

## Sittingbourne

The new Central Park Stadium was built in 1990 to serve as the new home for Sittingbourne FC. The site chosen was in the north-eastern part of Sittingbourne on a redeveloped area on the east side of Church Road. Church Road had consisted of housing but the redevelopment had made the area largely industrial. Sittingbourne FC had sold their old Bull Ground in the town centre to fund the new modern stadium with a capacity of 6,000 excellent car parking facilities.

By 1992 the chairman of the football club Mick Fletcher had revealed plans to construct a greyhound track around the football pitch and build a new 2,000 seated stand at the cost of £2 million subject to planning permission.

Overspending on the facilities by the football club resulted in a £700,000 cash shortfall and a £1.1 million debt by September 1994. In addition the anticipated start to greyhound racing was delayed following a design fault on the roof leading to expensive alterations. With no option but to sell the stadium to Swale Borough Council and lease it back Chief executive Barry Bright and General Manager John Aitken managed to maneuver the stadium finances until finally greyhound racing arrived.

On Tuesday October 3<sup>rd</sup> 1995 the new facilities could finally be experienced, it included a track side restaurant, fast food outlets, three licensed bars and three private executive suites. Racing would be held on every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday evening. The first ever race over 475 metres ended with Try My House taking the spoils for trainer Wayne Wilson. Incidentally Wilson would also claim the first major win for the track when he won the Puppy Derby at Wimbledon with Corpo Election soon after. The other trainers supplying runners on the opening night were Sonia Spiers, Derek Millen, Alison Ingram, Peter Galloway, Martin White, Ken Tester, Mick Mew & Tony Palmer and the Racing Manager was P.Nevett

The financial troubles refused to go away with the track being forced to close with no promoter available in 1996 and the future for the new venue looked bleak. However during 1996 Roger Cearn's stepped up with his greyhound company to take over and within a few months the stadium was open again. Cearn's was the grandson of WJ 'Bill' Cearn's the founder of Wimbledon stadium way back in 1928. Cearn's started to transform the operation into a successful business and in the process sealing a deal that brought the Trainers Championship to the track in 1998 which was won by Ernie Gaskin Sr. for the third time. The football team moved out following clashes with greyhound and football fixtures the same year.

A new group for trainers flew the flag for the track; Paul Garland scooped the Golden Jacket and Owen McKenna (son of the legendary Ger McKenna) took the Oxfordshire Stakes in 1999. Cearn's continued to be pro-active introducing the Kent Derby as the tracks principal event and he even managed to secure a second Trainers Championship in 2000. In the next couple of years Cheryl Miller & Maxine Locke joined the training ranks and Jess Packer was brought in as Racing Manager.

Miller reached the 2002 English Derby final with Windgap Java, a first for Sittingbourne; the fawn dog had won the Pall Mall earlier in the year. Another major event was introduced at the track the Kent Silver Salver, rescued from obscurity since it had been shelved following the closure of Canterbury.

In 2003 Sittingbourne staged a third Trainers Championship within a six year period and trainers Sonja Spiers and Kevin Connor returned to the track after long spells away but Maxine Locke left for Wimbledon. The track continued to grow in reputation and aptly took over the running of the WJ Cearn's Invitation (formerly Memorial) from Wimbledon. The London track was actively reducing their open race budget and Roger Cearn's was only too pleased to take this race.

Rich success covered the period 2007-2008; starting with hurdler Jos Cigar jumping to Grand National glory before trainer Tony Collett and owner Len Ponder released the Lenson's. Lenson Express won countless opens including the William Hill Classic at Sunderland, not to forget a Derby final appearance as well. Lenson Joker went one better by winning Greyhound of the Year, stayer of the year the Cesarewitch title at Oxford and the William Hill Grand Prix.

