

The Speedway Researcher

Promoting Research into the History of Speedway and Dirt Track Racing

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Edited by Graham Fraser and Jim Henry

Subscribers :

Editors' Blethers

The next edition will carry the annual questionnaire. We will be posing a few questions and trying to wrest another annual subscription from you. If you have suggestions for the questionnaire - please pass them to us ASAP. We will include the ones we consider the best. As ever we urge you to get your pens out and give us an article. You'll be surprised how easy it is as you draw on your own information and personal experiences. We'll never be Ian Felming or J.K. Rowling but it is a great feeling to see your work in print.

Ranking Team Strengths

David Selby, 34 Paddock Drive, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 6SS. Tel: 01245 464922 has penned the following article which has a statistical bent. Over to you number crunchers for reactions to David's thoughts.

The science of speedway statistics is a relatively modern development and the grandfather of the the discipline is surely Bryan Seery, who, upon his appointment as BSPA Manager in the mid-60s proceeded to take the art of recording match details and general speedway statistics to a hitherto unseen level. As a result the recording of speedway records since the introduction of the British League in 1965 is all but complete. However, prior to 1965 the situation is entirely different with the only records being the pages of the Speedway Star and other speedway publications, marked programmes and the records collated and published by folk like Peter Jackson and Peter Oakes.

How can we use what records we have to rank team strengths through the speedway ages?

Recording the performance of riders has probably been around since the sport's introduction to Britain in 1928 and definitely since the introduction of league racing in 1929. Until Bryan Seery came along the accepted method of ranking the league performance of one rider against another was the 'Match Average'. This was calculated simply by dividing the number of total points scored by a rider by the number of league matches he had ridden. This was acceptable in the period before tactical substitutes were introduced because riders could have a maximum of four rides and would only have less if they were injured or were riding at reserve. Reserves were at a disadvantage because in the normal course of events they only had two rides giving them a maximum 'Match Average' of six whilst team members could achieve a maximum of twelve.

I'm not sure who invented the 'Calculated Match Average' (CMA) but it would not surprise me if it was Bryan Seery. Like all good ideas it was simple but effective and made sure that all riders were ranked on a level playing field. Now I am sure that everyone knows how the CMA is calculated, but, if you don't it brings bonus points into the equation. The formula is - total points + bonus points divided by the number of rides. The product is then multiplied by four. This gives every rider the possibility of finishing the season with a CMA of 12 if they remain unbeaten by an opponent. It equalised things in the era that riders could have any number of rides per match. As far as I am aware there was a ten year gap between the introduction of the tactical substitute and the CMA and therefore there was a spell when the averages of star riders and reserves had an even greater divergence.

There is a third method of ranking riders and that is 'Actual Match Average', AMA, which has not been universally accepted and is not widely used. The formula for this calculation is the total points divided by the number of rides multiplied by four. This takes the bonus point out of the equation but still leaves a level playing field regarding the number of rides a rider takes in a match. My belief is that this gives a much better indication of a rider's contribution to the team effort than the CMA. Bonus points were originally introduced to encourage team riding but are awarded even when no team riding has taken place. A rider can be half a lap behind in last place, an opponent, who is in third place, falls on the last bend and the rider now finishes third. If he finishes behind his partner then he effectively gets credited for second place when calculating his CMA, even though he finished way behind the other two riders. If I were a promoter, building a team each winter within the agreed points limit which is calculated on CMAs, I would certainly look at each rider's AMA when deciding my team.

Another statistic that I like to use is the 'Team AMA' which is calculated by adding up the team's total points scored, dividing by the total number of rides and then multiplying by four. If, during a season,

there are no dropped points, (i.e. there is a first, second, third finisher in every race) then the maximum 'League AMA' will be 6.00. In effect this doesn't happen because there is always dropped points meaning that 'League AMA' is usually 5.997 or 5.998. If you calculate your team's AMA then if it is above (say) 5.998 you can say that the team is above average or below average if it comes out a less than 5.998.

The Team AMA is a better statistic than the Team CMA because it discounts bonus points and I feel a better guide to assessing team strengths. Take this

2 example that will illustrate the point. Each heat in a 15 heat match is drawn 3 - 3 and finishes red, green, yellow and black. The result will be 45 - 45. Now each team's Team AMA is 6.00 (45/30*4). However the Team's CMA are 6.00 for the home team (45/30*4) but 8.00 (45 + 15/30*4) for the visiting team giving an inflated indication of that team's strength.

I believe that the 'Team AMA' can also be used to compare team strengths year on year. Now it will not tell you whether the Ivan Mauger led Belle Vue of the seventies would have beaten the Tommy Price led Wembley of the forties but it will, I believe, allow you to rank teams for different seasons and different eras.

Using Peter Jackson's excellent Speedway Archives publications, I have calculated the 'Team AMA's' for the National League First Division from 1946 until 1954 and the top nine ranked clubs are:-

Team	AMA	Team	AMA
Wembley Lions 1954	6.954	Wembley Lions 1952	6.948
Wimbledon Dons 1954	6.939	Wembley Lions 1953	6.897
Wembley Lions 1947	6.873	Wembley Lions 1951	6.853
New Cross Ranger 1948	6.753	Wembley Lions 1950	6.717
Wembley Lions 1946	6.700	Birmingham Brummies 1952	6.477

The worst ten clubs were:-

Team	AMA	Team	AMA
Birmingham Brummies 1954	4.985	Bradford Tudors 1951	5.063
Wimbledon Dons 1948	5.244	Bristol Bulldogs 1950	5.250
Bradford Boomerangs 1948	5.270	Bristol Bulldogs 1952	5.283
West Ham Hammers 1946	5.357	West Ham Hammers 1947	5.565
Norwich Stars 1953	5.375	Belle Vue Aces 1954	5.386

Note: the mean league average AMA for this period was 5.977.

So what do these tables tell us? Well, 1954 was a vintage year with both Wembley Lions and Wimbledon Dons having outstanding years. However, in view of their higher AMA the 1954 Lions with the accolade of best team of this era, despite the fact they finished runners up to the Dons. The 1954 Dons did not even make it into second place because they were pipped by the 1952 Lions! The only champions not to appear in the chart are the 1949 Wembley Lions whilst the two teams appearing who did not win the championship are the 1952 Birmingham Brummies and the aforementioned 1954 Wembley team. The only two Wembley teams that failed to make the top ten were the 1948 and 1949 teams, the latter winning the championship by some nine points.

Whilst the 'Top Ten' chart is dominated by London sides, the 'Worst Ten' is in the main populated by provincial sides. Apart from the 1948 Wimbledon Dons and the 1946 and 1947 West Ham Hammers, all the worst ten clubs are from outside London. All five of the provincial clubs are represented in this table with Bradford and Birmingham appearing twice.

One of the problems in ranking teams is the different rules that have been used over the years. Take gate positions as an example. For a long time teams that were six or more points down after heat four had the choice of gate position, with team members being able to take either position allocated to their team. This resulted in higher averages for the star riders as they invariably took the better starting position whilst the second string or reserve made do with what they got. However, this did not affect the AMAs and adds weight to the argument that this calculation is more appropriate than the CMAs when looking at team strengths.

Other rule variances such as whether tape breaking or touching could count as a ride can be discussed because they happen so infrequently that they do not make any real difference to the end result.

