

# **The Speedway Researcher**

**Promoting Research into the History of Speedway and Dirt Track Racing**

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**A New Volume**

Well, here we are again. This is Number 45 and, if we keep running, the horizon is bright with 5 more to go to the half-century edition. The Web site still grows and the bulk of 1954 meetings should be there by the time you read this. Thanks for the support. **Jim and Graham**

## **Preston Speedway – a History continued - 1929 (Part 3)**

Those of you with good memories will remember from a past issue of the Researcher the early days of Preston speedway, one of the pioneer tracks and league teams in the early days of the sport.

After starting at the Farringdon Park track owned by their landlord, Preston Grasshoppers RUFC, in March 1929 the promotion ran a twice weekly fare of open meetings and then added English Dirt Track (Northern) League fixture to entice what turned out to be healthy crowds to the Lancashire track.

The last instalment saw Preston rising up the League table and by early July 1929 they were closing in on top spot after a 35-28 home win over Halifax.

However, after a number of open meetings at home the Lancastrians unbeaten eight meeting home league record would be given a severe test by high-flying White City (Manchester) whose strong team featured stars like Billie Dallison, Wally Hull, Skid Skinner and Arthur Jervis. A record crowd of 20,000 flocked by car, bike and tram to Preston's stadium, including many holidaymakers from Lancashire holiday resorts, to see how their boys would meet their toughest challenge yet.

They were not to disappoint as the Lancashire Daily Post report announced that it was probably the greatest speedway match yet at Farringdon Park. Heat one saw Dallison narrowly beat Joe Abbot in a time a shade outside the track record. Heat 3 saw the two captains **1**

pitted against each other, Ham Burrill and Arthur Jervis and with both sliding their machines at great speed and with perfect control, Burrill edged in what proved to be a new track record of 1 min 27.2 seconds. Leading 12-9 after three heats it was reported Preston's luck then went against them. Their riders either fell when leading or suffered a burst tyre (Jack Chiswell) whilst ahead. Skid Skinner did however have a bad fall resulting in an arm injury which evened things up a bit. The last three heats all went narrowly to the Manchester men and they won their eleventh successive match beating the home boys 37-26.

Four days later Preston again tasted defeat, this time at Cleveland Park, Middlesbrough 37-25, with local star Norman Evans getting a 12 point maximum. However, three days later and still in the North East, Preston were visitors at Brought Park, Newcastle in form of the biggest Geordie crowd of the season, 15,000. The homesters had Gordon Byers, Water & Fred Creasor, Tommy Storey, Ernie Smith and Phil Blake in their side. Preston lined up with Ham Burrill, Claude Rye, Jack Lund, Jack & Frank Chiswell, Len Myerscough. The Lancastrians won six out of the nine heats, including a 6-0 on heat 4, to win 36-26 and inflict on the Brough Park team their first home defeat of the season.

With up to two meetings a week from March to October you would think that the riders might have appreciated the odd time off, but the Preston promotion never missed an opportunity to put on a team meeting even when the league side was not racing. On the 25<sup>th</sup> July a Lancashire side (Ham Burrill & Joe Abbott (Preston) ; Broadside Burton (Rochdale); Frank Charles (Burnley); Billie Dallison (White City) and Cliff Watson (Salford) faced a weakened Yorkshire team comprised of Eric Langton (Leeds), Arnold Moore (Leeds); Harry Taft (Leeds); Roy Barraclough (Leeds); Bob Allen (Barnsley) & Joe Mitchell (Barnsley) in the War of the Roses. With a star-studded team representing the Red Rose county a home win was expected but what was surprising was the ease of the win by a score of 50 points to only 13 for the White Rose county. Eric Langton won heat 1 but trailed thereafter and with little support from his team Lancashire won eight of the nine heats, seven of them with maximum 6-1 heat advantages.

Back to league action on Saturday, 27<sup>th</sup> July, Preston hosted Newcastle who were keen to avenge their recent first home defeat by the Lancashire side. Unfortunately, the Geordies were completely outclassed Preston **2** racking up a maximum nine heat wins, only dropping three points

on their way to a 51-11 record Northern League win. The Brough Park side were happy to see the back of Preston for that season!

An unusual meeting took place at the White City Speedway, Manchester at the end of July when a White City Ramblers Team faced a Preston Tigers side over two heats in a friendly. Joe Abbott led Billie Dallison to a 4-2 first heat win and Claude Rye led Skid Skinner to a 5-1 in the second heat to record a 9-5 win to the Preston token side. This was recorded as White City's first home defeat but as the Lancashire Daily Post agreed it could not be regarded as a match in the accepted sense.

Back to full league action on 1<sup>st</sup> August when Preston entertained Barnsley. Again Preston dominated on their home track in front of 7000 spectators winning eight of the nine heats, Ham Burrill and Joe Abbott recording 12 point maximums. Only Fed Ledger triumphed for the visitors in an eight point haul, as Preston ran out 45-18 victors.

Another challenge meeting at Farringdon park followed when Joe Abbott's Team (Abbott, Franck Charles, Jack Lund, Claude Rye, Crazy Hutchins and W Anderton) faced Ham Burrill's Team (Burrill, Len Myerscough, Chris Tattersall, Frank & Jack Chiswell and Frank Greenall) over the traditional nine heat format. Press reports for this meeting are a little thin but they did record that Abbott and Charles powered to 12 point maximums as Joes's team thumped Ham's 40-23.

Next up was a visit to Thrum Hall, Halifax where the home side were looking for revenge for a close 35-28 defeat at Preston a month earlier. Little was recorded other than George Reynard and Dusty Haigh claimed 12 point maximums as Halifax triumphed 39-22, with only Joe Abbott (7 pts) putting up any resistance for the visitors.

