

Stephen Caton

Sports journalist and greyhound owner

Born Isleworth in 1956. Father was an HGV driver, mother a cleaner. Was at Wimbledon from 1994-2017. Trainer was Paul Donovan. Heart breaking. Used to have races Tuesday, Friday and Saturday – 6,000 people. People used to come up in coaches. Seems that GRA land investments went wrong. The GRA still had 6 tracks at the time. There were two proposals for the site. Case of brown envelopes! Pascale Taggart revived the Shelbourne Track in Ireland and he delivered more social housing than private but Merton knocked it back.

First went greyhound racing in 1969 in White City. Loved the dogs themselves. First went to Wimbledon in the 1970s. Phil Rees won the Laurels with Westmead Cloud. Had various dogs which ran at Slough but didn't make it. They went flapping. Wimbledon was a very tight course and there was a kink in the first bend which used to cause a lot of trouble. When they closed the main stand and turned the track around it was much better. Never went to the Derby. The course was quite difficult to get to.

Dogs were brought over from Ireland unexposed. The trick was to make the grading but not show true colours until later when you can get good odds on a win. Not a big punter ... maybe £100. To get a dog from Ireland could cost £2,500 for the hound and £500 for transport. Used to be so much skulduggery at Wimbledon.

Nowadays at Central Park the track pays for broken hocks which can be expensive. Bought a dog during Covid and it broke its leg on the track. Cost £1,200 to fix. Dogs are travelling at about 40 mph when they hit the first bend at Central Park. All greyhounds have a niggle. If the dog runs every week it covers the kennel bill (about £56 pw) and the kennel supplies the runners to the course.