

Preston

On Thursday 3rd May 1932 the Preston Greyhound Racing Association presented the opening meeting at the Acregate Lane stadium under NGRC rules. Sir Meyrick Hollins the High Sheriff of Lancashire and chairman of Preston North End FC officially declared the stadium open. The very first winner that night was Quaker Prince over 527 yards in a time of 32.33 secs watched by an estimated crowd of 7,000. The eight races on show

The company had employed a local labour force to build and run the stadium situated in the Ribbleton Ward in east Preston. The site chosen was partly on a recreation ground next door to the 1914 built Waverley Park Cotton Mill (the last cotton mill to be built in Preston). The track lied south of the houses on Miller Road and was accessed from Acregate Lane.

Racing was planned for every Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday evenings; this was common practice at the time and before a restriction was introduced as to which nights you could race. The track claimed that its electric totalisator was an invention created by Preston and was unequalled in Britain. The claim seems a little far-fetched bearing in mind that the GRA had automatic totalisators at many tracks and all electric totes had yet to be configured. Nevertheless the tote that Preston had was probably unique to the track because it was undoubtedly different.

Also unusual at the time was a greyhound track that was built within an area that contained significant housing, most city tracks saw a gradual increase in housing around their stadiums as the years passed but Preston was actually built right in the middle from the start. The paddock and racing kennels were literally next door neighbours to two houses in Oxley Road and must have been very noisy. Luckily the greyhounds would only be housed during racing with the resident kennels situated on a 26 acre site called Sykes Holt in the village of Balderstone, Mellor Brook six miles to the east. There were 100 kennels with the addition of rest kennels and exercising accommodation.

The Preston Greyhound Racing Association opened a second track at Derby the following year in 1933 as the sport remained healthy despite the Great Depression.

Mr E Harrison became the Racing Manager in the early fifties and would remain so for twenty years but the same period saw little open race success as the track trainers concentrated on running their greyhounds at Preston only. At least the sixties brought some long awaited victories, the George Gooch trained Stately Boy claimed both the Ebor Stakes and Lincoln and kennelmate Greenane Token lifted the Midland Flat trophy, the only other trainer at the time was Bill Keenan. Racing was now restricted to certain days and Preston's licence allowed them to race every Thursday and Saturday at 7.15pm with the feature annual event being the Lancashire Puppy Championship. R W Payne former Manchester-White City Racing Manager joined the track as General Manager and joint-Racing Manager.

In 1971 Jack Hurt joined the training ranks that would increase and consist of Farrington, Humphreys, Mengala and Mercer with some having to make journeys to sister track Derby during 1976 when Derby suffered from a shortage of dogs. In 1972 there was a major fire which resulted in serious damage to the main stand and required a significant rebuild.

In May 1978 the stadium closed suffering from financial troubles but would re-open the same year under independent rules. It would remain a major independent for ten years offering a handsome £2,500 to the winner of the annual Preston Derby. The owner Frank Boyle would bring in Peter O'Dowd as General and Racing Manager who in turn would become a respected Racing Manager in NGRC/GBGB racing some years later. The ownership switched to David Webb who sold the track for housing. Bizarrely it was the same year that NGRC track Derby closed, they had been sister tracks for over 40 years from 1933 before going their own ways and then finally both came to an end in 1988. The last meeting at Preston was on 03 December 1988.

On a map today the stadium would be found where the housing exists on Canterbury Road and Harling Road (2° 40' 19.126"W 53° 46' 1.575"N).

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Selected Track Records

Distance	Name	Time	Date	Notes
440y	Rathia Cutlet	25.34	22.08.1964	
	Stately Boy	25.25	30.08.1966	
520y	Plenty of Action	30.06	1947+	
	Shaggy Peter	29.79	08.06.1949	
	Bowness Snow	29.82	16.07.1966	
725y	Boothroyden Flash	42.35	22.08.1964	

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