

CHELTENHAM RACECOURSE

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"We chose Hepburn Associates on the sense of their creativity, their imagination and past record. We felt they could articulate and achieve our own vision."
Edward Gillespie – Managing Director, Cheltenham Racecourse.

When the horse racing world descends on Cheltenham for the Festival meeting in March, around 230,000 people visit over the four days. There is more racing on another 12 days of the year but for the rest of the time the facilities are available for everything that the ingenuity of the sales teams can devise. However the marketing of the event venue is connected to the racing. Edward Gillespie is the Managing Director of Cheltenham Racecourse: "We have areas where we need to have high impact, high visibility and high customer appreciation for relatively short times of the year. We are window dressing in the same way as any events venue does but the customer does not care about the business case for investing for 16 days of use. It is unlike a restaurant where you primarily go to eat. Even if you are eating, it is not the reason you have gone to the racecourse. We are therefore looking for consultants who are capable of achieving that high customer appreciation but with a budget that is somewhat more competitive than if we were using the venue for our core business every day."

Hepburn Associates has been involved with various projects on the course for more than seven years. They were first introduced to the racecourse management by the caterers Letheby & Christopher (L&C) when work was required on the stand in the centre of the course. Hepburn's have since worked on the Dawn Run and Desert Orchid bars in the new stand, creating new bars over 60 feet in length and introducing a full Harry Ramsden outlet.

A more prominent project occurred when the racecourse decided to renovate the Gold Cup room. Gareth Evans, Operations Director of Letheby & Christopher: "The room had a very tired décor with worn out finishes. Originally designed in the sixties with a carvery counter for race days, hiding the counter from view for functions was difficult. Lighting was old fashioned and inadequate for events ranging from conferences to cabarets. Three TVs attached to each of the eight pillars were a safety hazard as well as an eyesore. Lots of 'Artex' type plasterwork covered every painted surface, and the dark brown wood cornices, architraves, doors and heating coil covers completed the dated and gloomy effect. As three of the entire wall areas were sliding glass frames to the inside and solid/louvres to the outside, this represented a considerable challenge to the designers."

Hepburn Associates were invited to manage the design and construction project, including sourcing, tendering and managing all contractors.

Edward Gillespie comments: "The 'wow' factor was restored and the refurbishments allowed us to totally rebrand and upgrade the selling and pricing for that room and make it demonstrably the second most expensive restaurant on the site. There has been a very good response and a high level of repeat bookings. Hepburn's did a great job. They were well organized and I like the fact that the entire team was involved in the project at an early stage. It was all well planned and coordinated. I am delighted with the results and we are already talking informally about future projects."



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