

## Norwich (City Stadium)

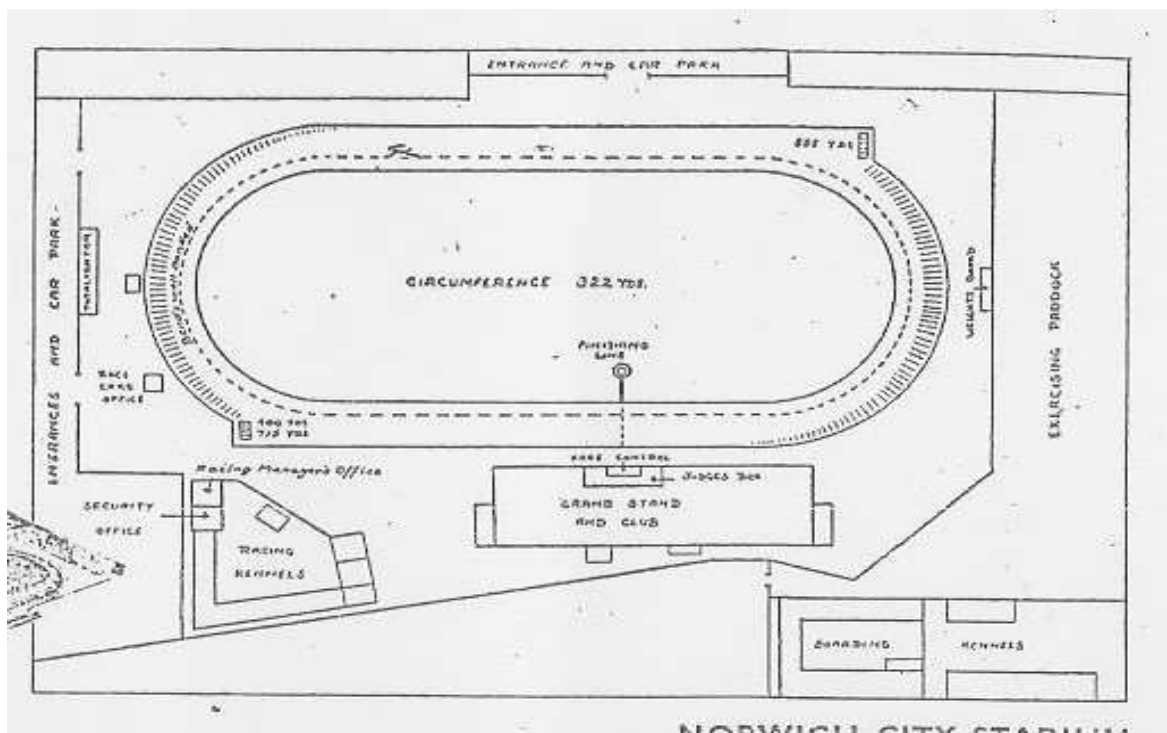
During 1932 the city of Norwich was to experience the coming of two greyhound tracks, the first to open was a track called The Firs on the west side of where the Holt Road meets the Cromer Road in the Hellesdon area despite its address being noted as Aylsham Road. The stadium would be a popular speedway venue and the opening greyhound meeting took place on 30<sup>th</sup> July at which stage rival track stage Boundary Park was well on the way to be completed. The Firs site was previously a field and probably received its name from being built next to Firs House. Just over two months later on the 6<sup>th</sup> October Boundary Park opened off Boundary Road. If you walked south down the Cromer Road from the Firs you would reach the junction with Boundary Road and a scattering of houses. The two tracks were within five minutes walking distance from each other but it did not seem to bother the owners of either track.

The following year in 1933 a third track sprouted up in the Thorpe area next to the River Yare, this was quite a weird and wonderful track in the sense that it was a small enterprise built on a flood plain. As a result during winter the fields known as Careys Meadow were sometime manually flooded to form an ice rink, the only recorded case of a greyhound track doubling as an ice rink! The first meeting was on 17<sup>th</sup> June 1933. With three greyhound tracks and as a result of the stiff competition it was inevitable that something had to give and that was the Firs which closed to greyhound racing in 1935.

The Second World War was fast approaching but bizarrely this did not stop Norwich from then gaining another track, the large City stadium at Sprowston Road opened for business on 25<sup>th</sup> July meaning that there were once again three tracks serving the Norwich public with racing. This soon changed as Thorpe held its last ever meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> September the same year.

The new City Stadium attracted a crowd of nearly ten thousand on that night during July which the management hailed as a great success. The stadium had been built north of the centre of Norwich but south of the junction between Sprowston Road and Mousehold Lane. The main catchment area was the densely populated housing estate of Sprowston to the east but there was a large wood to the south that still remains today.

The stadium was formerly declared open by Mr B Cannell, Mr F.Pine, Mr George Attoe, Mr A Holder (Director of Racing) and Mr J H Thornton (publicity manager) and the all-electric totalisator was a hit. The first ever winner was a greyhound called Grangemore Lad trained by Nicholson winning by four lengths at 5-2.



**Norwich City Stadium**

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The track characteristics were described as follows – A very handy and sharp little track, 322 yards in circumference (the smallest in Britain). The bends are well banked and perfect going is ensured throughout the year with the aid of an automatic watering system. Distances were 400, 555 and 715 yards with an 'Inside McWhirter Trackless' hare. Ray timing and photo finish were also installed.

The home straight contained the main grandstand and club with hare control and judges box opposite the winning post. The members club was a spacious modern club room with fully licensed bar and buffet. Subscription was £1, 1 shilling per annum. There were two entrances and car parks, one opposite the main stand on the other side of the track and one between bends three and four. The racing kennels could be found on the fourth bend but the 200 resident kennels were situated on the first bend with the exercising paddocks extending from the kennels to right around the second bend.

Following the closure of Boundary Park in 1962 the Racing Manager Arthur Rising joined the City Stadium with the existing racing Manager Mr D.Pine becoming General Manager and Director of Racing. Track trainers at the same time were Speechley and Ashley and distances changed to 333, 400 and 555 yards. Racing was held on Tuesday and Saturday evenings.

The end of the stadium came about as a huge shock for many, the advance runners had been advertised for Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> August 1971 but the public were informed that the Tuesday night racing had been cancelled and the stadium would close. Therefore the last meeting had been on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> August.

The site was soon converted to housing and today would have been where you can find Templere and Windmill Court (1° 18' 40.646"E 52° 39' 1.131"N).

### **Selected Track Records**

<b>Distance</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Notes</b>
400y	Springbow Carrie	23.90	12.07.1966	
555y	Buhler Drive	34.53	1970+	

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