

## Middlesbrough

Eight thousand people turned up to watch the first greyhound race at Middlesbrough on 19<sup>th</sup> May 1928 won by a greyhound called Just Alone over 500 yards. Seven races were held including two hurdle races. Handicap races would soon follow which remain very popular even to this day in the North of England and Scotland.

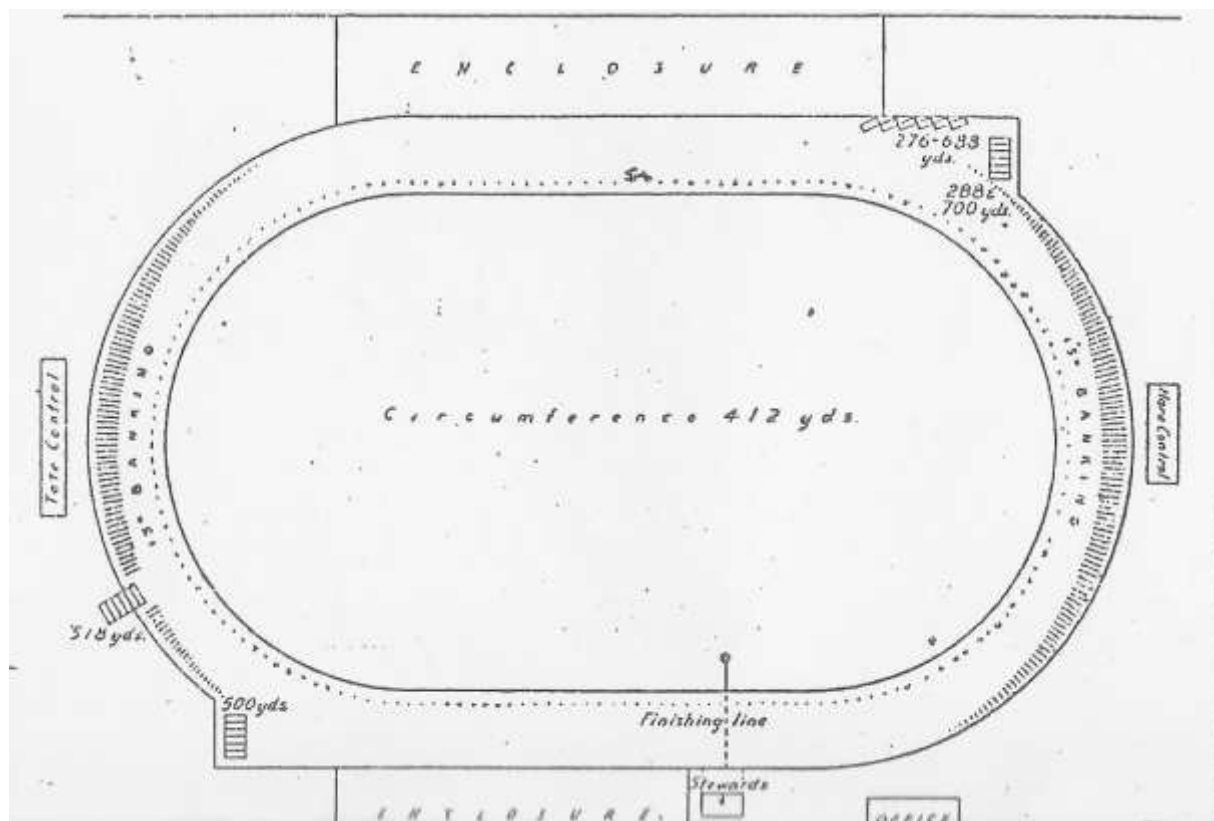
The idea of constructing a track in Middlesbrough came from Jack French and a local company were formed called the National Greyhounds Middlesbrough Ltd. The eleven acre site, a collection of allotments was transformed into a greyhound track with a circumference of 412 yards with a Mono-Rail type hare running on a bogey which would eventually be replaced by an 'Inside Sumner' in 1939.

The stadium had been built in an area called Ayresome south of the River Tees and directly south of the Tees marshalling Yard Railways and Stockton Road Tramway. Speedway also arrived during 1928 just three months after the dogs on 23<sup>rd</sup> August.

The stadium received the name of Cleveland Park and offered quite basic facilities; there were two enclosures both featuring members clubs, one on the home straight and another slightly larger one on the back straight. Between the first and second bends was the hare control and between the third and fourth bends was the tote control which opened later in 1936. The stewards box and offices were situated on the home straight before the first bend.

A greyhound called Cheerful Chinaman won his first race on 20 August 1928 and would go on to win an incredible 138 races from 452 outings when retiring on 21 November 1934. A record believed to be still held today. The first track champion was a greyhound called Brilliant Gambler an Irish import that held the track records over 470 & 650 yards. He won seven races and finished second five times in his first 15 races.

