The Curragh

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CASE STUDY // THE CURRAGH

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THE CURRAGH

WILLIAMS HELPS THE CURRAGH REMAIN THE FRONT RUNNER

Legendary Irish racetrack completes massive refurbishment with comprehensive selection of Williams products

The Curragh is a 5000 acre plain near the town of Newbridge in County Kildare, Ireland. Derived from "Cuirreach", or place of the running horse, it has been associated with horse racing for centuries.

It is home to one of Ireland's most important racecourses, and one of the major flat racing tracks in the world. A massive refurbishment program began in 2017, with the stunning Aga Khan stand being opened in April 2019. With space for over 6000 people over four floors and a 7000 sq/ft roof, it is the largest single part of the project.

Catering is a hugely important part of the operation at The Curragh, which can play host to many thousands of people on race days. Fergal Nugent, The Curragh's head chef, explains. "We have everything from à la carte restaurants, casual dining and cafés, to a selection of street food and grab and go operations. We have to be able to cater to groups of all sizes, and making sure we had the right refrigeration equipment to handle all our needs here was vital."

The project was overseen by Kaneco Commercial Kitchen Specialists. Project manager Keith Mulvaney explains the scale of the undertaking. "This has been an enormous job, we're creating a world class venue. We've basically rebuilt everything that was here," he says. "We've brought all of the amenities up to modern standards – not just the public spaces, but the areas for staff and the owners and trainers too, and the behind the scenes infrastructure supporting it."

The Curragh project was run on a lean system, which meant that construction was done in tightly controlled stages and only what was needed at each stage could be brought on site. "When we were choosing suppliers for this project, it was vital that we had equipment from a company that we could trust to work with the kind of precise schedule we required," says Keith. "This is why picking Williams equipment for refrigeration was so easy."

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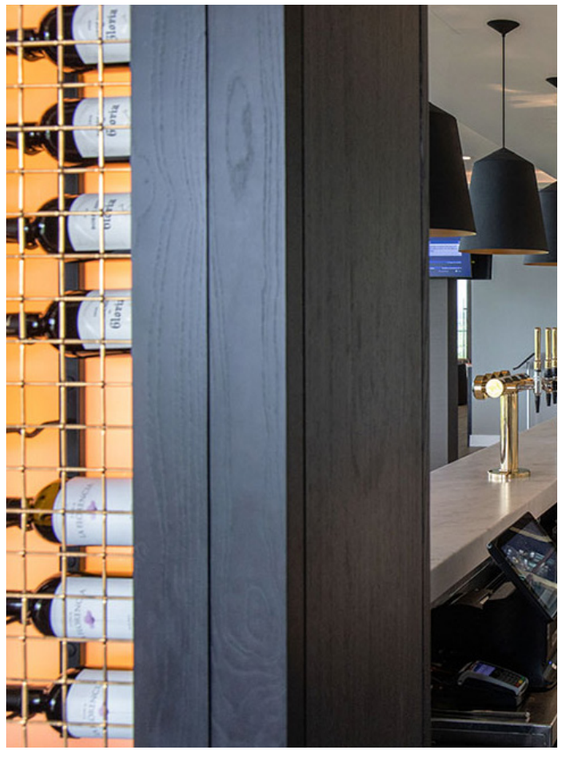

A vast array of Williams equipment was needed to meet The Curragh's requirements. This covers every step of the catering workflow, from bulk storage modular coldrooms to storage refrigerators, blast chillers and prep tables as well as bar fridges and wine coolers.

Williams coldrooms are made with modular components that allows them to be constructed to client specifications, meaning they can be configured precisely and installed in locations where more standard solutions wouldn't fit. "We have a coldroom for incoming goods, which has five internal sections with different temperature ranges that lets us store fish, meat, vegetables and dairy in perfect condition, as well as a freezer too," says Fergal. "It's hygienic and safe, and it also makes it easy for staff to find what they need."

