

The Speedway Researcher

Promoting Research into the History of Speedway and Dirt Track Racing

Volume 5 No. 3 December 2002

Edited by Graham Fraser and Jim Henry

Subscribers : 160

Who Was The Best Prewar Rider?

Don Gray, Old Orchard, Waterbeach, Cambridgeshire, CB5 9JU, Telephone: 01223 862279 has posed the question above and set out to answer it in the following article.

On becoming aware that I saw my first speedway meeting on Easter Monday 1930, many acquaintances ask, who, in my opinion, was the best rider in the pre-war era? A most difficult question to answer.

A number of criteria present themselves from which to reach an opinion and they are viewed from different perspectives by various enthusiasts, many of whom, I might suggest, are biased towards their own particular favourites.

I must concentrate on the thirties and ignore the overseas pioneers of the late 1920s when Frank Arthur and Vic Huxley reigned supreme over the inexperienced emergent British riders and when those spectacular showmen like Billy Lamont and Sprouts Elder enthralled a curious and excited public.

I choose to ignore the one track specialists who performed brilliantly on their own circuits but indifferently when visiting other tracks. I put men like Jack Barnett and Phil Bishop at High Beech, the Australian Jack Bishop at Exeter, Arthur Jervis at Leicester Super and Len Parker at Bristol.

Unlike the modern era, the pre-war decade was notable for the number of riders who experienced purple patches of form and dominated their peer for a few weeks, only to recede back to the category of "good" rather than "outstanding". Noteworthy examples include Dick Case (1932), Tiger Stevenson (1933), "Ginger" Lees (1934), Tom Farndon (1935), Frank Charles (1936) and Bluey Wilkinson (1937/38).

This interesting and stimulating aspect of the decade is supported by the number of different holders of the British Match Race Championship who were rarely successful in retaining their title against more than one challenger, until, that is, Tom Farndon became the holder in late 1934. Tom was still the Champion at the time of his fatal accident twelve months later after successfully beating off the challenge on five occasions.

Top men like "Squib" Burton and Wal Phillips ended their riding careers in the mid thirties due to injuries. Vic Huxley retired at the end of the 1936 season, still near the top, as also did Bluey Wilkinson and George Newton in 1938, although it was a serious illness that caused the latter to put his career on hold until the late forties.

Speedway racing is primarily an exciting entertainment for the public. Accordingly, should the accolade of best rider be attributed to the most spectacular thrill merchants like Clem Beckett, Tom Farndon, George Newton or any other of the flamboyant leg trailers of the era? Perhaps the nomination could be accorded to the most stylish rider.

Candidates would include Tiger Stevenson, Colin Watson, Vic Huxley or even Syd Jackson, the man Tommy Morgan of the "People" newspaper considered the most stylish of all.

Jackson, who sometimes sported the skull and crossbones insignia on his bike, used to lie flat along his tank and was sometimes referred to as the Streamline Express.

A further category for consideration might have regard to the universal popularity of a rider; Farndon, Case, Jack Parker, Langton, Wilkinson, all of whom would be at, or near, the top of a long list of favourites.

A case could be made for those men who shot rapidly to the highest echelons soon after taking up the sport. Bill Kitchen and Geoff Pymar in 1933 would qualify here. Also included in this category could be the transatlantic stars, the Milnes, Lamoreaux, Chitty and Gibb who came to these shores in the second half of the thirties and, together with the young Australian

Vic Duggan, promised a scintillating era for the immediate future had Adolf Hitler not spoiled things.

Purists would argue for all round professional motorcyclists Eric Langton and Jack Parker who were consistently at, or near the top for the whole decade.

In conclusion, I think the reader will agree that to name the best rider of the pre-war years would require the judgment of Solomon. However, I do not intend to duck the issue and my choice is the Belle Vue and England stalwart, Eric Langton as most deserving of the title.

Don concludes by stating that he stands to be shot down in flames, not, he adds, for the first time.

Can You Help?

Andy Marlow, 15 Thatcher Close, Beaumont Leys, Leicester LE4 0WE is looking for photographs of the Leicester Super stadium or track in the speedway era of 1929 to 1937. (Andy has also written in supporting the idea of a speedway statistics society. Anybody out there want to act as the catalyst for such an organisation. **The Speedway Researcher** will give you as much help as we can short of taking an active part in the running of any Society established.)

Stephen Harland, is looking for details of the pre-war Open Licence meetings at Cleveland Park, Middlesbrough (Try The Auto Northern Editions, Middlesbrough newspapers, The Yorkshire Post and some of the Newcastle newspapers.) He is also looking for details of the "Closed To Club" meetings staged at Cleveland Park in the mid to late 1950s. Stephen is looking for information on Ron Wilson's (Ray's dad) career as a Leicester rider and of Clive Hitch's Provincial League activities.

Mike Terran, [miketerran@hotmail.com] 5280 NM 7th Street, Apt 401, Miami, Florida 33126 USA is looking for heat details for both Belle Vue v Preston Northern League 1931 fixtures 11.4. and 24.6. He is also looking for heat details of the Belle Vue Merseysiders v Birmingham 12.8.1937.

Mike is also looking for scorers for both teams for the following 1930 Northern League matches. Belle Vue : 7.06 v Barnsley; 28.6 v Leicester; 9.07 v Preston; 6.09 v Liverpool. Liverpool 14.05 v Sheffield; 28.05 v Barnsley; 11.06 v Belle Vue; 26.06 v White City Manchester; 9.07 v Wombwell 23.07 v Glasgow; 20.08 v Leicester; 3.09 v Preston. Preston 22.05 v Barnsley; 31.07 v Belle Vue. Rochdale 26.04 v Preston; 31.05 v Leicester; 13.06 v Belle Vue; 1.07 v Barnsley. White City Manchester 19.4 v Newcastle; 28.04 v Wombwell; 17.05 v Leicester; 31.05 v Preston; 28.06 v Liverpool. Wombwell 28.04 v White City Manchester; 5.05 v Newcastle; 19.05 v Liverpool; 9.06 v Barnsley; 16.06 v Preston; 30.06 v Warrington.

Mike has come across a couple meetings featuring Halifax in 1930 which suggest the Thrum Hall outfit was part of the 1930 Northern League set up. Has anyone else seen any mention elsewhere of Halifax entering this league?

Chris Durno, c/o The Speedway Researcher is looking for the Coventry scorers for the following meetings: 1956 at Ipswich 14.6; at Oxford 28.6; at Rayleigh 28.7. 1955 at Exeter 19.8; 1954 at Exeter 14.6. 1952 at Liverpool 9.6; at Edinburgh 14.7 1951 at Dublin 18.7 1949 v Edinburgh 1.8; at Bristol 21.10 1948 at Haley 22.4; at Wombwell 7.5; at Tamworth 12.5; at Plymouth 20.5; at Hull 22.5; at Exeter 14.6; at Hull 24.7; at Wombwell 3.9; at Exeter 20.9; at Southampton 21.9 1938 v Cardiff 6.9; v Dagenham 13.9; v London 27.9; v Bristol 4.10; v Plymouth 11.10 1930 at Perry Barr 30.7; at Belle Vue 1929 v Hall Green 9.5; at Perry Barr 13.7; at Crystal Palace 27.7; at Wembley 1.8; at Perry Barr 5.8; at Perry Barr (v Coventry v London) 5.8; v White City Manchester 5.9; v White City London 12.9; at Lea Bridge 25.9; at White City Manchester 12.10.

