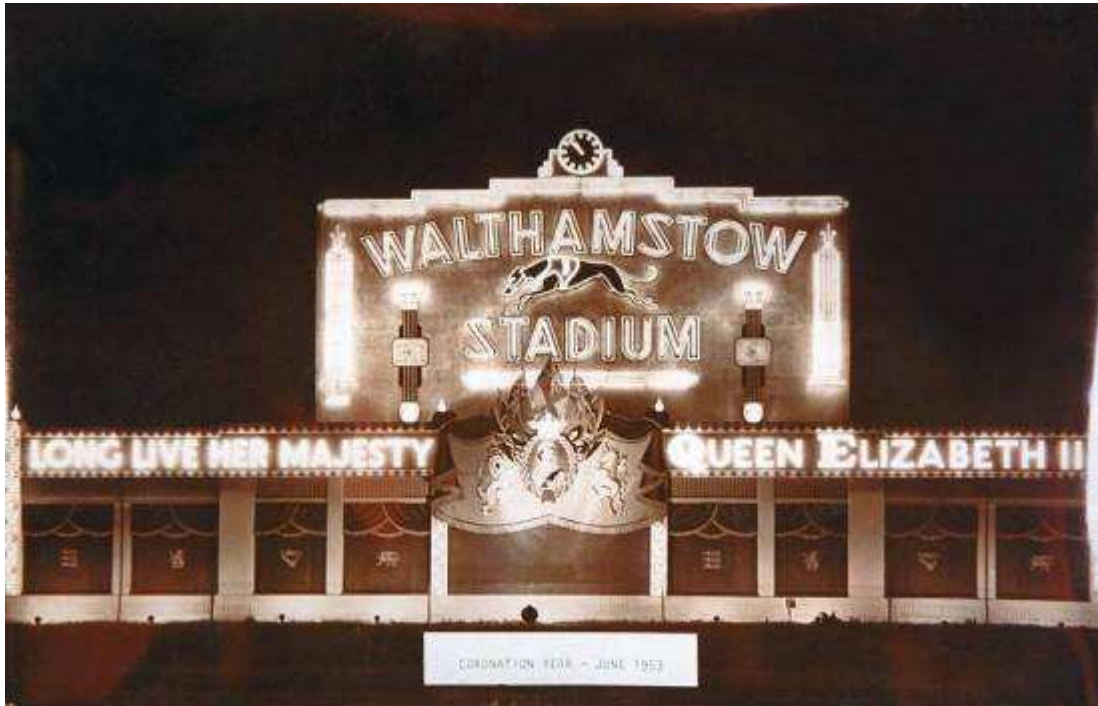


Walthamstow Stadium



Above; The stadium decorated to celebrate the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II

Las Vegas At The End Of The Victoria Line

Dog Racing History



Dog racing has a long history in Great Britain and grew out of the pastime of hare coursing. This is a working class competitive 'sport' in which hare are chased by greyhounds.

The dogs are tested on their ability to run, overtake and turn a hare, rather than a form of hunting aiming at the capture of game. It has a number of variations in its rules around the world. Informal coursing can be a true form of hunting. It is

often conducted to kill game or vermin, mainly for food, and as a form of gambling.

Coursing is a long established hunting technique, practiced with greyhounds and lurchers and with other sight-hound breeds (As opposed to dogs which hunt by scent) The sport grew in popularity in Europe during the 19th century,

Since 2005, hare coursing has been illegal throughout the UK, but continues elsewhere in the world as a regulated and judged, competitive 'sport, especially in Ireland and Spain, as well as in Russia and the Western United States. In Eurasia coursing continues as a classic form of hunting.

Right: Hare coursing with a muzzled greyhound in pursuit



Greyhound Racing Introduced From America

Greyhound racing using a mechanical 'hare' was invented in America and introduced to Britain in 1926 by an American, Charles Munn and a Canadian, Brigadier-General Critchley. They launched the British Greyhound Racing Association (GRA), and held the first British meeting at Manchester's Belle Vue Stadium. The industry was successful in cities and towns throughout the U.K. and by the end of 1927, there were forty tracks operating.

