

1974 Review of the Year

The year started badly as GRA closed Clapton on the 1st January, the classic Scurry Gold Cup competition was moved over to Slough. The track had been under a cloud for two years after the sale to developers and time was up for this famous old stadium.

Rayleigh-(Southend) was also lost to history when it followed Clapton on the same path. Clapton former Racing Manager Hugh Richardson became GRA's chief Racing Manager whilst trainers Adam Jackson and Tom Foster moved to White City. Sadly the recent closures of tracks forced trainers Kenric Appleton, Jim Sherry, Charlie Smoothy, Margaret Barker and Don Thornton into early retirement. However Thornton would join Maidstone a new track two years later.

Two famous Wimbledon trainers retired under happier conditions, Paddy McEllistrim and Stan Martin both chose to call it a day, they were replaced by Paddys daughter Norah and Sam Sykes a former head lad to Clare Orton. Owlerton's Ted Brennan continued the trend of retiring and after 43 years was replaced by Harry Crapper. David Kinchett joined White City from Shawfield and Jim Cremin became an Assistant Racing Manager at Hove under Peter Shotton. Tony Smith became Willenhall Racing Manager after moving from Leeds.

The future looked rosier for some tracks as Ladbrokes bought the Totalisator and Greyhound Holdings (T.G.H) which included the tracks at Brough Park, Crayford & Bexleyheath, Leeds, Gosforth, Willenhall and Monmore. They also persuaded Arthur Aldridge to leave GRA and take over as racing director.

Ipswich joined the NRG set up under a new permit scheme and held their first race on 2nd February; the track was under the control of Ernie Wedon who was also responsible with Len Franklin for Yarmouth stadium being constructed in 1940. Other independent tracks to follow suit during the year were Halifax (owned by Jack Wardman and Owlerton director Mr J Carter), Rye House (an independent since 1960) and Cambridge. Norton Canes and Watford switched to NRG rules in the latter part of the year to complete a group of six.

Watford kicked off their action on October 14th inside Watford FC's ground and was promoted by the GRA; it attracted Barbara Tompkins as a trainer and was too soon to become a main BAGS track. Ultimately the NRG were disappointed that only six independents took advantage of the new licensing available. Cambridge reverted back to an independent after just five months after promoter Laurie Boost claimed that the tracks costs increased.

The retired greyhound trust was formed with the task of finding homes for ex racers and Con Stevens resigned from the board of directors at Wimbledon bringing to an end his 46 years of association with the track. Jim Layton became Racing Manager at Catford; Stevens had a hand in getting Layton a career in greyhound racing when recommending him to Paddy McEllistrim as a kennelman some years before.

Independent track Newton Abbott had their grand opening on 2nd May. The track sited on the national hunt racecourse itself featured a grandstand that could be dismantled when horse racing takes place. Meanwhile a greyhound called 'Volvo' won the Mount Vernon Derby for a sizeable sum of £450, a remarkable figure for an independent track.

Belfast's two tracks Dunmore and Celtic Park were enduring serious disruptions due to the troubles in Northern Ireland.

The National power was continuing in Britain and Ireland and many tracks were in crisis, the 1973 ban on floodlighting continued and many tracks had to purchase generator. Derry in Northern Ireland came closest to closing after being unable to maintain racing in the afternoon.

With all the trials and tribulations continuing within the sport it was once again a greyhound that saved the day, this time it was a white and black bitch called Westpark Mustard. The July 1971 whelp won the Longcross Cup at White City in February and then completed ten wins in a row when successful in the GRA stakes. The greyhound went on to record an amazing 15 successive victories before breaking into season on May 12th. Trained by Tom Johnston at Wembley she was homing in on Mick the Millers record of 19 and luckily the seasonal rest allowed the Derby to take place without being overshadowed.

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The 1974 Greyhound Derby

Patricias Hope returned for an attempt to win the Derby for a third time, if he achieved this he would become arguably the greatest greyhound ever, but in his way were the cream of greyhound racing.

The brilliant Juvenile and Wood Lane winner Myrtown, Irish raiders Ballymaclune and Lively Band, Laurels victors Black Banjo and Over Protected were all strongly fancied but Black Banjo failed to progress to the first round following problems.

All the top names made it through the normally treacherous first round with Pall Mall champion Blackwater Champ (Peter Payne) and Jimsun (Geoff DeMulder) recording the best times of 28.53 & 28.54 respectively.

In an incredibly hard heat two of round two the dream of Patricias Hope ended and connections duly retired him with immediate effect.

Myrtown, Jimsun, Blackwater Champ and Acomb Dot all won their heats and remained unbeaten.

