

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

Any Colour as Long as it's White!

After years of different coloured papers for our covers we have been forced to adopt the negative image of Henry Ford. For some strange reason it is no longer possible to purchase 90 grams per square metre paper in colour but we can buy it in white. Unless anyone out there can help with reasonably priced 90gsm paper that is – the trouble is we use about two reams a year so suppliers are hardly likely to fall over themselves to supply to us.

Before we forget, our next issue ends the Volume (Ahhh) and we will issue our annual questionnaire. As ever we invite you to send in questions you'd like to ask the rest of the readership – we'll select the best.

Editors

G. Jimmy Baxter

In the previous edition we looked at a tale of this pioneer promoter from the 1949 Liverpool Handbook. This second item, headed Odd Jottings on the Career of Jimmy Baxter is worth reproducing.

“The following riders were brought into this country in 1928 from Australia by Jimmy Baxter :- Sprouts Elder, Billy Galloway, Keith MacKay, Irvine Jones, Stewie St. George, Paddy Dean, Bluey Wilkinson, Buzz Hibberd, Arnie Hansen, Dick Sulway.

The late Bluey Wilkinson actually went to Jimmy at West Ham as a mechanic. He had little experience of riding but Jimmy liked the boy's spirit and set about training him. For the first year he was hopeless, towards the end of the second season he improved, until one day in September, he went out and 'cleaned the field' he never looked back and later became World Champion.

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'Tiger' Stevenson was another rider trained in 1929 at West Ham. He went there as a novice, Jimmy loaned him a machine, Sprouts Elder trained him to stardom.

In 1928 Jimmy could see that speedway racing was not going to last as a 'Circus' and searched hard for the answer. One day while reading the football results, he thought, 'why not a speedway league'. He got cracking and worked out the sequence of arranging heats, etc. The first 'try out' match he staged at Southampton, between his own teams, Southampton and West Ham. The other promoters did not think much of the idea, and could not be bothered to go and see the result. The Press, however, were so impressed that, when he staged the return match at West Ham, they all went along! The crowd were 'on their feet' for the first time, Jimmy was invited to form a league and league racing was born. Later in the same year, he had another idea. 'Why not an England v Australia Test Match' This he tried out later in 1929. It was more than a success, and now a regular feature on First Division track, but not his own tracks. Such is the thanks one gets in life. Incidentally the Australian captain for the first Test at West Ham was Frank Arthur.”

[To add to this item, the 1948 Stenner's Speedway Annual carries an article about radio communications between riders and their team manager during a race. Tom Stenner credits the idea to Jimmy Baxter. The Annual shows a photograph of Gordon Parkins, then the Plymouth manager, talking to Phil Day. Parkins is shown using a large microphone and a big transmitter whilst Day has a box, about the size of shoe box, on his back. Seems that Parkins' messages were also picked up by the local police. Needless to say the experiment did not go any further at the time. For those of you who pre-date transistor radios the kit would probably have had a massive wet cell battery and the radio probably had fragile valves. A fall would have wrecked the battery with leaking acid, and smashed the valves.]

{Derek Bridgett has been in touch to advise Jimmy Baxter was involved in setting up Midget Car racing in the UK. Can anyone help Derek with this?}

Feedback

Brian Collins, from Hove passes on a couple of gems. The first refers **2** to two French riders, Charles Bellisent and Camille Tanton, who

arrived in London in August 1928. Bellisent beat Mart Seiffert at Wimbledon on 13th August of that year. In a wonderfully worded criticism of Charles' co-rider, The Auto (Automotor Journal) of 23.8.1928 said 'Monsieur Tanton is a large man and sits the 'bus well. Judging by his avoirdpois [weight] he shouldn't ever suffer from back wheel spin.' The second is about the Speedway News magazine which was owned by International Speedways in 1928. Issue 1 dated 19th May coincided with the opening of White City (London) and the second issue dated 28th May coincided with the opening of the company's second venture at Wimbledon. It was a day ahead of the opening of the promotion's third venture which was Harringay. Issue 3 is dated 2.6.1928. Issue 2 contained about half of the material that had been included in Issue number one.

Brian also adds a bit about Baroness Fern Andra, who challenged Fay Taylour to a race. She was a film star who made over 50 films, mostly in German, although she was born in the USA. Full details of the Baroness are on <http://uk.imdb.com/name/nm0027992/> [Nigel Bird suggests that the Baroness maybe sat on a Douglas (but the engine wasn't running) and the dirt track angle was a publicity stunt.]

