

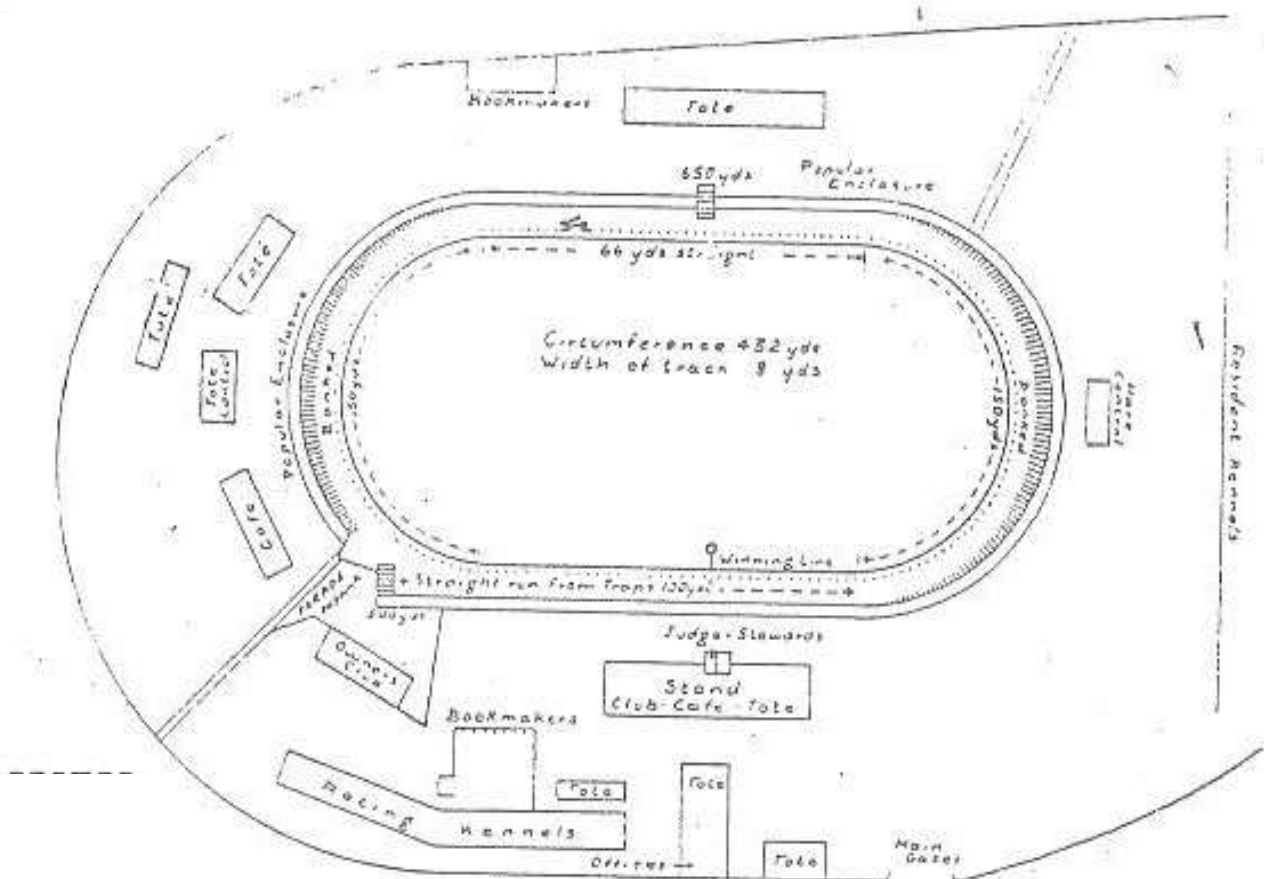
Gloucester & Cheltenham

The Gloucester and Cheltenham Greyhound Stadium opened on the Cheltenham Road at Longlevens after an unsuccessful attempt to start racing at nearby Elmbridge some years before. It had looked unlikely that racing would start at Longlevens because in the January of 1933 plans had been refused by the council due to concerns over noise and disruption.

However the plans for the track were passed and work began on the site some seven miles from Cheltenham and three miles from Gloucester. The opening night was on Saturday 22nd July 1933 and the track dimensions were a relatively standard measurement with a 432 yard circumference with distances of 500 and 650 yards. There were kennel facilities for 200 greyhounds within the stadium grounds.