Greyhound racing was particularly attractive to predominantly male working-class audiences because the urban locations of the tracks and the evening times of the meetings made them easily accessible and to patrons and owners from various social backgrounds.



Betting has always been a key ingredient of greyhound racing, both through on-course bookmakers and the totalisator that was first introduced in 1930. Like horse racing, it is popular to bet on the greyhound races as a form of parimutuel @gambling.

Left: The mechanical 'hare'

Greyhound racing enjoyed its highest attendances just after

the Second World War—for example, there were 34 million paying spectators in 1946. The industry experienced a decline from the early 1960's when the 1960 Betting and Gaming Act permitted off-course cash betting- although sponsorship, limited television coverage, and the later abolition of on-course betting tax have partially offset this decline.

A Rubbish Dump & Disused Football Ground

The story of Walthamstow Stadium started in 1931 when *William (Bill) Chandler*, a bookmaker, bought the site for £24,000 and built the stadium on the site. *Bill Chandler* had started out as an illegal back-street bookmaker who had become legitimate when he became an on-course horse racing bookmaker. As a Bookmaker, he realized the enormous potential profitability of owning his own greyhound racing stadium, where he would benefit from on site betting and from the government regulated mechanical Totalisator

At that time, the site consisted of an area of derelict land that was used as a rubbish dump facing Chingford Road with a football pitch having two spectator stands at the rear. At first the future stadium was no more than two



Google Earth image of Walthamstow Stadium

corrugated iron sheds and the first ever greyhound race at Walthamstow Stadium took place on 15 April 1931. The immediate success of the venture allowed *Bill Chandler* to rebuild it on a grand scale with matching kennels behind.

The early appeal of greyhound racing to Britain's working men is obvious. At that time, a working man couldn't bet legally and he couldn't get credit at a bookmakers. However, he could bet legally at a dog track. Greyhound tracks were also far easier to get to than racetracks and the entrance price was a lot cheaper.

Amy Johnson Opens The Stadium



Above: Amy Johnson

Building works finished in 1933 and the Stadium was officially opened by *Amy Johnson* who was a famous female aviator and the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic ocean. Between 1931 and 1943, although the now iconic art deco frontage remained unchanged, *Bill Chandler* rebuilt the stadium three times until he was happy with the design.

In the late 1940s, Britain boasted 77 licensed greyhound racing tracks and upwards of 50 million punters passed through the turnstiles each year.

Walthamstow stadium was one of 33 greyhound tracks in London. The original track length was 306 yards but in 1949 the track was shortened to 282 yards. It had a larger attendance and bigger income from gambling than any other dog racing track in the UK, with a capacity for over 5,000 people

There were five race meetings a week, during the day on Monday and Friday, and at night on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. The first race started at 7:45 pm on Tuesday and Thursday, and at 7:30 pm on Saturday. The last race started at 10:30 pm on all three nights. Trials were held on Wednesdays and before racing. All meetings had 14 races except for the Friday meeting, which had 12. The most common races were over 475 and 640 metres, with occasional 430, 835 and 880 races for specialist greyhounds.

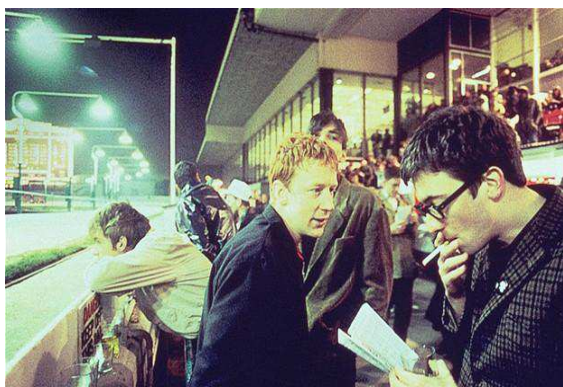


There were numerous major "open race" events, including the *Arc*, *Stewards Cup*, *Puppy Stakes*, *Grand Prix* and the *Racing Post Festival*.

