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The first 1926 race at Belle Vue Stadium, Manchester. P. HOWARD TARTER, *GREYHOUND RACING ENCYCLOPAEDIA* (LONDON: FLEET PUBLISHING, 1948).

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# “Everybody’s Going to the Dogs”? The Middle Classes and Greyhound Racing in Britain between the Wars

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*Greyhound racing using a mechanical hare arrived from the United States in 1926. It was first commercially introduced at Belle Vue Stadium in Manchester and then spread to Liverpool and London. By the mid 1930s it had become Britain’s third biggest commercial leisure activity, only exceeded by the cinema and by association football. The bulk of spectators came from the working classes. Middle-class interest in the sport has however been less noticed. The middle classes attended as spectators and betters at the leading, more elite courses, especially in London. Furthermore, they played a key role in terms of share ownership, organization, office holding, dog ownership, and training. While men were in the vanguard, there was evidence of interest from some middle- and upper-class women as well. So in wider debates in Parliament, local authorities, the press and elsewhere, the middle classes proved to be split in their attitudes, and as such the study is revealing in terms of British class, culture, and respectability between the wars.*

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ALTHOUGH BRITISH MIDDLE-CLASS SPORTING LIFE has received increased attention in recent years, social, cultural, and sports history has been slower to explore the less respectable dimensions of middle-class life. Leisure historian Peter Bailey first explored the paradoxes, discontents and dilemmas of respectability, and its calculative and performative nature, in 1978, and continued to do so thereafter, even if Michael Thompson's stress on the general respectability of middle-class social life continued for some while to dominate the field.<sup>1</sup> More recently over-simplistic stereotypes of middle-class respectability have been increasingly reassessed and challenged.

In leisure and sports history betting has provided useful entry points. Some middle-class men always showed a propensity to act in more hedonistic ways during their leisure, moving across the porous divisions between classes and respectable expectations.<sup>2</sup> Recent studies have suggested a varied and hedonistic enjoyment of horseracing and its associated betting amongst certain sections of an increasingly heterogeneous and secular middle class between the wars, some perhaps aping the cultural trappings of the aristocracy and gentry.<sup>3</sup> John Lowerson, a leading historian of middle-class sport, has accepted that such work represented "a major shift forward," and saw gambling, in particular, as a potentially powerful theme.<sup>4</sup> Most recently British cultural historian Peter Borsay, in a careful overview of leisure practice, has stressed the evidence of the sharing of interests in gambling amongst the working and lower middle classes.<sup>5</sup> This paper extends the debate further through an exploration of the complex relationship between greyhound racing and the middle classes between 1926, when the American version of the sport arrived in Britain, and 1939. Greyhound racing attracted strong opposition from some sections of the British middle class during this period, an opposition that continued after World War II, as historian Norman Baker stressed in an earlier issue of this journal.<sup>6</sup> But other sections of the middle class lent it equally strong support.

Greyhound racing's popularity in Britain grew rapidly between the wars, and even more rapidly after World War II. By the late 1940s British greyhound racing betting expenditure had even caught up horseracing, then calculated as £450 million pounds annually.<sup>7</sup> Betting on sports events was big business even in 1936, when the *Economist* plausibly suggested that about 66,000 full-timers were directly dependent on bookmaking activity.<sup>8</sup> Greyhound racing's inter-war annual betting turnover is unknown, though in 1939 the *Economist* estimated it as "over £50 million."<sup>9</sup>

It was undeniably hugely important as an entertainment event too, attracting middle- and working-class male and female spectators. By the mid 1930s it was Britain's third largest commercial leisure spectator activity, attracting unsubstantiated estimates of up to 100,000 people employed in part and full-time capacities.<sup>10</sup> Only cinema and league soccer exceeded it in terms of attendance. During the 1937-1938 season the four divisions of the English Football League attracted total annual attendances of over thirty-one million. Scottish League games, FA Cup matches, and other gate-money games swelled that total substantially. During 1936, approximately 38,000,000 attended all greyhound racing in Britain.<sup>11</sup> These attendances were well ahead of racing, rugby league, cricket, or rugby union.<sup>12</sup>

Greyhound racing, which was, along with speedway, the most successful commercial sport to emerge in Britain between the wars, has received little academic attention.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, the power of contemporary anti-gambling propaganda and the sport's consequent lowly status in the eyes of *some* middle-class observers, have led current sports historiography to over-emphasize its working-class nature. Ross McKibbin, for example, portrayed it as "not a socially inclusive sport" but "genuinely proletarian" and suggested that "the handful of highborn persons who occasionally attended dog races were slumming it, participating in a sporting bohemianism."<sup>14</sup> Jeff Hill's recent study of British leisure, sport, and society in the twentieth century likewise described greyhound racing as "almost exclusively working-class in character."<sup>15</sup> It was certainly true that greyhound racing was highly popular amongst some sections of the working classes. But it was not the whole story, and some historians have recognized its broader appeal. John Stevenson, for example, accepted that wider interest in gambling crossed class frontiers.<sup>16</sup>

This paper's exploration of the complex relationship between the middle classes and greyhound racing and betting between the wars begins by spelling out when and how the sport developed as a commercial activity and the initial pace and pattern of growth. It then explores the extent and nature of its middle-class appeal and the changing trajectory of support, before showing that many of the debates over greyhound racing and betting reflected cultural divisions *within* the middle classes over its nature and respectability, an issue that moves the topic towards more mainstream historical debates.

### The Development of Greyhound Racing, c.1830-1939

A popular song of 1927, "Everybody's Going to the Dogs," correctly implied that from its beginnings the new sport attracted "everybody," a cross-class following. By the 1930s the various levels of dog track catered differentially for spectators, with top stadiums providing social zoning through enclosure pricing. Such a structure paralleled the sport of horseracing, with its substantial middle-class following, and its continuum of courses from "select" Newmarket, Ascot, or Goodwood for the titled and wealthy to small "flapping tracks" in working-class urban areas, usually run by bookmakers and beyond the control of the racing authorities.<sup>17</sup>

Such social divisions existed in greyhound racing, too. Indeed they predated the arrival of the electric hare. The long-established rule-governed rural sport of hare coursing with greyhounds was high status. Coursing was costly, and Britain's leading coursers and clubs were almost all upper and middle class, although some events also attracted more proletarian followers. The Waterloo Cup, coursing's premier national competition, first begun in 1836 and held at Altcar near Liverpool, attracted large crowds and national betting interest even in the 1920s. In the 1880s there had been a temporary fashion for more commercialized hare coursing at enclosed racecourses such as Plumpton, Gosforth Park, Kempton, or Haydock, all attracting a cross-class spectatorship.<sup>18</sup>

The proletarian, cheaper equivalent was rabbit coursing, an occasional event in the new urban enclosed commercial grounds, often set up by publicans. In the 1850s most events were matches, with two owners putting up cash stakes, and their whippets or greyhounds chasing a rabbit, given somewhere between forty and sixty yards start. By the

1860s sweepstake events were being reported from grounds in the Midlands and across northern England, with dog owners charged an entry fee, and the landlord providing added money and rabbits.

Dog racing without the rabbit, while slower to take off, was also popular well before the arrival of the electric hare. In 1840 *Bell's Life* reported a "novel wager," with a match at Beverley where dogs had to run 200 yards from their "slipper" to their respective owners, the best of three heats for £5 a side. This attracted "an immense crowd of spectators."<sup>19</sup> Two hundred yards became a standard distance in enclosed greyhound and whippet racing. The 1860s saw dog handicaps increasingly introduced, with dogs given distance penalties depending on weight or merit, running toward their towel- or rag-waving owners. A short-lived though widely reported attempt was made to use an artificial hare pulled over a 400-yard course by a windlass at the Welsh Harp's enclosed Hendon ground in 1876.<sup>20</sup> By the 1880s dog handicaps were as popular as pedestrian events at some northern tracks. It was easier to attract entries, and there was slightly less corruption. At Oldham an event offering £25 attracted 240 dogs running in sixty heats.<sup>21</sup> The sport was temporarily popular in the south in the 1890s but was common in mining and manufacturing areas of the Midlands and North up to and beyond the 1920s.<sup>22</sup>

Greyhound racing on a longer, circular course using an artificial electric hare arrived in Britain from America during 1926. An American businessman, Charles Munn, had tried to get British investors interested, showing pictures of a track at Oklahoma City. He enlisted the help of Brigadier A.C. Critchley who brought other investors on board, and with limited funds they set up two courses, first at Belle Vue, Manchester, and then at Liverpool. Belle Vue attracted crowds of two or three thousand almost immediately and soon averaged just below 10,000 a meeting. Its success turned their attention to London, in hopes of attracting even bigger crowds. The following year, confident of success, Critchley purchased a ninety-year lease of the White City stadium, a disused former Olympic site, ironically, in the light of some Church opposition to the sport, owned by the Church Commissioners. Here greyhound racing took off instantly. About 25,000 attended on the first Monday and over 35,000 on the Saturday. Its novelty attracted nightly crowds averaging 40,000 that year.<sup>23</sup> Major tracks at Harringay (September of 1927) and Wembley (December of 1927) were also developed. Their popularity ensured that by the year's end sixty-two companies with a capital of £7 million were registered across Britain. In 1928, 154 tracks were registered, although of the tracks registered in 1927 over 40 percent had failed to take off. There were two higher-status organizations. The National Greyhound Racing Society (NGRS) founded on December 30, represented the commercial interests of the promoters of the leading companies with the larger more cross-class tracks. The National Greyhound Racing Club became the judicial, disciplinary, and registration body for the NGRS, establishing rules and a uniform basis for the conduct and operation of the leading tracks from January of 1928.

