

# Pontefract

## Location, Parking and Access

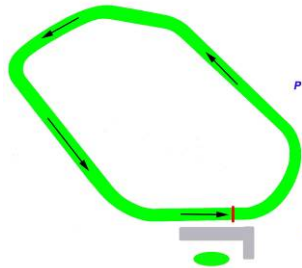


The course is ½ mile from J32 of the M62 and is 10 miles from the M1, M18 and A1.

There is ample parking on grass, located in several areas marked for each main exit route.

There are three railway stations in Pontefract. Tanshelf on the Wakefield line is a short walk from the course, whilst Monkhill station, on the Leeds line, is a mile away. Baghill is the third station.

## Course Layout



It is a rounded hexagonal shaped circuit almost 2 miles round, racing left handed (anti-clockwise). There are marked undulations and the home straight is uphill placing an emphasis on stamina. This means, for example that a horse which barely stays 5 furlongs on a flatter track will struggle here, whereas a horse that is a 6 furlong specialist elsewhere may still do well over 5 furlongs here.

The sprint course is considered to be one of the most severe in the country and it takes some getting, therefore ability to get the distance is paramount.

Draw Advantage: In sprints low numbers have an advantage, except when the going is soft when high numbers are favoured.

## Admission

Pontefract has four enclosures Club (£21), Paddock (£14), the 2<sup>nd</sup> enclosure also known as the silver ring (£7) and the 3<sup>rd</sup> enclosure (£12 car plus four passengers or £5 if on foot).

Accompanied under 16's admitted free of charge.

Annual membership: Single £180, joint (same address) £245

A smart casual dress code applies to the club enclosure.

**Discounts: Seniors  Group**

## Overview

The total length of all the enclosures exceeds 2 furlongs and there is something for all pockets.

The main grandstand is shared by the Club and Paddock enclosures. In the club enclosure it offers a mixture of uncovered tiered viewing with an upper level of seating, some of it under cover. There is a club lawn at the end of the stand with a large number of garden tables and benches. The area in front of the stand is a combination of lawn and hard standing, this area is not particularly wide, meaning the club section of the grandstand is relatively close to the track, providing good close



up viewing.

The stand in the paddock enclosure is almost exclusively tiered viewing and is slightly angled to the track meaning the northern end of the stand is further back from the track than the club end. I say almost exclusively tiered viewing as there is a low bench style seat running along the rear wall of the stand, however although this provides a welcome place to sit it is so low you cannot really view the racing when sitting. The area in front of the stand is mainly lawn with some hard standing.

Both the club and paddock areas of the stand have balconies to the rear and in the case of the club balcony this offers an excellent view of the parade ring.

There are lawned areas to the rear of the stands offering even more bench and garden table seating.

The silver ring has a stand similar in design to the main stand, offering the same configuration as the paddock, without the rear balcony. This enclosure has a massive lawn in front with a small hard standing.



The 3<sup>rd</sup> enclosure is pretty basic being a car park cum picnic area with a single building offering a bar / café / toilet and tote facilities.

The course is set in a beautiful park setting, however this does have some disadvantages. There is a wooded area which means a section from the end of the home straight to the start of the back straight is out of sight of the stands, however this only really impacts races longer than 1½ miles. There are various other clumps of flora which periodically obstruct views,

particularly the first furlong of 1½ races and a section turning out of the far side.

However there is a big screen so the runners can be followed when out of sight.

Pontefract is a lovely course in a pretty setting, although the pretty setting can also be frustrating as the parkland can obstruct the viewing. OK the woods can't be moved but planting of large bushes alongside the far side of the track is thoughtless.

The course is one of the most stewarded I have visited and although very efficient one or two are slightly overzealous and seemed to have dropped out of charm school before completing the training.

OK the points are nit picking, but these little things would make an otherwise very good course an excellent course.

A tell tale sign of a good course is the number of annual members and Pontefract has them in abundance. At both the inspections there was a very good crowd and these were non-holiday season, mid-week meetings.

With its wide range of enclosures the course caters for all pockets.

Pontefract is a charming course and well worth a visit.

### **Catering**

There are three main restaurants. The main dining room in the Club enclosure is a turn up on the day facility with tables allocated on a first come first served basis. The Park Suite, also in club, offers a package for £47 a head (excluding admission) including four course lunch, afternoon teas and balconies overlooking both the parade ring and winning post.

There is a self service dining room in the Paddock enclosure offering a range of main courses for £4.95 - £5.95 (including steak and ale pie, two different roasts, fish pie amongst others), I tried the pie, which was very tasty, however the meal was slightly let down by being accompanied by tinned processed peas!!!

A good range of sandwiches were available for around £2 - £2.50. There were many bars, some selling light snacks. There were mobile units selling the ubiquitous burgers and fish and chips. Burgers and hot dogs around £3.30 - £3.50, fish and chips £5.50.

Bitter was £3.30 and lager £3.40, water was between £1.30 and £1.50 a bottle.

All in all a reasonably good range of food also at reasonable prices.

### **Ancillaries**

**Bookmakers**

A healthy turnout with 38 in the main enclosure, nine in the silver ring but only two in the third enclosure. Betting was to an over round of a generous 1.2% a runner.

**Racecard**

Cost £2 (free if in Club). The card begins with a two page, bicolour, guide to the facilities and general information, followed by a page detailing bars and eateries. There was a guide to the runners at the away meeting, however without any colours, which makes following the race on the big screen difficult without a racing paper.

Then it was down to basics with the cards themselves which were clear and in colour. There was a review of the previous meeting tucked between the first two races.

An adequate, rather than spectacular card.

**Toilets**

Plenty of them and no queues .... the toilet at the far end of the paddock grandstand was reminiscent of my old school toilets ... very nostalgic.

**Parade Ring**

Another of these strange paddocks situated on the side of a hill. A large oval it is functional rather than pretty, with old wooden railings.



The winners enclosure is compact and separate from the parade ring, with some tiered viewing.

Although the area behind the stands is lawned, with plenty of seating, the paddock is plain and uninspiring, a few flower beds would be all it takes to add that something extra and make it more attractive.

**Non Racing Attractions**

Pontefract town itself is a typical market town.

Being close to the motorway network means the cities of Bradford, Leeds and York are in easy striking distance. As is the stunning scenery of the Yorkshire countryside.

<b>Contact Details</b>	
	<a href="http://www.pontefract-races.co.uk">www.pontefract-races.co.uk</a>
	01977 781307
	Pontefract Park Race Co. Ltd 33 Ropergate Pontefract West Yorkshire WF8 1LE

<b>Ownership</b>	Private
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<b>Fixtures 2012</b>
April 10th & 23rd
May 2nd
June 1st (eve), 11th (eve) & 24th
July 2nd, 10th, 20th (eve) & 29th
August 8th & 19th
September 20th & 27th
October 8th & 22nd

<b>Inspection Dates</b>		
<i>Date</i>	<i>Weather</i>	<i>Type</i>
10/07/07	Sunny	6 flat midweek
20/10/08	Overcast with light rain late on	6 flat midweek
07/07/09	Overcast with very heavy showers	7 flat midweek
06/07/10	Sunny becoming overcast	7 flat midweek