

# *It's all about marketing our product*

*If Australia has the best greyhounds and tracks in the world ... how come people are flocking to racing in England and Ireland but not here? Graeme Jupp went to find out.*

By **DAVID BRASCH**

SOME months ago Gold Coast secretary Graeme Jupp sat back and looked at the state of the greyhound industry.

He rightly reasoned the Australian greyhound is the best in the world, despite what any other country might say. He also

reasoned that our tracks are the fastest, safest and among best in the world as well.

Why then, he thought, does greyhound racing attract only owners and trainers and a few diehard supporters?

"It wasn't hard to see that England and Ireland were attracting huge crowds to greyhound racing every meeting," said Jupp.

"I decided to head over there and find out just what is their secret.

"Obviously it all revolves around marketing, promotion and, as I found out, research into the industry and the people who go greyhound racing."



*In Dublin Graeme Jupp met up with Anne Murray wife of the late Teddy Murray a regular Australian visitor.*

So Jupp packed his bags recently and headed to England, Scotland and Ireland and took in some of the major greyhound racing venues, spoke to the leaders of the sport, the racing managers, the controlling bodies and saw for himself just what it is that lures people to the sport.

"The first thing I noticed in England was the influence BAGS meetings have," he said.

"They are greyhound race meetings run *by the large bookmaking firms, sometimes* five and six times a week, to fill a timeslot for punters to bet on. All are twilight.

"The bookmaking firms close their doors at 6pm so if you want to have a bet on a night greyhound meeting, you have to go to a track."

Jupp had heard the reputation of Walthamstow and headed their first to see for himself the success of the track that has been in the Aslett family since it was built in 1927. Current secretary is Anne Aslett whose great grandfather built Walthamstow.

"*As for a racetrack, non compare with* any greyhound track in Queensland," he said.

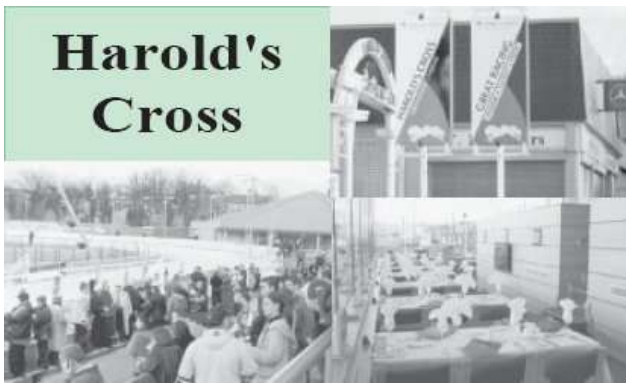
"But Walthamstow is ever conscious of sponsors, sponsorship and customer comfort."

Anne Aslett gave Jupp a sponsors booklet that is specially prepared for potential sponsors outlining a number of packages available, seven in all.

"Walthamstow is in the middle of London and the crowds on a Saturday night range from 2000 to 2500," said Jupp.

"The worst crowd is a Wednesday night that attracts between 900 and 1000 every week.

"The club promotes a 'night out package' of dining, racing and the track's nightclub after the races.



“But there is also a racegoers deal for 13 pounds which includes entry to the track, a *meal, several pints of beer and six one pound bets.*”

Jupp was fortunate to be in England right at the right time. “I had organised to spend a few days at the British Greyhound Racing Board offices and was lucky because the Board was just concluding a marketing symposium and I was able to sit in at that and pick up on all of their recently conducted research.”

Jupp said the facts and figures gleaned from the British Board’s research was excellent.

Of the 980 people surveyed about greyhound racing, responses were:

- \* 42% said greyhound racing was a good night out
- \* 41% said it was good fun
- \* 34% said it was a sport for the serious gambler
- \* 30% said it was an old man’s sport
- \* 29% said it was exciting
- \* 11% said it was cruel
- \* 10% said it was too expensive
- \* 10% said they did not go because they did not know how to gamble and
- \* 5% said it was a young man’s sport

Jupp liaised with the Board’s press and PR officer Emma Johns.

“The survey was conducted in different parts of the country, some where there is no racing at all,” said Jupp. “The responses from women were interesting.”