.....continued

A third Derby final appearance in 2011 for Sittingbourne nearly resulted in actually winning it but Westmead Guru trained by Kelly Findlay had to settle for second place behind Taylors Sky. John Mullins won the 2011 TV Trophy on his home track with Knockies Hannah, the first time the event had been held at Sittingbourne. One year later the track saved the Grand National from extinction after taking the famous classic race from Wimbledon.

Mullins left for Yarmouth in 2012 and Tony Taylor had a spell at the track in 2013. The most recent accomplishment of note was a fourth Derby final runner in 2014 with Tony Collett's Kinraig Rory.

### Selected Track Records

Distance	Name	Time	Date	Notes	
265m	Fast Ranger	16.20	24.11.1999		
	Westmead Shaw	16.13	20.05.2012		
450m	Parking Flash	27.46	04.06.2006		
	Jims Havana	27.35	17.06.2007		
	Citizen Skipper	27.26	24.05.2009		
	Jacks Back	27.10	08.07.2010		
473m	Droopys Vieri	28.53	26.03.2000		
480m	Reagrove Roe	29.09	04.06.2006		
	Lenson Joker	28.92	12.08.2007	Kent Derby heats	
	Lenson Bolt	28.91	16.08.2009	Kent Derby heats	
	Eye Onthe Flash	28.90	4.03.2010		
	Blonde Fletch	28.80	20.06.2010		
	Jazz Apollo	28.72	24.07.2011		
	Coolavanny Bert	28.50	20.11.2011		
	500m	Official Rebel	30.70	28.05.2006	
	Emporio Spitfire	30.60	04.06.2006		
	Macintosh Wonder	30.53	16.07.2006		
	Lenson Express	30.31	08.04.2007	WJ Cearns Invitation	
	Lenson Earl	30.26	09.12.2007		
	Lenson Express	30.23	28.09.2008		
	Grayslands Tiger	30.14	24.05.2009		
	Lemon Maldini	29.97	24.07.2011		
	Jet Stream Duke	29.84	16.03.2014		
	642m	Lobo	39.96	07.10.1999	
		Droopys Zach	39.64	09.08.2009	
Boomtown Polly		39.60	30.03.2014		
Droopys Posh		39.58	11.05.2014		
Touch Tackle		39.44	19.10.2014		
708m	Sumi Girl	44.32	27.11.1998		
	Brimardon Star	44.00	03.05.2009		
	Brimardon Star	43.70	02.08.2009		
893m	Redec Pride	59.62	22.10.2006		
	Slaneyside Demon	58.42	29.10.2006		
	Slaneyside Demon	57.64	05.11.2006		
	Omega Wink	57.44	29.07.2007		
	Gas Hawk	57.20	02.08.2009		
	Seamies Gambler	57.19	09.08.2009		
	Matching Amy	56.91	20.06.2010		
	Droopys Djokovic	56.82	31.07.2011		
	Buglys Billie	56.82	21.08.2011		
	Aayamzabella	56.49	17.10.2013		
916m	Jodie With Flex	58.29	14.02.1999		
	Ericas Equity	58.09	17.08.2003		
943m	Baliff Perry	62.14	15.10.2006		
	Omega Wink	61.96	26.12.2006		
	Gaytime Beauty	60.74	12.08.2007		
	Omega Wink	60.69	15.08.2007		
	Blonde Blitz	60.18	18.07.2010		
	473mH	Ballmac Keano	29.41	01.07.2001	

480mH	Borodale Hawk	31.02	26.11.2006	
	Skippers Crew	30.58	03.12.2006	
	Nickel Trader	30.53	09.03.2007	
	Nickel Trader	30.40	18.03.2007	
	Carnaree Honcho	30.06	07.04.2007	
	Westmead Vieri	29.90	19.05.2007	
	Castledale Lad	29.71	19.08.2007	
	Platinumlancelot	29.45	30.07.2009	
	Sizzlers Spirit	29.44	15.07.2010	
	Mash Mad Snowy	29.20	01.06.2014	