The Speedway Star ran a poll to discover who was the best rider of the Millennium. If only Speedway records were more complete we could apply the principle to the 'Team AMA' to see what was the best team of all time, although no doubt if we did, the arguments would rage on for months.

Publications

Memories of 'North East' Speedway.

Bob Ferry is Mr Sunderland Speedway and as well as publishing booklets on his beloved team and riders, has an interest in North East Speedway in general. This latest booklet is subtitled 'Stars, Diamonds, Bandits, Tigers, Comets and Arrows'. (if you know all these teams then you can claim to know a bit about speedway history - if not then buy this publication.) and as with his previous titles it is self published with Bob's own unique and sometimes quirky memories of speedway. The booklet will offer many reminiscences for North East speedway fans from the 1960s onwards, and you may agree or disagree with many of Bob's memories but this certainly gives the flavour of speedway in this area when it could boast five or six tracks. (Eds - It is good to see Berwick, Newcastle and Workington survive but it would be nice to see the sport return to Sunderland and Middlesbrough. (East Boldon stadium still stands and there is ongoing activity on the Middlesbrough front.) It is unlikely that Ashington, which staged two meetings, will ever surface as a venue again. For details of how to obtain this booklet contact Bob Ferry on 0191 536 5064 or write to him at 13 West Drive, Cleadon, Sunderland, SR6 7SJ.
Review by Graham Fraser.

Speedway in the South East

For some inexplicable reason this book was not reviewed by The Speedway Researcher at the time of its publication earlier this year - so we are pleased to correct that omission and pass on our apologies to the author.

Following on from his previous Tempus speedway regional histories on East

4 Anglia and London, Norman has here tackled the team / tracks and riders of the South East of England. It covers the major league tracks of High Beech, Eastbourne, Rye House, Hastings, Canterbury, Crayford, Rochester / Romford, Iwade / Sittingbourne, Arena Essex and the Isle of Wight. As if that were not enough you can also read potted histories of minor league tracks at Dagenham, Luton, and Smallford, as well as information on Greenford, Brighton, Portsmouth, and Barnet. There are even mentions of Catford, Staines, Elsetree and Lydd plus six tracks that never quite made it. Now there has to be something of interest to all speedway historians.

As well as covering a large number of tracks and teams in this densely populated region, Norman has also had to cover the tracks from the very beginnings of the sport right up to the most recent, such as Lydd. As ever it is a quality Tempus book profusely illustrated with photographs and illustrations including pre-war photographs and programme covers. Its coverage of many of the short-lived and minor league tracks is welcomed and the Editors of The Speedway Researcher hope that it will stimulate further research on these lesser known venues and perhaps some future dedicated track histories will be published as a result.

This is a welcome addition to the compilation of the history of the speedway tracks in Britain from Tempus and is the most wide ranging volume to date. Highly recommended.

Speedway in the South East by Norman Jacobs. Tempus Publishing Ltd., The Mill, Brimscombe Port, Stroud, Gloucestershire, GL5 2QG - £14.99 + P&P.

Reviewed by Graham Fraser.

50 Greats Bristol Bulldogs Speedway

In a previous book review we said that the 50 Swindon Greats by the same authors surely marked a point where Swindon was the most thoroughly researched and published team in British Speedway (still to come, a second follow up '50 more Swindon Greats' book!). Not to be outdone Robert and Glynn have produced a companion volume on Bristol Speedway to add to the four separate histories Robert has co-produced with John Jarvis for the 1928 - 30, 1936 - 39, 1946 - 49 and 1950 - 53 eras, as well as a Bristol Riders' Index 1936 - 78 (with presumably a further history for the Eastville years to come?). Now this has to be the most complete speedway history for a team with so many reincarnations - truly a labour of love.

50 Bristol Greats is identical in format to the Swindon edition with sections covering rider histories including photographs, plus their Bristol career statistics. Many of the riders are legends from the pre-war (Morian Hansen, Cordy Milne and Vic Duggan) and post-war (Phil Crump, Olle Nygren, Bruce Cribb, Nigel Boocock) eras. Some of the names are much less familiar and this reviewer was surprised to see the name of Rol Stobart included (pre-war Barrow, Workington, Preston, Leeds and West Ham) as he had not realised that Rol had ridden for Bristol - some distance from his pre-war Cumbrian 5 home.

50 Greats Bristol Bulldogs Speedway by Robert Bamford and Glynn Shailes - Tempus Publishing Limited £12.99 + P&P.

Reviewed by Graham Fraser.

White Ghost: The Ken Le Breton Story

There have been many articles about Ken Le Breton and a recent edition of Tales from Scottish Shale (for the uninitiated, an irregular booklet publication from Friends of Edinburgh Speedway each of which covers an aspect of Scottish Speedway history - contact Ian Moultray on 0131 666 2826 for details) was a potted history of the rider known as The White Ghost. His career was short, from 1947 to 1951. He rode very briefly for New Cross before moving north to ride for Newcastle Diamonds in 1947 and 1948 before becoming a big star and living legend at Glasgow Ashfield during 1949 and 1950. Tragedy struck in Australia in January 1951 when Ken was fatally injured in an Australia v England Test Match in Sydney leaving thousands grieving his passing.

Jon Jon White has produced what can probably be described as an official biography because it has the approval of Ken's only remaining sister who provided many of the previously unseen family photographs. This is not just a speedway book but an analysis of much what made the man tick. It details his early life before motorcycles took hold, but from the point where Ken decided that speedway racing was his chosen career path, his life was dominated by the sport. This book catalogues his relatively short but, at times, contradictory life. Its style is unlike any other speedway book this reviewer has come across but it is obviously a sincere tribute to both the man and the speedway legend. The photographs are special, many previously unseen. Ken's career statistics are also appended and there are many tributes and contributions from riders and speedway personalities who knew him. This book is both for those already familiar with Ken's speedway career, as well as the uninitiated who want to know what the fuss was all about.

White Ghost: The Ken Le Breton Story by Jon Jon White - Tempus Publications - £12.99 + P&P.

Reviewed by Graham Fraser.

Can You Help?

Deborah Cherry, 33 Shuttleworth Road, Preston, Lancashire, PR1 6DB Tel: 01772 881105 is looking for information about a Miss Laura West who, according to a press report dated 11.5.1930, was set to make her dirt track debut at a Midlands dirt track that week. It is also possible that Laura raced at Lea Bridge sometime between February and May 1930.

Deborah is also wondering if anyone can help with programme and/or press

coverage of Carol and Hortense Williams who are known to have raced at Southampton on 19 and 25 October 1929 and Portsmouth 31 May 1930. Details of their appearances at other meetings in this era would be appreciated.

Finally - does anyone have a contact address for a Christian Weber, who wrote an article about Fay Taylour's activities in New Zealand.

Stephen Harland, 8 Bramley Parade, Bowesfield Lane, Stockton on Tees, TS18 3JG Tel: 01642 633869 is looking for information on Middlesbrough Speedway in the pre-war era from sources other than the local newspapers (Newcastle newspapers carried some Middlesbrough info. JH). He is looking for photographs - in particular a photo of the 1929 Northern Dirt Track League team. In addition Stephen is looking for a special Speedway Echo on Frank Hodgson published during the 1940s.

Andrew Weltch, 36 Thornbury Close, Rhiwbina, Cardiff, CF14 1UT. Tel: 02920 613614 E-mail WeltchA@cardiff.ac.uk is seeking meeting reports, photos and any other information about the Wales v England midgeet car meeting at Cardiff on 16.10.1952. He is also looking for results and any other items from the Cavalcade of Speed meeting at Newport on 19.6.1964.