An unreported Challenge Match took place between Warrington and Preston at the Arpley Motordrome on 9<sup>th</sup> August and only the result is recorded – a Preston win by 34 points to 29. In what was to become a “local derby” match with Liverpool over the seasons Preston ran, the Preston team visited Stanley Speedway on 10<sup>th</sup> August. 10,000 predominantly Merseyside fans saw their favourites succumb to Preston by the big margin of 48 points to 15, Preston riders securing 8 heat wins out of nine, with only Liverpool's Larry Boulton a home team victor. By the 10<sup>th</sup> August the English Dirt Track League table showed the following team positions:

White City	P18	W17	L1	D0	Pts 34	
Preston	P21	W14	L7	D0	Pts 28	<b>3</b>

Leeds	P18	W13	L4	D1	Pts 27
Halifax	P19	W13	L5	D1	Pts 27
Salford	P18	W8	L10	D0	Pts 16
Leicester	P19	W7	L11	D1	Pts 16
Rochdale	P15	W7	L8	D0	Pts 14
Sheffield	P15	W6	L9	D0	Pts 12
Newcastle	P12	W6	L6	D0	Pts 12
Warrington	P18	W5	L12	D1	Pts 11
Barnsley	P16	W5	L11	D0	Pts 10
Middlesbrough	P16	W5	L11	D0	Pts 10
Liverpool	P10	W3	L7	D0	Pts 6
Hanley	P4	W0	L4	D0	Pts 0

As you will see the league title was realistically between White City, Preston, Leeds and Halifax, with White City's form giving them a big advantage.. At the other end of the table Stoke(Hanley) were soon to drop out of the league leaving Liverpool as favourites for the wooden spoon. Belle Vue had earlier resigned following problems were encountered with the speedway promoters' organisation

On August 10<sup>th</sup> 1929 in an Open Meeting at Farringdon Park tragedy struck when in the first semi-final heat of the Senior Scratch featuring five riders and in the third lap Crazy Hutchins in an attempt to avoid leader Winks Rice's back wheel hit the fence causing the bikes of both Rice and Hutchins to hit the fence and bounce back onto the track into the path of third placed local lad Jack Smith. Smith rode over Rice's machine was thrown over his handlebars, falling heavily in the process. Smith was taken to Preston Infirmary and remained unconscious for week but died shortly after. A subsequent Inquest found that Smith had had time to avoid the fallen bikes but had suffered concussion followed by compression and a fractured base of the skull and a verdict of accidental death was recorded. A full inquest report appeared in local newspapers some two weeks later.

As the end of summer approached bottom side Liverpool were the next to visit the Preston fortress and given the recent result on Merseyside they must have feared the worst. The meeting went exactly according to expectations Preston conquering Liverpool 52-11 exceeding by a point their record breaking victory over Newcastle some weeks earlier. Star home men were again Burrill and Abbott with 12 pt maximums and **4** Claude Rye chipped in with a handy 7+1. In a meeting where

Liverpool managed only two 5-2 heat losses at best it was no surprise that their top scorer was once again Larry Boulton with a miserly 4 points. It was at this point of the season that Preston launched its English Dirt Track League KO Cup campaign with another fixture against hapless Liverpool. The first leg was at Stanley Speedway only four days after the 41 point victory over the Merseyside strugglers. The first leg tie saw Frank Charles make his senior debut for Preston strengthening an already sold team, his move coming after the mid-season demise of Burnley. It was again the same old story Preston romping home to victory by 47 points to Liverpool's 16, Burrill and Abbott again leading the way. An improvement by the "Scousers" over their previous two meetings with Preston but not by much.

The first round second leg at Farringdon Park was obviously a foregone conclusion and although Liverpool continued to show improvement at the fourth time of asking, they still only mustered 19 points to Preston's 44, despite a 6-1 advantage to Tommy Price and Crasher Coxhill in heat one. Normal service was soon resumed Preston wining the remaining 8 heats. This gave the Lancastrians aggregate victory 91-35 overall and progression to the second round where it would not be as easy.

There was a surprise for Preston two days later at the Lundwood Speedway, Barnsley when after leading by 12 points after six heats, Preston suffered multiple machine misfortunes which saw the Barnsley riders knock off three victories from the final three heats, gaining 17 points to the visitors four and a narrow 32-31 league win over Preston. A blow to the Lancastrians title aspirations.

Two meetings followed in the remainder of August 1929. Preston hosted Rochdale in a league encounter. Joe Abbott was again the star with three wins followed by Jack Chiswell and Len Myerscough one each. As expected Squib Burton was the Rochdale star, supported by Rex Kirby and Buster Breaks but could do little to stop Preston picking up the victory 36-27 in a hard fought meeting. A Challenge Match between Preston and a Rest of the League Team gave Preston riders the chance to enjoy racing against riders from their competitors teams. Preston: Ham Burrill; Len Myerscough; Joe Abbott; Jack & Frank Chiswell and Claude Rye The Rest: Chris Tattersall; George Reynard; Geoff Taylor; Smiler Wotton; Frank Smith and AN Other. In a fairly open meeting in which Preston triumphed 36-27 Ham Burrill top scored with 10 for the homesters and Geoff Taylor also picked up 10 pts for The Rest. 5

It was then announced that Preston's opponents in the second round of the KO Cup would be Sheffield. Other fixtures were White City v Newcastle; Rochdale v Leicester Stadium; and Halifax v Wombwell.