Twelve greyhound trainers were attached to the track. They were: Gary Baggs, Seamus Cahill, John Coleman, Paul Garland, Dickie Hawkes, Kelly Mullins, Mick Puzey, Peter Rich, Graham Sharp John Sherry and Mark Wallis

Inside The Stadium

Over the years the Chandler family constantly improved and upgraded facilities at the stadium that was built around the oval shaped underground heated dog track.



Above: Picture showing punters outside the restaurant



Above: From the right hand side of the stadium

Entering from the Chingford Road end, Charley Chan's night club was under the clock tower. At the rear of the clock tower was the totalisator (Tote) board with a public enclosure. On the right hand side of the track was the popular (Cheaper) public enclosures, food outlet and bar.



Above: The 'Tote' board under the clock



Above: Greyhounds leaving their traps



Above: Punters watching the dogs race from the restaurant



Above: The restaurant interior

On the left hand side of the track were the elite main enclosures, including corporate areas, bars and two tier restaurant. At the far end of the track was the kennels. The electronic starting traps for the greyhounds were located on the left hand side of the track.

The Car Park In The Grounds Of Salisbury Hall

Opposite the stadium was some land that was the remnants of the former Salisbury Hall estate and farm. When the stadium was first built, Salisbury Hall and some other buildings still existed on the site. However, what remained of Salisbury Hall was demolished in 1952 and circa 1955 the Chandler family bought the site for use as a stadium car park and demolished the remaining outbuildings.

Up The Wolves, Motor Cycle Speedway

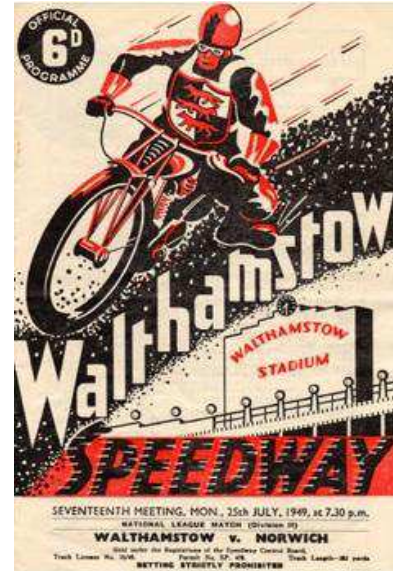
Motor cycle speedway racing was staged at the Walthamstow Greyhound Stadium in 1934 and between 1949 and 1951. It began because when the governing body control board revoked the licence of the Lea Bridge Speedway Club and the track closed. The Lea Bridge riders were transferred to the Walthamstow Stadium which housed a 305 yard track. The Speedway side of things were controlled by Dicky Maybrook who had been connected with International



Speedways between 1928 and 1932.

The new club's first race was with the West Ham and they were comprehensively beaten by the 'Hammers'. At that time they didn't have any official colours and

rode in red jackets with white numbers. Later they wore black racing jackets sporting a two tone black and white shield that had three wolves.



Although the track was not quite ready, their first 'home' match was against Wimbledon and the Walthamstow Guardian reported that there were 11,000 people attending. The lighting failed on several occasions and there were problems with the starting gate so that races had to be started manually with a flag and a light.



However, as a result of noise complaints the Club were forced to relocate at the end of the first season. The Wolves competed in the National League but were forced to relocate due to noise complaints. They moved to the Hackney Wick Stadium as the Hackney Wick Wolves. Many racers moved to the Lea Bridge Stadium in Leyton, which had also sprung up in response to the demand for the sport.

Despite the major disruption of WWII, motorbike racing enjoyed a resurgence and in 1949 the Wolves were reborn again at Walthamstow Stadium. The track length was initially 306 yards but was reduced to 282 yards in 1949



Above: Picture cards of Walthamstow Wolves speedway riders

Between 1949 and 1951, the team raced in the National League Second Division with moderate success. The team featured ex-England international George Newton. At that time all the other London clubs, Wembley, Wimbledon, West Ham, Harringay and New Cross raced in the First Division.

