

THE SPEEDWAY RESEARCHER

Edited by Graham Fraser & Jim Henry

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OUR MANIFESTO

We are both very interested in the history of the sport of motorcycle speedway racing. We know of lots of dedicated fellow historians of the sport who are working away in splendid isolation and of a few very small research partnerships working together on various projects. We suspect that there are a good few more dedicated people who are quietly working away on research projects who would welcome a bit of help from others elsewhere in the country as they have difficulty in gaining access to remote information.

It strikes us that there is probably a fair bit of duplication of effort as researchers, who are unaware of others with a similar interest, revisit the same source and abstract the same information. It also strikes us that there is a lot of work to be done and maybe it is time to get interested parties to declare their interests so that information can be shared round.

The established speedway magazines have their own editorial priorities which we have to accept. We consider that encouraging research into speedway history and publishing the results of research is not at the top of the agendas of other magazines. We also consider that there should be some outlet for telling fellow researchers what has been found. Since there is no magazine devoted to doing this - and we think it needs to be done - here is the first of a publication we have decided to name The Speedway Researcher. We intend to publish The Speedway Researcher, initially in this format, every three months. If it takes off then it will grow as we receive material to publish.

This copy is free of charge but if you wish subsequent copies we ask for a subscription charge of £1.50 to cover postage and copying for the remaining three editions of Volume No.1. Please make cheques / postal orders payable to The Speedway Reporter.

Our aim is to establish a network of interested individuals and to provide a forum for you tell everyone else what your interests are and what you are looking for. We would like to know what you have researched and how you hold that information.

We want to share details about sources of information, for example - Do you know about the British Library Newspaper Library at Colindale in London ? Do you know what it holds ? Do you know how to find out what papers and publications are where ? Do you know about copyright law ?

We have thought about the formation of a Speedway History Society and would welcome your thoughts on this. Do we really need a formal organisation or can we get by by just knowing who is who and what they do ?

We'd love to hear from you ! Our addresses/telephone numbers are :

Graham Fraser,
7B Bruce Street, Stirling,
FK8 1PD Tel : 01786 471992

Jim Henry,
90 Greenend Gardens, Edinburgh,
EH17 7QH. Tel : 0131 664 7185

GRAHAM'S PET PROJECTS

Like Jim I am very interested in the history of speedway, especially the pre war years which are quite poorly documented in the speedway press.

My main interest is the history of Preston Speedway which operated in the pre war ear at Farringdon Park. There are stories of a possible venue in the late 1930s at a dog track in the town but I've not been able to confirm this.

I have been collecting newspaper cuttings about Preston's activities both home and away and hope to compile a comprehensive history of this venue in the future.

I have been gathering information about other venues which are bit more obscure like Swindon - Gorse Hill and even more obscure Chalton track which was situated near Horndean in Hampshire. Originally it seemed that Chalton was only a training venue cut out of a field but I have uncovered details of actual meetings staged there.

I have been doing a little research into the Portsmouth venue at Copnor Stadium and am interested in other ventures in this south coast town.

Other venues which are of interest to me are Newcastle Gosforth, its sister promotion at Whitley Bay, the one year wonder of Brighton and another odd ball - Little Park in Barrow.

Any information on these venues would be very welcome.

I have been attempting to compile a match score record of the Northern Dirt Track League and the 1930 Northern League. Again I welcome any help anyone can give me to complete this exercise.

Jointly with Martin Somerville I recently produced a directory of the Conference League tracks and for my sins I am the secretary of the Linlithgow Lightning Speedway Supporters Club.

JIM'S FOSSILISED FACT FINDINGS

The fruits of my largest research exercise have been published by Friends of Edinburgh Speedway in "A History of Edinburgh Speedway Part 1 The Marine Gardens Years." I'm working on the last few missing bits of the 1948 to 1954 Old Meadowbank, Edinburgh era and only need a few race details and heat times including all league match race times for the July 1948 and October 1948 Fleetwood v Edinburgh fixtures.

I have completed, as far as is possible, the pre history of speedway in Glasgow which includes race by race details of Glasgow Nelson (1928 & 1932), Celtic Park (1928), Carntyne (1928 & 1930) and White City (1928 - 1931 and 1939 - 1940) venues. I would welcome any information from programmes from these venues for this era as the newspaper reports of the day rarely list more than first and second places. There is interest in publishing this in book form but nothing has been finalised yet.

I've started work on compiling details of the post war activity in Glasgow which stretches from 1945 to 1954, 1956, and from 1964 onwards. It will be some time before I complete a preliminary run through of available information before I'm able to start seeking to fill gaps in my information base.

