

Liverpool (Breck Park)

The city of Liverpool would of course engage in the new sport of greyhound racing that was gripping the country in 1927. The first of four tracks was constructed along the Townsend Road. Known as Breck Park the Liverpool Greyhound Club Ltd (LGC) was one of the first greyhound racing companies to be created ensuring that the Greyhound Racing Association (GRA) had some competition.

The rivalry got a little out of hand when the GRA advertised a warning in national and local newspapers to potential stadium investors claiming that they had sole rights of greyhounds chasing electric hares which had upset other companies because it implied that they were the only company allowed to race greyhounds. It upset Leeds (Elland Road) and Breck Park so much that they both took the GRA to court over the notices, they felt that it was unfair that the GRA could publish such material in Leeds and Liverpool when rival tracks existed in those cities already. Meanwhile in Liverpool a track at Prescott Road, Stanley was owned by the GRA and was due to open on the 17th August.

The first meeting at Breck Park got underway on 23rd April 1927 and attracted 8,000 spectators. In direct competition with Stanley for spectators the management was very quick to announce that they would race throughout the winter because GRA Stanley had just made a press release stating that they were closing for winter in mid-October and reopening on Easter week 1928. The perils and dangers of early racing were highlighted when during a meeting in September the electric hare ran off the rails in a shower of sparks crashing through the railings scattering spectators in the shilling ring. A most tragic hare accident would occur at Leicester two years later.

Breck Park became a very popular venue for boxing and held many high profile bouts over the following years being promoted alongside the greyhound racing. Affiliation to a governing body came in the form of the British Greyhound Tracks Control Society (BGTCS); this organisation was much smaller than the National Greyhound Racing Society (NGRS). The GRA Stanley track changed ownership to the Electric Hare Company Ltd in 1929 whose directors were Jimmy Shand, Tom Wilson and John Bilisland.

A third Liverpool track called the White City was opened on 20th August 1932 and was just a stone's throw away from Breck Park, if one followed the Townsend Road south they would come to the Lower Breck Road which is where the track was situated. The Anfield Greyhound & Sports Club Ltd owned the track and would also compete for patronage,

With three tracks up and running yet another arrived but this time it was away from the centre of Liverpool near the docks, Seaforth became the fourth Liverpool greyhound stadium when opening on 25th February 1933. Despite the fierce competition all four tracks actually made good profits, probably based on the fact that there was a very keen population willing to spend money on the racing. Breck Park suffered one week's closure in 1932 due to the fact that authorities had closed the track waiting to see the outcome of court case involving the tracks use of a totalisator.

Breck Park switched allegiance from BGTCS to NGRS in 1932 becoming the only Liverpool track with affiliation to the NGRS at the time. The totalisator was a significant area of profit for tracks but faced opposition from many religious groups. Nevertheless despite Breck Park having the lowest turnover of the four tracks in Liverpool it was still able to maintain remarkable figures as the Second World War approached.

The track is reported to have suffered bomb damage during world war two as many parts of Liverpool did but the closure of the track cannot be attributed to the damage because business was good after the war. In 1946 the totalisator turnover was £836,354 and one year later £624,157.

The closure was a result of a serious fire on 26th February 1948, the same day that an unrelated serious fire ripped through White City, Manchester. Whereas the Manchester track recovered Breck Park did not and the wooden buildings were destroyed resulting in the immediate and permanent closure of the track. The Liverpool racing Club had owned the track from day one and clearly felt that it would be too costly to rebuild.

After demolition the site was renamed Edinburgh Park in 1953, the track would have been at the far end where the Edinburgh Park Dockers Club and Waterloo Dock FC football pitches meet Darmonds Green Avenue today.

.....continued

Selected Tote Returns

Year	Breck Park Turnover £	Seaforth Turnover £	Stanley Turnover £	White City Turnover £
1938	x	x	245,642	286,394
1939	x	425,460	x	x
1941	156,634	359,711	351,956	296,357
1942	270,732	506,371	537,478	542,340
1943	X	518,112	597,686	751,040
1944	X	806,681	864,618	841,182
1945	X	951,523	1,112,331	726,440
1946	863,354	1,990,410	1,814,431	1,726,194
1947	624,157	681,145	983,540	957,067
1948	69,638	385,078	754,551	916,473