

New Dagenham

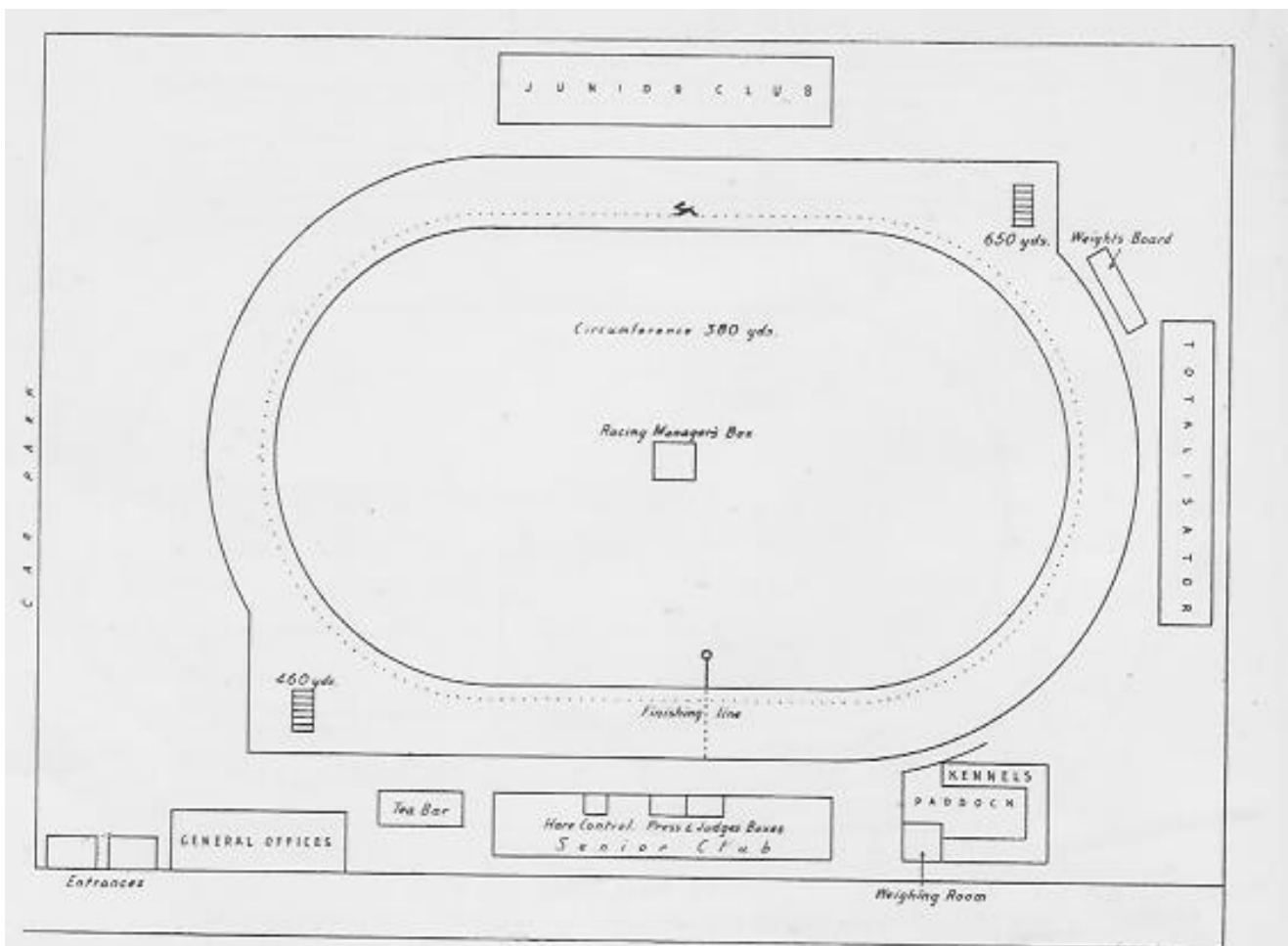
Dagenham had seen greyhound racing since 1930 and in 1935 the site north of the Ripple Road was purchased by Romford Stadium Ltd and plans were drawn up to build a new stadium on the same site to compliment the one that had just been rebuilt at Romford.

The work started in 1938 and after nine months the stadium was ready to open. Lord Denham of the NGRC fresh from opening Oxford four days earlier arrived on the 4th April 1939 to officially open the new stadium. All races were worth a very attractive prize of £10 to the winners.

The opening year of 1939 was of course the start of the Second World War but many racetracks were lucky in the fact that there was so little to do for the general population. As a consequence many flocked to greyhound meetings causing a few problems for the authorities such as transport issues and the morality of racing during the war. In 1942 the track was subject to an identity swoop by military police looking for service absentees and civilians with defective identity cards. Despite tough times it was clear that the public wanted a release from the worries of war and they found it in dog tracks.

In December of 1941 two young lads were carrying a ladder that hit an overhanging electric cable killing 16 year old Harold Brindley and badly burning his friend 17 year old John Love. The perils of electricity during this part of the century were plain for all to see.

War interrupted the routine of regular racing but the track was better placed than many in the London area to continue some form of racing. In fact the West Ham operation was switched to Dagenham in March 1944 for a short time whilst the track was closed. With the track being on the east side of Greater London the crowds were large and spend was good.



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The circuit itself had a circumference of 380 yards which is why it was described as a little track with sharp turns favouring railers, the distances raced were 460 and 650 yards and the greyhounds raced behind a 'Trackless McWhirter' hare. Facilities included the Junior Club and Senior Club, the latter housed the hare control room, press box and judges room and to its left was a Tea Bar. Additionally both clubs offered hot and cold buffets. Behind the 650 traps was a weights board display and between the 1st & 2nd bends was the totalisator. Aside from the track kennels and weighing room on the home straight there were residential kennels nearby at Heaton Grange, Straight Road in Romford.

Unfortunately the main reason that Dagenham is remembered is for the most infamous moment in greyhound racing history 'The Dagenham Coup'. The event in 1964 is well documented on the homepage of the website so there is no need for details here. It is fair to say however that as a result of the coup the track never recovered because after the court cases Romford Stadium Ltd sold their controlling interest in Dagenham for £185,000. The company stated that government restrictions on fixtures forced both tracks (Dagenham and Romford) to race on the same day and that in turn impacted attendances. It had been bought by Reynolds packaging and therefore ceased as a greyhound track in 1965.

The site today is an industrial area off Choats Manor Way north of the railway line (0° 8' 22.626"E 51° 31' 40.665"N).