



Reviewing A Roller Coaster Year

It's now the time to look back on 2024 – another year of achievements, continued growth and challenges.

First and foremost I'd like to thank all our volunteers, partners, trustees and sponsors for all their efforts and amazing support over the last 12 months. Collectively you make WISH a vibrant and dynamic charity, always looking forward positively and bringing a can-do attitude to all that we do.

So, I'll try and pick out the main highlights and the challenges we've overcome.

The Club kindly gave us a dedicated space to work from, something secure where the artifacts could be safely stored and that we could work from.

Our first thought was to name the space after our fellow founder and close friend Mick Pugh, who sadly passed away after a superhuman fight against cancer over many years. The door plaque means that we think of you and all that you did to make WISH, WOPA and the Museum happen every time we access our MP room.

Chris Hutchinson and his team went to work on making it a home for us, painting, flooring and adding cabinets and shelving so that we could move in. The Club put electrics and internet in so we could work effectively, our office equipment came out of grant funding giving us the tools we need to aid further development, and digital archiving of the whole club history is now finally underway.

Our plan was to move all of the artifacts that were on the third floor into the MP room ASAP, only to have this thwarted by the flooding that took place at the stadium, leaving the museum under water.

Our first challenge was to get all of the artifacts safely out of the museum – the MP room was the obvious destination, this was no mean feat as all of the items had to be wrapped, transferred into newly purchased cases and then carried up to the top floor as the lifts were out of action. It took around 10 volunteers, including a couple joining us for the first time, a whole week to achieve this and there they remain (for now) but the museum will be back with a bang, bigger, brighter and better in early 2025.

In respecting and celebrating our multi-sports history a film was produced "Going to the Dogs" a memory capture project with a whole range of people involved in Greyhound Racing in many different ways to tell the story of the sport from its inception in 1928 to final closure. This project was done with our long-term partners Digital Works who are experts in the filming and editing of heritage. Sponsored by the National Heritage Lottery Fund, it enabled us to not only make the film but also to honour one of the sporting greats "Mick the Miller" the most famous Greyhound in history. The mosaic wrapped in approximately two tonnes of ugly and broken concrete had sat under the West Stand since its removal from the old stadium floor, but what to do with it?

That challenge was met by WISH and a whole team of dedicated partners who managed to turn it upright, keep it in one piece (there were many doubters who believed it would come apart) mount it outside the stadium and then wrap it as if it was a giant picture frame. The result is there for everyone to see.

There are many who believe that Speedway racing was long gone from anywhere in the capital and would never be seen again. Wimbledon being the last to close, but after two decades the Red & Yellow Dons raced once more in

a four-team tournament in Kent, matching ourselves against the stadium's own current racing team the "Kent Kings" whilst reviving two other old London teams at the same time. The Dons narrowly missed out on winning their first event, only losing to the Kings in the final race. The veterans however won their event winning all four races in that extra competition.

It was an amazing day, Mirac Wormble brought a bus load of supporters from the stadium, a sold-out crowd, the feel good factor of seeing the team colours flying again and the bucket collection on its own raised over a £1,000 for the Ronnie Moore statue being installed in 2025.

It's a WISH team effort, along with a myriad of different partners. I'm humbled and grateful to be a part of it.

John Lynch, WISH Managing Director



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