Jim Henry (Co-Editor) is looking for heat details for a second half Tamworth v Fleetwood match 19th October 1948 which was the second half of the Tamworth v Hull match.

The Lanarkshire Eagles

In the last edition Jim Henry looked at the 1950 - 1952 seasons of the team that was based at The Stadium which was located in Milton Street in the then hub of Scottish steel making, Motherwell. In this article the seasons covered are 1953 and 1954.

The 1953 Eagles lined up much the same as the year before. Veteran Will Lowther hung up his leathers and Bob Lindsay moved on to Edinburgh. In their place came ex-Ashfield Giant Ron Phillips and another ex-Giant, Jimmy Tannock. They joined Gordon McGregor, Noel Watson, Johnny Green, Derek Close, Bluey Scott and Scott Hall.

The opening home fixture was a Best Pair won by Tommy Miller and Larry Lazarus representing Glasgow Tigers. A week later the Eagles thrashed Coventry at The Stadium with Close and Watson on maximums in the opening National League Division Two match. This was followed up by a narrow defeat at Leicester and things were looking promising.

Next up at home were Edinburgh Monarchs and they beat an Eagles side suffering from bike problems. This was followed by another narrow away defeat, at Coventry and a thrashing at Poole. Stoke visited on 17th April and were sent home defeated by a big margin but the road proved tough with a big defeat at Wolverhampton and an even bigger one at Yarmouth (23 - 61.) 7

Only Derek Close was showing any consistency - well - consistently good form.

Wolverhampton gave the Eagles a scare. Young Jimmy Tannock was out and in came Bill Dalton.

They responded to it by beating Poole and then Leicester by respectable margins. The latter was one of Close's poor displays when he pulled out of two races due to bike failure.

Derek was down on power as Eagles beat Glasgow in a Lanarkshire Cup match, with a side that included Joe Crowther replacing Dalton and Tannock replacing Scott Hall, then scored an immaculate 18 point maximum at Swindon as the visitors lost 46 - 62 in the National Trophy tie first leg. This deficit was overcome at Motherwell, after a big away defeat at Glasgow.

Stoke repaid Eagles on 16th May with a 22 - 59 score and Liverpool showed the Scottish side the way round Stanley Stadium two days later.

Back home and Eagles with Scott Hall back in the side showed Edinburgh a thing or two despite Noel Watson crashing out of the match in heat after a coming together with Bob Mark. It was short-lived joy as they lost to Poole in the first leg of the National Trophy but swung things their way with a storming home win to take the tie on aggregate thanks to Johnny Green who scored paid 18. This earned them the right to face First Division opponents.

A Tuesday night Skelly Trophy meeting went to Tommy Miller and Tommy and Ken McKinlay came back on the Friday to inspire Tigers to a narrow league win at The Stadium. A week later Yarmouth came north and lost 30 - 54.

The familiar not too bad at home but poor away cycle followed with a loss at Old Meadowbank in Edinburgh and a win at home over Stoke by a whopping big 68 - 17. A break in the league action saw a Scottish Championship qualifier shared between Johnny Green and Derek Close before it was back on the road for another thumping, this time at Coventry which put them out of the Queens Cup.

Eagles now faced Haringay Racers in the National Trophy and they put on a great display to win the tie. Close and Phillips had great support from Green and McGregor while only Split Waterman made anything of the track to take 14 points.

The return was a different story and Eagles were trashed 85 - 23 at Green Lanes. That was bad enough but they lost Derek Close in a, by then, meaningless nominated race when he crashed with Allan Quinn. This ended Derek's season and seriously weakened the Eagles for the rest of the season.

Eagles promoted Jimmy Tannock into the team and brought in Jock Pryde and beat Wolverhampton at home but Jock's stay was short as they signed Guy Allott as his replacement. Against all the odds Eagles beat Glasgow Tigers at home then repeated the dose in a challenge fixture at Ashfield before seeing out July with a narrow Queens Cup win over Poole.

8 A defeat at Edinburgh was followed by others at Leicester, Stoke, Poole Glasgow White City before they raced to a win over Poole at The Stadium. The last mentioned fixture saw the team field Cyril Cooper at reserve and he scored a reserves maximum - 6.

A Scottish Cup fixture at Edinburgh on 24th August saw them go down by a mere 6 points and defeats on the road at Wolverhampton, Coventry and Yarmouth where they only managed 23 points.

Consistency was not trait of Motherwell riders. Rarely did any one man score consistently and two good meetings on the trot were a rarity. For example over the first weekend of September they disposed of Coventry and Leicester with Noel Watson scoring a paid maximum in the first and four paid five in the next. The following week Noel scored 14 but could not prevent Edinburgh winning to effectively put Eagles out of the Queens Cup. The return in Edinburgh was a formality.

Maybe the promotion spoke to the riders but the following week they tore Yarmouth apart then a week later they dumped Edinburgh out of the Scottish Cup with a 61 - 47 win on the night and 112 - 104 on aggregate.

Wee Aussie Noel Watson rode what would be his last match for Eagles against the Bloaters. Noel scored a full maximum. Tragedy would strike during the winter as Noel was fatally injured in Australia.

Eagles closed the season with home and away defeats by Glasgow Tigers in the Scottish Cup final. The 1954 season saw the Eagles line up with Gordon McGregor, Derek Close, Bluey Scott, Johnny Green, Ron Phillips, Cyril Cooper, Scott Hall and big money close season signing Tommy Miller. The opener was a shocker as Jim Lightfoot, then a Coventry find, inspired his team from reserve to a narrow 43 - 41 win at The Stadium. This was followed by a narrow defeat at Edinburgh then whoosh Eagles were airborne.

They won at Leicester, thumped a weakened and demoralised Glasgow Tigers who were riding their last official fixture before closure and then did enough at The Stadium to put Rayleigh out of the National Trophy on aggregate.

Ipswich copped it in Motherwell and again almost a week later at Foxhall Heath with Larry Lazarus added to the squad the lashed Witches by 32 - 52. Wolverhampton were next at Monmore Green (28 - 56) and Coventry (40 - 43) were repaid at Brandon a night later. Still it went on as Leicester were thrashed at The Stadium (66 - 18).

First Division teams held no fears for the Eagles and Wimbledon went the way of the others and fell 64 - 44 with only Ronnie Moore and Geoff Mardon standing up to the home men.

Monarchs came and went down as Eagles celebrated victory in the North Shield competition they richly deserved to win. Only Tommy Miller was a consistently big scorer but the others played their part as others dipped on the night. Tommy also lost out on the Skelly Trophy, a meeting sponsored by the local car dealers, and Dick Campbell – Edinburgh's Kiwi added his name to 9 the pot.

From mid June on Eagles disposed of Rayleigh, Poole and Exeter at home before Derek Close claimed victory from Tommy Miller in the World Championship round..

The second half of July saw Eagles on the road and they lost a barrowload as Tommy Miller plunged to a low of 2 and suffered another big defeat at Bristol before suffering a rain off at Swindon.

Back home they salvaged some pride with a big win over Bristol before they suffered their first ever rain off since they opened mid 1950.