Greyhound racing soon developed both more elite and more plebeian manifestations, and a tiered structure emerged. At the top were the leading tracks, run by the NGRS, which successfully attracted a large, socially mixed crowd. Then came a middle group of courses, some run by the NGRS, others independent tracks that could not meet the NGRS requirements, since the NGRS acted as a cartel, and refused membership to potential competitors, effectively ensuring that top dogs could not run there. These independent

tracks followed somewhat different rules, created at first by the Canine and Greyhound Racing Control Board and then by the British Greyhound Tracks Control Society (BGTCS). These were organizations formed by the track managements. Beneath these again came large numbers of smaller, local and much less well-run “flapping” or “unlicensed” tracks, found throughout Britain, but especially numerous in mining communities in Scotland and northeast England, some notorious for dishonesty. These latter tracks certainly attracted an almost entirely plebeian crowd, often small in number.

By contrast the leading tracks attracted large crowds, including not only working-class men, but also groups of the upper and middle classes and significant numbers of women. The official statistics of the elite courses affiliated to the NGRS showed rapid growth in total annual attendances in the early years, and crowds still continued to grow during the years 1930 to 1933 at the heart of the Depression. This was followed by a leveling off, with year-on-year fluctuations in terms of attendance and numbers of licensed tracks.

**TABLE 1: ATTENDANCES  
(NGRC LICENSED COURSES ONLY) 1927-1939**

	no. of licensed tracks	London	Glasgow	Manchester	Great Britain
1927	18				5,656,686
1928	n/a	6,451,417	1,457,673	1,402,988	13,695,275
1929	n/a	7,848,638	1,542,653	1,705,756	15,855,162
1930	39	8,619,217	1,607,431	1,724,406	17,119,120
1931	n/a	8,608,382	2,037,350	1,708,430	17,906,917
1932	50	9,023,156	2,235,954	1,743,814	20,178,260
1936	56	n/a	n/a	n/a	c.19,000,000
1939	61	n/a	n/a	n/a	c.26,000,000

Source: NGRC Yearbooks

Such statistics have, of course, to be treated cautiously. Some promoters may have tried to stimulate public interest by giving inflated attendance numbers. Others may have reduced figures to avoid entertainment tax. At the leading London stadiums attendances were highest in the 1920s, when the sport was a novelty, with occasional reports of 70,000 or even more.<sup>24</sup> The leading “classic” races (usually named after their equivalents in higher-status horseracing) always attracted crowds between 30,000 and 50,000. Ordinary events

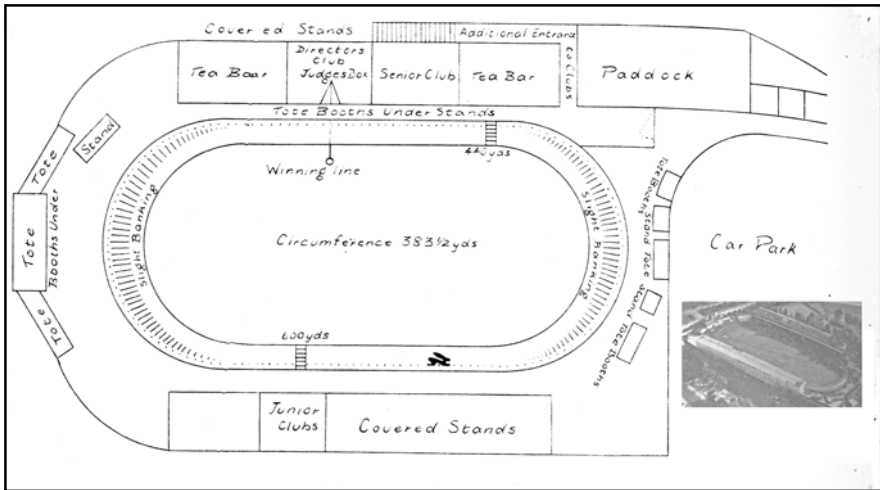
attracted smaller crowds. Manchester's Belle Vue stadium averaged crowds of 10,000 plus in 1928. In 1929 the management of Wembley told the drinks licensing magistrates that its average nightly number of spectators was 9,000.<sup>25</sup> Though crowds at most stadiums dropped slightly in the early 1930s, the popularity of Mick the Miller, a dog who became a sporting icon during the Depression, still attracted over 50,000 to his major races.<sup>26</sup>

One of the reasons for the popularity of the sport was that it was much easier for those in work to attend greyhound racing than horseracing, not least because it was, unlike horseracing, often an evening event. Dog tracks had a great advantage in terms of regularity, time, distance, and cheapness. Horseracing was not competitive. In London, for example, the Metropolitan Racecourse Act of 1879 forced all new racecourses more than ten miles away from central London, and in 1934 London's five easily accessible racecourses racing under Jockey Club or National Hunt rules only offered in total sixty-three afternoons of racing a year, largely on weekdays, not the weekend. Trotting, unlike in the U.S., was not a major sport, though Northolt Park's pony racing and Greenford trotting offered a further 124 race days. By stark contrast, London contained twenty-three greyhound tracks offering over 4,000 days' racing, mostly in the evenings *after* work, and often on Fridays and Saturdays.

### Middle-class Support for Greyhound Racing

From its beginnings greyhound racing sought to attract the middle classes as well as the working classes and promote an image of respectability, a point Mike Cronin has made in his detailed study of Arthur Elvin and greyhound racing at Wembley.<sup>27</sup> Those people who were running the tracks, themselves middle class, presented greyhound racing with an aura of modernity, a sense of glamour and excitement, to aid its cross-class appeal. Support for the view that there was indeed a substantial middle-class spectator presence comes from sufficient directions to be highly convincing. If greyhound racing were unattractive, it would have been unlikely that readers would have found the result of a dog race, however important, in any "half-serious newspaper."<sup>28</sup> In reality even the quality press provided regular coverage of greyhound racing but only at the elite tracks. The *Times*, for example, a paper read by three-quarters of families with incomes over £500 per annum according to Political and Economic Planning's 1939 *Report on the British Press*, usually provided results, future runners, and reports on leading races from Harringay, White City, and Wembley. Manchester, Clapton, West Ham, and Stamford Bridge received more limited coverage. Although also reporting the various anti-greyhound racing groups at some length, the coverage by the *Times* of leading tracks and their results was both extensive and supportive, though it was critical of the poorer tracks. Its coverage far exceeded that for coursing or tennis. This clearly assumes some interest amongst its readership. The *Daily Telegraph*, the *Express*, and *Mail* provided consistent coverage alongside horseracing. The readership of all of these appears to have been largely middle class.<sup>29</sup> The *London Evening News* covered the sport. The *Evening Standard* contained a daily greyhound supplement. A flourishing sporting press provided further details, though here the readership may have been more working class. The *Sporting Chronicle*, for example, had a regular feature "Round the Dog Tracks," with tips, in the 1930s. No less than twelve specialist greyhound papers are listed at Colindale Newspaper Library from 1927. Popular newspapers such as *Sporting Life*, the *Daily Mirror*, and the *Daily Mail* regularly sponsored races.





Wandsworth Stadium, London, with its cross-class facilities. P. HOWARD TARTER, *GREYHOUND RACING ENCYCLOPAEDIA* (LONDON: FLEET PUBLISHING, 1948).

