

INTERVIEW SUMMARY

Mark Burrige

- Father had Greyhounds in the 60s. He visited kennels in Wembley and at the age of 17 he was suddenly hooked.
- Backed "Purdey's Pursuit". Had 50p on it and they won. Was fascinated by the various characters at Wimbledon.
- His Grandfather would go to Wembley & White City. Mark and his dad would regularly visit. He loved the glamour of it.
- "A real Buzz" During the public Derby was when you would experience the real atmosphere. In 1978 a dog of his ran undefeated to the Derby final.
- The stadium was next to a massive carpark. Great ambience, spacious, good betting room and areas to dine.
- Loads of characters like bookies and tic-tacs and their "secret" sign language.
- 8-10 races, get a table with his dad, regulars were treated very well.
- _____ legend won, 'fearless flight' winning a heat of the grand derby.
- Home of greyhound, well maintained and suited.
- Brilliant, outlandish clothes. Felt like a war between bookies and punters. Tony Morris, Henwood Family, regulars at the restaurant
- Great anticipation on the hour-long drive there. Even other sports with the same crowd size didn't have the same raw, ecstatic anticipation.
- He only ever owned one greyhound at a time due to cost.
- Food is Crucial. Exercise, all their energy goes into a single race and after that they are very lazy. Can't run without petrol. Gallop once a week typically but it varies between all dogs.
- Breakfast in the morning. Walk, a light lunch and then a rest. Transported to a racetrack via van. Weight is checked as well as the dog's ear. Vets give a final check-up before a muzzle is placed on and they are paraded before the race.
- Dear love for their dog. Loves to visit them on Sunday morning. Mark buys them steak from the butcher as a treat.
- Nowhere near what it is now. Welfare is brilliant now and rehoming has become a massive priority. Welfare is everything. 96% rehomed. Greater understanding of greyhounds now. Myth of poor treatment of dogs. Those that abuse the dogs are immediately banned.
- Syndicates make it more likely for dogs to be rehomed. Great idea as long as they are running properly by someone more experienced.
- Pretty poor. £300-£500 that would come from bookmakers for first place. Grand Derby prize money is £10,000 which is the same as what it was in Wembley in the 80s. Biggest win was one of the pups of Fearless Flight, One Cross Double, who raced to and won the final winning £500.
- After the asbestos trouble and removal of the main stage there were fewer people, but crowds were still decent. On derby night it was packed. The derby roar started as the hare started and built even louder after the dogs get released, only dying down once they crossed the finish line.

- Needed a new paintjob, money was spent on the corporate boxes. Well-furnished until asbestos issue.
- Used to have great coverage. 2 newspapers, many interviews with trainers and more bookies back then too.
- Fewer owners due to a lack of money in the sport.
- Awareness of welfare higher standards of maintenance. Mark doesn't know anyone who doesn't love their dogs like their own pets.
- Other entertainment, accessibility of the entertainment via phones. White city would have 60,000 in crowds. In the past if you made a bet you HAD to be there. Lost many stadiums in America and now down to 19 in the UK.
- WWW campaign went up to London to voice support for the Pascal Taggart plan. Mark believes it was always going to become a football stadium. Impression that it was what the council always wanted. They wanted to "bring back football".
- Still going, hopefully. Battle between two media outlets that will continue to cause damage. Expect 12 tracks by that point but hopefully it continues. Standards of industry is excellent at the moment. Wishes to continue to raise awareness.
- Many memories taken for granted, now treasured. Very difficult for all involved.
- An enormous amount, got back into ownership a few years ago after 10 years of being out. He is more into it than ever before. Plans to retire with some greyhounds and take them for walks every morning. Humble, kind and curious animals. Bring joy on a regular basis.

Additional.

The stadium was difficult to revisit.

Acted as a kennel hand during covid. Wanted to parade a greyhound and his friend invited him to get a kennel licence. Even with no crowds it was electric. The relief of getting the dog in and the sheer adrenaline of seeing them bolt out is fantastic. He also never saw just how much the greyhounds love it until becoming a kennel hand.