In 1938 all greyhounds were owned by the company after privately owned greyhounds were phased out, many tracks felt it was easier to foil doping plots this way. Distances soon changed to 288, 500, 518 & 700 yards. Totalisator turnover during 1946 equated to £656,386 and one year later £384,632, the same year in which the new Electro-Mechanical tote was installed.



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In 1956 there was a famous triple dead heat between Law Maker, Red Bay and Spinach Lad in 30.36 over 518 yards, a fine grading achievement by racing Manager R W Burns. The feat was repeated three years later when Quarry Tanist, Sandboy & Skip Me crossed the line together on 12 July 1959.

A big feather in the cap for the track arrived in 1961 when it hosted a heat of the prestigious BBC Sportsview Television trophy over 880 yards and a hurdle race was run for the first time at the track since 1938. The successful staging of the BBC heat resulted in another heat being awarded in 1964. Throughout the sixties the track enjoyed regular Wednesday & Saturday night racing. The resident trainers were Harry Gendle & K Nelson, the principal event was the Cleveland Stayers Championship and amenities on offer to the public included four bars and three cafes. The NGRC clearly liked Middlesbrough awarding the Stewards Cup in 1968.

When Vic Abbott had replaced R W Burns as Racing Manager the decision was taken in 1967 to sand the bends following the example of many other tracks. Eventually the entire track would be sand but not until 1984. In 1973 a greyhound called Atlantic Flight set a local record of eight consecutive wins but more worryingly was the extensive construction around the track as the A19 viaduct and A66 trunk roads were beginning to dwarf the track.

During 1978 Harry Gendle retired after 46 years as a trainer at the track. The only record big race win by a Middlesbrough hound came in 1982 when the terrific hurdler and Irish Grand National champion Face The Mutt won the Scottish Grand National for trainer Reece before moving to Norah McEllistrim at Wimbledon the same year and completed the set after taking the English Grand National.

In 1985 there was serious arson attack and the main stand was destroyed, this was followed by Ross Searle taking over as Racing Manager from Vic Abbott. In 1987 the track hosted auctions for the first time and one year later celebrated its 60<sup>th</sup> year in operation. During 1990 the track suffered an exodus of trainer because a revamped Sunderland had opened but new Racing Manager John Taylor did his best to stem the tide.

In September 1996 the site was sold and sadly the track was demolished to make way for the Macmillan City Technology College extension and ended up being part of the MacMillan Academy and now part of the Goals soccer centre football pitches (1° 15' 52.846"W 54° 33' 54.036"N).

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### Selected Track Records

Distance	Name	Time	Date	Notes
240y	Fred Thornley	14.82	14.10.1929	
270y	Hettys Heir	15.92	17.06.1936	
280y	Stockbroker	17.50	01.06.1938	
288y	Blue Dusty	16.61	28.09.1957	
	Lincolns Inn	16.18	24.07.1971	
306y	Sandys Peach	17.61	29.09.1956	
470y	Brilliant Gambler	27.29	21.08.1929	
475y	Brilliant Gambler	28.19	23.06.1928	
480y	Daegrease	28.80	29.05.1937	
500y	Shanes Al	28.61	07.06.1965	
	Idle Sailor	28.48	24.09.1966	
	Malaria	27.96	06.07.1968	
518y	Boy Mack	30.28	1946+	
	Dusky Guy	30.27	26.10.1946	
	Blue Dusty	29.70	09.07.1956	
650y	Brilliant Gambler	??	1928+	
	Pennine Jock	38.81	02.07.1930	
682y	Stocky	41.71	19.07.1933	
692y	Captain Horner	43.88	13.08.1938	
700y	Maylin Justice	41.83	30.07.1962	
	Claudyne	39.75	11.07.1965	
718y	Sound Hero	42.96	23.06.1962	
880y	Student Life	52.23	26.04.1961	
882y	Kirkleatham Leader	57.46	06.05.1935	
470yH	Corah Hill	28.61	02.07.1930	
475yH	Burnebe	30.15	13.06.1928	
650yH	Cleveland Lass	42.54	22.02.1930	
266m	Mattie Jo	16.28	1989+	
	Well Keeper	16.24	29.07.1991	
	Seaview	15.97	01.08.1994	
282m	Kiplings Fox	17.55	1976+	
450m	Move Along Myna	27.84	20.04.1988	
	Ballynaught Five	27.82	1989+	
462m	Swift Linnet	28.36	04.03.1989	
	Jubilee Rocco	28.18	18.06.1993	
478m	Lazy John	29.59	1978+	
	Lucky Saint	29.25	11.06.1983	
640m	Grace Line	40.79	04.10.1989	
	Keiberwood Bob	40.26	23.09.1994	
774m	Hollands Sand	50.91	12.11.1993	
824m	Desert Tan	55.11	17.02.1988	
836m	Dampit Pride	54.94	25.07.1990	
847m	Ryehope Dawn	55.90	1987+	

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