

Derby

The greyhound stadium in Derby had extremely unusual roots in that it was the prison for a full century before. Originally the grecian-doric style new county gaol was built of freestone to the cost of over £65,000. It was a six acre site on South Street backing onto Uttoxeter Old Road. The entrance was at the end of Vernon Street and the construction took six years to complete opening in 1827. The walls were 25 feet high enclosing three acres of land and the gaol held over 300 prisoners.

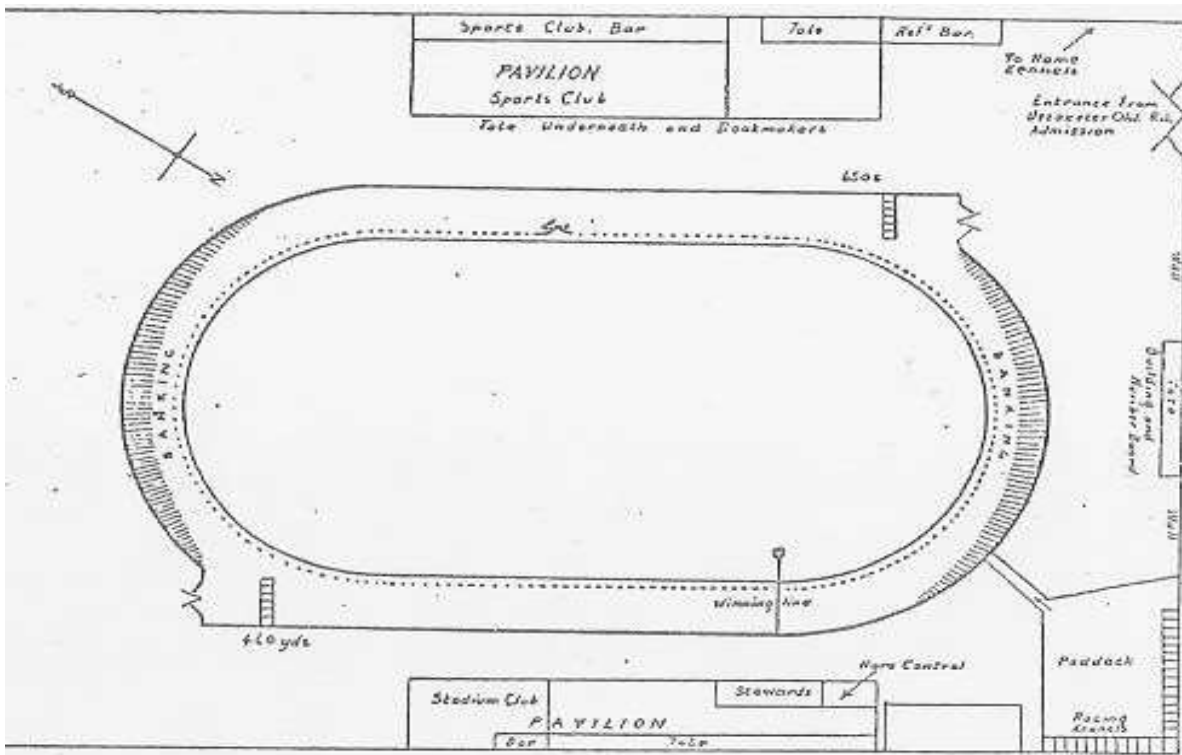
In 1865 the gaol changed its name to HM Prison Derby and it served as a prison until 1916 when it was closed. The last hanging had taken place as recently as 1907. The site acted as a military prison from 1919 until most of the buildings and cells inside the boundary walls were demolished in 1929. The curtain wall and large entrance remained in place and the bodies of the murderers were exhumed and reburied under the walls that remained.

Within five years the Preston Greyhound Racing Association had purchased the site and built a greyhound stadium within the walls. The company who had just opened their Preston track in May 1932 set an opening date of 29th April 1933. The first manager was Ted Rimmer (one of the famous Rimmer brothers) and facilities included two clubs, one in the grandstand and one in the popular enclosure.

