

## NEWS FOCUS

## SPECIAL REPORT

In the second part of an investigation into jockeys' welfare, **Lee**



**Mottershead** looks at what happens when a riding career comes to an end

ON AVERAGE, a jump jockey retires at 30, a Flat jockey at 33. They leave the weighing room with not only hopefully more than half a life still to live but more than half a working life in front of them. In that regard, as in so many other ways, jockeys are different to the vast majority of us.

For many recently retired riders the future can be a scary place. A significant number continue to be professionally involved in the sport, including as trainers, bloodstock agents, officials or through working in the media. Others disappear from our consciousness. Whether they remain active in racing or are largely forgotten about, some require help, either immediately or far down the line. Racing often continues to provide that help.

Pat Eddery was never short of people seeking to lend a hand but his story still ended up in the saddest way. The former champion jockey's death in November was followed by his daughter Natasha openly raising the subject of her late father's alcoholism, which became so bad the family was ripped apart.

If family and friends are unable to save a troubled individual, organisations representing a sport would likely also be unsuccessful. However, for ex-jockeys in Britain and Ireland, there is much available help to be had, whether assistance is needed due to matters of health, wellbeing or employment. Sometimes, all that is required is a little company. Even that can be provided.

### Thinking of the future in the present

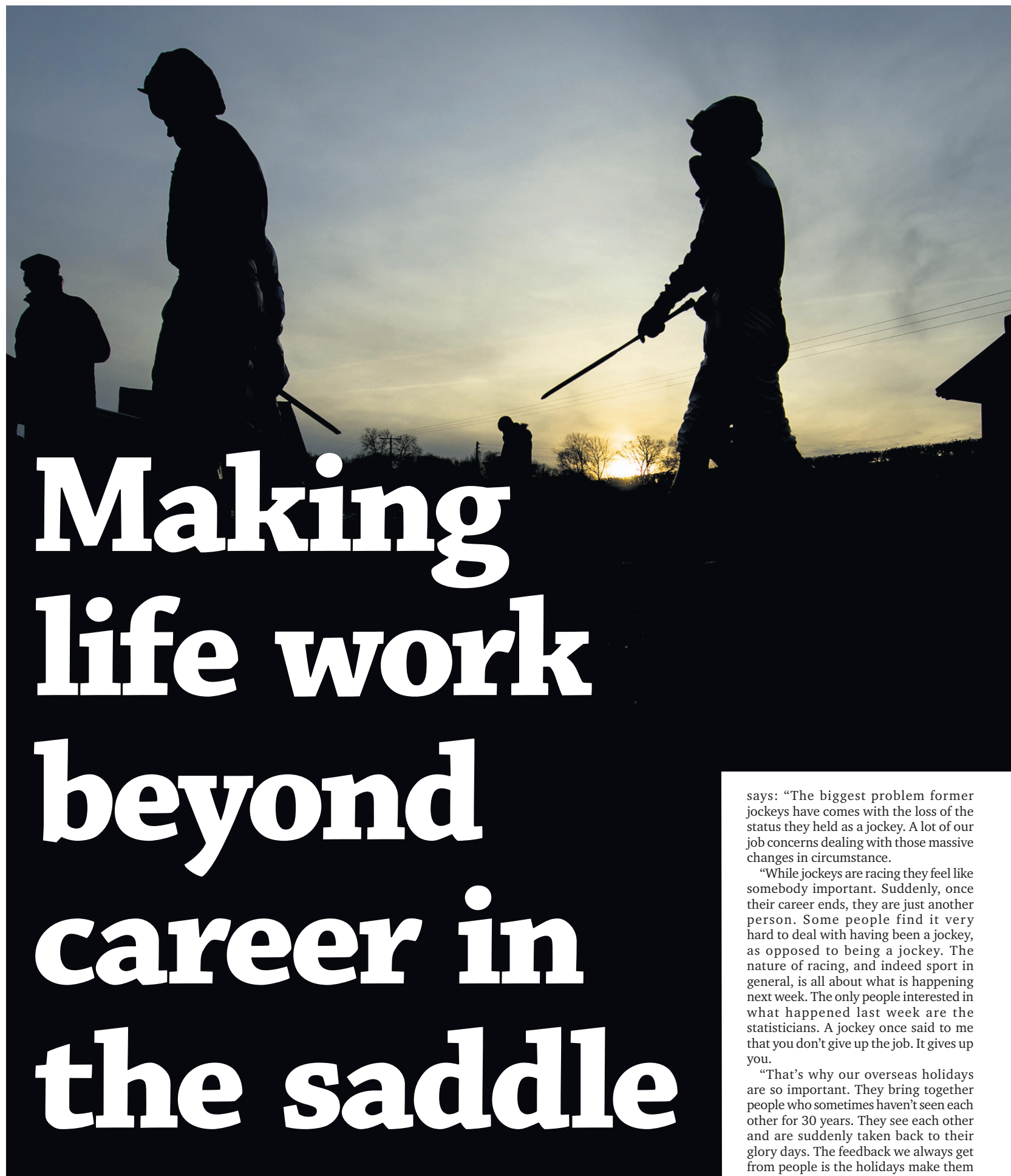
The Jockeys Employment & Training Scheme has been an invaluable asset to members of the weighing room for two decades.

