

Clapton

Designed by the famous architect Sir Owen Williams, Clapton became London's fourth greyhound track, although it did not stage its first meeting until 7th April 1928. After spending over £80,000 to install greyhound facilities at the Millfields Road ground, which was also a major venue for boxing, and even in its early days baseball, the football team was soon asked to find a new home as the track invested in the dogs, opening its first restaurant in 1930 and building covered stands and a second restaurant in 1939.

The first Managing Director was H.Garland Wells who was joint vice president of the sports NGRS and Clapton Stadium Ltd also owned Reading, and later South Shields and Warrington. Clapton was described as a small difficult course with short straights (76 yards) and easy bends on a circumference of 359 yards. The hare was a curiously described 'Centre Scott Magee Silent'. Despite being small it was large in stature and became a prominent and progressive stadium, the nearby training quarters at Claverhambury Farm in Waltham Abbey had two hundred acres of undulating grassland in rural surroundings. Six resident trainers and six ranges of kennels with each range having a five acre plot for exercising.

The Scurry Cup at Clapton for sprinters over 400 yards was introduced by Racing Manager Major C.Moss in 1928 and would become a classic race, the first ever winner was Cruiseline Boy from Wimbledon. In 1929 the tracks first major winner came when Bewitching Eve won the Oaks for trainer Cooper. In 1934 the track was represented in the Derby final by the legendary Wild Woolley locally trained by Harry Woolner and two years later Kilganny Bridge won the Grand National for trainer Higgins. Joe Coral (Coral bookmakers) was once a bookmaker here before his Empire grew.

Clapton was so successful in the early years that the decision was made by the company to purchase the Dolphin Stadium in Slough and they renamed it the Slough Greyhound Stadium. A second Derby final appearance by a Clapton hound was in 1938 after Demotic Mack finished fifth for trainer Charles Cross. The same greyhound then emulated the feat one year later actually finishing third this time however.

The stadium was closed for short periods during the war but was still able to race at most times. Success was easy to come by following the appointment of Stanley Biss from West Ham. Biss became one of the most prominent trainers of that era and some of his charges included the magnificent Local Interprize and Rimmells Black. Local Interprize a black dog owned by Eric Goddard ensured packed stadiums around London and went onto win the Welsh Derby, Gold Collar twice, Cesarewitch, Scurry and reached the Derby final twice. Garland-Wells passed away in 1948.

Clapton continued to strive for improvement and took on a new trainer called Sidney Clare Orton known as 'Clare' son of the great Sidney Orton, Clare had spent three years previously at Coventry. Other races were introduced to Clapton over the years and were soon established as notable events, they were the Metropolitan Cup, National Sprint, London Cup & National Open Hurdles. The latter event that had been going since 1928 was responsible for the introduction of the Conal hurdle, a safer hurdle construction that was installed at all tracks in 1950.

In 1951 Clapton won the National News of the World title and Stanley Biss retired in handing the kennels to Pam Heasman but sadly Biss passed away in 1952 after suffering a stroke. The track appointed Jimmy Jowett from Warrington in 1952.

Into the fifties and there was another Derby final appearance this time it was the Tom Smith trained Paddys Dinner In 1953 the Director of Racing was Eric Godfrey and the Racing Manager was Mr H.J Richardson and the six resident trainers were John Snowball, Arch Whitcher, Clare Orton, Jimmy Jowett, Gordon Nicholson and Tom Smith.

108 meetings & 850 races took place on Thursday and Saturday nights at 7.45pm and thousands of patrons frequented the track. A new lighting system had been installed, £20,010 had been paid out in prize money with seven no races and eight greyhounds disqualified. Clapton lost in the National News of the World competition semi-final to Shawfield.

Finally in 1956 the track won its first Derby crown when Paddy McEvoy trained Dunmore King to the glory. As golden period of racing arrived, the track had some of the best trainers and greyhounds in the country for the next twenty years. In 1959 the board was taken over by Edward and Horace Luper.

.....continued

To list all of the achievements of the track here would be too many and they can be viewed under the major races section but worth mentioning are Palms Printer claiming a second Derby triumph for Paddy McEvoy in 1961 and yet another Derby triumph in 1963 for John Bassett and Lucky Boy Boy plus Jimmy Jowett who created an endless list of honours for the track.