**Graham Fraser** (to be continued)

## **Bill Bryden – An Aussie Star Who Never Shone in The UK**

**Tony Webb** gives an insight into another Aussie who is relatively unknown in the UK.

Bill Bryden is one of the few Australians who reached Super Star status in Australia but for some reason could never reproduce that form in UK. Lionel Levy, Ken Cameron, Kev Torpie, Frank Hayes and Arthur Malm are other riders that come to mind. Possibly the advance publicity creates a hard act to follow, the fans and promoter's expectations are often high, there is the adjustment to totally different tracks and racing conditions and lifestyle and it is quite a culture shock to many young Australians. An overseas rider will often get the opportunities ahead of the home riders as there is always an air of mystery and charisma attached. Therefore it is often a case of being put in the deep end, sink or swim. Bill Bryden started his racing career in New South Wales as a sidecar passenger to Jack Hellback in 1951 he took up solos in the 1954/1955. He quickly rose through the junior ranks at the Sydney Showground coming second in the New South Wales Junior championship that season.

In the 1955/1956 season another milestone was beating his first A grader, that was the legendary former Belle Vue rider Jack Chignell. Bill's first trip to Queensland came in early 1956 when he raced at Toowoomba lowering the track record. Late in the 1956 season he beat Aub Lawson at the Royale in Sydney posting a time of 58.8 which put his name in the record books as the third fastest of all time at the famous track.

He was signed for the Ipswich Witches in the UK for the 1956 season replacing the non returning Australian front 1955, Bluey Scott.

Competition for his signature had also come from Wembley Lions and East Anglian neighbours Norwich Stars. He was greeted with a mass of publicity and found it hard to meet the expectations, he had the company of fellow Australians Bob Sharpe and Junior Bainbridge but never really settled at the Foxhall Heath track. He rode the full season but was only able to score 21 official points. All due credit to Witches boss Arthur

**6** Franklyn who never gave up on Bill and kept him in the side hoping

he would find the form he was capable of. He returned to Australia in the October of 1956. There were several overtures for him to return from British promoters but he never did. However, he returned to ride at Toowoomba and Brisbane in November 1958 after a 2 year absence. Bill's first Test cap for Australia was in the 1958/1959 series against England. He scored 8 points in the third test at Sydney in the Australian 32-28 win. The following season he won the New South Wales Championship from Lionel Levy. He was top scorer for the Australian team with 27 points in the five match series which saw Australia lose every match.

He was a regular visitor to Queensland riding at Townsville, Rockhampton and the Ekka 1959-1965. At one meeting in Rockhampton in 1961, he was flown up for the meeting and won \$500 for three heats of 2 lap match races against the Swede Kai Forsberg and Bob Sharp.

Bill was a member of the Australian team that won a three match series in New Zealand in early 1960. Bill top scored with 33 points.

In the 1962 Queensland titles he ran third place at the Ekka.

Wintering in Rockhampton in 1962 he won the McLeod trophy and the A grade scratch final on opening night at the Showground on March 15.

1965 at the Australian titles he took third spot behind Brian Collins and winner Bob Sharpe. Bill's last appearances in the Australian team was the 1967/1968 series. Riding in the first and third Tests in Sydney he scored 3 points on each occasion.

Pre war star and Sydney promoter Frank Arthur is on record as stating that Bill was one the best handicap riders in Australia competing from a massive 140 yard handicap at the Showground.

His career ended on a sad note as he was in the race that claimed the life of Lionel Levy, Bill never rode speedway again after that fatal race.

However he rode as a passenger for sidecar star O.Salter at Phillip Island in 1970 and 1971 scoring two notable wins

He was one of the guests of honour at the opening of the Homebush track in Sydney in 1999 and is a regular at Labrador on the Gold Coast where he is Club Patron.

## **MAX GROSSKREUTZ & NORWICH – 1938**

When I was young (writes Mr Norwich **Bryan Tungate**) and not really interested in the facts surrounding Speedway I was always told that Norwich should have been League II Champions in 1938. The reason 7

they did not win the League was that Max would often drop out during matches and allow the lesser lights to take his place, so the old-timers told me. Well this did happen on numerous occasions during the season, but not very often in League matches. On the majority of occasions those matches were in the National or the Provincial Trophy competitions. The real reason Norwich did not take the title was down to sheer bad luck more than anything else.

When Max was allowed by the Speedway Control Board to take out his riding licence again there were conditions they attached to that permission.

1 .... Max had to be properly transferred to Norwich and could only be transferred back to Aces.

2 .... Max could only ride in Official fixtures but must not ride any second-half races.

3 .... Max was not allowed to enter or ride in the World Championship meetings.

4 .... Max was not to ride on any First Division tracks, except Belle Vue.

5 .... All of these conditions were to be stated as part of the transfer agreement.

It did not state, as far as I can say, that Max must ride in the Test Matches for Australia v. England, his retirement was one of the contributing factors in the scrapping of the series after just one match in the previous 1937 season. He rode in all five Tests in 1938.

Max also agreed to race at Belle Vue on August Bank Holiday Monday. In May, when the agreement was made, Norwich had no fixture on that day so it seemed alright.

When the Second Division plans were formulated for a July start the date was kept free on the Stars fixture list. Unfortunately Lea Bridge, making up a team from Harringay assets in the main, became late entrants and they were to start on August Monday. The first team to visit the Bridge would be Norwich. On the 27 July the Stars visited the Southampton track but the fixture was washed out. The re-run date was set for August Monday, following the afternoon meeting at Lea Bridge. Suddenly there were two matches without Max on a day which had been kept free. Worse was to come when the young Alan Smith was injured on the 30 July and was also to miss these two meetings. Norwich pitched new young Aussie Syd Littlewood into the reserve spot but there was to be no fairytale outcome. Stars lost 50 – 30 at Lea and heavily 63 – 21 at

**8** Southampton. They only lost two other matches in the League

that season. With Max they would have definitely got much closer in both these matches. The tie for top place was decided on race points “for” and Hackney Wick edged it having 758 compared to the Stars 749.

