

# The Speedway Researcher

Promoting Research into the History of Speedway and Dirt Track Racing

Volume 11 No.2 September 2008

Edition No.42

## Colindale To Close

Every so often there is a newspaper headline which will chill you to the bone. This is our chiller!

**Nigel Bird** and **Roger Beaman** who boldly go down to the North London building which houses the British Library Newspaper Library on a regular basis have alerted us to the impending closure. Without going into the gory details the current stock of newspapers will become a bit more difficult to access in the short and long term. Most will return to the public domain but an allied problem is that some newspapers held as hard copy are literally disintegrating as the years pass and are being withdrawn from public view. Thankfully some have been microfilmed (but some microfilming is poor quality and photographs reproduced from it are poor.) A potential saviour is digital photography which can, provided no flash is used, take a copy of the newspapers. However, as you can imagine, there is a huge stock of newspapers which need to be copied and it is a very expensive business.

The upshot is, however, if you want to do some research into speedway from the original newspapers and the ones you want to look at are only in Colindale the message is get your skates on as there is not a lot of time left.

How will you find out if Colindale is the only holder of a newspaper title?

Well you could look at the back numbers of *The Speedway Researcher* – we did cover the newspapers held at Colindale and we also covered the holdings of other libraries with extracts from the Newsplan series.

We'll keep you updated but if you want to do some original digging and the source is at Colindale – don't hang about. **Jim Henry**

## Wartime Speedway

**Arnie Gibbons** has penned this interesting item.

Just how many tracks staged wartime speedway? As research spreads further the number that we know about is slowly rising. Belle Vue is of course the

first name to write on the list, followed by Rye House who were the only other track to stage meetings on a regular basis for a sustained period.

Several tracks staged the odd meeting – principally in 1940. West Ham, Southampton, Glasgow (White City), Harringay and Crystal Palace extend the list to seven. There were even attempts to set up a war-time league. West Ham's 1940 programmes suggest that Belle Vue, Glasgow and Harringay were about to join the Hammers in a league competition. The programme for the 13 May meeting advertises West Ham v Belle Vue on 21 May as the next fixture. However it looks like the meeting didn't take place, and the league folded before it began. On 10 May Germany invaded France and the war stepped up a gear – this may have explained the loss of momentum for organised war-time speedway.

Several venues re-opened in 1945, but only Newcastle staged a meeting before VE Day (7 May). That makes them venue number eight.

The first edition of 'Homes of British Speedway' identifies a ninth track that staged speedway during the early stages of the conflict – the new track at Cowley, Oxford. Opened earlier 1939 as an amateur venue it put on meetings after hostilities commenced in 1939 and 1940.

Another amateur venue came to light in the shape of Dagenham. A programme for the 1 October 1939 meeting makes the rather unlikely claim about Adolf Hitler that: “He's only showing off because he hasn't a speedway like Dagenham to occupy his tiny little mind.”

Now an eleventh venue has been unearthed.

Meetings scheduled for 3 September 1939 (the day war was declared) at Rye House and California were cancelled. The following week's *Reading Standard* found space on page seven to run the headline: “War declared against Germany,” and carried photographs of children evacuated from London to Reading over the weekend. Although Reading FC beat Southend 1-0 on the Saturday cinemas and the greyhounds at Tilehurst ceased. After a week or so the cinemas re-opened and on September 13 greyhound racing resumed.

A search through the *Wokingham Times* at Colindale revealed that this wasn't the end of speedway at California for 1939. While the paper carried announcements about how to apply for petrol coupons, plans to carry on with speedway at California were reported.

A meeting took place on September 24. Lloyd Goffe (still generally referred to as Ken in the local press) made his first appearance on track at California for three years. The highlights of the meeting were his encounters with fellow National League rider Jim Boyd. Johnnie Walker, Jack Adams, Sid Lewington and club chairman Herbert Deacon were among the competitors who turned out to perform in front of a poor crowd. Several of the regulars were missing,

competing in a meeting held on the same day at Cowley stadium. That meeting featured Bill Newell, Jack Peck, Arthur Flack and George Bason, among the California regulars.

Further research reveals that California opened at Whitsun (May 5) in 1940 with the intention of running regularly. Now that California extends the list to eleven are there any further venues that belong on the list?

## **SYD LITTLEWOOD - A NORWICH LEGEND**

**Tony Webb** from Australia has given us a few pen pictures of Aussies who raced in the UK who may be names to many of us. We will be publishing these interesting insights as Tony passes them on.

The career of Australia, Norwich and Newcastle leg trailing star Syd Littlewood began on the dirt tracks and grass tracks of Victoria in 1936. Syd who was born in 1914, had an early love of motorcycling in general. After he completed his apprenticeship as a fitter and turner he embarked on a 17 year career as a professional speedway rider. Syd was always insistent that his name was spelt Syd and not Sid.

After obtaining rides in Melbourne in 1937 he made the overland trek to Western Australia to begin his voyage to England in March 1938. On the way from Victoria to the West he raced at Adelaide and Claremont in Perth. It was to be 12 years before he would see his homeland again

On arrival in England he was signed by Max Grosskruetz for the Norwich Stars where he made his home base. His first meeting in the Norwich colours was at Birmingham on Saturday April 23 when he scored 2 paid three from 2 rides. In that first season he had 4 home meetings and 8 away meetings as reserve and was a regular in the second half events at the Firs. He also appeared in the 1938 World Championship round on June 4 but failed to score before. In his last meeting for Norwich on November 5<sup>th</sup> he won the Eastern Counties Championship and Willmott Cup, which today is proudly displayed at his son Trevor's home in Brisbane. A rewarding climax to his first year in England.

1939 saw Syd join the Newcastle Diamonds team in the same division as Norwich. Syd had a regular team place with his new team and in July Norwich supporters saw just how much Syd had improved as he was in the team that won the English Trophy final at the expense of the Stars. Syd scored 7 in each leg of the final as his team edged home winners by 84-82. Newcastle were at the top of the League table when racing stopped for the duration of the war. On the outbreak of war which curtailed the 1939 season, Syd's attempt to join the Australian forces was denied due to the fact his engineering skills were

required for the war effort in England. He spent the war years making secret equipment for submarines.

Syd married a local Norwich girl Gladys in 1940, their only son Trevor was born in Norwich in 1941

The war did not prevent some speedway action and reports indicate that Syd rode for a Norwich team at Dick Case's track at Rye House on June 29 and August 24 1941.