Pricing of the “first” and “second” rings at leading tracks likewise suggests a better-off clientele. Prices for seats near the winning post, usually in the most expensive enclosure, were usually between five and seven shillings at more select tracks. Wembley’s leading ring cost ten shillings. Given that betting money would also be required this was an expensive night out. Pictures, photographs, and even cartoons regularly show enclosure crowds containing well-dressed people, and men in bowler hats and trilbies, so they were probably fairly typical.<sup>30</sup> There were also more exclusive facilities. Almost all stadiums had members’ clubs, for which an annual subscription was required. In 1927, for example, Wembley’s club membership was three guineas annually. By 1933 Belle Vue, Catford, and Southend charged two guineas, compared with smaller provincial-licensed tracks such as Portsmouth or Norwich where membership was five shillings or less. Wembley also had private boxes, while entry to the exclusive Stadium Club rooms cost ten shillings. By 1938 Wembley had cocktail bars and a luxurious dining room, accommodating 250 diners, placing bets from their table and enjoying “excellent table d’hôte meals.”<sup>31</sup>

All the leading tracks had substantial parking facilities. Even a smaller track like Hendon had space for “several hundred motor cars.”<sup>32</sup> Cars were very much part of an expensive, aspirational culture of conspicuous consumption, largely restricted to the middle and upper classes.<sup>33</sup> Wembley Stadium and Greyhound Racecourse Ltd. built “the most extensive automobile parking space in the world,” with 4,000 spaces, and a purpose-built access road.<sup>34</sup> Club members had their own private car park. Some car parks were certainly well used. London’s White City could accommodate 2,500 cars and was “crammed full” in 1934. Though it attracted only about 1,400 to the Greyhound Derby of 1938, many avoided the two shillings and sixpence parking fee by street parking. Some 150 cabs also served departing punters.<sup>35</sup> The Bolton Greyhound Racing Company Ltd., which owned two BGTCS-governed tracks at Bolton and Blackburn, found car park charges highly profitable. They provided a third of its income in 1935.<sup>36</sup>

Middle-class support came from a number of directions. In part it came from the coursing community, which had initially subjected greyhound racing to criticism, ridicule, and opposition. Some felt it was probably a brief craze, dismissing it as a "new sport imported from America."<sup>37</sup> But some members enjoyed the new sport from the beginning. Most were won round, not the least because the increased income the National Coursing Club attracted in registration fees helped assist smaller coursing clubs. Leading coursing officials were generally keen to get involved in greyhound racing, as were well-known greyhound trainers and a substantial number of existing owners.

Some of the existing middle-class followers of flat and national hunt racing were likewise quickly attracted to the new sport. Several ex-public school racing journalists soon owned dogs. Meyrick Good, who read races at Aintree for seven different members of the royal family and broadcast for the BBC, first saw greyhound racing at Belle Vue and attended Wimbledon track regularly as well as owning a number of dogs.<sup>38</sup> There were some upper-class attendees and a very significant middle-class presence at most of the leading and middle-ranking British tracks. Wimbledon, for example, was "patronised by some of the best people in the land, including a number of peers of the realm and other distinguished people."<sup>39</sup> Lord Cragavon, the northern Irish premier, regularly attended meetings at Celtic Park in Belfast and was emulated by others of the leisured classes, including barristers, MPs, and professional men. Brighton's clientele was largely "holiday-making visitors, people in search of health and a residential population consisting largely of retired businessmen."<sup>40</sup> Reports sometimes referred to the presence of local councilors. At Hendon, in 1935, for example, "the Mayor and Mayoress and several councilors" attended.<sup>41</sup> Betting was increasingly presented as essentially modernistic, and the middle classes, with their reliable salary, less affected by the Depression and stepped by age and promotion, were more able to indulge spectatorship, betting, and ownership as affordable leisure habits.

What was the appeal of racing? Early spectators were impressed with the tremendous pace of the dogs. Britain was a dog-owning nation, and some individual greyhounds caught and held the imagination of the public. Mick the Miller was featured on *Pathe News* and later took to the screen in the Gainsborough Pictures film, *Wild Boy* (1934), with the film promoted as "A real winner," and "First past the post," while he was usually described as "That Wonder Dog."<sup>42</sup>

The spectacle was novel too. Racing was particularly attractive on darker evenings when lighting could be exploited. Interviews and correspondence with some of those who visited as children confirm this. One lady, for example, remembered vividly how in the winter "it was very cold, a few flakes of snow fell, and we stood around glowing braziers to try to keep warm. . . . [T]he bright lights against the black sky and the throng of people were a great excitement to me."<sup>43</sup> Overhead lights made the track stand out in the darkness "like a lighted stage," and during the races "the various changes of position made the situation doubly exciting and dramatic. . . . [T]he speed was terrific, and the taking of the hurdles was a magnificent sight."<sup>44</sup> A writer in August of 1927 admitted that

there is no denying the thrill of those marvellously swift dashes around the arena, swift as they are, for the dogs as well as the spectators. The entertainment is cheap and easily got at if it is provided in the evening hours after the day's work is over. There is too a strange intoxication in the sight and sound of the

shouting masses of spectators packed in the comparatively small space of the stands, alternatively lit up by the arc lights round the arena or thrown into darkness as they are extinguished during the actual race, leaving nothing illuminated but the bright green ribbon of the turf.<sup>45</sup>

Floodlights, with their 32,000,000-candle-power, were another novelty not found at other sporting venues until much later. The Phillips Electrical Company was responsible for introducing them at London's White City in 1932. Music also lent further appeal and leading events often had bands. The pipe band of the Irish Guards performed at White City. Grandstands provided shelter in rainy weather, and unlike most sports grounds, they had drink licenses for members' bars. But the racing and betting provided the heart of the appeal, with the short intensive thrill of six or more races, the exciting diversion of betting, and the general novelty value of the sport.

For a few short years from its introduction dog racing became emblematic of modernity. It had associations with the U.S., just like the new sound films and the new forms of popular music. Early descriptions made much of the "glamour" of the whole scene, and the "intensity" of the excitement before the start. The stadium was presented as an almost carnivalesque space. To one female writer the "seething crowds of excited spectators" were "reminiscent of a fete in some continental city, for rarely is such an all-pervading spirit of enjoyment found in sober England." She wished the dogs could go round a second time and was amazed that "so much excitement and emotion could be compressed into less than half a minute."<sup>46</sup> Initially greyhound racing became "fashionable," a "vogue." Reporters regularly wrote about it. Celebrities provided glamour. Hollywood actress Tallulah



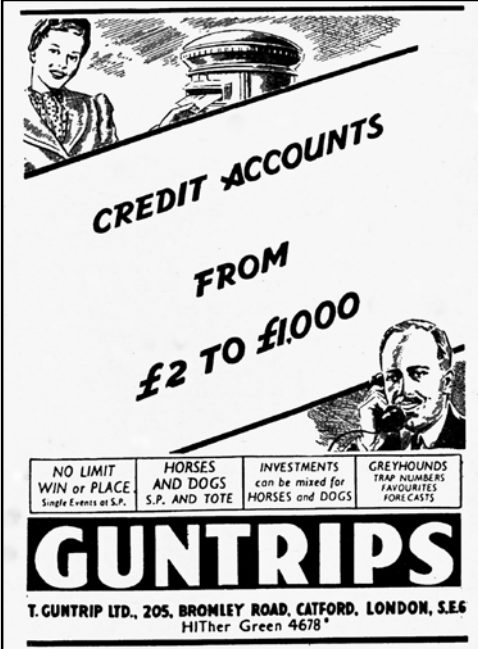
Will's cigarette cards used the spectacle and modernity of the sport. COURTESY OF MIKE HUGGINS.

Bankhead opened Wimbledon track. King Alfonso of Spain watched the 1930 Greyhound Derby. Stage stars such as Flanagan and Allen, and sportsmen such as boxing champion Len Harvey were regular attendees. The publicity helped both the tracks and the celebrities, who were further involved by presenting trophies too: Gracie Fields at West Ham, Australian cricketer C.V. Grimmett at Sheffield, and a Sunderland football player at South Shields during January of 1934. One young girl later remembered how the evenings that truly delighted her mother were "when the winner's cup and prizes were presented by the stars of those days: Leslie Randolph in a superb fur coat, glamorous Jessie Matthews, often with Sonny Hale, handsome Jack Buchanan, actor Jack Hulbert. Mother was star-struck."<sup>47</sup>

The *Times* argued that greyhound racing was a "genuine sport" picking out its "drama," "excitement," its "sprints" and "thrills," praising its organization and pageantry, and claiming that "the formality of the bugle call and the parade of dogs round the course, each dog in the charge of a smart-looking kennel man, is one of the things that should help the sport to live in the pageant-loving atmosphere of London."<sup>48</sup> Early descriptions made much of such rituals, with buglers announcing the approach of the dogs in their differently colored track jackets, each numbered, and led by white-coated, bowler-hatted kennel hands.

