

# The Speedway Researcher

Promoting Research into the History of Speedway and Dirt Track Racing

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## Dick Seers Aussie Test Team Star

**Tony Webb** sets out a brief look at an Aussie who is probably looked upon as a lesser light but still was a test match star.

Dick Seers, Allan Quinn, Don Lawson Arthur Payne and Keith Ryan are the only survivors of the original Australian Test teams that were popular until the first series ended in 1953. Dick is now resident in the central coastal town of Port Macquarie. Dick now in his 86th year, was born 14 August 1926 in Sydney, has fond memories on his years as a professional speedway rider. Dick travelled to England in 1948 where he joined the Fleetwood Flyers with Frank Malouf. Dick failed to make an impression at the northern track scoring a total of 8 points and was placed on a free transfer. He wintered in England where he trained on Oliver Hart's training track. In 1949 he was invited to Glasgow in 1949 scoring 4 points in early season matches, then transferred to Halifax where he surprised everyone by finishing the 1949 season as their third highest point scorer with 367 points. In 1950 he was transferred to First Division Bradford Tudors, netting 113 points. He was selected as reserve for Australia in the test match at West Ham on June 6, but failed to get a ride in the World Championship rounds he scored 13 points which placed him 41<sup>st</sup> in the qualifiers but an injury curtailed his season. Dick returned to Australia to recover. He had his best season at home in 1950/1951. He was called up for the second test at Sydney Sportsground scoring 5 points from the reserve berth. In the third test at the Royale he equalled his first score. He was retained for the fourth test at Bathurst scoring 9 and repeated that tally in the final test at the Royale. Australia won the series 7-0. After missing two English seasons he returned on the "SS Orontes" arriving London March 24 1953 with his wife Winifred. This was an epic sea voyage as no less than 31 speedway riders were on board including VSRA member Allan Quinn. Dick rejoined Bradford scoring 77 points. The last of the **1**

test series was held at Birmingham, Dick scored 5 points in the Australian loss to England 47-61 and again in 1954, in his last season in England he scored 62 points. During his career he scored 641 points in official league matches. Dick returned to England in 2009 where he met up with old friend Huck Fynn still resident in the Midlands.

## **THE BILLY BRAGG STORY**

The JAP Origins by Tony Webb

One of speedway's forgotten men, Billy Bragg, was the real ideas man behind the JAP engine. Like so many others over the years he considered he drew the short straw and was never given the credit that was due to him. This is the true course of events Stanley Greening of JA Prestwich, who were producing motorcycle engines, had encouraged John Prestwich to pay a visit to Stamford Bridge Speedway track in 1928, yet surprisingly he had come away quite unimpressed believing that speedway was little more than another new craze. Fortunately, Stanley Greening had more faith in speedway's long-term prospects for he had already been able to observe how the sport was progressing. He retained a keen interest in racing right up to his retirement, completing almost 50 years with J. A. Prestwich and Co. Ltd, and rising to the position of Chief Technical Advisor. The factory's involvement with speedway racing became the subject for further discussion during the 1929 Motor Cycle Show at Olympia. Bill Bragg who was then Captain of the Stamford Bridge team, called at the JAP stand when Vivian Prestwich was on duty. Vivian realised that perhaps speedway had more to offer than his father had suspected. Through this further representation, John Prestwich changed his mind and gave the project his blessing. Given the go-ahead, Stanley Greening started work along the lines Bragg had indicated.

The first engine followed the lines suggested by Bill Bragg, starting with a 350cc racing engine with which Stanley himself and Teddy Prestwich, another of John's sons, had gained some world records at Brooklands. Its weight was reduced some 11lbs by using the crankcase from a 250cc engine and a single-port 350cc cylinder head with the combustion chamber reshaped, the cylinder having come from a 500cc single after paring off its cooling fins. It was given to Bill for trial, but was well down on power and no match for the four-valve Rudge that 2 was beginning to displace the Douglas.

Undeterred, Stanley Greening experimented with cam design, port shapes and angles, and even skimmed the flywheels to reduce weight still further. A small batch of modified engines were loaned to riders of the calibre of Vic Huxley, Billy Lamont and Frank Arthur, to be installed in Harley-Davidson 'Peashooter' frames. But they were still no match for the opposition and with their evening takings threatened, the riders began to look elsewhere. But before Stanley had time to feel disappointed, help came from an unexpected quarter. Wal Phillips now came back into the picture, having at one time worked in the factory to be near his uncle, Bert Le Vack, whom he worshipped. Already a big name in speedway racing, Wal had just purchased a new Rudge to replace his Douglas. Still an occasional visitor to the factory, news of his change of machine reached the ears of Stanley Greening, so when he next called, Stanley asked him if he could borrow the Rudge to strip the engine completely. He wanted to see for himself why the engine was proving so successful. Wal consented, and so began a partnership that gave the JAP engine the break it needed.

Using the information gleaned from the Rudge engine, Stan and Wal worked long hours in the Experimental Shop. They became so totally absorbed that neither of them realised how they were making life unbearable for those who lived nearby as they ran engines on the test bed late into the night. But their devotion soon paid off, with an engine that developed 33bhp and weighed only 53lbs. By August 1930 the new 80 x 99mm 497cc engine was ready for the crucial test, The engine was fitted with Lodge sparking plugs, which were developed to withstand heat yet not oil up, and an Amal racing carburettor. Stamford Bridge was to be the venue, the engine being mounted in a frame designed by George Wallis which he was anxious to try out. The machine's debut at Stamford Bridge proved highly successful, Wal winning his first two races and breaking the lap record unofficially during practice. But the handling was not all it should have been and he withdrew from the remainder of the meeting. He proved his point by reverting to the Rudge frame when, riding in just three meetings, he recorded 14 wins. The speedway JAP engine had arrived.

Meanwhile Bill Bragg had a serious accident that finished his speedway career. He opened a garage at Brixton Hill where he sold Riley Nines before retiring to Bury St Edmunds in Suffolk where he died in the sixties.