The first post-war meeting for Syd was an unofficial test match against Australia v England held at Odsal in August. He scored 2 points from the reserve position.

In early 1946 the Speedway Control Board pooled all riders for allocation. Riders were also graded and paid according to their respective grade. As a number 4 grade rider Syd was entitled the sum of fifteen shillings a start and the same amount per point. He was allocated back to Newcastle under the Johnny Hoskins promotion, Syd had a great respect for "Roaring Johnny" and held him in high esteem

In 1946 Syd was again a regular in the Diamonds side and held his team place throughout that first post-war season. He scored 112 points in that season to give him the third heat leader position alongside Jeff Lloyd and Norman Evans. Also in the Diamonds team was fellow Queenslander Charlie Spinks. At the end of the year he returned to Norwich in an exchange deal for Wilf Jay.

The 1947 season with his old club started badly for Syd who suffered an arm injury which meant he was off the track from mid-April until early September. On his return to action he found it was much like starting all over again but in October Syd took his best score for the Stars against Wigan and he was getting back into the swing ready for the next season. His total score for the 1947 season was 45 points from league matches. During the winter months Syd was a hard worker on his machinery and also did a fair bit for his team-mates as well. He was always looking for improvements to his machinery and developed some frame modifications that were adopted by other members of the team. Syd, Bluey Thorpe and Bert Spencer could always be found in the Firs stadium workshops when they were not racing.

Syd was also a keen angler and was instrumental in setting up the Angling Section of the Norwich Supporters Club. He and Fred Rogers, when he arrived at Norwich, were often seen with the Club team in local competitions.

1948 saw Syd make a slow start but he was soon scoring well, especially at the Firs. Most of August & September proved to be his best spell of the year. His best night was in September when he scored a maximum against Edinburgh. Stenners 1949 Annual reported Syd's form and confidence as a "feat of

concentration and determination. The total league score for 1948 was 117 from 28 matches giving an average of 4.18

1949 saw Syd start in good form and, except for a few off-nights he had what proved to be his best season at Norwich. In two matches in August against Fleetwood, Syd proved unbeatable but only a week later he crashed through the safety fence at Coventry and had to miss 3 weeks with a shoulder injury. He had been a regular partner to Bert Spencer during part of the 1949 season but the changing tracks were forcing the leg-trailers out of speedway. Bert called it a day in September and this left Syd and Ted Bravery as the leg trailers. This was Syd's best season for the Stars with an average of 5.00 from 175 points from 35 meetings.

1950 was the first season in Division One for the Stars it also proved to be the last UK season for Syd. Early in the season he had crashed and injured his shoulder again and was out for a month. He came back into the side but didn't hit the form of previous seasons. High scores were only spasmodic for Syd and he rode his last match on September 23<sup>rd</sup>. His tally for the season was 33 ½ points from 17 matches, his average dropping to 1.97. He then rode in Pairs Competition and some odd second half rides on 14<sup>th</sup> October where he picked up a win and two third places and announced his days were numbered in the clubroom that night.

With Bravery also retiring at the last night of the season it was the last of the Norwich Leg-trailers. (Until Geoff Pymar came in 1956). All three of ours were spectacular riders and well worth the admission money whatever the result of the meeting

At the end of the 1950 season Syd and his family retired to Australia. They embarked on the Strathnaver to Sydney from Tilbury docks. The return voyage to Australia must have been a memorable and fun packed experience, fellow travellers were Australians Dick Steers, Graham Williams, Cliff Watson, Ted Argall, Aub and Don Lawson, Bob Leverenz, Alec Hunter, Jack Gates and Frank Malouf as well as English test team riders Eric Williams and Reg Fearman and Kiwi Clown Prince Bruce Abernethy. On arrival at Sydney they then caught the train to Brisbane. Trevor recalls their arrival at South Brisbane railway station where they were met by riders Dicky Smythe and Bert Spencer. They settled originally in the inner city suburb of Kelvin Grove. Syd commenced riding at the Exhibition grounds but he found the Australian racing scene to be a lot less challenging than his hectic UK career.

He rode the 1950/51, 1951/52 and 1953 seasons in Brisbane. The highlights were a creditable 6 points in the Queensland championship in 1952 and he also was runner up in the Brisbane pairs with Vic Sage in the same season. The final highlight was his first official international cap for his country in the

third test against England at the EKKA in early 1953. There was not a fairy tale ending as Syd failed to score, but not many riders get the first official cap in the seventeenth year of their career.

Syd retained his close friendship with former Norwich riders Bob Leverenz from Adelaide, Bluey Thorpe on the Gold Coast and Alec Hunter from Sydney who often stayed at the Littlewood home in the early fifties when they were riding in Brisbane.

He then turned to his former trade of engineer, going in to business with former Victorian rider Morrie Bond in the repair of fuel tanks for a while. He finished his working life in charge of the production machinery at a cardboard cylinder manufacturing company in Brisbane.

Syd passed away aged 86 at a Logan, Queensland nursing home on 24/11/2000, he is survived by his wife Gladys at 96 and his son Trevor.

## Speedway 2028

**Keith Farman**, (AKA Mr Yarmouth Bloaters) has been polishing his crystal ball and the Svengali of Speedway (or is it the Old Moore?) has looked to see what will be happening in 2008.

This year, speedway is 80 years old, so it's just 20 years before the sport will celebrate its 100 season. Personally I keep wondering what speedway will be like when it celebrates its 100 season in 2008. The merchants of doom will tell you that speedway will be dead by then. Now if I had a £1 for every time I have heard that said, I would not need to do the lottery, because I would be a millionaire.

So I started daydreaming and found myself in 2028. How things have changed, as when I first watched the sport in 1948 it was just 20 years old. The tracks were cinders, riders wore pudding basin helmets and some of the riders were still leg trailing. I was there at Hackney, on a very cold afternoon, when the sport celebrated its Golden Jubilee. I was also at Rye House for the 75 Anniversary meeting.

The Century celebration started with displays all week, where it had all started at High Beech, then on the 19 February, at the Len Silver Complex at Rye House, the Century Gala Meeting was held. Ove Fundin had promised Len Silver at the 75 Meeting that he would be willing to come and race against Mark Loram again, when the sport celebrated its 100 birthday. Ove was as good as his word, as both he and Mark were there, together with all the other living World Champions who just toured the track riding the bikes of their era. The two oldest champions in Fundin and Briggs, now both in their nineties, led this parade, and they were given a great reception from the 80,000 crowd.