By the early 1930s dog racing had become a metropolitan attraction for certain middle-class groups. Summer leisure suggestions in *The London Weekly Diary of Social Events* in 1931, for example, a pamphlet for people staying in London hotels, included museums, galleries, lectures, cricket, and also dog racing. To J.B. Priestley dog racing was not part of the older working-class world but a part of the new, modern, postwar England, the England of "arterial and by-pass roads . . . cocktail bars, motor coaches, wireless, hiking, factory girls looking like actresses, greyhound racing and dirt tracks [and] swimming pools."<sup>49</sup>

But beyond all such attractions it was betting which lay at the heart of the sport. Even though bookmakers or tote statistically had the edge, probability theory made clear that in the course of an evening most spectators would only make a small profit or a small loss and have an evening's excitement for their money. Betting was already an attraction to some middle-class groups, but before the advent of greyhound racing it was legally confined to off-course credit betting or office sweepstakes on horse races or to very occasional on-course betting.<sup>50</sup> Few could afford regular time off work to travel to distant horse race meetings. Now greyhound racing offered a new legal, regular, and convenient form of betting. At some courses there were ranks of bookmakers; at others, plenty of totalisator (tote) windows. Some stadiums had both. The sights, sound, disorder, and excitement of betting rings, the colorful bookmakers, with their often confident, charismatic, and outspoken demeanor, always had an appeal to some middle-class punters. In part greyhound racing simply extended betting's growing popularity. As a proportion of consumer expenditure betting grew from 1.3 percent in 1920 to 2.5 percent in 1925 even before the arrival of greyhound racing. It reached 3.7 percent in 1930 and hit 5 percent by 1938, though also thanks in part to the popularity of football pools.<sup>51</sup> After the Betting and Lotteries Act in 1934 tracks had to provide audited accounts of punters' spending on the tote. Such data was no more than suggestive of how much individuals bet. In general tote receipts during the 1930s were between three and five times as much as the gate money, although most money simply re-circulated between punters.



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Just as some sections of the middle classes were attracted to spectatorship and the excitement of betting, there were others, sometimes the same people, who were entrepreneurial enough to get involved in other ways too. The titled, the officer class, and businessmen dominated greyhound racing's organization. Wealthy American businessman Charles Munn, Sir William Gentle (a retired Brighton chief constable), and Brigadier-General Alfred Critchley, formerly in charge of RFC/RAF training during the war and then a director of the Associated Portland Cement Company, raised the £22,000 that allowed the Greyhound Racing Association to construct Manchester's Belle Vue stadium. Lord Chesham, Lord Westmorland, and Captain (later Lord) H. de Trafford were its first stewards, while entertainment entrepreneurs, including, *inter alia*, bookmakers, turf accountants, and publicans were also soon involved. Between 1935 and 1939 the councils of the two leading organizations contained twelve names with titles, thirteen holding military rank, four MPs or JPs and only five others, all businessmen. Leading figures in the lower-status BGTCs were generally local businessmen. The chairman of Hackney Wick stadium, for example, was also managing director of the Mentmore Manufacturing Company, makers of Platinum pens.

The middle classes also played a leading role as investors in the majority of the new companies, both successful and unsuccessful. The shares of the Seaforth (Lancs) Greyhound Racing Association, for example, formed in 1932, were owned by an engineer, a retired cotton merchant, a master printer, a retired master mariner/manufacturer's agent, a director of the Preston Brick Works, a director of Hoylake Winter Gardens, and a cotton agent. Its ground opened in early 1933 but failed after capital difficulties. A dentist, two engineers, a merchant, and agent, an East India merchant, a contractor, and a company

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£791,504 (a)

198,938

£990,442

(a) Including 1,486 shares which have been forfeited.

The Preference Shares are entitled to a fixed cumulative preferential dividend at the rate of 8 per cent. per annum. Any additional profits distributed are divisible as to 25 per cent. to Preference shareholders and as to 75 per cent. to Ordinary shareholders.

DIRECTORS.

Maj.-Gen. The Lord Loch, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., M.V.O. (Chairman);  
Brig.-Gen. A. C. Critchley, C.M.G., D.S.O. (Vice-Chairman and Managing);  
Lt.-Col. J. T. C. Moore-Bircham, M.C., M.P.; F. S. Gentle; C. A. Munis.

Secretary: A. Whitley.

Registered Offices: 70, Pall Mall, London, S.W.1. Telephone: Regent 7399.

Transfer Office: 11, Ironmonger Lane, E.C.2. Telephone: Metropolitan 8166.

The Company owns 86,984 ls. shares of the Greyhound Racing Association, Ltd., which owns racecourses at White City and Harringay, London, and at Hall Green, Birmingham, Powderhall and Marine Gardens, Edinburgh. The Company has acquired the White City Stadium on a ground lease of 73½ years, and freeholds at Harringay, Birmingham and Edinburgh, and has formed the White City Stadium, Ltd., to develop general sports business at White City.

The Company was registered in 1927.

The Company's financial period ends on December 31st of each year. Excess dividends on the Preference Shares have been : 1929, 0.84124 ; 1930, 0.84124 ; and 1931, 0.83938.

The following table chronicles the advancement made by the Trust since registration :—

	Subsidiary dividends.	Revenue, net after tax.	Revenue after fixed Pref. div.	Paid on Ordinary
13 months to Dec. 31st, 1928	Not disclosed	£67,622	£3,267	Nil
1929	£69,587	87,519	24,457	10
1930	98,944	113,128	49,930	10
1931	98,944	131,609	68,407	10

The balance sheet at December 31st, 1931, showed that cash in hand amounted to £32,852, and debtors to £15,321, against creditors for £4,919. Bank loans totalled £85,000, and mortgages £16,940.

At the meeting the Chairman said that attendances had been well maintained, and spoke hopefully of the prospects of the White City Stadium, as a venue for boxing matches, athletic sports, etc. This materialised during the summer.

The shares are dealt in on the London Stock Exchange.

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Shares in greyhound racing companies were sometimes highly profitable. ANONYMOUS, *THE GREYHOUND RACING SHARE GUIDE* (LONDON: T. MASSEY, 1932).

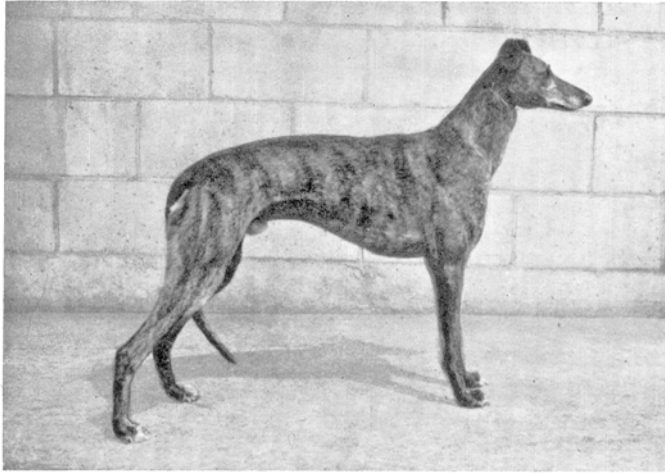
director held shares in the Oldham Greyhound and Sports Club, and this was fairly typical of the other companies of the time.<sup>52</sup> Many companies were highly speculative, and a number failed. Capital difficulties, competition from other courses, local opposition, or refusal of a license by the NGRC, which increasingly only allowed stadiums in towns with populations over 300,000, could all lead to a decision not to continue.

Dog ownership was another aspect of middle-class involvement since running a dog at the leading courses was only “within the means of the moderately well off.”<sup>53</sup> Some owners both coursed and raced as did the future Earl of Rosebery, Lord Dalmeny, in the 1920s.<sup>54</sup> The sporting press, *The Greyhound Stud Book*, and general histories of the sport make constant reference to owners with titles, military rank, businessmen involved in a range of commercial activities, company directors, and wealthier bookmakers. Greyhounds could only compete at NGRS tracks if they had been entered at the litter stage in the *Greyhound Stud Book* of the National Coursing Club or the *Irish Greyhound Stud Book*, and then registered at the NGRC. When ownership changed the dog had to be re-registered, with a further fee. So ownership was costly. In January of 1934 the NGRC had over 41,000 dogs and 21,000 owners registered on its books. By the 1936-1937 season it had

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47,650 dogs, and 23,501 private owners.<sup>55</sup> Purchasing a dog was even more expensive than breeding one. In 1927 more than half of all dogs sold at auction cost between twenty-one and forty guineas, and costs were even higher for the best dogs. Future Grand National winner Cormorant cost £1,000, his litter brother Carpio £1,250. If an owner tried to breed from his bitch, a leading sire covering would certainly cost over ten guineas and could reach fifty.



