

Bristol (Eastville)

On Saturday June 16th 1928, Eastville became the second track in Bristol to open. On Stapleton Road in the north part of the city was Eastville Stadium that had originally been used for rugby in the 1890s before Bristol Rovers FC acquired it in 1897. Greyhounds didn't play their part until 1928 when on that first evening a dog called Vivacious collected £20 for connections when he won the track's very first race.

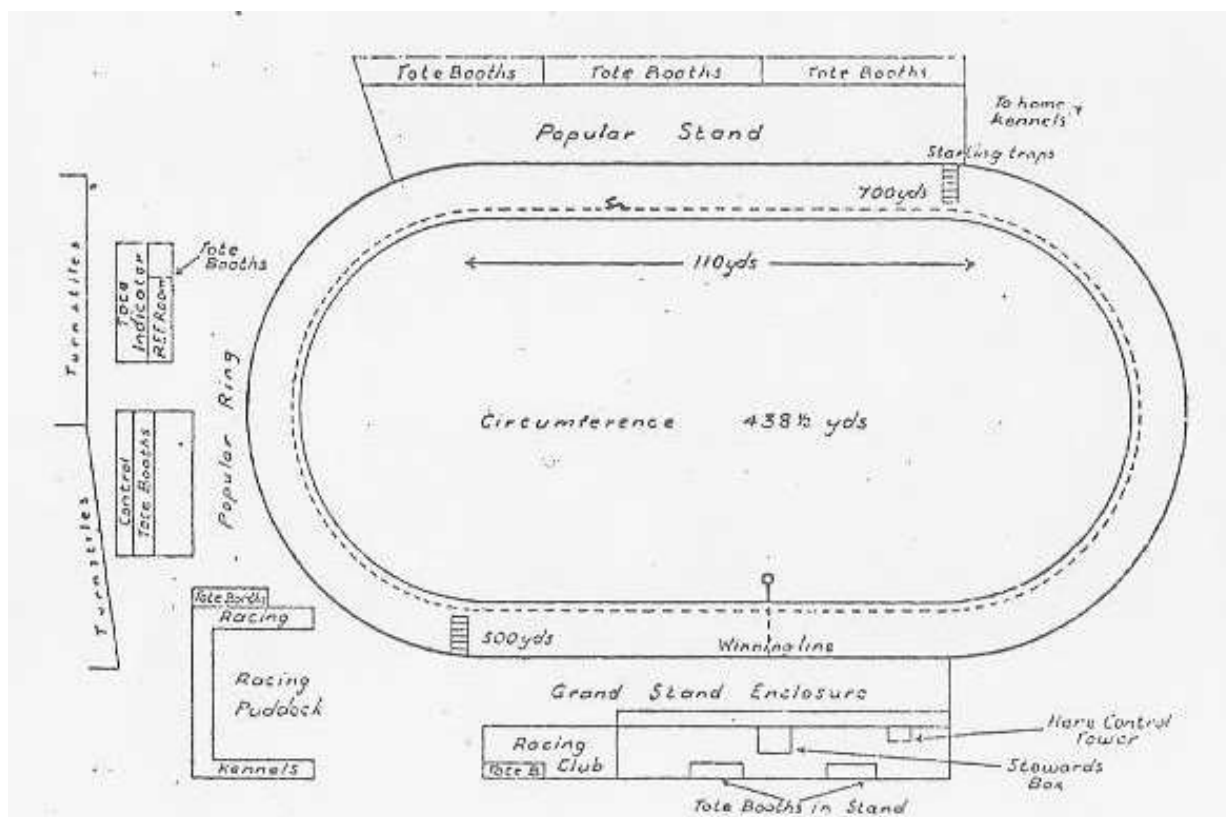
The Eastville Stadium totalisator system was introduced in 1932 helping to secure the greyhound racing's future at the venue, this was the total reverse to the football club who were in financial difficulties. During 1939 Bristol Rovers F.C negotiated a sale price to the Bristol Greyhound Company, albeit by the chairman, who carried out the deal without the knowledge of his fellow directors. Eastville changed hands for £12,000. The first General Manager was Lieutenant-Colonel Forsdike who was to become secretary of the NGRC.