Bill Bragg distributed thousands of leaflets regarding his claims. I think there was substance there as he was so adamant regarding his claim I always believed Billy Bragg's story was true. However he never appeared to have documentation of his claims. His story appeared in print many times by independent journalists, but was never substantiated by anyone connected with the factory, they did not want to know. Over the years there have been many ideas come forward, but unless they were patented with copyright, there can be no claim. J A Prestwich advertised extensively in speedway publications, it should be considered that publishers did not want to lose a valuable advertiser, therefore a ban was placed on any mention of Bill Bragg by journalists.

### **84S Type Engine**

This engine nicknamed the 'Short Stroke' engine is not really a short stroke engine in the proper sense of the term which infers a shorter stroke than bore ratio. Its 90 mm stroke is shorter than the 4B engine which is 99 mm stroke. The 84S type engine is not intended to be a high revving engine and it's low speed torque and power is similar to the 4B engine but it will achieve higher RPM up the straight. Do not under-gear this engine, the best results will be obtained using the same high gear ratio as the 4B engine and certainly not more than 1 tooth extra on rear wheel sprocket from what would normally be considered JAP gearing. The main differences apart from the bore and stroke are a shorter and strengthened alloy con rod, an alloy barrel with steel liner and 'squish' top piston, and a larger inlet port and carburettor (34mm). Maintenance procedures are similar to the 4B engine but the 84S engine requires more ignition advance and we have found 40° before TDC to produce the best results. When assembling the engine particular attention should be paid to the 'squish' clearance between the piston and cylinder head, remembering that when engine gets hot the con rod will expand slightly in length so an allowance of about ½ the thickness of a cylinder head washer should be allowed when the engine is cold to prevent the piston touching the cylinder head when the engine is running hot.

Bore: 84 mm.

Stroke: 90 mm.

Capacity: 499 cc

Compression Ratio: 14 : 1

Weight: Net 59 lbs.; Magneto 2 ¾ lbs.; Carburettor 2½ lbs.  
Carburettor: AMAL type 1034. 12½° down draft.  
Ignition advance: 40° before T.D.C. (14 : 1 Comp. ratio).  
Valve Timing: As for special cam wheel pt. No. 23154.

## **Matt Jackson's Research**

Years and years ago, I started to put together some information - which I suppose these days would be called a data base – of post-war speedway riders, their biographical details and their career records. In time, the information reached a stage where I thought it might make a good book and got in touch with various people through the Speedway Researcher, one of whom was Hugh Vass. I teamed up with Hugh as we attempted to put together a complete biographical history of post-war speedway riders, me doing the biographies and Hugh contributing the statistics with his meticulous methods and extensive contacts. At one stage a book was on the cards but one interested party didn't share our hopes for methods, and another had to pull out when we thought it was all systems go. Undeterred, we contacted John Somerville and he kindly agreed to provide us with the missing ingredient – the photographs - and we decided to publish on disc.

This was about five years ago and the first disc contained details of every rider who made their post-war league debut in the 1940s. A second disc followed a year later charting the careers of all those who made their first league appearance between 1950 and 1959. I have been working hard on the 1960s disc and everything was in place and ready to go a few months ago. However, I hit a bit of a snag with a work related issue that prevented me from going ahead with disc three and the matter remains unresolved. I am not sure when the work issue will be sorted out and have decided that, rather than wait indefinitely, I would set up a web site to put all the information out there for general information.

There are benefits to the web site. Firstly, it is free. Secondly, it can contain more information than a disc or book ever could and thirdly, it can be updated when new information comes to light. The first two discs have prompted a deluge of information from relatives and friends of long lost riders like Charlie Bourdon, Stan Paulsen, Lionel Watling and Ernie Steers to name a few and I have been adding an

‘updates section’ to each disc to incorporate the new found details. With a web site the information can be added and updated at the click of a button.

I also intend to look at the pre-war riders as well and I would like to thank the likes of **Bob Ozanne, Brian Collins, Stuart Staite-Aris** and Peter Jackson for submitting the statistics and race results from the pre-war era to the Speedway Researcher web site for making this possible. Hugh’s contribution to the project has been equal to the work I have put in, **John Somerville** has been a god send and **Robert Bamford** has provided endless support and information. I hope the people who were looking forward to disc 3 are not too disappointed that the information is to be published this way but I hope they understand the reasons why. The site is in its early stages of development and it will be updated regularly over the next weeks, months and years, hopefully to include every rider who has ever ridden in a league or knock-out cup match in Britain since 1929. If anyone can assist with any information to add to what I hope will be a useful addition to the speedway historians community, please get in touch via the link on the site. Please visit [www.speedwayatoz.co.uk](http://www.speedwayatoz.co.uk) and if anyone has any feedback, positive or negative, I would be happy to hear from you.

## **Ron Bagley**

**Keith Farman** aka The Keeper of The Bloater Pond did a few biopics and the following on Ron Bagley is worthy of being reproduced here. The quietly spoken Ipswich lad made his first public appearance on two wheels on the rough cycle speedway tracks, which mushroomed in the Suffolk Area after the first Speedway meetings were held at the Foxhall track in 1951.

Tracks appeared here there and everywhere and in some towns and villages the local Parish and Urban Councils built the tracks for the youngsters.

Ron soon became a force to be recorded with in the pedal pushing sport and was the big name in the Ipswich Vampires team. He became Suffolk Champion and in the mid 50’s won the National Championship, a great achievement at that time, as there were literally hundreds of Cycle Speedway teams up and down the country and 6 thousands of riders.

The lure of the real thing bugged him and he purchased his first 500cc JAP from Ricky Jerome, who was a junior rider. In 1958 Ron Bagley was the name that occasionally appeared in the second half of the Ipswich programme, under the watchful eye of Charlie Frenzel, who was the manager of the Witches at that time, and from all accounts he occasional gave Ron a hard time.

It was harder to ride a speedway bike than it looked and more often than not, Ron would fall before the chequered flag.

Ron was also getting some rides at Rye House, where he would be paid in loose change that had been taken from the turnstiles.