'FUTURE CUTLET'

CONSIDERED BY CAPTAIN BRICE 'ONE OF THE BEST-LOOKING OF RACING GREYHOUNDS'



'GREY RACA'

ONE OF THE MOST PROMISING PUPPIES OF 1933

Track greyhounds of the 1930s. MRS. C.F.C. CLARKE, *GREYHOUNDS AND GREYHOUND RACING: A COMPREHENSIVE AND POPULAR SURVEY OF BRITAIN'S LATEST SPORT* (LONDON: METHUEN, 1934).

Only better-off owners could afford to have their dogs trained, nurtured, and fed at the kennels of specialist dog trainers. A dog in training usually cost £1 a week or even more, though this included basic vets' fees and entries. Such income provided middle-class affluence for successful trainers. Trainer Sidney Orton, an ex-farmer, for example, kept his son at public school. Titled women were particularly enthusiastic owners, especially where their husbands were recently titled. In July of 1927, for example, owners of White City runners included the Marchioness of Blandford, two viscountesses, two duchesses, the Queen of Greece, and thirteen other titled ladies. Most female owners who ran their dogs at the NGRS tracks were middle class. Even Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin's daughter, Betty, ran a dog that year. Most owners were male. The names in the *Stud Book*, popular histories of greyhound racing, and the owners named in the sporting press all support Mark Clapson's view that "company directors, many wealthier bookmakers and businessmen from all areas of commerce, and a . . . considerable number of genteel owners, many with a career in the army behind them, ran their hounds at the biggest tracks."<sup>56</sup> For example, a pro-greyhound racing letter to the Home Office in January of 1934 contained many middle-class signatures, including those of insurance and stockbrokers, company directors, a chemist, a jeweler, and a restaurant proprietor.<sup>57</sup>

**TABLE 2: GREYHOUND OWNERS IN 1934  
SIGNING LETTER TO HOME OFFICE**

	%(n=92)
Aristocracy and gentry	9
Independent	3
upper professional	12
lower professional	2
the drink trade	1
other proprietors and employers	39
managers and higher administration	1
Clerical	5
Foremen, supervisors and inspectors	0
skilled manual	8
semi-skilled manual	0
unskilled manual	0
Untraceable	11
Housewife	9

Breeders too, who needed to afford to register their dogs in the *Greyhound Stud Book*, the official record of the National Coursing Club, were substantially middle class. Breeding was a profitable business, with companies springing up to set up greyhound studs to sell to the public. 60,000 greyhounds were registered by the later 1930s.<sup>58</sup>



By the later 1930s, however, there were signs that while greyhound racing was still growing in spectator numbers, this growth was largely in working-class spectatorship and was largely only because of an increase in the number of tracks. By contrast middle-class spectator support seems to have been playing a less important part overall. The exact reasons are unclear but seem to have lain outside the sport. In part attendance was now less “fashionable” as the more hedonistic section of the middle classes sought new forms of leisure stimulation. The looming prospect of war may also have had an impact. At any rate the *Times* coverage, for example, showed a substantial decrease from 1935 onwards as it cut back on reportage of results. Another signifier was car parking, a clear middle-class marker, which generally entered a decline in many middling courses according to financial records. The Bolton Greyhound Racing Company Ltd., which owned two BGTCS-governed tracks at Bolton and Blackburn, found profits and income steadily dropping from the mid- 1930s. The major income stream that showed the most decline was parking, which dropped to £1,833 (17 percent of income) by 1937, though this was still a substantial proportion of their receipts.<sup>59</sup>

### Wider Middle-class Attitudes to Greyhound Racing 1926-1939

The significance of middle-class attendance at greyhound racing, however, needs to be set in a broader historical context if we are to understand it. Middle-class attitudes to betting were shifting in the inter-war years, not just with regard to greyhound racing, but also the football pools or horseracing. The debates in the media, Parliament, and pulpit over dog-racing’s social and moral effects and pleasures provide clear evidence that views amongst the middle classes were in process of shifting towards an increased stress on betting’s pleasures, although there were still religious, reformist, and respectable groups strongly opposed to all forms of betting. Greyhound racing provided a focus for a wide variety of varying and conflicting middle-class discourses over betting, which were often controversial, propagandist, and highly partisan. Middle-class leisure values were placing less emphasis on morality and rational, brisk, and purposeful recreations towards increasingly frank and indulgent enjoyment of commercial leisure in a significantly expanded leisure world. Amongst the many material conditions influencing such changes were reduced hours of work, increased leisure time, some increase in secularism, and a growth in real wages. Taking a base of 100 in 1930 real wages moved from 91.2 in 1920 to peak at 108.3 in 1935, falling only slightly to 107.7 in 1938.<sup>60</sup>

Amongst the leading indicators of this broader cultural stress on leisure was the increased amount of personal income spent on moderate gambling and its related industries, which many now accepted, according to the 1932/1933 Royal Commission on Lotteries and Betting, as “a pardonable habit” with “an element of amusement.”<sup>61</sup> Even the fervent anti-gambler Canon Peter Green recognized that “the persistent obstacle to any considerable improvement in the present position is the non-existence of a conscience on the question among the bulk of our population, and . . . even among Christian people.”<sup>62</sup> Estimated annual legal national gambling expenditure rose from £63 million to an estimated £221 million over the period.<sup>63</sup>

Nevertheless, betting was still, like alcohol, a “major opposition” in society.<sup>64</sup> Yet historians have tended to oversimplify the complexity of such divisions. The economic

historian Stephen Jones has suggested that “on the gambling issue, liberals, nonconformists and respectable workers stood against Tory aristocrats, the new leisure entrepreneurs and the ‘rougier’ elements within the working classes.”<sup>65</sup> But while the multiple discourses surrounding betting certainly suggest that attitudes to gambling were a major fault line in British society, such divisions, and the often conflicting views of those who attached meaning to them need more careful deconstruction. Even political parties were split. The Tories were generally supportive of greyhound racing, but a number of Tory figures such as Lord Lonsdale supported racing and coursing but opposed greyhound racing. Socialist politicians were generally opposed. Ramsey MacDonald saw greyhound racing as a cause of “most distressing evils,” destructive for the working classes and their moral life.<sup>66</sup> Likewise Philip Snowden, in a Leeds speech of January 22, 1928, argued that it demoralized the character and habits of the British people. But Aneurin Bevan was more sympathetic, attending the annual meeting of the National Greyhound Racing Society in 1933.<sup>67</sup>

All political parties were even more divided on the question of whether to liberalize gambling law or to toughen it further, as any decision could lose votes. The 1923 Select Committee of the House of Commons considered the question of imposing a duty on betting but was so lobbied by different interest groups that it proved unwilling to recommend changes. There were, as the Chief Clerk to Bow Street Police Court admitted in his 1935 guide to betting law, “two parties,”—those who saw gambling as one of the most powerful instincts of the human race and so wished to restrict only “such facilities . . . as can be shown to have serious social consequences,” and “a large and effective minority of citizens” who wished to prohibit it altogether.<sup>68</sup>

Attitudes to gambling also spanned the divides of class and religion, even if personality and temperament, age, gender, political affiliation, and the nature of work played a part. Nonconformists, for example, certainly were by and large opposed, though even here there were minorities in their churches who spoke up for gambling. Catholics were often far more supportive. Many middle-class moralists and social reformers opposed betting. Other middle-class people enjoyed it.<sup>69</sup> These were more likely to be involved as investors, organizers, and officials, dog owners and spectators at select dog-tracks.

Although only a minority of the British population, the anti-racing groups, unsurprisingly, dominated press discourse. As the emerging greyhound-racing industry increasingly attracted larger crowds, and more British companies tried to float race tracks in 1927 and 1928, fervent anti-gamblers rapidly organized resistance through preaching, letters to the press, the formation of anti-gambling organizations, and the production of anti-gambling literature. The National Anti-Gambling League (NAGL) had taken the lead in attacking horserace betting before World War I. But its main successes were now behind it. Its membership was dropping. There was little money to support active opposition. Concerned individuals who led the movement largely came from the Protestant churches, the custodians of traditional morality and the Nonconformist conscience. Some magistrates and MPs were also active, supported by economists worried about “wasted” earnings, some city and town councils, and head teachers and other educationalists.<sup>70</sup> By May of 1928 Home Secretary William Joynson-Hicks had received over 1,600 motions from religious and secular organizations. These called for state control of the sport and

portrayed greyhound racing as exploitative, a moral challenge to the nation. Hicks, who was a fervent evangelical, was initially swayed.

Such opposition, whilst numerically limited, was socially significant. Leading activists were often politically influential and worked hard to create a negative image of the sport. Anti-gamblers amongst local authorities, especially Watch Committees, town planners, educational groups, and charity organizations were all adept at managing press coverage to put across their views and forming new organizations to increase their chances of press publicity.