John Warner, 187 Crofton Road, Orpington, Kent, BR6 8JB responds to Phil Smith's query about the postcard copies of the Trawler and Club Member cigarette card set are rare by advising that they are and quoting their current catalogue value as £150. No 43 should be Sid not Syd Jackson but I suspect John that the error was mine (JH), not Phil's.

Roger Beaman has sent in extracts about Tamworth's Fazley track that appeared in a local newspaper. Nice to see an article arousing nostalgia, and hopefully rekindling interest, (but wouldn't it be nice to see more news articles about new venues opening? JH)

Eric Watson is not happy with the feedback on the magazine given by R M Young. Whilst we agree with Eric's thoughts on R M Young's sentiments, we, the Editors accept everyone's views and if everyone said we were wonderful we might just get complacent.

Finally **Eric** is concerned that by scanning in items from magazines like the Speedway Star and then seeking to share the material could run readers into trouble with copyright legislation. The Editors have tried to give advice and there is no doubt that copyright legislation is a legal morass. On balance the best idea is - if you are not sure of your ground – don't do it. Better to be safe than sorry.

Tyres

Over the years the subject of speedway tyres has raised the hackles of many riders and in recent years we have even had the allegations of tyre doctoring and attendant rules about the supply of tyres for the meeting. The introduction of unpopular tyres in 1950 saw almost mass rider revolt and, after a few unhappy weeks they were withdrawn and a return made to the previous version. How much longer before we see those lovely duvet-wrapped versions seen on Formula One cars in the speedway pits? Or maybe we'll have wet and dry weather tyres like our vastly over-rated but greatly slobbered over "flying machines". (Just ignore me if you are into Formula One cars. Jim)

For the record the tyres of 1931 (Samuel again) were restricted to 28 inches by 2.5 inches. Sammy went on to say "There are reasons underlying this ruling (which is universal), the principal ones being that larger rear tyres rob racing of a great deal of its interest owing to the fact that they minimise to some extent the "broadsiding" which is so spectacular, and furthermore, they cause certain amount of damage to the tracks."

Anyone with more information about the tyre saga over the years, which has been an interesting, and often recurring issue in speedway, and feels like telling us all about them will be welcome to do so.

Jim Henry

The Name's The Same

Don Gray from Waterbeach comments on the item in last edition of Volume 4. Don writes - I can confirm that the pre-war Cliff Watson was one of the pioneer north country riders. He took to the cinders at Salford in 1928 and had regular rides at Middlesbrough that year as both tracks were under the same management. In 1929 he started the season at Sheffield but moved back to Salford, where, for a time, he captained the League team. He had a few second half bookings at Wembley in October after Salford had closed for the season. In 1930 Cliff was a key member of the powerful White City (Manchester) side until the track closed down in August of that year. In 1931 he rode for Leicester Super but dabbled in second half events **4** at Stamford Bridge after the Super closed its doors late season.

1932 found Cliff back up north, this time with Sheffield until that track was obliged to close its doors in July when the club elected not to compete in the new National League competition. Cliff then travelled south to join Clapton but, failing to claim a regular place in their league team, he called it a day and retired in August. However, he was back with Sheffield when that club reopened for its one and only pre-war National League participation.

As the article stated, he did attempt a come back with Sheffield in the heady post war revival of the sport in 1946 but, presumably, decided to call it a day after scoring only four points in four matches.

On the subject of two men with similar names, there have been two called "Buster" Brown. The first, whose christian name, I believe was Leonard, rode at Leicester Stadium and Nottingham in 1929 and was a member of the Nottingham League teams of 1930 and 1931. In fact he captained the team in its matches in the Southern League before the track closed its doors at the end of July. I have no record of him since.

The second "Buster" Brown, whose first name I do not recall, was one of the galaxy of young hopefuls who found a berth at Wembley in 1949. He moved to Oxford in 1950 and to Swindon, where he was a leading light in seasons 1951 and 1952 before finishing his short career with spells at Poole and back with Wembley in 1953.

