course, although there are still some blind spots from the integrity tower and clubhouse. The only downer is the roof isn't covered so if the weather is wet or windy it could be a tad uncomfortable. The areas in front of the stands are shallow and concrete.

The course enclosure is very basic with a small stand and little else apart from a bar / canteen which has seen better days. Natural viewing is limited however it is adjacent to the big screen so races can be viewed on there.

Ludlow can almost be described as being racings old maiden aunt, a tad eccentric but everybody loves her to bits.

Certainly if a racecourse was being built from scratch today it wouldn't be built in the style of Ludlow's grandstand. It has seen better days and I'm sure given the opportunity the executive of Ludlow would like something different.

I must admit my first impression on seeing the stand was one of total incredulity but, you know what, I fell in love with it. It has character, something distinctly lacking in the newer modern grandstands, costing millions into the bargain. The view from the roof is second to none, I I don't just mean of the racing. The surrounding scenery is beautiful, even if the surrounding hills were covered in mist.

The staff were all friendly and welcoming, although the admission process was slightly complicated in that you have to purchase a course ticket to be able to access the car park and then upgrade to a grandstand or members badge at the turnstile. Quite why Grandstand and Members badges cannot be sold at the car park entrance I don't know.

The course makes the best of the physical constraints it faces, with a railway line immediately behind the stands and a busy road dissecting the course their hands are tied. Situating the weighing room and paddock in the centre of the course, away from the stands, on the face of it seems a strange decision. It is actually a masterstroke of planning and makes good use of the available space. There is also an excellently located water jump in front of the stands. Stand next to it, inside the course, and you can get a spectacular view of the jump being taken.

Ludlow is a course that on first impressions you want to slaughter in a review, get under its skin and you quickly fall in love with the place. It is a course of treasure, it's certainly unique – I only wish I lived nearer to it, it's one of the few courses I would actually consider taking out an annual membership.

If they can just improve the range of catering they would have what is pretty close to the perfect course.

Catering

The racecourse restaurant provides a package for £55 a person (£5 extra for a window seat), including Members admission, three course lunch, tea or coffee and the table for the day. Food is of a good quality with a choice of three menus. Subject to availability a table may be available on the day for £35.50, admission not included.

There is a carvery in the Plymouth Stand in the Members enclosure, shared with the annual members and owners bar, offering homemade soup for £3, dish of the day £9.25, Roast Carvery £12.95 and desserts for £3.50. In the bar area there is a large open space with few tables, which prompted some complaints from racegoers.

At the other end of culinary offerings there isn't very much to be honest. There is a very popular cafeteria in the main stand, however if you want healthy eating you will be disappointed as the menu consists of the like Chips (£1.50), Pork Bap – very generous portions (£4.80), jumbo sausage or Bacon Roll (£3.50), burger (£3) or Pasty (£3.25). Although a cup of soup for £1.50 is not extortionate.

There were only two 'mobile' units, both in the centre of the course. A confectionary unit with a limited range, mostly chocolate, of sweets. The gem was the mobile unit behind the weighing room. Badged as a seafood unit it had a selection of sandwiches and cold shell fish (£2.90 - £4.50). However it was doing a roaring trade with its prawn curry (£5.00) and freshly cooked to order steak baguettes (£5.50), burgers (£3.50).

Food availability is adequate at either end of the spectrum, although it would be better if some mid-budget and healthier eating options were available

Lager and Bitter are £3.20

Ancillaries

Bookmakers

The number of bookmakers is in the mid 20's with an additional half dozen in the course enclosure.

Racecard

Cost £2, free with members admission. Like the course there is nothing flash about the racecard. It is functional more than glamorous. One aspect I liked was it did not contain too much advertising.

Toilets

More than adequate ... indeed the gentlemen's urinals in the lavatories underneath the members stand would have any industrial architect salivating in delight at the grand porcelain installations. Conversely the facilities in the new members building are modern, clean and functional.

Parade Ring



A square shaped "ring", unusually located in the centre of the course, which does entail having to cross the course to get to and from the main enclosures, so high heeled shoes probably not recommended for the ladies (or indeed gents if they are that way inclined). Although with a half decent pair of binoculars the parade ring can be clearly seen from the Grandstand roof.

However there is one major minus point with the parade ring and that is the runners parade the "wrong way". In other words they parade anti-clockwise, which means the attendants are inside the parade ring. On a warm day when the horses number cloths are visible it is not a problem. However on cold days when horses are rugged-up it is very difficult, if not nigh on impossible, to see the numbers on the attendants arms, therefore making it very difficult to identify runners.

The paddock can best be described as sparse and functional, none of the old flower border malarkey at Ludlow, however it serves it's purpose well.

There is a separate unsaddling enclosure in front of the weighing room

Non Racing Attractions

Nearby is the cradle of the Industrial revolution centred on Telford. There are many "living" museums in the area, all worth a visit.

Contact Details	
	http://www.ludlowracecourse.co.uk/index.htm
	01584 856221
	Ludlow Race Club Ltd Ludlow Racecourse Bromfield Ludlow Shropshire SY8 2BT

Ownership	Private
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Fixtures 2012
January 5th & 19th
February 1st, 8th & 22nd
March 1st & 28th
April 5th & 29th
May 17th (eve)
October 10th & 25th
November 15th & 26th
December 13th & 19th

Inspection Dates		
<i>Date</i>	<i>Weather</i>	<i>Type</i>
23/03/07	Overcast and cold with some drizzle	7 jump midweek
07/03/08	Overcast, very windy some spits and spots.	7 jump midweek
24/11/04	Overcast with a chill wind	7 jump midweek
17/12/09	Clear but bitterly cold	7 jump midweek
21/10/10	Sunny and autumnal	7 jump midweek
21/12/11	Sunny becoming overcast	7 jump midweek