Tommy Miller was by now growing ever more unhappy and was wanting away to pursue his career down south. The crowd were not too happy and when Tommy had a poor showing for Scotland at The Stadium, they let him know in no uncertain terms of their displeasure - Tommy was booed. What did he care - he got his wish and moved on to Coventry.

As it was Eagles next fixture was at Brandon and Tommy the Bee blasted his ex-team mates with a maximum return. Doug Templeton was drafted in a reserve. The same team then lost at Poole and Southampton before another big home win, this time over Oxford followed by a similar demolishing of Southampton.

This match saw Bluey Scott sustain an injury in his opening ride which turned out to be the very popular red head's last outing for the Eagles.

Eric Ebbs filled Bluey's slot at Rayleigh as Eagles lost and Motherwell signed Bob Fletcher, ex-Edinburgh, as a replacement in time for a trip to Ipswich where again their vulnerability on the road was exposed by the Witches. Trips to Leicester and Exeter went the same way as Ipswich.

September started with a win over Swindon, a rain off against Ipswich, an abandonment of the match versus Leicester and a win over Coventry when Tommy Miller managed only 10.

Ipswich were rained off again on 1st October but the match, which would be the last league match at Milton Street, was restaged a week later. The fixture against Leicester was never re-staged.

The season had been punctuated with other fixtures, notably midget cars and stock cars, and with the season ending incomplete the writing was on the wall.

The Motherwell promotion were keen to run in 1955 but the southern based teams did not fancy a single meeting trip to Scotland. Motherwell were killed off.

A proposed junior event in 1955 never happened but the track opened for practice by Ian Hoskins in late 1957 and a short open season in 1958. The stadium fell derelict and was demolished. A trotting track was constructed and a few long track type events were staged in the early 1970s. A small track was cut out the centre green and a lone meeting staged after the opener was lost to rain. Jim

Henry

10 Go on - get your pen out and write us an article.

Rider Numbers

Over the years The Speedway Researcher has set about compiling information on a range of topics. Your response on the cigarette cards was very impressive and resulted in a very comprehensive record on the subject.

Colin Parker, 59 Clinton Lane, Kenilworth, Warwickshire, CV9 Tel: 01926 854852, who is very interested in the pre-war era, provides the following list of the International Speedways Limited Rider Numbers used in 1929 and wonders if anyone can help fill in the gaps.

Whilst in the early days programmes did use helmet colours the riders in each meeting had riding numbers. Most sets of numbers were probably track and meeting specific but International Speedways seem to have set their own listing and used it a number of tracks they owned. Just for the record the enterprising International Speedways Limited also founded the Speedway News which was essentially about their activities in the very earliest editions.

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Tommy Croombs | 2. Art Pechar |
| 3. Jack Parker | 4. Sprouts Elder |
| 5. Ivor Creek | 6. Roger Frogley (Crystal Palace) |
| 7. Col Stewart (Southampton) | 8. Frank Arthur |
| 9. Harry Taft (Hall Green) | 10. Ron Johnson |
| 11. Vic Huxley | 12. Colin Stewart |
| 13. Not Used ? | 14. Jim Kempster (Wimbledon) |
| 15. Billy Lamont | 16. Billy Dallison |
| 17. Eric Spencer (Harringay) | 18. Fred Cooper (Stamford Bridge) |
| 19. | 20. Max Grosskreutz |
| 21. Les Seamore (Stamford Bridge) | 22. H.H. Ivy (Stamford Bridge) |
| 23. Don Boswell (Stamford Bridge) | 24. Jack Ormston |
| 25. W.H. ÓBilló White (Stamford Bridge) | 26. Jack Barnett (High Beech) |
| 27. | 28. |
| 29. Arthur Warwick (Stamford Bridge) | 30. |
| 31. Arthur Willimott (Crystal Palace) | 32. Lew Lancaster (Coventry) |
| 33. Wilmot Evans (Coventry) | 34. Cyril Lord (Coventry) |
| 35. Alan Sanders (Coventry) | 36. Dilly Gittens (Coventry) |
| 37. Bert Perigo (Coventry) | 38. Jimmy Hayes (Southampton) |
| 39. | 40. Charlie Wilkins (Stamford Bridge) |
| 41. J. Martin (Coventry) | 42. Gus Khun (Stamford Bridge) |
| 43. Buster Frogley (Wembley) | 44. Buzz Hibberd (West Ham) |
| 45. | 46. |
| 47. Wal Phillips (Stamford Bridge) | 48. |
| 49. Tommy Cullis (Southampton) | 50. |

The numbers 12 , 34 and 40 could have been used by Eva Asquith, Stan Lemon and Arthur ÓTinyÓ Timms.

51. Tiger Stevenson (West Ham); 53 Les Dallimore (West Ham); 54 Les 11 Blakeborough (Stamford Bridge); 56 Ernie Rickman (Southampton) ; 62 Ed Bradley (West Ham); 63 Mark Sieffert (Wimbledon); 66 R Seward (Southampton); 67 C.S. Barrow (Southampton); 68 Freddie Hore (White City London); 71 Reg Pointer ; 72 Triss Sharp (Crystal Palace); 74 A W. Billy Day (Stamford Bridge); 77 Joe Francis (Crystal Palace); 80 Hilary Buchanan; 83 Syd Edmonds; 89 Nick Nichol (Stamford Bridge); Les Maguire (West Ham); 92 Taffy Williams (West Ham); Dick (L O Les) Bellamy (Stamford Bridge); 99 Jack Barrett (Crystal Palace); 100 T R Wainwright (Southampton); 101 Jack Chiswell; 108 Boyd Pratt (White City London); 109 E Slade-Jones; 110 Colin Watson; 111 Jimmy Stevens; 112 Dank (Frank) Ewen (White City London); 113 Del Foster; 115 Dick Bird; 116 Alf Summersby; 122 O E Sykes (Stamford Bridge); 123 Colin Ford (Stamford Bridge); 124 Fred Ralph (Stamford Bridge); 125 Ray Ralph (Stamford Bridge); 126 Les Ralph (Stamford Bridge); 127 Bert Bolt (Stamford Bridge); 147 Jack Adams (West Ham); 148 Bruce McCallum (Southampton); 149 Sonny Wilson (Stamford Bridge); 150 Wally Trumble;

155 Don Taylor (West Ham); 156 Bluey Wilkinson (West Ham); 157 Reg Bounds (west Ham); 158 Cecil Brown (Southampton); 160 Clarrie Eldridge (Southampton); 161 J R Morris (Southampton); 161 Alb Wakerley (Southampton); 163 Vic Collins (Southampton); 169 Ernie Lister (Southampton); 172 Brian Donkin (Crystal Palace); 185 George Lovick (Crystal Palace); 188 Jimmy Pink (West Ham); 200 R Clark (Southampton);

201 Clem Cort; 202 Will Dennis; 203 Bill Crouch; 204 Les Dearth; 205 Stan Spencer; 206 Cecil Brown; 207 Sid Chambers; 208 Albert Savory; 209 Eric Lister (Southampton); 210 Harry Taft; 211 Frank Goulden (Southampton); 212 Ben Living (Southampton); 214 Reg Heller (West Ham); 217 Don Durrant; 221 Ken Dixon (Stamford Bridge); 251 E Maguire (Stamford Bridge).