An interesting point was that Hackney wanted to stage a home and away match with Norwich to decide the title outcome but the S C B would have none of this. Hackney even wanted Norwich to “drop” Max from the team for this proposed match-up. They seemed to hate Max as, even when he broke the track record at Hackney, the Hackney big-wigs simply refused to recognise the time Max clocked. Anyhow any chances of them beating Norwich over two-legs were fairly low as Stars had won in a National Trophy fixture by 121 – 94 and repeated the medicine by 119 – 95 in a Provincial Trophy round. Max only took 2 rides in the Hackney leg of the National Trophy tie and was riding in a Test Match so missed the Norwich leg of the Provincial meeting.

### **Same Meeting – Different Programme Covers**

**Derek Lloyd**, who follows Coventry, advises that the Brandonapolis programme of 6/9/78 has two covers, one red and blue and one plain white, whilst the Coventry v Wimbledon of 24/3/079 programme had two covers, the normal one plus a plain white one while the Ipswich v Coventry of 6/10/83 was another programme with two covers, one blue and one purple.

### **Skid Kid Ivan**

**Graeme Frost** sent us this item.

CYCLE SPEEDWAY, WOOLSTON

(From Our Own Correspondent.) Visited the Woolston Cycle Speedway team the other evening and spent a very enjoyable couple of hours in their company. These boys, known in racing circles as the "Riley Stars," provided the fans with an excellent two-hour non-stop variety evening. Items from children of 5 to 50. From the tiny tots in their Irish and Scottish costumes to a violin solo from a young 50-year-old, filled one of the most pleasant and unexpected evenings which have come my way in a long time. (Some of the Supporters' Clubs could do well by taking lessons on entertainment from these lads.) The evening was run to provide a travelling fund for their team should they be called upon to **9**

race away from home. The "Stars" side is captained by a wee fellow who forever wears a smile, Ivan Mauger. He not only skips the "Stars" to victory but sets a fine example for his fellow team-mates to follow. Ivan holds the local track record and is the teams' match race champion. Heat leader is brother Trevor. Kelly Brown, No. 3 in the line-up, is the brother of the Canterbury junior Des Brown (Des, incidentally, was captain of the "Stars" before riding for Christchurch). Barry Mekelle and David Trotter make up the side, which has twice defeated the recognised champions, Wainoni. Proudly sporting the Speedway badges of Glasgow, Cardiff and Wimbledon, Captain Ivan invited me along to their next evening, sometime in September—I'll be there. Good luck, "Riley Stars." Source: The Speedway Times (NZ), 18 July 1952.

### Speedway Fans Riot

The item on Wikipedia seems unreal but it is referenced. It refers to a meeting at Harringay of all places. On May 14th, 1938 when speedway racing was stopped early due to an accident, a crowd of 2,000 demanded their money back. When their demands were ignored the crowd broke onto the track, smashing and damaging parts of the stadium and setting fire to the track's tractor.

### Now Here Is An Idea

On Friday 31<sup>st</sup> August 1951 at Blackbird Road Stadium, Leicester the management tried out an unusual scoring mechanism for the second half reserves match. Normal heat points (3,2,1,0) were awarded plus there was additional points for beating opposition riders e.g. Ht1 Wright – 3 for win + 2 for beating 2 opponents. You could look it as an additional bonus. Leicester 16 Coventry 24 Reserves Individual Match

Leicester		
Cyril Page	3 3	6
Vic Pitcher	0 2	2
Laurie Holland	3 0	3
Johnny Carpenter	0 5	5
Coventry		
<b>10</b> Peter Brough	2 3	5

Jack Wright	5	5	10					
John Yates	5	2	7					
Alan Hailstone	2	0	2					
Ht1 Wright (5), Page (3), Brough (2), Pitcher (0)	73.2	3	7	3	7			
Ht2 Yates (5), Holland (3), Hailstone (2), Carpenter (0)	73.2	3	7	6	14			
Ht3 Wright (5), Page (3), Yates (2), Holland (0)	73.6	2	7	9	21			
Ht4 Carpenter (5), Brough (3), Pitcher (2), Hailstone (0)	74.6	7	3	16	24			

## AUSTRALIANS IN UK 1928 - 2007

Part 3 of **Tony Webb's** list and yet again you are invited to pass your comments on the attached list. S/H = Second half rides only. ISL = International Speedways Ltd. DSL = Dirt Track Speedways Ltd T/A = track accident R\A = road accident. If you have any additions or alterations to Tony's list, please get in touch with him at [binbooks@inet.net.au](mailto:binbooks@inet.net.au)

Harris Peter "Gundy"	NSW	Glasgow 1950	Wolverhampton 1951,	Died 1997
Harrison Rusty	SA	Edinburgh 2001/06,	Workington 2007	
Harrison Ray	VIC	Ipswich 1958	Rye House 1959	Yarmouth 1960
Haslinger Gunther	WA	Doncaster 1971,	Birmingham 1972	
Hastings Harold	QLD	Lea Bridge 1931	Belle Vue 1932	
Hawkes Guy	WA	1968	UK	
Hawkes Jason	VIC	1997		
Hawkins Warren	NSW	Crewe 1970		
Hay Gary	NSW	West Ham 1970		
Hay Reg	TAS	Norwich 1937/38,	1949/51	
Hayes Frank	VIC	Ipswich 1960		
Hansen Arnie	SA	1930		
Henderson Ron	QLD	Newcastle 1975/8		
Henry Christian	QLD	Edinburgh	Glasgow	Newcastle
Herne Phil	NSW	Birmingham 1973/4/	78,	Newport 1975/6, Bristol 1977
Herne Lee	NSW	Newport 2001		
Herne Jay	NSW	IOW 2007		
Hewitt Les	NSW	Coventry 1948/51.	Died Sydney 2005	Age 78
Hibberd Buzz	NSW	ISL 1928,	West Ham 1928	Rode first meeting July 28 Killed on track 1930