The semi-finals arrived an incredibly four hounds were still unbeaten but in the first heat Soft Light provided a shock win beating Jimsun by a length whilst Acomb Dot finished last. Blackwater Champ took the honours in heat two with Myrtown taking the third and the final place in the final.

33,000 turned up to see the sports premier event and they saw the Irish hope Ballymaclune trap well and take an early lead. Favourite Blackwater Champ lost any chance he had after missing the break. Jimsun showed tremendous early pace to overtake and impede Handy High when moving up to second place. Jimsun challenged along the back straight and gained the lead at the third bend. He ran on to win by just over a length in 28.76sec. Myrtown finished well to take second place.

After the final Jimsun's part-owner Joe De Mulder (father of trainer Geoff), revealed the dog had a tendon problem during the latter part of the competition.

With Westpark Mustard hogging all the news the main racing events were merely a sideshow. Black Banjo attempted to make amends for the his early Derby exit when competing in the Welsh version but only managed to finish runner up to Dankie.

The 1974 Irish Derby

Myrtown travelled over to Ireland for the 1974 version of the Irish Derby hoping to go one place better than his English Derby campaign but would of course face Irelands best. Prominent owner Cyril Scotland (owner of 72 winner Catsrock Daisy) would enter another flying hound called Lively Band a fawn dog who possessed blistering early pace and had shown his true colours when winning the Derby consolation at White City.

Myrtown was a strong ante post favourites and duly progressed through the mandatory first round. Fastest in that round was Tain Rua who recorded 29.30 and the second round featuring all eight heats threw up a formidable race which Myrtown won from Lively Band in 29.20 and saw the end of Tommy Astaire.

In the quarter finals Myrtown won in 29.00 and looked to have the competition in his grasp, Nelsons Blast set a time of 29.12 before Lively Band scorched around in 29.05 to remind Myrtown that there were still others to beat. In fact Myrtown suffered his first defeat in the semi-finals to Shady Waggon and with Lively Band winning the other semi from Quote Me and Wind Jammer the English hope was suddenly installed as second favourite for the final after the trap draw left Lively Band in red.

The draw proved pivotal when Lively band and Myrtown both broke well but the latter found trouble getting across to the rails allowing the Jack Murphy trained runner to ease to victory from the strong finishing Wind Jammer with Myrtown ending up third. Quote Me failed to finish with a broken leg.

Cosha Orchis provided a shock in the Scottish Derby at odds of 12-1 before Black Banjo and Blackwater Glory met again in the St Leger final but both fell victim to Cute Caddie.

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Just three days before the re-appearance of Westpark Mustard there was just time to see Westmead Valley victorious in the Scurry final at its new home in Slough.

Win numbers 16 & 17 soon arrived at White City and Wembley for Westpark Mustard and wisely her connections side stepped the Gold Collar and Cesarewitch in preference to 700 yards at Wembley in October. On successive Monday Nights the crowds flocked to the Empire Stadium Wembley to watch the bitch claim the 18th victory and then romp home in the Duke of Edinburgh intertrack area semi-final by 13 lengths and equal the brilliant record held by Mick the Miller.

So it came down to a third Monday night in a row on October 28th, Ladbrokes came in with a special £500 sponsorship for the race and 84 year old Sidney Orton (trainer of Mick the Miller) was special guest of honour. Two withdrawals from the race Millcock and Mickey Finn (both lame) resulted in a four dog race. The race was not a formality despite going off at odds of '14-1 ON' but after encountering trouble she led at fifth bend and drew clear to set a wonderful new record.

Unfortunately after travelling to Shelbourne Park for her next race the run of 20 wins was ended when beaten by Tommy Astaire.



***Kenric Appleton was forced into early retirement.
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Spillers Greyhound Derby Final (29th June - White City 525y, £13,500)

Pos	Greyhound	Trap	Trainer	SP	Time
1	Jimsun	1	Geoff DeMulder (Hall Green)	5-2	28.76
2	Myrtown	3	Eddie Moore (White City Manchester)	2-1	28.86
3	Ballymaclune	6	Ger McKenna (Ireland)	5-1	28.90
4	Soft Light	4	Joe Bennett (Private)	6-1	28.92
5	Blackwater Champ	5	Peter Payne (Private)	13-8F	29.00
6	Handy High	2	Paddy Milligan (Private)	20-1	29.20

Grand National (White City 525yH – April 13 £750)

1	Shanneys Darkie (Colin West)	10-1	29.43	4
2	Andreda	11-2	29.75	3
3	Silver Breeze	14-1	30.07	6
4	Heath Grange (Charlie Coyle)	6-4f	30.43	1
5	Strebor Gem (David Kinchett)	9-2	30.71	2
6	Sammic Blue (Noreen Collin)	3-1	30.91	5

