

Perry Barr (Walsall Road)

The third track to open in Birmingham was Perry Barr in the Birchfield area of North Birmingham. Kings Heath and Hall Green had both opened in 1927 to large audiences and Perry Barr soon followed in the spring of 1928.

The track was situated west of the Walsall Road and the first night of racing was promoted by the Birmingham Greyhound Club Limited. The stadium had been built to the cost of £70,000 and the first night of racing was on 7th April.

Despite the fact that the sport was experiencing a boom for some reason the promoters ran into financial difficulties and within two years were left bankrupt. The Birmingham Greyhound Club Limited had failed to capitalise on the growing interest observed all around the country. A licence to continue racing was refused in November 1928 probably due to evidence of funds owed and the official receiver announced that £95,000 was owed to creditors during a meeting in August 1929. This was an extraordinary amount bearing in mind that the stadium itself had only cost £75,000 to build.

Luckily this was not the end of the venture, Perry Barr Stadium Ltd became the new promoters of greyhound racing and they made a great success of it. It was described as a good galloping track with long straights and banked bends suiting all types of dogs, especially large, wide and 'leggy-on-the-turn' varieties. The circumference was 462 yards with distances of 500, 525 & 700 yards behind an M&S cable outside here. The Racing Manager was Mr J. Poole.

Entering through the car park you would be presented with the 3'6 enclosure, the main stand with dining facilities, a milk bar and tote booths. On the opposite side of the circuit was the 2'6 enclosure, another milk bar and the club stand. On the first bend was the race kennels and paddock featuring four ranges of kennels for forty dogs each, three of these were for home trained dogs with the fourth being for newcomers and visitors. There was also an isolation block for sick and injured dogs with a separate surgery.

Mick the Miller attracted thousands in 1931 when he took on two hounds in match races. He beat St Leger champion Maidens Boy on August 8th but lost to Northern Flat champion Ross Regatta on Sep 19th.

Even a disastrous fire in April 1937 failed to halt progress at this Midlands track, the fire caused £12,000 worth of damage, a very significant figure in 1937. The Birmingham Cup was introduced in 1939 as the premier event to be held annually and it was quickly established as a notable competition.

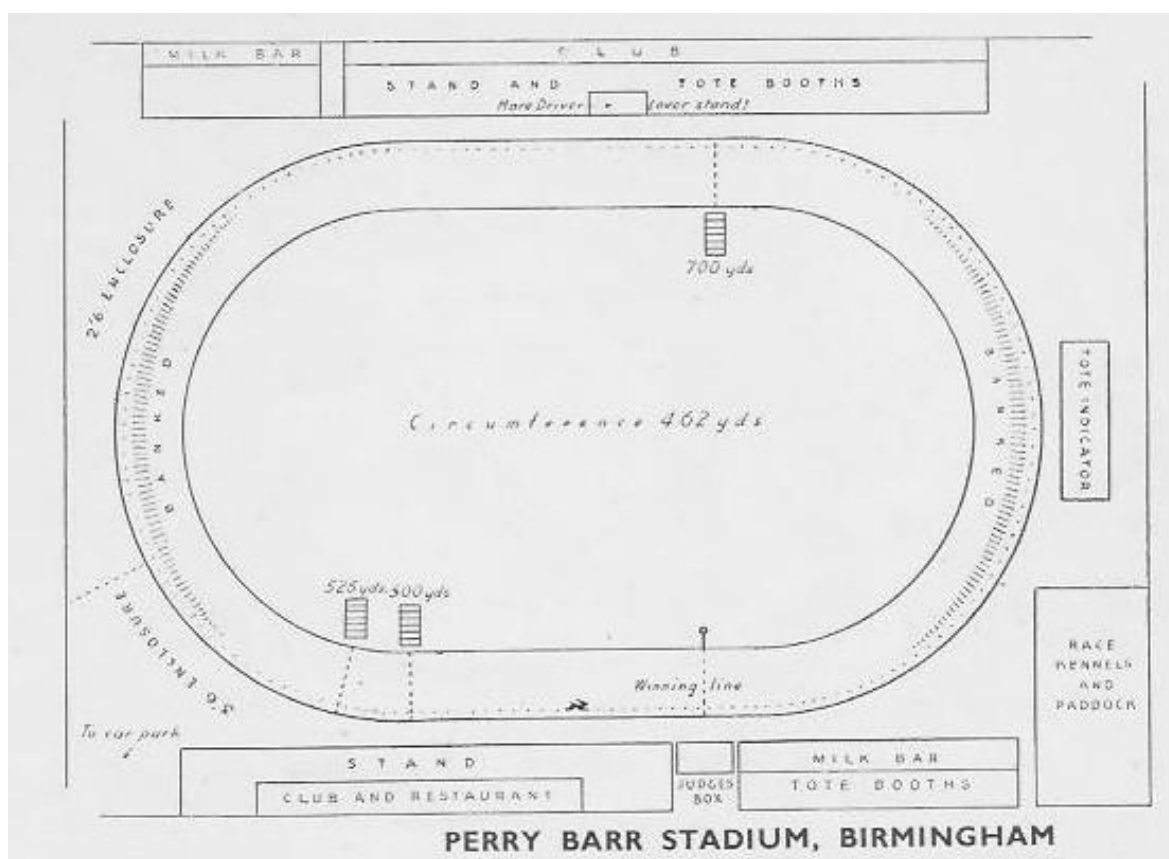


***Perry Barr
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The war arrived in 1939 and was well into its fourth year when the Mr Bithel owned, Tom Baldwin trained Model Dasher won the Midland Puppy Derby and Eclipse. The white and brindle dog then proceeded to break two track records on his home turf followed by triumphing in the Key, the Test, Wembley Gold Cup and Birmingham Cup in 1944. Model Dasher had put the Midlands track on the map and then trainer Jack Toseland produced a golden spell where he mixed with the best trainers in the country and gave the London dogs a run for their money.

