

# SPORT RACING

## The 1930's- A Golden Era of Greyhound Racing in Waterford

*The 1930's was a terrific decade for Waterford greyhound racing when Waterford, bred, trained and owned greyhounds won nine major Classics in Ireland and England*

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Greyhound racing and coursing in County Waterford has been an extremely popular sport for well over a century and in this article we look back on a really terrific decade for the sport on the tracks. The 1930's were very special years in the history of greyhound racing in Waterford when Waterford bred, trained and owned dogs won nine major Classics in England and Ireland.

Between them they won two English Derbys, two English Cesarewitches, one English Laurels, one English St Leger, one Irish Derby, one Irish St Leger and one Irish Grand National.

### Prince Fern led the way

The first greyhound to hit the headlines was Prince Fern (Green Fern-Run Around) bred by William Power, Orchardstown.

Prince Fern was sold first to Mr Michael O'Sullivan from Johnstown, who at that time bought numerous dogs to sell on to owners not alone here in Ireland but also in England.

Prince Fern was then sold to Mr James Harpur, Belfast in December 1929 and he raced on tracks all over the country in the summer of 1930 with very good results.

Entered for the Irish Greyhound Derby that year, he was a most impressive winner of his first round heat, winning it on August 19th in Harolds Cross.

Nine days later in the semi-final he again had no problem in winning it readily. Also reaching the Derby final was a very good dog called Hydrangea, owned and bred by Mr John Harney, Dunhill. The final was on September 6th at Harolds Cross.

From trap 2 Prince Fern started at 4/1 and faced among others Hydrangea in trap 1, the joint favourites Odd Minister in trap 5 and Whatever in trap 3.

Odd Minister went into the lead from the start and was unchallenged for three quarters of the journey. But then Prince Fern shot through to go on and win by half a length in 30.13 with Odd Minister and Whatever 2nd and 3rd respectively. Hydrangea finished fifth.

In October the same year Prince Fern made it to the final of the English St Leger where he finished fourth.

Prince Fern therefore was the first to set up the great winning sequence that lasted until 1939.



1933 English Derby Trophy won by Future Cutlet

### Future Cutler- A Superstar who won four English Classics

A greyhound to really set the English tracks alight was Future Cutlet (Mutton Cutlet-Wary Guide) bred by Tom Fitzgerald from Shanbally, Kilmacthomas.

Having had a brilliant career here in Ireland, Future Cutlet was sold for £600, a huge sum at the time, to W.A. Evershed of Hasting in 1930 to race at the newly opened Wembley Stadium Track.

He was trained by Sidney Probert and entered for the 1931 Laurels, which he won in the then fast time of 28.52 seconds. He won the Cesarewitch that year also.

In 1932 connections decide to run him in the Derby and he made it through the final impressively.

In the final he met the northern flyer Wild Woolley, and from the time the traps opened it was a race just between these two star greyhounds with Wild Woolley getting the verdict by a neck; the pair ten lengths in front of the others as they crossed the line.

Entered in the 1932 Cesarewitch, he set a new world record of 33.78 seconds in his semi-final before going on to win the final for the second consecutive year.

By the time he contested the 1933 Derby, Future Cutlet was four years and three months old, and with Wild Woolley in trap 4 again taking part and the new flyer, Beef Cutlet in trap 5 running brilliantly, it was not thought that Future Cutlet in trap 3 could make amends for his failure of the

previous year.

But again he ran brilliantly, this time along with Beef Cutlet, the two crossed the line almost together.

The result was given in favour of Future Cutlet by a neck in 29.80 with Wild Woolley in third place. He was the oldest dog ever up to then to win the Derby and was a very worthy winner.

At the end of that summer Future Cutlet was retired. Though Sidney Probert thought him a highly strung dog, difficult to train, Future Cutlet was only once unplaced during his entire career.

He was probably the fastest trapper seen up to then and the racing manager at Wembley thought him 'the best looker' of them all

### Two famous Waterford men and their dog Moresby

When you mention Pax Whelan in County Waterford you immediately call to mind one of the county's and indeed country's greatest republicans.

Born in Dungarvan on July 8th 1890, Pax was the eldest in a family of five, and married Catherine (Cáit) Fraher, the daughter of Dan Fraher local hurler, inter county referee and also a champion athlete and a real Republican and promoter of all things Irish including the language.

Having leased a field from Captain Richard Curran in 1885 and developed it into a sports field, on the 31st of March 1912, Dan then bought the sports field now known as Fraher Field, to be used for Gaelic Games and N.A.C.A.

Athletic meetings, mainly during his lifetime.

On his death his only son Monnie owned it and after his death it fell to the Whelan family in particular Pax to care for it until it was purchased in 1973 by the County Board.

