

= Villa Park =

Villa Park is a football stadium in Aston , Birmingham , England , with a seating capacity of 42 @, @ 682 . It has been the home of Aston Villa Football Club since 1897 . The ground is less than a mile from both Witton and Aston railway stations and has hosted sixteen England internationals at senior level , the first in 1899 and the most recent in 2005 . It was the first English ground to stage international football in three different centuries . Villa Park has hosted more FA Cup semi @-@ finals than any other stadium , having hosted 55 matches in total .

In 1897 , Aston Villa moved into the Aston Lower Grounds , a sports ground in a Victorian amusement park in the former grounds of Aston Hall , a Jacobean stately home . The stadium has gone through various stages of renovation and development , resulting in the current stand configuration of the Holte End , Trinity Road Stand , North Stand and the Doug Ellis Stand . The club has initial planning permission to redevelop the North Stand , which will increase the capacity of Villa Park from 42 @, @ 682 to approximately 50 @, @ 000 .

Before 1914 , a cycling track ran around the perimeter of the pitch where regular cycling meetings were hosted as well as athletic events . Aside from football @-@ related uses , the stadium has seen various concerts staged along with other sporting events including boxing matches and international rugby league and rugby union matches . In 1999 , the last ever final of the UEFA Cup Winners ' Cup took place at Villa Park . Villa Park also hosted the 2012 FA Community Shield , as Wembley Stadium was unavailable due to it staging the final of the Olympic football tournament .

= = History = =

The Aston Lower Grounds , later renamed Villa Park , was not the first home of Aston Villa F.C. Their previous venue , Wellington Road faced increasing problems including an uneven pitch , poor spectator facilities , a lack of access and exorbitant rents . As a result , in 1894 , Villa 's committee began negotiations with the owners of the Aston Lower Grounds , " the finest sports ground in the district . " Situated in the former grounds of Aston Hall , a Jacobean stately home , the Lower Grounds had seen varied uses over the years . Originally the kitchen garden of Aston Hall 's owner Sir Thomas Holte , the man who gave his name to the Holte End stand , it later became a Victorian amusement park complete with aquarium and great hall . The current pitch stands on the site of the Dovehouse Pool , an ornamental pond drained in 1889 . In place of the pool the owners of the Lower Grounds built a cycle track and sports ground that opened on 10 June 1889 for a combined cycling and athletics event that drew an estimated crowd of 15 @, @ 000 . Negotiations continued for two years before the Villa committee reached agreement with the site 's owner , Edgar Flower , to rent the Lower Grounds for £ 300 per annum on a 21 @-@ year lease with an option to buy the site at any point during the term . The committee immediately engaged an architect who began preparing plans for the site , which included construction of a new 440 yards (400 metres) cement cycle track to replace the existing cinder one . The main stand was to be built to the east on the Witton Lane side , with the track and pitch fully enclosed by banking . Construction of the final phase of the stadium began in the winter of 1896 following negotiations with contractors over the price . Several months behind schedule , the almost @-@ complete stadium finally opened on 17 April 1897 . The process of fixing issues with the building work would continue for a number of months thereafter . As built , the stadium could house 40 @, @ 000 spectators , most of whom would stand in the open on the banking . The first match at the ground , a friendly against Blackburn Rovers , took place on 17 April 1897 , one week after Aston Villa had completed the League and FA Cup ' Double ' .

After winning the league championship in 1899 , Villa 's record @-@ breaking average crowd of 21 @, @ 000 allowed the club to invest in a two @-@ stage ground improvement programme . The first stage extended the terrace covering on the Trinity Road side at a cost of £ 887 while the second cost £ 1 @, @ 300 and involved re @-@ laying all terracing around the track to remedy a design flaw that caused poor sightlines for the majority of the crowd . In 1911 , Villa bought the freehold of the ground for £ 8 @, @ 250 , the office buildings in the old aquarium and car park area for £ 1 @, @

500 and the carriage drive and bowling green for £ 2 @, @ 000 . This was the first stage in plans drawn up by ambitious Villa director Frederick Rinder , that would see the capacity of Villa Park increased to 104 @, @ 000 . In June 1914 , another phase of enhancements began at Villa Park to compete with improvements at other grounds around the country , including Everton 's Goodison Park , where a new two @-@ tiered stand had just been completed . The first stage of improvements saw the cycling track removed , new banking at the Holte Hotel End (Holte End) and a re @-@ profiling of all the terracing to bring it closer to the newly squared @-@ off pitch . Rinder turned to the renowned architect Archibald Leitch to design a new Villa Park . Their joint plans included large banked end stands at the Holte and Witton ends and the incorporation of the original Victorian Lower Grounds buildings , including the aquarium and the newly acquired bowling greens . The outbreak of the First World War severely hampered design and construction efforts .