Hampden Park Remembered

Howard Jones' latest booklet on defunct tracks covers what was one of the largest capacity stadiums, Hampden Park in Glasgow. I recall my visits there were confined to the spring and autumn as I lived in the city in my student days. The crowds were lost and there was no access to the bends, well unless it came on rain and those on the back straight were allowed into what is known as the Rangers End. Celtic fans were left out in the rain at the east end of the stadium.

The track was a good metre plus above the height of the front terraces and I shudder to think what would happen to anyone crashing through the safety fence.

Howard has the place well summed up and you can acquire this and the other in print copies from him at SpeedAway Promotions, 16 Poachers Trail, Lytham 14 St Annes, FY8 4FF. £4.50 each or you can subscribe to the series.

The Early Days of Suffolk Speedway

We are indebted to Keith Farman for this article which looks at the speedway in a corner of East Anglia.

The earliest recorded motor cycle racing in Suffolk took place at Portman Road round the Ipswich Football Club pitch in 1904. (This has been claimed by some as the first dirt track event - Editors) In the 1920s the sports days at Benacre had motor cycle races and in one the American 3 Mile Champion appeared. Also road racing had been staged on the Lowestoft sea front.

To help the local riders to race, the Lowestoft Club was formed in 1932. It was local businessmen F.M.Newson, A.S.Povah, J.C. Charlesworth, together with other local enthusiasts who stood security to cover any loss incurred. All the meetings were described or advertised as Speedway, in fact they were all grass tracks but the grass soon got worn down. Nevertheless they were the forerunners of Suffolk Speedway, well before Ipswich came onto the scene in 1951 and Mildenhall a good few years later. Waveney Speed Track 1932

The seeds of the Lowestoft Club had been sown in 1932 when a meeting was held at Oulton Broad (9.4.32.). Fred Leavis, who rode under the assumed name of Arthur Reynolds, was the top rider that day. He was riding for Wimbledon and was also the top rider at The Firs, he would become one of the top riders at the early Suffolk tracks as well. They then opened the Waveney Speed Track at Doles Meadow, Bradwell, a village 8 miles north of Lowestoft and four miles south of Great Yarmouth. Bradwell was in Suffolk in 1932 but with boundary changes it is now in Norfolk.

The first meeting was held on 28.4.32. Nine meetings were held on Saturday afternoons, plus a gala meeting on the Bank Holiday Monday that was ruined by rain. They then ran the next meeting at Crown Meadow, the home of Lowestoft Football Club, but the track was not suitable as it had post and iron railings round the perimeter. It was also far too narrow so they moved back for one more meeting on 20th August at Doles Meadow.

These meetings featured handicap events of one and two miles and six lap races. They also staged track record attempts. Many races were started using the flying start method. Several riders of some note rode at this track including the young Geoff Pymar who would become one of the top stars of the sport. Geoff rode for many teams including Yarmouth in their last stint in 1960 and 1961. Geoff would eventually retire in 1963 and he passed away a year or so ago.

Other riders included Jim Millward (Wembley and Norwich), Arthur Reynolds (aka Fred Leavis) who was the first Norwich captain in 1932 and Jack Smythe (aka(also known as) Jack Sharpe who in 1932 captained Yarmouth in a match against Staines and scored a 12 point maximum).

As the track was a flapper track, operating outside the controls of the ACU 15 the professional riders had to use assumed names. (This occurred in many instances notably at Rochdale and Audenshaw in 1930 - Editors). The London rider, Johnny Bull, who was reported to be 18 stone, was a great favourite but it is unclear what his true identity was. I was at one time certain that he was Bert Gerrish because of a photo of a large rider was signed Bert Gerrish, but Bert's son has told me that he rode as Bert Peters. My latest information is that Bull could have been Eric Spencer, who was a star in 1928 - 29 and then disappeared from the London tracks.

Wal Smith from Newmarket held the one lap record of 22.4 seconds and the two lap record of 48.6 seconds until Smythe, in the last meeting, clocked 22.2 for one lap and 45.0 seconds for two laps.

Wal Smith and Jim Millward both came from Newmarket and had very contrasting styles. Jim was a real dirt track rider broadsiding flat out in exciting fashion round the bends. Wal, on the other hand, took the bends extremely steadily but still managed to win many races. Jim was one of the idols of the Bradwell crowd because of the fine sporting spirit he displayed. He was a daring and skilful rider whether winning or losing, he always had a smile.

In the last meeting (20.8.32) two well known dirt track riders appeared, Hal Herbert and Fred Wilkinson, who had made their names at the Leicester Super track. But they were not at home on the grass surface and did not distinguish themselves. Other riders included Wally Banner, Jack Jolly (possibly Jack Newlands, a Norwich rider). The London riders and most of the professional riders plus a few of the top local riders would go on to race at Norwich on the Sunday afternoon.

The meetings attracted several hundred fans who were also given extra events to keep the the interest going. Trick riding by Tricky Newman and his lady partner. Then there was surf riding on dry land, as the announcer put it, which was very popular with the fans. This was a novel event that had riders towing a board with another rider trying to stay on it. Most riders found it convenient to sit but others,

who were a bit braver, stood up on the board and, invariably, fell off. The Gala Day also included an old crocks car race, an obstacle race, chariot races and sidecar races.

Kessingland Road 1933

In 1933 the venture moved to Kessingland Road Speed Track and was now under the banner of Lowestoft Motor Club. It was under the control of Frederick Newson who was racing manager. Frederick had a nephew, Fred, who was a rider who used the name of Dusty New. Frederick's son Norman helped out in the pits. Once the young Newson spilt some of Jim Millward's fuel and Jim got very grumpy about it.

The club Committee held their meetings in the Adelaide Arms, a pub in Lowestoft High Street that was owned by Roy Munnings' father. (This pub was bombed during the war.) Committee meetings were also held at Crown Meadow 16 Store which was located next to the football ground. This was an off-licence and general store which was owned by Frederick Newson's wife.

The first meeting was held on 2nd July 1933 when 22 riders were contracted to appear. Altogether 7 meetings at this venue were reported in the contemporary press. The track was advertised as the only real Australian Motor Cycle track in England and was called the track by the Silver Sea.

The third meeting had a special event, England v Australia. Was this the first ever Test match in Suffolk? Not really !! The Australian team won the event thanks to magnificent riding from Wal Smith who had previously been credited with coming from Newmarket. Smith would go on to race for the Norwich team.

Joe Linn, Tom Hall, Speedy Williams, Herb Peters, Bill Jackson, Hal Ford, Joe Brown and Wal Smith were among the names advertised for the fifth meeting on 6th August.

Amongst the most successful riders was Freddie Jones who had a number of wins. He was a local fish monger who had a motorcycle with a large custom built sidecar that he used for transporting fish. The same sidecar was used for transporting his 350cc BSA to the track. (No such thing as food hygiene rules in these days.)

Again the top riders rode under assumed names. Joe Lyons was billed as coming from Australia and London, suggesting that he was attached to one of the London Clubs, was the top rider. Joe Linn (London) and Speedy Williams (possibly Jerry Williams), Tom Hall, Herb Peters (Bert Gerrish), Bill Jackson, Hal Ford, Joe Brown were almost certainly, like Linn, attached to London teams. A 'new' find, George Rownet did well in the second last meeting, as did Wal Smith and Arthur Reynolds (Fred Leavis.)

Two great characters were Johnny Bull and Spike Rhiando. They would arrive on the Saturday night in an old furniture van with a blonde beauty who seemed a bit too old for them. The three would sleep rough overnight.