In 1962 Messer's Rosendale & Gould paid £200 for a greyhound called Dromin Glory which was expected to make just a top grader at Clapton and it would allow them free entry into the stadium. To add more interest the dog had been delivered to the wrong kennels when bought and had gone missing for a week. He went onto to win the Scottish Derby, Cesarewitch, Select Stakes, Birmingham Cup and be voted greyhound of the year.

During 1963 Clapton Stadiums Ltd owners of Clapton, Slough and Reading scrapped evening starting times in an attempt to scupper the bookmakers shops from being able to take advantage of off course betting without paying the industry it due worth. The trainers attached to the track in 1965 consisted of Adam Jackson, Stan Gudgin, Jimmy Jowett, Paddy Keane and Bill Kelly. The same year the track hosted Pinewood Studios as they shot scenes for a new film starring Rita Tushingham and Mike Sarne called Bethnal Green.

The company sold Slough to the GRA in 1966 and the Clapton shareholders contemplated a bid from GRA which included Clapton Stadium two training sites with 180 acres and an interest in the West Ham site. The deal went ahead later that year. Clapton installed a closed-circuit television race patrol camera in 1967 that was able to replay the races to the public. Although very expensive the equipment was a hit and would set the scene for the future.

The GRA and in particular the GRA Property Trust there was uncertainty surrounding the track and it was dealt a hefty blow in 1968 when the GRA decided to move all of the greyhounds out of the Clapton kennels at Claverhambury Farm and the West Ham kennels and put them at the training establishment at Hook kennels, Northaw. The Northaw kennels would now house all trainers from Harringay, White City, Clapton and West Ham which brought the estate under considerable pressure. This move looked worrying, now that the kennels had been

Despite this bad news Adam Jackson and Paddy Keane both secured Derby wins with Chittering Clapton & Faithful Hope respectively before the arrival of none other than Patricias Hope in the early seventies. This brilliant hound rightfully gained all of the attention as Clapton remained one of the top tracks in the country. The question marks over the future remained which led to Paddy Keane moving back to Ireland to train from kennels there.

In 1969 a major moment in the life of Clapton took place when the GRA sold the track to what was effectively a redevelopment company. The sale of the immensely popular track caused much upset regardless of the fact that no immediate plans for closing were revealed.

