











*An ERA is warmed up in the paddock during a 1970s historic meet. The Terrace Straight grandstands can be seen in the background. Judging by the gent with his fingers in his ears, the car does appear to be rather loud. The ERA was one of the most successful cars in Crystal Palace's prewar guise – campaigned by the likes of Whitehead, Dobson and Bira. (Courtesy Trevor Legate)*

to New Zealand Hill. This right-hander was known as 'the link'.

Three days before construction of the circuit was due to start, a catastrophe struck South London. On November 30, 1936 Crystal Palace burnt to the ground, leaving little more than a gaunt-looking iron skeleton. Even so, work on the new circuit began on time and, within 5 months of the fire, the new circuit was ready. On 24 April, 1937 the first meeting took place and the opening race was won by a Pat G. Fairfield in his works ERA; he also established the lap record for the new circuit, averaging 54.59mph (87.85kph).

The circuit ran with great success, and many 'names' raced there, including Prince Bira who made Crystal Palace his own. Richard Seaman, who raced for the great works Mercedes Benz outfit, brought his W125 Silver Arrows to the Palace and drove a few demonstration laps. The circuit closed in 1939 at the outbreak of war with Raymond Mays in his ERA setting a final lap record of 60.97mph (98.11kph) a couple of months before the start of hostilities.

Most of this circuit remains today. Two sections are missing: the first, from halfway round Big Tree Bend all the way to the exit of Stadium Curve, was destroyed by the extensive work in the park in the 1970s; the other section to go was the middle 200 meters (218yds) of the Terrace Straight.

It took the park 8 years to recover from the war and for motor racing to return. Local residents were none too keen to see the return of racing at the Palace and kicked up a fuss, with the result that racing was restricted to just 5 days per year. The track, too, was changed as the inner loop was deemed too slow; a new link was added between Fisherman's Bend and the exit of Stadium Curve. New Link, as it was known, was a steep 1-in-8 drop which made the preceding Fisherman's Bend much faster. The start/finish line was resited halfway along the Stadium Straight, and safety was improved by new barriers.

The 'new' Crystal Palace opened on Whit Monday 1953 and attracted over 40,000 spectators. The fresh road racing course proved much faster, with Tony Rolt in his Connaught lapping at an average speed of 72.73mph (117kph). The circuit was from then on firmly on the motorsport map, holding regular Formula 2 meetings throughout its existence as well as many other car and bike events.

terraces that dominate the land between the Terrace Straight and the site of the Palace itself.

Following the path of the 1920s circuit right up to the left-handed Rockhills Hairpin – now known as Pond Hairpin – the track then swept right and turned left at Big Tree Bend down New Zealand Hill. The name of the hill is another hangover from the 1920s, though the track at this point does not follow the old course.

At the bottom of New Zealand hill the track turned left through stadium dip then down a short unnamed straight into a long right-hander at Stadium Curve. On the exit of this corner the field flashed past the timing box, over the grid, and began another lap.

There was also the option of a shorter circuit with a right-hand curve about halfway along the Terrace Straight linking the straight