

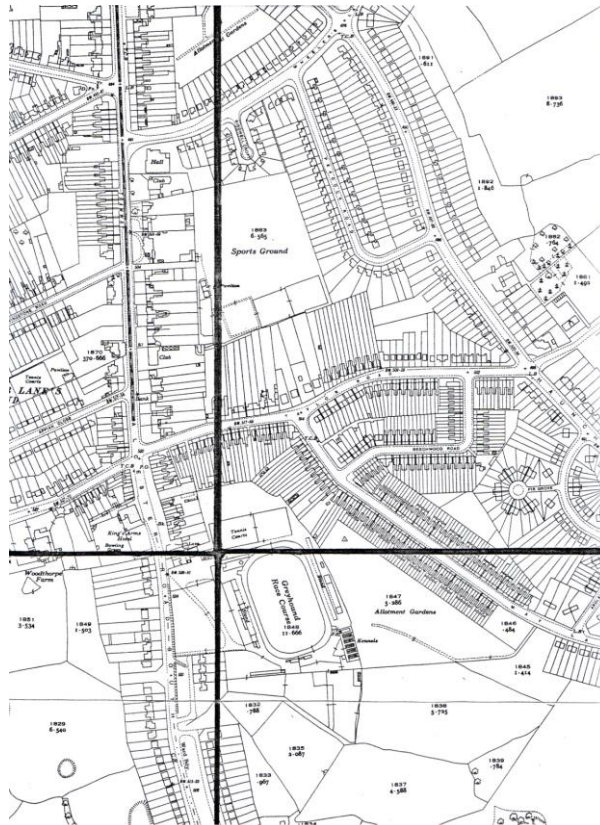
## King's Heath Horse Show.

Founded on May Day 1899 - the first show took place in the form of a 5 mile parade led by a silver band, which began at Kings Heath Station Wharf, progressed up the High Street to Parsons Yard (later the site of the Kingsway Cinema), then onto Vicarage Road and ending at Kings Norton Green. Eye witness accounts say crowds formed two deep along the route waiting to see the spectacular site of 200 hundred ponies, horses and trade turnouts. The horse was a much valued part of society and a wide variety of horses were used at the time to draw tradesmen's delivery vehicles.

In the early 1900s the parade developed into a horse show and was held in the grounds of Highbury. Austen, son of Joseph Chamberlain, was the first president and was often seen at the show wearing the family's trademark, a home grown orchid.

After four successful years the show transferred to The Priory in Vicarage Road, Kings Heath, the home of Major J. Howard Cartland, who became the second president of the society and who also sponsored two championship cups for the best light weight and the best heavy weight hunting horses. Each cup winner also received an additional prize of 15 guineas.

In 1923 several of the Kings Heath Horse Show committee formed a shareholders' company and purchased a 10 acre site at Alcester Lane's End, naming venture Kings Heath Horse Show and Recreation Ground Ltd.



OS Map 1937 - see location of Kings Heath Sports and Recreation Ground and Horse Show.

In 1925 fifty Russian Cossack horsemen visited Birmingham giving two shows per day for one week at Kings Heath Horse Show and Recreation Ground. This included an afternoon and evening show, which was illuminated by electric light and a gala performance in aid of a Birmingham Hospital charity.

In 1932, between 3,000 and 4,000 people attended the 29<sup>th</sup> annual Whit Monday Show and despite the unfavourable weather entries were of a high standard as was usually associated with the event.

In 1934, members and patrons paid subscriptions of between 10s 6d and £3 3s. These included many individuals and businesses from Kings Heath, for example:

J. Markham of “The Priory” Kings Heath; A.W. Lashford and Lashford Junior of High Street, Kings Heath; C.A Lyons and Mrs A. Perkin of Taylor Road, Kings Heath. Most paid subscriptions of 1 guinea entitling them to free tickets to the grounds and the enclosure. Many subscribers exhibited, some officiated and some donated prizes and prize monies including, for example: A.W. Lashford ; Major J. Howard Cartland JP; W.A. Tipping and Son Kings Heath Coal Wharf and several others, who were members of the council.

In 1934 at the 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Show there were a total of 17 events starting at 10.00 a.m. and the last event finishing at 6.00 p.m. Prize monies ranged from £1 – 50 guineas and nine silver challenge cups were on offer to be won:

- **A.W. Lashford** donated a prize of a silver cup and 15 guineas awarded to the best “One Horse Turnout”– heavy draught or light weight carthorse class, belonging to a tradesman.
- **Kings Heath Horse Show and Recreation Ground Ltd** awarded a silver prize cup and prize money of 15 guineas to the best local cart horse class (mare or gelding) in regular work, shown in harness and from within a 10 mile radius of the grounds. In 1934 this was awarded to Mr W.R. Fleetwood of [Pershore Road, Cotteridge](#) who was also a member of the Horse Show, for “Norton Duchess” a Bay mare of 7 years and 17 hands. [W.R. Fleetwood ran a road haulage business using horses and carts initially and pre WW2 carried coal and coke for Cadbury and played a part in the erection of the Austin “Shadow” factory at Cofton Hackett](#)

Classes included:

- shires and cart horses
- hackney and harness
- hunters and jumping
- children’s
- local cart classes
- novelty classes.