Johnny Bull seemed a far too big to be a rider, dwarfing his bike. Nevertheless he was a good speedway rider but, possibly because of his weight, he did suffer from a lot of machine trouble. Spike Rhiando was a good looking wiry little fellow. He was billed as an Italian rider but was certainly from the USA. His parents had been trapeze artists in Canada and Spike was part of this act, being thrown from one to another. Seeing little future in that he had drifted into jalopy racing. He made some money, got on to the American dirt track circuit, saved hard, and, eventually got to England.

Spike was injured in a spill in the second meeting and was kept in hospital for six days. At the next meeting a collection held for him during the interval raised the sum of £8 and three shillings (£8.15) which was presented to him at his next appearance at the track. £8.15 was a great sum in these days proving certainly that he was very popular with the fans. Spike later became a star of Midget Car racing and after the War he made a lot of money in the ill-fated 17 groundnut scheme of the Atlee Government of 1945.

The local riders had their own novice races featuring riders such as A.Storey, Jack English, Jack Fordham, Ted English, Freddie Jones, Alf Sadler and Dusty New who's names feature in the contemporary reports.

The advert for 13 August was interesting. It proclaimed Real Speedway Racing and encouraged people to 'Come and see the Pakefield Terror.' It was, however, silent on the identity of the rider. It could well have been Wal Smith the track record holder or another of the well known London imports.

The meeting for 20 August was advertised as 'Thrilling Speedway' and encouraged spectators to come and see famous riders including those breakneck two, Joe Linn and Wal Smith.

The admission to the meetings was one shilling and sixpence (7.5p) with boys being charged two pence (about 1p.). The car parking was free. However, the local press failed to carry any information about this meeting. It is possible that the event was rained off as the ground was boggy due to natural springs and it is possible the meeting was rained off due to rain.

About this time Norwich started to advertise their venture as the only real dirt track in East Anglia at which recognised dirt track riders appeared.

To Be Continued.

Grass Track or Dirt Track?

How to categorise these events is a never ending source of debate. We would suggest - again to be argued - that if the meeting started on track that was a green field, it is a grass track. However, if the bends were devoid of grass before the racing started, then it was a dirt track. Over to you if you don't agree.

Norman Street

Fred Paul, 6 Horsepool Road, Sheviok, Torpoint, Cornwall, PL11 3EP writes to us as follows:
As a schoolboy, one of my favourite riders was Norman Street, former captain of St Austell in the 1950s. I first saw him at Plymouth in 1948 riding for Hastings. Then St Austell Gulls joined the Third Division in 1950 and Norman became their captain and became my idol for the next four seasons. He was a prolific scorer for the Gulls in 1950 when they nearly closed for the first time. The next we hear of him is at Eastbourne in the newly formed and rather small Southern Area League. However, he was far too good for this standard of racing and was not allowed to continue by the powers that be at the time. He then seems to have disappeared completely. I have since heard that he now lives on the Isle of Wight. Where is Norman Street now? Anyone with
18 information should drop a line to Fred.

Newsplan

We continue with the information on the location of newspapers contained in the Newsplan publications. This time we look at Report of the Newsplan Project in the East Midlands. April 1987 - July 1988 by Ruth Gordon - Published by the British Library. (There is a Newsplan 2000 exercise which involves the filming of local newspapers. Will give a bit more details of this in due course. Cambridge Evening News [Cambridge University Library 1928 onwards, Cambridge Library 1928]; Cambridgeshire Times and March Advertiser [Cambridge Library 170 onwards]; Cambridgeshire Weekly Times [Cambridge Library 1981 onwards]; Peterborough Advertiser [Peterborough Library 1968 onwards & Peterborough Evening Times Offices 1948 onwards]; Peterborough Standard [Peterborough Library 1928 onwards]; Wisbech Advertiser [Fen Advertiser Office 1928 - 1971, Wisbech Museum 1928 - 1944, Wisbech Library 1928 - 1964]; Buxton Advertiser [Buxton Library 1994 onwards]; Buxton Times [Buxton Library 1994 onwards]; Derby Evening Telegraph [Burton on Trent Library 1948 - 1977, Derby Local Studies Library 1957 onwards]; Derby Express [Derby Local Studies Library 1986 onwards]; Derby Mercury [Derby Local Studies Library 1928 - 1933]; Derby Reporter [Derby Local Studies Library 1928 - 1930]; Derby Advertiser and Journal [Derby Local Studies Library 1928 - 1976]; Derbyshire Times [Chesterfield Library 1928 onwards]; Football Express [Chesterfield Library 1928 - 1933]; Long Eaton Advertiser [Derbyshire Records Office 1928 - 1929, Long Eaton Library 1930 onwards]; Leicester Chronicle [Leicester Library 1928 - 1979]; Leicester Football Mail [Leicester Library 1928 - 1931]; Leicester Mail [Leicester Library 1928 - 1963 & 1982 onwards]; Leicester Mail Sports [Leicester Library 1931 - 1963]; Leicester Mercury [Leicester Library 1928 onwards]; Leicester Mercury Sports Mail [Leicester Library 1976 onwards, Leicester Mercury Office 1928 onwards - with gaps]; Melton (Mowbry) Times [Melton Library 1928 - 1981, Leicester Library 1928 - 1981]; Boston Target [Boston & Sleaford Target Office 1984 onwards]; Skegness Extra [Skegness Library 1998 onwards]; Skegness News [Skegness Library 1998 onwards]; Skegness Standard [Skegness library 1998 onwards]; Eastern Daily Press [Norwich Library 1928 - 1978]; Eastern Football News [Norwich Library 1954 onwards]; Kings Lynn Leader [Kings Lynn Library 1988 onwards]; Lynn News and Advertiser [Kings Lynn Library 1944 onwards]; Norfolk Chronicle or the Norfolk Gazette [Norwich Library 1928 - 1955]; Norfolk Leader [Kings Lynn Library 1986 onwards]; Norfolk News [Norwich Library 1949 - 1961]; Yarmouth Free Press [Great Yarmouth Library 1928 - 1939]; Yarmouth Mercury, Gorleston Herald and North Norfolk Advertiser [Great Yarmouth Library 1928 onwards]; Evening Herald & Daily Chronicle & Advertiser for Northampton District [Northampton 19 Library HQ 1928 - 1931]; Football Echo (Northampton) [Northampton Library HQ 1928 - 1939]; Mercury & Herald [Northampton Library HQ 1928 onwards]; Milton Keynes Gazette [Brackley Library 1978 onwards]; Northampton Herald [Northampton Library HQ 1928 - 1931]; Northampton Mercury Daily Reporter [Northampton Library HQ 1928 - 1931]; Northamptonshire Evening Telegraph [Kettering Library 1928 onwards]; Evening Post (Nottingham) [Nottingham Library 1928 onwards]; Mansfield

and North Notts Advertiser [Mansfield Library 1928]; Nottingham Daily Express [Nottingham Library 1928 - 1953]; Nottingham Daily Guardian [Nottingham Evening Post Office 1928 - 1953]; Nottingham Evening News [Nottingham Library 1928 - 1955]; Nottinghamshire Guardian [Nottingham Library 1928, 1930 - 1932, 1934]; Evening Star [Suffolk Records Office 1928 onwards with some gaps]; Ipswich Mercury [Suffolk Records Office 1980 - 1983]; Lowestoft Journal [Eastern Counties Newspaper Office 1928 onwards, Suffolk Records Office 1928 onwards]; Newmarket Journal [Suffolk Records Office 1928 onwards]; Lowestoft Mercury, Oulton Broad and Waveney Valley Advertiser [Suffolk Records Office 1937 - 1939]; Newmarket Weekly News [Cambridge University Library 1981 onwards, Newspaper Office 1981 onwards]; Suffolk Chronicle and Weekly General Advertiser and County Express [Newspaper Office 1928 - 1980, Suffolk Records Office 1928 - 1980].