The first ever winner was 2-1 shot Tramore Lad over 260 yards after defeating 6-4f Santober by one length in 17.31. The circumference of the track was 385 yards which was laid out on the former exercise yard for the prisoners, other distances were 460 and 650 yards. Many of the early races were just four dog events. The onsite track kennels adjacent to the track backed onto Sims Avenue, the buildings were old prison officer's quarters and were now houses for the trainers, a cookhouse, storage and staff rooms.

Trainer Charlie Green provided the track with their first major taste of success, he steered Silver Wire to the final of the Scurry Gold Cup and duly won the event at Clapton. Another trainer Harold Broadbent dealt with the Derby greyhounds housed in the adjoining stadium kennels and owned by the company and he would eventually become the head of the RSPCA.

After the war a greyhound called Keepers Remorse would race an astonishing **409 times** and finish second 98 times and in 1947 the tote turnover was £452,808. The Racing Manager was Lieutenant-Colonel Prior and he believed that greyhounds raced better at night under lights ensuring that Derby always had first class lighting. George Turnpenny arrived from Willenhall in the fifties and remained Racing Manager for a decade.



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Racing continued over the next two decades and attendances were good. The next milestone came in 1968 after the Pat Murphy trained Malaria won the Midland Flat. As racing in the sixties progressed race nights were set up on Wednesday and Saturday evenings and facilities included three buffet bars and two licenced bars. The circuit circumference was re-measured at 378 yards.

In 1970 George Coleman became General Manager and Barry Davis became Racing Manager after. Throughout the seventies two principal were introduced, they were the Derby Plate over 420 metres and the Derby Vase over 590 metres. Businessman Terry Corden became General Manager in 1979 and in 1981 Lois Lane won the Ebor Stakes at Leeds for Terry Munslow.

A greyhound called Derby Pleasure won 34 top grade races in 1979 and 1980. The remainder of the eighties would see a great deal of change starting in 1984 when the ageing stadium was bought by Terry Corden for £300,000 and Peter Robinson became the Racing Manager. The only remaining trainers housed at the track kennels were Tom Harrison and Pat Murphy following the departure of Frank Heald and Peter Corbett.

The legendary Scurlogue Champ smashed the track record over 764 metres in front of a huge crowd recording 49.04 sec during November 1985.

Corden sold the stadium for a handsome profit in 1988 receiving £1 million from JF Miller properties and Heights of Abraham Limited, within two years Derby City Council received a planning application for redevelopment.

The last race meeting was held on Saturday 7th December 1988 (Bizarrely the same year as Preston closed). Today the area is very smart with office buildings contained within the redeveloped area. A beautifully restored entrance called Vernon Gate still marks the entrance of the prison and greyhound stadium, it is sad however that so much history has been lost (1° 29' 30.472"W 52° 55' 23.197"N).

Selected Track Records

Distance	Name	Time	Date	Notes
270y	Cheerful Cricket	15.21	1972+	
460y	Special Intention	26.00	1954+	
	Good Man	25.62	23.05.1964	
	Mystic Prairie	=25.62	1970+	
	Rich Tea	25.51	1972+	
650y	Derry Fame	36.77	01.07.1964	
	Spectre II	36.49	1970+	
246m	Illinois Riki	15.14	1979+	
	Spiral Gigi	14.94	1987+	
	Wiggy Park John	14.76	07.09.1987	
420m	Pacey	25.79	1979+	
	Bleakhall Wonder	25.74	06.04.1987	
590m	Dyrnham Star	36.95	1975+	
	Band of Joy	36.89	1987+	
	Commons Darkie	36.56	11.11.1987	
764m	Derange Me	49.40	1978+	
	Scurlogue Champ	49.04	16.11.1985	
934m	Gloss	61.05	1979+	
	Sheffield Silver	61.95	15.04.1985	

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