Work on Motherwell and Ashfield are in the frame but are long term projects.

Given the opportunity to look over wartime Belle Vue programmes I have compiled a wealth of heat details 1939 - 1945. These are held on computer disc in the Clarisworks 3 programme. It can be copied to text or one or two of the older word processing packages.

Our Friends In The Front Line

We would be happy to carry a resume of what you are researching, information you are seeking and details of what you hold and will share. Here are the details of a few colleagues we know are undertaking research work.

ALAN JONES 24 PURBECK AVENUE, SHEPSHED, LOUGHBOROUGH,
LEICESTERSHIRE LE12 9HD. Tel 01509 506540.

Alan's love is Leicester Speedway. He is researching the history of the sport from 1928 until the town was cruelly robbed of the sport in 1982. In the pre war days there were two tracks, Leicester Stadium at Blackbird Road and Leicester Super which was located in Melton Road. Post war only the Stadium venue was operational.

Alan intends to publish a book on giving details of Leicester's speedways and considers that he is about a year away from publication. He would welcome any information about Leicester, especially the early pre war days as he is still looking for details from a few meetings.

ROGER HULBERT 6 THE GARTH, FIRST LANE, ANLABY, HU10 6UY.
Tel 01482 648240.

Roger has just recently published a history of Hull's speedways from the fairly obscure pre war White White City, through the unusual Hedon Aerodrome track, past the Boulevard and arriving at the current day New Craven Park.

Roger intends to update the history including this and subsequent seasons. He also will update the currently published history as and when he manages to obtain the race and rider information on the 1948 and 1949 seasons that has eluded so far.

Roger would welcome any Hull information from this era you may be able to provide.

GLYNN SHAILES 64 STATION ROAD, PORTON, SWINDON, WILTS.
Tel 01793 770009

Glynn has published books on Oxford Speedway in the past and is, not surprisingly interested in the local venues of Swindon Gorse Hill and the post war Blunsdon venue.

Glynn and colleagues are working on a history of Poole Speedway. He has been involved in the setting up of a local exhibition about the Pirates in this the 50th anniversary of the team. Yet again, if you can help Glynn with info about Poole this would be most welcome.

JOHN JARVIS 104 POUND ROAD, KINGSWOOD, BRISTOL.
Tel 01179 676320

The history of Bristol is John's main interest and he has compiled a wealth of information about the sport in this area and the activities of the team which have represented the city.

John is very interested in compiling a record the many tracks which have operated in Britain over the years. He always welcomes details of new venues and likes the information to be supported by references to the source of the information. John is also interested in collecting details of grass track events in proper stadium settings where the track location can be identified.

The Back Page

Some thoughts on what a Speedway History Society or a Speedway History Network might seek to achieve. Any other ideas would be welcome.

A core of work might be as follows :

1. The establishment of a record of all tracks which staged speedway racing in Great Britain and Ireland. The record would include details of track address, years of operation, details of track dimensions and the promotions organising the events staged at the track.

(For the purpose of this record all tracks with loose surfaces either total length or partial (ie on the bends) and indoor venues irrespective of surface will be considered suitable for inclusion. Venues for demonstrations will be included irrespective of surface.)

2. The establishment of a map record of the location of each track on a common map base. (Suggest a 10,000 Ordnance Survey base.)

3. The establishment of a record of all meetings (to include rain offs). It is suggested this record would provide brief details of day, date, result of principal event. Details of the source/s of meeting information would be required in support of this record.

4. The establishment of a record of riders who took part in meetings. It is suggested this is compiled on a meeting by meeting basis if possible. It is suggested that an attempt is made to obtain a photograph of each rider.

5. The establishment of a record of photographs of speedway racing and riders published in contemporary newspapers and from non speedway published sources. (Copies can be expensive so it is suggested the record notes the publication title, date, page number, and a description of the contents.)

6. The establishment of a record of programmes issued for events. This would indicate whether, for example, new or reissued programmes were used.

7. The establishment of a record of badges.

8. The establishment of a record of film of speedway racing.

9. The establishment of a record of videos of speedway racing.

10. The establishment of a record of machines used for speedway racing.

11. The establishment of a Roll of Honour which would carry the names of those riders killed or fatally injured on speedway tracks.

Obviously we would need volunteers to coordinate these areas of work. Again, we welcome offers from interested parties or details of anyone currently working on these topics.

Jim Henry has been working on topic 11 and has a list of riders killed or fatally injured in Britain, Australia, Sweden, and Poland. Names from several other countries probably could be added. All details welcome.