I did not think that I would still be around and still a fan for Century's Season Celebrations. But now at 93 I am happy with all that has happened to take speedway forward from being a minority sport, to one of the top sports in the world. What a week of celebration it has been, and what a difference from just 20 years ago. Then the sport looked in bad shape, but it has had a dramatic change during the last twenty years.

So many things have helped to make it a worldwide success. One of the most important was the success of the GP series. It really took off when it went world wide attracting full houses to all the twenty rounds, that now included rounds in Australia, New Zealand, Japan, China, South Africa, USA, Monaco and Dubai. The UK now has three GP's, with the British GP still in the Millennium Stadium at Cardiff. Wembley welcomed speedway back with the English GP, and with the Scottish GP being held at the Murrayfield, the home of Scottish Rugby.

It was through the upsurge of the GP's that the large Japanese motorbike companies come involved in the sport. Once they came aboard, the publicity was priceless to the sport, as the public knew their machines. The large tyre manufacturer followed, bringing tyres that improved the grip to make for far better racing.

The greatest change is from shale track to synthetic tracks. The new type track surface can be put down in half a day, and can be used in the wet. This was a far cry from the old wet shale that ruined so many meetings, and also the problem of dust in hot days.

Once the new track surface was up and running, it became possible for tracks to be laid at other sporting venues without much disruption of other events. With the success of the GP at Wembley it was decided to bring the Wembley Lions back. Rugby grounds and football clubs, came in to generate more income to their Stadiums. Scotland has the Murrayfield Monarchs and England the Twickenham Tigers, while the Belle Vue Aces now race at Old Trafford.

Also a new concept is out of town Entertainment Centres, catering for several different forms of activities, that provide a full day of exercised and entertainment became popular.

In the bad old days the promoters put the admission price up each year and so the crowds dropped. Then it was found that by lowering admission prices more fans turned up. With bigger crowds the stadiums could generate more income with the profit on food, drinks and souvenirs. Betting had also come in to the sport with big money on the jackpot to get the seven home riders scores correct.

With almost full houses, the big sponsor came in to pay for the rider's point's money. More and more tracks came into the Leagues so the Leagues multiple to the Elite and 5 Premier Divisions.

The matches still held over the old 15-heat format. The problem of tactical substitutes was solved when the tactical rider for double points was dropped. Instead the new tactical rule is that once a team is 5 points down, that team can bring in an extra rider, under handicap for double points This is called a Fiver, as once 5 riders are in the race its then over 5 laps. A rider can be used twice under this rule, thus allowing a team to stay in contention. Also once a team is 5 behind they can choose the gates for all the riders, allowing them to make a star rider from the opposition to go off a gate that is not working so well. These rules stopped the majority of runaway wins, making the matches much more exciting. Also the bonus point was brought back but the 3 points for an away win was kept, but with 2 for an away draw, and 1 point if the away team only loses by 5 points.

My team the Ipswich Witches used to have a Spartan stadium. What a transformation to the stadium over the last few years. Now the Stadium has grandstands all around the track, with the Louis Lounge catering for the sponsors, and serving a-la-carte meals on the home straight. In all parts of the stadium top class food is sold from excellent restaurants, with bars serving alcohol, and all at very reasonable prices. Under the stands are other amusements outlets, including, other indoor sports, exercise rooms, cinemas, and casinos.

Twenty years ago there were so few English lads, but now all the riders are English. This happened because someone noticed that after the war the Speedway World magazine had arranged training tracks that had produced the riders for the Third Division. It was decided that the money from the TV could be used to start up eight training schools, with adverts appeared on TV, and in the Motor Cycle press, advertising this was free to anyone who wanted to try speedway. This scheme soon got lads away from other forms of motorcycle sports.

This was a great success in finding new talent, as it was also found that not all kids wanted, or liked ball games. So under a Government initiative, an experiment was made with junior training tracks, provided by the local councils. Once they were up and running it the young lads did not get into so much trouble. Later smaller tracks were put into schools with the youngsters riding 50 cc bikes. This was another reason that the sport was on the up grade, as obviously a lot of the young lads wanted to become professional riders, and the ones with talents did. All of them enjoyed riding the bikes, and there was also an extra interest as they were taught how to prepare and strip down bikes.

After all this day dreaming I woke up and found that I had gone to sleep at Mildenhall, in a three hour marathon, ah well we can all dream, but could my day dream really happen?

## **Vic Sage – Another Relatively Unkown Aussie**

Vic Sage began his riding career at the Sydney Royale in 1950/51 Australian season he travelled to England as a freelance for the 1951 season , making appearances at 5 different tracks including Wimbledon, Wolverhampton, Newcastle and Edinburgh. He arrived at Tilbury in the company of Bluey Scott, Bill Jemison, Don Prettejohn and Allan Quinn on the Arcades. He was originally posted to Wolverhampton where he rode in a world championship qualifier round in June. He gain his first league outing at Meadowbank in August then suffered a broken wrist at the tail end of the season. Early press reports had him noted as an Australian airline pilot. Vic was signed by pre-war Belle Vue rider Arthur Franklyn, Manager for the new Southern League club the Ipswich Witches, where Vic quickly settled in as crowd pleaser and showed early promise. His form dropped mid season which relegated him to second half events.

Returning to Australia he shifted camp to Brisbane where he showed improved form and held the 4 lap record at 71.4 a highlight was his joint third spot with Keith Cox in the 1952/53 Queensland Championship. On the basis of his Australian form he made a second trip to England

Arriving in March 1953 he discoverd the Ipswich club had transfer listed him at 250 pounds, although he was still offered the opportunity of second half outings. Vic then took up residence in Poole, taking on the track preparation for which he received much praise. He did get a ride for the Overseas team against Great Britain at Poole in June but chances were sparse

Come July Vic realised he was battling to make the grade in the tough British scene and booked a passage back to Australia on the Orcades in August 1953 along with West Ham's Cliff Watson

When Brisbane opened for the 1953/1954 season at the Exhibition Ground Vic was raring to go again. He remained in the top riders ratings along with Keith Gurtner, Keith Cox, the Waddell brothers, Lindsay Nixon, and Bert Spencer. His 4 lap record still held until the 1954/1955 season.