The track witnessed some of the most prestigious races on the calendar, including the Stow Marathon over 820 metres, the Grand Prix over 640 metres, and the Carling Test over 640 metres. However, due to declining attendance and complaints of noise from local residents the Club was finally closed in 1951.

Winston Churchill

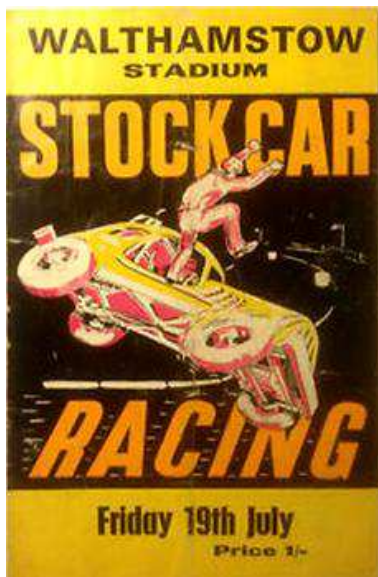


The first general election after the end of WWII was held in July 1945, a few months after the celebration of victory. Winston Churchill, the war time Prime Minister and the MP for the local Wanstead & Woodford constituency, addressed an audience of 20,000 people at the Walthamstow stadium.

However, this was to no avail as his Conservative Party lost the election to Clement Attlee, who later became the Labour MP for West Walthamstow.

Above: Winston Churchill addressing the audience at Walthamstow Stadium in 1945

Stock Car Racing



The picture above is © of Jim Luck and is not at Walthamstow. However, it accurately gives the 'feel' of stock car and banger racing

Stock car racing took place at many greyhound and speedway tracks. Between 1962 and 1968 Walthamstow Stadium was home to BriSCA "Senior" F1 and "Junior" F2 stock cars, raced by Londoners such as Rod Dore, Vic Ferriday, Maxie Bacon, Barry Brew, and many more.

From 29 March 1968, Spedeworth Promotions (Now Spedeworth Motorsports) took over the running of racing at Walthamstow with their Superstox, Stock Car, Hot Rod, Banger and Midget Racing. The promotion continued there until the end of the 1974 racing season. It is believed that the car racing ended due to complaints relating to noise from residents in the Chingford Mount area.

Charley Chan's Nightclub

Charlie Chan's Nightclub was opened within the foundations of the clock tower in 1984. The interior has been described as being very kitsch with a red and black faux-Oriental decor, plastic greenery and a grand piano.

It quickly became the 'in' nightclub for east Londoners and was a popular venue. There

can be few Walthamstow people, born in the 1970's, who didn't patronize the club at some time or other.



Unfortunately, by the late 1990's it had acquired the reputation for drugs and 'trouble' and many of its regular customers moved to other club venues. In its last few years, it fell out of favour with nightclub goers who regarded it as being 'tacky' and 'downmarket'. It closed permanently in November 2007

The Chandler Family

Throughout its 77 year history (1931-2008) Walthamstow Stadium was owned and controlled by the *Chandler* family. It was bought and built by *Bill Chandler* who had eight children. A year before he died in 1947, control had passed to his son *Charles* while the betting business was in the hands of *Victor*, another son. After *Charles* died, his brother *Percy* became Managing Director. In 1984, control of the stadium passed to his nephew, *Jack* with another *Charles* becoming Chairman. When the stadium was sold in 2008 eight family members were Directors.

Right: Jack Chandler



Victor's son then created a chain of betting shops and on his death in 1974, the company passed on his own son also *Victor*. He's the man who, in 1999, took the business offshore to Gibraltar and hastened the introduction of tax-free betting in the UK when the government, seeing others follow suit, abolished the ten per cent duty in a bid to tempt them back.

