

## Swindon

Greyhound Racing in Swindon began with two tracks appearing back in 1930, the first was in the village of Wroughton, south of Swindon and the second being right in the centre of the town on Edinburgh Street. Both were very short lived ventures and had disappeared by the mid-thirties.

It was not until 1952 that greyhounds returned to north of the town in an area known as Blunsdon. The site chosen was a rural setting south of Lady Lane and was named after the Blunsdon Abbey Estate in Blunsdon St Andrew, a Victorian estate which had seen the main house destroyed by fire in 1904.

The stadium opened to the public on 23 July 1949 when it hosted the Swindon Robins speedway team and greyhound racing would follow three years later on 01 November 1952. The track raced as an independent and offered an eight race card on the opening night over distances of 324 & 525 yards. Two thousand people turned up to watch Mr Huddy's Don't Care win a 324 yard race in a time of 19.02 secs at odds of 6-1.

The stadium came into the hands of the Bristol Greyhound Racing Association, soon to change their name to Bristol Stadium Ltd; the company already had control of Oxford in addition to Bristol. This inevitably led to the track becoming part of the NGRC set up during April 1968. The Silver Plume competition was inaugurated the same year as the tracks principal event which produced a home winner in 1969 in the form of The Bad Drop trained by Kay Lee. The event had formerly been held at the closed Knowle track.

A small short lived greyhound racing circuit appeared in nearby Common Platt during the late sixties but disappeared soon after unable to stabilise a business with a much bigger neighbour on the doorstep.

Greyhounds called Just Cruising and The Grand Snow were local favourites throughout the late sixties, the two bitches raced for many years.

Following the closure of Gloucester & Cheltenham in 1983 many of the trainers found new homes at Swindon and Bristol after being kindly accommodated by the respective Racing Managers Bill Hiscock and Ken Whitrow. Later the same year a company called ADT (British Car Auctions) purchased the Abbey Stadium using the huge car park as a base for their sales. Swindon experienced considerable change during this period, the Jubilee Stakes was introduced by British Car Auctions bringing another significant competition to the track and many of the attached trainers began to taste open race success. Two other competitions that attracted decent interest were the Grand National of the West and Pride of the West.

Racing was held on Monday, Wednesday and Friday evenings over distances of 275, 480, 510, 685 & 730 metres. The circumference was a massive 463 metres and the circuit was renowned for being a tough test for non-stayers but had a very good injury record. The car park could hold 4,000 vehicles but facilities remained basic and dated.

In 1984 trainer Tony Meek was making a name for himself when winning the Stewards Cup with Keem Rocket, the fawn & white dog then claimed the Golden Jacket the following year. Another trainer Tony Mann experienced success with the Peasedown prefix during the late eighties. Swindon was prone to losing some of its better trainers to Oxford and Tony Meek was one such trainer to move in 1986.

General Manager Bill Chandler created a good atmosphere for the public and investment was put into grandstand improvements in 1988 with an efficient and popular restaurant ensuing. The hare was also updated with an 'Outside Sumner' being used.

A fine moment came during the 1990 Derby when Paul Owens steered the Burnt Oak Champ all the way to the final, although finishing last in the final he put up a great fight throughout the competition. Further success in the Cock o'the North and Midland Puppy Derby followed for Viking Champ and One For Lloyd respectively. Bill Hiscock left for Romford in 1990 as their new General Manager and Stuart Netting became the Racing Manager before joining Ramsgate which led to Dave Stow taking over. The track acquired numerous trainers in the subsequent years and particularly owner trainers.

.....continued

A pivotal year ensued in 1997 as the BS Group owners of Eastville, Bristol sold the stadium to developers and bought Swindon from ADT (British Car Auctions). A remarkable move took place, the entire racing office, bookmakers, trainers and even the BAGS contract was rerouted forty miles up the M4. Suddenly the track had a substantial BAGS contract to look after but at least they had the understanding of how it worked with so many Bristol faces joining the track. Even the highly regarded Western Two Year Old Produce Stakes was shifted from Eastville and would now be better known as the British Bred Two Year Old Produce Stakes.

Swindon built a healthy relationship with Oxford and the pair featured in annual inter-track challenges before track changes and race distances were altered in 1998. In 2002 the company bought Reading to add to the current portfolio that included Poole and Milton Keynes. Bill Chandler had joined the NGRC by this time replaced by Brian Ludgate whilst Clive Oseman had taken over as Racing Manager.

The BS Group would dispose of both Milton Keynes in 2005 and Reading in 2008 leaving just the two tracks under their umbrella. The BS Group would become Stadia UK under another company called Gaming International which is all a little confusing bearing in mind that the CEO of all three companies was Clark Osborne.

