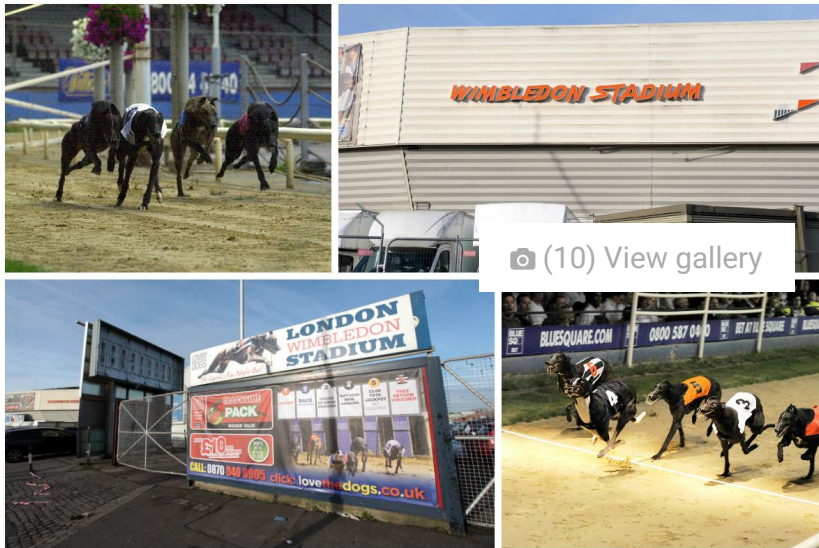


WIMBLEDON Guardian

27th March 2017

'Cruel and outdated' or demise of 'excellent' sport? Wimbledon Stadium holds final greyhound race in Plough Lane before building of AFC Wimbledon stadium

Pippa Allen-Kinross



(10) View gallery

The Wimbledon Stadium has held its final greyhound race as the Plough Lane site prepares for demolition.

Greyhound fans swarmed to the stadium for the last time on Saturday, March 26, before the 89-year-old stadium is demolished to make way for a new football stadium for AFC Wimbledon.

A statement on the Wimbledon Stadium website now simply says: "Goodbye from us all at Wimbledon Stadium.

"Thank you to everyone that has visited.

"The stadium is now closed."

LOVE THE
DOGS

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www.lovethe dogs.co.uk

WIMBLEDON STADIUM

1928-2017



Wimbledon Stadium opening night Saturday 19th May 1928 - estimated 22,000 spectators

**GOODBYE FROM US ALL AT WIMBLEDON STADIUM.
THANK YOU TO EVERYONE THAT HAS VISITED
THE STADIUM IS NOW CLOSED.**

The poster displayed on the Wimbledon Stadium website

The tradition was brought to a close by the win of 'Glitzzy King' in the last ever race.

Demolition of the site is expected to begin next month, with building work on AFC Wimbledon's new stadium scheduled to start in 2018.

Plans for the Plough Lane site include a brand new 20,000 seater stadium, which will begin as 11,000 before being expanded, as well as 602 flats and a range of shops and amenities.

Aug 22: 'All systems go': Sadiq Khan hands back Plough Lane AFC Wimbledon stadium decision to Merton Council

However, not everyone has mourned the demise of the last greyhound racing track in London.

Chief executive for the League Against Cruel Sports, Eduardo Gonçalves, said: "We are delighted that a real sport with willing human participants will finally be replacing the cruel and outdated sport of greyhound racing at Wimbledon.

“The stadium’s closure marks a significant step in the right direction, but more still needs to be done to stop the thousands of greyhounds being subjected to cruelty and exploitation in this murky industry.”

He added: “Current regulations are totally inadequate and don’t protect the welfare of racing dogs. There is a culture of secrecy and cruelty which continues because the Government has continuously allowed the industry to regulate itself.

“Despite years of campaigning for industry improvements, too many greyhounds still continue to suffer unnecessarily. There is no viable alternative but to call for this archaic practice of racing animals for sport to be phased out.”

The Greyhound Board of Great Britain (GBGB) declined to comment on the accusations.

However, in a statement released the day before the closure, on Friday, March 24, their chief executive Barry Faulkner said: “It is very sad we are losing the last track with a London postcode, one at which I have enjoyed many cracking nights’ sport.

“While the primary reasons behind the closure are increasing residential land values and the political opportunism of Merton Council, there are also wider issues regarding the financing of the sport.

March 24: Greyhound Board of Great Britain chief accuses Merton Council of 'political opportunism' ahead of Wimbledon Stadium's final dog race before demolition for AFC Wimbledon stadium in Plough Lane

“Until such time as the greyhound racing receives a fair return for the betting industry for the excellent product it supplies, which would enable the sport to thrive, I fear other tracks could suffer the same fate.”

When asked for a response, Merton Council declined to comment.

The Wimbledon Stadium was built by architects Elcock and Sutcliffe in 1927 and opened a year later.

During the Second World War, the stadium contained onsite air raid shelters and an anti-aircraft gun, as well as being the site where the British Expeditionary Force assembled in 1939 before departing for Europe, and being used as a holding centre for refugees fleeing Europe in 1943.

The stadium, which is also hosts stock car racing and market trading, has been hosting the English Greyhound Derby for 32 years.

The Save Wimbledon Stadium Action Group have submitted an application for the stadium to be historically listed.

Jan 9: AFC Wimbledon stadium: Final challenge for Plough Lane dreams as Wimbledon Stadium assessed for historic listing

Although the Department for Culture, Media and Sport are yet to make a final decision on the listing, even a listed building can still be demolished with relevant consent from the local authority: in this case, Merton Council.

Opinion on social media was also split.



Marten Kats 
@MartenKats

Fantastic that Wimbledon Greyhound stadium is now closed. A new home for [#afcwimbledon](#) & 1 less venue for the animal abuse greyhound racing!

5:40 AM - Mar 26, 2017

2

See Marten Kats 's other Tweets



John newbery
@jonnylondon77

@SadiqKhan as you are mayor of London are u sad to see Wimbledon greyhound stadium close its doors after 89 years disgrace u let this happen

7:28 PM - Mar 25, 2017

1 See John newbery's other Tweets



joe ♥
@josiequant1

A great day for Wimbledon. No longer associated with Greyhound racing! Now let's hope all the other tracks in the country close too.

5:34 AM - Mar 26, 2017

1 See joe ♥'s other Tweets



Kevin Dear
@kdear57

Wimbledon never been a lucky track for me but I'm still sad to see the capital without a greyhound stadium anymore.

Money talks 😞

6:51 PM - Mar 25, 2017

7 See Kevin Dear's other Tweets



andrew elias
@andykln

Thats it folks Wimbledon closes its doors to Greyhound Racing, no more London tracks left.. very sad day for greyhound followers!

6:50 PM - Mar 25, 2017

1 See andrew elias's other Tweets



Liam Davis
@davisliam

Very sad to see #wimbledon greyhound track close tonight. The final track in #London many happy memories. A true working class sport

6:26 PM - Mar 25, 2017

2 See Liam Davis's other Tweets



Ben Keith

@BenStarSports

GRA and Galliard Homes, you went out of your way to destroy Greyhound Racing. **HANG YOUR HEADS IN SHAME.**

6:23 PM - Mar 25, 2017

56 50 people are talking about this