

Phil Donaldson

Son of a bookie, track commentator with tales of the characters that came to bet

Born 1967 in Nelson Hospital Raynes Park. Dad was a printer and a bookmaker at Wimbledon Stadium. He remembers going to the dogs as a youngster maybe two or three nights a week and from around the age of 14 he was helping out his Dad taking and giving out winnings on the track. He was living a totally different life to the one that his school friends knew.

Back in the day there were all sorts going to the dogs; great characters like the pimp Jimmy the Ponce and the shoplifter Bobby the Bag and George the burglar who would turn up with a Cornflakes box full of cash. He worked for the GRA at Catford and Wembley and in the last decade at Wimbledon he was the track commentator. Dad retired early from the print business when he was 45 and made a good living as a bookie fulltime – left before it became a less attractive industry.