

Hall Green (Birmingham)

The Greyhound Racing Association (GRA) bought the land that was known as the Olympia Sports Ground in the Birmingham suburb of Hall Green and constructed a greyhound track (1° 50' 24.934"W 52° 26' 17.282"N). It opened on 24th August 1927 on the York Road and a huge crowd of 20,000 turned up to experience racing here despite the fact that another Birmingham track (Kings Heath) had just opened three months previous. The first race on that Wednesday evening was won by Lock Latham owned by Lady Lock and Mr P.Latham and was over 500 yards in a winning time of 29.66. Appearing that same night was Bonzo who duly won his race and would go on to win the first ever running of the Champion Hurdle race at White City, London, and this event would soon be called the Grand National.

The 440 yard circumference was a decent size circuit with long straights and fairly easy turns. Handicaps and an 'Inside Sumner' hare were features of the early days with main distances of 500 and 700 yards. Facilities included the main stand which offered the Hall Green Sports club and enclosure club and stands on the opposite side of the track to accommodate the large patronage. A small annual subscription allowed patron's admittance to the clubs and it was not long before a restaurant service was introduced.

Next to the main stand was the car park and situated next to that was the track kennels, paddocks, hare control box, brake house and generator room. Similar to other larger tracks of the time there was a resting kennel located away from the track and the Hall Green resting kennels were found nearby at Bogay Hall Farm in Solihull. Speedway took place up until 1937.

The only significant pre-war hound associated with the track was Grosvenor Edwin whom was housed at the track before transferring to Jim Syder at Wimbledon. This brindle dog was virtually unbeatable over the 700 yard trip and would go on to score some major successes in the coming years.

After the war the track introduced a major event for the first time and it was called the Midland Flat Championship. The inaugural event was won by rival track Perry Barr after Negros Lad won in 28.75 for trainer Jack Toseland. The event was initially popular with Midlands's tracks but it was not long before the London and Northern connections turned their attention towards the competition. The centre green was home to the Hall Green Amateurs football team between 1951 until 1965.

A huge investment in 1970 resulted in the track becoming one of the major provincials in the country and the GRA spent over £750,000 renovating the club house into a four tier restaurant. The restaurant gave an excellent view of the new electronic display tote board. The track kennels were unfortunately demolished during this build and Hall Green would employ contracted trainers from this point onwards.

The new facilities attracted one of the country's finest trainers in Geoffrey DeMulder, the 'Wizard of Meriden'. No sooner had DeMulder gained his attachment when he achieved the greatest feat for the track so far, finishing runner up in the Greyhound Derby with Little County behind John Silver. DeMulder was disappointed that his unbeaten hot favourite had failed to take the crown but over the following years he would achieve wonderful things and Hall Green would experience a golden era. In 1973 Sid Mann retired ending a 43 year association with GRA, Mann had originally taken out a licence in 1930 and had been based at Hall Green for many years. Also in 1973 Hall Green lost a closely fought battle with Wembley in the Duke of Edinburgh Cup Grand Final by 64 points to 56.

DeMulder won countless trophies for Hall Green in the seventies and topping the list was two Derby triumphs in 1974 & 1979 with Jimsun and Sarahs Bunny respectively. Ray Wilkes also trained his third Midland winner during this period. Despite this golden era the track lost its Racing Manager when Jeff Jefcoate joined Northern Sports at the Ramsgate venue.

In 1978 Assistant Racing Manager Horace Peplow retired after 50 years on the racing staff and was replaced by Simon Harris son of former trainer the late Roger Harris. Hall Green trainers would win major races with regular occurrence and the likes of Leo Pugh, Ben Parsons, Paddy Hancox (an arrival from Perry Barr), Bertie Gaynor and John Malcom (ex-Kings Heath) all recorded decent wins.

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Despite the losses of Jefcoate and Peplow the track was lucky to have Sidney Wood, the deputy chief Racing Manager for the GRA and David Burkett the General Manager on site. In 1981 the track changed to a totally sand surface which replaced the former grass straights, an Outside McKee Scott hare and underoil heating were also installed.

The next big news arrived on the back of the White City disaster, the closure of the sports premier track meant a re-allocation of the major races and the Grand National was earmarked for Hall Green. As 1984 came to an end Scurlogue Champ had wowed the public already and the Hall Green crowd were lucky enough to see him set two track records, one in December 1984 and another the following year.

A one off staging of the Golden Jacket in 1985 was followed by further stadium improvements in 1987 including a large snooker club to the tune of £400,000 with more expansion plans set for the future. GRA had clearly decided that Hall Green was there to stay despite the company closing other tracks. As the late eighties arrived the industry was experiencing a mini boom era, attendances and tote turnover were going up meeting by meeting and at last the promoters were getting some reward. Hall Green Stadium received yet another facelift in 1989 and this time to the tune of £1 million, mainly extending the restaurant and constructing a 48 bedroom hotel called 'The Lodge'. A new track surface was also installed during this latest investment. Attendances soon increased at the Birmingham venue run by the now General Manager Clive Feltham and Racing Manager Simon Harris.

Races to come and go over the years included the Midland Oaks, Midland Grand National, Midland Stayers Stakes and Winter Trophy.

As the boom began to slow down, an incredible hurdler came on the scene, arguably the best since Sherrys Prince and his name was Kildare Slipper, the Paddy Hancox trained white and brindle was a very special hurdler setting some unbelievable track records. Starting with two track records in the trial stakes and first round of his second Grand National he was installed at even money to win the final and he duly did recording 28.52 a sensational new track record. He won by 9¾ lengths and when the time was announced over the loudspeakers everybody was stunned because the track record for 474m flat at Hall Green was 28.56, four spots slower than the jumps time just recorded. This incredible run must go down as one of the greatest in history.

