

Maidstone

Greyhound racing was not brought to Maidstone until 1976 following an agreement with Horace Luper and the Maidstone United Football Club. Maidstone United had been playing at the Athletic Ground on the London Road since it had been built way back in 1898 and during this time had not considered a greyhound track unlike many football clubs throughout the years. By 1976 the industry had already experienced the highs that would never be seen again but Luper who had been prominent in former track Clapton was undeterred.

Despite this the hare is running was called out for the first time on a Friday 1st October 1976 at 7.35pm. The greyhound operation was organised by H Luper & Associates Greyhounds Ltd and they built a track around the football pitch described as having a good running surface and offering distances of 254, 443, 634 and 1015 metres.

NGRC licenced from day one the contracted trainers brought in to supply the runners were Don Thornton, Mrs. E Follows, Vernon Ford, Peter Isaac, Mrs. Pat Butler, David Ingram-Seal and Des Dare. There were also two owner trainers Bill Bookle and Mrs. B Luscombe.

Unfortunately despite the upbeat start the track soon closed although the track remained in situ for any forthcoming promoter. Luckily Todos promotions came along and reopened the track in 1981 after making alterations to the layout. The circumference was put to 376 metres with slight alterations with the distances changing to 454, 644 and 830 metres. Steve Hibbard conducted the role of both General and Racing Manager following the death of the first General Manager Tom Jones. The reopening took place on 16th October 1981 with regular racing taking place on Tuesday, Friday and Saturday evenings.

Remarkably the track was to experience one of the greatest names in greyhound racing, a greyhound called Whisper Wishes, a black August 1981 son of Sand Man. He was bred in Ireland by Mrs G. Naylor out of her brood bitch, Micklem Drive. After a year that consisted of only 15 races, winning six including the Courage Select Stakes at Wembley he came into the ownership of Irishman John Duffy. Duffy would pencil in the Derby for his hound and put him with Maidstone's Charlie Coyle which of course resulted in him becoming the 1984 English Greyhound Derby champion. The Derby win alone put Whisper Wishes amongst prestigious company but the greatness came later because he was about to embark on a stud career which many would argue was the most successful in history.

Mel Cumner brought more success to Maidstone in 1987 when her hurdler Cavan Town completed the English/Scottish Grand National double. One year later Catch Ruby secured the Greenwich Cup title for Harry White.

Sadly Maidstone did not have the opportunity for their reputation to grow further because the football club had agreed to sell the site for re-development.

The final meeting was held on 30th April 1988 and the punters watched Movealong Jewel claim the 10.00pm race as the curtains lowered.

The site today on Leafy Lane is a small retail park that includes an Argos.

Selected Track Records

Distance	Name	Time	Date	Notes
454m	Westmead Wish	28.21	1987+	
644m	Myarny	41.16	1987+	
850m	Malibu Light	54.38	1987+	

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