Laurels (Wimbledon 500y – May 17 £3,000)

1	Over Protected (John Coleman)	7-4	28.00	4
2	Deneholme Chief (Norah McEllistram)	6-1	28.08	5
3	Slippery Slave (Colin West)	10-1	28.14	3
4	Ahaveen Dandy (Pat Casey)	4-1	28.17	1
5	Huberts Cato	16-1	28.25	6
6	Handy High (Paddy Milligan)	6-4f	28.39	2

Grand Prix (Walthamstow 700y – May 25 £1,500)

1	Ballyglass Hope (Don Thornton)	7-1	40.58	4
2	King David (George Curtis)	4-1	40.70	1
3	Chain Gang (Frank Melville)	6-1	40.86	5
4	Leading Pride (George Curtis)	7-4f	40.87	2
5	Silver Sceptre (Reg Young)	9-2	40.89	6
6	Rally Round (Frank Melville)	10-1	41.01	3

Welsh Derby (Arms Park Cardiff 525y - July 13 £1,000)

1	Dankie (Colin West)	4-1	29.72	6
2	Black Banjo (Barney O'Connor)	8-1	29.96	5
3	Soft Light (Joe Bennett)	5-4f	29.97	4
4	Silver Thought	10-1	30.51	2
5	Sibbens (Frank Baldwin)	9-4	30.53	1
6	Cowboy Jo (Mick Hawkins)	12-1	30.61	3

Irish Derby (Shelbourne Park 525y – July 27 £10,000)

1	Lively Band (Jack Murphy)	5-4f	29.11	1
2	Wind Jammer (Ger McKenna)	10-1	29.31	3
3	Myrtown (Eddie Moore)	6-4	29.79	6
4	Boolas Duchess			4
5	Shady Waggoner			5
6	Quote Me	10-1	00.00	2

Scottish Derby (Shawfield 525y – Aug 3 £2,000)

1	Cosha Orchis (Jimmy Meechan)	12-1	29.20	5
2	Sibbens (Frank Baldwin)	5-1	29.44	3
3	Two P.M (Norman Oliver)	5-2f	29.48	6
4	Ahaveen Dandy (Pat Casey)	3-1	29.54	1
5	Cheerful Bill (J Doyle)	9-2	29.60	4
6	Beakilla Diver (Jim Glass)	3-1	30.00	2

St Leger (Wembley 700y – Sep 2 £2,500)

1	Cute Caddie (David Kinchett)	4-1	41.17	2
2	Blackwater Champ (Peter Payne)	6-4f	41.23	6
3	Black Banjo (Barney O'Connor)	6-1	41.33	3
4	Streaky Sheila (Charlie Coyle)	3-1	41.35	5
5	Annettes Diamond (John Coleman)	9-2	41.41	1
6	Michaels Duchess	10-1	41.97	4

Scurry Gold Cup (Slough 475y Sep 7 £1,000)

1	Westmead Valley (Hugh McEntyre)	11-10f	26.24	6
2	Sweetly	8-1	26.62	5
3	Mahon Valley (Colin West)	5-1	27.18	2
4	Tipper Tar	16-1	27.24	3
5	Parazoo (Mrs.J.Hawkins)	9-2	27.34	4
6	Solar Mars (Sam Ray)	9-2	27.44	1

Gold Collar (Catford 610y – Sep 21 £2,000)

1	Leaders Champion (Dave Geggus)	8-11f	35.02	1
2	Gay Kathy (Tom Johnston Jr.)	6-1	35.60	4
3	Merry Champion (Luckhurst)	3-1	36.06	3
4	Ballytegan (Ken Usher)	6-1	36.12	6
5	Breakaway Steve	25-1	36.34	5
6	Millcock (Peter Payne)	7-1	36.60	2

Cesarewitch (Belle Vue 880y – Sep 28 £2,000)

1	Westbrook Quinn (John Coulter)	7-2	52.17	5
2	Pitmans Brief (Jim Singleton)	7-4f	52.31	4
3	Silver Sceptre (Reg Young)	4-1	52.39	2
4	Chain Gang (Frank Melville)	2-1	52.49	3
5	Kiwis Buster (D Exley)	10-1	52.71	1
	Lizzies Girl (E.Williams)	N/R		6

Oaks (Harringay 525y – Nov 8 £1,500)

1	Lady Devine (Sid Ryall)	3-1	28.76	5
2	Gay Kathy (Tom Johnston Jr.)	4-1	28.94	1
3	Bo Bo's Jane	8-1	29.26	2
4	Pineapple Grand (Frank Baldwin)	1-1f	29.34	3
5	Sweeping View	50-1	29.54	6
6	Ballinderry Lass (Clare Orton)	16-1	29.66	4