

Reading (Oxford Road)

Reading Stadium built adjacent to the Great Western railway and north of Wigmore Lane off the Oxford Road opened on Saturday 14th November 1931. The stadium situated north-west of the town attracted a crowd estimated to be between 4-5 thousand who came to watch a seven race card produced by Racing Manager J J Compton with the first race starting at 7.30pm. The honours of that race went to Symbol but the feature events of the evening were the Berkshire Stakes heats and Tilehurst hurdles stakes heats. The success of the racing resulted in two more meetings on the Monday and Wednesday and track alterations took place in time for the finals of the events mentioned that were held the following Saturday. The reason for alterations was because the public required a better view of the greyhounds from the run up to the winning post. The rails were moved back five yards and the track was lowered slightly.

In 1932 Guideless Joe set a track & national record of 22.00 secs for the 400 yards trip, the brindle dog would go on to win the very first official Irish National Derby at Shelbourne.

Clapton Stadium Ltd acquired the track in 1934 with the Managing Director being Mr H Garland Wells, the Director of Racing was Major C E R Moss and the Racing Manager was H Craven. The track of course was running under NGRC rules and the track trainers included G F Spencer & George McKay. Race distances were 400, 525 & 600 yards, the 400 yard distance would go down in history because it was the only race of that length that could be held over two bends due to the extremely large nature of the track. Unsurprisingly some of the fastest track times set in Britain were at Reading on the 526 yard circumference circuit.



Reading Stadium
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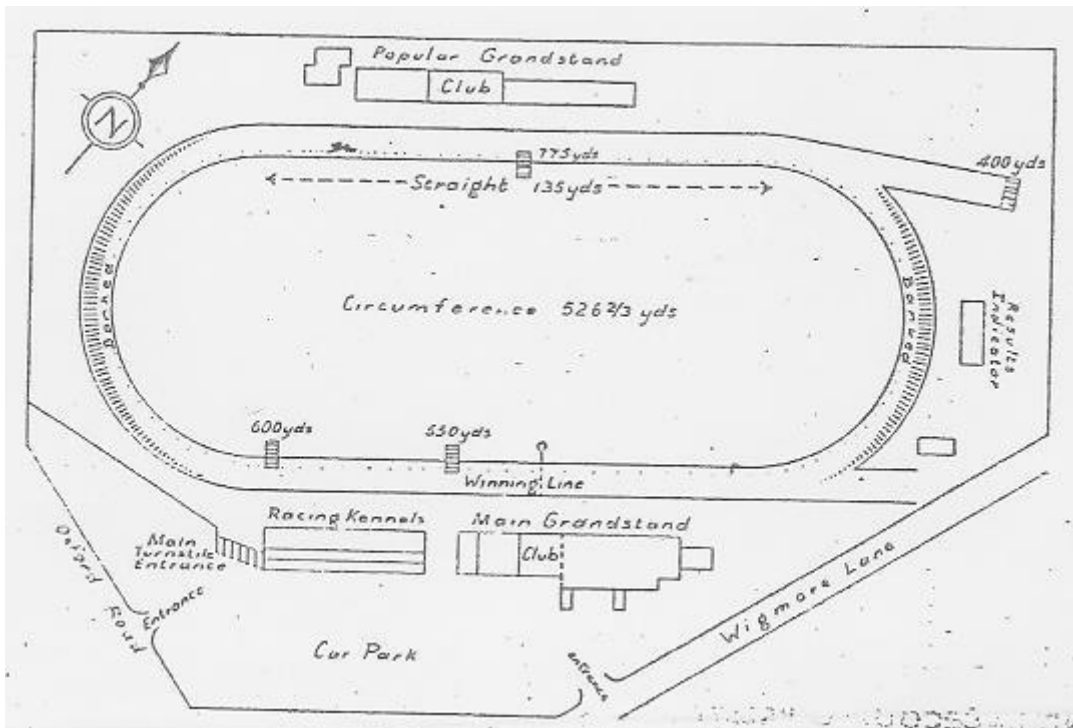
The main grandstand (pictured above) was next to the racing kennels on the home straight and was accessed from the car park on Wigmore Lane and Oxford Road. The Popular Grandstand on the north side was opposite the main stand next to the railway line. The resident kennels were in a rural setting in nearby Tilehurst.

