

# \*Highbury

Between 1913 and 2006, the Club's home was Arsenal Stadium, known almost universally by its original name of Highbury

→ The move to North London was down to Henry Norris, who took over at Woolwich Arsenal while still chairman at Fulham in 1910.

His initial plan was to merge Fulham and Woolwich Arsenal, but the proposal was rejected by the Football League. He was then told by the League that it was a conflict of interests to control both clubs, and so he chose to concentrate his efforts on Woolwich Arsenal – the first London club to turn professional and the first to be admitted to the League.

In 1912/13 though, Woolwich Arsenal, already in desperate financial straits, were relegated from Division One (for the only time in the Club's history) with a record low of just 18 points. In a bid to revive the Gunners fortunes, and to increase the supporter base, Norris decided to move the Club. After originally sounding out sites at Battersea and Harringay, he decided on a plot of land in Highbury, the site of the playing fields of St John's College of Divinity. Despite local opposition to the move, from residents and other north London football clubs, the deeds were signed early in 1913. Arsenal paid £20,000 for a 21-year lease on six acres of land and, as part of the deal, agreed not to play at home on Christmas Day or Good Friday. The college remained at the southern end of the stadium until it burnt down at the end of the Second World War.

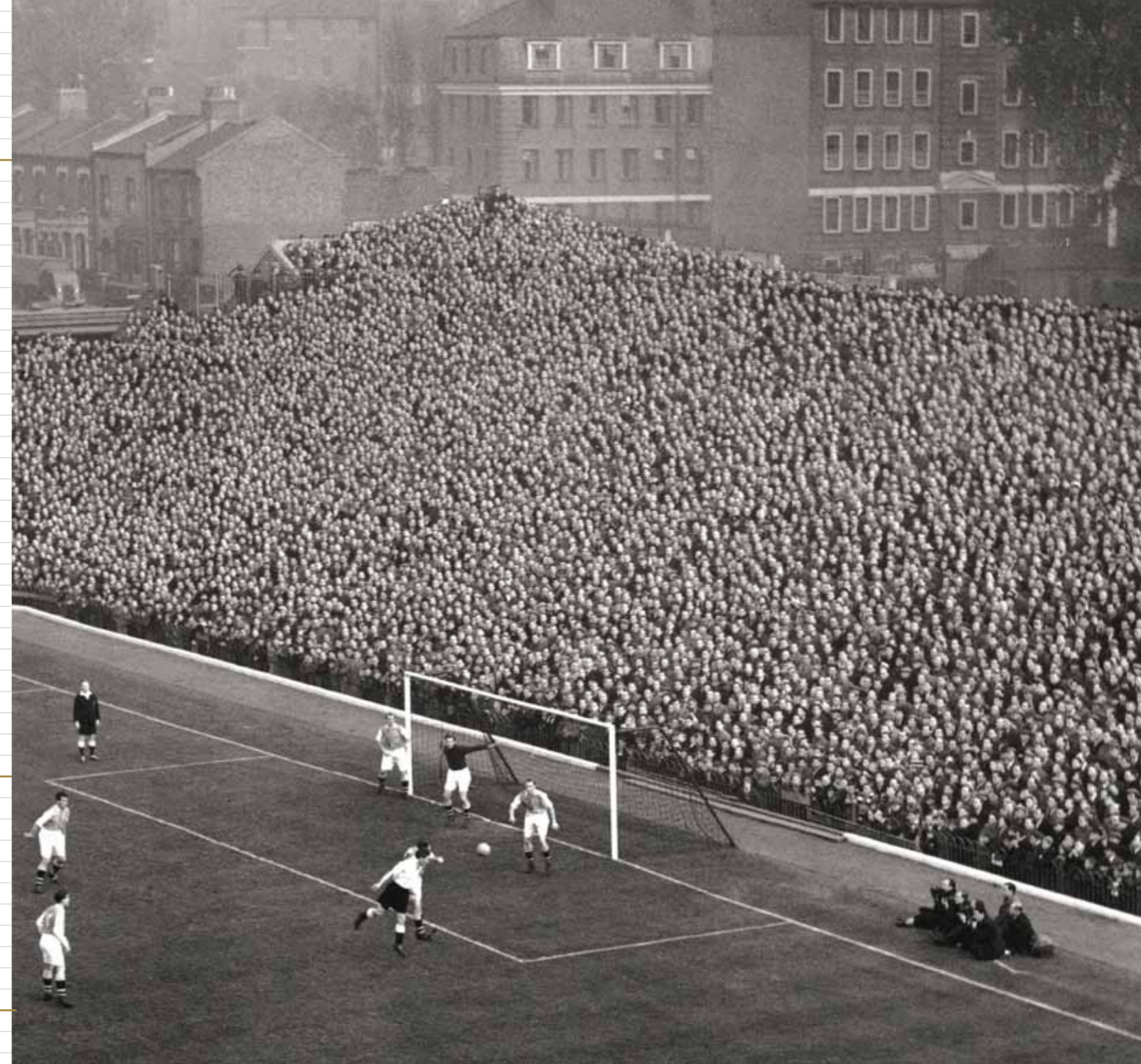
**\*fact**  
Before moving to **Highbury**, the Club was based at the **Manor Ground in Plumstead**.

The new stadium was designed by Archibald Leitch and much work had to be done at Highbury before Arsenal could play their first game there. The pitch was levelled, a new grandstand was partly built, and turnstiles and terracing were installed – all at great expense to Norris (later Sir Henry Norris). The main stand was on the East side, and housed 9,000 spectators. The first match was a 2-1 victory over Leicester Fosse, on September 6, 1913. In 1925 the Club paid a further £64,000 to buy the site outright, and the restrictions on playing on Good Friday and Christmas Day were lifted. The West Stand was designed by architect Claude Waterlow Ferrier and was opened in December 1932. It was the most advanced grandstand ever seen in England and had seats for 4,000 in addition to standing capacity for 17,000. The two-tier stand cost £50,000 to build. It was in the 1930s that the name was changed to

'Arsenal Stadium', and in October 1936, the art deco style East Stand (Grade Two listed) was opened. This stand housed the offices, players' facilities and the main entrance (the famous Marble Halls). It cost £130,000 and had seating for 8,000.

In the Second World War Arsenal Stadium was used as a first aid post. During the war incendiary bombs destroyed the North Bank roof. In 1948 Highbury was used as one of the football venues during the London Olympic Games. In 1951 floodlights were added and in 1956 the North Bank roof was rebuilt. Undersoil heating followed in 1964 and extra seating was installed in the West Stand in 1969. The Clock End stand was redeveloped completely in 1989, to provide room for 48 executive boxes and further office space. In 1991, following the Taylor Report, Highbury was converted into an all-seater stadium. A new, two-tier North Bank stand was opened in 1993, providing seating for 12,000 spectators, along with a shop and museum. Other modernisations followed, including the introduction of two huge screens and electric scoreboards.

In its last season, 2005/06, Arsenal Stadium had a capacity of 38,419. The final game, a league encounter, was played against Wigan Athletic on May 7, 2006 and drew a crowd of 38,359 who witnessed Arsenal triumph 4-2. ■



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