

## White City (Liverpool)

The Jimmy Shand-John Bilsland success had started at Southend-on-Sea and had moved on to Stanley and Seaforth in Liverpool. The syndicate would soon trade as the Electric Hare Company but before that happened Bilsland bought out Shand for £400,000 leaving Bilsland in sole control of Stanley and the soon to be Seaforth.

With the money Shand had plans of a grand nature, a super track just one mile from Stanley and it would be called White City-Liverpool located on the Lower Breck Road and sometimes referred to as Anfield (not to be confused with Breck Park).

Jimmy Shand's super track at White City Liverpool had been built in record time and was the first completely covered-in stadium. Shand was now a direct competitor of John Bilsland but the opening of White City did not worry Bilsland because he also had further plans afoot. These plans were based around his home of Glasgow and involved the opening of two more tracks, Shawfield and Firhill.

The super track was squeezed in between housing and the Belmont Road Institution (a workhouse that would later become a hospital) on an existing athletic ground. The third Liverpool track duly opened on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> 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. Trading as 'The White City Greyhound Racing Company' Shand would compete with the Electric Hare Company previously mentioned and the Liverpool Greyhound Club Ltd owners of Breck Park for patronage. The directors were Mrs & Mrs Shand, R.A.Russell, Bee Edwards and Robert Wright. Shand, Russell and Wright acted as stewards with the latter also holding the post of Racing Director.

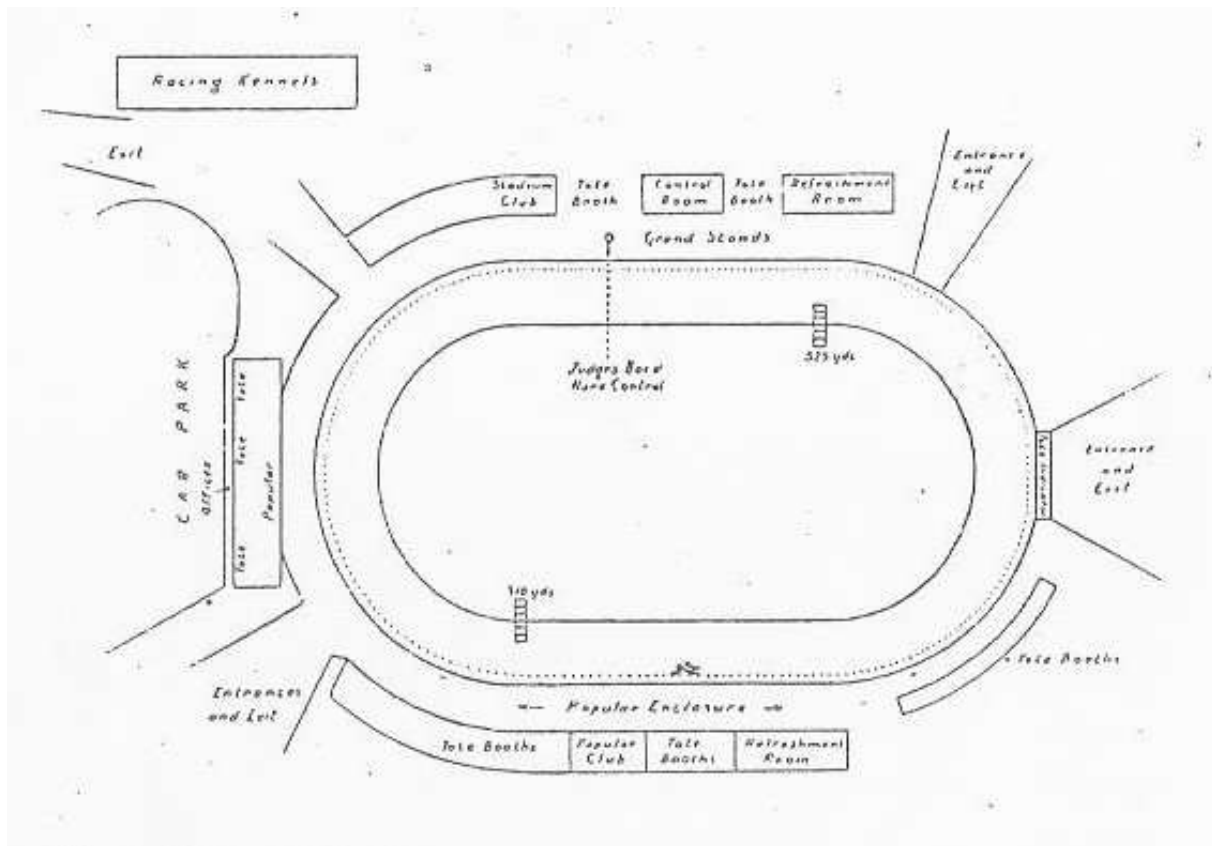
With three tracks up and running yet another arrived but this time it was away from the centre of Liverpool near the docks, Seaforth became the fourth Liverpool greyhound stadium when opened by Bilsland on 25<sup>th</sup> February 1933. Despite the fierce competition all four tracks actually made good profits, probably based on the fact that there was a very keen population willing to spend money on the racing.