The sheer volume of their published material made them appear powerful. The National Emergency Committee of Christian Citizens, for example, published at least five oppositional pamphlets in 1928 that evinced strong disapproval and moral criticism of betting as “an emotional deficiency disease.” Dog racing was castigated as “animated roulette,” a “social evil,” and a “social problem” creating secondary poverty by encouraging excessive gambling. The tracks were dubbed “canine casinos.” Anti-gambling narratives regularly quoted examples of individuals ruined by betting. E.B. Perkins, for example, the Assistant Secretary of Social Welfare for the Wesleyans, cited a respectable businessman, who lost his job, his reputation, and his character after he got into debt and embezzled from his firm.<sup>71</sup> Much of such material simply repeated the traditional attacks on betting rehearsed in 1922-1923 for the House of Commons Select Committee on Betting Duty, and probably had little wider public impact.

Anti-greyhound racing propaganda agitated local opinion against the building of new stadiums in terms of four key arguments. One was the affront to “respectable” householders, with the suggestion, sometimes explicit, that stadiums attracted the poor or disreputable to the area. A letter from an Ilford company director, for example, claimed that Ilford’s track proposal was opposed by 95 percent of the inhabitants, citing “the invasion of crowds of undesirable characters who notoriously frequented greyhound racing to say nothing of the demoralization of younger members of the community.”<sup>72</sup>

A second was racing’s dismissal as being run merely for commercial profit by its promoters, something inherently exploitative, an artificial pursuit for which there existed, supposedly, no “popular demand,” a vested interest supporting gambling.<sup>73</sup> Certainly there was much evidence that greyhound racing had a strongly commercial thrust, driven by businessmen interested in maximizing profit.

The third was the allegation that dog racing was dishonest, a corrupt sport, with dogs manipulated by bookmakers, owners, and others for profit, something that police evidence suggests applied largely to low-status “flapping” tracks, not to NGRS ones.<sup>74</sup> The fourth, most powerful of all, was anti-gamblers’ claimed need to protect the young from gambling’s adverse moral effects, although “young” was rarely defined. Henry Carter in 1928 described crowds as “thousands of working men, mostly youthful,” women “in smaller numbers,” “lads and girls in their teens” with “boys” as young as sixteen.<sup>75</sup> Female betting was another concern. The Lord Mayor of Manchester claimed attractive well-dressed young women between seventeen and twenty-four were betting at Manchester in December of 1927.<sup>76</sup> The Secretary of the Girls’ Life Brigade believed that “girls of tender years are to be found . . . betting on the various races.”<sup>77</sup> Such views were constantly reiterated over the following years. The Royal Commission of 1932/1933 was particularly impressed by evi-

dence about “general deterioration of character amongst young persons in poorer neighbourhoods” and other supposedly adverse social results of betting on the dogs by “the young.”<sup>78</sup>

Some local authorities such as in Newcastle and Margate tried to prevent entrepreneurs from opening courses by astute use of the 1925 Town Planning Act to stop disturbance of amenity. A major set-piece confrontation came in November and December of 1927, after the trustees of the Crystal Palace agreed to allow it to be used for greyhound racing by a vote of thirteen to nine. But there were opposing majorities on a number of local authorities, including the Croydon and Wandsworth Borough Council, and, a little later, the City Corporation and London County Council (LCC). There were letters to the press, and Protestant churches in south London organized petitions with some 43,434 signatures finally obtained. The NAGL took legal action against the trustees, arguing that dog racing was a serious menace to the social and moral well being of the nation.<sup>79</sup> Preaching and organizing meetings against gambling in different contexts presented an appearance of widespread opposition. The Bishop of Lichfield was especially active. He gave a major speech at a diocesan conference at Wolverhampton in November. He was amongst a number of very active Free Church and Church of England clergy who, with Sir Earnest Lamb, set up the National Emergency Committee of Christian Citizens in December of 1927 to oppose greyhound racing. About fifty cross-party Members of Parliament sent a deputation to the home secretary, claiming it was “a most pernicious form of gambling” and not “a legitimate, clean or healthy sport.” The home secretary’s response was equivocal, though he was anxious at reports of its “doubtful effects.” He accepted that “juvenile betting was a very great evil.”<sup>80</sup> In January of 1928 the pressured trustees reversed their decision by twenty votes to eleven. A proposal to develop cricket’s Middlesex Oval ground for greyhound racing met a similar fate in October of 1931.

Despite such apparent successes, other evidence suggests that councils across Britain varied significantly in their attitudes, and, much more significantly, that antipathy was often balanced by tacit support. The LCC was one of many who resisted pressure for anti-greyhound racing legislation. In January of 1928 its General Purposes Committee rejected a motion calling on the government to give local authorities power to prohibit or license tracks and make betting there illegal by twenty votes to seven. The LCC itself was later “not prepared to express any opinion upon the question.” A proposed amendment that “in the opinion of the Council such abuses as betting in connection with greyhound . . . racing call for definite action” was defeated by seventy-one votes to twenty. In 1928 complaints to the LCC about Sunday morning races, run by many of London’s unlicensed tracks because attendances were better, were ignored. When the issue was raised with Scotland Yard, the police pointed out that “meetings have also been held to protest at the efforts of Church Councils to suppress the racing” and that practically nothing had occurred to justify police action.<sup>81</sup>

Even anti-gamblers admitted that some men of high public repute, including a substantial minority of MPs, lent greyhound racing their support. Both the Dog Racing Bill, 1928, and the Dog Racing (Local option) Bill, 1932-3, which required a license from the local authority before a place could be used for dog racing, failed to pass through Parliament successfully.<sup>82</sup>

Greyhound organizations launched successful propaganda counter-attacks. A Greyhound Racing Protection Association was formed at the beginning of 1928, headed by Admiral Sir Sidney Freeman, in order to collect evidence to combat the organized propaganda of interests opposed to greyhound racing. The NGRC also set out to defend the sport. One reason why later writers have seen greyhound racing as working class was the club's propagandist decision to juxtapose dog racing against horseracing, which they deliberately portrayed as an upper-class pastime in order to represent greyhound racing as a more working-class leisure activity. They deliberately portrayed dog racing as the "poor man's sport," a "great new democratic sport," far less cruel than the upper-class coursing that the NAGL were not attempting to ban, and much cheaper than going to horserace meetings, which the NAGL had earlier given up trying to ban. Other pro-greyhound racing discourse described greyhound racing in clearly conservative ideological terms as a "healthy and clean outdoor recreation. . . . [O]ne of the most successful counter-irritants to socialistic and revolutionary nonsense . . . and a great antidote to Bolshevism."<sup>83</sup> Strong economic arguments were advanced in its support. In 1928 greyhound racing was claimed to have paid £200,000 in entertainment tax and given about £15,000 a year to charities, whilst providing local employment for the building trade, transport, trainers, handlers and track workers, and contributing substantially to local rates. Suggestions of dishonesty were met head on, claiming attempts were easily foiled, while all licensed tracks and kennels had their own security officers, usually ex-Criminal Investigation Department (CID) men.

Some writers provided disingenuous testimonials about the sport's supposed social benefits. *Actual Facts about Greyhound Racing* challenged Rev. Carter's *Facts about Greyhound Racing* arguing that no magistrate could prove a case of misery due to excessive betting, no pawnbroker could say that homes were being pledged, and National Savings' income was rising not falling. An East End vicar and a Catholic clergyman both spoke in support. Brigadier-General Critchley claimed that "greyhound racing has stopped a good deal of drinking. Authorities report nearly 50 per cent reduction in drunkenness wherever greyhound racing is taking place." He suggested that public houses round the White City were taking less than £20 instead of over £60 on Saturdays and alleged that a suppressed police report requested by the home secretary had showed that where racing was properly conducted it decreased local drunkenness, greatly reduced petty larceny, and brought street offences down.<sup>84</sup> Others stressed its social, convivial side and the acceptance of the police that crowds were well behaved, emphasizing "the great comradeship of all greyhound lovers" and the "many happy hours" spent watching.<sup>85</sup>

Such debates were revisited for the Royal Commission on Lotteries and Betting in 1932/1933, as it gathered information relating to the proposed licensing of greyhound tracks and the legalization of their tote facilities, which had initially been in widespread use but were deemed illegal by the High Court in December of 1932. This time middle-class pro-greyhound racing groups were better organized, using all the legitimate machinery of letters to the press, deputations, and dinners with MPs.<sup>86</sup> Greyhound racing organizations, stadium directors, and dog owners lobbied the commission. The Parliamentary Committee on Greyhound Racing, composed of "a large number of members representative of all parties in the House," supported the tote's re-introduction. They denied that

there was any hard evidence of so-called moral effects. These were “matters of opinion,” where “no case whatever has been proved.”<sup>87</sup> The BGTCS produced the *Greyhound Tracks Review* with a policy of “fair play for all,” encouraging readers to lobby MPs and local agents. Anti-gamblers were derided as “obscure little cranks,” “faddists,” “fanatics,” “bodies that on principle are opposed to all sports and popular amusements.”<sup>88</sup> Cinemas were used to advertise greyhound racing charity events.

