

## Canterbury

Off the Kingsmead Road in Canterbury a stadium was constructed on top of a former rubbish dump during 1958. Sporting activity on the site started with athletics before the Canterbury City FC football team took up residence from 30<sup>th</sup> August 1958.

Ten years later on 18<sup>th</sup> May 1968 a speedway track opened for business with the Canterbury Crusaders roaring around the circuit against the Belle Vue Colts.

Greyhound racing did not arrive until 1987 around the same time that the stadium lost the speedway because the local council refused a new lease due to complaints from residents regarding the noise. The introduction of the greyhound racing was problematic as the track encountered issues over the track surface. A wider 398 metres circumference oval was quickly constructed to replace the original track dimensions.

The speedway had ended on 31<sup>st</sup> October 1987 and the greyhounds started just two months earlier on 28<sup>th</sup> August. The General Manager was Wally Mawdsley (also one of the speedway promoters) and the Racing Manager was Frank Baldwin (soon to be replaced by Steve Hibbard) when racing began.

There is a saying '*the candle that burns twice as bright, burns half as long*' and Canterbury was a classic example of this. Taking up an NGRC licence under the permit scheme they were going to experience unprecedented success for a track that would survive just twelve years.

Race days were set as Tuesday, Thursday & Fridays, trials were held on Monday mornings and the original circumference was 357m with distances of 400, 578 & 757 with an outside Sumner hare. Following the previously mentioned alterations the new distances were 245, 410, 450, 645 & 840m and race nights changed to Mon, Tues, Fri and Sat. Kennels for 82 greyhounds were built and the patrons had three bars, a refreshment room and a smart 150 seated restaurant to select from.

Recruitment of trainers is always tricky for a new track but Canterbury managed to entice Irishman John McGee Sr., McGee known as Ginger McGee had worked for Fred Wiseman before taking out a full licence and joining Canterbury. The track would quickly experience a Greyhound Derby victory, something that many tracks would never experience. The greyhound in question was the McGee trained Hit the Lid who lifted the 1988 version.

David Day replaced Hibbard as Racing Manager and the track also secured a lucrative BAGS contract, this was another instance of a track achieving great things that other had been waiting years for. Hit The Lid was announced greyhound of the year and McGee claimed two consecutive trainer of the year titles in 1988 & 1989.

The Thames Silver Salver previously run at Southend was introduced by Canterbury as the main competition in 1988 and it was to take place in the summer renamed just the Silver Salver.

From 1988-1989 Canterbury won the Gold Collar with Sard (McGee), the Cesarewitch & BBC TV Trophy with the Harry White trained Proud To Run and the Blue Riband with Ring Slippy (Derek Millen). In 1990 McGee joined Hackney but his shoes were aptly filled by Patsy Byrne. Byrne would claim two Grand Prix and the Gold Collar with the brilliant Dempseys Whisper and a Juvenile with Druids Johnno.

Druids Johnno of course was the greyhound that was half owned by H.R.H Prince Edward. The half share of the black dog had been given to the Prince by Patsy Byrne during a charity meeting at Canterbury, all prize money would go to the Royal Marines Benevolent Fund. It was the same year that black dog was the beaten favourite in the Greyhound Derby Final.

Glengar Ranger continued the winning trend in 1991 after a Laurels victory for hander Jimmy Fletcher, the following year Fletcher took the Scurry with Glengar Desire. It was in 1992 that Canterbury played host to a new TV channel called Sportscast, the track also decided to scrap eight dog races on evening cards after tote turnover on them dropped lower than six dog races. Glengar Ranger reached the Greyhound Derby final to put the seal on another progressive year.

After a quieter 1993 three classic wins arrived in 1994, Sandollar Louie (Kevin Connor) was a shock winner of the Cesarewitch, Randy Savage (Connor) jumped to Grand National glory and Rabatino took the Scurry, Rabatino was trained by McGee who had switched back to Canterbury as a trainer.

It was in 1995 that the '*candle*' started flickering, the track was refused a betting licence forcing trainers to march on council offices in protest, luckily a reprieve arrived but clearly something was afoot at the local council. A year later plans were rejected for a redevelopment proposal for houses and a hotel but it was known that further plans would be submitted. The Barry McIntosh trained Come On Royal provided a respite after winning another Scurry Gold Cup for the track.

The candle was nearly burnt out in October 1997 following a development brief being approved and in 1998 it was revised to include 140 residential units.

On the 30<sup>th</sup> October 1999 racing came to an end at Kingsmead Stadium after an incredible twelve year spell, the site would soon be demolished and today it would have been located where Ambleside Place and Westwood Drive is situated.

### **Selected Track Records**

<b>Distance</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Notes</b>
245m	Glenvale Boy	14.75	03.03.1989	
275m	Cora Hill	16.43	1994+	
400m	Westwood Ho	25.45	1987+	
	Straight Through	25.45	1987+	
	Bluefalls Boy	25.45	1988+	
	Glaives Fever	25.45	1988+	
410m	Ballinlough	25.12	29.03.1988	
430m	Union Decree	26.55	04.04.1999	
	Union Decree	26.33	25.04.1999	
450m	Tip For Glory	27.23	21.10.1988	
	Burgess Bard	27.18	08.04.1991	
480m	Paradise Slippy	28.97	1994+	
578m	Bedemar Zelda	37.15	1987+	
645m	Run on Terry	39.94	29.03.1988	
675m	Liberal Idea	41.88	1994+	
757m	Denes Mutt	50.43	1987+	
850m	Proud to Run	54.30	1987+	
	Minnies Siren	54.18	11.11.1989	
880m	Back Before Dawn	56.34	1994+	
1045m	Deenside Madam	69.86	23.10.1989	
450mH	Emerald Trail	27.70	30.06.1989	
480mH	Cassies Street	29.54	1994+	
625mH	El Tenor	39.50	25.04.1999	
645mH	Razmac Dancer	41.29	10.07.1990	
	Brosna River	41.27	28.08.1990	

+ Date when record was held, not necessarily the year it was set.