Ipswich entered a team in the Southern Area League under the guidance of the Norwich captain Aub Lawson in 1959 and Ron was given the occasional ride. He was improving all the time and he managed to qualify for the SAL Riders Final that season.

### **On His Way To Stardom at Yarmouth**

In 1960, the Poole National League team moved to Ipswich, and there was no place for Ron in the new team. He was in danger of drifting out of the sport, until Yarmouth offered him a place in the Yarmouth team. His first taste of the new Provincial League was at Rayleigh as reserve. Getting just one ride in which he did not score a point.

Then as a full team member at Bradford he had four rides and scored three points, nothing sensational, but he was improving. Still wild but willing, Ron kept his place for the return match with Rayleigh at Yarmouth, in his first race he gated first but hit the fence on the first bend. Ron had three more races and fell in each of them.

Away to Edinburgh he failed to score, so after four matches he had got just three points. His racing was fearless, and the Yarmouth Management kept him in the team, as they were sure that he would improve.

He managed to get two points at Bristol, and another four at Cradley Heath, and then in the home match against Liverpool he got his best score, nine points.

He was a trifle impetuous in all his heats, and in one heat he was involved in an incident involving the Kiwi, Bruce Subritzky, who was justifiably very annoyed.

After this match Ron settled down and finished the season with 68+18 hard-earned points. The Bloaters fans had taken to his flat out riding style, that at times was still a bit wild, but exciting to watch. 7

With Yarmouth dropping out of the Provincial League in 1961, Ron joined Plymouth, and he improved his average by about fifty-per-cent. Towards the end of the season he rode in a few matches as a heat leader.

Yarmouth did run a short season in 1961, and were in the East Anglian League; they rode in just one away match, at Norwich, with Ron being the top scorer with nine points. He also topped scored in his first home match against Rayleigh with eleven points. In the CTS Trophy he came third.

Ron did not ride well in his next three outings getting only four, seven and three points. The King of Oxford Trophy was to be the last meeting to be held at the Caister Road Track. Ron rode well winning his first two races, and then had to meet Harry Edwards, who was also unbeaten. It looked to the fans that heat ten would decide the Trophy. Ron, who was the crowds favourite, was on the outside, he rode hard into the first bend, and it seemed a little too hard as he crashed with Edwards and Wal Morton. Only Peter Jarman missed the pile-up. Ron had tried too hard and was excluded from the re-run. This lost him the Trophy, as was not fit enough to ride in his remaining heats

### **Two Seasons With Sheffield**

Won the Skol Larger Easter Trophy at Rye House after scoring 13 points. He won a run-off with Geoff Mudge to become a popular winner.

Sheffield signed Ron for the 1962 season and their fans were not impressed as he only scored one point in his first match.

A few more low scores, and then he won the fans over in when in the match against Edinburgh he hit form-scoring 11 points.

A few weeks later he scored his first ever maximum against Cradley Heath, and in doing so defeated Ivor Brown, his old Yarmouth captain, Ivor was now one of the top riders in the league.

Unable to ride his way to the next round of the World Championships, Ron made amends in the Provincial League Riders Championship. In the qualifying rounds he scored forty out of a possible forty-five points. He was one of the seeded riders for the final at Belle Vue. He won his first race and added three-second places, to finish fifth highest scorer with nine points.

In 1963 he was expected to progress, he was tipped by some to become a World-class rider, but in fact he went backwards. He was still very **8** good at Sheffield, but surprisingly, not so good away from home.



The next season he went right off form, and was never the high scoring dashing daredevil of the previous years.

Ron also rode Ipswich who had a team in the Metropolitan League in 1964. After being one of the bright young men of the British Speedway; Ron had been through a confidence-sapping spell that forced him to quit the sport.

### **Back To Ipswich**

John Berry and Joe Thurley re-opened the Ipswich track in 1969, and the new Promoters John Berry and Joe Thurley put Ron on top of their shopping list and an advert appeared in the local paper asking for him to contact the new Company. They found him living in Felixstowe and they asked him to be Captain of the new Second Division side. After five years out of the sport, he said yes, and was back at the track where he started his career.

His first match was at Long Eaton Ron was third in his first race but went on to be the team's top scorer with ten points as the Witches lost 45-33. Ipswich's first meeting at Foxhall Heath since 1965 was against Rochester. Ron blew his engine whilst warming up in the pits and came in last on his first race, but still top scored with ten points.

The Ipswich management had done well in getting Ron back into the sport, he was undoubtedly a fine skipper and one who helped more than a little to clear out the early season gremlins, and settle the team down into a fine home combination. In a season that eventually ran-up an unbeaten nine-league home wins by the end of the season. Ron done an excellent job, scoring one full and one paid maximum in the season. For 1970, the Second Division had a Match Race Championship; the top scorer would race off for the Silver Helmet, after the League match. It was decided that the first race would be at Romford, and the top away riders would challenge Ross Gilbertson and Ipswich were the team in the first match. It was Ron with ten points that became the first challenger. Both men crashed alarmingly as Gilbertson looked set to take the lead Ron was excluded for unfair riding.

The next night, at Ipswich for the return match, Ron beat Gilbertson in heat nine, and dropped his only point of the evening in heat twelve. As top scorer it was again Ron who got the chance to race for the Silver Helmet, and this time he made no mistakes to become the new Champion. He lost in his first defence the following week, to Long Eaton's Malcolm Shakespeare.

John Louis had started the 1970 season as reserve, but after the first month of the season he was in the team as a partner to Ron, John became the teams star rider and they made a great pair. In the Anglian Best Pairs 4-6-1970, it was Ron and John that become the popular winners.

Ipswich became a better team in 1970 Ron was a very reliable captain, leading them to victory in the K.O. Cup Final. He was hit with injury problems in the second half of the season but still gave the team tremendous support.

Ron was dogged with machine problems and was not scoring points in 1971, and it destroyed his confidence. He was also out for several weeks with a collarbone injury during which time he team managed the side for a number of meetings.