Hard on the heels of Don's item we received an item from **Eric Watson** in Southampton. Eric advised that the "Australian" (actually a New Zealander) Cliff Watson had his first rides at Sydney in 1939. He came to England in 1947 and joined West Ham. He had two brilliant seasons in partnership with Aub Lawson until 1949. Cliff then transferred to Harringay and after two mediocre years in 1950 and 1951 decide to call it a day and never returned from Australia. Eric also mentions the two Tommy Prices. Price number one was Tommy A Price (Arthur?) who rode every year between 1929 and 1939 turning out for Liverpool, Preston, Leicester Super, Belle Vue and Edinburgh. The other Tommy Price was the man who became world champion and rode for Wembley 1936 – 39 and 1946 – 1956. In addition Eric reminds us that there were two men with the moniker Fred (or Freddie) Williams. The first was an Englishman who rode for Salford in 1929 and 1930. The other came from Port Talbot in Wales and won the world championship in 1950 and 1953. Tommy was also a Wembley man from 1947 to 1956.

[On the same note the exercise on compiling Halifax details confirms that there was a rider called Stuart Robson who had outings in second halves 1949 – 1951 era. Obviously he wasn't the current day Rye House rider.JH]

Meeting Formats

The post war National Leagues used a very similar fourteen heat format for most of the period 1946 to 1953. There were some minor tweaks in the programming of the reserves in heats twelve and thirteen. The format was Ht1 1,2 v 1,2; H2 3,4 v 3,4; Ht3 5,6 v 5,6; Ht4 1,7 v 4,7; Ht5 3,4 v 1,2; Ht6 5,6 v 3,4; Ht7 1,2 v 5,6; Ht8 3,8 v 3,8; Ht9 5,6 v 1,2; Ht10 1,2 v 3,4; Ht11 3,4 v 5,6; Ht12 5,7 v 1,7; Ht13 5,8 v 5,8; Ht14 2,6 v 2,6.

On the same topic there had been some debate during the winter of 1951 / 1952 on amending the format to save a bit money in the days of eight man teams. One idea which surfaced, and was tested at Motherwell, was a six man team, thirteen heat format. One promoter voiced his thoughts in a letter to his fellow promoters thus : I am still doubtful whether the new 6 a side team with a league match of 13 heats will be successful. It leaves the necessity of a second half programme which will most probably end up in uninteresting racing. I think the public, who are very discriminating today do not want to see these easy second half rides which occur for some riders. They want to see closely contested racing every heat.

My plan is for a team of eight riders made up of four star riders and four second class riders. The star riders will be paired against each other as will the second strings. This will give sixteen heats viz eight of each, giving a full length programme of keenly closely paired racing. Each rider will get four rides, but star riders will get better pay. There will be no start money or bonus points.

The pay scale proposed saw Division One star men paid £3.50 a point and Division One second class riders receive £2.50 a point. At Second Division level the payment proposed was £2.50 a point for star men and £1.75 for second class riders. The cost per meeting would be £288.00 for a top level meeting and £222.00 for a Second Division match.

The specimen format saw home Stars numbered 1 – 4 and home Second Strings 6 – 8. The visitors would be numbered A – D and E – 6 H respectively.

The format proposed was Ht1 1,2 v A,B; Ht2 3,4 v C,D; Ht3 5,6 v E,F; Ht4 7,8 v G,H; Ht5 1,2 v C,D; Ht6 3,4 v A,B; Ht7 5,6 v G,H; Ht8 7,8 v E,F; Ht9 1,3 v B,C; Ht10 5,7 v F,G; Ht11 2,4 v B,C; Ht12 6,8 v F,G; Ht13 1,4 v A,D; Ht14 5,8 v E,H; Ht15 2,3 v A,D; Ht16 6,7 v E,H.

I am not aware of this format being tried out anywhere – are you? If so where, when, and what was the reaction?

About the same time another promoter suggested a format for seven man teams involving seven men, utilising five men five times, 1 man (first reserve) three times and 1 man (second reserve) twice.

The suggested format for this type of meeting saw an opening race for the reserve riders followed by a novice race for non team men. A fifteen heat match followed with the format Ht1 1,4 v 1,4; Ht2 2,5 v 2,5; Ht3 3,6 v 3,6; Ht4 1,5 v 2,4; Ht5 4,7 v 3,7; Ht6 2,5 v 1,4; Ht7 3,6 v 2,5; Ht8 1,4 v 3,6; Ht9 3,5 v 1,5; Ht10 2,7 v 3,7; Ht11 3,6 v 1,4; Ht12 1,4 v 2,5; Ht13 2,5 v 3,6; Ht14 3,4 v 4,5; Ht15 1,2 v 1,2. This would be followed by a contest which would count towards a Championship event similar to the Gold Cup of the 60's. This would be contested by the eight highest scorers, on a two heats and a final format giving a total meeting programme of 19 heats.

