

# Thirsk

## Location, Parking and Access

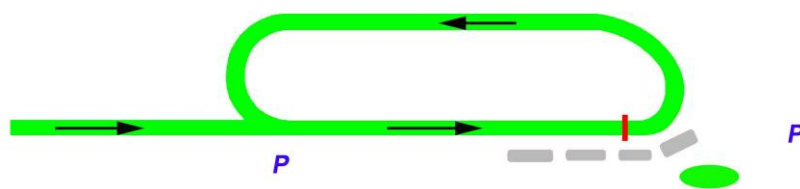


Situated on the outskirts of the town, the real life James Herriot used to be a racecourse vet here. The track is a flat racing circuit.

Parking is on grass and free in a large car parking area. There is a members car park adjacent to the track and the main car park is the opposite side of the road from the course.

Thirsk station is mere half a mile from the course. With regular services from Manchester, Leeds, York and Middlesbrough.

## Course Layout



Thirsk is a left handed (anti-clockwise) oval circuit of 1¼ miles, with an extended straight for

paces up to six furlongs. There are slight undulations in the home straight.

The turns are quite tight although not as bad as they look on the course diagrams. Speedy short striding horses perform better on the round course whilst long striding runners fare OK on the straight course.

Draw advantage: High numbers have the edge on the straight course when the stalls are on the stands side, the advantage becoming more pronounced when the going gets softer.

## Admission

Thirsk has three enclosures Members (£20 - £22), Paddock (£13 - £14) and Family (£6 - £7). In the Family enclosure a car and four adults is admitted for £18 - £20. For the two day meetings a multi-day members badge is available for £35.

Discounts are available for groups of ten or more in all enclosures. Senior discounts are available for the paddock and family enclosures.

Annual membership: Single £155, Associate (husband and wife) £250, Guest (adult and guest) £275 and Junior (17-21) £70

Dress Code: In the Members enclosure is mandatory for gentlemen to wear a collar and tie.

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

## Overview

One of the first things that strikes you when you arrive at Thirsk is how green the course is and I don't mean green in the sense of Northern racing green. As you enter the course you are met by the most beautifully manicured lawns which wouldn't look out of place on the greens at a golf course like Augusta.

I should also point out that the course has nothing to do with any of the major course ownership groups. It is independently owned and one had the impression this independence is something that is and will be jealously guarded. Indeed it is perfectly fair to say the management of Thirsk is very much "old school" with both the good and bad aspects thus entailed.

There are three enclosures at Thirsk.

The members enclosure still retains a strict dress code for Gentlemen in that a collar and tie is obligatory, it doesn't actually mention trousers although it is assumed these have to be worn as well. It is not a big deal if you forget to bring a tie, as I did on my first visit, as it is possible (for a small refundable deposit) to borrow a tie for the evening.



There are two stands in the enclosure. One of which has seating, although unusually the seating consists of wooden benches as opposed to individual seats. Not the most comfortable for a long session but presumably more cost effective. This stand is 100% under cover.

The other stand, shared with the Paddock enclosure offers tiered viewing only and is about 30% covered.

The area in front of the stands is predominantly lawned.

The Paddock enclosure consists of the bulk of the main grandstand which is an attractive red brick stand, covered with massive foliage to the rear. Offering tiered viewing part of the stand is about 30% under cover with the remainder 80% covered. There is a single row of bench seating at the rear of the stand.



A second stand is shared with the Family enclosure, again offering tiered viewing with approximately 90%.

The area to the front of the stand is mainly hard standing although there is a lawned area near the family enclosure end.

The family enclosure, located before the furlong pole is mainly grass. It has the shared stand with the Paddock enclosure plus a second stand, again offering tiered viewing with about 90% cover.

Viewing from all the stands is good with the only "blind spot" being at the entrance to the back straight where a big tree and hedges obstructs viewing of the track, especially from the lower levels of the stands.

This is only a problem with races of a mile or more and is most obvious with one mile races as the start itself is obstructed from view. However there is a big screen available which helps mitigate the problem.

