

Mildenhall

Mildenhall is in an area with strong coursing roots and in later decades greyhound racing became a popular sport. The market town in Suffolk is surrounded by agriculture and it has been that way for centuries. The only significant landmark near the town was RAF Mildenhall, a Royal Airforce station that opened in 1934.

Less than forty years later in 1971 a speedway practice track was built on farmland owned by Terry Waters and two years later the track was moved to a different position on the same farmland but this time on the south side of the junction where Hayland Drove meets Cooks Drove. The track was extremely primitive with a few sheds used as dressing rooms and straw bales made up the safety fence.

In 1975 the Mildenhall Fen Tigers were formed and they entered the National League. The team was quite successful and continued to compete right up until the end of the 1989 season when the Speedway ceased.

However in August 1990 Dick Partridge approached Terry Waters regarding a return for speedway and the introduction of greyhound racing. A lease was agreed and the greyhound track was constructed along with improvements in the facilities including new concrete terracing and track lights. The hare was an 'Outside Summer' and the sand that made the surface was the Kings Lynn silica sand. Seventy-four kennels were constructed with a paddock and weighing room added in an area of the old speedway pits. After securing a licence from the NGRC the first meeting took place on Saturday 21st September 1991. An eight race card started with a 375 metres event that was won by Coppacabana a 3-1 shot trained by Mills in a time of 24.61 secs. Colin Ayres was brought in as Racing Manager.

It was not long before the track attracted some major players; it is worth noting that one Linda Jones and her husband Doug who lived in nearby Lakenheath would appear at the track regularly whilst building their Imperial Kennels up. Jenny March and John Counsell also trained here in the early days.

Tuesday and Saturday night racing became regular nights racing and the other race distances in addition to 375 were 550 & 700 metres. Unfortunately the speedway attendances were not as hoped forcing the speedway operation to close down in 1992. The greyhound racing was then overseen by Richard Borthwick and Michael Glynn and new Racing Manager Michael Hill. The track underwent changes again with distances being fine-tuned to 220, 375, 545, 700, 870 & 1025 metres on a circumference of 325m.

Trainer Linda Jones secured a contract at Romford in 1994 leaving the track after cutting her teeth here. The track continues to trade year by year with little open race success based on the fact that travel remains a problem for the trainers attached. Terry Waters took over as general manager and the turn of the millennium around the same time that Swaffham closed.

In recent years Dave Coventry invested in the stadium owned by Terry Waters and Carl Harris became General Manager. Since 2008 the stadium has been under threat from closure since two residents took the stadium to court over noise disruption and in 2014 the Supreme Court ruled in favour of the residents. It seemed extraordinary that the justice system could side with the two residents that moved into the area in 2006; 35 years AFTER the speedway track existed! Maybe the stadium owners should move near to Heathrow, they could make a few quid.

Thankfully the stadium still races today with James Waters (son of Terry) as General Manager and Michael Hill approaching twenty years as Racing Manager.

Selected Track Records

Distance	Name	Time	Date	Notes
220m	Lots Of Jolly	13.39	26.10.1993	
	Pams Deema	13.28	14.08.2012	
375m	Some Kick	23.90	21.09.1991	First night best time
	Dunmurry Vixen	23.44	26.10.1991	
	Lots Of Jolly	23.10	11.07.1994	
	Flashy Beo	22.88	11.10.1996	
	Warning Sign	22.76	26.06.2012	
545m	Decoy Panther	33.90	12.12.1994	
	Lady Small Paws	33.76	26.02.2001	
	Much Approved	33.74	18.05.2004	

	Newtown Shannon	33.67	08.06.2007	
	Blackrose Jessie	33.60	19.08.2008	
550m	Dunmurry Brandy	34.72	30.11.1991	
700m	Fortunate Man	45.67	21.12.1991	
	Take A Flyer	44.90	31.10.1994	
	Trade Link	44.44	07.10.1999	
	Bubbly Capel	44.01	08.05.2012	
870m	Hillmount Jean	56.53	26.09.1993	
	Barwise Smiler	56.15	28.09.1998	
1025m	Dusty Image	67.49	11.11.1994	