

## Park Royal

Before the turn of the century the area of Twyford in north-west London had been largely rural which resulted in the Royal Agricultural Society (RAS) building the RAS Showgrounds in 1903 intended to be used every year for their annual show. However despite it becoming a well-known area and home to Queens Park Rangers FC the Showgrounds were sold in 1907 and attracted industrial companies. Buildings began to be constructed in the area which was known as Park Royal and the Park Royal Ground also hosted Queens Park Rangers FC. The Army took over the ground from QPR FC in 1915 and the showground area and football ground became a major Guinness Brewery and other engineering works by 1920.

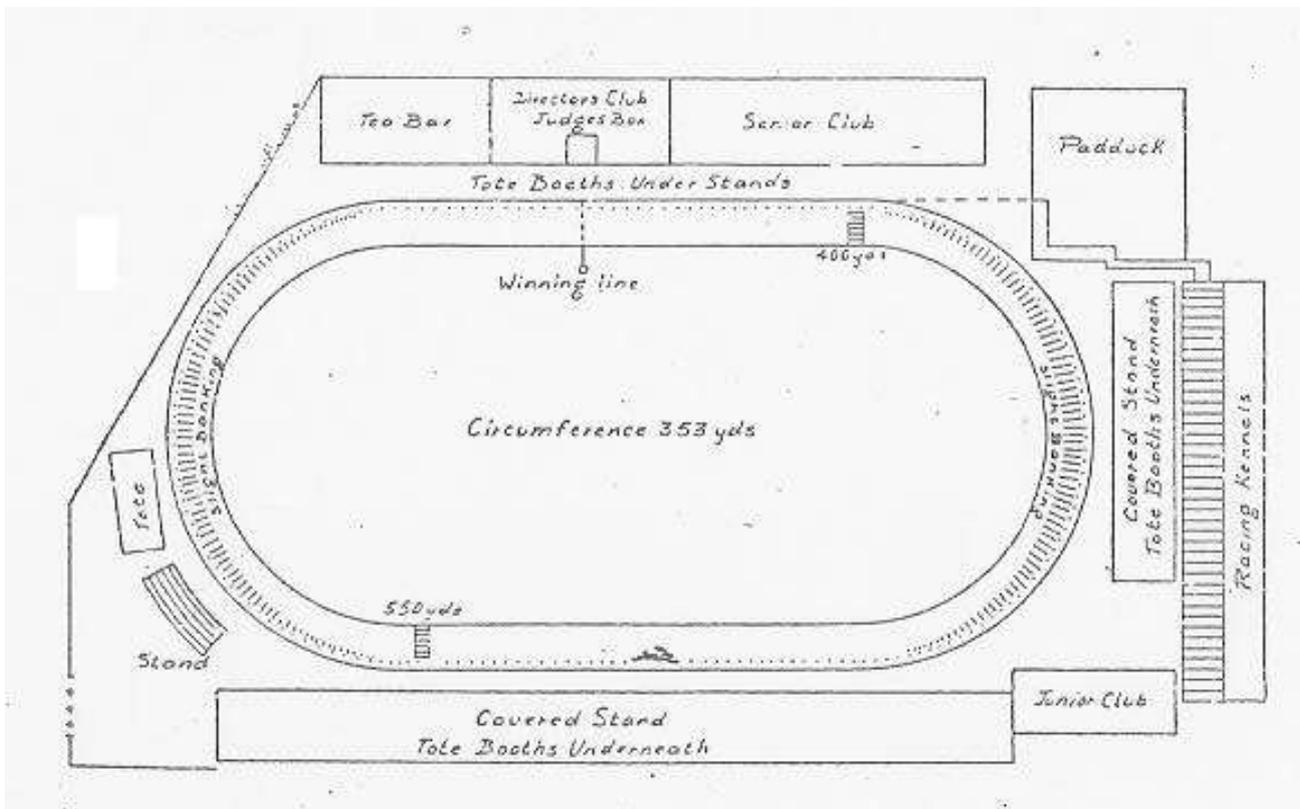
In 1931 a new stadium was opened with entrances along the Abbey Road. The stadium site chosen was slightly east of the Park Royal area and north of an athletic ground and engineering works. The main use for the stadium would be the new sport of greyhound racing that was gripping the nation. Next door was the newly built Park Royal coachworks that would also become a very well-known business.