Again I don't know if this format was ever tried out. **Jim Henry**

Can You Help?

Eric Watson, 43 Hammonds Green, Totton, Southampton, SO40 3HU Phone 023 80871561 is seeking the christian names of the following riders. A. Wainwright who was at Southampton in 1928.; Waln (seen him as Minny or Miny JH) who rode at Wimbledon in 1937; L. W. Walton who rode at White City, Manchester in 1929 and A.J. Ward who rode at Salford in 1929.

Derek Carruthers delcarruthers@clara.co.uk has noted a reference to a meeting held at Whittlesey Main Road, Peterborough held on 4 September 1932. Can anyone shed any light on this venue?

Derek also asks if anyone has any information about a pre-war grass venue in Bournemouth before the war.

Jim Henry (Joint Editor) is looking for the following Sheffield information: 1947 17.4 v Wigan Times 2nd placed men SH trophy heats; 8.5 Best Pairs Details Ht4 + SH; 29.5 v Glasgow SH; 17.7 v Birmingham 2nd placed men SH trophy heats; 21.8 v Newcastle

SH: 28.8 v Birmingham Time Reserves Race; 25.9 Sheffield Silver Helmet Tournament SH; 9.10 v Glasgow SH; 18.10 v Middlesbrough SH; 23.10. Sheffield Telegraph Cup SH. 1948 Home: 1.4. v Edinburgh SH; 8.4. v Glasgow SH; 15.4 v Fleetwood SH; 22.4 v Birmingham SH; 29.4 v Bristol SH; 6.5 v Middlesbrough SH; 13.5 v Norwich SH; 20.5 v Fleetwood SH; 10.6 v Newcastle SH; 17.6 v Norwich SH; 24.6 v Edinburgh SH; 8.7 Belle Vue v Bradford SH; 15.7 v Middlesbrough SH; 22.7 v Glasgow SH; 50 Guineas Trophy Times + SH; 5.8 v Norwich; 12.8 v Fleetwood SH; 19.8 v Edinburgh SH; 26.8 v Birmingham SH; 2.9 v Glasgow SH; 9.9 v Newcastle SH; 16.9 v Norwich SH; 23.9 v Birmingham SH; 30.9 v Middlesbrough Times + SH; 7.10 v Edinburgh SH; 14.10 v Newcastle SH. Away 26.3 at Middlesbrough 4th Placed Men, Times; 20.4 at Fleetwood Times; 4.6 at Wombwell Meeting Details; 18.6 at Wombwell Sheffield v Middlesbrough Bears Meeting Details; 8.7 at Middlesbrough Times; 1.8 at Wisbech Meeting Details; 7.10 at Middlesbrough Bears Times; 16.10 at Fleetwood Meeting Details. **Mark Aspinell**, 1 Hylands Close, Barnston, Essex, CM6 1LG is looking for heat details for the following meetings. He is aware that some are published in the Speedway Star but there are discrepancies in these results and Mark would like information from alternative sources to check out these records. (JH - I've entered all Mark's requests as they lay in an unopened envelope before the Vol 8 No 2 was published due to my tardiness. I have apologized to Mark) 1965 6.8 Glasgow v Newcastle. 1966 6.6. Newcastle v Oxford; 26.8 Wolverhampton v Newport. 1967 30.3 Oxford v Belle Vue; 1968 29.6 Berwick v Middlesbrough; 27.7 v Nelson; 7.9 Coatbridge v Coventry; 19.7 Middlesbrough v Belle Vue II; 29.8 Nelson v Weymouth; 16.9 Reading v Plymouth; 5.9 Wimbledon v Leicester; 3.10 v Cradley. 1969 25.9 Middlesbrough v Doncaster; 29.9 Newcastle v Belle Vue; 6.10 v King's Lynn; 29.5 Oxford v Wimbledon; 19.6 v Wolverhampton; 26.6 v Sheffield; 3.7 v West Ham; 10.7 v Poole; 17.7 v Leicester; 18.9 v Belle Vue; 4.8 Reading v Belle Vue; 29.9. Sheffield v Halifax. 1970 10.9 Oxford v Newport; 15.6 Reading v Long Eaton; 29.6 v Rochdale; 6.7 v Boston; 29.8 v Teesside. 1972 20.8 Scunthorpe v Crewe; 11.5 Teesside v Canterbury. 1973 23.10 Barrow v Teesside. 1974 Rye House v Stoke. 1975 22.8 Coatbridge v Crayford. 1976 16.9 Stoke v Mildenhall. 1977 Bristol v Exeter; 21.10 v Birmingham. 1978 13.8 Milton