Jim Henry, (Joint Editor) is seeking heat details for the following meetings: 1948: 29.6 Fleetwood v Glasgow; 3.8. Fleetwood v Glasgow. Race by race details for Junior Bainbridge at Wombwell 28.5; at Odsal 2.10; Bat Byrnes at Odsal 2.10; Joe Crowther at Sheffield 1.7; at Odsal 2.10; Will 3 Lowther at Odsal 2.10. 1949: Jack Hodgson at Gladsaxe (Denmark) 2.10; Will Lowther at Liverpool 18.7. 1950 : Fleetwood v Glasgow 22.7: Junior Bainbridge at

Sheffield 3.8; at Halifax 1.9; at Shelbourne Park 3.9; Frank Hodgson at Coventry 19.8; Jack Hodgson at Coventry 19.8; Tommy Miller at Shelbourne Park 3.9 and the dates, and scores for the Test appearances in Australia 1950 - 1951.

A Guide To The Sequence Of Colour Patterns On Speedway Race Jackets

Eric Watson, 43 Hammonds Green, Totton, Southampton, SO40 3HU, Telephone 023 80871561 has compiled the following article. He poses an unusual question and admits he doesn't have an answer to it. As per usual we invite readers to make a contribution to the topic, safe in the knowledge that we will publish those we can.

Eric's question - "Who decided the order of various colours on Speedway Race Jackets?"

Eric's Answer "I don't know and would like to hear from anyone who does know."

From my first visit to Southampton Stadium in 1947 I have been fascinated by the different coloured patterns / motifs on Speedway Race Jackets. I did colour drawings of all the Postwar League Teams in Divisions 1,2 and 3. But I never gave any serious thought to how or who decided what colours / patterns should be used or if they had to follow any kind of pre-determined order. And I never found any reference on the make-up of Race Jacket Colours in the then "Speedway Bible" of the day - "Stenners' Annuals"

So was (or is?) there any Speedway organisation that rules "The colours will be laid out like so?". Be it the Speedway Control Board, ACU or BSPA?

Does anybody know?

With Southampton's closure in 1963 I lost contact with live Speedway for many years. Then on opening a box in my attic in 1999 I found all my old Speedway books and was bitten by the bug again.

A lot had changed during my absence, but the "Magic" of the sport was still as strong as ever, and my enthusiasm was re-kindled, especially on those coloured Jackets.

I have undertaken as many Jackets as I can from 1929 to the late 1970s because in that period I consider most Jacket designs were hand drawn first before they were manufactured. In the 1980s the Jackets were probably designed using computer graphics and to obtain the intricate patterns we see today.

My research has revealed that of some 242 jacket designs (98 Prewar and 144 Postwar up to 1964) the "Start" (or first) Colour, which I shall call the "Leader" colour does appear to follow some sort of convention in about cases. I don't know if this is coincidental or if it was meticulously planned that way. This of course means that 15% do not follow the convention. When League racing began in 1929 Race Jackets were very basic one piece design of one colour (the Leader) with letters or numbers on them. But quite a few tracks had "halves", "quarters" and various "stripes". Then in 1930 various motifs began to appear on the jackets. But I found that from 1929 my suggested convention is apparent.

For example when the club colours were stated to be '2' colours or '3' colours, the first colour was named as the 'leader' colour and as stated previously (in 85% of cases) would be positioned on the jacket 1st according to the design format: - e.g. assuming a club's colours are given as "Red" and "White" - the 'Leader' colour is "Red", and the the following convention applies:-

1. Horizontal Halves Jacket - the Red Leader is the 'Top' half.
2. Vertical Halves Jacket - the Red Leader is the 'Left Hand' Half.
3. Diagonal Halves Jacket - the Red Leader is the 'Top' Half Diagonal sector regardless of the angle of slant of the diagonal dividing line.
4. Quarters Jacket - the Red Leader is in the 'Top Left hand' quarter.
5. Checkboard Pattern Jacket - the number of Vertical Squares is always an Odd number so ensuring each line in the pattern always starts and ends with the same colour. The Red Leader is in the first Square (Top Left) of the first line of squares.
6. Horizontal Stripes (bands) Jacket (3 or more) - the Red Leader is the first Stripe (band) at the Top of the jacket.

7. Vertical Stripes (bands) Jacket (3 or more) - again the number of stripes are always an Odd number, ensuring the start and finish colour are the same. The Red Leader is usually the first vertical stripe (band).

8. Jackets with a single 'Motif' (Star, Ace, or Letter etc.) - Red Leader is usually the background colour.

9. In the majority of cases where Numbers or Letters were used on the Leader background they were usually White.

If any fellow Researchers out there can answer some of my queries or expand on the foregoing, or correct any errors, please feel free to speak out. Let's see if we can establish a true picture of how the make up of Race Jacket colours were really decided.

Publications

Two Wimbledon Legends

Readers will recall Norman Jacobs' contribution to speedway history

5 through his recent Tempus books on East Anglian and London Speedways. This is a departure from that format as it is a chronological history of two New Zealand legends and Wimbledon Dons, Ronnie Moore and Barry Briggs. The book covers both their Wimbledon careers and their World Championship exploits.

If you want to either wander down memory lane or find out what all this fuss was about regarding the Moore / Briggs phenomenon, then this is the book for you. A straightforward read, quality production, sprinkled with black and white photographs all coming at a very reasonable price of £3. The colour photo of Moore in full flight is worth the price in itself! Published by Wimbledon Speedway and available from Sports Replay (Southampton) Ltd, 49 - 53 Queensway, Southampton, SO14 3BL.

Review by **Graham Fraser**.

Speedway In Wales

The Principality can boast a speedway pedigree going back to Boxing Day 1928. The history of speedway at Cardiff's pre-war and post-war venues is well covered and the book also covers the hazier tracks at Pontypridd, Tradegar and Caerphilly which is interesting reading. As ever the historian in me was a wee bit disappointed that the 1930 Tradegar season did not merit a bit more coverage.

The book covers the ill-fated Neath venture of 1962 and the Newport tracks at Somerton Park and Haley Stadium in some detail. It is bang up to date enough to take a look at the new venue at Carmarthen which hopefully, will go from strength to strength under the enthusiastic guidance of Nigel Meakins.

Speedway at the Millennium Stadium is not overlooked and I admit to liking the chapter devoted to Freddie Williams who did Wales proud by winning the World Championship twice.

All in all the book, illustrated by some very interesting photographs, by **Andrew Welch** is yet another Tempus winner.

Speedway In Wales is published by Tempus - £12.99 plus P&P.

Review by **Jim Henry**.

A History of the World Speedway Championship

This World Championship history follows in the footsteps of previous books by Maurice Jones and John Chaplin and similarly follows a chronological history of the event from the unofficial pre-World championship era, before 1936, up to the 2001 Grand Prix series. It is liberally scattered with programme covers and many of the Mike Patrick photographs will be familiar to readers.

It is a mine of information about all the World Finals giving full results and times, supported by *Speedway Star* type meeting reports giving some interesting anecdotal details fleshing out the statistical details.

No criticism is meant of this book but I know of some speedway researchers who still await a World Championship history book that gives details of various championship qualifying competitions particularly in the 1950s. This weighty book at just over 350 pages is certainly good value for money and whilst not adding greatly to previous titles on the subject it does bring the story more up to date and give another perspective to the one-off World Championship years and the Grands Prix. Certainly one for the reference shelf.

Written by **Robert Bamford and Glynn Shales**. Published by **Tempus Publishing**. Price £14.99 plus P & P.
Graham Fraser

The Complete History of Wimbledon Speedway

Another title from the prolific stable of speedway publications of Howard Jones' Speedway Publications, this large format (A4) booklet catalogues the history of the Dons in chapters covering each decade of the team's existence 1920's to 1990's with a page to celebrate the rise again of the Wimbledon team name in 2002.