### **From Captain To Team Manager**

Ron then decided to step down, in his own words. **“The youngsters are improving and I'm not, so they are the ones that must have the chance”**. His Captaincy had been the finest in the League and even when going through this patch he still had a word of encouragement to the youngsters. When Ron told John Berry of his decision, John immediately offered him the Teams Managers position, so Ron jumped from team captain to team manager.

In his first week as manager, Ron wrote in the programme, **“I'll tell you this, by the time I'm finished here, we'll not have one of the best Teams, WE'LL BE THE GREATEST EVER”**. And those giants of the First Division had better start worrying because its their scalps were after. His first job was to make John “Tiger” Louis captain little did the fans know reading his notes that night that his words were going to become true. Ron became one of the sports greatest managers.

In his first season the team won the K.O. Cup. In 1972 they took over West Hams League Licence and finished sixth in the League. They finished fifth in the 1973 season, and third in the 1974 season. They lost in the final of the K.O. Cup in 1974 to Sheffield 90-66. Then the words of 1971 came true, Ipswich won the League for the first time, and they lost to Belle Vue in the K.O. Cup in the first round, who came second to the Witches in the League.

Just to prove how good the team was they won the League and the K.O. Cup the following season. This time beating their fellow East Anglians, Kings Lynn, 79-77. Ipswich came forth in 1977 and people close to **10** Ron could sense that he had become restless. With John Berry they

had taken the team from nothing to winning everything there was to win. He needed new targets, new challenges, but most important, he needed to be his own boss, and at the end of the season he resigned. A year out of the sport, then he made a shock return to Mildenhall, in the National League, Ron proved to be a great manager as the “Tigers” won the League. This gave Ron the honour of being the only Manager to win the British and National Leagues

Ron had wanted to run his own track and in 1980 he sold his photographic business to move to the North West, full of confidence that he could make a go of “Workington”. But after one season of bad luck and poor crowds the “Comets” were refused permission to come to the tapes for the 1981 season. In many ways it was a tragedy that he failed, because no one could have worked harder on a limited budget. It was a sad way for Ron to leave the sport as he had done so well in his native Suffolk.

### **Sale of Programmes and Photographs**

The demand for material which was listed on the sheets posted out with the renewal slips was patchy. There is still a fair few items left including a Wartime Belle Vue programme. We’ll arrange to post a revised list on the web soon after the publication of this edition. The income goes to a good cause, funding the web site.

### **Colindale Closure**

The British Library Newspaper Library web site is now carrying information that heralds the end of an era. Colindale stopped issuing periodicals in June and a few months will close completely.

The newspaper and periodic archive is being transferred to Boston Spa which is near Weatherby where they will be permanently stored.

Anyone wishing to look at newspapers and periodicals will be able to look at these publications at the Euston Road, London library but they will be copies rather than the original. The British Library is confident that most of the publications will be available in this format.

Those publications not copied will be brought to Euston Road from Boston Spa provided they are in a good enough condition to be transported. However, they will not be available on demand but the

British Library suggests they will be able to supply two days after the request is submitted.

It goes without saying that anyone wanting to consult newspapers and periodicals should contact the British Library before travelling to be sure of the availability.

The online subscription service which allows subscribers to look at a number of newspapers continues is providing an ever growing number of publications. Unfortunately a significant number of the newspapers were published well in advance of 1928.

**Jim Henry**

## **Speedway Dynasties**

**Keith Corns** recently mention that he had notice that Connor Coles was now riding and that he was the third of the Coles family to take to the shale. Obviously his granddad was Bob Coles and his dad is Michael Coles. Bob is probably best known for his Mildenhall connections while Michael's main teams were Exeter and Edinburgh. Connor is currently riding in the National League for the newcomers Kent Kings who are based at the new track at Central Park, Sittingbourne.

This in turn led me to come up with three other three generation families. The first that sprung to mind was the Grant dynasty which started with Alec "Farmer" Grant who rode before and after the war at Newcastle before moving north to race at Glasgow Ashfield. It was then continue by Rob Grant (snr) who is best known as a Berwick Bandit and he was followed by his son also called Rob who rode for a few teams including Stoke.

In turn it led me to the Allott dynasty which started with Guy who raced for Sheffield, Motherwell and Leicester before he returned to Sheffield. Guy's son Nicky was a man a number of tracks including Sheffield and Scunthorpe and the third generation is represented by Adam who also raced for a few teams over the years.

The next Dynasty is the Swales family and the senior representative is Jackie Swales who was best known at Middlesbrough. Twins Tony and Tim also raced for their dad's team but by now it had re-invented itself as Tees-side. The third generation of this dynasty is represented by a number of enthusiastic riders including Jonathan, Jamie and Andy.

Now the well ran dry but then Keith came up with the family that tops the three generation dynasties, the Dugard family. Started by Charlie 12 Dugard he was followed by Bob, John and Eric. Bob's lads Martin

and Paul followed in his tyre tracks and now Martin's sons Kelsey and Connor are out on the tracks.

Charlie not only rode but was heavily involved in pioneering the Elite League track at Eastbourne, a venue graced by his descendents.

To the best of our knowledge this is the longest dynasty to date unless someone can come up with any others we have missed. **Jim Henry**

## **Burton On Trent Training Track**

Eagle-eyed readers of the Speedway Star of 27<sup>th</sup> July might have noted a reference to a training track run by the Burton and District Sporting Motorcycle Club. A scan over Google maps located the venue which is located off the B5234 a short way west of the town of Burton on Trent. No details of how long it has been in operation. From the air photo it looks a tidy wee operation. Any tracks more out there? **Jim Henry**

## **Exeter Track Record**

**Tony Lethbridge** has compiled a list of track record holders and the times for the gone and much missed County Ground from 1947 until it closed at the end of 2005.