Dave Stow was brought back in to assist Clive Oseman as joint Racing Manager, a move made following an increasingly busy BAGS schedule. In the meantime Swindon had seen little open race success since the days of Tony Meek but a gradual build up in trainer strength and greyhound quality led to long awaited wins. Paul Foster won the prestigious Cesarewitch with Dark Hondo in 2007 before Matt Dartnall joined the training ranks in 2010.

Walthamstow closed in 2008 resulting in the Arc being transferred to Swindon, although the Arc was seen as a popular competition in the current calendar it had little history. Maybe the track would have been better off putting the money into the Silver Plume and continuing with it. Nevertheless Swindon trainers began to pick up silverware, Nick Colton dual attached with Oxford claimed an Arc win in 2011 with Jolly Poacher and Matt Dartnall followed that up by defending the title for Swindon the following year with Ballymac Cryan. Dartnall also steered Farloe Ironman to the Derby final in 2012 finishing runner-up to Blonde Snapper and his bitch Blue Bee lifted the Golden jacket title.

More recently Kevin Hutton came to prominence at the track before joining Towcester in 2014. He won the Oxfordshire Gold Cup in 2012 with Barnish Booth, the Champion Stakes with Airport Captain and the Oaks with Droopys Danneel but the highlight was a Derby fourth fifth place finish with Screen Critic in 2013.

Swindon continues to punch above their weight on both the open race circuit and during the BAGS track championship always putting up a good show.

In 2014 Stadia UK operations director Bill Glass announced that planning permission was granted for 66 new houses on part of the existing Swindon stadium site and the plan was to use some of the funds to build a new stadium and then the old site would be demolished for 450 homes. The new stadium should be up and running by 2016.

.....**continued**

### Selected Track Records

Distance	Name	Time	Date	Notes
520y	Glory Newtown	29.18	1970+	
550y	Ballybeg Flash	30.71	29.06.1970	Silver Plume Final
575y	Legane Glory	32.44	1970+	
740y	Bishops Miss	42.93	1970+	
275m	Fearless Swift	16.28	19.08.1985	
280m	Mollifrend Tom	16.19	05.10.1988	
285m	Leaders Highway	16.23	10.06.1998	
	Everton Cheetah	16.23	12.03.2003	
	Jimmy Lollie	15.90	30.09.2009	
460m	Droopys Clay	27.54	03.09.2002	
	Pindi Express	27.33	11.02.2004	
476m	Money Matters	27.89	03.08.1988	
480m	Dave's War	28.49	1979+	
	Clonee Bill	28.26	18.10.1982	
	Peasedown Julie	28.26	09.11.1983	
	Trade Style	28.84	23.05.1998	Silver Plume Final
	White Santa	28.63	12.06.1998	
	Three Wells	28.60	11.04.2001	
	Dalcash Invader	28.57	03.09.2002	
	Westmead Joe	28.50	19.07.2006	Produce Stakes semi-final
	Rhizome Wizard	28.44	21.10.2006	
	Troys Expert	28.29	25.07.2009	Produce Stakes final
	Mark My Words	28.28	09.07.2011	Produce Stakes heats
	Mark My Words	28.26	15.07.2011	Produce Stakes 2 <sup>nd</sup> round
	Sids Dream	28.20	24.02.2012	
	Shaneboy Alley	28.18	01.05.2013	Arc Final
	Johnnys Star	28.18	05.07.2013	
509m	Westmead Gold	29.98	01.07.1987	
	Darragh Commet	29.94	04.07.1988	
	Broadacres Butch	29.85	04.04.2001	
	Rhizome Wizard	29.73	26.08.2006	
	Pine Isle	29.70	16.09.2009	
	Little Jig	29.65	30.09.2009	Pride of the West final
	Crusty Crab	29.59	10.11.2010	
	Sawpit Sensation	29.43	01.05.2013	
530m	Greenfield Fox	31.58	1977+	
685m	Bright Cut	42.38	1976+	
	Black Port	41.72	18.07.1984	
	Droopys Kovac	41.86	31.05.2002	
	Streaky Luvs Men	41.64	13.07.2002	
	Shelbourne Star	40.94	11.02.1004	
695m	Miss Linsey	45.42	17.06.1985	Jubilee Stakes semi-final
	Go Go Tiger	45.37	17.06.1985	Jubilee Stakes semi-final
	Jet Streamer	45.31	06.11.1987	
737m	Wailea Flash	44.62	03.08.1988	
	Xamax Ayam Zaman	45.13	03.09.2002	
	Streaky Luvs Men	45.11	11.07.2003	
	Wise Maldini	44.86	20.09.2003	
943m	Eternal Mist	60.18	1980+	
	Tartan Sarah	58.52	23.07.1984	
476mH	Gizmo Pasha	29.40	13.06.1990	
	Faoides Country	29.11	18.09.1991	
480mH	Greenacre George	28.93	03.09.2002	

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

**Selected Tote Returns**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Turnover £</b>
1953	73,933
1954	67,000