An Off Shore Gambling Hub

Gibraltar becoming a worldwide hub for online gaming with numerous sportsbook, casino and poker licenses awarded to most of the world's largest gaming firms. In 2004, the company was renamed '*VC Bet*' for branding reasons although in late 2008, Chandler himself chose to revert the name to '*Victor Chandler*'. In 2012, the company renamed itself again as '*BetVictor*'

After accumulating 41 locations in London and its vicinity, *Chandler* ultimately sold the licenses of the *Gala Coral Group* in 2006, which operated the *Coral Bookmakers*. Despite the fact that a majority of licenses were sold, he retains ownership of Deanery Street, Mayfair London and the Dublin Betting Lounge



Above: *Victor Chandler*

The *BetVictor* company sponsors many sport and sport related events including, horse racing, golf, poker, snooker and football. *Victor Chandler* has owned many racehorses in the UK, South Africa and the U.S. In 2013 the Sunday Times Rich List estimated his person wealth at over £150 million.

When *Victor* was interviewed about the closure of Walthamstow stadium he expressed the opinion that his aunt, 90 year old *Frances Chandler*, the first *Charles Chandler's* wife, who had been a successful greyhound owner since the 1950's and never missed a greyhound meeting, would miss the stadium.

Not Going To The Dogs, The Stadium Closes



The news of the stadiums closure came as a great shock to many people and a campaign was mounted to oppose the closure by finding an entrepreneur who would take on the venture and operate the stadium as a greyhound racing venue. Those involved in the abortive campaign to save the stadium (Including the Chingford and Walthamstow MP's) seem to have overlooked the basic economics of the situation.

The Stadium Losing Money

In the last few years of its life, attendances that once used to host 15,000 punters were reduced to 1,500 people. The turnover at Walthamstow's government-owned *MicroTote* betting windows was £13m in 2000 in 2008 it was £8.7m.

A major factor in the decline was that the advent of betting shops in the mid 1960's meant that punters did not have to go to the dog track to place a bet. They could simply walk into a local betting shop, that can stay open until 10pm, to place a bet. Today, you can place your bids on the internet and sit at home watching racing on your HD 3D television.



According to the *Chandler* family, in the three years before it closed, the Walthamstow stadium lost £500,000 per year. The *London & Quadrant (L & Q)* housing association bought the stadium site for development for £18 million and aim to spend a total of £50 million on the site .

From the *Chandler* family point of view, they cashed in an unprofitable *he vacant car park*.

asset that was costing them a huge amount of money and in return gained a substantial amount of money that they could invest in their extremely profitable off shore gambling business.

Making matters worse, was the news that the objectors to the stadium closure were prepared to entertain a bid from a rival entrepreneur who wanted to buy the site from *L & Q* for a third of the price that they had paid for the stadium, keep the stadium as a dog racing track add a casino and develop the rest of the site for private housing.

Unsurprisingly, the objectors' appeals to the London Mayor to disallow the development, carried little weight and the *L & Q* development of the stadium site was approved.

What Happened To The Greyhounds

An analysis carried out since the closure of the stadium found that, broadly speaking, 60% of the 160-170 dogs have definitely established stability elsewhere. However, 38 dogs have not been seen in public since Walthamstow closed and the remainder have not raced with a frequency likely to pay their keep for two and a half months. This situation is



likely to be worse because of the effects of the future viability of dogs displaced at other tracks by ex-Walthamstow a

The Future

The new owners of the Stadium site are L & Q (Formerly the London & Quadrant Housing Association) The development of the site will be carried out by the Quadrant Construction, who is L & Q's own company and will include:



Above is an artist's impression of how the new frontage to the road will look.

294 new homes, including maisonettes, apartments and houses, a car park, cycle storage and recycling facilities. They will also provide a nursery, a café, a sports centre and pocket allotments

The development will also include a sensitive restoration and refurbishment of the Stadium's Grade II listed Tote building and former dog kennels, which will be brought into long-term use for the whole community.

The developers say that the scheme will create up to 250 jobs, including many apprenticeships and training opportunities for local people and bring £50m worth of investment into the borough, including £3.8 million to improve local leisure, education, health and transport facilities.

Below are some artist's impressions of what the site will look like once it is completed:



The Salisbury Hall Car Park Development

The car park area opposite the stadium is to be developed as a Bus Depot & Learning Centre by the HCT Group. They are a social enterprise organisation in the transport industry who reinvest the profits from their commercial work into further transport services or projects in the communities they serve.



