



THE COMING OF THE GREYHOUNDS

THE Wembley Company had paid £150,000 for a Stadium that had cost something over £750,000, nearly double the original estimated cost. On the face of it they had a bargain. But apart from the physical assets of concrete and steel, the Company had nothing except a contract with the Football Association which had gone with the Stadium. Unless those vast miles of terraces could be filled at sufficiently frequent intervals between the Cup Finals, they would all eat their heads off. Arthur Elvin believed that, properly presented, the new sport of greyhound racing could bring people "out" to Wembley several times a week and provide a continuous attraction that would keep the Stadium going until such time as other sports and spectacles could be developed. The title of the company was Wembley Stadium and Greyhound Racecourse Ltd. The "and Greyhound Racecourse" was dropped after a few years.

Wembley as we know it today is, in fact, founded on greyhound racing. Without the dogs it might have been impossible to maintain the Stadium for the football and other sports for which it is famous. Without greyhounds there might not have been that perfection of organization, the trained staff, the well-oiled machine that makes a football match at Wembley something different from a match anywhere else in the world. Greyhound racing at Wembley has brought great benefits even to those who have never seen it, and who may even disapprove of it; something worth bearing in mind, perhaps, when inevitable attacks are made on the sport which has been considered "fair game" by Chancellors of the Exchequer and Mrs. Grundies alike.

Quite accidentally I helped to introduce greyhound racing to England. A friend sent round to me Major Lyne Dixon, a veterinary surgeon, who asked me if he could borrow my portable cinema, in those days still something of a novelty. I asked what the films showed and he replied that they came from America and were of dog racing. He wanted to demonstrate to some

47

friends in the City to encourage them to invest in this new sport. I lent him the projector and ever since I have kicked myself that I did not give him my war gratuity to put on the dogs instead of buying a house. The original shilling shares in due course became worth pounds. Arthur Elvin realized there was an enormous future in greyhound racing at a fraction of the cost of horses, without the need to travel long distances in the evenings after work with the added satisfaction of seeing what happened to the bet he insisted on having, instead of merely having to look for the results in the newspapers.

The sport had been introduced only a year or so before he bought the Stadium and all manner of queer stories were going the rounds about what really happened at meetings. It was rumoured that dogs' paws were smoothed with emery paper to make them slip; that if they touched the hare they would be electrocuted, that unscrupulous owners fitted their paws with rubber bands to give them a grip, and so on. Most of the rumours were, of course, nonsense. But Elvin determined the racing at Wembley should not only be well presented, but also completely above board, and he set a strict standard for quality and fairness. He coined the phrase "The Ascot of Greyhound Racing" and found the men who could help to make Wembley earn the title.

One of the men that Arthur Elvin found by a lucky chance was Captain A. E. Brice, now a director of Wembley. When greyhound racing was introduced to Britain, Captain Brice, although still a young man, was one of the best-known coursing judges in Britain, and indeed in the world, for before World War I he had been many times to Russia, France, Germany and elsewhere to judge. He was "born to the business", his father having been elected Waterloo Cup judge for fourteen years. Brice himself started judging in 1910 and was elected Waterloo Cup judge in 1926, I imagine the youngest man ever thus to be honoured. There was considerable controversy in the coursing world about this "new-fangled" sport of greyhound racing. Brice had made up his mind that it had come to stay and in fact was, with the late Sir William Gentle, Brigadier-General Critchley and others, one of the original investors in Lyne Dixon's company. When he learned that Wembley were to introduce "open" races, he was convinced there was a great future for the new sport. But it was quite by

chance that he became connected with Wembley. He had promised a journalist friend to recommend him for a job and was speaking for him to the director of a sporting newspaper when the director said: "Do you know that the new Wembley Company is looking for a director of racing? Are you interested?" Brice was interested. The Wembley Board was meeting at the time—the Company was to be launched next day—and a call went through to the boardroom from the newspaper office. The result was an immediate meeting and the appointment of Captain Brice. He continued to judge coursing meetings and, indeed, achieved his ambition of being elected judge for the Waterloo Cup 24 times, beating the record of his father's great rival, Mr. Hadley. There was nothing that Captain Brice did not know about greyhounds, and not only Wembley but the sport benefited immensely from his association with it.