Higgs Wally	WA	Yarmouth 1951 TQ 1953-60
Hinze Gerry	QLD	1968
Hodgson Craig	SA	Peterborough 1989
Hodgson Mal	NSW	Tamworth 1947 s/h
Holder Chris	NSW	IOW 2006/7
Holder Jim	NSW	Glasgow 1929
Hookham Cec	NSW	Tamworth 1948/50
Holt Mike	NSW	Romford 1970, Weymouth 1970
Howell John	WA	Middlesborough 1972
Humphries Bob	NSW	Kings Lynn, Reading, Milton Keynes
Humphries Scott	SA	Wimbledon 1989
Hunter Alec	NSW	Norwich 1950/1, Retired to Queensland,
Hunter Rod	VIC	Newcastle 1989
Hunter Maury	QLD	1968
Hutchinson George	NSW	1955 -1958 Ringwood Eastbourne. [official]
	SAL	Poole.
Hutton Neville	NSW	Stoke 1953
Huxley Vic	QLD	1928 ISL tracks, 1928/9 Harringay 1930, Wimbledon 1931/6, died Brisbane 1982
Hyde Craig	QLD	Ipswich 1989
Hynes Dave	VIC	Plymouth 1948
Ible Doug	NSW	Wembley loaned to Aldershot Rayleigh Oxford 1950/1 AUS V ENG at Shelbourne Park 1950
Ingram Peter	QLD	Exeter 1971/2, Newport 1972
Isbel Clayton	WA	Newcastle 1978
Innocent Bob	WA	Exeter 1961/2
Jackson Dave	NT	Mildenhall 1983-9. Boston 1986
Jackson Jack	NSW	Wembley 1934. Father of Gerry
James Scott	SA	Buxton 2000
Jameson Dave	NSW	Glasgow 1939
Jameson Len	NSW	Glasgow 1939
Jameson Bob	NSW	Halifax 1965/7, Teeside 1968
Janke Merv	QLD	Glasgow 1977/8, Halifax 1982
Jemison Bill	NSW	Birmingham 1951/2, Wolves 1952/3. Died 2000
Jennings Bob	QLD	Raced WA 1968 Ipswich 1969
Jones Ashley	VIC	Kings Lynn 2003
Jones Alan		Wolverhampton 1981
Jones Bert	QLD	West Ham 1930, Plymouth/Crystal Palace 1931, Southampton 1936
Jones Irvine	NSW	DTS 1928. West Ham 28/7/1928.
<b>14</b> Jones Rob	VIC	Canterbury 1974

Jones Moff	QLD Southampton 1939
Jones Mark	VIC 1999
Jones Johnny	NSW Bradfield 1958
Johnson Matt to Billy Hammil	NT Newport 1997 DNR visa problems. Mechanic
Johnson Noel	QLD Exeter 1929/30, Plymouth 1931/2, Died Plymouth 1932. Track Accident
Johnson Ron	WA 1928 Crystal Palace 1930/3, 1934/9, New Cross 1947/51, Ashfield 1951 (Edinburgh 1960) [Born in Scotland]
Johnson Steve	WA Long Eaton 1995, Ipswich 1996, Oxford/Wolverhampton 2005, Arena Essex 2006 Coventry 2007
Kavanagh Ken	NSW West Ham 1930/1 Also known as 'Crash'
Kennedy Danny	VIC Weymouth/Poole 1978/84
Kelley Chris	SA Eduinburgh
Kelly "Ned" Les	SA Glasgow 1929 ( <b>Les "Ned" Kelly rode there</b> )
Kent Ray	NSW. UK born rode in France /Uk
Kentwell Greg	NSW Halifax 1966/9
Kermond Vic	NSW Ashfield 1950 mechanic /Kermond frame
Kingston Bert	QLD Halifax 1965/8
Kirkby Kal	WA Southampton 1959
Koppe Steve	QLD Canterbury 1976/9, Exeter 1978/9, Swindon 1980
Kumeta Dave	NSW Workington 1972
Kemp Dave	QLD Southampton/Lea Bridge 1930
Kirkman Ken	NSW Wembley 1934
Lewis 'Tiger' Harry	WA Leeds/Wimbledon 1932, Coventry 1933, Southampton 1936
La Sagna John (Jack)	NSW 1950 Edinbugh. <b>Sheffield Died Edinburgh</b>
Lambert Roger	NSW Berwick 1986, Edinburgh 1979/80 <b>Glasgow</b>
Lamont Billy	NSW ISL 1928, Clapton 1933, Sheffield 1938, Newcastle 1939
Langdon Steve	QLD Exeter 1988/9
Langdon Tony	QLD Poole 1988/90
Langfield John	NSW West Ham 1969/ Poole 1971/2
Langois Brenton	SA Bradford 1960 ish
Langton Steve	QLD Portsmouth 1930, Lea Bridge/Southampton 1931, Clapton 1932, Walthamstow 1934, Birmingham 1937/8, Tamworth 1947/9, Southampton 1950
Langtry Bluey	NSW Norwich 1949, Halifax 1952 Liverpool 1953
Lawson Aub	NSW Middlesboro 1939, West Ham 1939/50, Norwich 1953/60