Apart from the colour covers, it is produced in black and white on good quality glossy paper. As ever, with Speedway Publications it provides a lot of fascinating photographs and the season by season reports are succinct but leave you wanting more. The reproduction of programme covers in each chapter will be a bonus for programme collectors.

This is obviously a labour of love for author **Ian Perkins**, a lifelong Dons follower following in a family tradition and he is currently webmaster of the Wimbledon Speedway website (www.wimbledonspeedway.co.uk). The

present rise of the Wimbledon speedway name from the ashes and ongoing interest in the career of Ronnie Moore has resulted in a number of Dons related publications, of which this one is well worth buying even if, at 71 pages a tad on the expensive side.

Written by **Ian Perkins**. Published by **Speedway Publications (tel 01253 733288)**. Priced £14.99 plus P&P.

Cigarette Cards

In this edition we hope we are bring to a conclusion the list of cigarette cards and give thanks to **David Hartley**, 26 Haugh End Lane, Sowerby Bridge, West Yorkshire, HX6 3BJ and his colleague **Tony Crowther, Royston Blackstone**, 4 Springfield Road, Southwell, Nottinghamshire, NG25 0BT, to **Charles McKay**, 6 Haslemere Close, Bradford, BD4 9EB and **John Warner**, 187 Crofton Road, Orpington, Kent, BR6 8JB who have all chipped in to compiling the list of cards in this series. It has been no mean feat and **The Editors** hope this provides a useful record of these interesting speedway related items. However, as always, we welcome any factual corrections and updates to make the records as complete as possible.

Sports Favourites A & J Donaldson Ltd, 69 Ingram Street, Glasgow

400 Bill Kitchen Wembley Lions, 401 Vic Duggan Haringay Racers, 402 Lloyd Goffe Haringay Racers, 403 Max Grosskreutz Australia, 404 Lionel Van Praag New Cross Rangers, 405 Joe Crowther Glasgow Tigers, (406 **Royston Blackstone** suggests this one was Cyril Brine). 407 Wilf Jay Newcastle Diamonds, 408 (Appears there were two cards with this number) Eddie Lack Edinburgh Monarchs and Cyril Brine Wimbledon Dons, 409 Frank Hodgson Middlesbrough Bears, 410 Tommy Allott Sheffield Tigers, 411 Tommy Price Wembley Lions, 412 Ron Johnson New Cross Rangers, 413 Buck (Keith) Ryan Glasgow Tigers, 414 Bill Baird Ashfield Giants, 415 Wally Lloyd Belle Vue Aces, 416 Ron Clarke Odsal Tudors, 417 Malcolm Craven West Ham Hammers, 418 Jeff Lloyd New Cross Rangers, 419 Dent Oliver Belle Vue Aces, 420 Harold Fairhurst Glasgow Tigers or Edinburgh Monarchs, 421 ?, 422 Bert Shearer Edinburgh Monarchs, 423 Junior Bainbridge Glasgow Tigers, 424 Split Waterman Wembley Lions, 425 Eric Chitty West Ham Hammers, 426 Norman Parker Wimbledon Dons, 427 Oliver Hart Odsal Tudors, 428 Alec Statham

Odsal Tudors, 429 Alec Grant Newcastle Diamonds, 430 Frank Dolan Harringay Racers, 431 Dick Geary Fleetwood Flyers, 432 Norman Lindsay Glasgow Tigers, 433 Mike Erskine Wimbledon Dons, 434 Louis Lawson Belle Vue Aces, 435 Bert Spencer Norwich Stars, 436 Will Lowther Glasgow Tigers, 437 Stan Dell Birmingham Brummies, 438 Bill Longley New Cross Rangers, 439 Lloyd Goffe Harringay Racers (duplicate?), 440 Cyril Quick Bristol Bulldogs, 441 Norman Evans Ashfield Giants, 442 (**Roystone Blackstone** has this one as Dick Campbell Edinburgh Monarchs), 443 Wilf Plant Middlesbrough Bears, 444 Fred (Kid) Curtis Middlesbrough Bears, 445 George Wilks Wembley Lions, 446 Steve Ison Harringay Racers, 447 Eric French New Cross Rangers, 448 Bat (Bernard) Byrnes Glasgow Tigers, 449 Bill Maddern Edinburgh Monarchs,

The list of Donaldsons cards have some with double numbers as follows:

50/471 Keith Gurtner Ashfield Giants, 51/472 Clem Mitchell Edinburgh Monarchs, 52/473 Aub Lawson ?, 53/474 Merv Harding Ashfield Giants, 54/475 Ronnie Moore Wimbledon Dons, 55/476 Tommy Lack Edinburgh Monarchs, 56/477 Gruff Garland Ashfield Giants, 57/478 Nobby Downham Glasgow Tigers, 58/479 Willie Wilson Ashfield Giants, 59/480 Don Cuppleditch Edinburgh Monarchs, 60/481 Rol Stobbart Newcastle Diamonds, 61/482 Jack Young Edinburgh Monarchs, 62/483 Gordon McGregor Glasgow Tigers, 63/684 ?, 64/685 Danny Lee Edinburgh Monarchs, 65/486 Graham Warren Birmingham Brummies.

Dirt Track Riders Smoke Trawlers Critic Club Member Cigarettes.

Issued by J.Pattreieux Ltd in 1930

Place. These are superb photocards and were issued both in black and white and in sepia.

Details of riders or action on the back. Also cards with no information on back.

1 Jack Barber, 2 Bronco Dixon, 3 George Greenwood, 4 Frank Charles, 5 Ham Burrill, 6 W.E.Platts, 7 Squib Burton, 8 Syd Jackson, 9 Syd Parsons, 10 Eric K. Langton, 11 Jack Chapman, 12 Arthur Sherlock, 13 Joe P. Abbot, 14 George.B Crawshaw, 15 George Wigfield, 16 Arthur Atkinson, 17 Feet Up (shows fallen rider), 18 Can You Do This? (crash scene), 19 Laying Her over (fall), 20 Down But Not Out, 21 How Did That happen? (fall), 22 Jack Barnet, 23 Fay Taylour, 24 Buster Frogley, 25 Eva Asquith, 26 Roger Frogley, 27 Colin Watson, 28 Eric Spencer, 29 Billy Galloway, 30 Frank Arthur, 31 Billy Lamont, 32 Vic Huxley, 33 Max Grosskreutz, 34 Sprouts Elder, 35 Ivor Creek, 36 Billie Dallison, 37 Jim Kempster, 38 Skid Skinner, 39 Del Forster, 40 Tommy Hatch, 41 Charlie Spinks, 42 Stewie St George, 43 Alec Jackson, 44 Jack Parker & Ron Johnson, 45 H.R. Ginger Lees, 46 Arthur Franklyn, 47 Raising The Dust!, 48 A.W. Jarvis, 49 Dusty Haigh, 50 Dicky Wise, 51 Frank Varey, 52 Dare-Devil C.H. Beckett, 53 W.H. Hull, 54 Chun* Moore. *Note Chun is correct, not Chum.

Godfrey Phillips 6 Miscellaneous Issue Sports

All in black and white.

Issue 1(1948). - 9 Vic Duggan, 15 Oliver Hart, 19 Bill Kitchen, 20 Eric Langton, 26 Doug MacLachlan, 31 C.R. Mountford, 32 Jack Parker, 33 Al Phillips.