Keynes v Weymouth.

Mike Terran, 5280 NW 7th Street, Apt 401, Miami, Florida, 33126, USA is looking for scans or photocopies of the following programme front covers: Wembley 1932, Barnsley 1929; Preston 1930; Manchester (Belle Vue) 1931, Belle Vue 1932, Sheffield 1932, Cardiff 1936, Leicester 1937, Newcastle 1938, Glasgow 1940, Harringay 1940 or 1941.

Glynn Shales, 64 Station Road, Purton, nr Swindon, Wiltshire, SN5 4AJ Tel: 01793 770009 is working on the life and times of Neil Street and asks if anyone can pass on memories of Neil.

Vic Butcher, 7 Derwent Close, Tangmere, Chichester, PO20 2FQ Tel: 01243 532819 is looking for full information on the following fixtures involving Southampton: 1929 15.5 at Lea Bridge; 8.6 at Perry Barr (Birmingham); 11.7 at Wembley; 5.8 at Aldershot; 22.8 at West Ham; 12.9 at Wembley. 1930 25.3 at West Ham; 25.4 at Hall Green (Birmingham); 7.6 at Portsmouth; 23.7 at Exeter; 11.9 at Portsmouth. 1931 18.4 v West Ham at Lea Bridge; 9.7 at Exeter. Finally, Vic is seeking information about a fixture, Lea Bridge v Southampton which is meant to have taken place on 27.6.1931. Vic suspects it was postponed for some reason but would like confirmation.

Nigel Bird is not seeking information BUT he does ask if someone can do an item about the track at Luton. Over to you out there – can anyone do us an article?

Handicap Racing 1963

The references to the big five of the 1963 National League, Peter Craven, Bjorn Knutsson, Barry Briggs, Ronnie Moore and Ove Fundin frequently refers to them as being 20 yard handicap men. In the clouds of time most people seem to think they gave everyone a 20 yard start but this was not the case. In 1963 there were three handicap grades, scratch men, 10 yard handicap men and the big five. It is true that tracks needed three starting gates, one for each handicap but if the race had only 10 yard men the big five had only ten yards to catch up and it was only scratch men who had the luxury of a twenty yard advantage over Messers Craven, Briggs, Knutsson, Moore and Fundin. Maybe someone can tell us who the scratch men were and who the men were off a ten yard handicap. With seven teams of 9

seven men the complete list for the whole League would not be overly lengthy.

Jim Henry

On – Off Meetings

Bryan Tungate, one of our men in Norwich, has shed a bit light on this unusual happening at Wigan's Poolstock Stadium in 1947. On the evening of 10th May, according to Charles W. Willmott, who was Chairman of the Norwich Supporters' Club at the time, Norwich Stars were due to race the Warriors in an official fixture but the condition of the track resulted in an announcement at 8.30pm that the Norwich team would not ride and that the match was being called off. Indeed it was so wet that roads round the stadium were flooded. The first and second bends of the track were also under about four inches of water and track staff couldn't keep up with clearing it from the circuit.

However, as the fixture had drawn a crowd of between 1,500 and 2,000, someone, maybe the promotion was unhappy at sending them home without seeing speedway. As a result some of the Wigan riders decided to put on a show and took part in some impromptu races. According to Mr Willmott's records nine heats were staged and he reported that Jack Gordon equalled the track record in one race. (Aside – was it registered ? in a recent televised match that was called it was ruled that Leigh Adams track record, established in an early race in the meeting, could not stand. [Any thoughts on this one?]) Aussie Jack Baxter won one race and was third in another. Surprisingly the record notes that Norwich riders Paddy Mills and Roy Duke took part with Paddy (AKA Horace Burke) taking a second place and Roy a heat win. Not surprisingly the riders were described as being completely black after their escapades. Can anyone come up with full heat details for this on-off fixture? For the record a similar situation arose at Powderhall in Edinburgh when the promotion staged a few races after the referee abandoned a meeting. In this instance the promotion were fined heavily for staging racing on a track deemed to be unsuitable and now the rule book states very clearly that once a meeting as been called off by the referee due to bad track conditions, no further racing or training is permitted.