### COUNTY GROUND TRACK RECORD (CLUTCH START) 1947-2005

Distance 1947 440 yards, 1948 433 yards, 1976 396 metres

14/4/47	84.4 sec.	Bernard 'Broncho' Slade	(Heat 1 first meeting)		
5/5/47	81.1	Les Trim	19/5/47	79.6	Cyril Roger
29/9/47	79.0	Cyril Roger	26/4/48	78.4	Cyril Roger
17/5/48	77.0	Cyril Roger	7/6/48	76.2	Cyril Roger
5/5/50	76.0	Don Hardy	7/7/50	74.6	Ken Le Breton
11/8/50	74.2	Ken Walsh	9/7/51	73.1	Jack Young
6/8/51	72.8	Olle Nygren	1/10/51	72.8 =	Jack Young
25/5/53	72.6	Goog Hoskin	7/9/53	72.0	Goog Hoskin
18/4/58	72.0=	Barry Briggs	12/7/65	71.4	Igor Plechanov
10/10/66	71.4=	Sverre Harrfeldt	1/7/68	71.4=	Martin Ashby
12/8/68	70.2	Martin Ashby	30/6/69	70.2=	Odd Fossengen
24/5/71	70.2=	Peter Ingram	26/7/71	70.2=	Peter Ingram
26/7/71	70.2=	Bruce Cribb	26/7/71	70.0	Peter Ingram
26/7/71	70.0=	Dave Hemus	30/8/71	70.0=	Bob Kilby
24/4/72	69.8	Bob Kilby	1/5/72	69.8=	Bob Kilby
1/5/72	69.2	Bob Kilby	25/5/73	69.2=	Ivan Mauger

2/7/73	68.8	Ivan Mauger	6/5/74	68.8=	Ivan Mauger
5/8/74	68.0	Ivan Mauger	7/4/75	68.0=	Ivan Mauger
3/5/76	67.8	Ivan Mauger	25/7/77	67.8=	Phil Crump
15/5/78	67.8=	Scott Autrey	19/6/78	67.4	Scott Autrey
25/8/78	67.4=	Reidar Eide	16/4/79	67.2	Vaclav Verner
9/7/79	66.6	Scott Autrey	16/7/79	66.5	Peter Collins
16/7/79	66.2	Scott Autrey	4/5/92	66.1	Tony Olsson
11/7/93	65.8	Joe Screen	22/5/95	65.8=	Dean Barker
11/7/95	65.8=	Mark Loram	28/8/95	65.0	Jason Crump
29/4/96	64.3	Mark Loram			

(Exeter accepted by Guinness Book of records as fastest track in UK)

## The Missing Meetings

My request in the last edition of the magazine for details of missing meetings produced a good response and the list has been reduced by at least a page. It still runs to five and a half pages but it was heartening to get details of some from toughies like Aldershot in season 1952.

Anyway, a big thank you to everyone who pitched in and I'll keep my fingers crossed that a few more will emerge to see the light of day.

The list does not include any National League Division 1 meetings but there are a few Division 2 and Division 3 meetings which would be especially good to pin down to sort out rider stats.

The Southern League and Southern Area League, however, still remains a fairly large black hole and I'd love to get this era much more in focus.

I suspect the non-league tracks will remain the biggest nightmare and I'm not holding out a lot of hope for these but, I never say never.

Beyond these I still have loads of part bits of meetings and, I remain optimistic. If you have programmes but haven't looked at the needs list, please do, you never know just how much delight I get in reducing the length of the needs lists, even just by one line. **Jim Henry**

## Web Whispers

The web site continues to expand and it is a pity that some of our readers don't have the skills to take advantage of this very useful research tool. I have completed my exercise for the years 1945 – 1964 as far as I can go from published sources but I am always being sent a few more items which allow me to stroke off an item on the needs lists.

I am also reworking the files and compiling track by track needs lists which can help collectors see what is needed. I am also looking at some venues where the details of the meetings are a bit scanty. A classic example is the such as Belfast venue, Dunmore Stadium, which staged meetings in 1950.

**Mark Aspinell** is fairly knocking out files which are providing information about many seasons post 1964 while **Steve Wilkes** is still working away on year by year files.

**Bob Ozanne** is still busy with the pre-war material but this is not a readily available and marked programmes are few and far between. The site now has an entry for a meeting staged at Staines in 1938, a very hazy venue to the west of London.

**Matt Jackson** is still the pilot at the helm and has launched a site of his own, [www.speedwayatoz](http://www.speedwayatoz.com), which will pool rider profiles. The site is worth a look and, if you can help Matt, do get in touch. Matt has restricted it to riders who rode in official league for cup fixtures.

I can't start to imagine how the list would balloon if he decided to add in those guys and girls who rode in other events and second half events. But, and it is a big BUT maybe someone might want to have a go at this task sometime.

Finally, a big thanks to **Keith Corns** who has sorted out the Wolverhampton files and, as I write, is sorting out the Yarmouth files. I'm very sure that the late Keith Farman will be looking down on us and grinning from ear to ear as the record of his beloved Bloaters is being brought "up to date." Keith has the patience to go through files I never have.

**Jim Henry**

### **Belfast Dunmore 1950 Needs**

Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> May 1950 Dunmore Trophy Meeting Details

Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> May 1950 Best Pairs Meeting Details

Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1950 Turnham's Team 34 Lloyd's Team 50 (Ch) Meeting Details

Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> June 1950 Dunmore Bees 39 Manchester Starlets 33(Ch)  
4thplaced men + Second Half

Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> June 1950 Dunmore Bees 26.5 The Rest 43.5 (Ch) 4thplaced  
men + Second Half

Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> June 1950 Individual Trophy 4thplaced men + Second Half

Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> July 1950 Dunmore Stadium, Belfast Meeting Details **15**

Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> July 1950 Dunmore Bees 44 Liverpool Chads 26 (Ch) 4<sup>th</sup> placed men + Second Half

Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1950 Dunmore Bees 50 Northern Tracks 21 (Ch) Meeting Details

Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> July 1950 Three Laps Championship Second Half

Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> August 1950 Best Pairs Second Half

Friday 11<sup>th</sup> August 1950 Dunmore Bees 41 Liverpool Chads 30 (Ch) 4<sup>th</sup> placed men + Second Half

Friday 18<sup>th</sup> August 1950 Belfast Bees 39 Glasgow Tigers 32 (Ch) Second Half

The Belfast venue staged both open meetings and non-league team events using a number of Scottish based riders such as Alan (McQueen) Robertson, Malcolm Riddell, Peter (Gundy) Harris, Bill (Jock) Gordon, Alf McIntosh, and Peter Dykes. Harris was an Aussie and Dykes was a New Zealander and both were based at White City Glasgow as members of the Glasgow Tigers squad. They also used riders who were based in the Liverpool /Manchester area like Ralph Horne, Tom Turnham, Val Morton, and, Angus McKenzie.

