

American women's track racing group touring England from September 1889 to January 1890

In the United States, track cycle racing became widespread during the 1880s, following its popularity in Great Britain, but unlike Great Britain, and women were regularly participating in handicapped races against men. Mike Fishpool [1] describes how mixed handicap races, rather than women-only race guaranteed good crowds and a healthy revenue. By 1889, women were competing in 6 day races, usually for eight hours per day and the British press reported [2,3] on a big event at a Madison Square Gardens, New York from 11th-16th February 1889 "They rode in heavy wooden tights, or rather leggings, with tight-fitting jackets, and caps pulled down over their heads. There was no ribbon frippery, and on the back of each appeared her number in the race. The ages claimed by each ran from 17 to 24." The total receipts from the weeks racing were over \$10,000 of which the riders received about \$4,000 split as, Stanley 40%, Von Blumen 20%, Oakes 15%, Snaller 10%, Lewis 8%, Baldwin 5%, Hart 2%. Armando received \$300, McShane and \$Brown 235. Attendance on the final night was 4,000. [4]

In September 1889 five of the star American women cyclists toured Britain for four months, the women were Louise Armaindo, Lottie Stanley, Jessie Woods, May Allen and Lillie Williams. Women racing on high bicycles was a novelty in England but fairly commonplace in America. They were accompanied by their agent American JN Gannon and Louise Armaindo's trainer, the Canadian athlete Tom Eck. An extensive history of early women's track racing in North America is given in M Ann Hall's book *Muscle on Wheels: Louise Armaindo and the High-Wheel Racers of Nineteenth-Century America*.

Racing locations in England

North Shields, Cycling Grounds, Hawkey's Lane, 28th September 1889 [5,7]

Northampton, Victoria Gardens, 30th September 1889 [6]

Long Eaton, Recreation Ground, 8th October 1889 [8]

Sunderland, Hudson Road Skating Rink, 2nd - 9th November 1889 [9,10]

Northumberland, New Delaval Bicycle Club, 7th December 1889 [11]

Sheffield, Drill Hall, 20th December 1889 - 1st January 1890 [12]

Lottie Stanley remained on her own in England and competed in the following races:

Wallsend, North Road - 13th May 1890 [13]

North Shields, Cycling Grounds, Hawkey's Lane - May 21st 1890 [14]

Holywell, Northumberland - May 24th 1890 [15]

Wolverhampton, Molyneux Grounds - May 26th 1890 [16]

Stoke on Trent, Victoria Ground - June 28th 1890 [17]

Wolverhampton, Molyneux Grounds - August 4th 1890 [18]

Llwynypia, Tonypany - Running Grounds - September 1st 1890 [19]

Hartlepool, Grange Road - September 27th 1890 [20]

References

[1] Fishpool, M. Lady Racers: the origins of Women's cycle racing, Playing Pasts, June 25th 2018.

[2] Birmingham Daily Mail, 18/2/1889.

[3] Glasgow Evening Citizen, 22/2/1889, p4.

- [4] Sporting Life, 2/3/1889, p6.
- [5] Shields Gazette, 16/9/1889, p3.
- [6] Northampton Mercury, 28/9/1889, p1.
- [7] Shields Gazette, 30/9/1889, p3.
- [8] Sporting Life, 11/10/1889, p1.
- [9] Sunderland Daily Echo, 4/11/1889, p3.
- [10] Pall Mall Gazette, 11/11/1889, p5.
- [11] Morpeth Herald, 14/12/1889, p3.
- [12] Sheffield and Rotherham Independent, 26/12/1889, p8.
- [13] Jarrow Express, 16/5/1890, p6.
- [14] The Shields Daily News, 22/5/1890, p3.
- [15] Blyth Weekly News, 24/5/1890, p7.
- [16] Newcastle Daily Chronicle, 26/5/1890, p7.
- [17] Birmingham Daily Post, 30/6/1890, p7.
- [18] Shields Daily Gazette, 5/8/1890, p4.
- [19] Western Mail, 2/9/1890, p7.
- [20] Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail, 24/9/1890, p2.