As a result of the worsening economic situation , 1919 quotes for the implementation of the pre @-@ war construction plans came to £ 66 @, @ 000 , compared to the 1914 quote of £ 27 @, @ 000 . By March 1922 this price had reduced to £ 41 @, @ 775 and the directors pushed ahead with the plans for the new Trinity Road Stand . Construction began in April 1922 with the stand partially opened in August that year . Construction continued throughout the 1922 ? 23 season with the stand officially opened on 26 January 1924 by the then Duke of York , later King George VI . He commented to Rinder that he had " no idea that a ground so finely equipped in every way ? and devoted to football ? existed . " On completion the Trinity Road Stand was considered one of the grandest in Britain , complete with stained glass windows , Italian mosaics , Dutch gables in the style of Aston Hall and a sweeping staircase . Several commentators including Simon Inglis consider it to be Leitch 's masterpiece , described in 1960 by a Sunday Times reporter as the " St Pancras of football . " The final cost of the stand and associated 1922 ? 24 ground developments was calculated at £ 89 @, @ 000 , a sum that enraged the club 's directors who ordered an investigation into cost and in 1925 forced the resignation of Rinder .

Villa Park was to remain in much the same state for another 30 years with no major developments until the late 1950s . During the 1930s the earth and timber terraces with wooden crash barriers were completely replaced by concrete terracing and metal barriers , a process first begun by Rinder . In 1936 he was voted back onto the board at the age of 78 after the club were relegated to the Second Division . Nearly 25 years after he had created his 1914 masterplan , Rinder resurrected it and looked to carry out the third phase of his developments . He died in December 1938 after Leitch who had died in April 1938 , leaving his construction business to his son , Archibald Junior . The complete redevelopment and extension of the Holte End began in early 1939 supervised by Archibald Junior . When the Second World War broke out in September 1939 , all construction across the country stopped . Unusually , given the austerity measures in place at the time , Villa acquired a special permit to continue construction of the Holte End ; Simon Inglis notes " How they achieved this is not recorded . " Work on the ground was completed by April 1940 and the stand was immediately mothballed as Villa Park switched to its war time role . The Trinity Road Stand became an air @-@ raid shelter and ammunition store while the home dressing room became the temporary home of a rifle company from the 9th Battalion , Royal Warwickshire Regiment . German bombs caused £ 20 @, @ 000 worth of damage to the Witton Lane Stand , which was not remedied until 1954 .

Apart from running repairs and fixing bomb damage , no major projects were undertaken until 1958 ? 59 when four projects were announced . As a result , the old Bowling Green pavilion on the Trinity Road became a medical centre , the basement of the aquarium building was converted into a gym , four large floodlight pylons were installed and a training ground was purchased 500 yards (460 metres) from Villa Park . The floodlights were first used in November 1958 for a friendly match against the Scottish side Heart of Midlothian . In the summer of 1962 , £ 40 @, @ 000 was spent on a roof for the Holte End , the first to provide cover for the ordinary terrace fans at Villa Park since 1922 . The old barrel @-@ shaped roof on the Witton Lane Stand , the only remaining feature of the 1897 Villa Park , was removed in the summer of 1963 and replaced with a plain sloping roof in the same style as the Holte End . Villa Park was chosen by FIFA to host three matches for the 1966 World Cup on the condition that the Witton Lane Stand became all @-@ seater . The players '

tunnel also required covering with a cage while the pitch was to be widened by 3 yards (2 @. @ 7 metres) . Regular ground developments and innovations began in the summer of 1969 under the direction of the new chairman , Doug Ellis , who set about redeveloping Villa Park for the modern era . Much of the stadium had fallen into various states of disrepair and was in need of modernisation . Ellis updated the infrastructure , installed a new public address system , carried out plumbing work , which included installing new toilets , resurfaced the terraces and built a new ticket office . His tenure also saw executive lounges replace the old offices in the Trinity Road Stand .