**Woman said of greyhound racing:**

- \* They are not interested in betting
- \* Watching dogs go around and around was not fun
- \* If they want to do out for a meal, they will go to a restaurant
- \* If they want to go out dancing they will go to a club

The responses from North London were interesting. They included that greyhound racing was:

- \* Blokeish
- \* That you couldn’t dress up
- \* It was cold and wet
- \* Poor food was offered
- \* Not suitable for families
- \* You had to line up top have a bet

Jupp said it was obvious from the symposium that much could be done to attract people to greyhound racing but a number of marketing ploys had to be embarked upon.

These include:

- \* Raising the profile of greyhound racing
- \* Creating a feeling of excitement
- \* Targeting group organizers at workplaces

- \* Provide information of a ‘whole night out’ aspect
- \* Provide transport to and from the track
- \* Have special charity nights
- \* Put together birthday packages for people
- \* Fund raising nights for firms, charities etc

Jupp also met up with the leaders of the Retired Greyhound Trust and was hugely impressed by their dedication and marketing expertise in getting greyhounds as pets into as many homes as possible.

“The Trust has produced a series of children’s books about ‘Speedy the Greyhound’ and these are provided to schools, families etc and give a cartoon aspect of just what greyhounds are really like to have around the home,” he said.

Book topics include: Speedy goes to the *sea, Speedy goes to London, Speedy down* on the farm, Speedy and his friends.



While Jupp was impressed with Walthamstow and the other central London track of Wimbledon, he also headed north to visit regular Aussie visitor Terry Corden at his Nottingham track.

“Terry’s children Nathan and Rachael run the track and there is always promotions happening there,” he said.

“They race Monday, Thursday and Saturday and some day meetings conducted by BAGS.

“Nottingham is a nice country track.”

Heading north to Scotland and a visit to Glasgow’s Shawfield Stadium, Jupp was not impressed.

“We arrived for the heats of the Scottish Derby,” he said.

“I saw some outstanding greyhounds, but Shawfield leaves a lot to be desired. The food was poor, and it was not up to the standard of the tracks we saw in England.”

Ireland was a revelation though.. Tracks in England are privately owned.

The Irish tracks are run by the Irish Greyhound Board and that Board and the Irish Government have a policy to make greyhound racing as popular as they can.

A visit to the newly built stadium at Cork was an eye opener.

“It is the pinnacle of the greyhound racing world. The best complex there is,” said Jupp.

“But it is three years old so it should be.”

Jupp said the Irish Board went throughout the world and picked the eyes out of the best there is and came home to build a showpiece at Cork and did just that.

The Irish Government set aside a parcel of land some years ago to develop a sporting complex. Greyhound

racing sold its old track for housing development, and moved into the Government-sponsored complex. "The technology that has been embraced at Cork is something to be seen," said Jupp. "All Australia can take a leaf out of Cork's book regarding the utilization of technology."

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*Jupp sees a hand-held tote, similar in size to a calculator, being the future of betting in Australia.*

*"At Cork a girl comes to your restaurant table with the hand-held tote, takes your bet, punches in the numbers and prints out a ticket for the punter from a portable printer attached to her belt," he said.*

*"I believe the NSW TAB has the technology now and is looking at introducing it into this country."*

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*"There are plasma screens everywhere, viewing screens at every table with a multitude of options. The software is the best on offer."*

A feature of the grandstand at Cork is a two-way glass area at the end of the stand which leads to the kennel block. This allows the public views of all the workings of the kennel block and has proved extremely popular. Racing is Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday nights. A band plays for an hour and a half after the last race entertaining customers.

Bookings must be made a month in advance to get a seat in the restaurant on a Saturday night.

Harolds Cross and Shelbourne Park (the *Harolds Cross has just undergone a huge* remodel. Land around the track was sold off for housing to fund the project.

Jupp said he learnt much from his trip.

"Clubs really need to be more aware of marketing," he said. "It is up to us to get out there and tell people that greyhound racing is out there.

"You never see a billboard in this country promoting greyhound racing."

He says racing today is an event, just like football, pop concerts etc.

"It's great to have champions at your track and in your bigger races, but they are not the most important thing today," he said.

"The most important thing is to get the people to come back"

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**Jupp also attended the Grand National at Aintree in Liverpool and was staggered by the TV coverage of the grueling race.**

*"There were TV cameras before every jump and after every jump. Some 39 horses started the race but only 17 finished. The day was bigger than any Melbourne Cup."*

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