It was in August 1927 that the Company bought the Stadium. Immediately, nearly £90,000 was spent on making the Empire Stadium suitable for greyhound racing, this sum including the cost of track, car-park, kennels and lighting.

On 10th December Arthur Elvin presented his first big challenge to make Wembley the sporting centre of the world. And what a December night that was! The staff worked day and night, and "the boss" worked with them, as he has ever since. With typical Elvin thoroughness to see that no factor for the public's comfort or pleasure should be overlooked, a dress rehearsal was held on the previous evening. It went on all through the night.

What was the public offered apart from the sport? First, the immense car-park with room enough for 4,000 vehicles. Second, seats under cover for 30,000 patrons. Third, for luxury and convenience, there were a novel cocktail bar, a dining-room, smoking-lounges and a dance floor. All this beside the programme of racing and a streamlined system for placing bets for those who wished to back their fancy as well as enjoy the still novel spectacle.

The December day moved to its zero hour. No one who attended will ever forget it. The company had invited five hundred personal guests. They arrived all right, but so also did a thousand gate-crashers!

The astonished host met total strangers walking off with bottles of champagne crammed into their pockets. Gate-crashers

D

were seizing the food. The well-drilled service of waiters and waitresses was rushed into utter confusion. Down in the kitchens where Elvin made one visit he found waiters fighting each other with forks and spoons—and even table knives.

From the fantastic crowd in the restaurant he passed to the open-air to find fifty thousand wildly excited men and women cheering each race to the echo. They were loving every moment of it, but the real thing was still far from the smooth running of the night-long rehearsal. In one race the dogs caught up and passed the hare. One of them, named Big Attack, was bowled over by the mechanism. The stewards, apparently overcome by the immensity of the occasion, allowed the race result to stand, and such was the good temper of the crowd that few objected.

How different that would be today! For one thing, the accident would be unthinkable. For another the present-day stewards would order the race to be re-run, or voided.

But with all its incidents on the track, the confusion in the kitchens and restaurant, the Wembley Stadium Greyhound Track was well and truly off to a good start. Much more than a new greyhound meeting grew out of the venture. A luncheon in the West End attended by Lord Askwith, Lord Kilmorey, Lord Mottistone and Arthur Elvin led to a second gathering with other interested parties in the Wembley Stadium Board Room. Out of that historic conference came the Control Board of Greyhound Racing, one of the earliest, and still proudest, milestones in Sir Arthur's crowded career.

Not until February 1928 did the greyhounds begin to show a profit. It would not be strictly correct to say that since then "it has never looked back". It has had to look back on a number of occasions. Chancellors seeking "easy money" for taxation and believing that discriminatory taxation on greyhound racing would not lose too many votes, have been one trouble. The legal anomalies in the chaos of our betting laws have been another, and restriction on the number of meetings due to transport or other periodical crises have been a difficulty. But in good times and bad the dogs have been one of the mainstays of Wembley, producing a decreasing proportion of the revenue as other sports have developed there, but making possible their development and, incidentally, providing countless millions with entertain-

ment. In the first year the attendance at greyhound racing was 1,500,000. In the second year the attendance was 25 per cent up and the pessimistic shareholders who, at the first annual general meeting of the company, had been inclined to be critical of the "extravagance" of their managing director, were answered by a working profit of £40,000, most of which had come from greyhounds.

The standard of racing and the amenities has been maintained through the years only by a constant flow of new ideas and money. Most of the innovations which improved greyhound racing originated at Wembley, not only measures designed to prevent any "funny business" and give the punter a fair deal, but also to improve the racing in general. Open sweepstake races were introduced at Wembley and through the years the successes on other tracks of Wembley-trained dogs was an advertisement for their standard of racing. The electric tote was introduced in 1932—and in 1933, owing to the uncertainty of the legal position, the whole of the great expenditure had to be written off. Later on, when the use of totalisators was legalized under certain conditions, considerable sums were spent introducing improvements to satisfy the public. Few years, indeed, passed without some thousands being spent on improvements. As an instance, ten years after the start of racing, a new restaurant was built in the North Stand which overlooked the arena, making it possible to dine in comfort while watching the racing—not to mention losing your money without leaving your table.