Lawson Don	NSW Newcastle 1950, West Ham 1952, Norwich 1955
Le Breton Ken	NSW New Cross Newcastle 1948, Ashfield 1949/50, Died Australia 1950
Leigh Gordon	VIC Swindon 1955
Leisk Les	WA Leicester 1978
Lemon Mark	SA Oxford 1996, Poole 1998, Exeter Stoke 2006, Rye House/Reading 2006, Workington 2007
Letch Mike	VIC Hackney/Rye House 1969/70
Leverenz Bob	SA Norwich 1949/51
Leverington Trent	QLD Glasgow 2005, Stoke 2006, Glasgow 2006 Glasgow 2007
Levy Lionel	NSW Wimbledon 1948, Coventry 1948, 1950/3, Southampton 1953
Litchfield Keith	SA 1929 Freelance
Lindsay Norman	NSW Glasgow 1947/51
Liston Ray	QLD 1960 Rye House. 1961 French Champion
Little Wally	NSW Wimbledon 1934, 1930 was riding in UK 1938
Littlewood Syd	VIC Newcastle 1939/46, Norwich 1938, 1948/50.die Logan QLD 2000
Loakes Brian	QLD Hull 1972
Logan Jack	VIC Long Eaton 1951-2
Longley Bill	VIC New Cross 1938/9, 1947/52, Wimbledon 1954, Wembley/Rayleigh 1955. Died Qld 2005 Age 90
Lorymer Wayne	NT Peterboro 1982
Lupton Stan	QLD Lea Bridge 1931, Plymouth 1932, Wimbledon 1932
Lyons Jason	VIC Glasgow 1991/2, Belle Vue 1992/2003, Poole 2004, Newcastle 2004/5, Mildenhall 2006/7

## Speedway In Ireland

Written in 1947 by **W. J. Ross**, this is another good article sent in by **Graeme Frost**.

About a year ago, a native of Cork and a Bangor (Co. Down) businessman decided that the time had arrived when speedway racing should be introduced to Ireland.

Knowing well that difficulties would confront them at every turn they

**16** nevertheless proceeded

to lay the foundations for the establishment of a speedway race track in Belfast.

To-day, at Gibson Park, a pleasant Belfast suburb, will be found Ireland's first speedway track, established through the enterprise of Mr. Henry Robinson, an architect, and Mr. Norman Railton, an electrical engineer. The new track, although lacking at the moment not a few of the things necessary for successful speedway racing, promises to become a popular rendezvous of speedway racing enthusiasts from all parts of Northern Ireland.

Energetic workers, Mr. Robinson and Mr. Railton are putting their hearts into the task of establishing speedway racing in the capital of Northern Ireland and making it a first-class attraction. Difficulties are still numerous but they are determined to overcome them one by one and succeed in their venture.

When the first meeting was held at Gibson Park only a few spectators attended. These early supporters were men and women who had previously enjoyed all the thrills of speedway racing at Manchester and in London. They knew what to expect in the way of thrills and they were not disappointed.

Attendances gradually increased as more and more people learned from friends that speedway racing is a really thrilling sport.

To-day Belfast possesses hundreds of speedway racing enthusiasts and the number is increasing weekly. One local businessman goes as far as to predict that within five years the sport will be even more popular in Ireland than in England.

No experienced riders have yet been seen at Gibson Park but during 1948, it is hoped that supporters will be able to see several of the great names in speedway racing competing in events at Belfast.

Plans are being made for a team to compete in the Speedway League in 1948. Star teams will be brought over from England and Scotland to thrill spectators.

As a nursery for beginners, the new Belfast track has produced quite a number of riders of whom more will be heard in the future.

One daring young rider, Tommy Seymour, made his first public appearance on the track recently and captured the coveted "Silver Wings" Helmet presented by the Malone and Windsor Branch of the R.A.F.

Association which, incidentally has given magnificent support to the new venture since the track was opened. Tommy Seymour is **17**

going places. Possessing all the qualities necessary for success in speedway racing, he is determined to reach the top.

Regular patrons have already found several idols among the dozen or so riders.

Brothers Billie and Tommy McCrea are exceptionally popular and Joe McGurk, the most daring rider yet seen on the track, has gained for himself quite a host of fans. Joe had no experience of speedway racing before riding at Gibson Park.

Jimmie McCean and Rob Owens have already made names for themselves locally and great things are expected of them in the future. The same can be said for Jimmie Slane and Eric Barker, two promising young riders who are quite at home on the track in spite of the fact that they are new to the game.

Billie Henderson, Cecil Adams, "Buzz" Harvey, Jock Walton, Danny Rice and Jimmie Kendal are others who have made considerable progress since they first appeared on the track.

Four teams have battled for honours twice weekly since the opening of the track. They are - Antrim Aces (Billie McCrea, capt., Rob Owens, Eric Barker and Jock Walton); Tyrone Typhoons (Jimmie McCean, capt., Danny Rice, Eamonn Rice and Reg. Wilson); Down Buccaneers (Tommy Vernon, capt., John Moore, Vic. McCarthy and Joe McGurk); Cregagh Panthers (Tommy McCrea, capt., Billie Henderson, Jimmie Kendal and "Buzz" Harvey).

At the end of the series the placings were as follows: (1) Cregagh Panthers; (2) Antrim Aces; (3) Tyrone Typhoons; (4) Down Buccaneers.

The Gibson Park track is 440 yards in length. Billie McCrea holds the track record - 1 min. 40 4/5 secs. - and, what is more, he is determined not to have it wrested from him.

Earlier in this article, I referred to the difficulties encountered by those responsible for bringing speedway racing to Belfast. Although the site at Gibson Park is far from suitable, better accommodation is not available at the moment in the Belfast district.

Before the track could be started a colossal amount of work had to be done by the organisers and even by the riders themselves. Even when racing had started, improvements to the track were still being carried out. So appreciative were some of the spectators of the fare offered by the promoters that at this stage they lent a hand with the task of laying cinders and doing other jobs. That's enthusiasm for you!