Redevelopment of the Witton End stand began in the summer of 1976 . The stand had not seen any major work since 1924 and its rear remained a mound of earth . Initial renovations saw the levelling of the earthen mound and new concrete terraces constructed on the lower tier in preparation for the construction of an upper tier . Stage two began in February 1977 and was officially opened in late October that year . The stand 's design and fittings were impressive for the time , including novelties such as an ' AV ' logo spelled out in coloured seats and a double row of executive boxes . As well as the new Witton End stand , renamed the North Stand , Villa Park went through further renovations throughout the ground . The cost of the work was £ 1 @. @ 3 million . As a result , and as with the construction of the Trinity Road Stand fifty years earlier , Villa were again burdened with debt . An internal investigation found that £ 700 @, @ 000 of the £ 1 @. @ 3 million worth of bills were unaccounted for . A later report by accountants Deloitte Haskins & Sells found that the bills were inflated by only 10 % but that there were " serious breaches of recommended codes of practice and poor site supervision . "

In response to the Hillsborough disaster , the Taylor Report of August 1989 mandated that all major stadia be converted to become all @- @ seater as a safety measure . During the summer of 1990 , the first changes were made to comply with the report 's requirements . The North Stand saw the addition of 2 @, @ 900 seats to the lower tier of the stand in place of terracing , the Holte End 's roof was extended in preparation for more seats , the Trinity Road Stand had its roof replaced and the Witton Lane Stand had more corporate boxes added . By that time , all four floodlight pylons had been removed to make way for boxes or in preparation for seating and new floodlights were installed on new gantries on the Trinity and Witton stands . In February 1992 , the club 's application to the Council for permission to demolish the Holte Hotel was rejected . After several months of negotiations , Villa gained permission for a new stand to replace the Witton Lane Stand . The new design meant that the club had to realign Witton Lane and , as a condition of the planning permission , pay £ 600 @, @ 000 to compulsory purchase the houses along Witton Lane and upgrade the road from a B to an A road , as well as moving its utilities . The stand was fully operational by January 1994 at a cost of £ 5 million with 4 @, @ 686 seats , which brought Villa Park up to a capacity of 46 @, @ 005 . It was announced at the 70th birthday gala of chairman Doug Ellis that the stand was to be renamed the " Doug Ellis Stand " , a move that caused some controversy among Villa fans with some still referring to it as the Witton Lane Stand . Nevertheless , during the 1993 ? 94 season , the newly rebuilt Witton Lane Stand became the Doug Ellis Stand . The Holte End was the only remaining stand that did not meet the Taylor Report requirements and a structural survey revealed that putting seats onto the existing terracing would be uneconomical . Instead the decision was taken to build a new stand consisting of two tiers , just four years after construction of the new roof . The demolition of the stand began on the last day of the 1994 season . Its replacement began to open in August 1994 with 3 @, @ 000 seats in the lower tier occupied for the first seating @- @ only game at Villa Park . By December the same year it was fully operational and had a capacity of 13 @, @ 501 seats , bringing the Villa Park capacity to 40 @, @ 310 . Upon completion , the Holte was the largest single end stand in Britain .

The next development at Villa Park was the Trinity Road Stand in 2000 . It had stood since 1922 though it had seen a number of renovations and additions since . The demolition of the old stand began after the last game of the 1999 ? 2000 season , an event met with an element of sadness from observers such as Simon Inglis who stated that " the landscape of English football will never be the same . " The new stand was much larger and more spacious than the old one , taking Villa 's capacity from 39 @, @ 399 to its present 42 @, @ 682 . It was officially opened in November 2001 by HRH The Prince of Wales , just as the old stand had been opened by his grandfather George VI ,

77 years earlier , when he was still the Duke of York .

= = Structure and facilities = =

Villa Park comprises 42 @, @ 682 seats split between four stands . These four stands are the Holte End to the South , the Trinity Road Stand to the West , the Doug Ellis Stand opposite the Trinity Road Stand , and the North Stand behind the northern goal . All of the stands are composed of two tiers except the Trinity Road Stand , which has three .

