

Plymouth (Pennycross)

In 1928 south-east of Pennycross village and directly east of the Pennycross vicarage an area of rural land was identified for a greyhound track in the north of Plymouth. There had been attempts at racing on the Polo Grounds in nearby Roborough and Beacon Park also hosted summer racing but this was the first time a substantial stadium was being constructed.

The venture would cost over £30,000 and take over six months to build before coming to life and the track was one of nineteen that the Greyhound Racing Association (GRA) had a financial interest in. The first meeting was held on 28th May 1928 promoted by the Plymouth Greyhound Stadium Ltd company becoming the third venue in Plymouth to experience greyhound racing. The track circumference was a large 471 yards and the hare was a Metro-Vickers with racing being held four times per week on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday evenings. The stadium could be accessed on a private road that linked to Honicknowle Lane and Ham Drive and facilities included the Pennycross Sports Club for members. Race distances included 525 & 725 yards.

The first winner at Pennycross in a time of 33.4sec was Tabiffa, a 2-1 shot, owned by Miss Wynter. A rehearsal had taken place two nights previously on the Saturday whereby Managing Director Jack Andrew and Racing Manager Mr J A Chapman selected which greyhounds would run on opening night.

By 1931 three more venues at Beacon Castle, Devonport and Plymstock Park had all tried the new sport. However Pennycross was the only track to survive beyond 1934. Speedway also began at Pennycross in 1931.

Although racing under NGRC rules when the track first opened it is believed that the track became independent sometime before or during the Second World War. Totalisator turnover in 1946 was a very healthy £1,020,472 during its peak.

The stadium had housing to its south and as the years passed this increased in size and began to close in around the track on the east and then north. During the sixties the west followed suit resulting in a strange situation where the stadium looked out of place completely surrounded by housing. Pennycross stadium had nearly disappeared itself in 1961 but gained a reprieve and an extended lease despite being chosen as the new site for a boys school.

In the late sixties the track continued to race on Wednesday & Saturday nights at 7.30pm, there were two licensed bars and five buffet bars. The track was grass with distances of 275, 300, 500, 525, 750 & 800 yards and an inside hare.

The stadium began to become extremely run down with little investment put into it, the speedway stopped and eventually in November 1972 the greyhounds ceased. The stadium was demolished and became industrial units until recently when housing replaced them.

The site today is the Cherry Tree Gardens housing development on Pennycross Close.

Selected Tote Returns

Year	Turnover £
1939	162,678
1944	524,202
1945	838,453
1946	1,020,472
1947	660,472
1948	446,505
1949	366,151
1950	286,964
1952	283,600
1953	251,000
1954	207,000