Getting back to Pax now he was also deeply involved in the GAA as a player and referee and was then County Board Secretary for many years until 1938.

On top of this Pax was also a keen follower all his life of greyhound racing and coursing and in 1928 was a founder member of Dungarvan Coursing Club.

He was the first secretary of the club and held many positions over the years and was also involved with the Irish Coursing Club.

Now to Moresby (Roving Bunt - False Colleen). The greyhound apparently was presented to another well known Dungarvan man E. A. Ryan, Ballinacourty House and he gave him to Pax who registered him in both their names.

Ryan was State Solicitor from 1922 until his death in 1940. Despite his busy business life, he too had a great interest in many sports, including horse racing, coursing, golf, swimming and sailing. He was the first President of Dungarvan Golf Club when it was founded in 1923 and was in that position until 1936 and up to his death was its Vice-President.

In 1929 he and his wife owned a horse named Wild Edgar bred near Kilmacthomas by Mr Kirwan and trained in Whitechurch by Mr M Mc Grath. It had many wins and ran in the Cheltenham Gold Cup and Aintree Grand National in 1929 but was unplaced in both.

### 1936 St Leger Final

Moresby was bred by Mr J Ryan Tallow and whelped in July 1933 and was trained by J Spillane of Stormont Kennels, Ballymun, Dublin.

Moresby was named after a ship that foundered in Dungarvan Bay on December 24th 1895 with 20 of the 25 people on board lost.

Pax Whelan was advised not to call the greyhound Moresby as it could be a bad omen.

In 1936 and 1937 Moresby won many of the big races in Shelbourne Park and Harolds Cross, including Sweepstakes while he was also third in the Grand National in 1936 and was a finalist in the Derby the

same year.

His biggest test however came in the Irish St Leger final in Shelbourne Park on July 4th, 1936.

He made his way to that final by winning his heat on June 15th and then was second in the semi-final on June 27th behind Shady Gaff.

In the final he started at 8/1, the joint favourites were Shady Gaff and Slashaway at 5/2.

In the final Moresby was drawn on the outside in lane 6 and it proved to be a lucky omen.

At the first bend there was a lot of trouble and Moresby escaped it all and went clear down the back straight and went on to win in the end by one length with Slashaway trap 2 second at 5/2, and Crooked Nest trap 4 third at 8/1. His famous owners collected £250 and a beautiful trophy for the victory.

### Pal's Rover

The fourth Waterford bred dog to come into prominence was Pal's Rover (Roving Bunt-Painetto) bred by Mr W Power, Fewes.

In 1937 the dog was kept busy on the tracks and at coursing by Power. It was at a Coursing meeting in Tallow that his new owner and trainer Mr George Hely, a chemist in Cappoquin purchased him for



Pax Whelan, joint owner of Moresby

just £3 in late December.

In 1938 he was kept equally busy and was entered for the Irish Grand National. In the first round he was defeated by half a length in the worst time of the night and it's there the fairy tale began.

That evening in Shelbourne Park Pals Rover's owner decided it would not be worthwhile taking the dog back on such a long journey again for the second round as he felt his dog would be eliminated. At the races that evening was Kit Moloney who had been attached to Mr. Arthur Callanan's staff when that trainer occupied No 1 range of

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Highland Rum with his trainer Pat Fortune, owner Jimmy Harty and kennel boy Kit Moloney who remained with the dog for several nights before the race

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kennels at Wembley Stadium. Ever since his return from Wembley some months before Kit, with the exception of an odd day's work, had been unemployed.

He was standing near Hely in Shelbourne Park and was recommended to Pals Rover's owner by another greyhound man. Hely immediately handed him over the dog, with the instruction to put him on the early train for Waterford the morning after his second round defeat.

Kit and Pal's Rover from that moment spent many hours together, day and night. At five o'clock each morning Pal's Rover was taken out for a "constitutional" and then had breakfast on his return three hours later.

A two hours stroll through the fields in the afternoon followed and then dinner.

Pal's Rover was then kennelled each night in Kit's bed.

Pal's Rover liked Kit immensely and in return for the kindness and gentle and judicious handling which his temporary master gave him, Pal's Rover shot round Shelbourne Park in his second round heat in to win hands down.

To assure Kit that this was no mere 'flash in the pan' Pal's Rover stepped it out in the semi-final to record a good time again to score easily.

Lucky to qualify for the second round, Pal's Rover at 2/1 was now regarded as the only danger to the favourite Hidden Form 6/4 in the final which was seven days off.

Kit Moloney's worry started then and ended only on Saturday night, when the thousands who thronged the enclosures at Shelbourne Park cheered Pal's Rover home after taking the lead at the third hurdle.

He was one of the easiest of winners and the man who was responsible for it all did not see the dog record that victory.