Issue 4 (1949) Sundry Sportsmen - 2 E.E. Briggs, 4 Eric Chitty, 11 Ron Johnson, 21 Alec Statham, 24 Split Waterman.

Issue 5 Speedway Riders - (Issued on board and paper depending on the number of cigarettes.) The information suggests a number of different cards were published with different captions. (For each of the numbers there is a card captioned with the riders' name which is followed by the words "Speedway Rider". Where the name follows the letter a) in brackets the card carries no other caption. Where the letter b) is shown the caption is as shown below.) - 223 a) Frank Arthur b) Frank Arthur Australian Speedway Team, 224 Gordon Byers, 225 Dicky Case, 226 a) Tommy Croombs, 227 Tommy Frandon, 228 George Greenwood, 229 a) Max Grosskreutz b) Max Grosskreutz Belle Vue Speedway team, 230 a) Vic Huxley, 231 a) Syd Jackson, 232 Nobby Key, 233 Wally Kilmister, 234 W.Kitchen, 235 a) Eric Langton, b) Eric Langton Speedway Champion Team, 236 a) Ginger Lees b) Ginger Lees Speedway Rider c) "Ginger" Lees Wembley, 237 Jack Ormston, 238 Jack Parker Clapton (capt), 239 a) Wally Phillips, 240 Dicky Smythe, 241 Tiger Stevenson Champion Speedway Rider, 242 Frank Varey Belle Vue (capt), 243 Colin Watson Wembley Speedway.

Issue 11 Sundry Sportsmen (1953) - 25 Jack Young.

Dirt Track Riders A set of 50 coloured cards issued in 1929 by J.A.Pattreious Ltd.

1 Arthur Franklyn, 2 "Skid" Skinner, 3 Smiling Jim Kempster, 4 Dick Hyman, 5 A.B.Drew, 6 Ron Johnson, 7 Charlie Spinks, 8 Sig Schlam, 9 "Tommy" Hatch, 10 "Sprouts" Elder, 11 E.R. Greenall, 12 George Emsley, 13 Broadside Vic Huxley, 14 Norman Dawson, 15 Alec Jackson, 16 C.H. Beckett, 17 Mark Sheldon, 18 R.H. Chadwick, 19 C.A. Drew, 21 C. Taft, 22 Paddy Dean, 23 Spencer Stratton, 24 Arnold Moore, 25 William James Dallison, 26 Rex Kirkby, 27 A.W. Jervis, 28 Larry Coffey, 29 L.H. Boulton, 30 H.R.(Ginger) Lees, 31 Fay Taylour (Irish), 32 Frank Arthur (Aussie), 33 Charlie Datson (Aussie), 34 Stewie St George (Aussie)*, 35 Johnnie Broughton, 36 H.Taft, 37 Syd Newiss, 38 William Simpson, 39 G.A.Drew, 40 T.Withington, 41 "Acorn" Dobson, 42 W.N.Hull, 43 Ian Richings, 44 Eric Blatherswick, 45 G. Hazard, 46 "Bob" Harrison, 47 Arthur Firth, 48 Geoff Taylor, 49 H. "Blank", 50 Wilf McClure.

*Note: was a Kiwi. [8 Sigmund Schlam:10 Lloyd Elder; 27 Arthur Warden Jarvis; 30 Henry Riley Lees; 36 Harry Taft; 42 Walter Hull; 45 George Hazzard] [Can any reader provide any other of the full names ?]

Thrills Of The Dirt Track Issued with Amalgamated Press Limited's boys comics Triumph /and The Champion 1929

1 A Critical Slide (Charlie Datsun), 2 Car v Sidecar, 3 Frank and His Peashooter (Frank Arthur), 4 On The Bend (Vic Huxley) 5 Getting Off The Mark (Lionel Wills and Ron Johnson), 6 Is He Over (Jack Chiswell), 7 A Thrilling Spill, 8 After Him Boy (Vic Huxley pursued by Colin Watson), 9 Flat Her Down, 10, A Crash At The Corner, 11 Pioneers Of The Dirt Track, 12 Acrobats Of The Dirt Track, 13 A Close Finish (Charlie Spinks leads Frank Arthur), 14 All Out For The Winning Spurt (Billy Lamont beats Dicky Smythe), 15 When The Bike Takes Command, 16 The First Bend.

Interesting Personalities United Services Manufacturing Co. Ltd.

19 E Langton, 20 F Arthur, 21 V Huxley, 22 T Farndon, 23 T Stevenson, 24 F Varey, 25 B Kitchen, 26 G Lees, 27 D Smythe, 28 D Case, 29 J Ormston, 30 W Phillips, 31 J Parker, 32 C Watson, 33 S Jackson, 34 N Key, 35 G Byres, 36 G Greenwood, 37 T Croombs, 38 W Kilmister.

Sporting Celebrities In Action Major Drapkin 1930
23 B Lamont, 24 S Elder.

Sportsmen of The World Amalagamated Press 1934
(See Vol 4 No. 4.) Add T Stevenson to list.

Sports R J Hill 1934
2 Motorcycling / B Lamont, 4 F Arthur.

Sports Champions State Express 1935
12 V Huxley, 22 T Farndon.

We have not included the items produced by The Vintage Speedway Magazine as they are quite recent and details can be had from their back numbers. However if someone submits a list - we'll print it.

Lost League of the Inkers

We do have some odd article titles but this is a cracker - once you read it you'll see how it was derived by **Mike Terran**. (It is about the 1929 English Dirt Track League, on which **Trevor James** did an excellent statistical breakdown a good few editions ago.) The league that time forgot! The English Dirt Track League is a comparatively recent discovery, omitted from Speedway literature from the 1940s and much of the 1950s, the League's existence was brought to prominence in a series of Speedway Star & News articles by Slider Shuttleworth and a veteran Leicester fan in the late 1950s / early 1960s. The English Dirt Track League claimed to be the "First Speedway League in the World" (justified because it started a month ahead of the Southern League). Despite earlier misconceptions, research has shown that almost all of the league matches were completed by

the eleven teams that finished the season. Two or possibly three matches were not run, as Liverpool resigned, and were later reinstated but too late for their away matches at Halifax and Middlesbrough to be staged. An unverified result for the Halifax v Leicester Stadium match has appeared, although it is also reported that Leicester conceded the two points for this match, in favour of participating in the English Dirt Track League Cup at Preston on the same day.

The League brought some colourful riders to the fore with fanciful nicknames such as "Buster" Breaks, "Cracker" Simpson, "Crasher" Coxhead, "Daredevil" Beckett, "Skid" Knock, "Smoke" (Not Smokey) Robinson. It also featured underage riders including Eric Worswick who rode for Salford while he was 15 years old.

Whilst it only lasted for a season the League spawned a number of men who would gain fame with the two big teams of the day, Belle Vue and Wembley.

Belle Vue notables include Frank Varey (Belle Vue), Bob Harrison

(Belle Vue), Joe Abbott (Burnley & Preston), Eric Langton (Leeds), Oliver Langton (Leeds), Eric Blain (Liverpool), Tommy Allott (Barnsley), Wally Hull (White City), Tommy Price (not World Champion) (Liverpool & Preston).

Wembley notables include Gordon Byers (Newcastle), Henry Riley "Ginger" Lees, George Greenwood (Leeds), Norman Evans (Middlesbrough), whilst Alec Jackson who went on to manage Wembley rode for Bolton & Belle Vue.

Frank Charles (Burnley & Preston) and Jack "Broncho" Dixon (Middlesbrough) both rode for the Belle Vue and Wembley outfits.