The charity, funded by riders' prize-money contributions and support from the Injured Jockeys Fund, helps current and former riders find employment for when their careers in the saddle are over. Assistance comes in the form of training, advice or grants.

More than 800 people have had reason to be grateful to JETS since its inception. Among those in some form of education currently are Hayley Turner (public speaking), Robert Lucey-Butler (electrical installation) and Emma O'Gorman (advanced cooking).

All three are ex-jockeys, and although an individual who has held a licence can call on JETS at any point thereafter, general manager Lisa Delany is particularly keen to persuade as many current jockeys as possible to think about what comes next.

She says: "The Professional Players Federation did a study that showed the two years post-retirement represent an incredibly challenging and vulnerable time for any sportsperson. Hence, anything we can do to make that transition easier will be of huge benefit, not only to the individual but also to those who might otherwise have to pick up the



pieces, groups like the Injured Jockeys Fund and Racing Welfare.

"It's imperative plans are made before a jockey retires and we have made huge strides in the right direction. From an athlete's point of view, it has also been proven if you have that dual career action plan in place you will perform better because you won't have those worries about the future.

"Ideally we would have every single jockey doing some form of personal development while they're riding. That isn't where we are now, but we've probably had some contact with well over 50 per cent of full professional jockeys.

"Jockeys are becoming increasingly professional and there has been a real change of attitude with younger jockeys. If you can change the culture at that stage it becomes part of the culture.

### Ireland: replicating what works in Britain

Andrew Coonan, general secretary of the Irish Jockeys Association, has been part of the team that has developed a programme for helping Irish-based riders find a next career that bears great similarities to JETS.

"I make no apology for saying we did not try to reinvent the wheel," says Coonan. "We took the UK system as a very good model and, in so far as we can, we have mimicked it.

"We have the Jockeys Welfare and Employment Training system that links up with racing-related businesses or business people and tries to get riders placed in an internship, while at the same time they receive some financial assistance if it's required.

"We currently have one Flat jockey doing an accountancy course partly funded by us. We have another two guys who have returned to college. If someone during the course of his riding career wants to make plans for a second career and needs some financial assistance, or just advice, we have facilities there to help."

### Dealing with a major change in circumstance

No organisation is so famed for looking after former riders as the Injured Jockeys Fund, which as well as supporting those whose lives have been rocked by serious accidents or illness, whether while racing or not, regularly comes into contact with individuals simply missing their former profession.

South-east almoner Lucy Charnock

says: "The biggest problem former jockeys have comes with the loss of the status they held as a jockey. A lot of our job concerns dealing with those massive changes in circumstance.

"While jockeys are racing they feel like somebody important. Suddenly, once their career ends, they are just another person. Some people find it very hard to deal with having been a jockey, as opposed to being a jockey. The nature of racing, and indeed sport in general, is all about what is happening next week. The only people interested in what happened last week are the statisticians. A jockey once said to me that you don't give up the job. It gives up you.

"That's why our overseas holidays are so important. They bring together people who sometimes haven't seen each other for 30 years. They see each other and are suddenly taken back to their glory days. The feedback we always get from people is the holidays make them feel like they're back in the weighing room.

"Most people don't get the buzz out of their job jockeys do, so they don't have the same affinity with how they earn their money. Jockeys do the job because they love it. Realistically, when they stop race-riding it's unlikely they will find a job they can love in the same way. Most people wouldn't find one job in their life they really love. To find two is even harder."

Charnock adds: "Ninety per cent of my work in the south-east is about dealing with jockeys who retired years ago and are struggling with whatever life is throwing at them now. Nobody hears about them or that sort of work because it's not newsworthy and the people involved are often not big names, but they did have rides and they do qualify for our help."