Perhaps, here, where I have emphasized the important part that greyhounds have played in helping the financing of improvements at Wembley and the introduction of other sports, I might also mention the part they have played in financing the national exchequer. In 1951 alone Wembley paid £364,807 in totalisator tax and Bookmaker's Licence Duty and with Entertainments Tax and other taxes a total of £577,158. In the previous year it was £598,629. In twenty-five years the Wembley greyhounds seem to have provided the Chancellor with five or six million pounds—almost enough to build a new battleship, which might deservedly be called *H.M.S. Wembley!* It is ironical to recall that for a brief period before he went to Wembley, Elvin worked in one of the departments of the Inland Revenue!

Inevitably there is a whole host of stories concerning the dogs of a quarter of a century. Big dogs, little dogs, game dogs that never gave up, as well as the proud champions and curious character dogs. Has there been another lovable fool like Walcutt, nicknamed "The Wembley Clown"? He was a hurdler, and no matter where he finished at the end of a race he was always the winner of the rough-and-tumble for the hare skin thrown to the hounds about a hundred yards past the post. Skillfully dodging all other dogs the lively Walcutt leapt over the old hare escape tunnel. The rest of the pack would follow. But no dog or kennel lad could get the skin from the four-legged comic who would join the parade back to the kennels with the hare skin in his mouth as proud as if he were the winner of the Dog Derby.

Dashleigh was another "human" dog, nothing less than a canine weather forecaster. When it was going to rain he would tear out his bedding and hide in a corner. If fine weather was on the way Dashleigh rolled on to his back, paws in the air and a grin on his face. So correct was he that all around the Stadium he became known as "the barometer" and was jokingly said to be worth more than his keep to the Box-Office for his forecasts. Blonk was another weather-conscious dog. He hated the cold, and a wise backer checked the records to discover that this particular dog rarely showed top form in the winter. But when the sun shone—then there was a rush to back him. And often he obliged the Wembley fans with his best at prices in the region of 10-1. The hotter the sun, the faster went Blonk.

Another odd dog was Reveller, who raced all out after the dummy hare, but if faced with a live one would indifferently turn his back! It was one of the sights of the kennels to see Reveller eating a meal from the same bowl as a pet rabbit and not even lifting a lip to his furry "enemy". Incidentally the idea in the early days of greyhound racing that a dog raced on the track was never any good for coursing was disproved more than once by Burletta and other dogs. Burletta had been a fine performer on the track, winning the St. Leger in 1928.

Owners, too, are remembered for odd stories. Perhaps the best concerns the owner who won his first classic race with his last runner. In 1936 Mr. I. H. Bloom, a well-known owner of a greyhound string, decided to dispose of his Wembley kennel. The

majority of them were brought up for auction on a Saturday. Among the names in the catalogue was Mitzvah. But between the printing of the list and the sale Mitzvah had qualified for the final of the Scurry Gold Cup. At the last moment Mr. Bloom decided to withdraw the dog from the auction and let him take his chance in the race. Time after time the owner had been represented in finals, but had never managed to win a classic. And then, the eleventh-hour Mitzvah rose to the occasion and romped home in 23.29 seconds to win by four yards!

But Wembley greyhound history is far from a collection only of comic dog stories. It has shouldered a great part of the rise to popularity of this great modern sport. It set out to become "the Ascot of dog racing", and many of the items we accept today as normal racing were innovations first introduced on the Wembley track.