Admission tickets to the grounds and enclosure cost 3s 6d, programmes cost 6d and Ansell’s provided the beer at the bars on the ground. Music and announcements were made using Marconiphone public address equipment.

In 1933 the South Stand caught fire during the night and, despite the fire brigade's efforts, was completely destroyed. The fire was reported in the The Birmingham Gazette, as causing damage which would cost thousands of pounds to repair.

From 1944 the subsequent war time shows were an enormous success with attendance of over 8,000, turnstiles were forced to close early for safety reasons and thousands of pounds were raised for charity.

As well as the annual horse show many other sports were catered for and the ground was converted for Greyhound racing in 1926.

In 1949 the Greyhound Racing Company bought the freehold of the ground and a trust was set up by the original shareholders enabling the horse show to continue on Whit Mondays. The Lord Mayor was regular visitor and the show attracted some ten famous riders including Dawn Palethorpe, Ann Moore, Ted Edgar and Wilf White [famous show jumping riders of the 50s, 60's and 70's and all household names competing at national and Olympic levels.](#)



**Show Jumping at Kings Heath Horse Show in the 1960s.**

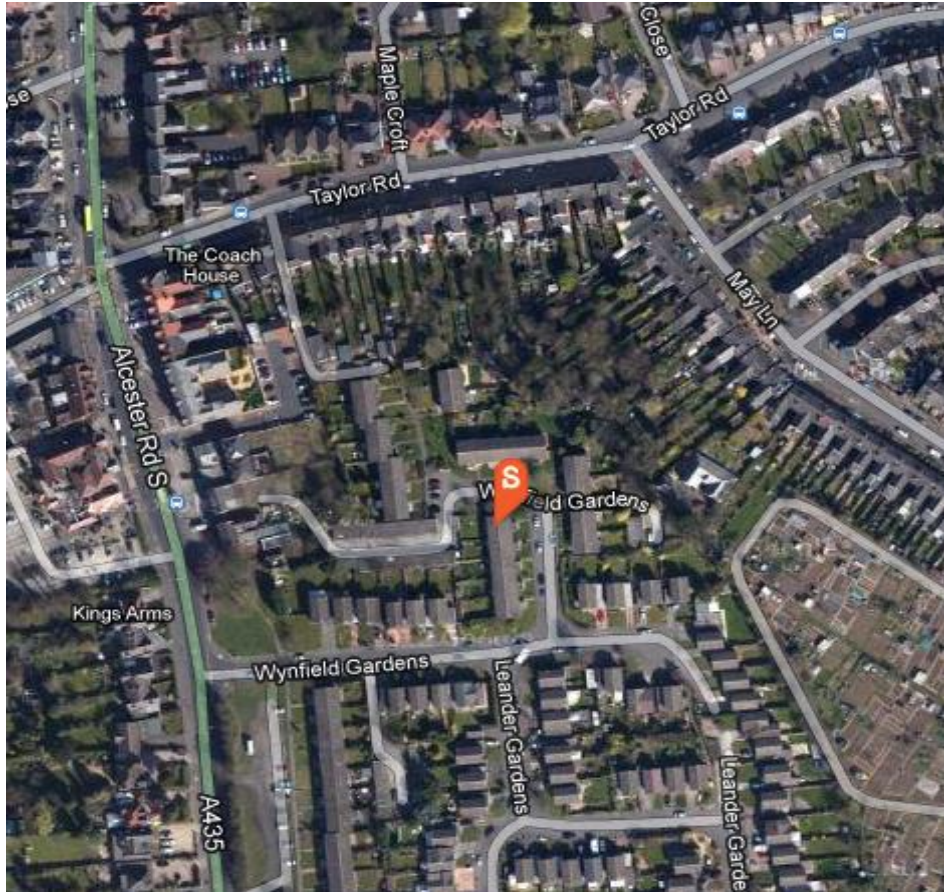


**The above images are of the show in 1957 at Alcester Lanes End.**

A move to country became inevitable in 1965 as Kings Heath became increasingly urbanised and a 22.5 acre site was purchased in Tithe Barn Lane, Earlswood where the Horse Show continues to this day.

## Kings Heath Greyhound Stadium

Situated on Alcester Road, Alcester Lanes End between what are now Westfield and Wynfield Gardens.



The land, 10 acres was first purchased in 1923 by members of the Kings Heath Horse Show Committee and was first converted to a greyhound track in May 1926 and opened its gates as one of the earliest tracks 21<sup>st</sup> May 1927.

Crowds were first brought to the popular meetings by tram which terminated at the Kings Arms (known locally as the Knob) at Alcester Lane's End.

The lease taken over in 1936 by H. Leo Craven and his associate Herbert Mansfield, who were both invited to join the horse show committee. By 1949 the Greyhound Company had purchased the freehold for the ground.

The most prestigious races held were the Lincoln, the Midlands Oaks and the Tradesmen's Trophy and many famous Birmingham bookmakers first cut their teeth at Kings Heath including the Berrows, Bob Thornton, Tom Sheldon and Norman Fogg.

