

Cambridge

The city of Cambridge had roots connected to greyhound racing as early as 1930 although the period of fame that relates to the name Cambridge in the records refers to that of Cambridge City FC's Milton Road ground. Cambridge of course is also an area that was very popular with coursing.

The City Ground or Milton Road as it was also known was built in 1922 and hosted Cambridge City FC from that year. Greyhound racing arrived on site in 1968 and the opening meeting was held on 6th October. Attendances were very healthy and attracted more people than the football fixtures. The first racing took place on Wednesday and Saturday evenings at 7.30pm on a circumference of 400 yards with a McGee outside hare. Distances were 260, 460 and 660 yards on an all grass track.

In 1974 the management decided it was time to have a go at regulated racing and became NGRC affiliated, however the trial only lasted five months before promoter Laurie Boost claimed that increased costs forced the track to revert back to their independent status.

During 1978 the decision was made to race under the NGRC rules of racing for a second time which would result in an incredible sequence of successes for the track that had only just switched from being an independent. Extraordinary performances and a first class group of trainers contributed to some notable achievements. Racing would take place every Monday, Wednesday and Saturday evening with trials sessions held on Thursday afternoons. The switch to NGRC rules resulted in the track being resurfaced and restaurant facilities being made available to the public.

The first race under the new rules was on 24th November and the Racing Manager was J.Foster.

It just happened that the trainers joining the track after the switch were some of the best in the country. Pat Mullins the 1978 Derby winning trainer was one of the first to join, Mullins had of course just won the Derby with Lacca Champion and soon brought glory to Cambridge when he lifted the Scottish Derby crown with Greenville Boy in 1979.

Lacca Champion nearly achieved a remarkable double when finishing runner up in the 1979 Greyhound Derby final. The same year a newcomer called Sport Promoter reared by Pat and Linda Mullins broke the track record over 400m at Cambridge in his first race and went on to win the Romford Puppy Cup and Sporting Life Juvenile. The George Morrow trained Northway Point added the Scurry Gold Cup to the Cambridge mantelpiece and respected trainer Joe Cobbold joined the training ranks.

1980 was even more eventful as Sport Promoter secured a classic double by claiming the Gold Collar and Grand Prix, Sport Promoter was duly awarded the title of Greyhound of the Year and trainer Pat Mullins also became the Trainer of the Year.

March 1981 was a very sad time for the track because Pat Mullins passed away. The well respected handler collapsed and died whilst working at his kennels in Manningtree, Essex. He had suffered a heart attack the previous year and had been warned by doctors to avoid stress. His wife Linda would take over the kennels. However the astonishing golden era still continued as Joe Cobbold claimed the Trainer of the Year and latest training recruit Natalie Savva then went on to win the Puppy Derby with Special Account. In between all of this success Cambridge was recognised by the industry after receiving Bookmakers Afternoon Greyhound Service (BAGS) fixtures as a result of the December 1981 decimation of horse racing.

Cambridge obtained a 1982 contract with the BAGS to relay its meetings to bookmaking shops on Tuesdays for thirteen weeks. Racing Manager Paul Sobal monitored proceedings as the track installed more security with an anti-doping chromatography unit and veterinary surgeons at each meeting.

Even the lesser known trainers got into the winning act; Leon Steed won the 1982 TV Trophy with Alfa My Son and the following year Darkie Fli came up victorious in the Laurels.

The era came to an end in 1983 when Cambridge had their NGRC licence cancelled and they reverted once again to independent status leaving top trainers looking for a new attachment. Joe Cobbold went private and would eventually put the Utopia kennels in the hands of son and daughter in law Trevor and Pam. Linda Mullins took up a position at Crayford, Theo Mentzis and Natalie Savva both went to Milton Keynes.

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In 1984 planning permission was given for a £10 million redevelopment scheme for Cambridge City Football Club's ground at Milton Road. The present pitch, greyhound track and stands would be demolished and replaced by a three-storey block of research and development buildings with an underground car park and the football pitch was moved slightly north-west and turned 90 degrees. The last meeting was held on 14 April 1984.

Today the football pitch and Westbrook business centre remain where the old football and greyhound track would have been (0° 7' 25.641"E 52° 12' 57.103"N).