

Burnley

South of Burnley there was a large open space known as Towneley Park which served Towneley Hall and the Towneley family for five centuries. In 1902 the estate was sold to the Burnley Corporation and despite the fact that most of the park remained in situ they did agree the sale of a plot of land that ran alongside the River Calder and the Hall's north access road. This ten acre plot was in the area known as Towneley Holmes.

A local company with a share capital of £13,000 purchased and constructed the track which was a gigantic 570 yards in circumference surpassing the even the later Reading track. Towneley experienced its debut on 3 September 1927 with seven thousand attending the meeting opened by Lady O'Hagan. The stadium could be accessed from either the east or west side, on the east side the path was opposite the Smalley Street junction with Woodgrove Road and cut across Towneley Park meeting the Hall's north access road. The stadium kennels were adjacent to this path situated on the north side of the stadium. From the west there was footbridge over the River Calder that met the Hall's north access road. Whichever entry was chosen resulted in the same turnstile entrances on the east side of the stadium being used where the main stand overlooked the course. The greyhounds initially housed at the Burnley track consisted of 100 brought mainly from Hull.

The stadium soon came under the control of the Associated Greyhound Racecourses with Towneley becoming their second of three tracks that they would eventually own. The first being Darnall in Sheffield which opened in May 1927 and the third was the Old Craven Park in Hull which opened in May 1928. Towneley also hosted dirt track speedway in 1929. Haulage businessman Bill Sharples had a litter out of track bitch Calliope, sired by Grand National finalist Douro and trainers included Jack Hillman (a former England goalkeeper) and Jack Ashworth.

Just four years after opening the Associated Greyhound Racecourses went bankrupt with the track then being taken over by a local businessman named W Spencer who closed the stadium blaming the government betting bill that restricted the days that tracks could race. With meetings limited to a maximum of 101 per annum the management put the stadium, kennels and equipment up for auction.

From here the Towneley track was taken over by Captain Ramsbottom who had replaced Harry Bury as the judge and handicapper under a previous promotion. Ramsbottom then made a quick profit by selling onto two brothers Dr. and Clem Hodgson. It appears that the constant changes of owner affected the way the track conducted itself and it was unable to sustain racing with the last meeting taking place on 2 November 1935.

The buildings associated to the stadium (stands, shelters and kennels) were demolished and the track was filled in as the site became playing fields. A golf course then spread its wings north and incorporated the site into the course. The position of the stadium would have been on the most northerly holes that are played on the course today, exactly on the opposite side of the River Calder to the £33 million Unity College. (2° 13' 33.098"W 53° 46' 53.587"N)