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The Web Spins Faster

We continue to progress with the web and the Pre-War input fronted by **Bob Ozanne** who is well supported by **Peter Jackson** has now been joined by **Allen Trump**. Between the three it is anticipated that this section will become a very valuable database of meeting details from this era.

The Post War section grows too with ever growing interest from all airts and parts. Halifax 1948 – when but a nomadic side – to 1951 has been added. Coming soon – Belle Vue 1947 and Bristol 1949. We are also adding small, but important, upgrades of information and to use an old Scottishism – Many a mickle maks a muckle (lots of wee bits make a big one.)

Help is always welcome on such a big exercise and nobody will be turned away that is for sure. If you have access to the web please give the site a look, especially the missing details sections, and if you can plug any gaps from programmes in your collection, well, that would be very helpful. You will be acknowledged in the contributors section. **Ron McNeil** has added a Can You Help? section to the web for anyone to use. It is not intended to replace the section in this magazine as I know some folk do not have access to the web.

Jim Henry

Goodbye Walthamstow

A recent item in the Speedway Star indicated that a company well known as house builders had purchased Walthamstow Stadium, in Chingford Road, London which was the home of the Wolves in 1934 and for the period 1949 – 1951, for a reported £35,000,000. To recoup that outlay it is clear that the future of the stadium is not too rosy as a greyhound stadium, so bang goes any slight hope of ever seeing speedway there again which is a pity. At the same time we seem to be losing speedway from the only London venue, Wimbledon, but at least the stadium seems to be safe from any re-development threat. An item of SKY TV Dogs programme featured a GRA Director stating the stadium was safe but some form of new development may be considered similar to Shelbourne Park. As they say – where there is life there is hope.

Jim Henry 11

Classic Programme Comment

The notes on the back page of a Bari Speedway programme from Italy in September 1945, when the British Army was giving their soldiers something to do, make amusing reading. In a item about a relay race which would feature “daredevil” officials and team members the crowd were advised : Spectators are earnestly requested not to throw missiles at the “devils.” (daredevil officials) Not that their absence at future meetings would in any way affect the quality of the racing, but it will cause considerable delay in clearing up the track for the next race.

Jim Henry

The Red Card

Just after we went to print with the last edition the Speedway Star carrying a report of the Newcastle v Somerset match arrived with details of the exclusion from the meeting of Magnus Zetterstrom. Interestingly the Paisley episode was mentioned in a recent Speedway Star and the referee named as Crawford Logan, who I understand never officiated again. Peter Oakes also mentioned an incident in which Michael Lee was excluded from a meeting. No need to dwell on these but they are unusual happenings to say the least.

Jim Henry

Two Maximums on One Night

Nigel Bird tells us that the last meeting at Birmingham in 1953 staged on 26.9. was a double header with the Brummies racing Wembley and then Coventry. Alan Hunt went through the card scoring an unbeaten 12 as the Lions went down 46 – 38. In the second fixture Alan batted the Bees for an unbeaten 15 from five rides. Nigel wonders how many riders have matched or bettered this feat.

For The Record

Nigel Nicklin, 73 Court Crescent, Kingswindsford, West Midlands, DY6 9RN Tel: 01384 401499 nigel.nicklin@blueyonder.co.uk, who **14** is, with Roger Beaman, the Cradley Heath expert, has written in to

initiate discussion on how fellow researchers collate and display their information with a view to possibly agreeing a standard to work to when researching meeting details. Nigel has sent in a number of specimens of the forms he uses to collate his Cradley Heath team details but unfortunately we are unable to reproduce these in this magazine.

Nigel's Form 1 is an A4 sheet with headings boxes which allocate a match number, indicate the date of the meeting, indicate the competition e.g. Provincial League, indicate the home team, the away team and the score. [JH - my only thought with this is a need for an additional box which would indicate the venue as it was not unusual in the late 40s and early 50s for teams to race each other on neutral venues.]

