

History of the Shepparton Greyhound Racing Club

Records indicate that Plumpton coursing was conducted in the Shepparton area as far back as 1916. In 1939, leading local trainer, the late Roy Pyke trained four winners and his brother Leckie trained two on the eight-event card and the four winners from the five - event final coursing meeting at Tatura. Pike also trained the mighty Kreuger who won the 1934 Derby at Tatura, the 1934 Waterloo Cup at Geelong and the 1935 Waterloo Cup at Benalla.



The first Speed coursing meeting conducted in Shepparton was at Deakin Reserve, now the showpiece of Goulburn Valley football. Two races were conducted on a carnival night with the first race taken out by the Roy Pike trained Some Gag. Speed coursing behind a pacemaker commenced at the Shepparton Showgrounds in 1937.



The late Kelvin Tremellen back in 2009 remembered the track at the showgrounds. It was a pear-shaped circular track with a 275 yard straight that finished by a now long-gone peppercorn tree. When Shepparton became a city in 1948, greyhound racing was transferred to Tatura as betting in cities on anything other than horses, was illegal. Tremellen also remembered time spent at Tatura during the late 1940s and early 1950s when the greyhound track was on the inside of the Plumpton

enclosure. The Club ran a bus from Shepparton over to Tatura for patrons but it was still too far for many punters. Enthusiasts from that era remember the efforts of local stars such as Don't Enquire, owned and trained by Bob Crawford, who was undefeated on the showgrounds track. Crawford also trained Saddleback and Cupford who won numerous races and Bungana, a champion hurdler, for local mentor, the late Mick Moylan.



Local owners and trainers made their mark on the Plumpton events. The Young brothers from Tatura won the Derby in 1935 with Asalando. Ted Ansell also won the Derby at Tatura in 1953 with Count Cashiel, trained by Les McKellar. Shepparton owners and trainers were fortunate to have the Plumpton at both Tatura and Benalla where the Waterloo Cups, Derby and Oaks events were regularly held.



Over the years, greyhound racing in the Shepparton district has produced some great administrators with the late Jack McKenna. Secretary of the Tatura Plumpton Club and later at Sandown Park, possibly the best known. In late 1972, the Greyhound Racing Club moved to the Shepparton Showgrounds with a high-speed 440m horseshoe track featuring wide turns and a 720 metres circumference. In those days, there was no off-course TAB betting so 12 bookies accommodated the punters. With the Showgrounds already the home for the Shepparton Trotting Club the cost of establishing the venue for greyhound racing was minimal and a kennel block was the only major construction work that was required. With huge input from working bees organised by the Committee, it cost a mere \$40,000 (\$207,000) to re-establish greyhound racing in the Goulburn Valley.



On the 11th, January 1973, Mr Peter Ross-Edwards, Victorian leader of the National Party, officially opened the new track. Mr Ross-Edwards remained as Club Patron for many years. A huge crowd attended the opening night with the Olympic Park Grade 2 being the feature event on the card. City superstar Half Your Luck was the main attraction on the program but for once he had his colours lowered by the Buck Buchanan trained Mighty Thunder who established a track record of 25.50 secs. By the time racing had moved from the showgrounds to Kialla in 2005, the track record had been lowered by some twenty lengths with the mighty Brett Lee setting the track record of 24.16 secs.

The opening event of opening night The Wangaratta Juvenile Stakes over 440m was taken out by the by the W. Davey's trained True Blue picked up the \$65 (\$336) winner's cheque and a trophy. In the first year of racing, nineteen bookmakers operated on local and interstate meetings, a real indication of the halcyon days of greyhound racing in the early seventies.

The track re-opening program in 1973 listed the President as Ken Pewtress, Vice Presidents as Reg Roscoe and Vic Brett and the Secretary as Terry Tremellen. Vic Brett later became a long serving Secretary of the club until 1997. Whilst Terry



A Shepparton greyhound dynasty! The Tremellen family: brothers Terry, Luke, Ross and on the right, Vic Brett.

Tremellen and his brother Ross a two time President of the club are both life Members. The Shepparton Veterinary Clinic was in charge on the opening night and that group still provides the race night veterinary service to the club today. In those early days, several well-known families were active in local greyhound racing, most noticeably the Tremellen family mentioned above are

still active around the club today. Another major player around the club was the late Leckie Pyke who was the last to represent the famous Pyke family. From the middle 70's the McGrath name is also synonymous with the club. The late Tony McGrath a life member and Victorian Hall of Fame inductee led the club with great

support from his wife Sandra also a Life Member. Tony was on the committee for 30 years from 1975, 12 of them as President. Prior to his passing last year, he remembered the times at the showgrounds when the GRCB did not allow money



to be provided for clubs that were not on Crown land. As a result, the club had to borrow money and get big numbers at working bees to complete such tasks as building the cafeteria that Tony remembered as a major step forward for the club. Tony's son Carl is the club's current manager continuing the McGrath name at Shepparton. Pride of place amongst Shepparton greyhounds goes to the late Doug and Lorraine Ferremi's Hall of Fame Inductee Highly Blessed, she has the kennel block named after her. During the 1990s, Highly Blessed

won virtually every major Group race in Australia and earned career prize money of \$295,000 (\$410,000) The World Greyhound Federation has voted Highly Blessed as one of the world's best eight greyhounds and she is one of only two Australian greyhounds to be selected in the All-World Greyhound Field.