Thirsk is one of those courses where the visual delights are to be found behind the stands. As I have already said there are plenty of lawns here and none more so than behind the stands, accompanied by some well tended flower beds the course is not only a visual delight, it makes you feel relaxed.

Stewarding is firm but polite – including a very strict enforcement both the tie and drinking policies, although the occasional smile would not go amiss.

Indeed talking of drinking Thirsk, unlike many courses, does not strike me as being a "drinking" course. Yes there are bars but they do not dominate. There are some courses where you find a bar wherever you turn, here you have to actively go and find them – personally that is no bad thing.

When carrying out my visit for the review it was my first time at the course for seven years – I came away wondering why I had left it so long.

Thirsk is a delightful course, well worth a visit if you are in the area, indeed it is well worth making a special visit to.

### **Catering**

Thirsk is one of those rare courses where all tastes are catered for.

From the "top" fully inclusive package in the Hambleton Rooms for £72 a head, fully inclusive right through to the ubiquitous burger you will be sure to find something you like.

If you don't wish to book the full package the Hambleton rooms offer an a la carte dining service on a first come, first basis – a members badge is required. Starters are from £3.00 - £5.25, mains from £9.85 through to £14.95 and desserts £4.25 - £4.95. They do boast it is possible to have a three course meal for under £20

There is a cafeteria in the main enclosure serving a good selection of hot main meals for £5.95 - £6.50 each. Including roast, pies, lasagne, a vegetarian option and salads.

There are also outlets selling burgers at around £3.80 and a fish and chip area with fish and chips at £6.20. I can thoroughly recommend the spring onion and smoked haddock fishcakes available from the same outlet for £4.50 (including chips)

Water is £1.50 a bottle, bitter £3.70 and lager £3.80.

### **Ancillaries**

#### ***Bookmakers***

One of the rather disappointing aspects with around twenty layers in the main ring but only four standing in the Family enclosure.

Despite the small number of layers they were betting to a reasonable over round of 1.64% a runner.

#### ***Racecard***

Cost only £2.50, still one of the cheapest around, having said that it wasn't cheap in appearance.

The cover had a really eye catching drawing by Jonathan Trowell and was much more striking than the predictable covers you normally get. Indeed it has worked as a marketing ploy as I am now determined to get a copy of this drawing for my study.

The card itself is well laid out and has all the information you require to make the most of your visit and is certainly as good, if not better, than some cards costing £3 elsewhere.

#### ***Toilets***

There were plenty and all were clean and adequate.

### **Parade Ring**



Not surprisingly the parade ring is very attractive, being a medium size oval situated behind the members stand, but accessible to paddock visitors as well. There is some button seating, albeit rather low. There is some gentle banking of the turf at one end helping with viewing.

The pre-parade ring is very close to the main ring allowing easy viewing and the winners enclosure is in a separate area, near the main ring, in front of the weighing room.

### **Non Racing Attractions**

Set in an area of outstanding natural beauty, the Yorkshire Dales are only a short hop away.

Of course Thirsk is better known to many as Darrowby, the home of vet James Herriot and there is a museum in the town celebrating his life. Indeed the real life Herriot, Alf White, was the racecourse vet at Thirsk for many years.

### **Contact Details**

	<a href="http://www.thirskracecourse.net">www.thirskracecourse.net</a>
	01845 5222276
	Thirsk Racecourse Ltd, Thirsk Racecourse, Station Road, Thirsk, North Yorkshire, YO7 1QL

<b>Ownership</b>	Private
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### **Fixtures 2012**

Thirsk have been approached, on several occasions, for permission to show their fixtures, as yet they have not responded or even had the common courtesy to acknowledge the requests.

Therefore, for copyright reasons, it is not possible to include their fixture information here.

<b>Inspection Dates</b>		
<b><i>Date</i></b>	<b><i>Weather</i></b>	<b><i>Type</i></b>
01/07/08	Warm and sunny	6 flat evening
30/06/09	Warm with thundery showers	6 flat evening
29/06/10	Warm and humid	6 flat evening
19/05/12	Overcast and bitterly cold	8 flat afternoon