**18** The company which has been formed to control the new Belfast

track - the Irish Recreation Company - has as its directors a number of ambitious young men whose average age is 28. They foresee a bright future for speedway racing in Northern Ireland and each is giving of his best in a concerted effort to develop their enterprise.

"Our intention," says one of the directors, is to establish a chain of speedway tracks in Northern Ireland and later we may extend our activities to Eire."

In the development of speedway racing in Northern Ireland, the company is much indebted to the Motor Cycling Union of Ireland for its valuable assistance. It appreciates the assistance so unselfishly rendered and looks forward to even closer co-operation in the future.

The R.A.F. Association (Malone and Windsor Branch) has also given the promoters excellent encouragement and the deep interest it has taken in the new sport is also much appreciated by the directors of the company. Speedway & Ice Hockey Digest Vol 1 No 2 [Oct 1947]

## Introducing Gil Craven

**Graeme Frost** has sent on this interesting article about Gil Craven.

I've done some queer things in my time and seen some queer places, but I never thought I would be asked to write about them. Having wandered all over the world since I was 15 it stands to reason that the following omits much that might be interesting if only I had more time.

However—born in Ilford, Essex, May 30, 1921; nationality-still English; ran away from home at 15 together with the next door neighbour's daughter. Shortly after this I decided England was too small for a man of my size so I stowed away on a Cardiff tramp steamer bound for Buenos Aires. It was here that I first became fascinated by ships, or rather I should say ship's engines. Seven years later I found I owned a string of letters after my name and was appointed Chief Engineer of a 15,000 ton freighter. At 22 I was the youngest man in that position down the whole Pacific seaboard.

### GUN RUNNING

Having jumped a large gap here I might mention two things. Throughout the 1936-39 Spanish war I was engaged on jobs that fell little short of piracy and for which I am now truly ashamed. I joined foreign vessels, sailing under no flag, which ran guns and ammunition, quite illegally, to either Franco or the Government, whoever paid most. The job was dangerous and in Barcelona I missed the firing squad only on account **19**

of my age; however, the money was good and I needed this money, and I needed it badly—for Speedway. You might think this strange because up to then I had never seen a Speedway meeting.

What I had learned, though, was that my brother, whom I had left selling eggs outside a grocer's, was now earning £15 a week for riding round a place called Hall Green, Birmingham.

I simply forgot my conscience, together with the odd bullet that came my way until this war ended in February, 1939.

May, 1939, found me mastering the art of broadsiding at a place called Dagenham. After my first meeting, the fence was in very bad shape, I was sore all over and had no seat to my leathers. The money was 2s. 6d. per point. In July I had come out of hospital following a chain going through my foot and began to perk up nicely. I had five maximums and won three cups in succession; then Bill Longley came to Dagenham and when I beat him, too, Johnnie Hoskins signed me for West Ham and loaned me to White City, Glasgow. I had varying success here—which included learning the Scottish language—but then our war started.

#### BACK TO SEA

Then and there I gave up all ideas of Speedway, as I had been in the sport for so short a while I figured I would be too inexperienced for my age when the war was over. My contemporaries at the time were Buck Whitby, Roy Craighead and Bill Gilbert. Big brother Malcolm was at this time riding very well and making a lot of money—in fact he would often throw me 2s. 6d.—or one point—when I was sitting on the track after a fall. So I took him to sea with me at £9 a month just to show him there were two sides to earning a living and to see if he was as good at both. Malcolm left me after one trip to Roumania to study Diesel engines, and I never heard about him until after the war was over.

Meanwhile, I made a career of my job, realising that while the war was on there was no alternative, anyway. I took degree after degree at mathematics and science and gradually began to sprout gold braid all over my uniform. In 1942 my tanker was torpedoed in the Atlantic and blown sky-high and the four survivors were taken to Halifax, Nova Scotia. I then joined the Canadian Merchant Navy and served in the Pacific as Chief Engineer until my ship came into the London Docks in June, 1946.

Here again fortune changed hands. I visited West Ham to watch Malcolm and took along the Captain and chief officer. We were given a royal  
**20** welcome by Arthur Atkinson and when I left I had bought two bikes

and the entire spare parts from West Ham's workshops. Arriving back in Canada I left the sea and, ironically enough, travelled passenger in my own ship to New Zealand, together with my racing equipment.

The Shipping Company said I was mad, and when I think of the 800 dollars a month job I packed up I sometimes think they were right. I had left a comfortable amount over there, however, together with a house and a yacht, and I sold the latter to buy a night club in New Zealand.

I often think I should grow up and settle some place.

#### THE CINDERS AGAIN

So now I am in New Zealand and sitting frightened to death on a Speedway bike. Can I ride one again after seven years, and what am I doing it for, anyway? Because I was English with a broad Canadian accent they handicapped me 100 yards behind just for publicity. They had push starts with six in a race and I won these races because the other guys' bikes wouldn't start. In fact, I won so many like this that the others had to put clutches on so they could have their engines running. It gave me that initial break just the same and I used to practice while I was racing.

During the 1946-47 season I won every trophy offered in New Zealand, including the National Championship.

I had wires from England to return, but as I was well fortified with dollars I chose a season in California. Unfortunately they had clutches on their bikes and I was continually sending to Canada for bank drafts. I made no money in America but have since re-earned the money I lost there by the experience I gained while racing on their tracks.

An average Californian circuit is 190 yards long and once you can get round it you seldom get caught in a tight spot in English racing. Crashes come from mood and bad luck. Sometimes I think I am moody and unlucky!