The top man was veteran Wally Lloyd who had been involved with organising the operations at the venue. Wally presumably rode in all the meetings too. Fellow veteran Ron Johnson had a few outings too.

Another regular was Londoner Tommy Lack who spent a part of 1949 with his brother Eddie at Old Meadowbank in Edinburgh riding at reserve before losing his place.

It would be great to pull the details of this venture into one file and all help is welcomed. It is similar to the other Irish venues like Chapelizod and Santry which are quite hazy and in need of deeper more information to complete the record of events on "The Emerald Isle". **Jim Henry**

## **The History of Preston Speedway**

**Graham Fraser** continues his history of Farringdon Park, Preston.

### **The History of Preston Speedway – 1931**

After two quite successful years in 1929 and 1930 Preston entered a slimmed down Northern League, following the closure of several clubs from the previous season. Only six sides started the season with only 4 finishing it. The team changes from the 1930 season saw Liverpool, Manchester White City, Warrington, Edinburgh, Newcastle, Rochdale, Barnsley and Wombwell no longer participating and the re-emergence of Leeds after a year's absence.



The Farringdon Park season started on Good Friday, 3<sup>rd</sup> April with an All-Star Opening Meeting that included such names as Walter Hull and Chun Moore (Belle Vue), Dusty Haigh and Norman Hartley (Sheffield), Tommy Price (Leicester Super), Norrie Isbister (Glasgow). The full Preston squad of Joe Abbott, Ham Burrill, Ginger Lees, Larry Boulton, Bill Kilner and Jack Tye made up the rest of the programme with a selection of juniors contesting the Junior Six Race. Competition winners were:

Scratch Race Final: Walter Hull

All Star Nine Race: Walter Hull

Golden Helmet Race: Dusty Haigh

Junior Six Race: Eddie Myerscough

Special Match Races : Joe Abbot bt Walter Hull; Dusty Haigh bt Ham Burrill; Norrie Isbister bt Larry Boulton

Another Open Meeting the following Thursday saw Larry Boulton win the Scratch Race; Frank Charles triumph in the Flying Twelve race for the George Formby Cup; and Frank Varey take the Golden Sash Race in front of 700 spectators.

Northern League competition started on Sat 11<sup>th</sup> April with the toughest possible start, Belle Vue away over nine heats, a change from the six heat five rider teams of 1930 ( with a 3-2-1-0 scoring format) in front of 30,000 fans.

The teams were:

Belle Vue: Frank Varey ©, Walter Hull, Len Woods, Bob Harrison, Indian Allen, Chun Moore, with Arthur Franklyn at reserve.

Preston: Joe Abbott ©, Ginger Lees, Ham Burrill, Larry Boulton, Jack Tye, Eddie Myerscough with Will Anderton at reserve.

Match details from press reports are sketchy but race winners were five for Belle Vue to four from Preston although the visitors picked up many of the lesser places. Preston gave as good as they got but a BV 5-0 when two Preston riders collided in heat 7 then saw Belle Vue take the lead for the first time and hold on for a 27-24 victory.

As was the pattern in 1931 the reverse fixture immediately five days after and Belle Vue fielding the same teams but Preston brought in Tony Golding at no 6 and Eric Airey at reserve. This must have been a really exciting meeting as Preston narrowly won heat one, followed by reverse 5-1s in 2 & 3, Preston taking a narrow lead which they held by one point at heat 7. Heat 8 saw Belle view move ahead by one point with a 2-4. So it was all down to the final heat. Ginger Lees and 17

Larry Boulton against young Aussie Len Woods and Indian Allen. Mirroring the previous meeting both Belle Vue men fell leaving Preston to

pick up a 5-0 and the overall victory by 27 points to 23, inflicting Belle Vue's first defeat of the season before 6,000 fans.

A week later Glasgow were the visitors for the league encounter at Farringdon Park. – the teams lined up:

Preston: Joe Abbott ©; Jack Tye, Ham Burrill; Bill Kellner; Ginger Lees; Larry Boulton – reserve was Eric Airey

Glasgow: George McKenzie, Norrie Isbister, Percy Dunn, Alfie Williams, Andy Nicholl, Arthur Moser and Arthur Mann at reserve.

Glasgow certainly played second fiddle to the rampant homesters with any Glasgow points coming from Preston rider engine failures.

Glasgow only had one heat advantage all night a 2-4 in heat 8 and three 3-3s, but Preston stormed ahead with a 5-0, three 5-1s and a 4-2 to win in convincing fashion 35-18. Top scorers for the Lancastrians were Joe Abbott & ginger Lees who scored 9, with Norrie Isbister top scoring with 5 for the visitors.

Moving to the following Tuesday, 28<sup>th</sup> April, Glasgow hosted the return which saw Arthur Moser drop to reserve and Drew McQueen came into the Glasgow team at No 6. Preston introduced Jack Rowley for Ginger Lees with Eddie Myerscough at reserve. A crowd of 10,000 settled in for an enthralling contest. Glasgow held a slim lead until heat 4 when Preston drew level. A Glasgow 5-1 in heat 5 and a Preston 2-4 in 6 saw Glasgow hold a slim 2 point lead into the final heat.

What transpired next in the meeting was detailed in the local press.