From the time the four finalists were placed in their starting boxes, Kit Moloney hid behind the grandstand—the big moment was too much for him—and when he came into the enclosure when the race was over, no one knew that the unemployed elderly, stoutish man wiping the perspiration from his face provided the half-minute thrill that brought so many people to their feet.

When the owner and dog returned to the parade ring after the presentation of the cup, Kit was awaiting them and on seeing him Pal's Rover sprang forward and placed his forepaws on his shoulders and Kit bent down to receive the salutations of the dog whom he made a champion and winner of £200 and a cup. The owner George Hely was very much impressed with the ovation the Dublin public gave him and his dog as they paraded the track. "A wonderful expression of sportsmanship," he remarked, but Kit was the man who worked the oracle.

## Highland Rum

The next Waterford

Greyhound to make history in the 1930's was Highland Rum (Rum Ration-Leigh Lady) a May 1937 red and fawn dog which was bred in Dungarvan by Andy Sandford and was owned by James (Jimmy) Harty, Ballinamona Ring, who himself had bred greyhounds for years.

The dog was a son of Rum Ration out of Leigh Lady and Jimmy's first cousin Joe Harty, Gortnadiha, Ring owned Leigh Lady.

Highland Rum was unbeaten in Ireland and was sent to England on the suggestion of a friend of Harty's to be trained especially for the Derby by Pat Fortune, a native of Glandore, County Cork now training at Wimbledon.

He was sent there about nine weeks before the English Derby of 1939, the Derby took place during June.

The eight first round heats were held on 10th June and Highland Rum progressed winning his first-round heat.

He was third in his semi-final and qualified for the final.

Offered a four-figure sum before the final for Highland Rum, Harty refused to sell.

The Derby final took place on 24th June at White City Stadium with a first prize of £1,250. The attendance at the final was 92,000 and the totalisator turnover for the final was £14,341 and for the meeting it was £114,780 which set a new record for a greyhound meeting.

Jimmy Harty had taken a holiday from his Rate Collector's post and stayed in the trainer's house in England before the race for two weeks.

## Racecard for Gay Hunters St Leger final.

In the final Highland Rum started at 2/1 joint favourite with Carmel Ash.

As the traps rose, the outsider Mister Mutt took the lead, bad crowding resulted as the field reached the first bend together and the wide runner Highland Rum took advantage, building a five-length lead from Carmel Ash.

Highland Rum went on to win the race in 29.35, with Carmel Ash 2 1/2 lengths running behind in second place and Demotic Mack a further 12 lengths behind in third place.

Mr Harty, trainer Fortune, and Highland Rum then began a triumphant procession round the track, being proudly piped by the Dagenham Girls Pipers' Band.

It was a great Derby for the Irish with an Irish owned dog, Irish bred dog and an Irish trained dog. Among those who travelled over for the final were Miss May Harty, sister of the owner, Miss Flahavan and Mr Michael Harty, two first cousins, Mr Thomas McGrath contractor and Mr John J Crotty First President Dungarvan Coursing Club.

## Gay Hunter

The final Waterford bred Greyhound star of the 1930's Gay Hunter (Dan's Leg-Trianons Lass) was bred by Mr John Delahunty, Kilcullen, Faithlegg.

Trianon Lass was kicked by a horse causing serious injuries but was kept by Mr Delahunty for breeding purposes.

Gay Hunter was sold on to Mr Michael O'Sullivan, Johnstown for less than £17 together with two other litter brothers for a total of £50.

Mr O'Sullivan sold him across the channel to Mr J

Jack, Falkirk who had many successes with him. Entered for the 1938 English St Leger he finished second in the final and in the Cesarewitch he made it through to the semi-final the same year.

In 1939 he was entered for the Derby in June which Highland Rum won and Gay Hunter set a track record of 29.21 in winning his first round and he reached the semi-final but he did not make the final.

Again entered for the 1939 English St Leger he won his heat, was second in his semi-final behind 1/3 shot Abbeylara and so qualified for the final on November 6th at Wembley.

Running from trap 2 in the

final and starting at second favourite 7/4 with Ballydancer favourite at 5/4, the favourite ran a very disappointing race and at the half way stage it looked as if its kennel companion Ballyjoker would win but Gay Hunter, a slow starter, would not be denied despite getting a bump at the third bend. All down the back stretch he made up leeway and had the race in hand at the final bend. He went on to win the 700 yd race in 41.79 by two and a half lengths from Colonel Waterhall with Ballydancer three lengths away third.

So Gay Hunter brought down the curtain on a great decade for greyhound racing in Co Waterford.



Moresby with the trainer's daughter Bernadette Spillane and two friends of hers.

Race Card For Future Cutlets Derby win.