Farewell Trelawny

I always think that the closure of a speedway track should be likened to a death in the family. We cannot let the passing of that unusual speedway in the quarry and the adjacent azure blue lake go without saying goodbye. It was unique - where else have you seen notices advising you not to climb the walls?

I only visited the track once (and apart from making a complete fool of myself as I fell my length before executing a shoulder bashing dive forward roll when Brian Turner's bike started unexpectedly) and I have fond memories of a pleasant wee raceway that provided some good racing.

In view of the time between the closure of the Cornish Stadium and the opening of the Moto Parc I sincerely hope that we will see the Trelawny Tigers back in the Premier League next season at an new venue. Graham and I wish you Cornish lads the very best wishes in finding a new venue. Jim Henry

Speedway at the Summer School

Unlikely as it may seem but Planners get together each year for a Summer School. This year it was held at Bangor in North Wales and one of the evening speakers was a planner called Richard Fordam, who is based in the Newcastle

20 area and who gave an evening talk about motor cycle sports and speedway was given a mention. No he isn't against the sport - far from it - Richard is actually keen to promote the virtues of motor and motor cycle sports.

From all reports his talk was very well received by the audience of fellow planners.

Jim Henry

For the Programme Purists

You may or not be aware that Edinburgh has been using seven different programme covers this year. Each cover features a different member of the original Monarchs septet. Now, just to complicate matters - from the Glasgow Premier meeting onwards the meetings have featured two different covers for each meeting. The Monarchs have added another cover to celebrate the team winning the Premier League. The programme for King's Lynn match featured the special League winners cover and this a thoughtful idea of a white wrap round which looked like they wanted to keep the cover in pristine condition. It turns out that the white wrap round was, in fact, a wrap to deal with slow drying ink. Whilst The Speedway Researcher is not into collecting memorabilia we are happy to pass on information about unusual situations like this to our readers, many of whom do collect such items.

Editors

Can You Help 2

Stewart Smith, May Cottage, Beaulieu Road, Dibden Purlieu, Hampshire, SO45 4PT Tel: work 02380 574 725 mobile 0773 669 1471 E-mail stewart@ocean-ss.com asks if anyone has any information about a rider called Ronald Hilary. Stewart thinks he was connected with Wembley Lions in the 1930. Roger Beaman, 47 Peel Way, Tividale Oldbury, West Midlands, B69 3JX. Tel: 0121 532 8614 is seeking second half details for the home meetings at Cradley Heath. 1949 1.4 v Sheffield; 16.4 v Fleetwood; 29.4 v Southampton; 20.5 v Odsal; 27.5 v Newcastle; 3.6 v Ashfield; 17.6 v Edinburgh; 24.6 v Walthamstow; 1.7 v Coventry; 22.7 v Norwich; 29.7 v Edinburgh; 30.7 v Ashfield; 12.8 v Newcastle; 19.8 v Fleetwood; 17.9 v Sheffield; 23.9 v Ashfield; 7.10 v Walthamstow. 1950 10.4 v Plymouth; 24.4 v Norwich; 24.6 v Birmingham; 3.7 v Coventry; 4.9 v White City (Glasgow); 11.9 v

Fleetwood; 2.10 v Southampton. 1951 26.3 v Hunt's Team; 2.4 v Stoke; 9.4 v Leicester; 16.4 v Leicester; 21.4 v Kangaroos; 7.5 v Sheffield; 12.5 v Liverpool; 14.5 v Southampton; 11.6 v Ashfield; 18.6 v White City (Glasgow); 23.6 v Newcastle; 30.6 v Liverpool; 9.7 v Norwich; 6.8 v Leicester; 24.8 v Fleetwood; 7.9 v Walthamstow; 14.9 v Halifax; 21.9 v Birmingham. 1952 25.4 v Yarmouth; 9.5 v Stoke; 7.6 v Motherwell; 20.6 21 v Edinburgh; 27.6 v Poole; 5.7 v Motherwell; 18.7 v Oxford; 4.8 v Leicester; 15.8 v Liverpool; 5.9 v Stoke; 19.9 v Edinburgh; 26.9 v Ashfield; 3.10 v Poole.

Phil Hood, 21 Riverside Gardens, Thorpe Meadows, Peterborough, PE3 6GE Tel: 01733 347725 is looking for the date of and full heat details for a Birmingham v Newcastle North Cup match staged early in the 1938 season. He is also looking for full heat details of 1938 Newcastle matches at Hackney Wick 25.6; at Lea Bridge 19.9, and at Leeds 13.10. He is seeking full heat details for the following meetings at Newcastle 1938 North v London 19.9. 1939 v Middlesbrough 24.4, and v Bristol 24.7. Phil is seeking details of the 4th placed men for the following Newcastle home meetings: 1938 v Belle Vue Reserves 2.5; v West Ham 9.5; West Ham v Belle Vue 16.5; v Norwich 23.5; v Sheffield 30.5; v World Championship Round 7.6; v West Ham 13.6; v Belle Vue Reserves 20.6; v Leeds 27.6; v Hackney Wick 4.7; England v Dominions 11.7; v West Ham 18.7; v Leeds 25.7; v Birmingham 1.8; v Sheffield 8.8; v Norwich 15.8; v Southampton 22.8; v Sheffield 29.8; v Lea Bridge 5.9; v Sheffield 5.9; v v Birmingham 26.9; and, v Leeds 10.10.

John Chaplin, Drakes Cottage, West Street, Clipsham, Rutland, LE15 7SJ. Tel 01780 410394 E-mail vintage.mags3@btopenworld.com is working on a book on Ove Fundin. He is seeking personal anecdotes about Ove from any source. He is also seeking further details about two particular incidents. The first was in 1958 when Ove was apparently warned by the referee before a Match Race Championship decider against Brian Crutcher at Wimbledon. Norwich protested because he was warned before racing had taken place. Does anyone know why he was warned? The second was in 1960. In the Gold Cup Final at Wimbledon there was an on track 'incident' between Ove and Ron How to which the crowd took exception and Ove had to be escorted from the stadium by the police. He is reported to have given back the winners trophy. Does anyone know what happened to the trophy?

Ole! 1949 Style

Alan Jones, our Leicester expert, has sent us an interesting item about Bob Greaves who went to ride in Spain in 1950. The Ole therefore has nothing to do with the Great Dane.

Bob Greaves spent much of his early riding career on the grass speedways of Holbeach, March, Wisbech, Ely and Peterborough, He had obtained second half rides at Norwich and Tamworth during 1946 - 47 and this led on to Coventry where he broke into the Bees team a year later. His stay at Brandon was brief and in April 1949 he secured a booking to ride at Leicester but fell in the scratch race, which turned out to be his only ride at Blackbird Road. Now out 22 of contract, his future did not look promising but his luck was soon to change with an unexpected opportunity.

