

1928 Review of the Year

In addition to the NGRS the National Greyhound Racing Club (NGRC) was formed, the purpose of this was organisation was to govern greyhound racing. This body would be responsible for Regulation and the rules of racing that came into force on 23rd April. It consisted of twelve stewards, one of them senior and most of them with military or police backgrounds. The most important individuals were listed as E.A.V.Stanley, the highly decorated Lt General Sir Edward Bethune and Major B.D.Corbett. The rules of racing were introduced and updated every year depending on the needs of the industry and everyone had to be licensed by the Club including tracks. Tracks that were not licensed were called independent or Flapping tracks although the latter was considered a crude way to describe them until even the independent tracks themselves got used to it. Calendars were formulated containing information for all licensed personal and anyone falling foul of the rules was subject to investigation. A passport or official identity book for every greyhound was soon introduced and was a vital component to ensure the policing of greyhounds at every track. (They are still used today despite which upsets Racing Managers with computers). However I suppose this gives an indication how important they were for over sixty years. Another interesting fact is that all results and every racecard from every track were checked by the NGRC for the purpose of ensuring the greyhounds remained consistent in running. The task is now done by individual tracks and the stipendiary stewards.

As the year progressed the boom of tracks opening reached massive proportions with many more starting for business.

West Ham Stadium was opened, it had a huge capacity of 100,000 people, and there was a main two tier 80,000 capacity stand with a second stand also accommodating another 20,000 spectators, while the track itself was the largest in Britain with a circumference of 562 yards and 123 yard straights. It was so big that greyhounds running over the standard trip of 550 yards didn't even have to run a complete lap! The stadium had no relation to the football ground and was based in Prince Regent Lane, East London, and was officially opened on 28th July 1928. The stadium had been designed by Archibald Leitch, responsible for most of the major football stadia at the time including Anfield and Highbury. Over 200 were kennelled at the stadium in four blocks, while the huge track was lit by 70 x 750 watt lamps and used a special monorail train weighing 500lbs to carry the hare and was guaranteed to race whatever the weather due to its unique distinction of having its turf track laid on wood raised twelve inches above ground level.

Clapton Stadium designed by the famous architect Sir Owen Williams, became London's fourth greyhound track, although it did not stage its first meeting until 7th April 1928. After spending over £80,000 to install greyhound facilities at the Millfields Road ground, which was also a major venue for boxing, and even in its early days baseball, the football team was soon asked to find a new home as the track invested in the dogs, opening its first restaurant in 1930 and building covered stands and a second restaurant in 1939.

Wimbledon started racing on 19th May and would become one of the most prominent tracks in the industry. The company was owned by Mr Bill (W.J) Cearn and the Racing Manager was Con Stevens. The trainers were Stanley Biss, Harry Leader and Ken Appleton soon to be joined by Paddy McEllistrim.

The Dolphin Stadium in Slough was opened to greyhound racing on the 26th May by George Bennett owner of Slough F.C. Staines and Charlton were yet more London tracks to open, the former on 28th January.

Greyhound Racing had a rocky start when it came to Wales in the White City Stadium at Sloper Road in the Grangetown area of Cardiff. Owing to the persistent rain that fell on the opening night (Easter Saturday) only 9,000 spectators turned up. The first hurdle event was declared a no-race, because the dogs were so busy fighting each other that none of them completed the 470 yard trip. Fine weather returned on the Easter Monday and 25,000 people paid either 2s 4d or 5/- to get into the stadium, the GRA (South Wales) had erected six kennel blocks with accommodation for 180 dogs under the grandstand. Many tracks built the kennel ranges for the greyhounds within the sites of their respective stadiums.

Wales opened two more tracks during the year, the Arms Park (Cardiff) on 7th April and at Swansea on the 7th July a greyhound called Paddy Braun won the first ever race. Just across the border the Eastville Stadium in the north part of the Bristol had originally been used for rugby in the 1890s before Bristol Rovers FC acquired it in 1897. Greyhounds didn't play their part until 16th June 1928 when that Saturday evening a dog called Vivacious collected £20 for connections when he won the track's very first race.

Stadiums were springing up everywhere, in Scotland there were three in Glasgow, Coatbridge & White City in April and Carntyne in May followed by Cowdenbeath in July.