In its early days greyhound racing attracted more serious opposition than any other new sport before or since. Not only the Church, but anti-gambling organizations and kill joys in general flung themselves into a battle to ban "the dogs" on the grounds that "it was bad for public morale", that it was "degrading to true sportsmanship", and many other accusations made by people who had never, sometimes, even seen one meeting. From today's viewpoint we can look back and see that many of those vitriolic outpourings were true of certain tracks.

In the get-rich-quick flush of success caused by the first meetings, ill-managed tracks were opened at short notice to attract people with the main object of parting them from their cash by means short of pocket-picking. Good dogs were substituted for inferior types. To secure unfair results animals were heavily fed or doped before races. It was impossible to identify a particular dog, for markings were altered in back-street hide-outs by rogues with both eyes on the main chance and not a care for the public's sport.

Unsporting speculators nearly strangled the great sport of greyhound racing within a year of its birth. Unfeeling fleeced, the general public were turning against the sport and telling their friends to do the same. Only a sincere effort by responsible track directors and genuine owners could keep greyhound racing going as an above-board entertainment. And in that effort the directors

of the Wembley Stadium played a leading part. The able organizing brain of Elvin planned the way ahead with the paying patron his first concern, and Captain Brice, in charge of racing, doing everything possible to keep the sport clean and interesting.

Fortunately the get-rich-quick tracks that mushroomed overnight were sprinters, not stayers. Although scores of them appeared in all parts of the country they closed down with equal rapidity once they had made a month or two's killing. The newly-formed Boards of the National Greyhound Racing Society and the National Greyhound Racing Club had not so much to fight individual or group pirates as the anti-greyhound influence these strangers had left behind. No meeting of the Wembley Company has passed without the Chairman paying a tribute to the National Greyhound Racing Club, of which the Marquis of Carisbrooke is senior steward, which exercises so much care and vigilance on the tracks, which, like Wembley, operate under its rules.

Although never a greyhound owner myself I have been behind the scenes at the Wembley Kennels which are self-contained at the Wembley Stadium Estate. Originally there were six ranges, as the dog "stables" are called, each housing sixty dogs. But a buzz-bomb blew one down, so today five are in full activity, each block containing the greyhounds under one of the five trainers. Close by are the veterinary quarters where each racing dog is weighed and examined two hours before a race. There are also racing kennels where the dogs are quartered and isolated in absolute security after they pass the veterinary surgeon before the evening's racing.

New since the war is the dog hospital and, farther away, an isolation block where new dogs from sales or Ireland are housed for ten days when they come to Wembley to be trained. This isolation is a precaution against an animal bringing an illness or disease which might spread to the others.

All around are wired-off paddocks and a special trial track where the greyhounds are exercised, trained and tried, an on-the-spot amenity that few tracks share with Wembley. Most of them have their greyhounds trained and quartered at varying distances from where they have to race. For the Wembley runners it is no more than a short walk from home to track.

But of chief interest in the continuance of the Wembley story are the offices of the Racing Manager and his staff. Their pleasantly grey-washed building was in the Empire Exhibition, the Bermuda House. It still stands, a well-cared-for souvenir of the beginning of the story and now the nerve-centre of the Wembley back-bone—for that is what greyhound racing must be of all the great enterprise. It was the original regular sporting attraction—the only one to continue through the war, with but a month or two break at the beginning—and still today drawing thousands of patrons every Monday and Friday. An unusual point about the Wembley greyhounds is that they are all privately owned. It is a ruling that the Kennels will not race company-owned dogs.

No record of dog or owner comes anywhere near that set up by the Wembley Veterinary Surgeon, Col. E. Middleton Perry, C.B.E., F.R.C.V.S., who has been at the Stadium since the beginning of greyhound racing—and probably has not missed one race meeting in that time. That means something like three thousand five hundred consecutive attendances. It is Colonel Perry's highly responsible task to check the identity and health of each greyhound before it goes into the racing kennel on the evening of a meeting, and again before it races and after the race. The uninitiated may be interested to know that racing greyhounds had identity cards long before Britons were so burdened. These "passports" to recognized race-tracks detail the length of the dog's tail, its girth and height at shoulder. Its weight is as carefully recorded as that of any lady on a diet. The colour of its sixteen toe-nails are also carefully recorded as is the colour of its eyes.