*“ Arthur Moser had come into the heat as replacement for Drew McQueen who had failed to get his bike going. He borrowed a bike from Norrie Isbister which was a runner but he failed to beat the clock which had been set to give him three minutes to take his place in the starting line up.*

*Glasgow's bacon looked saved as Andy Nicholl took the lead for the all important three points, closely followed by Arthur Moser. Unfortunately Andy broke a chain and he drifted to a halt leaving Arthur in the lead. Arthur was overtaken by Boulton who ran him close on the exit to a bend. Arthur did not consider that Boulton had used unfair tactics in his passing move but the SACU Stewart saw things differently (Jack Rowley had finished third). After Boulton crossed the line and a draw **18** in the match proclaimed until the Scottish Auto Cycle Union*

*judge gave out Arthur Moser had won the heat, Boulton being disqualified for boring out Moser on the straight. Boring meant forcing wide by pushing the rider over from their preferred riding line. Billy Galloway said that the Stewart 'could see better than Arthur, and there was something in that'. What happened was that Boulton was coming out of the scoring board bend when he went into a fierce two wheeled skid out towards Arthur who had to shut off. Arthur probably thought this was just a racing incident but the Steward saw it as a hindrance to the Glasgow rider from which the Preston man and his team would clearly have benefited. Boulton was on a very fast Douglas and the track was probably more suited to the Rudge machines which were used by the Glasgow team"*

The outcome was a Glasgow win by 28-25 and registered their first league win of the season, Preston's record now being two wins and two defeats.

Over the next week Preston hosted two Open meeting. On Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> April, Wally Hull beat Joe Abbot in the final of Knockout Match Races which saw Max Grosskreutz beaten in the opening match race and Hal Herbert defeated in the semi-final race. Preston reserve Eric Airey was victorious in the Preston Handicap Race and Joe Abbott overcame Wally Hull in the final of the Golden Helmet.

Four days later and over three races Squib Burton beat Joe Abbott in Match Races; Larry Boulton won the Preston Handicap; Jack Tye won the All Star 12 Race and Squib Burton also picked up the Golden Sash. Given the small number of teams entering the league the Northern Division of the National Speedways Association it was announced in the press at the beginning of May that a knock-out cup competition to be decided by home and away matches.

The draw included non-league teams and was:

York v Wombwell

Leicester Stadium v Glasgow

Preston v Leicester Super

Belle Vue v Sheffield

It was also confirmed that the Northern Division of the NSA had persuaded the Auto-Cycle Union to agree to appoint starts of experience who shall be in regular employment in that capacity at Northern tracks and five individuals from Lancashire and Yorkshire were being considered.

League speedway resumed the following week when the Lancastrians travelled to Owlerton, Sheffield and the teams lined up as follows:  
Sheffield: Dusty Haigh, Harry Credland, Arthur Moore, Broncho Dixon, Norman Hartley, Eric Blain, Jack Barber  
Preston: Joe Abbott, Eric Airey, Jack Tye, Larry Boulton, Ham Burrill, Jack Rowley (unknown reserve)

The Sheffield Star Green 'Un sports edition carried a box advertised the meeting with admissions at 6d, 1s/2d & 2s/4d (including Tax!) and 'Covered Accommodation for 12,000.

The meeting itself was something of disaster as Sheffield picked up four 5-1s and the best Preston could do in reply was a 2-3 advantage in one heat and four heats were shared, the result being 34-19 to the Tykes. Norman Hartley top scored with 8 for the homesters and Joe Abbott picked up the same score. Larry Boulton did knock a fifth of a second off the standing start Sheffield track record with a time of 88 seconds. The Sheffield Daily Telegraph reported 'Preston Speedway Humbled' in front of a crowd of 18,000. In comparison the Lancashire Daily Post reported they gave a "creditable performance" The same paper said two days later that the Preston team's "luck was bad" with Eddie Myerscough out with a knee injury, Ginger Lees suffering a dislocated shoulder in a road accident, incidents where team mates collided at Belle Vue depriving Preston of points that could have given them victory, the disqualification of Larry Boulton at Glasgow to name but a few of their problems! It also reported that the German star rider Bill Kellner had not fulfilled expectations.

As is often the case the return league match against Sheffield at Farringdon Park saw a reverse of fortunes. Preston kept the same six starters with Eddie Myerscough returning from injury at reserve: Sheffield also kept the same starting line up with Tommy Allott at reserve. Preston star Ginger Lees was suffering from an eye injury and missed out on a return to the Preston side.

Preston took six heat advantages and Sheffield picked up two, with one shared heat giving a final score of Preston 32 Sheffield 20. Eric Airey top scored for the Lillywhites with 9 and Harry Credland collected six for the visitors. The meeting took an alarming turn at the start when Haigh, whilst leading, fell and the Preston captain Joe Abbott crashed into him being then "tossed into the air landing on his head, hands and knees then doing a somersault!". After five minutes attention from the 20 ambulance men he got to his feet, returned to the pits and came

out later to win heat 4. He later went on to win the second half Golden Gauntlet event – many of those pioneer riders were certainly hard men! The local Preston paper in its ‘Speedway Notes’ on the 16<sup>th</sup> May 1931 produced an interesting article about Joe Abbott that bears reproduction here as it gives a real flavour of speedway in that early era:

***“What It Costs The Riders”***

*Preston Speedway team nearly lost their popular captain, Joe Abbott, on Thursday, when he took a nasty toss after colliding with Dusty Haigh. He had a very lucky escape, but that is not a fresh experience for him. He has crashed dozens of times and none of his spills has been serious.*

*Abbott, whose home is at Burnley, has had a remarkable career. He is a very consistent rider and never indulges in stunts. London fans have a great admiration for him, and recently paid him a compliment by inviting him to ride at Crystal Palace. He was the first Northerner to appear there this year and celebrated the event by outstripping their fastest rider. Though his weekly income these days must be considerable, Abbott denies that he is making a fortune. Smashed machines cost a great deal he says, and swallow up a lot of the profits. This season alone he has had four engines smashed up through bad spills and each mishap incurred a fresh outlay of about £46. At the moment he is contemplating buying a new machine, a Wallis Jap, on which he hopes to break a few more records”*

On Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> May Preston travelled to Melton Road to face Leicester Super in a re-arranged League meeting. The teams lined up as:  
Leicester Super::Arthur Jervis ©, George Marsh, Cliff Watson, Hal Herbert, Tommy Price, Fred Wilkinson

Preston: Larry Boulton ©, Jack Tye, Ginger Lees, Eric Airey, Eddie Myerscough, Jack Rowley

Preston, missing Joe Abbott and Ham Burrill, were somewhat understrength for this clash with a tough Super team on their own track and in another bad result for Preston were, according to the Leicester Mercury “outclassed” by a score of 34-20. With the home team considered good enough to challenge Belle Vue for the league title on present form. Arthur Jervis & Cliff Watson top scored with 8 for Leicester, whilst young Eddie Myerscough was top scorer for the visitors with 6. In second half racing there were reported to be some bad accidents, with Eddie Myerscough being knocked unconscious when he fell between two machines and had to be dragged off

the track by the arms whilst the race was allowed to continue! The local reporter suggested that five riders in such second half racing was perhaps one too many. This was yet another defeat for a Preston side that was quite highly rated at the start of the season.