The Golden Crest was introduced in 1937; it became one of the most important races in the provincial calendar and the event was first won by Wimbledon hound Wily Captain. Racing continued throughout the war years despite considerable disruption and being unable to hold the Golden Crest on a couple of occasions. However attendances in the thousands still flocked through the turnstiles.

A greyhound called Gypsy Win provided Eastville with a first taste of glory outside of Bristol, the Franks trained runner claimed the Wimbledon Gold Cup in 1943.

In 1945 the crowds witnessed a remarkable victory for Shannon Shore, a winner by ten lengths in a new track record for 500 yards; the black dog was timed at 28.76 during the Golden Crest final. The following year he broke the track record again in the semi-finals but was to lose out to Rimmells Black in the decider. Bizarrely history was repeated when Rimmells Black then reached the final one year later after breaking the track record in his semi but lost out to Funny Mick.

A second major competition was introduced in 1946 and this was the Western-Two-Year-Old Produce Stakes. There was a collection of Produce Stakes held around the country and nobody would have known that this would be the sole survivor today.



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In 1947 Oxford's Guru Leslie Calcutt was appointed as Director of Bristol Greyhound Racing Association Ltd, a move that would eventually result in Bristol taking over the Oxford. Bristol incidentally instigated a wide search for a greyhound called Mountford Quiver after she escaped from the Eastville kennels, the bitch returned of her own accord 16 days later in good condition despite a harsh winter.

In 1952 the Abbey Stadium in Swindon opened on November 1st, it was now becoming a rare occurrence for a new track to spring up by this time. The stadium was opened by the Bristol Greyhound Racing Association, soon to change their name to Bristol Stadium Ltd and they also took control of affairs at Oxford following the death of Leslie Calcutt.

The year proved to be extremely eventful and the track achieved a huge success against much more prominent opposition when they won the national inter track championship sponsored by the News of the World defeating Bradford 19-11.

Ken Whitrow became the Racing Manager in the late fifties and trainer Stan Raymond switched from Knowle to Eastville. Raymond was to provide the track with a home winner of the Golden Crest in Monnow Wizzard in 1959.

The South Western region of the NGRS organised the inter-track competition called the 'Pick O' The Tracks' and Bristol lifted the trophy in 1967. Eastville became one of the first circuits to abandon grass in 1968, becoming sand based, many tracks would follow suit over the next decade.

In 1975 Oxford Stadium Managing Director Ian Stevens (son of Con Stevens) acting for Bristol Stadium Ltd sold Oxford to the City Council housing committee for £235,000 in October and then became General Manager at Eastville. Two years later the Newport Wasps Speedway team relocated to Bristol and remarkably the Speedway track was placed on top of the greyhound circuit and then dug up again every meeting. The poor track staff must have hated every minute of that season. Not surprisingly the Speedway only lasted the one season.

Individual tracks could tender for BAGS contracts in 1979 which resulted in many looking towards the income stream of BAGS racing. A select group of eight tracks gained contracts, one of course being Bristol.

August 1980 turned out to be a bad month at Eastville when the stadium suffered a major fire and the majority of the South Stand was destroyed causing more than £1million worth of damage. Later in the year some consolation arrived in the form of the long awaited BAGS debut in November, and along with Hackney, the two tracks became the backbone of the betting shop service.

Classic glory came the tracks way in 1982 after their top trainer Henry Kibble steered Donnas Dixie to the Gold Collar title at Catford. One year later following the closure of Gloucester and Cheltenham, Bristol was to receive an influx of new trainers including their leading trainer Janet Dickenson.

During the eighties Bristol experienced steady success, two Golden Crest winners in 1980 and 1984 added trophies to the cabinet, the latter winner was Too Ton Tony trained by Mervyn Osborne. The same trainer handled track champion Desert Wishes who had the idiosyncrasy of stopping after the race had just finished and running back around the track in the wrong direction. Bristol Rovers FC vacated the track in 1986 relocating to Twerton Park in Bath.

Edwin Osborne replaced Clark Osborne in the General Manager role and Dennis Pope took over from Ken Whitrow. Pope remained at the helm until 1996 when he resigned quoting a growing and orchestrated campaign against him following NGRC fines.

