

## **Kings Heath (Birmingham)**

The first track to open in Birmingham was Kings Heath and when the gates opened on 21<sup>st</sup> May 1927 the crowds flocked to the stadium to see the new sport.

The stadium was south of Taylor Road and east of Alcester Road South and if it were standing today the north section of the stadium would be where Wynfield and Leander Gardens are located and the south section of the stadium is where the Cocks Moors Woods golf course stands.

Back in 1927 the crowds arrived by tram but Kings Heath would always be in the shadow of larger neighbours Hall Green and Perry Barr. Nevertheless the track enjoyed some fine moments starting with those very early days when the British Greyhound Sports Club acquired the lease of the ground and constructed a greyhound stadium. The company owned four other tracks in 1927, Darnall (Sheffield), Knowle (Bristol), Boulevard (Hull) and St Annes (Blackpool).

In 1936 the lease switched to Herbert Leo Craven and he introduced a major new event called the Lincoln. The first running ended with a victory for the Arthur Doc Callanan trained Slightly Potty.

Kings Heath gained stability in 1949 when the freehold was finally bought outright by the Kings Heath Racecourse Ltd.

Described as a fair sized course with fairly easy turns and a good length run in, the circuit had a small 390 yard circumference. The main distances were 480 and 675 yards and greyhounds chased an 'Outside Sumner' hare. On the turnstiles side of the track there was the main stand featuring the Silver Club and Best Ring Club with matching betting rings. On the opposite side of the course were two covered stands, to the west was the popular betting ring and to the east were the racing kennels, isolation kennels and home kennels that included a rest room and surgery. Rest kennels were located at Cookhill in Worcestershire.

Perspective owners had to pay kennel charges of one guinea per week and the greyhound would be accepted into the track kennels on the understanding that all greyhounds were subject to veterinary examination, NGRC rules and company conditions.

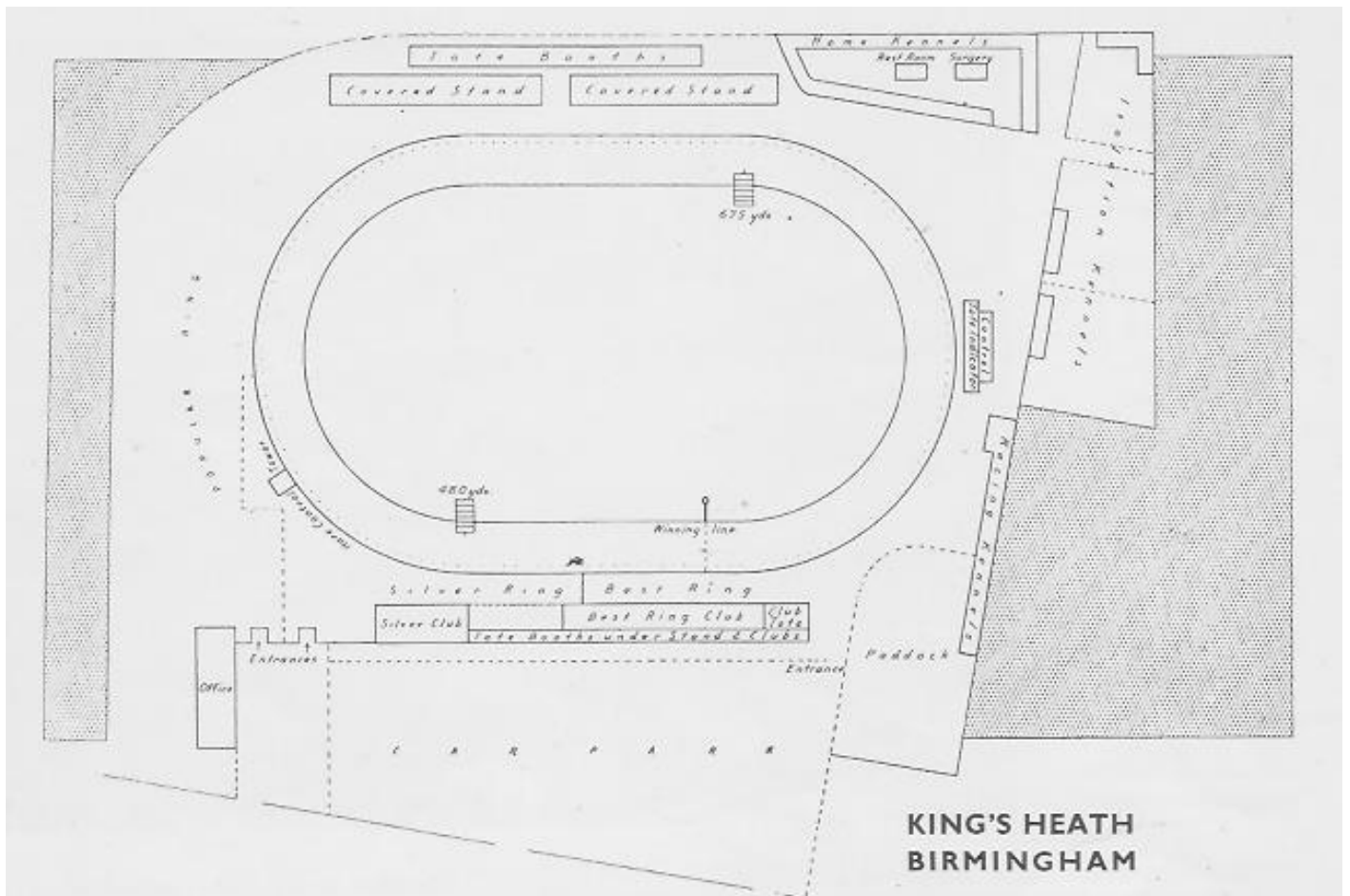
The first track trained success came in 1948 when King Hero triumphed in the Cambridgeshire at West Ham when trained by P.E.Frost. Another race called the Midland Oaks was introduced and Kings Heath gained more success in 1959 when the Len Bane trained Killahalla raided rival track Hall Green and secured the Midland Flat title. Jim Todd arrived at the track from Cardiff shortly afterwards to join the training ranks that consisted of Bill Bryant, Alf Gibbins, Len Bane and Allen.