On the first night gates opened at 6.30pm with racing starting at 7.30pm, seven races were organised and the first greyhound to pass the winning line was Valiant Rufus who beat Uskside Winner by a short head in 29.87sec. Valiant Rufus trained by Leslie Carpenter was odds on to win and few would have known they had just seen a greyhound that would win the Welsh Derby the following year. Carpenter trained three of the winners on opening night.

Within three years the track had grown in popularity and also experienced another major open race success, Bully Ring trained by Robert Linney won the Welsh Derby for Gloucester again in July of 1936. Further accolades arrived in 1939 when Black Peter trained by Stan Raymond made it all the way to the Greyhound Derby final. Unfortunately Black Peter was withdrawn from the final following an injury sustained during training, this was the only time Gloucester would ever have a finalist. Also in 1939 Black Peters kennelmate Black Johnny claimed the Birmingham Cup.



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The war arrived halting the chances for Gloucester greyhounds from attempting to grab further trophies and when the track was able to host racing it was rocked by a scandal in 1944. Six men charged with conspiracy to administer drugs to a greyhound were put on trial, four were found guilty and two were acquitted. The trial was soon forgotten when new success came the tracks way, Ronnie Mills and Arthur Shelton had joined the training ranks and along with Stan Raymond the trio would dominate racing in the West Country.

Brighter Days (Raymond) secured a double, the Champion Stakes and Western Two Year Old Produce in 1947, this was a year when tote turnover reached £748,859, providing a sizeable profit for Gloucester and Cheltenham Greyhounds Ltd.

The fifties started well as Stan Raymond won his second Western Produce Stakes in 1951 with Beyond Doubt and then followed this up by talking the Guineas with Melvalley Buster a year later. Raymond though was soon to take up a position at Knowle in Bristol.

The Stewards Cup was held at the track in 1953 which resulted in the legendary Magourna Reject appearing at the track. The blue brindle & white dog duly took the honours in front of a tremendous crowd.

Gloucester won the 1956 News of the World Intertrack Cup Final largely due to the Arthur Shelton hounds during a quiet period for the track and in 1960 Leicester Racing Manager Harold Richards took over the graders chair from PD Poole, ex Harringay man Norman Russell would soon be Richards' deputy.

The main competition at the track was the Grand National of the West until 1965 and a long awaited major race win finally arrived in 1964 courtesy of Rattle the Man from the kennel of Ronnie Mills, the event was the Golden Crest.

The sixties remained relatively uneventful for the track that concentrated mainly on graded racing; the resident trainers by 1967 were Mills, Leslie Carpenter, Ian Ray and John Wheeler. Carpenter aged 79 sadly passed away in 1973 following a forty year training career.

After four decades the stadium was not surprisingly becoming a little run down and outdated and the idea of new premises was discussed several times. However a new venue opened at the Horton Road Stadium in 1975 dampening any new plans for the Longlevens management. Gloucester (Horton Road Stadium) held its inaugural meeting on 7th March 1975 around the pitch at a large 30,000 capacity football stadium. Despite this competition for Longlevens they managed to outstay the neighbours and Horton Road could not compete with Longlevens and soon closed in 1979.

New track metric measurements resulted in distances of 462, 647 & 860 metres, Janet Dickenson and Doreen Swadden joined the track as trainers during a spell when the future of the stadium was unknown. The Thursday and Saturday night racing continued until 1983, the year in which the track celebrated a fifty year anniversary.

After failing to secure new premises at Oxleaze and Churchdown, the decision was made by the company to make 22nd October the last ever meeting. A statement by the Chairman W V Eggleton cited increased costs in subsidising the greyhound operation and was not prompted by the fact that Westbury Estates had gained permission for a redevelopment programme including the stadium.

The stadium like so many others was lost to housing and the only reminder today that it operated as a greyhound track is the Greyhound Inn which was also built there in 1985 (2° 12' 19.032"W 51° 52' 40.284"N).

Selected Track Records

Distance	Name	Time	Date	Notes
500y	Spring Shower	28.01	07.10.1948	
	Square Gift	27.79	23.04.1962	
650y	Bundle of Fun	37.25	08.07.1948	
700y	Old Berry Jewel	39.75	27.09.1962	
500yH	Joy's Heartbreak	29.24	24.07.1948	
	Halfpenny King	28.72	22.07.1965	
860m	Doverdale Lady	54.79	1976	