Other notables who emerged from the English Dirt Track League were Herbert "Dusty" Haigh (Halifax), Larry Boulton (Liverpool), Syd Jackson (Leicester), Cyril "Broadside" Burton (Rochdale), Les "Smiler" Wotton (Liverpool), Arthur Atkinson (Leeds), Claude Rye (Preston), Arthur Westwood (Sheffield), and, Billy Dallison (Manchester White City).

(Footnote: Having spent some time covering the early days in the newspapers it struck me that Wembley raced challenges at a number of tracks in the north. It could have been part of a talent spotting strategy by the Empire Stadium management as home grown talent was probably less expensive to sign than Aussie "imports". **Jim Henry.**)

Newspaper Information

Over a few editions, with a few gaps, we have listed the details of the newspaper holdings of the Colindale Reading Room of The British Library. At last we conclude with the newspapers for the London area.

Dagenham: Track: Dagenham Greyhound Stadium

Newspapers: (644) The Barking, East Ham and Ilford Advertiser, Upton Park and Dagenham Gazette 1928 - 1940; (645) Barking Chronicle 1928 - 1940; (646) The Becontree, Chadwell Heath and Dagenham Citizen April 1930 - Mid Aug 1939; (647) Dagenham Post and Barking and Rainham Guardian May 1935 - 1940.

Barnet : Track : Barnet

Newspapers: (648) The Barnet Press 1928 to 1940; (649) Burntoak Gazette May 1929 - June 1937; (650) Edgware Gazette 1928 - June 1937; (651) The Finchley Press and Muswellhill Mail 1928 - 1940; (652) The Golders Green Gazette 1928 - June 1937; (653) Hendon and Finchley Times 1928 - 12 1929; (654) Hendon Times and Guardian Dec 1929 - Oct 1940.

Crayford : Track : Crayford Greyhound Stadium

Newspapers: (655) The Crayford Advertiser May 1929 - September 1933; (656) Crayford and Barnehurst Advertiser Sept 1933 - Dec 1938; (657) Crayford Chronicle and Kentish Times 1928 - 1946 & April 1964 - Date.

Wembley : Track : Empire Stadium

Newspapers : (658) Queens Park Advertiser and West London Star 1929 - May 1938, (659) Queens Park and North Paddington Advertiser and West London Star May - Nov 1938; (660) Queens Park and North Paddington Advertiser and West London Star Dec 1938; (661) Queens Park Advertiser, Middlesex Independent and West London Star Dec 1938 - Sept 1956; (662) Wembley Enterprise Oct 1928 - April 1930 & Jan 1933 - April 1940; (663) The Wembley News 1928 - Date; (664) Wembley

Observer and Gazette January 1946 - Date; (665) Wembley Weekly Post Oct 1968 to Date; (666) The Willsden Chronicle 1928 - May 1964; (667) Willsden and Brent Chronicle May 1964 - Date.

Crystal Palace : Track : Crystal Palace

Newspapers : (668) The Croydon Advertiser and Surrey County Reporter 1928 - 1940; (669) The Croydon Times 1928 - Nov 1933; (670) Croydon Times and Surrey Mail Nov 1933 - 1940; (671) Crystal Palace District Times and Advertiser 1928 - 1940; (672) Norwood Weekly Herald 1928 - Dec 1939

Chiswick : Track : Chiswick Nomads

Newspapers : (673) Acton Gazette and West London Post 1939 - Date.

Hackney Wick and Lea Bridge : Tracks : Hackney Wick Greyhound Stadium, Lea Bridge Stadium.

Newspapers : (674) The Eastern Press 1928 - 1939; (675) Hackney Gazette and North London Advertiser 1928 - Date; (676) North London Reporter 1928 - Oct 1939.

Stamford Bridge : Track : Chelsea Football Ground

Newspapers : (677) East Fulham Citizen May 1934 - 1939; (678) The Fulham Chronicle 1928 - Date; (679) West London and Fulham Gazette 1928 - 1971; (680) Chelsea and West London Gazette 1928 - Dec 1928; (681) West London and Chelsea Gazette 1929 - 1940; (682) West London Press, Westminster and Chelsea News 1928 - 1940.

White City : Track : White City Greyhound Stadium

Newspaper : (683) Shepherds Bush Gazette and Hammersmith Post 1977 - Date.

Harringay : Track : Harringay Greyhound Stadium

Newspapers : (684) The North Middlesex Chronicle 1928 - 1940; (685) Hornsey Journal, Finsbury Park and Muswell Hill Standard 1928 - Date.

New Cross : Track : New Cross Greyhound Stadium

Newspapers : (686) Blackheath and District Reporter Sept 1959 - Dec 1962; (687) Blackheath Local Guide 1934 - Feb 1949; (688) Blackheath Local Guide and Lee, Lewisham and Charlton District Advertiser March 1949 - Nov 1957; (689) Deptford Citizen 1934 - Sept 1939; (690) Greenwich, Woolwich and Deptford Gazette 1934 - Date; (691) Lewisham Journal 1934 - Dec 1941; (692) Lewisham Journal and Borough News 1942 - Nov 1970; (693) Sydenham, Foresthill and Penge Gazette 1928 - Date.

Track Directory

Let us extend a welcome to the new training track in Workington which is now operational. From the information in the Speedway Star it looks a real wee gem so let us hope it helps nurture some new talent. Can anyone give us track statistics to pass on to our readers? I think we never did give an accurate entry for Somerset Rebels with regards to track length, opening meeting etc plus we never issued facts on the Millennium Stadium - any offers of data for these two?

We can also add another historical training track in the West of Scotland from circa the early 1950s. The track was in the vicinity of Dalmacoulter (Dalmacooter) which is to the east of the village of Glenmavis and north-east of Airdrie. A few years ago a venue in this location was mentioned by one time Scottish junior Jock Pryde and more recently, and totally independently, by ex-Monarchs rider Gordon Mitchell.

The Rise of “Atomic” Tommy Miller

Very few riders make the speedway world sit up and take notice in their first full season. Tommy Miller, the wee Scot from Blantyre in Lanarkshire took 1950 by the scruff of the neck.

I don't know when Tommy first tried his luck on a speedway bike but it could have been at Bothwell or at the regular Tuesday morning sessions at White City. The second half details of White City bear testimony to Ian Hoskins' search for talent as the number of one meeting second half riders was very large. You could not fault Ian for his efforts to unearth new talent as he gave one aspiring rider after another a chance to strut their stuff at his Paisley Road West venue.

Tommy made his public debut at White City Stadium in Glasgow on Wednesday 21st September 1949. Taking part in the Tiger Cub Rally Tommy came in third behind established second half men Ivor Smith and Joe "Whaler" Ferguson and just ahead of fellow second half debutante Gordon Mitchell.

(For the record Ivor made the Glasgow team for brief spell after the Aussies went home at the end of 1949. Joe Ferguson made the team in similar circumstances but is best known for his adventures on whaling ships and wrecking bikes. Gordon Mitchell was hauled off to do national service but came back just as Scottish speedway was going down the tubes in 1953. Gordon rode for Lanarkshire Eagles in 1958, Edinburgh Monarchs in 1960 and Newcastle Diamonds in 1961.)

With no second half the following week, Tommy next appeared on Wednesday 5th October this time taking a second place behind Peter Lloyd and ahead of Niven McCreadie and Gordon Mitchell in the Tiger Cub Challenge. The closing meeting of the 1949 season took place a week later and Tommy took the Consolation Race from Niven McCreadie, Red (Jack) Monteith and Gordon Mitchell.