Form 1 continues with a grid for rider and score information. [JH - my thought on this is that it would need to be extended to cater for the ten man teams which have been used plus an allowance for riders taking 7 rides as per the modern set up.]

Form 1 continues with a grid / table making provision for 18 heats and allowing for heat time, replacement riders, points scored, and a column each for heat score and progressive score. Information such as exclusions can be included in replacements column. [JH - suggest expansion to cater for 20 heats to allow for open events.]

Finally the form makes provision for the second half details. [JH - suggest provision for recording times for second placed rider for three heat and a final second half events.]

[JH - All in all the form as produced is very neat and easy to read. It is an ideal model to develop just a bit further to allow for a few more details and the range of meeting formats which have been used.]

Nigel's Form 2 is interesting as it is a record sheet for detailing the sources of information used to record the sources of information from programmes and match reports. In addition the form provides the space to record discrepancies in the information allowing the accuracy of the information to be assessed. [JH - a very good idea as I am very guilty of not retaining details of the source of my information. This approach is very commendable, systematic and indicates a very rigorous approach to information gathering.]

Form 3 is a list of meetings with three columns at the right hand side which indicate the status of the information on the match, second half and match reports.

Nigel has sent a couple of other items - an abstract from a record of meeting scorers and a specimen scorers chart which provides a breakdown of riders performances on a meeting by meeting basis which permits the calculation of rider averages.

The bulk of Nigel's information is stored on a spreadsheet package with much of it on Lotus 1-2-3. However, this is being transferred over to Microsoft Excel as Nigel finds this an easier package to use. If anyone has another system they would like to commend to us, please feel free to pass on your thoughts. Also we are sure Nigel would be happy to chat over his methods with you. (Editors).

Daft Thoughts

Gordon Fraser, the columnist for both the Edinburgh Monarchs and Armadale Devils programmes who looks at various things which are not obviously speedway related in what could be described as an off beat way, then adds a speedway spin, and I were talking about daft ideas. From the conversation the following daft idea evolved. Christmas is the time for games and daft ideas. Here is one for you all to spend a thought or two about and see what you come up with. Most of the diehards will be aware that some teams used letters on their race jackets. Recently I can add E for Dublin Eagles and P for a team that raced at a venue in Peterborough to the alphabet. Maybe you could stretch it as Glasgow White City riders of 1931 appeared in one team photo sporting the letters A - F inclusive. In addition you can use race jacket logos - for example it is widely accepted that a heart symbol (used by Southampton many moons ago) equates to the word love - and team and/or sponsor names for this exercise. Now - can you come up with words and phrases which might have arisen had riders representing their teams had stood together in the line up before a meeting? For example if three riders from Tamworth Tammies, Dublin Eagles and Cradley Heath had stood in line you would have read TECH. or Wolverhampton Wasps, Dublin Eagles and Birmingham lined up you would have WEB. Have fun and we'll publish the best, and dare I say it, cleanest of them. **Jim Henry**

Graham and Jim hope you all have a Great Christmas and an even better New Year

Two men called Phil Day?

Keith Farman suggests I have an error in my records Fleetwood. Keith thinks the rider who I refer to as Percy Day was Phil Day who rode for Newcastle & Plymouth in 1947 and then for Yarmouth in 1948. Keith suggests there was another Phil Day who was an Australian. Anyone clarify this situation?

A Letter From The ACU 1940

This one is dated 21st February 1940 and says - quote:
Speedway Racing (Season 1940)

For some months past the possibility of organising speedway meetings during the war period has been a subject of discussion and you may have noticed recent announcements in the Press intimating that track meetings may be staged on certain London and Provincial tracks.

Prior to this latter announcement the Auto Cycle Union had advised promoting bodies that it would be prepared to consider any programme of racing which was submitted, and if it were approved, the Union would render assistance as in the past.

It may be considered that any announcement of a race programme was premature in view of the fact that the Union is in communication with one or two tracks which are not apparently catered for in these skeleton arrangements, and moreover, I have not up to the present received any information from the promoters collectively as to their precise intentions.

Pending any official statement, as and when it may be made, of any 1940 racing controlled by the Auto Cycle Union, you should, if invited to take part in any speedway meeting, communicate with this office before committing yourself.

The letter was signed by T.W Loughborough who was Secretary of the ACU.