The United Greyhound Association (Northern Ireland) Ltd was formed, the directors were JA McKee (responsible for the McKee/Scott electric hare) and Captain John Ross, and they opened Dunmore Park (Belfast) in July. In southern Ireland, Cork which would become an extremely prominent track in the future got underway.

In the South of England Brighton & Hove Greyhound Stadium located in Nevill Road in the Hove Park area was opened in May 1928 by Charles Wakeling, Freddie Arnold and Major Carlos Campbell although GRA had shares in the venture. The first winner was a greyhound called Costs over 550 yards. Originally just a primitive track where the hare was wound round by hand and it took ten years to get electric lighting installed.

GRA also moved venues in Leeds moving into the Elland Road Stadium next door to the Fullerton Park Stadium and Football Stadium. Fullerton Park would be used for Speedway until 1938.

Four other seaside tracks opening were Ramsgate (26th May), Pennycross, Plymouth (28th May), Copnor, Portsmouth (30th June) and Southampton (6th August). In the Midlands and North another thirteen tracks started, they were - 17th March (Woodhouse Lane, Wigan), 31st March (Hanley, Stoke), 7th April (Long Eaton), 7th April (Coventry), 14th April (Askern, Doncaster), April (Perry Barr, Birmingham), 19th

May (Cleveland Park, Middlesbrough), 26th May (White City, Newcastle), 26th May (Blackbird Road, Leicester), 6th September (Craven Park, Hull) and on 23rd June, Brough Park (Newcastle) opened with the first ever race won by Mavin at 3-1. Darnall (Sheffield and Blackpool (St Annes Rd) completed the list.

Six new major events were inaugurated during 1928. The Cesarewitch at West Ham and St Leger at Wembley for stayers and the Scurry Cup at Clapton for sprinters were introduced in London. Three national Derby's started - the Scottish Derby at Carntyne, the Welsh Derby at Welsh White City (Cardiff) and the Irish Derby at Harolds Cross. The Welsh and Irish Derby's were unofficial at this stage.

The Irish Derby was unofficial because Harolds Cross decided to run a 'National Derby' without consulting the Irish racing fraternity. This was a practice they would continue to do until the formation of classic races in 1932.

On April 18th in Dublin Mick the Miller won on debut but was overshadowed by his brother Macoma five days later. Macoma also trained by Horan smashed the world record time for 500 yards beating the existing record holder Kriesler in a time of 28.80. Later in the month the pair went to Celtic Park to contest the Abercorn Cup and during a gallop Macoma caught his leg in the mesh traps breaking his hock. Mick the Miller finished third in the final but made a name for himself when equaling the world record of 28.80 at Shelbourne sandwiched in between the semi and final at Celtic Park.

Then tragedy struck as he went down with distemper, a highly contagious viral disease which primarily affects dogs. There were no vaccines back in the 1920s and his chances of survival were slim. However, Father Martin Brophy, who had reared him through thick and thin, refused to accept defeat and took him to Arthur 'Doc' Callanan, who was the manager of Shelbourne Park as well as being a qualified veterinary surgeon on site.

Mick the Miller was frail but Callanan thought there may be a chance of saving him and asked Father Brophy to leave the ailing youngster with him. Days and nights were spent in caring for the pup but he was saved and, several months later and in fairly good condition, he was returned to the Priest with the advice to give the dog a lengthy spell convalescing. Credit was also given to another vet called Paddy McGeady in helping bring the dog back to health.

In the August both Mick the Miller and Macoma were put up for sale by Father Brophy where Macoma went for 290 guineas but Mick the Millers reserve was not met, a lucky escape for Father Brophy who sent Mick back to coursing.

Greyhound Derby

The Greyhound Derby had become an established event and was now sought after by all greyhound trainers. The winner now received £1,500 and the format was qualifying through rounds at White City only. There were 96 entries from around the country, including entries from Scotland. Boher Ash a brindle dog owned Molly Stokes won his first round heat by 8 lengths in a time of 30.70 at a price of 8/11. He continued his winning ways in the second round when winning by 5 lengths in a time of 30.59 at evens favourite. In the semi-finals Fabulous Figure inflicted a 3 length defeat on from 10-1 shot Bendeemer in 30.76. Boher Ash scraped through to the final after the Edinburgh dog missed the break. The winner of the second semi-final was Musical Box in a time of 30.80 one length ahead of Moorland Rover, a further length back Baby Elephant made the last spot for the decider.

