

Rochdale

The Athletic Grounds east of Rochdale opened in 1894 and the new stadium soon became the home of the Rochdale Hornets rugby league club. Situated alongside the Oldham & Rochdale branch railway on its south side the stadium could be accessed from Milnrow Road.

Speedway arrived in 1928 with a team also called the Rochdale Hornets but sadly the sport only survived two years coming to an end in 1930. A greyhound syndicate brought greyhound racing to the stadium in 1932 with an opening meeting held on 18th June 1932 under BGTCS rules (the main rival of the NGRC at the time).

The racing progressed well and in 1938 the company failed in an attempt to purchase the ground from the rugby league club. Rochdale Greyhounds Ltd had earned around £100,000 in today's money from their tote deductions alone putting them in a strong financial position as the war approached. A well-documented incident took place the following year when part of the stand collapsed killing two spectators during a rugby match.

The track had a 450 yard circumference and a home straight grandstand and terracing, there was another stand and terracing on the opposite side of the track next to the railway line. The racing kennels and paddock were set well behind the main grandstand with the 120 resident kennels further behind these quite near to housing that had been constructed since the opening of the stadium. Race distances were 319, 500 & 530 yards with 465 yard handicaps.

After the war business continued to steadily improve until 1947 after the industry hit a peak. The Racing Manager during the fifties was T H Mitchell assisted by J Edden. There were no principal events of note and Rochdale trainers rarely competed in open races.

In December 1962 the track decided to leave the NGRC due to falling profits and they went independent, J Dickinson was the Racing Manager but Mitchell & Edden remained at the track. However during December 1969 the greyhound racing stopped under the Rochdale Greyhounds Ltd following unsustainable losses.

Speedway unsuccessfully returned for a season in 1971 and finally the rugby league team moved to a new home resulting in the closure of the stadium in 1989. Eventually the local council gave permission to redevelop the stadium.

The site today is the large Morrisons supermarket on Kingsway.

Selected Tote Returns

Year	Turnover £
1938	31,132
1943	178,818
1944	246,884
1945	370,605
1946	566,976
1947	252,811
1948	196,953
1949	165,007
1950	133,116
1952	126,300
1953	111,900
1954	97,000