I spent six months in California, learned to dislike Hollywood and doughnuts, and left for Australia in October, 1947. I raced in the tests there, scoring one point for dear old England as a reserve. I also had the satisfaction of beating Jack Milne one night at Brisbane, which surprised me more than him. As this season turned out wet I left early and settled in New Zealand again for a few weeks prior to leaving for England. It was then I first dabbled with night clubs.

I was sold a club which included some very ancient debts and five show girls of the same vintage. They shook themselves about twice nightly **21**

and for a small consideration three times. I made quite a packet from this club until they changed the Chief of Police, who was a Speedway supporter.

#### AND SO TO CRADLEY

I arrived in England to race for the first time in 1948. I have just grown up with the team, sharing their good and bad luck. I have no wish to race first division just now or to take the sport any more seriously than I have ever done. I get a kick out of racing and I hope you get a kick out of watching.”

Source: The Speedway Times (NZ), 11 April 1952

### Vic Sage Article

**Tony Webb** has sent us these comments re **Mark Sawbridge's** article on Vic Sage. (Airline pilot). There is no evidence of Vic having a pilot's licence, I think he may have been a cabin crew member on domestic flights in Australia and the story got embellished from there. His 3 trips to England were all by sea. Vic had the reputation of being a good story teller so there could be some doubt in some of the press stories.

His first injury was a broken wrist at Edinburgh 1951 The next season he received a back injury on August 1 in the Ipswich home match against Wolverhampton which finished his 1952 season in UK, but he was back in the saddle by November and had a good season 1952/53 at the Exhibition Ground in Brisbane, setting the 4 lap record at 71.40, 4th in the Queensland title and 2nd in the Brisbane best pairs with Syd Littlewood. To me this indicates the back injury sustained at Ipswich was not that serious.

He returned to UK and was based at Poole as track manager making one appearance for an overseas side. He returned to Australia in August 1953.

### Jeff and The Gitteratti

**Jeff Scott** has been rubbing shoulders with the great and good in the literary world. Dubbed the Bill Bryson of Speedway by Jim perhaps we should now be referring to Bill as the Jeff Scott of Travel Writing.

Anyway – here is Jeff's report of the bun fight. I'm sure we will all be happy to say – **Well done Jeff.**

In a glittering awards ceremony held at the swanky Park Lane Hotel, 22 Piccadilly, the great and good of the sports and publishing

worlds collided at the annual British Sports Book of the Year (2009) Awards.

Gaby Logan along with a huge variety of sportsmen and sporting men provided additional glamour. These included Bob Willis, Graham Poll, Ed Smith, Frank Maloney, Brough Scott, Mick Fitzgerald, Marcus Trescothick, Michael Owen (rugby player) and Paul Canoville and, from those great supporters and patrons of British Speedway, Sky Sports' very own Jonathan Sim.

There were six categories announced at the event and, sadly, my nomination with *Concrete for Breakfast* in the Best Biography section didn't win through! This accolade deservedly went Christopher Hilton's *Regga* - his book on Clay Regazzoni.

I was delighted to receive my nomination and believe that I was the only self-published author to attend. This is quite something in itself but I was even more honoured to tacitly represent and showcase British Speedway at such a high profile sports occasion. Hopefully, the members of the press in attendance will give speedway more thought and coverage in future! Everyone puts a brave face on afterwards if they've not scooped the top prize. As the author I'm delighted but, as the publisher, I'm gutted! And vice versa. None of my books would ever have happened without the help, encouragement and support of so many people involved in British Speedway. Thank you!

**Jeff Scott**

## **Nigel's Natterings**

### **Who started team racing**

It is the perceived wisdom that Jimmy Baxter was responsible for the idea and introduction of team racing, but on the evidence I have gathered I feel inclined to suggest this is not the case? The first known (so far) team event was in the north on the 11<sup>th</sup> July 1928 with the Manchester White City v Barnsley match. The second came on 14<sup>th</sup> July at Perry Barr with the Sunbac Club v Ilford club but the format is unclear. In 1928 around 16 team events were held in the north at Manchester White City (7), Salford (4), Barnsley (2), Liverpool (2), Middlesbrough, (1).

The speedway correspondent of a Manchester newspaper (March 1929) bemoans the fact that the league plans have not been finalised. He complains that they have had 6 months or more to sort it out, as the league idea was mooted at least as far back as September 1928. The northern promoters were running team matches in October and

earlier. Baxter did not try the team idea until November 1928. The more info I find the more I am inclined to suggest that the league idea was first thought of in the north. Jimmy Baxter it appears did suggest to the southern promoters that they give it a try after he had seen/heard what the northern tracks were up to but of course Baxter (DTS) was also involved running Glasgow in the north so he was well aware of developments. In a video interview many years later Johnnie Hoskins said 'someone' suggested team racing "boy did we jump at this idea" So Hoskins does not remember who's idea it was and of course some promoters remained sceptical and required some convincing as to the value of team racing. The first Jimmy Baxter staged matches (as opposed to series of match races) appear to be in November 1928:

Southampton v London 12-15 on Nov 3. West Ham v Manchester 18-9 on Nov 6  
6 Stands v Terraces 18- 9 at Southampton Nov 10. These were all over 9 heats,  
Quote:- The 1928 team matches do make me wonder about who really first came up with the league concept. I think the old Northern section of the Dirt Track Owners Association were probably the true originators. : -  
Un Quote. The first ever league match was at Leeds against Barnsley on 29 March 1929. It was also a 9 heat formula, the one that both Northern and Southern Leagues finished up with. Jimmy Baxter's first Southern league match was not until 1 May 1929 (Southampton v Hall Green). It does seem that Baxter was the driving force behind the introduction of team racing in the south.

**Deadline for items for next edition is 31st July 2009**

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