

Stanley (Murray Park)

In the northerly part of County Durham stands the former colliery town of Stanley and that one form of entertainment for the town was provided by greyhound racing from Thursday 26 August 1937.

Murray Park Stadium was built on the site of a football pitch on the east side of Ridley Street, Church Street and Joicey Square. The track was also known as Stanley but should not be confused with the Stanley track in Liverpool. The track ran as an independent at this stage and had no connection with either the British Greyhound Tracks Control Society (BGTCS) or the rival National Greyhound Racing Society (NGRS).

Five thousand people witnessed the first ever meeting held at the stadium during the summer of 1937 and first past the post was a greyhound called Beatrice May who stopped the clock at 18.30secs for 305 yards. A small circumference track of 367 yards resulted in distances of 275, 450 and 635 yards of which most were handicaps.

It is known that totalisator turnover was reasonably steady for an independent track towards the end of the war with only Ashington and West Hartlepool returning figures that surpassed Stanley (see page 2).

The promotion of Arthur Seymour and his wife Lily resulted in the track racing under NGRC rules towards the end of the decade, in the 1949 listings the track raced every Monday and Saturday at 7.00pm. The NGRC stay only lasted around five years because during 1954 the decision was made to revert back to independent status due to the fact that the NGRC refused to allow Stanley to race under a C-Licence. This type of licence was available to trainers who owned and trained a small kennel and if the tracks operated under what was termed the 'combine' they could allow C-Licence trainers race nights. Only Gateshead and South Shields remained in the combine following the withdrawal of Stanley.

On Saturday October 2nd the track re-opened to independent racing with the press reporting a packed house and it remained as a 'flapper' for the rest of its days. Throughout the sixties racing took place on Thursday & Saturday nights at 7.15pm over distances of 277, 460 & 637 yards behind an 'Inside Sumner' hare. The main races hosted at the track were the Sprint Classic, Derby and St Leger.

Stanley survived until 29th October 1994 when sold for housing but at least the stadium is remembered because the new housing was called Murray Park (1° 41' 25.888"W 54° 52' 23.992"N).