



# Running for their Lives!



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## The Fall of Pompey

### Joy as Portsmouth dog track closes

Portsmouth greyhound stadium (known as "Pompey" by dog racing enthusiasts) closed at the end of March and will be demolished to pave the way for housing.

Mike Hancock, MP for Portsmouth South, said: "I'm sure local residents will welcome it and see it as a positive stop in terms of some development starting to happen at the site."

The stadium had been open since 1931 and was one of the oldest in the UK.

The closure is excellent news for greyhounds, as the track's existence was responsible for the putting to death of at least 300 of these dogs every year. Amongst those celebrating the stadium's demise will be the Southern Animal Rights Coalition (SARC), who have campaigned against greyhound racing there for over 2½ years (see pic above).



## Greyhound death-rate down

### Thousands fewer killed each year



The latest report from Greyhound Watch, which carries out research into the dog racing industry, indicates that there has been a big fall in the number of greyhounds put to death each year in the UK and Ireland.

Based on industry figures, Greyhound Watch estimates that about 12,200 greyhounds are now being killed annually because of dog racing in Britain. This is still an appalling figure, but is, thankfully, about 3,000 less than three years ago.

The fall is largely due to a big decline in greyhound breeding, caused by the closure of five major British tracks and a reduction in racing at many others. Over the same period, the number of greyhounds killed because of Irish dog racing has fallen by almost 2,000.

*Demo at Walthamstow Stadium, one of the big tracks that has closed*

## Racing hit by betting slump

### Bookies' contributions drop again

The British Greyhound Racing Fund (BGRF), which is made up of a percentage of the money bet on greyhound racing with bookmakers, has fallen to £8.5m, compared with £10m in 2009 and £12m in 2008.

Greyhound Board of Great Britain (GBGB) Chairman, Maurice Watkins, said: "This substantial reduction in BGRF income is of significant concern for greyhound racing. It will mean that all those areas which benefit from BGRF support will probably incur significant reductions from the budgets previously agreed by the GBGB Board when anticipating a similar income to 2009."

The reduction in the BGRF has come about because fewer people are betting on greyhound races and is great news for the dogs, because it means that the GBGB will have even less money to spend on promoting greyhound racing.



*Persuading punters not to bet on the dogs*

# Unhappy New Year for greyhound racing

## Trouble for tracks as attendances tumble

The greyhound racing industry has been forced to make even more cuts as dog track attendances fell dramatically in the early part of this year.

- ◆ According to the pro-racing Greyhound Star: "Britain's racecourse promoters have had to endure one of the worst trading sessions in living memory....Over Christmas and into mid January, tracks reported a drop in crowd numbers with estimates generally varying between 15% and 25%."
- ◆ GRA (Greyhound Racing Association) spokesman Stephen Rea said: "Our figures must be 25% down. At Hall Green punters didn't want to venture out. We had one Saturday meeting where we only had 400 people here, which is about 70% down. Other tracks like Belle Vue lost several meetings and they also suffered when they were able to open."
- ◆ Bill Glass, of Stadia UK, who own the Poole and Swindon tracks, said: "We lost a stack of meetings due to the weather, and attendances were hit when we did race; in some cases by around 50%."



*Regular demos at Hall Green (Birmingham) have helped to drive down attendances*



*Demo at Sittingbourne, where big cuts have been made*

- ◆ The Sittingbourne track has been forced to cut out half its Friday evening race meetings due to lack of interest and, in the two weeks leading up to Christmas, a string of parties were cancelled due to the weather, resulting in greatly reduced attendances for the month. Racing manager Jess Packer said: "Times are very very hard at Central Park. Some very hard decisions have had to be made, and more may well come...The Fridays just aren't paying. For Valentines night we didn't even get 200 people here." Greyhound trainer Gary Sallis, who raced at the track for many years, has quit, saying: "The game is getting harder and harder. Owners aren't replacing dogs...I'm afraid the game is only going one way."

- ◆ Doncaster joined a long list of other tracks in calling a halt to its Tuesday night meetings for economic reasons. General manager Yvonne Freeborn said: "We had hoped that attendances would have picked up a bit quicker this year but it hasn't happened."
- ◆ Yarmouth has seen a big fall in the number of greyhound "owners" wanting to race their dogs at the track. Assistant racing manager Marcus Westgate said: "We've had less than half of what we would expect.....something has definitely changed." The stadium's two traditional holiday races, the annual veterans race and the New Years Marathon were both cancelled due to lack of interest.
- ◆ The doomed Portsmouth track had already dropped its Tuesday night meetings in January and February, with racing manager Paul Clark saying: "We didn't have enough punters to justify Tuesdays."
- ◆ In Manchester, the Aces speedway club, who currently race at Belle Vue greyhound stadium, are planning to move into a state-of-the-art arena at the council-owned hockey facility next door. With speedway being far more popular than greyhound racing, the move would deprive the struggling dog track of a considerable amount of revenue and push it even nearer to closure.
- ◆ Councillors have approved plans to build 84 houses on the site of the former Hinckley Greyhound Stadium, so making it even more unlikely that dog racing will ever return to the town.
- ◆ In Ireland, attendances at greyhound racing fell by 21% in 2009, causing Irish Greyhound Board (IGB) profits to be slashed to €1m from €5m in 2008. Tote profits from Irish greyhound racing were down by 15%. The slump has forced the IGB to implement staff redundancies and reduce the number of race nights at the tracks.

*March - Demo outside the IGB Annual Awards event in Limerick*