A chance for revenge was not long in coming as Leicester Super visited Farringdon Park two days later for the return League encounter. The Leicester team for this meeting was the same six as the previous fixture, whilst captain Joe Abbott returned for Preston despite a painful shoulder injury and against medical advice and a new face appeared in the guise of former Liverpool captain, Les 'Smiler' Wotton replacing Jack Tye and Jack Rowley. Ginger Lees rode despite leaving his riding breeches at home in Bury being able to borrow a pair at the track.

The meeting resulted in a dominant 35-19 win for Preston although the Leicester papers did not report their team as "outclassed" this time merely "beaten". The homesters won by six heats to Leicester's two with one shared. Ginger Lees returned to form scoring 9, supported by six from Abbott and Wotton + a credible 4+1 from young Eddie Myerscough riding two days after his horror crash at Melton Road. Super's leading scorers were Jervis and Herbert with 5. An interesting incident occurred in one ride when Hal Herbert's back wheel collapsed during the race.

Four days later an Open meeting at Preston saw times recorded as "exceptionally good". Ginger Lees who lowered Aussie Vic Huxley's standing start track record of 1min 26.4 by a full second in a heat of the Scratch Race (George Formby Cup) which he ultimately won in the final. This meeting also saw what was considered the most serious accident yet to occur at the Farringdon Park track when Cyril Crowther of Belle Vue, riding in a heat of the Golden Helmet fell when he could not avoid the fallen Sammy Marsland of Leeds and in doing so was flung by the impact, somersaulted and fell on his shoulder. He was found to have both fractured his right collar bone and his left wrist. Little reward for a junior rider trailing in second in the qualifying heat for the Golden Helmet Final!

## Fakenham

The sadly missed **Keith Farman** was also heavily into the history tracks in East Anglia. This item is about an obscure venue in this neck **22** of the woods.

In the 1932 season flapper tracks all over the country cashed in on the Speedway boom.

Local tracks were Norwich, Bradwell and Yarmouth and Fakenham track was yet another one that ran a few meetings that season. They opened on Wednesday evening August 3rd with the second meeting advertised for Sunday 13th August at 3 o'clock, with star grass and dirt track riders including Wal Smith, Arthur Reynolds, Jack Symthe, Jim Millward, Dicky Bird, Geoff Pymar. Admission prices was 9d and 1/- children 6d.

On Wednesday 17th the advert read book this date people are taking about the opening meeting. Riders were Jack Symthe, Red Dixon, Jim Millward, Jack Spencer, Wally Banner, Buzz Dixon.

### **Braehead Training Track**

Most folks north of the Border will know Braehead as large shopping centre to the west of Glasgow and north of the M8. However, prior to being developed it provided the venue for a practice track used by James Grieves. Thanks are due to Dad, James Grieves Snr, who has let us know that James Jnr started using the area riding a 50cc Puch in December 1983 and by September 1987 had progressed to a 125 Honda powered speedway machine. In January 1989 James Jnr progressed to a 500cc speedway bike but stopped using Braehead mid 1989 when he secured outings at Linlithgow, Shawfield and Powderhall.

As James Jnr progressed, so the size of the track grew from 85 metres a lap, to 100 metres, then up to 120 metres.

How many more venues like this have been used, especially in Scotland were blaes (waste retorted oil shale) football pitches were a quite common feature in the Central Belt. Angela McCalden who raced at Linlithgow is known to have tried a bike out on a blaes park in Cumbernauld. Bill McNeil, a Motherwell junior of 1954 spoke about having a skid round a blaes park in Glasgow somewhere north of the city centre. However, these probably were not properly marked out or maintained venues which would merit inclusion as a proper track but worth a mention nonetheless.

(It could be said as a side line, totally unrelated to speedway, that the blaes park was a used for football matches. It was only the foolhardy who would attempt to do a slide tackle on these surfaces. Those who did often carried the scars for life.) **Jim Henry**

## **A Record For a Speedway Programme?**

Programmes which have survived from before the war are not exactly rare, but neither are they what you might describe as ten a penny. Programmes from some venues, especially, the short lived venues such as Whitley Bay, Celtic Park and Carlisle have turned up and commanded a premium. However, it is worth noting that fairly recently a programme from the opening meeting at Celtic Park came up for auction. What is even more amazing is that it apparently sold for of the order of £3,000. This must be a record for any speedway programme. The purchaser, probably a collector of football and football related memorabilia, might not realise the historical speedway interest and it is open to speculation as to whether we will be able to add the information it contains to the Speedway Researcher files. By and large Bob Ozanne, and the post 1965 crew of Steve Wilkes and Mark Aspinell, and myself have been helped by collectors who have marked copies of programmes. It is again open to speculation if any of the established speedway collectors will be able to compete for programmes which can command £3,000 a pop for what is admittedly a very rare programme.

**Jim Henry**

## **Articles Wanted**

We are still looking for items for inclusion in the magazine and invite you to get your pens / computers out and do an article for us. The well of items is running dry and if we are to continue we want you to give us some encouragement. You can do it, it isn't hard, and we will give you as much help as you need to get started and to complete your project.

**Graham and Jim**

**Deadline for items for next edition is 30th October 2013**

**Web Master: Matt Jackson**

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