Bob heard that representatives from the 'Estadio Metropolitano' Dirt Track in Madrid had approached the Speedway Riders Association and offered 2 month contracts to any British riders not tied to a team. The offer seemed too good to ignore and along with Leicester based Len Altobell and Cliff Crothers, who had ridden for Wombwell the previous year, travelled to the SRA offices in London to find out more about the offer.

The thought of racing speedway in Spain must have really appealed, but Bob told Alan that the trio were a little apprehensive of what they might experience of life under General Franco. Nevertheless, when they arrived in London, Split Waterman met them and he encouraged the three riders to go and stated that if it were not for his contractual ties, he would have himself go out there to race.

The terms of the contract on offer appeared to be very lucrative which included all expenses paid for travel and hotel accommodation. On top of this, the riders would receive a weekly wage of 300 pesetas, which put them in the earning bracket of a bank manager's wage in those days, and, of course they could add whatever they earned from the points they scored. The prize for winning a heat was 100 pesetas, rising to 125 pesetas for the semi-final and 1000 pesetas for finishing first in the final. In addition the group were asked to take a spare bike with them to loan out to the Spanish riders for a fee of 200 pesetas per meeting.

On arrival in Madrid the British party, which had grown to six with the inclusion of John Hayles, Maurice Hutchins and Bluey Paye, was escorted to their hotel, minus their bikes. They were introduced to the track managers, one of whom was the pre-war Spanish rider, Angel Archie. The bikes were being transported by train, which had been derailed 4 kilometres from Madrid and the riders were not reunited with them for five days. The English speaking manager, Gregorio Prender, was not perturbed because he said that this type of incident happened every day.

When the Spanish riders saw the bikes for the first time they shook their heads in disbelief as they were still using old Rudge and Douglas dirt track machines on the 450 yard black cinder track. No doubt these were relics from the 1930s when dirt track racing was staged in Spain. This had ended in 1936 with the outbreak of the Civil War.

The arrival of the British riders was possibly the first occasion since 1936 and was to become the forerunner of a tour by a larger group in 1950 led by Ted Gibson, formerly of Plymouth. Therefore these pioneers a year earlier were heralded as stars and hardly a day passed without a reference to them in the newspapers. It even went as far as each being interviewed for Nationale de Espania radio and they also featured on the cinema newsreels.

The local riders soon took to the JAP machines and at the opening meeting on 30 June, a crowd of over 25,000 people turned up and enthusiastically embraced the skills of the British riders along with their own favourites, Gomez and Ayuso. In that meeting Bob Greaves finished second on three occasions, fell once and beat Cliff Crothers in a match race. Cliff was amongst the points but engine problems held him back. John Hayles performed the best that night but that cannot be said of Len Altobell who hit the safety fence in his third outing. Len badly lacerated his foot and spent the next few weeks in hospital.

The second meeting was staged the following week but for some reason the Spanish rider, Ayuso, refused to ride and was promptly jailed for breach of contract. Bob continued his good form and Cliff had rectified his engine problems but neither could match the form of John Hayles. Due to the heat, meetings in July and August did not start until 11pm and finished in the early hours of the next morning. At the end of August the British riders were asked to stay on for a further two months but Crothers, Greaves and Altobell returned home.

Before they left their hotel, the trio received a visit from Victor Boston, a French promoter, who wanted them to race for him the next season and left his contact details. Only Cliff Crothers took up the offer to return.

The story ends when the riders were paid in cash to cover their return travel expenses as they were aware that it was against the law to take Spanish currency out of the country and if found out the trio would face a term in prison. They decide to seek the advice of the British Consul in Madrid who confirmed their thinking but offered no help on the matter.

Alan did not ask Bob if he converted his wad of pesetas into euros when the currency changed.
(Anyone with details of overseas tours by British based riders ?)

Coventry 1936

Colin Parker, from Kenilworth mentions the ten meeting season at Coventry Brandon which were unlicensed and featured riders using aliases. He recalls one racer called Frank De Resque (De Resque were cigarettes) who took part in several of the Sunday afternoon events promoted by Syd Farndon (Tom's elder brother). De Resque was actually Les Brooke, a Coventry motor and motor cycle dealer who had raced at the Tamworth Mile Oak venture in 1934.

Deadline for items for next edition is : 31st January 2004

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NATIONAL LEAGUE DIVISION TWO 1954 NORTHERN SHIELD

Away Team	Coventry	Edinburgh	Glasgow	Ipswich	Leicester	Motherwell	Wolverhampton
Home Team							
Coventry	xxxxxx	57 - 27	Not Raced	52 - 32	50 - 34	40 - 43	64 - 20
Edinburgh	42 - 42	xxxxxx	47 - 37	48 - 35	51 - 33	43 - 40	Not Raced
Glasgow	32 - 51	38 - 45	xxxxxxx	Not Raced	Not Raced	Not Raced	Not Raced
Ipswich	47 - 37	54 - 30	48 - 36	xxxxxx	46 - 38	32 - 52	Not Raced
Leicester	41 - 44	47 - 37	Not Raced	52 - 32	xxxxxx	35 - 49	59 - 25
Motherwell	41 - 43	55 - 29	58 - 25	55 - 29	66 - 18	xxxxxx	Not Raced
Wolverhampton	30 - 54	49 - 35	Not Raced	Not Raced	39 - 45	28 - 56	xxxxxx

NATIONAL LEAGUE DIVISION TWO 1954 SOUTHERN SHIELD

Away Team	Bristol	Exeter	Oxford	Plymouth	Poole	Rayleigh	Southampton	Swindon
Home Team								
Bristol	xxxxxx	58 - 26	50 - 33	55 - 29	59 - 25	63 - 21	51 - 33	53 - 30
Exeter	47 - 36	xxxxxx	58 - 26	55 - 28	49 - 35	63 - 21	52 - 31	51 - 33
Oxford	52 - 30	34 - 49	xxxxxx	53 - 31	45 - 39	47 - 37	56 - 28	37 - 46
Plymouth	36 - 48	43 - 41	51 - 33	xxxxxx	Not Raced	37 - 47	44 - 39	31 - 53
Poole	56 - 28	49 - 35	49 - 35	64 - 20	xxxxxx	49 - 35	59 - 25	55 - 25
Rayleigh	40 - 44	54 - 30	45 - 39	46 - 38	35 - 46	xxxxxx	51 - 33	50 - 32
Southampton	41 - 43	40 - 44	48 - 36	44 - 40	44 - 40	37 - 47	xxxxxx	40 - 44
Swindon	33 - 51	31 - 53	46 - 38	61 - 22	53 - 31	50 - 34	52 - 32	xxxxxx

Team	R	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	Team	R	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bristol	12	9	0	3	566	437	18	Motherwell	8	6	0	2	401	269	12
Exeter	12	9	0	3	557	448	18	Coventry	8	5	1	2	365	307	11
Poole	12	7	0	5	533	468	14	Edinburgh	8	3	1	4	307	363	7
Swindon	12	6	0	6	485	525	12	Ipswich	8	3	0	5	307	364	6
Rayleigh	12	5	0	7	470	533	10	Leicester	8	2	0	6	298	375	4
Oxford	12	4	0	8	478	525	8								
Southampton	12	2	0	6	432	575	4								

Teams shown in italics are those that failed to complete the competition and do not appear in the final league table. The fixtures shown in italics were staged but have been expunged from the records.