Another local star was Roz Gilmore's Thorgil Magic. Quick out of the boxes, Thorgil Magic won the Geelong Winter Cup of 1986 and the Shepparton Cup in 1985 and 1986, breaking the track record in the latter of these two years. Over a long period of time, the Shepparton Cup was normally conducted during November and had provided a springboard for greyhounds going on to race in Group 1 races in the city. It had been an important prelude to Sandown's premier event the rich Group One Melbourne Cup series. Melbourne Cup winners Fair Sentence, Hua, Highly Blessed, Major Giant, Fair Sentence and City Blitz were some of the more notable greyhounds to race well in the Shepparton Cup before their giant killing performances in the city. The 1996 Shepparton Cup winner Bahama Image went on to win the Group One Golden Easter Egg at Wentworth Park, in Sydney the next year.



With GRV not prepared to improve the aging infrastructure at the Agricultural Society's showgrounds, another shift in venue came about with the greyhounds moving to new premises on Crown land at Kialla in 2005. GRV had joined with the City of Greater Shepparton and the State Government to finance a new track and facilities at Kialla, the home of Shepparton Harness racing. The Council was keen for the greyhounds to move to Kialla to establish a multi-purpose precinct for both harness and greyhound racing, while allowing for development of the old showgrounds site for inner city's recreational purposes.

Racing commenced at the new facility on 10th December 2005 after moving from the Shepparton Showgrounds. The Shepparton Greyhound Racing Club is a "State of the Art" racing facility featuring a sand-based surface and offering trainers three distances for racing. Situated on the Goulburn Valley Highway at Kialla and just under two hours from Melbourne, the club has proven to be extremely popular with trainers and visitors to the region.

With the patrons being catered for with an enclosed dining room, bar and TAB facilities overlooking the home straight and seating up to 200 guests this venue is also available for hire for functions such as weddings, parties and corporate meetings etc.

The club races Monday and Thursday each week with additional meeting as required. With 24 races on offer each week there is no shortage of entertainment and excitement at the complex. All meetings are covered by SKY Channel and the TAB.

During 2005 the Club experimented with the new synthetic track surface ProRide, which had been successfully used for gallops and was now installed at Kialla. Shepparton was the first greyhound track in the world to use the surface. The initial response to the new track was extremely favourable with local trainers the late Doug Ferremi and Jim Auld having early winners. "It was bloody perfect the first few races on Saturday before the heat got to it," Ferremi was quoted in the Shepparton News at the time.

But by April 2006, it became clear that the new surface was extremely temperature sensitive, melting in the heat and freezing in the cold. It cost some \$25,000 to dig up the synthetic surface and install a conventional sand and clay track we have today. The Club went into recess during this process.

Shepparton remains a rich area for Greyhound Racing in centrally Victoria, with the continued support of many locals with a long history of serving the club in various ways it is set to prosper for many years to come.



Club Presidents

Ken Pewtress, 1973 – 1979, Kelvin Trickey 1980 – 1982, Ross Tremellen 1983 – 1987, Gerry Moylan 1988 – 1989, Ross Tremellen 1990 – 1992, Tony McGrath 1993 – 2004, Vicki Hope 2004 – 2007, Gary Hale 2007 – 2008, Helen Sheedy 2008, John Martin 2009- 2017, Tracey Fothergill 2017- President.

Fun Facts:

Greyhounds can turn up on any track in Australia from any state. Such was the case when outstanding New South Wales sprinter Yannick was entered to race at Shepparton on Thursday the 26th of November 1987. Drawn box one in a mixed 4th and 5th grade stake over the 440 metre he was below his grade by quite a margin. Why trainer Alan Pringle decide to travel from Orange in New South Wales to Shepparton is anyone's guess. The 37-kilo fawn dog by Red Swinger from Hopeful whelped July 1985 had finished third in the National Derby behind Shy Sultan in February and had raced at the top level in his home state for most of that year. He was later in his career the 10/9 favourite for the 1988 Australian Cup finishing unplaced behind Golden Blessing. While in June of 1988 he won the

Tweed Heads Galaxy from box one as a 4/5 favourite. You probably don't have to wonder about the result he bolted in winning by 12 lengths in 24.87 at 1/3. Diamond Life finished second and Thorgil Frizza third. The track record at the time was 24.73 set in October that year by Nan's Pal. Most observers at the time thought he should have broken it. I am sure connections put the \$150 first prize to good use.

Victorian race calling icon Ron Hawkswell celebrates his 50th year calling Greyhounds in 2021. People in the industry may not be aware of how it all started for the popular big man of the sport. Officially it was at Shepparton, he had called trials and the like but got his first opportunity to call live races at the central Victorian track. At the start of any venture to succeed you not only need a steely determination but plenty of dedication. Local club caller back in 1971 was Ian Samblebe, Sambo is alive and well these days living on a Riverboat near the Gold Coast. He gave Hawk the chance to call the last two races on the card each Thursday night. Ron was working for the Tramways in his home suburb of Preston in those days. After working all day, he would drive the 172 k's, a two and a half hour trip each way for the experience of calling the live races. It led to Ron becoming the first caller at Cranbourne where he is a life Member and a full-time job which he still holds today with RSN.