Initially the anti-gambling lobby proved successful with the commission, whose interim findings recommended the banning of dog-track totes, but much less successful with the general public. Continuing societal divisions were reflected in press coverage. The *Times* saw the ensuing debate as reflecting public diversity, and although somewhat opposed to the tote presented the case under the headline, “The Dog-tote Dilemma.” Leading dailies, it explained, showed “high contention” over the issue. The *Telegraph*, for example, now saw it as “a piece of class legislation directed against a popular recreation.” The *Morning Post* felt there was a case for “giving the greyhound-racing totalisator . . . statutory provision.” By contrast the *Manchester Guardian*, always anti-gambling in approach, saw the recommendations as “entirely justified,” while the *Yorkshire Post* felt “the interim report will meet with general public approval.” Other papers, such as the *Daily Mail*, *Daily Express*, and the *Daily Herald* avoided alienating sections of their readership by avoiding any editorial comment.<sup>89</sup>

In general press and public supported retention of the greyhound stadium totalisators. In February of 1933 a Commons majority supported their reintroduction. One MP suggested that “the House appears to be mainly in agreement with those of us who feel that some degree of latitude should be allowed to greyhound racing. After all it is an agreeable spectacle and it is an entertainment *for all classes*.”<sup>90</sup> The commission capitulated. In 1934 the Betting and Lotteries Act legally established the tote.

Further illustration of the complex contradictions and tensions greyhound racing aroused came in the attitude of other British sporting bodies. Racing’s Jockey Club was unsurprisingly opposed, while the English Football Association publicly claimed not to encourage the use of any club grounds for greyhound racing. Yet the grounds of many existing football league clubs from Bristol Rovers to South Shields also functioned as dog tracks. Chelsea’s Stamford Bridge failed to get a dog track in May of 1928, when a license was refused, but got one when speedway ceased there in 1932. Wembley Stadium, where the English FA Cup final was played, made its money from greyhound racing.

London’s White City, a former Olympic track used for major track and field amateur athletics, had greyhound racing from 1927. Speedway was often put on at greyhound racing tracks, and nine out of ten tracks of speedway’s National League also staged greyhound racing.<sup>91</sup> In the rugby league, the two London sides Acton and Mitcham also showed it, as did several northern clubs.<sup>92</sup>

## Conclusion

By the inter-war period increased secularization and broader changes in wealth and in free time and cultural practices enwrapped the middle classes in a increasingly complex and contradictory matrix of leisure values, as both the widespread public support for greyhound racing and the vociferous opposition to it from a minority showed, although many

may have cared little either way. Attitudes to leisure crossed class, gender, and political party in complex ways, and certainly reformist opposition had only limited effect, despite the apparent straightjacket of respectability. Leisure attitudes amongst the middle classes were becoming more relaxed, especially in terms of private leisure. Sunday observance, for example, was becoming less strong. Middle-class tennis and golf clubs, with their own grounds, increasingly played on Sundays. In 1927 only eighty-two English golf clubs did not allow Sunday play. By 1939 there were only twenty-seven. London County Council allowed non-league non-commercial sport on its public sports grounds as early as 1922.

During this period some sections of the middle classes manifested a variously more materialist, hedonistic, or secular approach to the sport of horseracing and its betting manifestations.<sup>93</sup> A similar middle-class interest can likewise be tracked in greyhound racing, in terms of spectatorship, betting, administration, and financial investment. Even during the worst years of the Depression sections of the middle classes were prepared to exploit its anticipations, excitements, and possible profit, and indulgence in its pleasures was clearly no bar to success in other fields. By the mid 1930s modest betting on horses, greyhounds, or via the football pools, had become a source of pleasure for some in all classes. Betting was now deeply embedded in British culture.

Although the changing parameters of respectability, the circumstances in which activities became respectable or lost respectability, and the ways in which space for moving with freedom and relative pleasure was defined still remain to be teased forth in future studies, nonetheless the intersection of greyhound racing and the middle class reflects wider historiographical debates about British inter-war leisure culture and the impact of secularism, Americanism, and the Depression. At a time of economic uncertainty and political upheavals in the later 1920s and 1930s, some sections of the middle class, thanks perhaps to an improved standard of living, were increasingly looking for pleasure and escaping old restrictions on their leisure behavior.



<sup>91</sup>Peter Bailey, "Will the Real Bill Banks Stand Up? A Role Analysis of Mid-Victorian Working-Class Respectability," *Journal of Social History* 12 (1979): 336-353. See also Peter Bailey, *Pleasure and Performance in the Victorian City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); and F.L.M. Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society* (London: Fontana, 1988).

<sup>92</sup>Mike Huggins, "More Sinful Pleasures? Leisure, Respectability and the Male Middle Classes in Victorian England," *Journal of Social History* 33 (2000): 585-600; J.K. Walton, "Home and Leisure" in *The Victorian Vision*, ed. J.M. McKenzie (London: V&A Publishers, 2001), 50-73; Martin Hewitt, *Unrespectable Recreations* (Leeds, U.K.: Centre for Victorian Studies, 2001); Mike Huggins and J.A. Mangan, *Disreputable Pleasures: Less Virtuous Victorians at Play* (London: Routledge, 2004).

<sup>93</sup>Mike Huggins, *Horseracing and the British 1919-1939* (Manchester, U.K.: Manchester University Press, 2002).

<sup>94</sup>John Lowerson, "Starting from Your Own Past? The Serious Business of Leisure History," *Journal of Contemporary History* 36 (2001): 514.

<sup>95</sup>Peter Borsay, *A History of Leisure* (Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 98.

<sup>96</sup>Norman Baker, "Going to the Dogs—Hostility to Greyhound Racing in Britain: Puritanism, Socialism and Pragmatism," *Journal of Sport History* 23 (1996): 97-118.

<sup>97</sup>Roger Munting, *An Economic and Social History of Gambling in Britain and the USA* (Manchester, U.K.: Manchester University Press, 1996), 234.

<sup>84</sup>"Britain's Betting Industry-II," *Economist*, 7 March 1936, p. 517.

<sup>94</sup>"The Sport Industry," *Economist*, 8 April 1939, p. 75.

<sup>10</sup>Estimate of *Greyhound Tracks Review*, 12 January 1935.

<sup>11</sup>Mark Clapson, *A Bit of a Flutter: Popular Gambling and English Society, c.1823-1961* (Manchester, U.K.: Manchester University Press, 1992), 146. The attendances need to be put in context by cinema-going, where annual admissions reached 987 million by 1938. See Peter J. Beck, "Leisure and Sport in Britain, 1900-1939," in *A Companion to Early Twentieth Century Britain*, ed. Chris Wrigley (London: Blackwell, 2003), 459.

<sup>12</sup>See Mike Huggins and Jack Williams, *Sport and the British 1918-1939* (London: Routledge, 2005).

<sup>13</sup>Clapson, *A Bit of a Flutter*, 138-161 provides the most detailed overview thus far. Mike Cronin, "Arthur Elvin and the Dogs of Wembley," *Sports Historian* 22 (2002): 100-114 covers Wembley. See also Baker, "Going to the Dogs"; Colin Griffin, "Going to the Dogs: Some Further Evidence," *Journal of Sport History* 25 (1998), 601-604; and Kieran Foley, "Going to the Dogs: A Social History of Greyhound Racing 1926-1960" (M.A. thesis, Lancaster University, U.K., 1998).

<sup>14</sup>Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England 1918-1951* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 362, 384-385.

<sup>15</sup>Jeff Hill, *Sport, Leisure and Culture in Twentieth Century Britain* (London: Palgrave, 2002), 38.

<sup>16</sup>John Stevenson, *British Society 1914-1945* (Harmondsworth, U.K.: Penguin, 1984), 386.

<sup>17</sup>For earlier middle-class spectatorship at racing see Mike Huggins, *Flat Racing and British Society c.1780-1914* (London: Frank Cass, 2000).

<sup>18</sup>Harding Cox and Gerald Lascelles, *Coursing and Falconry* (London: The Badminton Library, The Field, 1892), 93-105 covers the rise and fall of the enclosed coursing ground.

<sup>19</sup>*Bell's Life*, 5 April 1840.

<sup>20</sup>*Times* (London), 11 September 1876.

<sup>21</sup>*Sporting Chronicle*, 9 February 1899.

<sup>22</sup>Clapson, *A Bit of a Flutter*, 143.

