

Liverpool (Seaforth)

The syndicate of Jimmy Shand, Tom Wilson and John Bilsland had moved their entire greyhound operation from Southend-on-Sea (greyhounds included) by train to take over Stanley in Liverpool in 1927 after leaving Southend due to higher rent demands. The Stanley track in the Old Swan area of Liverpool opened on the 17th August 1927 becoming the second track to operate in the city after Breck Park that had opened earlier that same year. Wilson opted out of the company and his shares were purchased by the other two who formed the Electric Hare Company. Plans were drawn up by the pair to build a third track in the city of Liverpool at Church Road, Seaforth, east of Liverpool docks and Crosby Road south.

However before the company had started construction of the stadium Bilsland bought out Shand in 1930 for £400,000 leaving the Electric Hare Company under the control of Bilsland.

With the money gained from the buyout Shand had plans of his own and they were of a grand nature; a super track just one mile from the Stanley track and this third Liverpool track called the White City actually opened before Seaforth with a first meeting held on Saturday 20th August 1932. Shand's company was called the 'The White City Greyhound Racing Company' and this now meant there were three city tracks operating.

The Seaforth area was heavily populated with an industrial heart but there were two available plots of land that could provide enough space for a new stadium. The track itself would be built on the only vacant land in the area but the residential kennels would find a home on the Portland House grounds between the Old Seaford Convent and the impressive Seaforth Hall. Three stands were constructed, two adjoining ones adjacent to Church Road and one on the opposite side of the course facing Crosby Road South and Henley Street (no longer in existence). The racing kennels were on the corner of Church Road and Caradoc Road but there were no resident kennels because all of the greyhounds were housed at sister track Stanley.

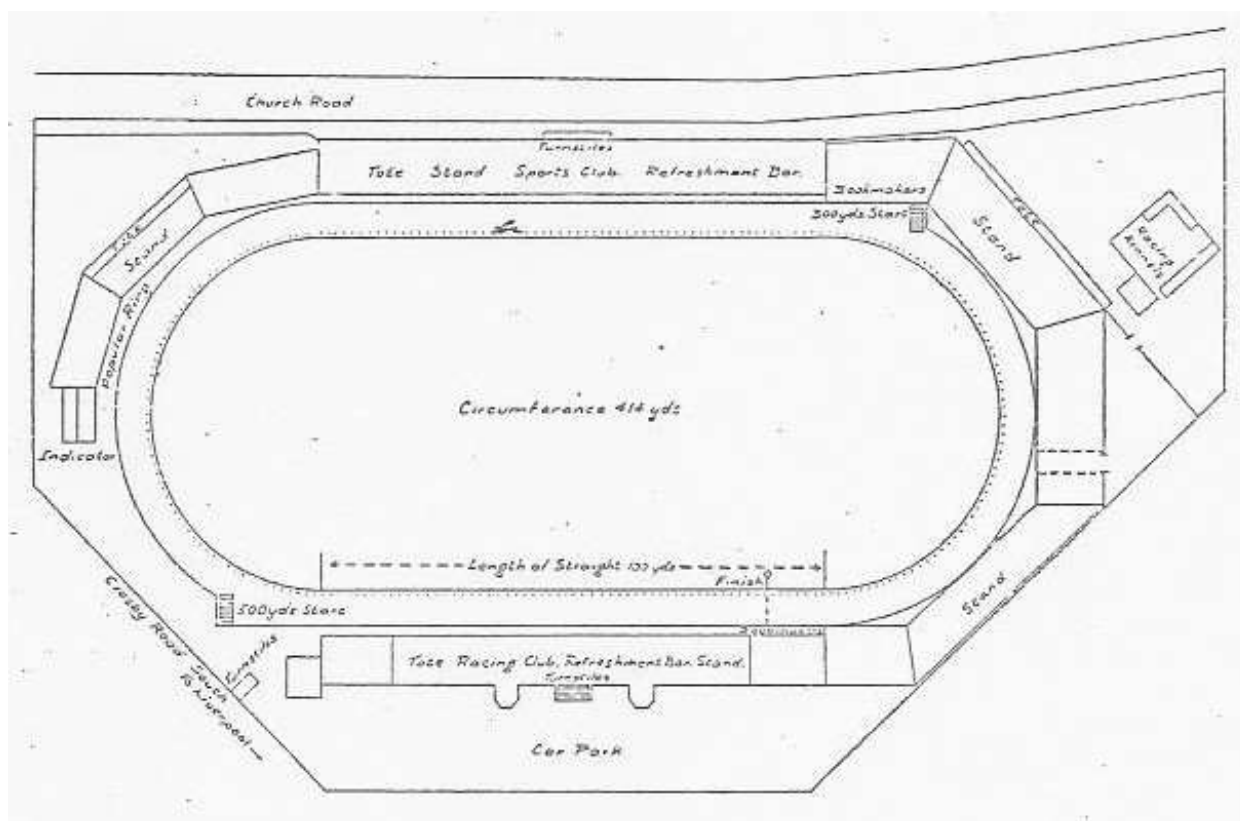
The circumference of the track was 414 yards with 100 yard long straights and fairly tight bends, distances were 300 and 500 yards and the hare system used was as 'Inside Sumner'.

The long awaited venture became the fourth Liverpool greyhound stadium when opening on 25th February 1933. The decision to open Seaforth by the Electric Hare Company Ltd would be an extremely successful one because despite its location away from the centre it would become the most frequented in this industrial area by the docks. 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.

John Bilsland was later involved in the formation of more tracks based around his home of Glasgow and involved the opening of Shawfield and Firhill.

The stadium hosted Speedway for a short period of time from 1934-1935 but it never gained a foothold. Seaforth was able to command the largest audience and spend in Liverpool, after the Second World War in 1946 totalisator turnover was an impressive £1,990,410 and one year later it was £681,145.

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By March 1950 the decision was made by Seaforth and Firhill to resign from their NGRC affiliation along with fellow Liverpool tracks of Stanley, Breck Park and White City. The chairman of Seaforth & Firhill John Bilsland stated that the cost of NGRC membership exceeds £1,000 per year if you included the greyhound registration fees.

Sadly Breck Park suffered a catastrophic fire in 1948 which eventually resulted in closure and this was followed by Stanley in 1961 replaced by a fish, fruit and vegetable market.

In 1965 Seaforth closed, the last meeting was on 31st December and today the area is housing called Church Grove found East of Liverpool docks and 'Crosby Road South' and south of 'Church Road' (3° 0' 46.854"W 53° 27' 44.692"N).

Selected Track Records

Distance	Name	Time	Date	Notes
500y	Buckram	28.66	14.06.1943	

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