Eventually Vic swapped to stock cars earning a well publicised reputation for his robust driving .

In the sixties Vic moved on to an official capacity as track manager for Empire Speedways under Frank Arthur at the Exhibition Ground, a position he held until the mid seventies.

Vic now lives in retirement on Queensland's Gold Coast, the haven of so many speedway stars of yesteryear. Thanks to **Tony Webb**.

## NEW ZEALAND riders who raced in UK

**Tony Webb** has pulled together this interesting list and there are loads of gaps in it. (If you want to make any comments – pass them to [jjh1950@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:jjh1950@blueyonder.co.uk) and they'll be passed on to Tony.)

Abel Roger b.1954	Christchurch.	Eastbourne 1978
Abernethy Bruce	Christchurch	Rayleigh / Wembley 1949-52 NZ Champion 1950 and 1951
Adlington Robin b.1948	Palmerston North	Brad. 1970/73 Glasgow Cov.1974
Albert Lin		
Allen [Bill] Wilfred 1929	UK born.Kilbernie	Plymouth 31
Allen Goog		Newcastle 1964-67 Ice speedway 68
Anderson Bob		California 55 Southern Rovers 56
Andersen Cliff	UK	Ellesmere.Crewe 1973 Swindon Newport 1977 Wolves 1975
Andrews Bill	Manawata	Poole Newcastle 1964
Austin Roger	Canterbury	1973 Elles/.Hull. 74 Brad./Newport
Bargh Andrew	Martinborough	
Bargh David	Martinborough	Berwick Newcastle 78-81 Coventry
Beardsley Graeme	Christchurch	Scunthorpe 1981.
Benson Jules (Julie)	Hawkes Bay	Rayleigh 1951-2
Berrigan Kris	Napier	Stoke 1980
Black Tom		Teeside 1973
Blacklock Charlie	Christchurch	Harringay 1934 died NZ 35
Bock Kevin	Wellington.	St Austell 1954 Exeter 54
Boyle Frank	Wellington	Oxford 1952
Bridson Jerry uk born.		53 Southampton, Poole Ringwood 1953-60 Wa 1960
Briggs Barry b. 1934	Christchurch.	Wim. 1952/59 NX/Soton 1961/3 Swin.1964-NZ Champion 1959
Briggs Murray	Christchurch	Wim/Eastbourne 1958
Briggs Tony UK		Reading 1980
Briggs Wayne	Christchurch	Edinburgh 1961 Exeter, Poole
Brown Allan		KL 1969

Brown Wayne	Wellington	Berwick 1978
Brown Max	Christchurch	LE 1974
Burt Murray		Nelson 1968-9
Callaghan Mike		Cardiff 1951-3
Clarke Peter	Hawkes Bay	Rayleigh 1951/3
Church Paul		
Clements Bill		Southampton 1961
Coombes Graham		N/C 1968
Cribb Bruce b 1946	Palmerston North	Poole 1965. Ex 1970 Cradley 73
Christophersen George		1953
Crozier Ivan		N/C 1968
Cunningham Jack		Wolves 1951-53
Dekok Mark	Auckland	Weymouth 1978-83 Scunthorpe
Douglas Malcolm		Southampton 1953
Duckworth Bob		Belle Vue 1962
Duckworth Steve		Newcastle 1983
Dunn Maury	Hawkes Bay	Rayleigh 1951 Harringay 1952-3 NZ Champion 1958.
Dykes Peter	Wellington	Glasgow 1951- 2
Fairhurst Harold born	Wigan	Glasgow 1947 – 49 Edinburgh 1949- 54 NZ Champion 1949 1954
Faquharson Colin	Hastings	b 1945. Berwick 1974 Edinburgh 77
Fullerton Mike		Paisley 1975 N/C 1978
Garmston John		Nottingham 31 Died track accident
Gifford Dave UK		Newcastle Coatbridge 73 Berwick 77
Goldberg Charlie		1936 Harringay
Goodall John	Auckland	Sunderland 1971 Newport 76
Hampton Robin		Glasgow Berwick 1981
Hayden Kevin	Wellington	Cardiff Poole 1952-3
Hart Jackie	Wellington	Exeter 1952, 54
Hicks Joe		Glasgow 1964-66
Hobson Jack		1935 Wembley/Hackney Wick
Holland Mick	Canterbury	Cardiff 1952 Died 2006
Holland Laurie		Leicester 1952
Hunt Jack		Newcastle 1946-8 NZ Champion 1945/ 1948
Hyde Reg		1936 West Ham
Jelaca Kelvin		Glasgow 1985
Jelega Len		
Jones Craig		Wimbledon 1951

Johnson Ron	Otago	Belle Vue 1950-59 NZ Champion 52
Johnson Tom		
Joynt Greg	Auckland	Oxford 1977
Kilminster Wally		died 1969 aged 65
Loach Brian	Christchurch	Newcastle 1961
Langtry Bluey		Liverpool 1952
Lyndon Mark		Newcastle 1990
Malskaitus Rim		Long Eaton 65 1st ES0 UK
Mason Alan		Christchurch Glasgow 1981
		Edinburgh 84
Mattison Alf		1931-33 Lea Bridge, Leicester
		Covetry
Mangham Harry		1930-1956
Mardon Geoff	Christchurch	Wimbledon 1951
Mauger Ivan b.1939	Christchurch	WIM/Eastbourne 1957/8 N/C 1963/68
		BV 69/73 EX 74/76 HULL 1976/8
		Newcastle 1979 Glasgow
Mauger Kim UK		
Mauger Trevor	Christchurch	
Mayhead Hec		Wimbledon/St Austell 1953
Mcfarlane Bob	Otago	Oxford 1952
Mchugh Maury	Palmerston North	1960
McKee Colin		Hackney 1963. Edinburgh 1965.
Mckinlay Stu		Cradley s/h 1970
Mckeown Brian	Canterbury	Southampton 1953 Newcastle 1962
Millen Jack	Auckland	Crewe Stoke Berwick Edinburgh
		Died in car crash 1978.
Miller Ivan		Rayleigh.
Moore James		Oxford 1970
Moore Les	Christchurch	Wim 1949 Shelbourne Park/Cardiff
		1950/1 Died race car 1956
Moore Ronnie	Christchurch	Wimb 1950-63, 1967-1969. Moore
		Park NZ Champion 191956/1962.
Moulin Bill		
Mudgway George		Odsal 1947
Neil Merv	Auckland	Norwich 1953
New [Ray] Charlie	Auckland	Coventry 1951 NZ Champion 60 / 61
Ovenden Bruce		Glasgow 1964 - 69
Pawson Fred		Poole, Norwich 1950
Pawson Patrick		
Petersen Gary	Christchurch	Nelson 1968-70. Wolverhampton

