

AGRA HALL OF FAME

J.G. "Jack" Nelson (Inducted 2009)

Category: TRAINER

J.G."Jack"Nelson was a partner with his brother in Mountain Ices (an Ice Cream factory in Launceston). He was also an S.P. bookie who built a house with five kennels and an office at Malunna, which became the site of the White City greyhound track.



A firm and very direct individual, Jack Nelson's love of greyhounds and great courage of character was responsible for track racing as we know it getting off the ground in Tasmania.

Open coursing had been popular for over a hundred years prior to track racing (remember greyhounds came out with the First Fleet) and few loved it more than Jack Nelson. He coursed his charges around the Nile, Quamby and Evandale areas and even won the feature Plumpton at Benalla in Victoria with Miss Alestone in the early 1930's. He pulled off betting plunges at speed tracks in Melbourne with greyhounds Golden Eagle and Golden Crown, after which he made a giant decision, one that was to shape the future of our sport.

In 1932, at his own expense, he built a 440 yard straight track running East to West on his property at Malunna. Further, he installed electric lighting and built a grandstand. All this at a time when The Lotteries Act had no provision for betting on

greyhounds, and in the midst of The Great Depression! With assistance from Arthur Morgan and five other enthusiasts including Ollie Illingworth, the White City Speed Coursing Track Pty. Ltd. was formed. Each member put in 10 pounds towards the costs of the initial meeting which saw seven races held on February 8 1933. Until Morgan had the Act changed to allow for legalized betting on Greyhounds the company's meetings struggled to survive.

But this all changed on September 26 1935 when a public meeting saw 27 enthusiasts form the Launceston Greyhound Racing Club. This body officially leased the track from Jack Nelson and H.G."Mick" Sturges was appointed Secretary on a salary of 3 pounds a week. The LGRC's initial meeting was on October 19 1935 with W.Lovett's Blue Bonnett the first winner.

The LGRC was keen to pursue a circular track similar to that at White City in Melbourne and in 1936 came to an agreement with Jack Nelson to build it for 200 pounds. Owing to the ground space a horse shoe shaped circular track was installed by Nelson and proved enormously popular. Later, more land was acquired and a properly surveyed circle track took its place. The Club made significant profits each year until the depths of the war in 1942.

The Club did not become the owner of White City until the season of 1947-48. Jack Nelson had been dead two years, (he died August 19th 1946) at the time the LGRC paid twelve thousand pounds to his estate for the purchase.

The LGRC established the J.G.Nelson Memorial race in his honour which ran from 1947 until 1974. Thankfully, the Club re-instated his race in 2009.

Jack Nelson was an owner and trainer of high repute and left his mark on track racing as he had done with open coursing. He won the feature MacRobertson Cup at Hobart's inaugural meeting on January 30 1935 with Golden City He run second and third in the 1943 Gold Collar with Some Lil and Carlsome. But he had far greater success yet. In 1942 Jack Nelson's My Kenya won the Hobart Cup despite the fact he was even greater chaser at White City.

Nelson must have been thrilled to win his home town Launceston Cup with the wonderful chaser Some Carlton in 1943, after it had run third in the Sprint Championship of Tasmania. But in 1946 he won the Launceston Cup again with the great Losma Lady. In that same year she ran fourth in the Hobart Thousand Final after winning both her heat and semi-final.

Jack Nelson's monumental gamble in 1932, to pursue his dream of speed track racing, established a platform for all "lovers of the leash" to pursue their dreams as well. Jack Nelson died on August 19 1946 and he now rightfully takes his place as an inaugural member of Tasmania's and AGRA's Greyhound Hall of Fame.

By Greg Fahey