Tommy spent the winter at the Bothwell track and, before the season had started, Ian Hoskins secured his signature to ride for the Glasgow Tigers.

Appearing in the number eight race jacket of the second reserve Tommy was in the Tigers team that faced and lost to Newcastle Diamonds at White City in a Northern Trophy match. Making his debut in heat eight Tommy followed home Jack Hodgson and ex-Tiger Will Lowther ahead of Don Lawson. His second race ended with a last place behind Tigers star Junior Bainbridge and Diamonds pair of Joe Arthur and Herby King.

A week later, Tommy, still number eight, picked up three paid five from his two outings as Tigers beat Fleetwood handsomely. This was followed by a single point from the number seven berth as Tigers were whacked at home by Stoke in a match that few Tigers men shone. In his first big test, his first match against Edinburgh Monarchs at White City, Tommy scored a second in heat four then in heat twelve he won his first race as a Tiger. Following Tommy home were Dick Campbell, Gordon McGregor and Ron Phillips in a good time of 81.0 seconds. The return at Old Meadowbank a few days later saw Tommy score his first league duck but he bounced back at White City on Wednesday 3rd May to collect his first paid reserves maximum (five paid six) against Sheffield Tars.

On the strength of this showing Tommy moved up into the team at Sheffield the following evening but only managed 1 from four rides. Back to number seven he started out a Stoke with a fall then rattled in eight points to be Tigers second top scorer as the Potters triumphed. A team place was secured for the visit of Ashfield but Tommy's four paid five could not stop the Giants, Tigers' arch rivals from north of the River Clyde, taking a narrow win. This was followed by six paid ten as he followed home his partner in every race as Tigers swamped the Halifax Dukes, while in the return at The Shay on 19th May Tommy took five paid six before recording a duck at Fleetwood the following night and four paid five at Newcastle.

Tommy was good enough to feature in the Glasgow Gala Cup on 24th May scoring eight for eighth place in a meeting won by Joe Crowther after a run off with Ron Clarke.

Back to Stoke on the Saturday and Tommy took three paid four from five riders in the National Trophy first round tie. Nobody expected the wee man to blossom so quickly but on 31st May in the return leg Tommy took heat one in track record time and went on the pile up thirteen paid fourteen as Tigers bundled Stoke out the competition.

Twelve against Norwich at White City was followed by three at The Firs, by five paid six for Scottish Select against Vic Duggan's Team.

Tommy's first paid maximum came against Stoke in the League at White City on 21st June with eleven paid twelve. His first full maximum would follow on 12th July.

The points flowed freely thereafter on most occasions as follows: 24.6 at Edinburgh 10+1(5); 28.6 v Ashfield 9+1(5); 1.7 at Coventry 9(4); 2.7 at Shelbourne Park 5(4); 4.7 at Southampton 4+2(4); 12.7 v Cradley **12 (4)**; 16.7 v Fleetwood **11+1(4)**; 22.7 at Fleetwood 4+1(4); 26.7 v Halifax **12 (4)**; 27.7 at Plymouth 8(4); 2.8 v Ashfield 10(4); 9.8 v Walthamstow **12 (4)**; 14.8 at Walthamstow 6+1(4); 15.8. at Yarmouth **11+1(4)**; 16.8 v Coventry **12(4)**; 23.8 v Sheffield

9+2(4); 26.8 at Edinburgh 7(4); 30.8 v Plymouth **12(4)**; 2.9 at Stoke 9(4); 7.9 v Southampton 10(4); 11.9 for Scotland v England **18(6)**; 13.9 v Edinburgh 9+1(4); 20.9 v Norwich **12(4)**; 23.9. at Norwich 6(4); 25.9 at Newcastle 11(4); 27.9 v Fleetwood **11+1(4)**; 4.10 v Newcastle 10(4); 10.10 at Ashfield 10(4); 11.10 v Edinburgh 10(6); 12.10 at Sheffield 7+1 (4); 14.10 at Edinburgh 12(5); 18.10 at Halifax 7(4); and 20.10. Lord Provost's Gold Medallion 12(5) Joint Second. Tommy's rise from virtual novice to heatleader took just all of three months - a truly remarkable story.

By the winter of his first season Tommy was a fully fledged International rider representing his England in Australia. He made it to the First Division rounds of the World Championship from the preliminary rounds but couldn't make it to the Final at Wembley.

No two ways about it Tommy Miller burst on the speedway scene in spectacular fashion.

Tommy went on to star for Glasgow Tigers for a further three seasons taking the Second Division Riders Championship (Silver Helmet), the Scottish Match Race Championship, and the Scottish Championship. He moved on to Motherwell for half a season in 1954, where he was quite unsettled, before moving on to Coventry where stayed until the end of 1955.

Tommy appears to have packed in after a spell at Oxford in 1956. In 1964 Tommy came back to act as an Umpire for the "Black" Provincial League.

Sadly Tommy died a few years ago, a relatively young man.

Jim Henry

War Cries

Fred Paul from Cornwall tells of the St Austell Gulls war cry of the early 1950s which was based on the Cornwall County motto of One and All.

5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1

One for all and all for one

G - U - L - L - S

GULLS

Books On Speedway

Alan Barwick, 6 Croft Villas, Church Street, Herfield, West Sussex, BN5 9NX has sent us a list of items we may have missed from our list of books.

Once A Jolly Swagman	?	late 1940s
Belle Vue Speedway Pictorial Souvenir		1949
My Two Lives	Eric Gundersen	
Bob Paulsen Souvenir Brochure		1975
Bob Kilby Testimonial Year 1980 Souvenir Brochure		1980
Stor Motor Fest For Varg-Olle (1946 - 76) Olle Nygren Brochure		
Inside Speedway	John Louis	1975
A Story of Grass Track Dave Stallworthy and Speedway in Cornwall	Tony Lethbridge	
Flat-out for Fame - speedway story		
Departed but not forgotten		1973
A tribute to those killed in Belgium		
Five Star Annual	Cyril J. Hart	1961
Laapland Whisperings		1965
History of the Speedway Hoskins	Ian Hoskins	2000
Ray Wilson & Norman Storer Testimonial Magazine & Brochure		1974
Canterbury Speedway Handbook		1969
King Cinder	John Foster	1977

Alan has listed some magazines. Now - Anyone want to do a list of speedway magazines? It is a big task as many were very short-lived to say the very least.

C.V.Chubb, 38 Stock Street, Plaistow, London, E13 0BY tells us of a book called *Speedway* which was produced for the M.R.O. Motor Rennclub Osterreich published in 1956. The book contains photographs and results for 1954 - 1956. A couple of pages cover Belle Vue's meetings in Poland staged in Warsaw and Breslau.

Speedway on Stamps

If my memory serves me well, the *Speedway Star* carried an article on the issue of stamps in Sweden in relatively recent times. This set me thinking - how many stamps have been issued with the theme of our favourite sport?

A colleague and stamp collector was kind enough to surf the net and came up with the following at a web site as follows:

http://members.aol.com/_ht_a/piotr1964/speedwaystamps.index.html.html?mtbrand=AO...

The earliest on the list is a stamp from Hungary issued on 28th December 1962. This was followed by a stamp issued in Czechoslovakia in January 1963. Neither seem to have been issued to mark a particular special event.

Jerzy Szczakail's World Championship which took place in 1973 is featured on a stamp issued in Poland on 2nd September of that year.

The list includes a stamp from Mongolia issued on 28th February 1982. For some reason the stamp carries the year date 1981 and is in a series entitled *Motoring 1981*. Denmark issued a stamp on 16th June 1988 to award of the World Championship to Vojens that year.

