



## THE HISTORY



It is hard to believe that the charming Clairwood Racecourse is built on land that was originally a swamp. A combination of foresight and careful planning saw the opening of the Garden Course on Tuesday May 24, 1921 amid great fanfare and excitement.

The Natal Mercury reported: "From 9.00am yesterday the main road on the South Coast between Durban and Clairwood presented a wonderful spectacle, for motor cars, motor cycles, rickshas and almost every conceivable form of conveyance has started with Clairwood the objective."

During the Second World War racing at Clairwood was suspended from August 1942 through to May 1945 as the Department of Defence had requisitioned the property. During this time a shipload of Polish women from refugee camps ended up on the Durban dock in a pitiful state both physically and mentally. Their clothes were in tatters and their spirits low, and they were taken to Clairwood and housed in the converted stables. Their morale was quickly restored in the pleasant surroundings and when they eventually left Durban, they were in high spirits.

Racing continued to flourish and after 50 years as a public company, the shareholders of Clairwood Turf Club Limited were bought out by the Natal Racecourse Development Fund. This meant that Clairwood became a non-profit organisation.

Thereafter a massive building programme commenced, culminating in the opening, in August 1982, of the new grandstand.

An integral part of the KwaZulu-Natal Winter Racing Season is the programme at Clairwood which has always included a host of graded races headed by the famous Clairwood Winter Handicap, which became the Mainstay 1800 then the Sharp Electronics Cup. It is now run as the Champions Cup.

This race has produced some memorable finishes featuring horses like the legendary Sea Cottage, Prince Florimund and Wolf Power and, probably the most spectacular of all, the sensational finish between Main Man and Model Man on July 25, 1987.

Clairwood became part of Gold Circle Racing, along with Greyville and Scottsville, in December 1999.

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