When Henry Kibble retired his son Terry took over the kennels and provided Eastville with another classic winner in Match Point. The black dog won the St Leger but would soon be upstaged by kennelmate and another black dog called Dempsey Duke. The February 1989 whelp made it all the way to the Derby final in 1991 and won the Blue Riband, East Anglian Derby and Reading Masters.

During 1993 Dave Lawrence stepped in as Racing Manager to fill the seat left by the departing Gary Woodward.

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**Greyhounds parading during a BAGS meeting.
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On 27th October 1997 a second body blow came to the sport after the Hackney debacle when the BS Group sold Eastville for development, plans were announced for a new Bristol greyhound stadium but never came to fruition. The BS Group management switched the entire operation, including trainers, racing office staff and bookmakers forty miles up the M4 to newly acquired Swindon, even the BAGS contract was taken on by Swindon.

Bristol one of the main BAGS tracks for years would become the home of an IKEA store (2° 33' 51.770"W 51° 28' 20.272"N).

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Selected Pre-Metric Track Records

| Distance | Name | Time | Date | Notes |
|----------|-----------------------|-------------|------------|------------------------------|
| 500y | Shannon Shore | 28.76 | 1945+ | Golden Crest final |
| | Shannon Shore | 28.66 | 1946+ | Golden Crest semi-final |
| | Rimmells Black | 28.65 | 13.08.1947 | Golden Crest semi-final |
| | Flintfield Grosvenor | 28.50 | 1950+ | |
| | Kensington Perfection | 28.29 | 03.08.1953 | Western Produce Stakes final |
| 525y | Discretions | 27.85 | 1968+ | |
| | Glen Ranger | 29.64 | 1950+ | |
| | Fealeside Bridge | 29.39 | 15.09.1962 | |
| | Paddles Son | ?? | 26.06.1965 | |
| 600y | Moonlight Chase | ?? | 23.04.1966 | |
| | Model Dasher | 35.11 | 1950+ | |
| | 700y | Shaggy Lass | 40.61 | 10.06.1946 |
| 730y | Je Vendral | 42.30 | 1970+ | |
| | Peasedown Marvel | =42.30 | 1970+ | |
| | Nobodys Pick | 42.29 | 1972+ | |
| 745y | Watch Kern | 42.74 | 11.07.1962 | |
| 932y | Hops Pal | 54.80 | 1972+ | |
| 957y | Ramsfort Venture | 56.58 | 19.09.1964 | |
| 500yH | Red Nuxer | 29.21 | 21.04.1945 | |
| 525yH | Paddles Son | 30.48 | 26.06.1965 | |

Selected Post-Metric Track Records

| Distance | Name | Time | Date | Notes |
|----------|------------------|------------------|------------|------------|
| 266m | Damiens Slave | 16.30 | 29.11.1986 | |
| | Rapid Mover | 16.26 | 1988+ | |
| 270m | Wheres The Limo | 16.24 | 19.02.1992 | |
| 410m | Fizzy Stuff | 25.80 | 1988+ | |
| 460m | Peasedown Dollar | 28.67 | 13.04.1991 | |
| | Wolf Man | 27.82 | 11.06.1994 | |
| | 470m | Rolstone Silk | 28.05 | 25.10.1979 |
| 610m | Mollifrend Slave | 28.66 | 04.05.1991 | |
| | Manorland | 28.49 | 04.05.1991 | |
| | Proud Operator | 39.33 | 1988+ | |
| 620m | Among the Gold | 39.19 | 1989+ | |
| | Airmount Flash | 38.29 | 15.02.1993 | |
| 665m | First Name Bart | 41.30 | 25.09.1993 | |
| 670m | Rolstone Silk | 41.39 | 18.06.1981 | |
| 680m | Ice Cool Blonde | 42.75 | 11.05.1991 | |
| | Fawn Peral | 42.28 | 15.06.1991 | |
| 855m | Decoy Lynx | 53.72 | 13.08.1994 | |
| 874m | Keem Princess | 54.59 | 16.08.1980 | |
| | Lilac Wonder | 54.54 | 17.08.1991 | |
| | 1015m | Mossfield Scotty | 66.29 | 15.10.1992 |
| 470mH | Sharp Look Out | 29.53 | 1988+ | |
| | Faoides Country | 29.08 | 20.07.1991 | |

+ Date when record was held, not necessarily the year it was set.