So stringent is the checking that on tracks licensed by the National Greyhound Racing Club there is no possible chance of the old-time chicanery and switching of dogs. One of the rules of racing shows that if a dog is two pounds under or over weight at the pre-race weigh-in, it is immediately barred from entering that meeting's events. To the novice there is something to marvel at in the sight of the locks and chains that keep the racing kennels secure. Guards are constantly on patrol within the wire enclosure that keeps the public at their distance from the dogs. A simple but ingenious device allows each set of six kennels to be marked with

the number of the race in which the six dogs will enter, yet prevents people outside the wire from seeing the details.

Colonel Middleton Perry's part in the success of Wembley greyhounds has been much more than that of examiner. In earlier days he performed the first remarkable operation on a valuable dog, not only saving it from being humanely despatched, but making it once more a winner of races. The greyhound in question was Dallas, owned, as were many dogs pre-war, by Mrs. Arthur Elvin. Dallas broke a hock and so sure were the insurance company that he would never run again that they offered to pay out his insurance money. But Colonel Perry told Mrs. Elvin he thought there might be a chance of saving the dog. He performed an operation and put a silver plate in the hock, a feat of veterinary surgery that had never before been attempted. Within six months, to Mrs. Elvin's delight and everyone else's open astonishment, Dallas was back on the track and winning races. Eventually he died in retirement at a ripe old age, the sire of many litters.

Colonel Middleton Perry probably knows more than any other man about the rise of greyhound racing to its present high standard. And he stated his views to me in the brief respites of a busy racing evening:

"Of course greyhounds are finer animals today. Now they are bred for whatever purpose is required and although there is a large amount of in-breeding going on, this does not seem to have an adverse effect on performances.

"In my time at Wembley I have examined every animal that has raced. With fifty-six dogs at a meet and one hundred and four meets a year that must be well over 100,000 dogs that passed through my hands. Veterinary supervision is strict—undoubtedly far stricter than in horse racing."

Colonel Perry laughed when I asked him if, with all his experience and by handling every dog in a race, he could pick a winner. "Yes," he said, "if the tracks were a straight line I should probably be able to do so. But it is the bumps and bends that upset the wisest choice. Without bumps and bends there would be no greyhound racing. Even human athletes have varying 'form' running better on some days than others. It is the same with dogs, with the difference that dogs cannot tell others when they do not feel 'on top of their form'."

Of his own care of dogs in the Wembley greyhound hospital and other professional matters, Colonel Perry prefers to remain modestly silent. But it can be stated that he and his partner in the nineteen-twenties were the first veterinary surgeons to be seriously interested in looking after these animals. He would be the last man to insist that his part in the success of the Stadium's dogs was the most important, and in fact the organization behind the scenes on a race night is not one man alone, or many men alone, but the whole team working smoothly together from kennel man to final judge.

No chapter on the coming of the greyhounds to the Wembley Stadium would be complete without some reference to the men who make them run. Wembley patrons have been fortunate in the trainers who exercise their skill and judgment behind the scenes. In the first years there was Mr. M. R. Burls—still training in the kennels; Mr. E. B. Probert and his son, Mr. S. S. Probert; also Mr. J. P. Syder who was succeeded by his son, Mr. J. Syder, who is now one of the five trainers together with Mr. Burls, Mr. H. Harvey, Mr. B. B. Melville, and not least Mr. L. Reynolds.

What are the secrets of successful training? Of all men Mr. Reynolds should know, for he has trained the winners of four out of the last five Greyhound Derby races.

Originally Mr. Burls was a coursing trainer down on the family farm in the country and brought some of his dogs to the future Ascot of Greyhound Racing more or less as an experiment. He has seen racing grow from the hectic five meetings a week each with seven races to the superbly-run eight events at the Monday and Friday meetings of the present day.