HCT has been operating in the Borough since 2004, and currently transports over 500 children with special educational needs between home and school every day. HCT also operates a coach and bus hire service for local community groups of up to 70 people, and the 212, W12 and W13 red bus routes.

Above Traveller's occupying the empty site

They deliver a range of transport services including: London red buses, social services transport, school transport, Park and Ride and provide over 17 million passenger trips on their buses every year.

They intend to construct a bus depot, from which they will run buses and community transport vehicles, and a training centre for unemployed people on the site. The plans also incorporate adequate parking for staff and visitors, eliminating the need to park in nearby residential streets. All HCT bus drivers are provided with a bus and tube pass for travel to work.

From March next year it is intended that there will be between 150 and 170 jobs at the depot and ultimately up to 270. The training centre will enable HCT to train up to 100 local unemployed people every year. HCT believes that its planned activities will have a very positive impact on the local economy and will ensure that surpluses generated from the operation of local bus services are re-invested to benefit local people.

Some Trivia

- Today, many people are puzzled why a stadium in Chingford is called Walthamstow Stadium. The answer is simple. Until 1969, when the boundaries of the component Boroughs that make up Waltham Forest were changed, Walthamstow Stadium was part of Walthamstow.

- The front and back cover of the *Blur* album 'Parklife' were shot at the stadium
 - The track is referenced in the 2000 film 'Snatch'
 - The boy band *East 17* filmed the video for their single 'House of Love' outside the stadium.
 - The stadium's neon sign is prominently featured in the video for 'Love on the Line' by *Blazin' Squad*
 - Used in 'An Education', a 2009 film.
 - Used in 'Twenty Twelve', the 2012 BBC satire about the London 2012 Olympic Games
 - David Beckham's first job was a glass collector at the stadium
-
- Walthamstow Stadium used to offer a 'Six Pack' admission package. This comprised: (1) Admission, (2) Scampi or Chicken & Chips, (3-4) 2 alcoholic beverages, (5-6) 2 Tote tickets for the sum of £13-50.
 - There are now only two dog tracks remaining in London at Romford and Wimbledon.

Bill Bayliss
June 2014

Miscellania

<http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2008/aug/09/london.greyhoundracing>

"It is, to be brutally honest, not much of a sport: the frantic pursuit of a faintly ridiculous mechanical hare around a sandy track by six skinny dogs. The whole thing is over in less than 30 seconds, and the hare never loses...."

On a moist August evening, Walthamstow stadium in east London is packed. Elderly men in macs scan their race cards, a pencil behind each ear; office parties screech as the winner of the last race is confirmed; tattooed and shaven-headed lads queue amiably for the hotdogs; young dads hoist excited infants on to their shoulders in readiness for the next off; in the posh Paddock Grill there are expensive tans, a designer frock or two and even a white tuxedo.

Down by the track, the last half-dozen independent bookies - there were once 50 - and their tic-tac men accept the sheaves of fivers thrust at them by serious-looking blokes clutching crumpled copies of the Racing Post. The bookies gaze skyward for a second, do the sums, scribble the new odds on their boards. There's a hush as the traps are lifted; the dogs flash by in a blur. "Go on number three! Wake up, five! Go on my son!....."

The dogs, as they still are, were a laugh: a little bit dodgy, a little bit gaudy; raffish, louche, welcoming. They offered quick thrills cheap. An excuse for a good night out, plus a bit of a punt. Above all, they were proudly working-class.”

<http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=SvYAHJ5ow24C&pg=PA28&lpg=PA28&dq=charlie+chan's+walthamstow&source=bl&ots=w9ikSQs9L6&sig=i1OasndOGp9GLTjk7hnctuZW868&hl=en&sa=X&ei=0RCKU9HiOiftO62dgFg&ved=0CEcQ6AEwBDgU#v=onepage&q=charlie%20chan's%20walthamstow&f=false>

“On the border of Walthamstow and its more salubrious neighbor Chingford, the Stow is an impressive venue, a suburban coliseum. Its façade, which is also the exterior of the track scoreboard, is a sight to behold: a white art deco monolith festooned in pink, orange and red neon and punctuated by a huge black illuminated greyhound leaping through a googleplex-megawatt sign that roars ‘Walthamstow stadium’”

At night, this larger than life slab of concrete and lights is a seductive beacon, a siren luring punters into an arena that harks back to the good old days of greyhound racing. For over 60 years the dogs have been a quintessential part of British working-class life. God knows what it must have been like in the thirties and forties, the sport’s heyday, when crowds of up to 25,000 would be drawn to the stadium like pilgrims heading for Mecca.