The Park Royal Stadium had two huge covered stands that ran the length of the home and back straights and a third stand with terracing was constructed at the north end, on the south end was the totalisator and more terracing. There was a first class restaurant facility with enclosed glazed and centrally heated licensed clubs.

In 1935 Park Royal was enlarged for use by Acton and Willesden rugby league club and in 1939 the stadium introduced the Guineas competition that would firmly establish itself in the racing calendar. The Crowley trained Musical Duke provided Park Royal with their first taste of major success after winning the Laurels in 1939.

Despite interruption during the war years the public were lucky enough to see the Guineas continue annually and watch wartime superstar Ballynennan Moon win the event in 1942. The best greyhound attached to Park Royal during the war years was Rochester Clipper trained by Miss Motchman winner of both the Metropolitan Cup at Clapton and the Wembley Spring Cup in 1941.

Similar to all other London greyhound stadiums at the time the track experienced phenomenal business despite the hardships of the post war period.



.....continued

During the summer of 1946 greyhound racing experienced an extraordinary high with phenomenal attendances and it was during this period that a company called London Stadiums Ltd brokered a deal to takeover Wandsworth Stadium Ltd, Park Royal Stadium Ltd and Charlton Stadium (1936) Ltd. The three companies that were taken over received shares in London Stadiums Ltd.

The Sunbury kennels were located in a rural setting on Hamworth Road in Sunbury-on-Thames which was 12 miles from Park Royal stadium. The kennels set in fourteen acres had accommodation for 600 greyhounds with served the London Stadiums of Charlton, Park Royal and Wandsworth. In addition to the kennels it offered a fully equipped veterinary surgery including x-ray, ultra-violet and infra-red ray apparatus with the kennel staff and veterinary surgeon living on site. The self-contained exercising grounds included over three quarters of a mile of special track for road work.

George Curtis arrived from Portsmouth and who would become a legendary trainer won the 1950 St Leger for Park Royal with Fawn Mack. In the fifties London Stadiums Ltd appointed R E C Parkes as Director of Racing to oversee their three tracks at Charlton, Park Royal & Wandsworth. The Racing Manager at the time was M J O'Hara who remained at the helm for many years. K A Guy replaced R E C Parkes in the mid-sixties.

O'Hea trained many winners here and was one of the leading trainers throughout the fifties whilst A Forman won the Buckinghamshire Cup in 1958 with The Gifts Champion and Jack Kinsley was also a trainer here before replacing Leslie Reynolds at Wembley in 1962 following his retirement. Kinsley's kennel range was in turn taken over by Stan Gudgin.

Park Royal raced Monday and Friday afternoons at 2.30pm following the Bookmakers Afternoon Greyhound Service (BAGS) formation. 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. The first tracks chosen were Park Royal, Kings Heath, Stamford Bridge and Oxford. Providing the dogs for the service were H Gray, G Clark, Dave Barker, A Forman and Bill Hennessey.

Even though the track had a BAGS service it closed suddenly on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1969, the manner of the closure came as a shock to trainers, owners and patrons as it literally closed overnight without warning on 22<sup>nd</sup> January (0° 16' 25.218"W 51° 31' 59.971"N).

### **Selected Track Records**

<b>Distance</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Notes</b>
400y	Grosvenor Ferdinand	22.70	1938+	
	Cash Balance	22.57	08.05.1939	
	Black Peter	22.10	08.05.1939	
	Montego Bay	22.04	13.04.1953	
550y	Flying Jockey	31.80	31.10.1938	
	Lady Maud	31.20	20.03.1948	
	Waltzers Choice	31.11	09.03.1953	
570y	Trojan Lad	32.68	14.09.1962	
755y	Star of Sprig	43.56	22.06.1964	
	Ever Work		08.06.1966	
400yH	Son of the Brave	23.14	31.06.1939	
	Vintners Cup	22.76	15.04.1957	
550yH	Chic Chic	33.45	20.08.1936	
	Scraggy Lad	32.14	11.09.1960	
570yH	Indoor Sport	34.12	05.11.1962	