



Running for their Lives!



Newsletter of Greyhound Action No. 31 May/June 2010

Filthy industry fading fast

More bad news for the greyhound killers

◆ According to the pro-racing Greyhound Star, in the late 1980s there were 44 major British greyhound tracks, of which only 25 now remain, and 80 smaller "flapping" tracks - now about 8. Twenty years ago 800 greyhound litters were being bred each year in Britain. Corresponding figures were 483 in 2008, 409 in 2009 and only 25 in the first 3 months of 2010.

◆ Veteran greyhound "owner" Len Ponder (involved with dog racing for 50 years) told the Greyhound Star: "I know the tracks are finding it difficult....but some of them don't help themselves. Some of the tracks are just filthy. They are disgusting and there is no excuse for it. It would cost a pittance to get staff just cleaning the facilities."

◆ Martin White, chairman of the Greyhound Owners Breeders and Trainers Association, has criticised the length of time that greyhounds are confined to small kennels during race meetings and described the condition of some tracks' kennels as "filthy and disgusting".

◆ Manchester's Belle Vue greyhound stadium looks set to put an end to some of its most valuable races, after failing to find sponsors to fund them. Among the races under threat are the Cock O' The North and the Scurry Gold Cup sprint championship. General manager Mick Hardy told the Racing Post: "There is no new sponsor for the Scurry at this stage and I'm not hopeful". Belle Vue has been hit hard by a big exposé in the local evening paper about the number of serious injuries to greyhounds there and a revelation by investigative group Greyhound Watch that appalling negligence by one of the track's top trainers allowed one of her greyhounds to be fatally savaged by another dog.

◆ Russ Watkin, a former official at Coventry Stadium, was fined £5,000 and severely reprimanded by the Gambling Commission for causing greyhound races there to start earlier than their advertised time, so that a colleague in the off-course betting industry could make money by placing bets on the results. Racing at the stadium has been suspended since December, after the company running it went bust.



◆ A Sheffield trainer has been accused of betting fraud. GBGB director of regulation Declan Donnelley said: "I can confirm Carol Evans had her professional trainer's licence suspended on Wednesday, May 12 as a result of information forwarded to us by Betfair regarding unusual betting patterns."

◆ According to the South Wales Echo, 9,000 people turned up for the very first greyhound race meeting at Cardiff's White City Stadium on Easter Sunday 1928, followed by a crowd of 25,000 on Easter Monday. That track and almost all the others in Wales are now long gone, leaving just one, in the Caerphilly area, which is attended by just a handful of dog racing enthusiasts.

Left - Wales: All that remains of the recently closed Swansea track

◆ Former staff at the now-closed Portsmouth Greyhound Stadium are owed almost £137,000, including ex-track manager Paul Clark, who's still waiting for £15,388.56 in unpaid redundancy and holiday pay. Trainers and staff have so far not received any redundancy pay and angry ex-employees attended a creditors' meeting, a month after the company was liquidated. Moral of the story - don't take a job in a dying industry!



Recent demo at Belle Vue, where regular protests and leafleting have caused attendances to fall

◆ Following a Greyhound Action investigation, the Sunday Express carried an article about the appalling conditions and injuries to greyhounds at the Lincolnshire ZigZag Kennels of notorious breeder Charles Pickering, who had previously been exposed by the Sunday Times for supplying young greyhounds to Liverpool University for dissection.

◆ Birkenhead greyhound trainer Ian Street was given a suspended jail sentence by Wirral magistrates and banned from keeping animals for life, after admitting 11 charges under the Animal Welfare Act. The court heard that Street's dogs were kept in damaged, rusty and blood-stained wire kennels, a garden shed and a loose-run compound. The greyhounds had poor skin, coats caked in mud, urine and faeces, and most displayed evidence of heavy flea, mite and worm infestations.

Greyhound Rescue West of England, which helped with the removal of the dogs, believes it is the first time a local council has used the act to rescue greyhounds. A spokesperson for the charity said: "We hope it will encourage other councils to use their powers under the Animal Welfare Act to remove racing greyhounds from unsuitable conditions in the future."

◆ The GBGB's greyhound racing TV programme, The Dogs, has been axed, with the Board no longer able to pay Sky the £4,000 cost of broadcasting each edition. A reduction in income from bookmakers has also forced the Board to slash prize money grants by 8.3% and spending on marketing by 19%.

◆ The poor financial state of the greyhound racing industry has caused trainer Michael Harris to end a successful career at Wolverhampton's Monmore Green Stadium and the Racing Post has reported that an up and coming Sunderland trainer has also quit.

◆ The Sunderland track suffered a further blow with news that another of its most important trainers, Ronald Paterson, is to appear before a disciplinary committee to face allegations that he put the welfare of his dogs at risk. Following pressure from Greyhound Action and concerned local residents, Paterson, who trains racing dogs near Eaglescliffe, Co. Durham, has been charged by the Greyhound Board of Great Britain with failure to provide overnight supervision for his greyhounds, failure to obtain planning consent for his kennels, and leaving eight dogs without proper shelter.



Exposed by the Sunday Express – Greyhounds caged at squalid ZigZag Kennels

Death knell for the Don?

Doom and gloom at London's only track



Above - Local Greyhound Action supporters demonstrate outside the Greyhound Derby Final

Even the staging of Britain's most valuable dog race competition, the Greyhound Derby, has done little to ease the stadium's problems, with (according to the Racing Post) only 2,500 punters bothering to turn up for the Final of this year's event, which normally attracts 6,000.

An indication of the decline of the Wimbledon track is shown in the value of prize money paid to race winners, which is now only a third of what it was 50 years ago, based on a cost of living calculation. And the following statement on a pro-racing internet forum just about sums up how far the fortunes of the place have fallen: "Was up in London Saturday and took the wife to Wimbledon. I was embarrassed to be there. The place is a slum, you cannot see the racing, the food atrocious the staff at best poor. This is the place where the Derby takes place??? What an insult to the owners and what the Irish must think must beggar belief. We walked out after 5 races. The future of greyhound racing in this country must be very bleak. I have 3 dogs currently and will not be getting anymore if this is the sort of thing that is allowed to be gotten away with."

Rumours are rife within the dog racing community that Wimbledon greyhound stadium will be sold to developers as soon as property prices rise.

Although the track is now the only one remaining within the London postal area, it has suffered a big fall in attendances and a few months ago was forced, for financial reasons, to close its main stand and put an end to Tuesday night race meetings.