In 1947 Slaney Record finished third in the Greyhound Derby, the following year Baytown Stork qualified for the Derby final as well, it was no easy feat for a trainer to make two consecutive finals, Stork also won the Birmingham Cup. Incredibly Toseland was to train four more Derby finalists (three in the next four years), Saft Alex in 1949, Black Mire the runner up in 1951, Dashboard Dan in 1952 and Shy Prairie some years later in 1965 completed a remarkable sequence of achievements.

Even though Toseland failed to win the big one he managed to send out two Welsh Derby winners (Negros Lad and Go Doggie Go), two St Leger winners (Black Mire & Wincot Clifford) and one Puppy Derby victor (Saft Alex). Perry Barr continued to mix it with the bigger tracks and another trainer Tom Baldwin claimed classics when Red Tan landed the Cesarewitch in 1947 and Davos Rink brought home the Welsh Derby in 1964.



Former Willenhall General and Racing Manager John Wilson joined the track taking over the hot seat from Mr Poole who would retire some years later in 1961.

The track became the first provincial to install automatic ray timing instead of the traditional hand timing and in 1965 the track trainers consisted of Tom Baldwin, Jimmy Quinn and Jack Toseland.

During the period from the war until 1970 Perry Barr gained success in many competitions and the track was highly regarded, Jimmy Quinn and more recent trainer additions Colin McNally, Brian Jay and Denis Delaney all won prominent races. The pick of the bunch was Greenane Flash, a St Leger champion and Derby finalist.

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1970 started with a blow for the track, another fire caused extensive damage but this once again failed to hinder the charge of the Perry Barr success. The main stand was rebuilt with a new restaurant and bar facilities and the track reopened soon after. Frank Baldwin had taken over from his father Tom who would retire to Wales and with John Bassett, Bertie Gaynor, Paddy McEvoy and Barbara Tompkins being handlers at the track you could see why the Birmingham venue was arguably the strongest provincial track in the country.

The list of 1970's winners is just too long mention so the most notable were the 1975 Scottish Derby winner Dromlara Master and of course the 1975 greyhound of the year called Pineapple Grand trained by Frank Baldwin. This fawn bitch won the Oaks, the Laurels and finished third in the Derby.

John Rowe a former trainer at Knowle and Oxford and Racing Manager at Leicester switched to the hot seat at Perry Barr joining General manager John Moore. John's sons Bob was Racing Manager at rival track Hall Green.

Win number twelve came the way of Westpark Mustard over 550 yards at the track on 23rd April 1974 when she was challenging the world record and in 1981 the stadium hosted the trainer's championship.

Amidst all of this success the stadium was bought by Ladbrokes and renamed the Birchfield Ladbroke Stadium, the purchase had arisen after Ladbrokes missed out on securing Romford and Brighton, beaten to it by Corals. As a result they turned their attention to the Midlands and bought Perry Barr. Further investment followed with facilities being updated by the bookmaking giant, £100,000 was spent including new lighting. Former GRA director of Racing Arthur Aldridge, now fulfilling the same role for Ladbrokes oversaw the purchase.

So all was going swimmingly, Jim Woods, formerly Charlie Boulton's assistant at Harringay took up the position of Racing Manager in 1982. The racing pattern was Tuesdays, Thursday and Saturdays and the strong group of attached trainers continued to reap rewards for the stadium.

Suddenly rumours surfaced regarding the desire of Ladbrokes to sell the land to developers, an unsettled Paddy Hancox moved to Hall Green and Bertie Gaynor switched to Coventry signaling a huge problem for Perry Barr. The rumours proved to be true when a sale to developers was agreed and the site sold, the last meeting was held on 14th April 1984, 56 years and 7 days after it had opened.

The site today is the huge 'One stop shopping centre' and not a single sign of the old track exists (1° 54' 18.375"W 52° 31' 6.504"N).

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Selected Track Records

Distance	Name	Time	Date	Notes
340y	Sufi	18.88	04.08.1960	
500y	Model Dasher	28.24	1946+	
	Blackburn Blue	28.30	11.10.1950	
525y	Halston Parade	29.57	1946+	
	Dromin Glory	29.31	04.08.1962	
	Discretions	29.24	1968+	Birmingham Cup heats
550y	Piper Apache	30.72	21.08.1963	
700y	Model Dasher	40.18	1946+	
	Brandy Soda	39.90	28.11.1964	
755y	Lancewood Olly	43.89	02.08.1958	
880y	Shanbally More	51.88	07.03.1964	
500yH	Brindled Beggar	29.25	1950+	
525yH	Holiday Thrill	30.83	1946+	
	Happy Reveller	30.72	17.06.1965	
310m	Major Arkle	18.63	1983+	
475m	Ardralla Victory	29.13	1983+	
485m	Miles Apart	29.69	20.05.1975	
500m	Ramblers Jet	31.16	1981+	
	Ramblers Jet	31.04	1981+	
	Desert Pilot	30.88	09.08.1979	
	Special Account	30.58	1983+	
650m	Columns Corner	41.12	14.08.1979	
	Brainy Prince	40.77	1983+	
725m	Ritas Hero	45.78	1983+	
830m	Decoy Boom	53.17	1983+	
890m	Corleys Kizzy	57.77	1983+	
915m	Carols Star	60.18	1983+	
475mH	Keen Fowler	29.93	1983+	
500mH	Keslake Banjo	31.92	1983+	

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