In the beginning the dogs were lured on with the skin of a real hare, nicknamed Horace, which weighed about half a pound, but needed a half-ton truck to tow it round the track. This was what was known as the "Trolley Type" hare. Changed in 1936 to the trackless "inside" hare and much more recently—at Wembley on 7th April, 1952—to the outside Magee hare control. The aim was always to offer the best lure and therefore the best racing.

That this is still one of the debatable points of greyhound racing has been shown by recent controversy about hare drivers

as the only human element left in the sport. Are they too erratic? Should there be an automatic control? Whichever is best it is certain that Wembley will have it, for it is at the Stadium that one innovation after another has been first introduced to the public. It was there that the dog identity books originated. The track was one of the first to use the automatic start and then the magnetic start. The magnetic start operates on the principle that when the hare reaches a predetermined point in advance of the traps, it makes electrical contact with the starting equipment and the traps open. The dogs are thus released exactly the same distance behind the hare for every race and the "human element" is eliminated.

It is of course up to the owner whether or not his dog is entered for a race. But it is for the trainer to decide if the animal is ready for a particular race. Even then the last word depends upon the Racing Manager, Mr. R. H. J. Jolliffe, and the Assistant Racing Manager, Mr. J. C. Tetlow, who between them "make up" the card for each meeting.

Just a word on the Wembley card introduced in its present form twenty years ago. It is a work of immensely detailed precision. It gives each entrant's last race, distance, time of winner, the going, trap number, position on each bend, how the dog finished, or, if not the winner, how many lengths behind the winner, which is also named, together with the entrant's breeding, weight, starting price and a calculation of the time for the distance including the state of the track. Each Wembley dog appearing on the race-card has five lines on its previous five performances so that for the spectator there appears to be nothing hidden except the absolute security that guards the animals between their kennelling before a race until after they have passed the judges and the scrutiny of the veterinary surgeon after the race. And it is interesting to discover that a dog will lose three-quarters of a pound in weight in between those two times.

The Wembley track is a fast galloping track, 436½ yards in circumference with long straights and fairly easy turns. It is, I am told, most suitable for full-sized 68-lb. dogs and 56-lb. bitches. As befitting its title of "The Ascot of Greyhounds" the Wembley Racing Calendar offers many of the major prizes to be won in the sport. There are the Inaugural Stakes over 525 yards flat with a

first prize of £150, and the Wembley Stayers' Stakes of 710 yards flat with £200 for the winner. The Spring Cup offers another £200, the Empire Stadium Stakes, £150; the Coronation Stakes over 525 yards hurdles for bitches offers a £200 first prize. One of the most interesting races for people who have an eye to spot future champions is the Trafalgar Cup, 525 yards flat for puppies with a first prize of £250. So we come to the Gold Cup over 700 yards flat with its prize of £200 and a silver trophy worth £25, which replaces the pre-war real gold cup, and the Summer Cup of 525 yards flat that has a £300 first prize. Finally, the most famous race of them all, the Greyhound St. Leger of 700 yards flat for the first prize of £1,000.

It was in this race that the champion of champions, the never-to-be-forgotten Mick the Miller, completed his magnificent career in a climax of astounding intelligence. A record crowd poured through the turnstiles on that evening of 3rd October, 1931. It was known to be Mick's last race and ninety-nine per cent of them must have come to see him. It was a four-dog race—Mick the Miller, Virile Bill, Seldom Led (the 1931 Dog Derby winner), the Bradshaw Fold. An unrehearsed hush fell on the crowd as the stand lights dimmed out to leave a brilliant emerald green track lit by the twin lamps of the giant standards. Round came the hare—the traps leapt open . . . and they were off!

The Miller flew into the lead as the crowd roared in applause knowing their favourite was rarely headed once he was away in such style. But this was the sternest opposition of all his long career. The noise died down as Virile Bill darted level, shoulder to shoulder with Mick. Muzzle to muzzle they swept around the track until the final turn. It seemed that Virile Bill on the rails had the famous Miller beaten at this killing pace. He began to race ahead. . . .

