

Exeter (Marsh Barton)

South of Exeter and north of Alphington is an area known as Marsh Barton although at the turn of the 20th century it really only consisted of the former Marsh Barton Priory also known as St Marys Priory (home to Augustinian Canons Regular) and Marsh Barton Lane which led to the Priory and Cottage. Either side to west and east was the Exeter railway and Great Western Railway respectively, the former swung in a westerly direction whilst the latter made its way south to Dawlish.

This was the ideal place to place a new greyhound track with the catchment area of Exeter nearby but not so close as to upset residents. The stadium was constructed along the south side of Marsh Barton Lane consisting of four buildings on the home straight. Racing began Saturday 21 July 1928 and was hailed as a success by the local press, it seems that the venue was initially known as Oak Marsh before Marsh Barton stuck. The first ever winner was Mr Tolkien's Sparks. The promoter was a Mr J Bonus but the track remained independent in these early days. The racing continued over the following years until Mr Henry James Shooter the chief steward at Marsh Barton took over the betting licence in 1935. The nearby County Ground in Exeter (formerly the Devon County Athletic Ground) also hosted greyhound racing from 1935 and became a serious rival for Marsh Barton by consistently pulling in larger crowds. This County Ground is not to be confused with the Devon County Cricket Ground that opened in 1889 and still exists today.

After the Second World War, Marsh Barton made the decision to race under National Greyhound Racing Club (NGRC) rules for the first time, with the events being conducted on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday nights. The final independent race took place on 14 Sep 1946 with first NGRC race just two weeks later on 28 September 1946. Speedway was also hosted from the period 1945-1951 although the rival County Ground became the home to the Exeter Falcons speedway team until 2005.

The track was described as an average size course, 456 yards in circumference with an 'Inside Sumner' hare. Distances raced were 300, 500, 525, 700 yards with hurdle events over 525 & 525 yards. All greyhounds were kennelled at the track with four trainers and 150 dogs.

In November 1949 the track once again reverted to 'flapping' status due to increased costs brought about by being a member of the NGRC and the fact that many of Marsh Barton's independent fraternity switched allegiance to the County Ground. Major problems arose in 1950 when the track announced losses due to the above mentioned problems and went into receivership. Attempting to sell the track at auction was initially a disaster because the valuation of £42,500 was not met. In fact bidding stopped at £22,000 way below the reserve, it was decided that the 16 acres would be sold privately.

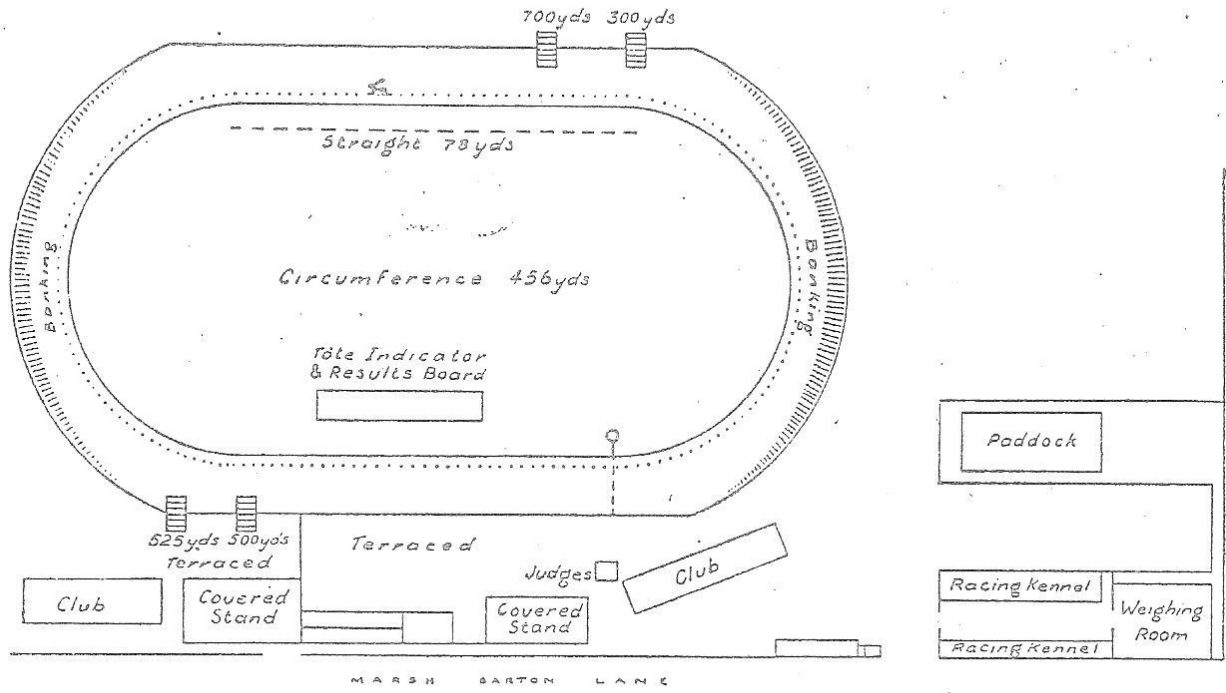
The stadium operated independently for just seven more years before finally closing its doors in November 1957, the stadium was demolished making way for the huge Marsh Barton trading estate. The stadium would have sat where Topps Tiles can be found today.

Selected Track Records

Distance	Name	Time	Date	Notes
500y	Belvedere Ace	29.98	1947+	
525y	Mighty Al	30.15	1947+	
700y	Northam Star	41.44	1947+	

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EXETER



3° 31' 51.183"W 50° 42' 31.077"N