A temple of glass and repro furnishings the Stow’s numerous bars and restaurants transcend the average night out in the East End. It even has a night club called Charlie Chans, a plastic plant and mirror ball throwback to the 1980’s replete with penguin-suited bouncers of the ‘Your names’s not down, you’re not coming in’ variety”

Stock Car Racing is Magic

Whatever number we support, we are fans of the greatest sport,
Stock car racing is magic. purp
North, south, east or west, whatever the formula ours is best,
Stock car racing is magic. purp, purp
When the fans all congregate you'll see no city slickers,
Just friendly folk displaying all their badges and their stickers,
And one or two we've heard about have numbers on their knickers!!
Stock car racing is magic.

White top to superstar, win or lose it's wunderbar,
Stock car racing is magic.
There's crowds and noise and fumes and dust and every meeting is a must,
Stock car racing is magic.
When the cars are on the rolling lap and the amber light is flashing,
Get ready for the green and the sound of engines thrashing,
And hope it's not our favourite who's gonna get a bashing,
Stock car racing fans are magic.

When the winner takes the chequered flag and he's on his lap of honour,
We all give him a purp though our own man's car's a gonna,
'Cause we know that in the pits, there are thousands working on her,
Stock car racing is purp, purp, purp, ...
Just friendly folk displaying all their badges and their stickers,
And one or two we've heard about have numbers on their knickers!!
Stock car racing is magic.

White top to superstar, win or lose it's wunderbar,
Stock car racing is magic.
There's crowds and noise and fumes and dust and every meeting is a must,
Stock car racing is magic.
When the cars are on the rolling lap and the amber light is flashing,
Get ready for the green and the sound of engines thrashing,
And hope it's not our favourite who's gonna get a bashing,
Stock car racing fans are magic.

When the winner takes the chequered flag and he's on his lap of honour,
We all give him a purp though our own man's car's a gonna,
'Cause we know that in the pits, there are thousands working on her,
Stock car racing is
Stock car racing is
Stock car racing is purp, purp, purp, ...



Whipps Cross Comets Cycle Speedway Club on the Walthamstow Stadium car park in 1949/50

Some Sources

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Tote

<http://www.greyhoundderby.com/Walthamstow%20Wolves.htm>

<http://www.defunctspeedway.co.uk/>

<http://www.spedeworth.co.uk/index2.php>

<http://sabotagetimes.com/music/charlie-chans-a-tribute-to-the-greatest-club-i-ever-went-t>

<http://www.bernardomahoney.com/forthcb/krays/articles/gd.shtml>

<http://www.walthamstow.towntalk.co.uk/pdf/newscuttings/diamondnight.pdf> Interesting

<http://www.timeout.com/london/events/victor-chandlers-60th-anniversary-2>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victor_Chandler_International

<http://www.wsgreyhound.co.uk/>

<http://www.estatesgazette.com/blogs/london-residential-research/2011/09/lq-development-is-barking-mad/v>

http://www.bdonline.co.uk/Journals/Builder_Group/Building_Design/17_July_2009/attachments/dogsrpt-pics.pd

<http://stowresidents.btck.co.uk/History>

http://www.thisislocallondon.co.uk/indepth/features/9040483.HISTORY_The_wheely_good_times_of_Walthamstow_Stadium/

<http://www.walthamstowhistory.com/stadium.htm>

http://hctgroup.org/about_us/hct_group_news/181/Planned%20bus%20depot%20and%20I_earning%20centre%20in%20Walthamstow

<http://www.lqgroup.org.uk/walthamstow-stadium>