John Snowball the trainer of the first ever Scottish Derby winner was appointed Racing Manager in 1944 after spending some time in Egypt with the Egyptian Greyhound Racing Association. The first notable open race success for a Reading greyhound was in 1945 when Bally Rambler won the Midland Puppy Derby, the fawn dog would break the Reading track record twice the following year.

Snowball left for sister track Clapton in 1946 as Assistant Racing Manager before reverting to being a trainer once more. Tom Smith former Catford trainer was also transferred to Clapton by the company in 1948 after a short spell as a trainer at Reading. Further company changes saw Eric Godfrey installed as Racing Manager before he became Director of Racing and was replaced by John Collins. In 1960 both were replaced, Collins by Ron Fraser and Godfrey by H J Richardson.

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The premier event at the track was the Hunt Cup but Reading hounds scored little success on the open race circuit with the exception of Wayside Abbey who won the Golden Crest for trainer Joe Farrand in 1954; Farrand would only train for a short period of time here before returning to Oxford. However one trainer that was firmly established at Reading would be Jim Sherry younger brother of Jack Sherry the well-known Ramsgate trainer. Sherry began training at Reading by 1960 and won the Oxford Two Year Old Produce Stakes with Corrigeen Prince in 1965.



During 1963 Clapton Stadiums Ltd scrapped evening starting times in an attempt to scupper the bookmaker shops from being able to take advantage of off-course betting without paying the industry its due worth. Just three years later Clapton Stadiums Ltd had sold up to the GRA. Worryingly the GRA at this time had the infamous Property Trust who was responsible for selling land to developers and a few stadiums had duly been lost.

The track was treading on eggshells with the GRA in the background but racing continued on Thursday and Saturday evenings with the greyhounds supplied by resident trainers Jim Sherry, Ron Jeffrey and Richard 'Dick' Barker plus Yates, Jimmy Jowett & Paddy Pierce.

Dick Carter and his wife Patricia were sadly killed in a car crash on Christmas Eve 1968 leaving the stadium management and bookmakers to contribute for a trust fund for their two daughters. Just over two years later the resident kennels were sold and Reading turned to contracted trainers system in 1971. It was the beginning of the end with the track then being sold in 1973 by the GRA.

The final meeting was held on the 10th November 1973 and the stadium was closed down on 1st January 1974, the site today is the Stadium Business Park on Stadium Way (1° 0' 45.217"W 51° 27' 48.042"N).

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Selected Track Records

Distance	Name	Time	Date	Notes
400y	Guideless Joe	22.00	15.06.1932	National Record
	Bally Rambler	21.99	29.05.1946	
460y	Captain Pike	25.67	12.09.1964	
500y	Peace Message	27.99	04.06.1960	
	Shady Mermaid	27.99	20.07.1963	
	Duck Snatcher	27.81	1969+	
	Beaverwood Wind	27.69	14.06.1969	
525y	Bella	30.05	16.04.1934	
550y	Lilacs Luck	31.43	15.05.1946	
	Bally Rambler	31.22	26.06.1946	
600y	Micks Fancy	34.22	14.11.1931	
	S.M Hector	34.13	13.04.1939	
700y	Pigalle Prince	39.92	25.06.1964	
	Movealong Phil	39.90	23.03.1966	
775y	Broomhill Broil	45.26	19.09.1936	
908y	Magic Brooklyn	53.57	07.05.1959	
400yH	Mac's Double	22.82	10.05.1933	National Record
460yH	Highwood Samson	26.50	1960+	
500yH	Mina Digger	28.68	1970+	
525yH	Bucail Macanta	30.98	07.10.1933	
600yH	Mac's Double	35.13	17.05.1933	