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Terry's life on the Life

I HAD been working as a circulation rep on the Sporting Chronicle, and when it closed in 1984 I joined MGN as a rep in the Yorkshire area for the Sunday Mirror and Sunday People.

Then when Mick Hendry retired as The Sporting Life's south-east rep, I was asked if I would take over his area. I jumped at the chance.

It meant I became responsible for organising the Life's sales at major racecourses – Ascot, Windsor, Kempton, Sandown, Epsom, Lingfield, Fontwell, Plumpton, Brighton, Goodwood, Salisbury and Folkestone.

And for 17 years I travelled to racecourses all over the south east in my trusty Ford Sierra diesel estates – they were great work horses.

My mileage was more than 35,000 a year, and my company cars lasted only two or three years.

There were good days, and bad days. A good day was when it didn't rain. A bad day was when it did.

I had a regular team of sellers each race day. My main problem was keeping my team together.

Their daily pay was just £10 plus

THESE days, racegoers get most of their data and news electronically on their smartphones or iPads; they even bet online. But in non-digital times gone by, a printed newspaper was essential, and there was a network of reps and sellers to ensure a ready supply at every racecourse, every raceday. Here *TERRY PATTINSON reminisces about his 17 years on the road as a circulation rep for racing's greatest daily, The Sporting Life

25 per cent on sales – so wet days meant not too much reward for a really hard day's work.

At Brighton one day it absolutely p*ssed down with rain, and one of my sellers got so wet that he came home in the back of my car in just his underpants.

That would be classed as a bad day.

Another time, at Newbury, the actress Susanna York asked me to show her the way

out. A couple of my sellers saw me talking to her and asked me about our conversation.

I told them she said: "I haven't seen you for a long time Terry, have you got a winner for me?"

One particular bad day I really

want to forget... I scooped up a couple of Life bundles from my local wholesaler, collected my sellers, and off we went to Folkestone races. I set all the sellers up on their pitches and business was brisk.

After about 30 minutes, the punters came swarming back, waving their papers and demanding refunds.

It turned out that the Life bundles I had picked up were old ones – and we'd been selling two-day-old papers.

Folkestone wasn't ever the greatest raceday for sellers, and it was one of our longest journeys.

A few choice words came from the back of my car on that day.

I think the circulation department is a forgotten and under-rated department, so it's good to share



By **TERRY PATTINSON** as told to **CARO CLUSKEY**

some memories of just how hard the work was.

On racedays, the start of a typical working day for me was picking up my order of Sporting Lifes from the local wholesaler at about 6am. Then it was back home for a quick breakfast.

Then it was off to pick up my team of sellers.

With my Sierra loaded with bundles of newspapers, billboards, banners, bags, sellers' coats – plus three or four sellers – there wasn't room to swing a cat, and the springs of my poor old car would be

groaning.

The supply of papers I carried varied, depending where we were selling.

An all-weather meeting at Lingfield, for example – when races took place on a synthetic track – I would take about eight quire (25 copies per quire), but a Derby Day needed 200 quire.

The weight of a bundle would vary according to the paper's pagination, but on average it would be about 20lb – just over nine kilos in today's money.

On a normal day my Sierra would cope with the load, but for glamour days such as Derby Day, Royal Ascot and Glorious Goodwood, I would have to hire a big white van. I employed about 30 sellers on these big days.

On Derby Day in 1995, with the help of 10 agency promotion girls and 30 sellers, and armed with a special Derby Day colour magazine (see below), I sold out 170 quire – 4,200 copies.

That was definitely a good day.

These days if I was selling at the meetings, I think the main problem would be the cover price. The Racing Post today is over £2, and that's a lot for a casual sale.

I'm now enjoying a peaceful retirement, with an occasional day at Salisbury or Bath races to remember life in the good old, bad old days.

