

Rye House

The story of Rye House in Hoddesdon is quite remarkable and few that attended the greyhound racing realised the history involved in the surroundings. The name originated from a collection of medieval buildings on an area known as the Isle of Rye due to the fact that the land was directly next door to the River Lee and in particular the Lee Navigation.

When the stadium was constructed in 1935 it was put next door to Rye House on a plot of spare land which is where the name for the stadium came from. Rye House had been the family home for the Parr family that included Catherine in the 16th century, a workhouse and tourist attraction in the 19th century.

The track is accessed from Rye Road either an easterly or westerly direction with Hoddesdon to the west and a huge sewage works to the east. All that remains today of the original Rye House is the gatehouse found to the north of the stadium. The stadium hosted both unlicensed greyhound racing and speedway but was owned by the Lea Valley Regional Park Authority.

The stadium was described as being able to hold 4,000 spectators and it was not until 1960 that the track made the news. Gerry Bailey and Jack Carter took over the lease and immediately began to upgrade the facilities moving the greyhound track to the outside of the speedway track forming a 440 yard circumference. Racing was held on Wednesday & Saturday evenings and an 'Inside Sumner' and photo finish was installed.

During 1974 six independent tracks took advantage of the new NGRC rule allowing smaller venues to join them in what was called the permit scheme. The track began to earn a decent reputation and with the Rye House Kart Raceway constructed next door the area became a popular day's entertainment.

The management inaugurated an event called the Sovereign Stakes which attracted some excellent sprinters from around the country. Rye House greyhounds held their own on the open race circuit with one in particular called Gin And Jass performing superbly. The brindle dog trained by Dave Drinkwater claimed the Crayford Vase and broke four track records but his biggest success was lifting the Pall Mall trophy in 1976.

Another trainer George Lang steered Salina and Regal Girl to two consecutive 'Key' victories before Dutch Jet became Peterborough Derby champion in 1983 for Jean Talmage.

Sadly the management found it difficult to continue under NGRC rules due to increased costs and in 1985 reverted back to independent racing. However in March 1988 Eddie Lesley took over the lease and brought the stadium back under NGRC rules. The track dimensions were changed to a 389 circumference and distances of 255, 465, 595 & 655m. Gerry Bailey was installed as the Racing Manager who then took over the lease again with Carter in 1990 and they in turn made Ray Spalding the Racing Manager. Spalding was later to become General Manager with Frank Baldwin brought in as Racing Manager.



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The constant changes at Rye House continued with race distances changing several times over the next decade and Rye House trainers sporadically picked up a competition win. In 1995 Theo Mentzis won the St Leger with Kens Dilemma and one year later Night Trooper finished runner up in the Derby. The brilliant Night Trooper a black dog trained by Nikki Adams then went undefeated through the Pall Mall in 1997 and claimed first prize in the Reading Masters.

John 'Ginger' McGee had an attachment at the track in 1998 following his return from a 1994 NGRC ban and in 1999 the Sovereign Stakes was revived under new Racing Manager David Quinn. The race went to none other than Night Trooper. In the summer of 2000 the site was sold to Silversport owned by speedway promoter Len Silver and Hazel Naylor but after a short venture with the greyhound racing they ended the greyhounds in 2004.

The greyhounds remained closed until 2005 re-opening under former Racing Manager Sue Picton. The ongoing problems finally saw the stadium close to greyhound racing for good on 15th November 2006.

Speedway remains in action at the stadium to this day and the greyhound track has been grassed over (0° 0' 32.834"E 51° 46' 8.998"N).

Selected Track Records

Distance	Name	Time	Date	Notes
210m	Our Dog Raphael	13.59	29.03.1998	
255m	Mairead Sand	15.71	1989+	
	Strange Dilly	15.66	30.05.1990	
265m	Mossley Mead	15.87	10.10.1999	
270m	Fast Kodiak	16.46	29.02.2004	
	Melodys Jo	16.29	26.06.2005	
	Torbald Dante	16.26	03.07.2005	
	Run for Bally	16.20	02.10.2005	
	Ringtown Mojo	16.20	05.11.2006	
281m	Tiger Jazz	16.91	1978+	
	Daleys Gold	16.59	1987+	
383m	Fast Kodiak	23.17	09.05.2004	
435m	Thats the Bullet	26.50	02.10.2005	
	Davdor Dashing	26.28	13.08.2006	
445m	Prinz Eugen	26.34	06.09.1998	
465m	Columbcille Gem	27.85	1989+	
	Ring Slippy	27.76	25.10.1989	
480m	Deejay Scores	29.52	14.09.2003	
	Farview Peek	29.33	21.09.2003	
	Tain Sli	29.26	10.04.2005	
	Tolon Prince	29.16	03.07.2005	
484m	Outlatwick Kibo	29.88	1976+	
	Glamour Hobo	29.25	1987+	
	Night Trooper	28.52	1997+	
600m	Run on Terry	37.50	30.07.1988	
628m	Billysroundabout	38.60	31.07.2005	
	Graigue Robin	38.52	23.10.2005	
630m	Kens Dilemma	38.75	1996+	
655m	Special Gamble	40.37	20.07.1988	
670m	Askinvillar King	43.12	1976+	
	Go Go Tiger	42.73	03.04.1985	
680m	Shelbourne Star	42.43	19.10.2003	
	Sooty Sive	42.38	23.01.2005	
	Greenacre Lin	42.33	06.08.2006	
	Greenacre Lin	41.91	13.08.2006	
685m	Dunmurry Flight	41.75	01.11.1998	

845m	Yamaha Autumn	54.42	23.01.2005	
865m	Decoy Madonna	54.69	10.07.1989	
	Bubbly Princess	53.25	04.04.1999	
870m	Cloonty Lib	57.05	1987+	
905m	Souda Bay	56.58	29.03.1998	
485mH	Creevy Rover	29.56	20.08.2000	

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