Penny Chris		Wembley 1930 Spain 1930
Ranby Reg		Aldershot 1951 Glasgow 1964
Redmond Trevor		Wim. 1976 n/c 1978 Belle Vue
Ross Larry	Chruistchurch	1981-6 Brad 1986
Shirra Mitch	Auckland	Glasgow 1976 Cov 1978 Reading
Shirra Tom		1982 Ips 1987
Shuter Frank b.1945	Rotura	Glasgow 1947
Sillich Mick		Poole Exeter died USA RTA 2002
Smith Graeme b.1946	Palmerston North	Coventry 1933
Snowdon John	Haweka	Rayleigh Canterbury Hackney
Spargo Bruce		1978 Barrow
Stapleton Graeme	Christchurch	Weymouth 1977
St. George Stewie		Wim. 1976. N/c 1978
Stratton Spencer		1928 Manchester,Cardiff 1930.
Subritzky Bruce		Leicester Super 1931
Suckling Noel	Auckland	1928 Nottingham 1930. Sheffield
Thackwell Ray	Christchurch .	.died rta Uk 1938
Thomas Alby		Belle Vue 1958 Liverpool 1961
Thatcher Bill		Berwick 1977
Thorpe Mark		Wimbledon1951 St Austell
Timmo Rick		1951 NZ UK Assoc.
Timmo Spencer		Plymouth 1952
Wells Alf	Auckland	Newcastle 1989-90
Whittaker Dave		Oxford 1970
Wigg Bob		Mildenhall 1986
Wright Roger	Christchurch	Edinburgh 62-65 Glasgow, Bradford
		Exeter 1970
		Wolverhampton 1951
		Rayleigh 68 Berwick. Workington

## Rye House Files and Others

**Mark Aspinall** has given the web site a massive boost with details of Rye House from 1981 onwards together with a pile of other data. This is a great addition and much appreciated. (More web news in the next edition)

## Pioneer Handicap and other Comments

**Graeme Frost** has sent the following:

Here is a copy of part of a story which appeared in the Adelaide Advertiser on Thursday 14 December 1933 which may be of some interest to Speedway Researcher readers. The Speedway Royale refers to the track at the Wayville Showground in Adelaide.

### **FASTER HARD TRACK**

A meeting of the directors of Adelaide Speedways Ltd., the promoters of the Speedway Royale, and the international riders, Bill Kitchen, Max Grosskreutz, Dick Case, Jack Chapman, and Arnold Hansen, was held on Monday and the latest ideas in English and Continental speedway matters were discussed. Many recommendations by the riders will be tried by the promoters.

It was suggested that six riders start in a handicap heat, but as there are not enough available riders this proposal was dropped. Last year was the first occasion that four riders competed in each heat of a flying start event, although visiting riders were satisfied many years ago that the track would hold this number.

### **Distance Handicaps**

The suggestion to handicap the riders by distance instead of time has been adopted, and for the first time in this State this new system will be practised at the Speedway Royale on Saturday night. Handicap men will receive their respective number of yards start on the scratch man, and on the word "Go" the four men will be pushed off instead of starting singly at so many seconds interval.

The surface on the Adelaide track is also found to be much heavier than the present surfacing of English speedways and the latest designed dirt track machines are built for the light tracks. On Saturday night the track will be rolled hard and only lightly loosened on the surface, and according to the internationals, this will be responsible for faster times and better riding.

### **Kitchen's Style**

Much comment was made concerning Bill Kitchen's manner of placing his leg in front of him when entering a corner instead of trailing it, but, according to Case and Grosskreutz, this style of riding on the English tracks is safer than the dragging style. Kitchen had one lap of the track before he entered for his first race, but he immediately rode convincingly as though he knew the track as well as the local riders. This was Kitchen's first appearance on a big banked track and his first ride since the last English season, and on Saturday night he should appear even more prominently.

Also interesting that "There will be no meeting on December 23, and arrangements are being made to take the remaining visiting riders for a kangaroo shoot." Although the handicaps changed from times to distance, at

this stage they still had the top rider on scratch with the others on so many yards head start. See handicaps below:

Riders and handicaps for Saturday night's meting are:-

Solo.-Arnold Hansen, scratch: Jack Chapman, 10 yds., Dick Case, 15 yds.:

Max Grosskruetz and Bill Kitchen, 18 yds.; Les Fredricks, 33 yds.; J. Brown.

40 yds.; Laurie Packer, 45 yds.; J. Frearson, 82 yds.; Ern Muehlberg, 93 yds.;

W. Bailey, 141 yds.; E. Williams. 210 yds.; S. R. Lang, J. West and W.

Knight, 240 yds. Sidecar.-Bruce Rehn, scr.; Don Parker, 45 yds.

## **A Look at Corfe Mullen Speedway**

(There is a fine dividing line between speedways / dirt tracks and grass track venues which are used on a regular basis. In view of this and the interesting contents the Editors are pleased to publish **Pete Ross'** article on this south coast venue. The article also gives an insight into how Pete has gone about his research which is valuable advice on how to do this. The article is being published a wee bit late but we hope Pete will forgive us for this. **Editors**)

A few years ago I came across a short article in a Speedway magazine dating from 1956. It highlighted the pre-war boom in short circuit motorcycle racing on both Dirt Track and on the Grass, and among the tracks mentioned in article was Corfe Mullen Speedway. After some research at Poole local history unit, at the archive of the local Evening Echo Newspapers and a plea for information in various local Magazines, I discovered that yes, there was indeed a Corfe Mullen Speedway. So, over the last couple of years I have spoken to many local people who either visited the track or new riders that raced at what was a Grass Speedway circuit. What was particularly interesting is the number of riders who were involved at that time or later raced on Dirt Track Speedway. As 2007 was the seventieth anniversary of the opening meeting at Corfe Mullen I could not let this occasion go un-noticed.