And then Bill swung slightly away from his tight hold on the rail. A gap of inches showed. Into this went Mick the Miller. He squeezed his lithe body into the inches-wide gap, whipped his rear end round like the thrash of a whip and put wings on his speed as Virile Bill, shocked and checked by the unexpected and supremely intelligent move, made a slight falter that cost him the race.

Who but the judge saw the actual end of that classic race?

Somehow everyone knew Mick had won. Hats and race-cards were flung into the air. There was cheering, crying, shouting for five long minutes before the judge's decision could be heard above the uproar. Most astonishing sight of all the bookmakers—the men who stood to lose thousands of pounds on the race—were dancing and applauding like maniacs.

When the hysteria finally died down the great champion was led round on parade to receive his most remarkable ovation. He turned his head to grin up to the crowd and took his bow by wagging his tail in token of thanks. Mick loved the crowds, was a real actor and probably the most intelligent dog ever bred.

For some years after his retirement Mick the Miller was a regular crowd-raiser when he was paraded on tracks. And always, as he passed the traps, he strained at his leash, wanting to be back in a trap, leaping for the lead, and dashing home the winner as so often in the past. In his day he won the remarkable sum of close on £10,000 in prize money for Mr. Arundel Kempton, who bought him, an unknown dog, from an Irish priest. And you may see Mick today, as handsome and intelligent as ever, for after he died of old age on 5th May, 1939, he was beautifully mounted by a skilled taxidermist and now stands proudly in the ground-floor gallery of the British Museum of Natural History in South Kensington, London.

A happy anniversary of the Wembley St. Leger happened in 1938 when the winner was Greta's Rosary. Many followers of the sport backed her to win for the reason that her sire was the redoubtable Mick the Miller, and father and daughter both paraded to double acclaim on that memorable evening.

A stranger story of the Greyhound St. Leger—that curiously mirrors the story of horse racing's Ascot Gold Cup—is the mystery of the stealing of the gold trophy from Wembley in 1936. The gold cup was in a glass-fronted case which stood in a securely-locked cabinet on view in the Stadium restaurant. The place was crowded with people. But at some time, and by some method, the thief opened the cabinet, took the cup from the case, turned the case round to face the wall, and walked off with the trophy with not a soul noticing a thing. How was this crazy crime committed? The police have remained baffled to this day.

At the time it was extremely awkward for Arthur Elvin. The

moment of the discovery of the theft was too near the time for the trophy to be awarded to allow a substitute to be obtained. Sportingly an owner who had previously won the race offered to lend his Cup—and this was used and presented in 1936. Later a new gold cup was ordered specially and given to the 1936 winner. But does some thief still treasure a greyhound gold trophy he "won" without the help of a dog? And will he at some time reveal how he removed it from a crowded room without anyone spotting what he was about?

One of the items on the race-card is a list of the track record holders, and it is a notable point that with only one exception all the records have been beaten since 1946. Perhaps we might compare the records at the time of writing with those set up fifteen years ago and note the improvements of the dogs.

525 yards flat	29.68 (1932)	29.04 (1951)
525 yards hurdles	30.65 (1931)	29.94 (1949)
700 yards flat	40.72 (1931)	39.70 (1947)
700 yards hurdles	42.10 (1930)	41.98 (1939)

The high quality of Wembley greyhounds has been often shown by their success in classic events at other tracks. In 1948, for instance, Wembley greyhounds took not only the St. Leger and Trafalgar Cup at Wembley, but also the Derby and Oaks at the White City, the Scurry Cup and London Cup at Clapton, the 1,000 Guineas at Park Royal, the Greyhound Olympic at Wandsworth, the Cloth of Gold at Charlton, Stewards Cup at Edinburgh, and the All-England Cup at Newcastle.

The Wembley track had a fine "photo-finish" installation put in in 1947. From its position in a special chamber built in the North stand, the camera is exactly aligned on the finishing line. The film is regulated to move at the same relative speed as the greyhounds and when a "photo-finish" is called for, prints are produced in exactly 90 seconds. These prints are put up at different points so that the backers can see with their own eyes how narrowly they won or lost their bets.