That, together with the Swedish stamps, appears to be the lot. A rather miserable tally when you think we look upon speedway as an important international sport. I must admit it is a wee bit of a pipe dream of mine that, if stamps still exist in 2028, the High Beech meeting of 19th February 1928 will be the subject of a commemorative issue.

Does anyone know who I should write to? It is a wee bit premature to think on who should be featured on the stamps - after all we are likely to have riders before that date who are still but a glint. **Jim Henry**

The Flyers Remembered

Mike Craven has been working on a history of Fleetwood for some time and recalls the relatively short-lived seaside venue.

"Dick Geary in red, Cyril Cooper in blue, Bill Maddern in white and Dick Campbell in yellow and black." So said the announcer as the tapes rose. A mighty roar, a spectacular fountain of cinders and four riders catapulted forward to the cheers from the estimated crowd of ten to eleven thousand souls. But in reality the ten to eleven thousand souls were somewhat bemused by the whole business never having seen the like before in a small town more renowned for the smell of fish than methanol and Castrol R.

They did after all live in the third biggest fishing port in Britain after Hull and Grimsby but outside the town not many people knew that. They enjoyed their sport though. In the winter a thousand or so would watch the non-league football team every other Saturday, a smaller number would turn up to see the rugby union team and in the summer there was often good support for the cricket team. There were also local clubs encouraging tennis, crown green bowling, cycling and the like but this thing called speedway was something else.

One month previously most had never even heard of it but the local newspaper had informed them that it was coming. In fact after a special five hour meeting of the Fleetwood Corporation's Finance and General Purposes Committee the new promoter had addressed a press conference where he outlined his plans for the establishment of Fleetwood as "an important speedway racing centre." Within a month more than two thousand tons of cinders as well as similar amount of earth and rubble had been dumped around the football pitch and track laid. With the aid of railway sleepers embankments had been created for spectators. A rush job if ever there was one but the objective was achieved and all was ready on schedule.

So here we all were in the year 1948 on the beautiful sunny evening of 13th April, barely three years after the end of the war. The occasion was the gala opening and the introduction to speedway to Fleetwood. The opponents were Edinburgh Monarchs, another new team yet to enjoy their first meeting at their own home stadium. The home side were described as the Fleetwood Flyers although they were still in fact Wigan Warriors pending the completion of one or two formalities.

They had already ridden three meetings of the new season as Wigan as well as the entire previous one but this season they had encountered difficulties with their southern Lancashire venue. The Poolstock Stadium owners wanted to take over the normal Friday evenings speedway slot for additional greyhound racing leaving the speedway promoters with a problem. The alternative was to switch to a race night between Monday and Thursday. However, after due consideration, this was considered to be unviable and it was decided to call it a day and find a new home for the operations.

The licence was successfully transferred to two Blackpool businessmen and the entire team moved to Fleetwood lock, stock and barrel with the exception of the injured Harry Welch who would become the founder captain of the Liverpool Chads the following year.

The three Wigan results for the 1948 season so far, two away defeats and one away win were debited or credited to Fleetwood's records as appropriate and the Flyers were in business. Not a young team for as in other sports the careers of the participants had suffered badly from the interruptions of the war years. Most speedway riders were keen to return but many were now in their thirties and forties rather than in their twenties and in most cases their return to the saddle would be relatively short-lived. In fact of the entire Fleetwood squad only Jack Winstanley was on the right side of twenty five, the remainder being all over thirty and most nearer forty.

But none of this was apparent when the rider in red passed the chequered flag ahead of Dick Campbell. The spectators cheered what would prove to be a rare Flyers heat win that night as they slowly came to terms with the scoring system. Next out would be the captain Jack Gordon with his team mate Reg Lambourne, after which it would be the turn of Norman Hargreaves and Percy Brine. There were just four heat wins all told as the Flyers lost 35 - 49 to the surprise of many as the Monarchs had not impressed in their early away meetings. A contributory factor was the managements' first tactical error which was permitting the visitors to practice on the track for the entire afternoon ahead of the meeting before the home side had even set foot in their new stadium, let alone have a sight or a feel of the cinders. Indeed the Flyers arrived only an hour before the meeting was due to start so with hindsight perhaps, the result was not surprising. The spectators were not too disappointed however for they had enjoyed a new exciting experience, the first of many. However, they were made to wait a further five weeks for that elusive first home win notwithstanding some close calls and fine racing.

The second home meeting against Sheffield which included the brothers Williams, Jack Bibby, Bruce Semmens and Jack White was lost by a mere six points with Flyers in contention throughout. The following week saw them minus Geary trounced by Norwich in spite of putting up a good show. In the meantime they were collecting their second away win, a win avenged at Fleetwood by the Brummies in the fourth home meeting. The Flyers / Brummies encounter was hailed in the local press as "the best racing so far." Then came the narrowest defeat yet, a match which was 85% overshadowed by tragedy at the end of heat 14 which brought it home to the supporters that it was an inordinately dangerous sport they were fast becoming addicted to.

Bristol were the visitors and the meeting was a classic. Fleetwood were on course for that elusive home win requiring only three points from the final heat in order to achieve it. The Bulldogs had already been six points adrift by heat 4 but drawn level in heat 8 and moved ahead in heat 9. Then Geary and Cooper wiped out Fred Tuck and Jack Mountford to reverse a two point deficit in heat 10. There followed a spot of sheer bad luck in heat 13. Ron Hart led Bristol's Eric Salmon just ten yards from the finishing line with colleague Brine, the only other rider in the race in third place, when his motor seized. It wasn't cruel enough the force of the blast, so to speak, blew Hart over the inside white line to instant disqualification

denying the team and himself the consolation of even a point for third place. Salmon who had been between thirty and fifty yards behind, depending on the sources you read, took the win. A Fleetwood 4 - 2 in heat 13 would have left the visitors with a mountain to climb but instead the 3 - 2 for Bristol left things a bit more open and it was all to ride for for both sides. Fleetwood's Jack Gordon and Cyril Cooper lined up against Bristol's Roger Wise and Mike Beddoe in the deciding heat 14. On the final bend Wise was in the lead, Gordon second and Cooper third with Beddoe trailing in last place. A magnificent final spurt by Beddoe saw him pass Cooper and almost squeeze past Gordon on the line. However, for one reason or another, Beddoe was too close to the fence and crashed with disastrous consequences. His third place had already given Bristol the match by a single point but ensuing mayhem and heated argument in the pits over the causes of the accident marred a wonderful evening's entertainment by both sides.

The details are subject of another story but if present day Health and Safety regulations had been in force and a prematch inspection had revealed just one of the possible causes, the Fleetwood operation would have been closed down on the spot. There were three theories as to the cause of the accident but none for the purposes of this article.

As it was Mike Beddoe was hospitalised initially with a broken ankle but the following day half of his foot was amputated at the Blackpool Victoria Hospital. Happily Mike was up and riding again the following season and he even rode again at Fleetwood. **22**

The following week it happened! The Flyers won at last but more importantly the "happening" was the arrival of Wilf Plant. An extra meeting was slipped into the fixture list on Whit Monday when the Flyers faced Middlesbrough. and the visitors won 47 - 37. Wilf was the top Bear with ten points. Overnight and well into the early hours negotiations took place and by daylight Wilf was a Fleetwood Flyer. Again, it is a long story but suffice to say that the £1,000 the promoters paid for him represented, arguably, the best decision they had ever made. For three seasons he was a prolific scorer and the favourite of the crowd. Even today his name is one of the five that instantly come to mind of any sixty year old who is asked if he or she remembers Fleetwood speedway, the others being George Newton, Norman Hargreaves, Dick Geary and Don Potter.