Once famously reported as the largest village in England, Corfe Mullen is situated in South Dorset approximately four miles from Poole and two miles from Wimbourne Minster. It is a scattered village with its furthest boundaries some two miles apart. In 1937 it was made up largely of farmland, groups of cottages and the usual pubs and churches. An ideal location for, the then, noisy sport of Motor Cycle Racing.

Ringwood Motor Cycle Club, formed in 1927, as part of the reforms in motorcycle sport brought in by the Auto Cycle Union (ACU) which was trying to ban all speed events from public roads.

The club promoted its first Grass Track event in April 1928 at The Mount circuit on the outskirts of Ringwood in Hampshire. Up until the mid 1930s the

ACU always allocated the three Bank Holiday Mondays to the club, however, in 1937, these prestigious dates had to be shared out with Cannfield Speedway and Salisbury Speedway. The reason these dates were so precious was the small but very prominent Lord's Day Observance Society which objected to all Sunday events. The club went looking for a more out of town venue hoping a rural location close to Poole and Bournemouth would stop the complaints of Sunday racing. Home Farm at Corfe Mullen, owned by the family of club rider Bob Atkins, was offered to the club and the first meeting took place on 8 August 1937.

The track was an oval course of approximately 500 yards per lap. It was set lengthways on a gentle slope, a very fast track due to one straight running down hill. Spectators paying an extra shilling (£0.05p.) could park at the trackside. The main event for the first meeting was a team event between Ringwood and Swindon, the visitors running out winners 29 to Ringwood's 25. To conclude the afternoon's racing the usual scratch races were run. The riders featuring on the day included riders who would turn out for the Pirates such as Charlie Hayden, Bingley Cree and Frank Holcombe. The Swindon team featured Roger Wise who is probably better known as a post war Bristol team man.

Southern Speedway Magazine's reporter noted in his match review on the meeting "heat four got away to a good start with Ernie Rickman exploiting dirt track practices to perfection jumping into first place and proceeding to show how the corners should be taken."

The second and last meeting at Corfe Mullen for 1937 was another team meeting on 5 September between Ringwood and Cannfield Speedway (Shaftesbury, Dorset). Bernard (Bronco) Slade riding for Cannfield, broke the track record twice during the match finishing up with a record at 1 minute 58.0 seconds for four laps. It is interesting to note that Bronco was brought in as a late replacement for the non-arriving West Ham Dirt Track star Lloyd Goffe. Starring yet again for Ringwood was Charlie Hayden, who was only beaten by Bronco Slade, while Bingley Cree again turned out for Ringwood. Ringwood also featured Gerald Selby who would go on to be Machine Examiner at Poole in the 1950s.

During the open scratch races club rider C. Parker's machine literally blew to pieces as he crossed the finishing line. His machine showered spectators with fragments of pistons, flywheels and connecting rods. Luckily no one suffered injury and the younger members of the crowd helped the rider retrieve any usable parts.

Several thousand people watched the meeting. Fans flocking to the meeting flooded the roads from Poole and the surrounding towns. This caused a great

deal of annoyance to the locals and was to be a problem which was to raise its head in 1938.

The 1938 season opened on 22 May with a visit from high flying Lincolnshire club Holbeach (Bell End Speedway). The visitors were sporting bright red painted machinery and they dominated proceedings running out easy winners with 60 points to Ringwood's 48. The stars of the home side were the Hayden brothers as Herby joined brother Charlie in the Ringwood side. Herby would later become involved in the management side of Poole Pirates.

Ted English, George Mills and Roy Duke all scored heavily for the visitors while the scratch races featured Jock Pope and Bingley Cree.

The meeting, attracting several thousand people, witnesses a demonstration by local residents complaining about the thousand or so cars and motorcycles which blocked up the local roads and the loud speakers which were audible some half a mile away from the track. A petition with 280 signatures was handed to the organisers and an official complaint was sent to the Parish Council.

The Parish Council reacted by considering the complaints and, following a 7 – 2 vote, they took a complaint to Dorset County Council for attention.

The organising club responded by agreeing to re-direct the traffic away from the problem lanes and agreeing to limiting the number of loud speaker announcements.

To add to the club's woes all the sidecar riders went on strike prior to the racing in a bid to secure equal payment with the solo riders. Fortunately the ACU steward, George Allen, called all the riders to a pits meeting between the riders and the promoters. A deal was struck and the racing went ahead.

However, a report sent to the ACU by the steward resulted in a £1.00 fine for each of the striking riders.

Racing returned to Corfe Mullen on 26 June with a team match, Dorset v Hampshire which was won by the 35 – 19 by the Dorset men. Three thousand were treated to a fine afternoon's racing on a dry and dusty track. Poole garage owner, Jack Leonard was top scorer for Dorset with a 9 point maximum. He had able support from Bingley Cree and Tommy Crutcher. The latter went on to race for Exeter Falcons in 1947 and was one of the promoting team who introduced speedway in 1948. Sadly Tommy, father of the Poole, Wembley and Southampton rider Brian, was killed in a motoring accident during the winter of 1947 / 48. The Hayden brothers and Frank Holcombe were in the Hampshire side while Alan Chambers had to retire from the meeting after a crash early on in the meeting.

Sidecar races followed the main event. In the second heat a coming together of Brian Ducker and Archie Appleby saw a spectacular double somersault by

Appleby who was unlucky to be felled by the wayward machine. Thankfully Archie was able to be discharged from the Poole hospital later in the day. On more light-hearted note the Lord's Day Observance Society turned up at the gate of the field with a loud speaker and proceeded to decry the blasphemous motorcycle racers. However, the Society's spokesman had to depart with a red face as he heard the club's loudspeakers announce the results which featured one Gerald Selby who was his nephew. Exit the Society spokesman, much to the amusement of the crowd who had turned out to enjoy the bike racing.

The meeting programmed for August was abandoned a short way into the proceedings. Two of the Cannfield team, Lloyd Goffe and Stan Lanfear, failed to turn up. The two thousand brave souls who turned up were greeted by a light shower which delayed the start of the meeting by twenty minutes to allow track preparation work. A few races were staged including one which saw a competitor run over the PA equipment. Needless the mishap to the PA caused another delay to allow repairs.

Charlie Hayden won the only main event staged before the heavens opened and the meeting was brought to a halt. To Be Continued.