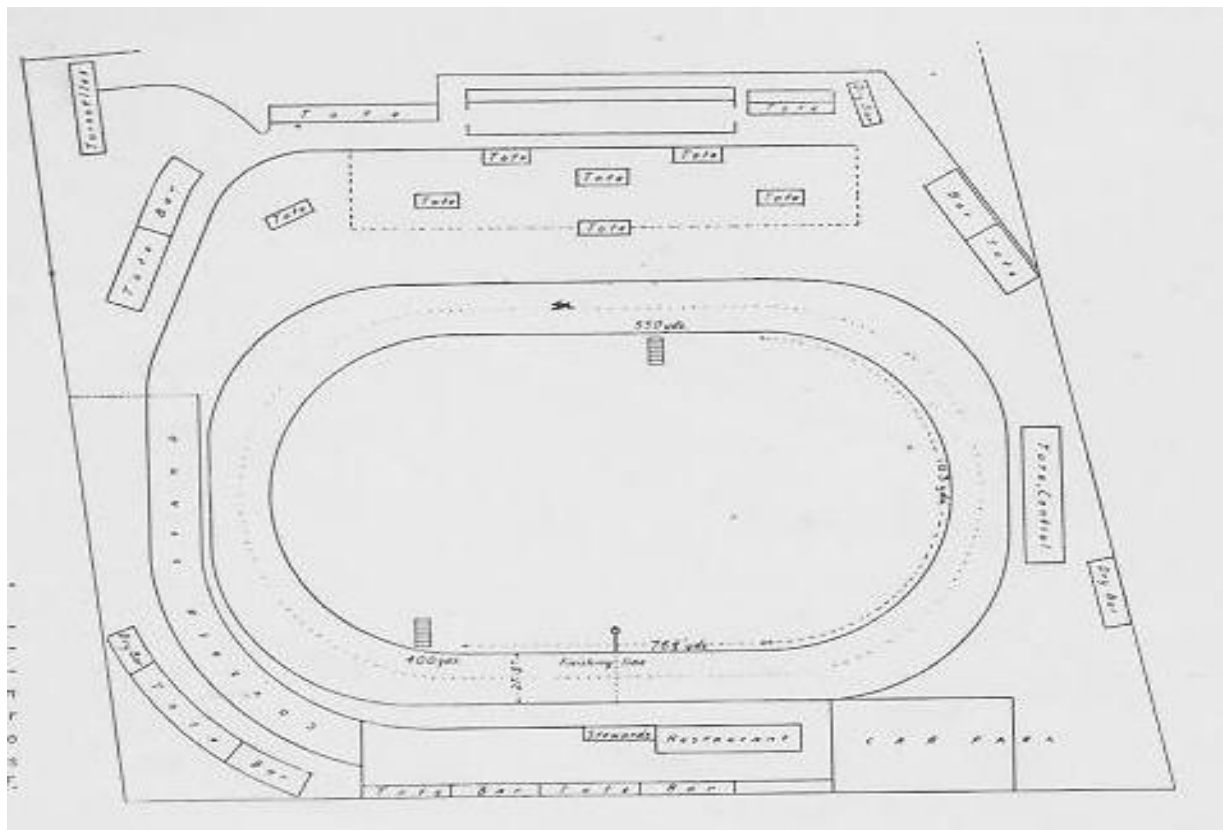
New Cross closed resulting in Charlie Smoothy and John Shevlin joining Clapton but John Bassett left preferring to take a break from the sport at this stage. Racing continued over the next few years, in 1971 the track were surprisingly beaten in the final of the Duke of Edinburgh Cup by Leeds.

Jimmy Jowett probably prompted by the cloud hanging over Clapton retired in 1973 after a very successful career.

The final nail on the coffin came on 1st January 1974 when the GRA closed the track with immediate effect, the classic Scurry Gold Cup competition was moved over to Slough. The track had been under a cloud for two years after the sale to developers and time was up for this famous old stadium and it would be replaced by the Millfields housing estate in the early eighties.

The site today is the Orient Way Millfields Estate (0° 2' 35.460"W 51° 33' 28.711"N).

.....continued



Selected Track Records

Distance	Name	Time	Date	Notes
400y	Creamery Border	23.31	05.08.1933	Scurry Cup Final & National Record
	Rimmells Black	23.11	26.07.1947	Scurry Cup Final
	Return Fare	22.89	1950+	
	Minorca's Hope	22.82	1953+	
	Rolling Mike	22.77	25.07.1953	Scurry Cup Final
	Gorey Airways	22.48	23.07.1960	Scurry Cup Final
	Cranog Bet	22.41	11.07.1964	
	Foyle Tonic	22.37	1970+	
	Don't Gambol	22.29	08.07.1971	
	550y	Blackwater Cutlet	31.80	1944+
Rolling Mike		31.99	15.08.1953	
Prince Chancer		31.76	23.09.1954	
575y	Kilcarbery Pride	32.85	1963+	
	Geddys Empress	32.82	07.06.1965	
	Sues Fancy	32.67	01.06.1967	
	Yellow Printer	=32.67	13.07.1968	
760y	Poetic Boy	45.29	1950+	
	Priceless Spot	44.60	03.10.1953	
	Lucky Hi There	43.88	25.06.1964	
909y	Carmen Star	53.80	25.06.1964	
934y	St Pancras Sharon	55.75	23.07.1960	
	Movealong Margo	55.20	13.07.1968	
400yH	Mount Davis	24.08	1950+	
	Ruddy Caution	23.53	08.08.1953	
	Change That	23.08	06.08.1960	
503yH	Fodda Champion	32.55	23.03.1957	
550yH	Macaroni II	33.02	1950+	
	Abbots End Monk	32.68	04.07.1953	
	Change That	32.41	20.08.1960	
	575yH	Prince Lawrence	34.67	11.11.1954

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