The Holte End is a large two @-@ tiered stand at the south end of the stadium . Originally a large terraced banking providing accommodation for more than 20 @, @ 000 spectators , the current incarnation was constructed in 1994 ? 95 and consists of two tiers with no executive boxes . The two tiers are slightly curved in a parabola to provide good sightlines from all seats while inside there are three levels of spacious concourse area as well as the Holte Suite , a large hospitality room for supporters . The roof is a variant of the " King Truss " system and the front third slopes slightly forward . Two large staircases , pediments , Dutch gables and a mosaic introduced in the 2007 season in the style of the old Trinity Road Stand make up the facade , itself inspired by Aston Hall . The Holte End is the most renowned stand at Villa Park amongst home and away team supporters . Traditionally Villa 's most vocal and passionate supporters gather here , including some Aston Villa hooligan firms .

Built in 2000 , the main Trinity Road Stand is the most recently completed at Villa Park and houses the dressing rooms , club offices and director 's boxes . The stand is composed of three tiers with a row of executive boxes between the second and third tiers . Although much larger than the other stands , the stand has roughly the same roof level as the other three sides . The players ' tunnel and the technical area where the managers and substitutes sit during the match are in the middle of the stand at pitch level . The press and the directors ' VIP area are situated in the centre of the middle tier . The upper tiers of the stand extend over Trinity Road , the street that cuts behind the ground . Cars travelling along Trinity Road have to pass through what is effectively a tunnel formed by the Trinity Road Stand .

The oldest stand at Villa Park is the North Stand , formerly known as the Witton End , completed in 1977 . It is a two @-@ tiered stand , with a double row of 39 executive boxes running between the two tiers . Upper tier seats are claret with " AV " written in blue while the lower tier consists of sky blue seats . The North Stand was " the first major stand in Britain to use what is now broadly termed the ' goalpost ' structure . " The facade of the stand is a " textured concrete render " typical of the time . Since the segregation of supporters in the 1970s , away fans had been situated in the lower tier of the North Stand . Former manager Martin O 'Neill expressed his desire to have Villa fans seated in the North Stand to improve the atmosphere at Villa Park . For the start of the 2007 ? 08 season the club released cut @-@ price season tickets for the lower tier of the stand . This meant moving the away fans to the northern end of the Doug Ellis Stand across both tiers . The Doug Ellis Stand , formerly known as the Witton Lane Stand , is a two @-@ tiered stand with a row of executive boxes dividing the tiers . The roof was originally planned to be a goalpost structure , the same as the Holte End and North Stand , but the plans were changed to a simpler cantilever design . It saw slight refurbishment prior to the 1996 European Championships to join the corners with the lower tier of the North Stand , improve leg @-@ room and increase the curve of the terracing to improve sightlines . The main television camera viewpoint is situated here , so televised matches at Villa Park take the point of view of a fan who is sitting on the half @-@ way line in the Doug Ellis Stand .

In the south @-@ west corner , between the Holte End and the Trinity Road Stand , there is a three @-@ storey pavilion @-@ like structure , which is used for corporate hospitality . There is also a large television screen in the same location . On 28 November 2009 , a bronze statue of former Villa chairman and founder of the Football League , William McGregor was unveiled outside the stadium . Behind the North Stand is the " Villa Village " made up of club and ticket offices as well as a club shop . The buildings were bought by the club from British Telecom in the 1990s .

= = Future = =

Aston Villa have initial planning permission to rebuild the North Stand in the same style as the Trinity Road Stand . Owner Randy Lerner has expressed his support for increased capacity as average attendances increased . When completed , the capacity of Villa Park will increase to around 50 @, @ 000 . As of the start of the 2010 season , designs are at a conceptual stage and due to a " multi @-@ year effort to consider business and supporter needs " there is no defined date for construction to start . In the meantime , the entrance to the North Stand , " R Block " , has been redecorated inside and out . The facelift has seen the curved fascia above the turnstiles replaced with cladding and canopies similar to those in front of the Holte Suite . The " R Block " concourse has also been expanded to create a larger , brighter open space .

Villa Park was originally listed as one of the six stadiums that will hold Olympic football matches in the 2012 Summer Olympics . On 10 August 2009 it was announced that the organising committee for the games and the football club had decided that uncertainty around expansion plans meant that the club were " unable to commit fully to hosting matches . "

= = Non @-@ Villa games and other sports = =

Villa Park was the first English ground to stage international football in three different centuries and has hosted matches during several international tournaments . Three World Cup matches were played at the ground during the 1966 World Cup and four matches during Euro ' 96 . The ground has also hosted a number of England internationals at senior level . The first was in 1899 and the most recent in 2005 . Sixteen international matches have been hosted at the stadium in total .