<sup>23</sup>Brigadier-General A.C. Critchley, *Critch: The Memories of Brigadier-General A.C. Critchley* (London: Hutchinson, 1961), 135.

<sup>24</sup>*Times* (London), 6 September 1927.

<sup>25</sup>*Times* (London), 1 June 1929.

<sup>26</sup>For the 1930 Greyhound Derby see *Greyhound Evening Mirror*, 20 June 1930.

<sup>27</sup>Cronin, "Arthur Elvin."

<sup>28</sup>McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, 362, 384-385.

<sup>29</sup>See Jeremy Tunstall, "The British Press in the Age of Television," in *The Sociology of Journalism and the Press*, ed. Harry Christian (Keele, U.K.: Keele University Press, 1980), 20-24.

<sup>30</sup>For example, David Low cartoons, *Evening Standard*, 17 December 1927; and 21 January 1928.

<sup>31</sup>National Greyhound Racing Club, *Greyhound Racing Year Book 1939-40* (London: Welbecson Press, 1940); P. Howard Tarter, *Greyhound Racing Encyclopaedia* (London: Fleet Publishing, 1948), 80.

<sup>32</sup>*Greyhound Tracks Review*, 2 February 1935.

<sup>33</sup>Sean O'Connell, *The Car and British Society: Class, Gender and Motoring 1896-1939* (Manchester, U.K.: Manchester University Press, 1998).

<sup>34</sup>Cronin, "Arthur Elvin," 100.

<sup>35</sup>*Greyhound Outlook*, 25 August 1934; Police correspondence re. parking at the White City 1932-9, MEPO/2/7776, National Archives, London, United Kingdom (hereafter NAL).

<sup>36</sup>Directors' reports and accounts, Bolton Greyhound Racing Co. Ltd., EKP/5380, Liverpool Record Office, Liverpool, United Kingdom (hereafter LRO).

<sup>37</sup>Lord Sefton wanted "nothing to do with it." *Times* (London), 16 February 1927.



- <sup>38</sup>Meyrick Good, *Good Days* (London: Hutchinson, 1941), 184.
- <sup>39</sup>*Greyhound Tracks Review*, 23 March 1935.
- <sup>40</sup>Letter from chairman of Brighton and Hove stadium, 21 November 1933, HO45/15853/663749/29, NAL.
- <sup>41</sup>*Greyhound Tracks Review*, 9 March 1935.
- <sup>42</sup>See Michael Tanner, *The Legend of Mick the Miller* (Highdown, U.K.: Compton, Newbury, 2003).
- <sup>43</sup>An invitation to share memories of pre-war dog racing published in *Saga Magazine* (December 2003) elicited 125 initial replies. Follow-up elicited fifty-eight further memories, and ten interviews were carried out.
- <sup>44</sup>*Times* (London), 18 June 1927; 27 June 1927.
- <sup>45</sup>*Times* (London), 7 August 1927.
- <sup>46</sup>Mrs. C.F.C. Clarke, *Greyhounds and Greyhound Racing: A Comprehensive and Popular Survey of Britain's Latest Sport* (London: Methuen, 1934), 22-23.
- <sup>47</sup>Mrs. "N.L.," Wolverhampton, U.K., to Mike Huggins, Windermere, U.K., 27 July 2004, in possession of the author. *Greyhound Outlook*, 4 August 1934, provides a similar list of stars at the White City track.
- <sup>48</sup>*Times* (London), 27 June 1927.
- <sup>49</sup>J.B. Priestley, *English Journey* (London: Heinemann, 1934; reprint ed., London: Penguin, 1984), 375.
- <sup>50</sup>For middle-class betting on horseracing see Huggins, *Horseracing and the British*, 83-89.
- <sup>51</sup>Munting, *An Economic and Social History of Gambling*, 231.
- <sup>52</sup>Seaforth Greyhound Racing Association Ltd., BT31/33371/268637, NAL; Oldham Greyhound Racing and Sports Co. Ltd., BT31/33332/264571, NAL. The BT31 file contains records of over thirty such tracks established between 1927 and 1933.
- <sup>53</sup>A.R.D. Cardew, *All about Greyhound Racing* (London: Elkin, Mulhouse and Marrot Ltd., 1928), 23.
- <sup>54</sup>Kenneth Young, *Harry, Lord Rosebery* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1974), 80.
- <sup>55</sup>*Greyhound Outlook and Sports Pictures*, 6 January 1934; National Greyhound Racing Club, *Greyhound Racing Year Book 1936-7* (London: Welbeck Press, 1937).
- <sup>56</sup>Clapson, *A Bit of a Flutter*, 155.
- <sup>57</sup>Observations from associations upon proposed legislation on greyhound racing tracks 1933-4, HO 45/15853, NAL.
- <sup>58</sup>Stevenson, *British Society*, 385.
- <sup>59</sup>Directors' reports and accounts, Bolton Greyhound Racing Co. Ltd., EKP/5380, LRO.
- <sup>60</sup>Stephen G. Jones, *Workers at Play: A Social and Economic History of Leisure* (London: Routledge, 1986), 12.
- <sup>61</sup>The Royal Commission on Lotteries and Betting, 1932/3 Final Report, p. 54.
- <sup>62</sup>See Peter Green, *Betting and Gambling* (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1935), 118-9.
- <sup>63</sup>Munting, *An Economic and Social History of Gambling*, 230.
- <sup>64</sup>Mass Observation, *The Pub and the People* (London, Cresset, 1987), 44.
- <sup>65</sup>Jones, *Sport, Politics and the Working Classes*, 56-57.
- <sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*, 85-86.
- <sup>67</sup>*Times* (London), 14 February 1933.
- <sup>68</sup>Albert Leick, *Betting and Lotteries* (London: Butterworth Press, 1935), 4.
- <sup>69</sup>Huggins, *Horseracing and the British*, 69-125.
- <sup>70</sup>My mother described vividly the shock of her teacher when she said she had been to the dogs.

<sup>71</sup>E.B. Perkins *et al.*, *Gambling—Right or Wrong* (London: Free Church Federal Council, n.d.), 6.

<sup>72</sup>*Times* (London), 27 January 1928.

<sup>73</sup>See Carter, *Facts about Greyhound Racing*. See also Peter Green, *Betting and Gambling* (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1935), 111; National Anti-Gambling League, *Gambling and the State* (London: NAGL, 1929); John Murphy, *Instinct Adventure and Gambling* (London: Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, 1934).

<sup>74</sup>Reports of various police authorities to the Home Office in January 1934, HO45/15850 file, NAL.

<sup>75</sup>See Carter, *Facts about Greyhound Racing*, 11.

<sup>76</sup>*Manchester Evening News*, 12 December 1927.

<sup>77</sup>*Times* (London), 23 December 1927.

<sup>78</sup>Royal Commission on Lotteries and Betting, 1932/3, .74. ¶254.

<sup>79</sup>*Times* (London), 22 November 1927.

<sup>80</sup>*Times* (London), 21 and 22 December 1927.

<sup>81</sup>London County Council dog racing file LCC/CL/GP/1/114 has details of the various attempts to put pressure on the Council, London Metropolitan Archives, Northampton Road, London.

<sup>82</sup>See HO45/15267, NAL, for relevant Home Office material.

<sup>83</sup>*Greyhound News*, 9 December 1927.

<sup>84</sup>Critchley, *Critch*. The home secretary was widely reported to have said that he had a most careful enquiry made through the police in various parts of the country on the effects of greyhound racing (e.g., *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 20 April 1928). Thus far I have not located the file.

<sup>85</sup>Roy Genders, *Modern Greyhound Racing and Coursing* (London: Sporting Handbooks, 1949), viii.

<sup>86</sup>*Times* (London), 15 February 1933. Further pamphlets were also produced, such as E.B. Perkins and Cecil H. Rose, *Serious Social Consequences: A Survey of the Evidence on Greyhound Racing* (London: Christian Social Council, 1932).

<sup>87</sup>National Greyhound Racing Society deputation, minutes of meeting, 1933, in HO45/15850/663794/27, NAL.

<sup>88</sup>*British Tracks Review*, 13 October 1934; 3 November 1934; 8 December 1934.

<sup>89</sup>*Times* (London), 11 January 1933.

<sup>90</sup>Great Britain, Parliament, *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 5th series, 274 (26 February 1933). Emphasis the author's.

<sup>91</sup>Jack Williams, "A Wild Orgy of Speed: Responses to Speedway in Britain before the Second World War," *Sports Historian* 19 (1999): 2.

<sup>92</sup>David Farrar, "Rugby League in London," *Association of Sports Historians Newsletter*, January 2000, pp. 4-7.

<sup>93</sup>Huggins, *Horseracing and the British*.