In 1993 the British Breeders Forum Produce was switched from Wembley to Hall Green and Simon Harris moved to the Wimbledon Racing Managers hot seat to be replaced by Gary Woodward. The following year Derby winning trainer Tony Meek who had joined the track from Oxford scored a remarkable double success by winning the Derby again but this time for Hall Green with Moral Standards.

The Television Trophy was hosted at the track for the third time in 1997 following the previous staging in 1979 & 1988 and in 1999 the Blue Riband competition was brought to the track after the demise of Wembley. The arrival of the Blue Riband resulted in the Grand National switching to sister track Wimbledon.

Under the leadership of General Manager Stephen Rea two new races were inaugurated by the track, they were the Gymcrack in 2000 and the Prestige in 2003 and in addition the track also hosted the trainer's championship for the first time at Hall Green which was won by Charlie Lister OBE. With all of these changes it was sad that the Midland Flat was discontinued, it had been the tracks oldest race.

Trainers Paul Sallis and Stuart Buckland brought more rewards for the track in recent times and Gary Woodward retired to be replaced by Rob Coulthard.

Due to recent GRA problems the decision was made not to continue with the Blue Riband and the British Breeders Forum and the Gymcrack was transferred to Kinsley leaving just the Prestige today. In 2014 the GRA sold Hall Green but retained a lease agreement, the track today is owned by Euro Property Investments following their £3 million purchase.

Wiki Waki Woo won the 2015 Golden Jacket for Angie Kibble; the Bampton based handler had joined the track following the closure of Oxford via Coventry.

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Selected Track Records (pre-Metric)

Distance	Name	Time	Date	Notes
500y	Demotic Mack	28.30	17.06.1937	
	Rushton Smutty	28.04	1951+	Midland Flat Final
	Rushton Spot	27.94	01.09.1954	
	Kilbeg Kuda	27.79	11.08.1965	
	Bresheen Legacy	27.73	12.04.1971	
700y	Sheehan	40.58	02.04.1938	
	Jersey Creamery	40.40	1948+	
	Greenane Airlines	39.94	30.05.1959	
	Clahane Girl	39.60	15.08.1962	
	The Grand Canoe	39.42	17.07.1965	
880y	The Cherry Tree	51.46	17.02.1962	
	Black Myross	50.90	19.07.1971	
937y	Tarry Oh No	56.10	01.09.1956	
	Model Airlines	55.98	19.08.1961	
500yH	Patlander	29.42	02.05.1934	
	Husky Sam	29.03	22.08.1959	
	Old Berry Star	28.75	17.08.1963	
	Sherrys Prince	28.38	02.10.1971	
700yH	Border Rambler	42.30	19.08.1939	

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

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Selected Track Records (post-Metric)

Distance	Name	Time	Date	Notes
258m	Hows Yer Man	15.32	1993+	
	Lunar Vacation	15.30	27.03.2007	
	Officer Donagh	15.29	01.12.2009	
	Fifis Rocket	15.14	19.04.2011	
	Ballymac Denis	15.12	18.04.2012	
259m	Foxy Cooper	15.45	1977+	
	Fearless Action	15.46	30.11.1985	
474m	Pat Seamur	28.49	1977+	
	Rikasso Hiker	28.59	13.10.1982	
	Westmead Merlin	28.33	15.10.1994	
	Westmead Chick	28.20	19.11.1994	
480m	Vintage Cleaner	28.20	25.04.2000	Blue Riband Final
	Harsu Super	28.13	13.10.2001	British Produce Stakes semi-final
	Farloe Verdict	28.09	06.05.2003	Blue Riband Final
	Toosey Blue	28.05	10.07.2007	
	Eye Onthe Storm	28.03	29.09.2009	
	Eye Onthe Storm	28.02	13.04.2010	Blue Riband Final
606m	Let Him Go	37.65	1977+	
	Glideaway Ted	38.78	27.03.1982	
645m	Palace Issue	39.01	22.09.2000	
663m	Katie Toughnut	40.88	1977+	
	Man Soda	41.59	1983+	
	Scurlogue Champ	41.56	27.02.1985	
	Special Bran	41.50	07.09.1985	
	Super Duchess	41.42	1987+	
	Roseville Jackie	41.37	09.04.1988	
	670m	Fearless Lynx	40.44	02.1995
683m	Gaisce Dubh	41.29	04.10.1991	
815m	Scurlogue Champ	52.51	01.12.1984	
	Minnies Siren	52.50	27.04.1988	
820m	Kilpipe Bib	51.71	24.06.1993	
892m	Spewood Wizard	56.13	27.04.1999	
	Spewood Wizard	55.74	18.01.2000	
	Spewood Wizard	55.34	16.06.2000	
	Head Iton Jordan	55.24	27.03.2007	
	474mH	Autumn Berlin	29.39	1980+
	Lovely Pud	29.38	08.09.1984	
	Kildare Slippy	29.14	22.04.1991	
	Kildare Slippy	29.06	14.03.1992	Grand National Trial Stakes
	Kildare Slippy	28.79	28.03.1992	Grand National First Round
	Kildare Slippy	28.52	08.04.1992	Grand National Final
645mH	Eezar Ferrari	40.71	13.12.1999	
	Go Dutch	40.70	25.02.2003	

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