From the central coldroom supplies can be distributed to the other coldrooms attached to each kitchen and bar, and then out to the kitchens themselves. Williams was also involved in the design of the kitchen to make sure the equipment fitted into the space as required. "They worked really hard on the ergonomic flow through the kitchen, the layout of the cooking islands and the accessibility of the fridges, it helps chefs get on with their job without running out of ingredients," says Fergal.

Race days can see The Curragh's caterers having to prepare food for up to 4000 people. With the potential for such a large number of covers, the blast chillers are a vital part of the process. "We do a lot of bulk cooking to prepare for the big days," says Fergal. "Obviously food safety is paramount, and with the Williams blast chillers we can be sure that what gets frozen remains the same as when it was cooked."

Some of the 56 undercounter fridges at The Curragh are public facing, being installed in private suites and bars. "Williams equipment is tough enough to survive professional kitchens, but it also looks great with the overall décor," says Fergal.

One of the most impressive pieces at The Curragh is the wine tower in the Champagne bar overlooking the parade ring, which was made to The Curragh's exact specifications. With crystal clear glass walls and under-rack LED lighting, it creates an attractive way of displaying wine to customers. "That's really been catching people's attention," says Fergal. "We get a lot of compliments from customers about how good it looks, and of course it keeps our best wines in perfect condition."

Jobs like the refurbishment of The Curragh are enormous and require careful co-ordination. Williams has decades of experience with such projects. This also involves providing clients with training and support for their new equipment. "They've been fantastic," says Fergal. "The training is great – they came in to tell us everything we need to know, and if I've had questions since then they've responded really fast."

With the final finishing touches to the project still taking place, The Curragh is slowly getting back to its full operational capacity, but Fergal is in no doubt about how ready he and his team are.

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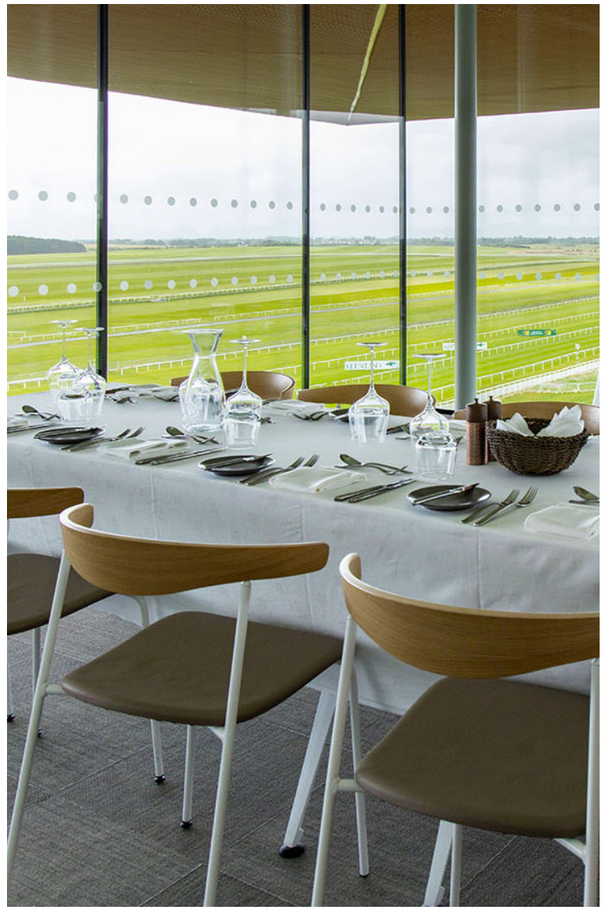
FERGAL NUGENT



www.**williams-refrigeration**.co.uk

Williams Refrigeration
Bryggen Road
North Lynn Industrial Estate
King's Lynn
Norfolk PE30 2HZ
T +44 (0) 1553 817 000
F +44 (0) 1553 817 111
E info@williams-refrigeration.co.uk

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