The White City track was completely under cover and cost £70,000 to construct but there is evidence that the track was put up for sale in November 1932 for the sum of £150,000. It is believed that the sale eventually took place sometime around 1936 when Shand sold it to the Anfield Greyhound and Sports Club Limited.

The circuit was described as a fair-size course with surface thatched all year round. There was an 'Outside Sumner' and facilities included a large Members Club situated in the best enclosure. All of the greyhounds were company owned.

Profits after the Second World War were significant with Totalisator turnover of £1,726,194 in 1946 followed by £957,067 in 1947. Originally affiliated to the BGTCS they would switch to the NGRC and would see all other rival Liverpool tracks close over the next three decades. Breck Park suffered a catastrophic fire in 1948 contributing towards their eventual closure.

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By March 1950 the decision was made by the four Liverpool tracks and Firhill to resign from their NGRC affiliation. The chairman of Seaforth & Firhill John Bilisland stated that the cost of NGRC membership exceeds £1,000 per year if you included the greyhound registration fees.

Breck Park suffered a devastating fire in 1948 which eventually led to closure and this was followed by Stanley in 1961 replaced by a fish, fruit and vegetable market and finally Seaforth at the end of 1965.

White City Liverpool would quietly trade over the years and would even run as an independent track for a short time; racing was held on Friday and Saturday nights at 7.30pm. The track was a 440 yard circumference circuit and the running surface was hay on peat moss and there was still an Outside Sumner hare in use. Facilities around this time included two buffet bars and two licensed bars.

In 1972 the track was purchased by the Greyhound Racing Association which had worrying overtones because during this period of greyhound racing history the GRA were actively buying tracks to sell for development. The purchase indeed was a disaster for the track because the GRA did sell the track for redevelopment.

Time was called on the last remaining Liverpool track on 6<sup>th</sup> October 1973, only 700 people turned up to witness greyhound racing disappear from Liverpool. Edward Baines the manager organised the movement of eighty company greyhounds to other tracks and all of the equipment was sold as the site was redeveloped.

Today St Margarets Primary School is situated where the track existed off the Lower Breck Road on the south side between Belmont Grove and Hampson Street. The actual stadium would have sat largely on the school field (2° 56' 40.108"W 53° 25' 26.148"N).

It was odd that a large city like Liverpool had no greyhound racing as early as 1973, a plan 27 years later by the GRA to start a new track in the northern suburb of Fazakerley failed to materialise.

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### Selected Track Records

<b>Distance</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Notes</b>
500y	Swift Wonder	28.57	18.09.1964	
	Moose Jet	28.52	1970+	
525y	Jeannie Johno	30.32	1947+	
	Keep Quacking	30.22	21.07.1948	
525yH	Red Nuxer	31.00	03.1946	

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