



▲ The combination of a Grade II* listed 18th century country house with an integral Grade II listed grandstand, complete with its original 1882 cast iron columns and awnings, is almost certainly unique in British racing.

For ticket holders, the Brandling Stand terrace provides splendid views across **High Gosforth Park**: of the parade ring (seen here and

opposite, immediately in front of the stand), the main circuit of the racecourse, the golf course and, on a clear day, Newcastle city centre and St James' Park, five miles to the south.

In common with all big city racecourses, several of which, such as at Manchester and Birmingham, closed following reform of the betting laws in the early 1960s,



Newcastle Racecourse struggled to survive in the late 20th century, until in 1994 the estate was purchased by Northern Racing (currently owners of nine other British courses). Since then, corporate and exhibition facilities have been greatly enhanced at a cost of £11 million, while the number of race meetings has increased to some 30 per year.

Of these, the highlight is a three day festival in late June, known locally as Race Week, when the Town Moor Hoppings take place and the big race of the year, the **Northumberland Plate** – known traditionally as 'the Pitmen's Derby' – is staged.

Seen here is the early stage of the 2005 Plate, as the runners speed past the main stand.

First contested on the Town Moor course in 1833, switching to High Gosforth Park in 1882, the Plate is a flat race for three year olds and over, on a circuit just over two miles in length. The winning owner receives a silver salver specially commissioned each year, with the Percy lion, the emblem of the Duke of Northumberland, as its centrepiece.

The 2010 race, won by Overturn, was worth £175,000, and was watched by a capacity crowd of 25,000, with overall attendances during the festival totalling around 40,000.

According to one estimate, this yields at least £4 million for the local economy. Another more recent high point, for local fashion outlets in particular, is Ladies Day in July.