

Wakefield

The Wakefield Greyhound Sports Stadium seems to have been a well-kept secret with little information available on one of the most remarkably shaped tracks ever seen. It is well recorded that oval track racing started at Belle Vue in 1926 but one could argue that triangle track racing started in 1933.

Wakefield constructed a greyhound track in the heart of the city where three railway lines intersected with each other. Previously a cricket ground the site was south of the Wakefield Kirkgate Branch railway and north of the intersection of the Doncaster to Leeds viaduct and the London, Midland and Scottish railway (LMS).

The reason for the most bizarrely shaped greyhound circuit was due to the plot of land running parallel to the 95 arch railway viaduct to the west and the LMS railway to the east. Add the former cricket pitch into the equation and you were left with what could only be described as a triangle track, it would have been most interesting to watch the designers in action back in 1933.

A well-publicised court case at the end of the first years trading culminated in Mr Justices Swift stating "I do not want to say anything in any way condemnatory of dog racing as a whole. I know nothing about dog racing and I only have to deal with the facts put before me in this case. But the amount of roguery exposed before me is greater than anything I have ever seen in any form of sport". The case to which he referred was the suing of the Wakefield track owners Leonard Parker and Jane Hargreaves by Halifax bookmaker Willie Lumb. Lumb had supplied 39 greyhounds to the track (independent at the time) for 10s per week per dog but the track owners counter claimed for keep and care. Further information came to light that Lumb was told how his greyhounds would be graded and if they were well, a claim denied. Lumb won the case and was awarded £215 but the judge summed up by criticising the way independent racing was organised and suggested that the police should become involved to prohibit any track running their track in this way.

It is apparent that the tracks problems continued to be an issue before the war as racing was held over the distances of 285, 310 and 510 yards. After the Second World War Wakefield gained consistency within the business and managed to pull in a totalisator annual profit before tax of £60,000 on a regular basis (see page 2). It is around this time that the track also joined the NGRC set up to bring some stability and integrity to the track.

Unfortunately not too much is known of the post war racing but it is known that boxing bouts of note took place at the stadium. In 1972 the government forced the country into frequent power cuts which did not help the financial situation at Wakefield who had to cancel many meetings during the early part of 1972 and the problems persisted throughout 1973. Although it is not known if this was a major contributor towards the closure of the stadium it was certainly one factor that resulted in the stadium sale in 1973. Add this fact to the tough times of the era especially in a mining county it is clear that it was no longer viable for the greyhound racing to continue.

The final meeting was held on 14 November 1973, the site would become the Trinity Business Park.

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Selected Track Records

Distance	Name	Time	Date	Notes
512y	Adams Prairie	29.07	1970+	
	Kinloch Star	29.06	11.08.1971	
665y	Katies Rusten	38.33	13.08.1969	

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

Selected Tote Returns

Year	Turnover £
1946	51,799
1947	53,347
1948	49,711
1949	60,332
1950	65,761
1951	65,940
1952	60,600
1953	61,000
1954	60,000