The final was made up of 5 greyhounds from London and Boher Ash from Scotland. Fabulous Figure was installed as 11/10 favourite; with the Trap 5 dog Moorland Rover the second favourite at 4/1. From the traps the favourite was boxed in with Boher Ash, running from Trap 1, lying handy. He pounced from half way and held on to win by a half-length from the fast finishing favourite. Musical Box was a neck further away in third.

In the Grand National Cormorant sprang a surprise defeating Carpio who had won all rounds going into the final including a semi win over Cormorant. Douro finished third despite also being unbeaten going into the final and also having a win over Cormorant in the third round.

Moselle knocked out of the Derby made amends winning the Oaks unbeaten throughout. Burletta and Chain Mail were unbeaten going into the St Leger final and it was the former that took the honours.

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Greyhound Derby (July - White City 525y, £1,500)

Pos	Greyhound	Trap	Trainer	SP	Time
1	Boher Ash	1	Tommy Johnston sr (Powderhall)	5-1	30.48
2	Fabulous Figure	2	Joe Harmon (White City, London)	11-10F	30.50
3	Musical Box	4	John 'Jack' Golder (White City, London)	5-1	30.52
4	Bendeemer	3	John 'Jack' Kennedy (Harringay)	100-8	30.68
5	Moorland Rover	5	Godfrey Hyde-Clarke (White City, London)	4-1	30.74
6	Baby Elephant	6	Joe Harmon (White City, London)	20-1	30.80

Scottish Derby (Carntyne 525y – June 30 £200)

1	Glinger Bank (John Snowball)	100-6	30.39	2
2	Ridiculous	5-1	30.40	1
3	Wee Murray	4-7f	30.44	4
u	Loyola	100-6		3
u	Rockall	5-1		5
u	Monart Boy	5-1		6

Grand National (White City 525y H - Aug 18 £700)

1	Cormorant (Sidney Probert)	4-1	31.16	1
2	Carpio	8-11f	31.19	3
3	Douro (Leslie Reynolds)	5-2	31.67	4
4	Danistol	10-1		2

Oaks (White City 525y – Aug 25 £700)

1	Moselle (Jimmy Quinn)	1-2f	30.50	3
2	Sweet Bessie (Harry Woolner)	6-1	30.54	5
3	Burletta (Alf Mulliner)	8-1	30.55	4
u	Bandrol (R Wilson)	20-1		1
u	Hantapara			2
u	Bella Cutlets (W Smith)			6

Scurry Gold Cup (Clapton 400y – Sep 15 £100)

1	Cruseline Boy (Paddy McEllistram)	4-7f	24.91	5
2	Hilman Carr	10-1	24.93	4
3	Melksham Dodger (Sid Jennings)	3-1	24.95	6
u	Finland	10-1		1
u	Grenogue (Godfrey Hyde-Clarke)	5-1		2
u	Lahard Boy	100-7		3

St Leger (Wembley 700y – Sep 15 £650)

1	Burletta (Alf Mulliner)	5-2	41.91	3
2	Chain Mail (Jack Kennedy)	10-11f	41.99	2
3	Toftwood Millsack (Harry Buck)	100-6	42.03	5
u	Bachelor (Graham)	10-1		1
u	Welcome Windfall (Joe Harmon)	6-1		4
u	Record Race (Thomas Cudmore)	7-1		6

Welsh Derby (White City, Cardiff 525y – Oct 13 £130)

1	Cheerful Choice	8-11f	30.73	3
2	Jolly Roger	8-1	30.97	6
3	Glenstal Rover	6-1	31.21	1
u	Berrima	5-1		2
u	Knight of Malta	25-1		4
u	Spittle Rover	6-1		5

Cesarewitch (West Ham 600y - Oct 20 £330)

1	Dicks Son (Bill Fear)	6-4j	34.38	6
2	Naughty Jack Horner (Jim Syder)	4-1	34.62	1
3	Hertford (Thomas Cudmore)	6-4j	35.10	4
u	Record Race (Thomas Cudmore)	8-1		2
u	Carberrys Chieftain	100-7		3
u	Money's Worth (Jimmy Lowther)	100-7		5