Villa Park has been the venue for several Cup competitions . It is the most often used stadium in FA Cup semi @-@ finals history , having hosted 55 semi @-@ finals . The club hosted the League Cup Final in 1980 ? 81 when Liverpool beat West Ham 2 ? 1 in a replay . In 1999 , the stadium hosted the last ever final of the European Cup Winners ' Cup in which Lazio beat Real Mallorca 2 ? 1 . During the construction of the new Wembley Stadium between 2001 and 2005 , the FA Trophy Final was held at Villa Park . The 2012 Community Shield was held at Villa Park instead of Wembley due to Olympic Games at the stadium .

Many athletics and cycle events took place at the ground prior to the First World War while boxing has been hosted on several occasions . On 28 June 1948 , Dick Turpin , brother of Randolph Turpin , became the first non @-@ white boxer to win a British title in a fight against Vince Hawkins in front of 40 @, @ 000 spectators following the British Boxing Board of Control lifting their ban on non @-@ whites challenging for titles . On 21 June 1972 Danny McAlinden defeated Jack Bodell in a British and Empire Heavyweight title fight .

The first ever rugby league test series was secured by Great Britain at the ground , when they defeated the touring Australian Kangaroos side 6 ? 5 on 14 February 1909 in front of a crowd of 9 @, @ 000 . A second rugby league game followed three years later on New Year 's Day 1912 but only 4 @, @ 000 people turned up to see Australia beat Great Britain 33 ? 8 . The stadium has also seen several international rugby union tour matches . On 8 October 1924 , a North Midlands XV lost 40 ? 3 to the New Zealand side touring Europe and Canada at the time . The second game took place on 30 December 1953 when Midlands Counties played another New Zealand side on their 1953 ? 54 tour of United Kingdom , Ireland , France and North America . The Midlands side lost 18 ? 3 . On 26 August 1985 , it played host to the first ever American football " Summerbowl , " intended to be the English equivalent to the Super Bowl . The game was played between the London Ravens and the Streatham Olympians and the low turn @-@ out of 8 @, @ 000 spectators meant that the Summerbowl was not repeated in subsequent years .

Villa Park was chosen as the venue for two pool matches in the 2015 Rugby World Cup . The first was a Pool B match between South Africa and Samoa on September 26 , 2015 with South Africa easily winning 46 - 6 with 39 @, @ 526 in attendance . The second was a Pool A match between Australia and Uruguay the next day with Australia easily winning 65 - 3 with 39 @, @ 605 in attendance .

== Other Uses ==

Aside from sporting uses , Villa Park has been a venue for musicians from multiple genres as well as evangelical preachers . The stadium has hosted several rock concerts , including Bruce Springsteen who played two concerts in June 1988 as part of his Tunnel of Love Tour , and most recently Bon Jovi , who played the stadium in 2013 as part of the Because We Can : The Tour . Duran Duran held a charity concert in 1983 to raise money for MENCAP . Other singers who have played at the ground include Belinda Carlisle , Rod Stewart and Robert Palmer . The American evangelist Billy Graham attracted 257 @, @ 181 people to a series of prayer meetings held at the stadium over the summer of 1984 . Archbishop Desmond Tutu held a religious gathering at the stadium in 1989 .

== Records ==

The highest attendance recorded at Villa Park was 76 @, @ 588 , on 2 March 1946 in an FA Cup 6th round tie against Derby County . The highest attendance in the all @-@ seater era was 42 @, @ 788 on 29 December 2009 in a Premier League game against Liverpool . The highest average post Second World War attendance at Villa Park was 47 @, @ 168 in the 1948 ? 49 season , while the lowest average post @-@ war attendance was 15 @, @ 237 in the 1985 ? 86 season .

== Transport ==

Villa Park is within a short distance of two mainline railway stations . Witton railway station is approximately 500 metres (0 @. @ 3 miles) from Villa Park , and Aston railway station is approximately 1 @. @ 5 kilometres (0 @. @ 9 miles) . Under current owner Randy Lerner , there have been discussions on changing the name of Witton Station to Villa Park as is the case with West Bromwich Albion 's local railway station , The Hawthorns . Aston Villa 's former CEO , Bruce Langham , has said that the West Midlands Passenger Transport Executive (Centro) are amenable to the idea as long as it is done at the expense of the club . No action has yet been taken .