

Coventry (Lythalls Lane)

In the Holbrook's area of Coventry off Lythalls Lane, Foleshill there is a road called Stadium Close, this is the only reminder today of a stadium that hosted greyhound racing and for a very short while speedway. Now covered by a mass of housing on Compton Road only memories of the Lythalls Lane stadium live on.

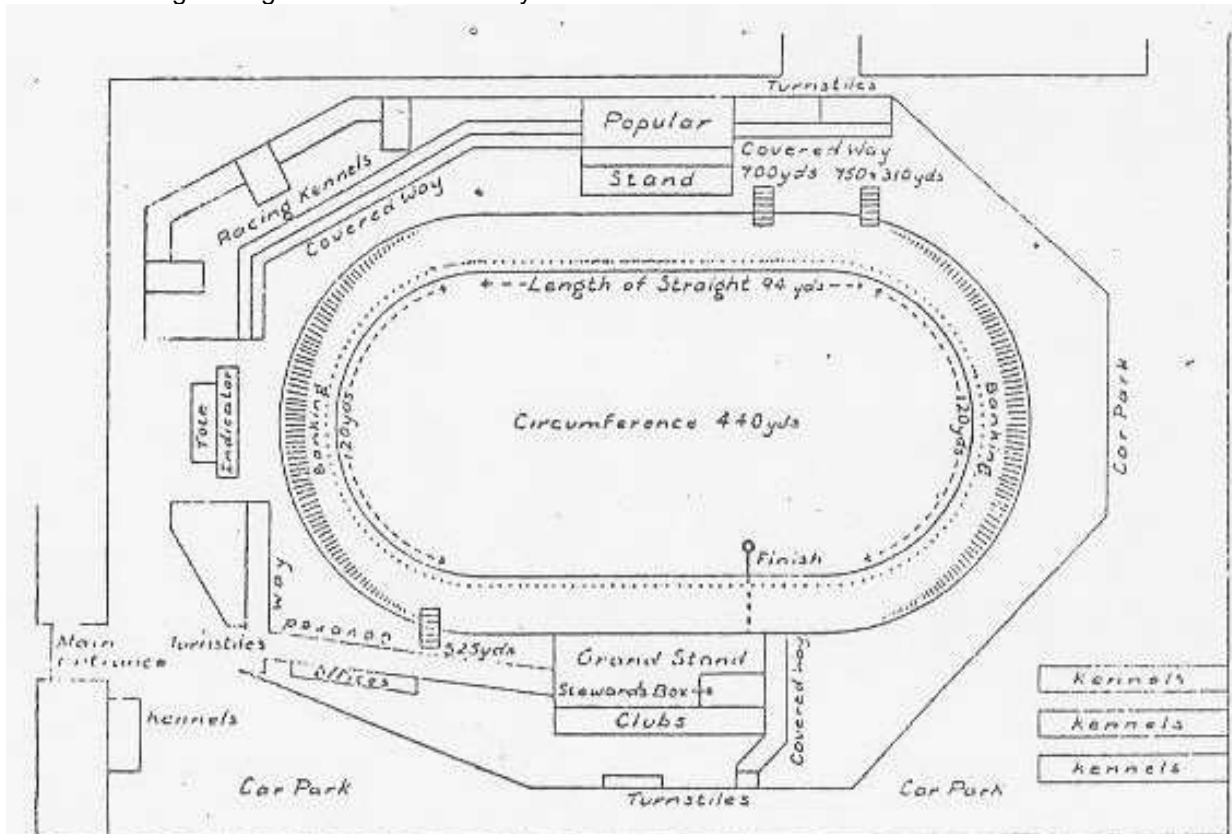
Opened on the 7th April 1928 by the Coventry Greyhounds Ltd the track was a reasonable size able to accommodate over 5,000 spectators. There was a large grandstand on the home straight and tote facilities right in front of the winning line.

The track got off to an inauspicious start when the General and Racing Manager Lieutenant-Colonel Geoffrey Nigel Fitzjohn committed suicide in the stadium offices in 1929. The 47 year old took a dose of prussic acid, a highly poisonous substance. Then in early 1933 the main stand caught fire and was destroyed.

In 1938 the Eclipse Stakes was inaugurated at the track over 500 yards. Lythalls Lane was mainly a rural area during the war which luckily resulted in minimal damage during the Coventry Blitz in 1940 and 1941. Apart from the clubhouse that was burnt down the stadium fared well compared to the rest of Coventry. A year later Ballynennan Moon one of the sports great stars graced the circuit and duly won the Eclipse, the event had returned after a two year break.

After the war the Sanderson's (Alan and wife Hilda) acquired the freehold of the stadium, Alan Sanderson owned the luxury Selsdon Park Hotel built in the 1920's and was reputed to have bottomless pockets. In addition to the Lythalls Lane purchase was the nearby Brandon stadium that hosted the Coventry Bees speedway team. Sanderson was also reputed to be a big speedway fan.

The Sanderson's employed George McKay as their greyhound trainer and experienced some wonderful times. Duffys Arrival reached the final of the 1945 Greyhound Derby losing out to Ballyhennessy Seal. Another of McKay's charges Robeen Printer eased to St Leger glory in 1945 and then went for the Oaks but had to settle for runners up spot to Prancing Kitty. Robeen Printer had arrived in England with a fine reputation following a victory in the Irish Laurels. The fawn was bought for record 1,650 guineas for a bitch by the Sanderson's. McKay would also become Racing Manager at the track some years later.



.....continued

The racing was very profitable as indicated by the tote turnover of £1,529,244 in 1947 and the track could attract the best greyhounds of the era. In the Invitation Stakes run at Coventry on 9 August 1945 Bah's Choice beat Quare Times by five lengths in a new track record with a time of 29.45sec. In 1946 Clare Orton (son of the great Sidney Orton) was recruited by the track.

Success in the fifties came in the form of Drumman Rambler trained by Olly Chetland, the Coventry greyhound finished runner up in the Derby final in 1952. Duke of Alva (Dicky Myles) produced a great run to claim the St Leger title in 1957.

The company changed names in 1950 following the purchase of Leicester stadium in Blackbird Road from Leicester Stadium Ltd. The new guise would be Midland Sports but three tracks would become two ten years later when an agreement was reached for redevelopment and planning permission was passed.

The last meeting was held on 25th September 1964 (1° 30' 9.041"W 52° 26' 36.241"N).



Lythalls Lane, Coventry.
Copyright and image courtesy of John Skinner

.....continued

Selected Pre-Metric Track Records

Distance	Name	Time	Date	Notes
310y	Robeen Printer	17.28	10.06.1946	
525y	Parish Model	29.43	03.05.1947	
700y	Shaggy Lass	40.87	04.02.1947	
750y	Model Dasher	43.65	14.04.1945	
525yH	Wolverton Grenadier	30.86	21.03.1946	