## Top Ten – Another View

**Bob Ballard**, from Somerset has given some thought to John Hyam's list and has written to us.

It was interesting to read John Hyam's pre-war top ten based on British form between 1930 and 1939. Having had the privilege of seeing five of the riders in the list – Wilbur Lamoreaux, Eric Langton, Jack Parker, Vic Duggan and Lionel Van Praag, I would have to change some of the names on John's list. I would agree with the first six but would substitute Bill Kitchen for Vic Duggan at 7 based on the fact that Vic didn't start until 1937 in Sydney and came over here to England and rode for Hackney Wick and Bristol and then joined Wimbledon in 1939 where he had a very good season.

Whereas Bill Kitchen, beside being a league rider for Belle Vue from 1933 onwards, rode in all the home Test series from 1933 and 1939 plus the one Star Final in 1935 plus qualifying for all three World Finals between 1937 and 1939.

I would have to included Vic Huxley instead of Jack Ormston at 10 with Ginger Lees, Ron Johnson, Dicky Case and Arthur Atkinson all being close contenders for some of the lower places.

I realise comparing the respective merits of individual riders is always controversial whether in their own time span or in different decades. However,

I hope that this stimulates some debate in your columns and that some of your members will be able to supply the details of leading riders scores in the seasons 1930 – 1939 from the League table to back up their choice.

## **Does Speedway Get a Fair Share of the Cake?**

The good old Government gathers up our taxes and then share it out to many deserving causes. I feel sure that there are many such organisations out there but I wonder how much comes back to speedway.

It would be interesting to know how much is disbursed by organisations such as SportEngland, which appears to have given some help to the Cradley Heath cause, and the sister organisations in Scotland and Wales. As public bodies they should supply the information or make it available through the requirements of the Freedom of Information legislation which they must comply with.

These bodies appear pour many millions into the so-called amateur sports and the grass roots of so many sports which provide lucrative short term careers in the top flight such as football and rugby to name but a couple. Top flight amateur athletics also appears to be a gravy train for the best. (OK UK scored a pile of medals in China but lots on bikes and in boats to be fair.)

In America it seems that funded university places can fall into the laps of promising sportsmen and women with loads of scholarships and the like. I have heard things are going this way in the UK but have nothing to back this up.

Speedway is viewed as a professional sport and this seems to be a blocker on money but, why should it? If money can be put into grass roots football and rugby etc which will give opportunities for the best to have a professional career, why should speedway not get similar help?

Maybe the sport should be looking to set up youth training schemes which will give youngsters a chance to compete in speedway at an amateur level which could provide a career path to professional sport. Are there lessons to be learned elsewhere? Can we draw on the Scandinavian approach? Even with this approach would there be stumbling blocks in finding tracks at locations across the country?

Returning to the funding area – maybe speedway should look back and recall at one time it was the victim of Entertainment Tax. What else was taxed? I haven't a clue to be honest but it strikes me things like ballet and opera may have been milked. Now – I'll bet that these two pastimes which are viewed as the preserve of the upper echelons rather than the Hoi Poloi (common people) (and salt of the earth they are), who follow speedway. I'd also like to bet that

there are millions pumped into these two, in relative terms, minority pastimes, to subsidise them. It would be interesting to know how much they get per paying member of the audience per performance to keep them afloat as the performers at the top level seem to command football star incomes.

Looking at speedway as a sport or an entertainment it strikes me that we probably are getting slim pickings from the Government of the day. Any thoughts on this article out there?

**Rodin's Statue**

## **Warzone Speedway**

**Trevor Davies** has published his latest book which covers a previously un-researched area of speedway history and produced a very informative read packed with a host of photographs you are unlikely to have seen before. The bikes will look a bit odd as they were HM Government property dispatch riders for the use of machines which had various bits cobbled together to ensure they could be slid round the bends of the various tracks in all parts of the Middle East and North Africa and other places such as Italy and Germany. A few of the lads who raced them had been professional riders before the war and fair few of the Boys, who were out for a bit of fun on tracks which ranged from a strip carved out the desert to pukka stadiums, went on to become the new boys of the post war boom.

I was privileged to be invited to the launch at the REME Museum at Arborfield near Reading on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> June which had a nice touch of pomp and ceremony. I was delighted to have met guys like Geoff Bennett, Billy Bales, Jimmy Gleed, Ian Williams and Split Waterman who raced in the Services along with a few colleagues including Glynn Shailes, John Jarvis, Robert Bamford and Tony Lethbridge. The ration book Trevor issued was literally your meal ticket – a nice touch.

I can't finish without a special thanks to Jim Gregory and Tom Richardson for getting me to Reading and back from the outskirts of London.

Despite the lack of JAPs the book is an excellent record of these now dim and distant days. It sits well with the RAF Fliers book and, if we twist Trevor's tail, maybe he'll do a book on Navy guys. (I can offer Alan Hunt and (I think) Tony Lewis as two but do you know of any more?) WE can't Press Gang him but do give any names of riders who were in the Navy and associated services during the war when you order the book from Trevor Davies, 21 Gatton Way, Hucclecote, Gloucester, GL3 3DG Tel 01494 497684 or 497371 (Mon Fri) 01452 619793 weekends Email – warzonespeedways@tiscali.co.uk Review

by

**Jim Henry**

## **It made how much at Auction?**

The answer is £37,600.00. What was it? Well the answer is a linocut print called “Speedway” by a lady called Sybil Andrews. **Bob Ballard** from Somerset sent in an item from his local freebie newspaper on the sale of the linocut prints at Lawrences Auctioneers at Crewkerne on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2008.

We copied the information to **Peter Oakes** who did a bit of research of his own and came up with the following: a print of this [lino cut] (it was a limited edition of 60) actually sold for (£56,465) at Heffers auctioneers in Vancouver, Canada, in May this year – a record for this particular piece. It's one of three sold at Heffers over the last three years.

You can look at a copy of the masterpiece on to the web site – just follow the links. Or you may have seen a small version in a recent copy of the Speedway Star.

Bob asks if there are any other speedway paintings out there and mentions the soap advert from the pioneer days showing the lady on a speedway bike. He also wonders if there are other paintings gathering dust in attics or dusted regularly in art galleries anywhere.