Ten points against Fleetwood one night and ten points for them the following night. Two successive nights which heralded the Plant phenomenon, the rest is local folklore. Fleetwood beat Newcastle 44 - 39 to start a run of home wins which really gave their followers, not all of which came from Fleetwood, something to shout about.

No indeed they didn't all come from Fleetwood. Every week they came in by the coach load from Blackpool, from Lytham, from St Annes and even as far as Morecombe to add to the atmosphere and to cheer the team joining in the war cries.

Whilst the crowd may have appreciated the F-L-Y-E-R-S Flyers their enthusiasm was not shared by nearby residents nor indeed half the Town Council. It was not so much the noise of the bikes as the public address system. The result of heat seven was of little consequence to the young couples whose houses backed on to the stadium and whose insomniac babies merely added to the commotion outside which could be heard in villages the opposite side of the river. In fact one gardening enthusiast from "Over Wyre" feared for his rattling glass in his greenhouse and shared his concerns with the "Fleetwood Chronicle." He didn't get anywhere though, neither did the the local pensioners and shift worker who weren't all that keen either. But the town was on the map with the results of the team hitting the national press every Wednesday morning and by and large the system was working well.

Meetings were fun. A few minutes before the start the pits gates would open and the team mascot "The Mighty Atom" (eight year old Jack Gorman in disguise, now older and a good friend of mine) would emerge astride a little Corgi scooter wearing all white overalls and a small crash helmet. With a serious look on his face, for it was all a very serious business for an eight year old, he would do a few laps of the track to the cheers of the crowd. Most of the time he would manage to stay astride "but not all the time" laughs Jack today.

The pits were often graced by local and visiting celebrities from the world of sport and entertainment who showed a keen interest as the riders stripped down their bikes and fiddled with the mags and carbs. Local resident George Formby was a well known motor cycle

entusiast as was international footballer Stan Mortensen. Both were known to borrow a machine and do a lap or two during the interval., The team battled on throughout the summer of '48 winning some but losing more. They had some big league wins during the last few weeks - 53 - 31 against Sheffield, 51 - 33 against Bristol, 53 - 31 against Norwich 50 - 34 against Edinburgh and 52 - 32 against Newcastle. Some of those balanced heavy defeats at the hands of these clubs on their own tracks for example 30 - 54 at Sheffield, 30 - 53 at Norwich, 33 - 51 at Middlesbrough and 27 - 57 at Bristol. The heaviest defeat ever occurred early in the season at Middlesbrough where they were brushed aside to the tune of 19 - 65. All in all an exiting league season but with less than average success.

Many of the defeats were close and the Flyers probably deserved better than their final league position of eighth out of nine which saved them from collecting the wooden spoon yet again. 1948 was the 21st anniversary of speedway in Britain and the speedway board were prompted to run a secondary competition. The Flyers fared somewhat better in the Anniversary Cup with seven wins and one draw out of sixteen matches which left them in sixth place out of nine.

Changes during the season included the arrival of Ernie Appleby from Birmingham at the start of July and after a slow start he scored well. Jack Gordon gave up the captaincy in September passing the role on to Dick Geary before going on to finish the season with Bristol. Geary was top Flyer with 254 points followed by Hargreaves on 220 and Plant on 178.

(To be continued.)

Thinking Caps On!!!

Now, **The Speedway Researcher** will try anything, so, when **Mike Terran**, sent us this short "Ferocious Quiz" we decided to go for it.

Question 1. These pre-war Tigers finished life as post-war Lions.

Question 2. These pre-war Lions became post-war Tigers.

Question 3. These Canaries became pre-war Tigers.

Question 4. These Wolves finished as post-war Lions.

Question 5. These pre-war Tigers became pre-war Panthers.

Question 6. Racing Suits - Name the four pre-war teams that wore the four suits on their race jackets (Clubs, Diamonds, Hearts, Spades.)

We'll leave this as a tail piece for this edition. Answers in the next edition.

Deadline for items for next edition is : 1st February 2003

The Speedway Researcher is edited and published by :

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

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

North Shield 1951

Away Team	Ashfield	Edinburgh	Fleetwood	Motherwell	Newcastle	White City	Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	
Pts														
Home Team														
Ashfield	xxxxxx	30 - 54	53 - 31	61 - 23	38 - 46	40 - 44	Edinburgh	10	9	0	1	537	297	18
Edinburgh	50 - 32	xxxxxx	59 - 25	62 - 21	54 - 30	61 - 23	Glasgow WC	10	7	0	3	441	394	14
Fleetwood	43 - 41	29 - 55	xxxxxx	39 - 44	45 - 39	35 - 49	Newcastle	10	5	0	5	435	404	10
Motherwell	39 - 45	27 - 57	46 - 38	xxxxxx	42 - 41	46 - 35	Motherwell	10	4	0	6	352	481	8
Newcastle	47 - 35	38 - 44	58 - 26	52 - 32	xxxxxx	47 - 37	Ashfield	10	3	0	7	402	434	6
White City	57 - 27	42 - 41	56 - 28	51 - 32	47 - 37	xxxxxx	Fleetwood	10	2	0	8	339	500	4

Central Shield 1951

Away Team	Cradley	Halifax	Leicester	Liverpool	Sheffield	Stoke	Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	
Pts														
Home Team														
Cradley	xxxxxx	51 - 33	38 - 46	57 - 26	56 - 28	52 - 31	Cradley	10	7	0	3	464	375	14
Halifax	41 - 43	xxxxxx	54 - 30	55 - 29	51 - 33	56 - 28	Leicester	10	6	0	4	467.5	372.5	12
Leicester	54 - 30	57 - 27	xxxxxx	61 - 23	50 - 34	52.5 - 31.5	Halifax	10	5	1	4	432	408	11
Liverpool	34 - 50	33 - 51	46 - 38	xxxxxx	42 - 42	49 - 35	Stoke	10	5	0	5	427.5	409.5	10
Sheffield	36 - 48	42 - 42	44 - 40	50 - 34	xxxxxx	48 - 36	Sheffield	10	3	2	5	389	451	8
Stoke	45 - 39	62 - 22	45 - 39	62 - 20	52 - 32	xxxxxx	Liverpool	10	2	1	7	336	501	5

Southern Shield 1951

Away Team	Coventry	Norwich	Oxford	Southampton	Walthamstow	Yarmouth	Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	
Pts														
Home Team														
Coventry	xxxxxx	26 - 58	37 - 47	33 - 51	40 - 43	48 - 35	Oxford	10	8	0	2	466	373	16
Norwich	55 - 27	xxxxxx	51 - 33	61 - 23	56 - 28	63 - 21	Norwich	10	7	1	2	510	328	15
Oxford	53 - 31	50 - 34	xxxxxx	48 - 35	49 - 35	52 - 32	Walthamstow	10	7	0	3	459	380	14
Southampton	51 - 33	42 - 42	43 - 41	xxxxxx	34 - 50	68 - 16	Southampton	10	4	1	5	410	429	9
Walthamstow	51 - 32	55 - 29	39 - 45	51 - 33	xxxxxx	50 - 34	Yarmouth	10	2	0	8	336	505	4
Yarmouth	55 - 29	23 - 61	36 - 48	54 - 30	28 - 56	xxxxxx	Coventry	10	1	0	9	339	500	2

These three competitions were staged prior to the main 1951 National League Division Two tournament. Information compiled thanks to **Ian Moultray, Alan Bates, Barry Wallace, Brian Tungate and Keith Farman.**