Following the closure of Lythalls Lane, Coventry in 1964 the prestigious Eclipse Stakes switched to Kings Heath in Birmingham meaning that Kings Heath now had three noteworthy competitions.

Despite the new trainers and races the track will always be best remembered for being one of the original suppliers of BAGS fixtures. The Bookmakers Afternoon Greyhound Service (BAGS) was formed following the ongoing problems appertaining to afternoon racing. The leading bookmaking firms behind BAGS would pay the NGRS (Racecourse operators) a set fee for the off course rights. The NGRS would then distribute the money between all NGRC tracks. This system would continue until 1978. Tracks first used on the BAGS were Park Royal, Kings Heath, Stamford Bridge and Oxford.

Jim Todd scored big race wins in 67 & 68 with Mystic Prairie and Shady Peacock (Golden Crest & Oxfordshire Trophy) after Len Bane's 1964 Yorkshire Produce triumph with Konig Seiger.

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When the GRA bought the track in 1970 the writing was on the wall, they owned Hall Green and had invested heavily in the track and when the Kings Heath takeover resulted in redundancies for the tracks senior managers and trainers Jim Todd, Alf Gibbins and Bill Bryant the local patrons feared the worst.

Those fears soon turned to anguish as Kings Heath was closed in 1971 with little warning. The year turned out to be a gloomy year for the sport as five tracks bit the dust. The final meeting was on 31<sup>st</sup> March 1971 and soon after developers owned the land and the stadium was demolished.

The site today is located at (1° 53' 21.577"W 52° 25' 12.061"N).

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### Selected Track Records

<b>Distance</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Notes</b>
480y	Ilisley Darkie	??	1946+	
	Special Intention	27.12	1954+	
	Poetic License	26.36	14.04.1962	
	Nancys Flash	26.24	1970+	
495y	Peace Sprite	27.08	11.07.1964	
660y	Konig Seiger	37.08	17.07.1965	
700y	Inferior Cracker	39.94	25.05.1963	
880y	Joystick	50.86	08.04.1964	
495yH	Happy Reveller	27.79	28.08.1965	

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