**Editors**

## **St Austell Speedway 1958 – 1963**

The full title of Jeremy Jackson’s latest book published by J & S Publications includes “Plus The Sidecar Years” but I suspect it is the solo action that will be of interest to most of you. It was an interesting period in the life of this Cornish venue as Trevor Redmond kept faith with the Gulls fans for six years before calling it a day. The track featured non league action until 1962 when it became the second home of the ill-fated Neath Dragons before running the Gulls in the Provincial League of 1963. Hazy days indeed reflected in some of the slightly fuzzy photographs but that isn’t a criticism as sometimes these give the mood of the era before the state of the art Single Lens Reflex and now digital cameras have made photography easy for everyone.

The sidecars look nothing like the modern machines – big British twins with highish frames – (which I’ve been lucky enough to see in action at the BMF Rally at Peterborough) – and which still go like stink.

This professionally produced book adds to our stock of information about this far flung part of Britain and worth splashing out the specially reduced price of £5.00 + £1.50 P & P. Available form Jeremy at Glen Maye, 85, Park Way, Fairfield Park, St.Austell, PL25 4HR. See also [www.booksmotorcycling.org.uk](http://www.booksmotorcycling.org.uk)

## **The Complete A – Z of Post War British League Riders Part One – The 1940s**

**Matt Jackson** and **Hugh Vass** have been working away on their project for a while but, like a good malt, the time doesn't matter is the end product is something to savour. You can ask why they didn't go an extra mile and get everyone who started out their careers in this era but didn't make in a league or other official fixture but that would be nit picking to say the least. The only sad bit is that the vast wealth of information is only available on a CD and if you don't have a computer you will miss out on something special.

The information is liberally sprinkled with good photographs of these men drawn from the huge archive belonging to John (Ian) Somerville and many of the photographs don't appear to have featured in publications before this.

The A – Z gives an overall perspective of guys from this pioneer era and highlights how many raced on into the 1950s and, in some cases, beyond.

Matt and Hugh's work clarifies the identity of a number of riders who raced under different names whether by intent or by error on the part of programme compilers or fans on the terracing.

Well done you two – and at £9.99 [(inc free P & P) from V.M. Jackson, 11 Crescent Road, Sheffield, S7 1HJ.] this well worth acquiring – computer or no as I think you would get some help at your local library to view this bench mark work. I'm looking forward to the following volumes.

Review by **Jim H**

### **An Apology**

We'll apologise now for not including much by way of your requests for information. We have received a fair amount of good articles and don't want to hold them back for too long a period. However, we set out to share information and we will make up for it in the next edition – promise. **Editors**

**Deadline for items for next edition is 31<sup>st</sup> October 2008**

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### National League Division Two 1953

Away Team	Coventry	Edinburgh	Leicester	Motherwell	Poole	Stoke	Glasgow	Wolver'pton	Yarmouth
Coventry	xxxxxx	43 – 41	49 – 35	43 – 41	59 – 25	45 – 39	51 – 33	55 – 29	46 – 38
Edinburgh	xxxxxx	45 – 39	54 – 30	38 – 46	54 – 30	61 – 23	51 – 33	32 – 52	49 – 35
Leicester	52 – 32	xxxxxx	46 – 38	53 – 31	36 – 48	55 – 27	43 – 41	53 – 31	60 – 24
Motherwell	44 – 39	xxxxxx	37 – 47	55 – 28	42 – 42	59 – 25	44 – 40	60 – 24	45 – 39
Poole	32 – 52	43 – 41	xxxxxx	43 – 41	42 – 42	51 – 33	44 – 40	48 – 36	53 – 31
Stoke	30 – 54	47 – 37	xxxxxx	46 – 38	45 – 39	38 – 46	48 – 36	41 – 43	43 – 41
Glasgow	53 – 31	39 – 45	50 – 33	xxxxxxx	49 – 35	56 – 28	41 – 43	42 – 40	54 – 30
Wolverhampton	57 - 27	48.5-34.5	53 – 30	xxxxxxx	43 – 41	67 – 17	43 – 41	50 – 34	62 – 22
Yarmouth	46 – 38	50 – 34	58 – 26	63 – 21	xxxxxx	63 – 21	58 – 26	62 – 22	56 – 28
Coventry	50 – 34	55 – 29	56 – 27	58 – 26	xxxxxx	68 – 16	47 – 37	46 – 38	59 – 25
Edinburgh	42 – 41	57 – 27	50 – 34	59 – 22	42 – 42	xxxxxx	50 - 34	45 – 39	39 – 45
Leicester	34 – 50	48 – 36	50 – 34	46 – 38	41 – 43	xxxxxx	42 – 42	58 – 26	53 – 31
Motherwell	41 – 43	58 – 26	42 – 42	59 – 25	49 – 35	57 – 27	xxxxxx	51 – 33	45 – 39
Poole	57 – 26	55 – 29	54 – 30	52.5-31.5	46 – 38	64 – 20	xxxxxx	49 – 35	62 – 21
Stoke	40 – 43	51 – 33	54 – 30	49 – 35	42 – 41	52 – 32	40 – 44	xxxxxx	40 – 44
Glasgow	42 – 42	43 – 41	54 – 30	48 – 36	50 – 34	50 – 34	45 – 39	xxxxxx	35 – 49
Wolverhampton	53 – 31	41 – 43	62 – 21	61 – 23	54 – 29	51 – 33	57 – 27	56 – 28	xxxxxx
Yarmouth	46 – 36	54 – 30	58 – 26	61 – 23	50 – 34	51 – 33	48 – 26	46 – 37	xxxxxx

	Home					Away					Pts		
	R	W	D	L	For	Against	R	W	D	L		For	Against
Coventry	16	14	0	2	775	569	16	5	1	10	619	721	39
Poole	16	16	0	0	895	448	16	2	2	12	597	744	38
Yarmouth	16	15	0	1	861	480	16	3	0	13	542	801	36
Glasgow	16	14	1	1	841.5	500.5	16	2	1	13	582	762	34
Edinburgh	16	13	1	2	784	556	16	2	0	14	565.5	777.5	31
Motherwell	16	14	0	2	807.5	531.5	16	1	0	15	505.5	834.5	30
Wolverhampton	16	11	1	4	735	607	16	2	0	14	547	794	27
Leicester	16	12	0	4	694	649	16	1	1	14	513	827	27
Stoke	16	11	2	3	756	584	16	1	0	15	454	888	26