



[From Nags to Riches: An Evening with Fred Done](#)

To be reviewed by **[Simon Belt](#)** March 2013

Part of the **Salford Lectures Series** at **[Salford University](#)**, this event was presumably an initiative to develop a broader dialogue with people across and from outside the University in Salford and Manchester, and promote the University by doing so. It was in the newly refurbished Chapman Building lecture theatre, and a most professional ticketing and reception process there was too. We were even given a slick lapel badge at registration, encouraging a subtle marketing mechanism if worn by visitors afterwards.

The format was that of a single speaker, **Fred Done**, with a professorial anchor to provide some focus and structure if and when required, but essentially leaving Fred to talk about his business life. Thankfully, Fred is quite a self-effacing character so tends to focus on the people or events around him rather than himself which tends to make for a more interesting presentation most of the time. This was definitely a very interesting presentation because of who Fred is and the changes in business he elaborated.

Fred was born in Salford in 1943, and has lived there all his life, now living in Worsley. He left at the age of 15, and somewhat regrets not getting a fuller education, though financially has done very well for himself. He began his career working for Ernie Peters, a local bookmaker, just when bookmaking became properly legal through the High Street. Having worked for Ernie for 9 years, he decided to set up his own bookmaking business and bought his first betting shop in Pendleton, Salford for the sum of £4000. Within 2 years he was opening a second and expansion continued steadily with the 100th shop opening in 1997, and the 500th shop opening in 2005.

The early introduction to managing gambling that Fred opened up with was extremely rich terrain to discuss, but rather glossed over for me. Whilst still at school, Fred was 'running' bets that were at that time illegal, and ensuring that some of the games people were betting on were rigged in his favour so that he definitely got a rewarding cut for his efforts. The sense of being inventive, taking advantage of situations, and letting kids develop their own nose, contacts and coping mechanisms was such a breath of fresh air it was quite exhilarating. This spirit seems to be so derided as neglect or abuse these days the request by the chair for Fred to bottle it or package it in a module came across as only half ironic, and the idea of staying on the topic seemed to fill him with dread of a PR disaster so the subject was regrettably moved on. It was clear that the balance between delivering some really useful insights and just developing good PR unfortunately wasn't going to be on the audience's side this time.

stimulation chair and prompt and

formation of personality - never been happier eeking out a survival plan through competitive advantage

what is an education is for

how university has become a haven for business uk to regenerate rather than educate

danny dorling and middle class angst at wanting us to have less in contrast to Fred's yearning to start out again and make the most of the increased opportunities

where are all the middle aged or middle class in Britain - trying to modularise ambition and self reliance

asian store manager in Tottenham after the riots

Turning round the tote - frustration of impact the nanny state has had on business, wanting the state to back off from business regulation

Blind spots of the university attempt to solve economic and social problems through education - is itself a telling sign of the instrumentalism that comes from narrowed horizons and ambitions. From Nags to Riches assumes a desire to want more which isn't an assumption to take for granted - especially in universities that are systematically scaling down ambition.

flat cap victory over top hats, and hats off to Bet365

Franchise response

local serial entrepreneur, lifelong Salfordian and Honorary Graduate of the University.

The discussion will focus on Fred's down-to-earth, determined and focused approach to business and the lessons he has learned over a hugely successful career. Along the way we will explore his many and varied passions, including his family, his love of Salford and perhaps a word or two about football!

Last year Betfred shops numbered 840 before it was announced that he was the successful bidder in the purchase of the Tote, the then government owned bookmaker. This purchase was completed in July 2011 for the sum of £265 million. Today, the estate numbers 1360 shops throughout the UK employing 10,000 people. In addition to being a bookmaker, Fred owns companies specialising in Bridge Finance, employment law, sports travel, and property.