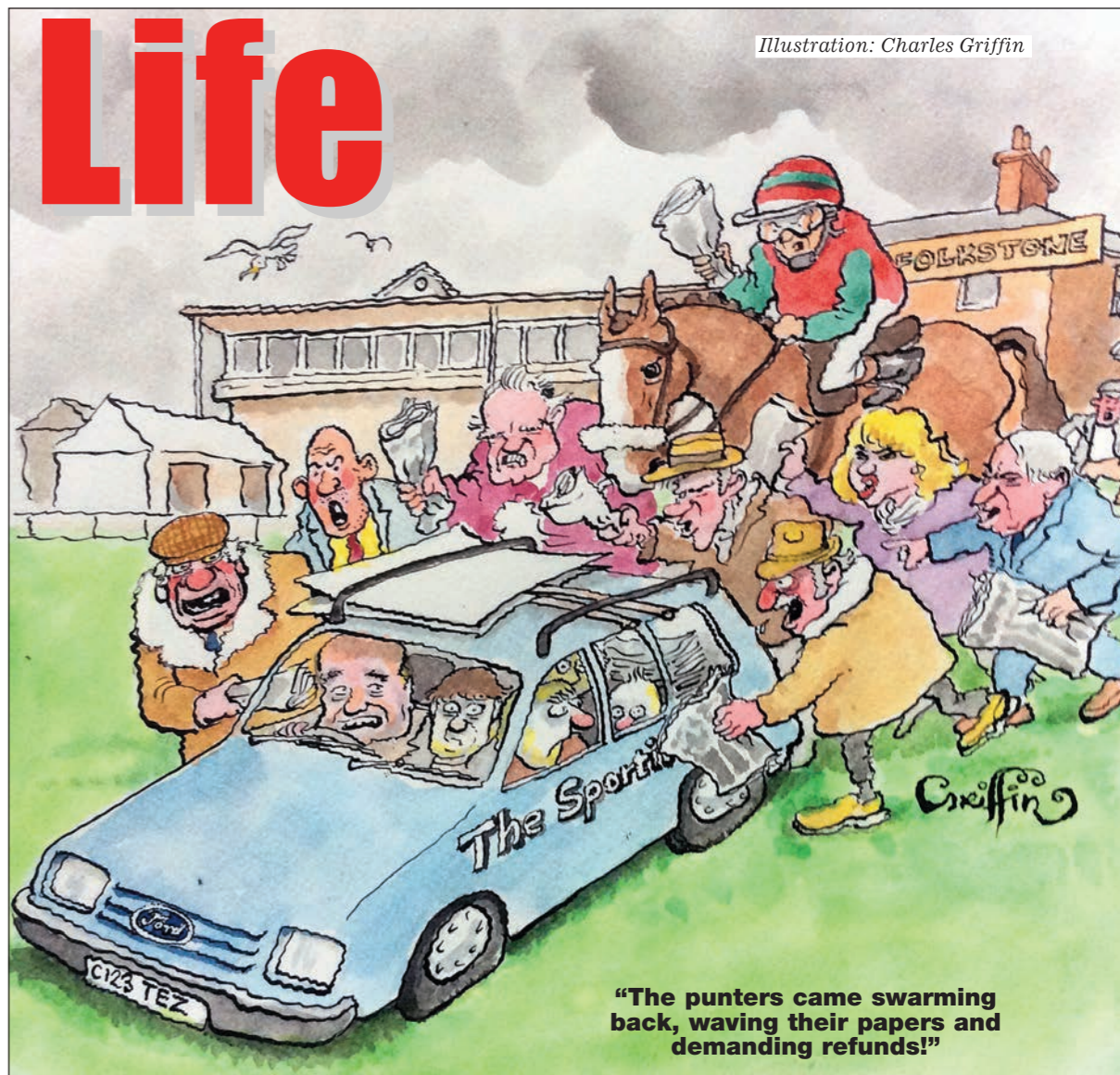


Illustration: Charles Griffin

"The punters came swarming back, waving their papers and demanding refunds!"



DERBY DAY 1995: Seller Joe finds there are, after all, some perks to his job



PAPER, GUV? Seller Trevor drums up some high-class business the same day



SUPER MAG: This free Derby Day magazine helped the Life to sell out all 4,200 copies



TIME OUT: Terry, right, takes refuge in the Turf Newspapers' kiosk for a chat with kiosk manager Tom Ward



BUNDLED: Seller Trevor deftly shows how to cope with a huge armful of papers



LIFE IMITATES ART: Some of the bundles from the epic Derby Day sale



ASCOT: Trevor and the Life display – Terry P made the stand himself!

***No, not this Terry Pattinson!**