Jim Henry

Rules and Regulations

It is anticipated that a few rule books from the pioneer days have survived but I wonder how many amendment sheets, which are **17**

but a single foolscap page, have made it. The Auto Cycle Union issued this amendment to the rules on starting procedures in March 1931 and it deals with Regulation 41.

Starts - It shall be the duty of the Steward to declare a race started and in the case of a false start to order a re-start. [For this purpose the Steward should be in an elevated rostrum. Placed in line with, and from about 20 to 30 yards from the inner edge of the starting line.

There should be no starter apart from the Steward. It should not be necessary for the Steward to leave the rostrum which should be so constructed that the Steward can make written notes under cover.

Telephonic communication between the Steward and the Clerk of the Course is desirable. Failing this, the Clerk of the Course should keep in touch with the Steward by messenger or in person.

The Steward should be provided with some means of signalling from the rostrum, whether a start has been made or not. This can be conveniently arranged electrically, by fitting the rostrum with a switch having three positions, "Yes", "No", and "Off". On putting the switch to the "Yes" position, the start should be signalled to the riders and to the public in some suitable manner such as a semaphore at Point A {shown on a diagram of the track as a quarter way round the bends one and two from the starting line.}, or the display of green lights. Similarly if the switch is put to the "No" position, a false start should be signalled.

Where there has been a false start and the Steward has decided which rider or riders were responsible, he must inform the Clerk of the Course and the colours of the said rider or riders should be displayed at point B {shown on a diagram of the track as a quarter way round bends three and diametrically opposed to point A.} so that on coming round for the re-start are automatically warned who was responsible for the false start. This can be arranged electrically or by flags. If the false start is caused by a rider who has already been warned, the Clerk of the Course, will, whenever practicable, exhibit a black flag to the offending rider, signifying that the Steward has excluded him from the Race.]

There shall, except for attempts at record, be but two methods of starting (a) the Rolling start and (b) the Standing start.

(a) For a rolling start there shall be transverse lines clearly indicated on the track itself, namely the starting line and a back line **18** four yards behind the starting line. The speed, preparatory to the

start, shall be set by the inside driver and may be limited. THE STEWARD WILL DECLARE A RACE TO BE STARTED WHEN AND ONLY WHEN BOTH WHEELS OF ALL, OR, EXCEPT IN MATCH RACES, ALL BUT THE LAST OF THE COMPETING MOTORCYCLES, ARE WITHIN THE TWO LINES.

During the preliminary lap, but only so far as 40 yards from the starting line, any driver experiencing mechanical trouble may claim a re-start of the preliminary lap by holding up his hand but he may only do so once in any one race.

Any driver causing a false start by –

(1) Being the inside man and reducing speed on approaching the starting line,

(2) Being too far in front'

(3) Boring, prior to the start, or

(4) Disobeying the orders of the steward,

shall be warned and on again causing a false start in the same race shall be excluded from the race.

(b) In the case of a standing start with engine dead, engines shall invariably be stopped until the signal to start is given, and the foremost part of each driver's motorcycle in contact with the ground shall be touching the starting line. The driver shall be seated on the saddle and each driver may be assisted in starting by not more than two pushers-off, Pushers-off must remove both hands and sever all connections with the driver and his motorcycle before stepping on or over the forward foul line, which shall be suitably indicated and shall be placed thirty yards in front of the starting line.

HANDICAP RACES. If the handicap race is based on time, the start shall be a standing start and the starting signals given by a timekeeper. If a handicap race is based on distance, the start shall be a standing start and the starting signal shall be given by the Clerk of The Course.

Aussie Powell

Glynn Shales from Purton which is near the home of Swindon Robins in Wiltshire sheds the definitive light on Aussie Powell as follows:

It was on Whit Monday, 4th May 1951 at Swindon, and the Robins were racing against Aldershot in a NLD3 match. I was a 15 year old schoolboy armed with my autograph book. I asked Ivor (Powell) **19**

to sign and he was pleased to do so. Having learned a bit about Ivor in the speedway magazines, I asked him "Are you in fact Australian Mr. Powell?" He handed back my book duly signed and said he wasn't, and was I asking because of the nickname he had of "Aussie Powell" ? "Yes" I replied, and Ivor then told me that his full name was Ivor Oswald Powell, and the 'Aussie' bit should have always been 'Ossie'. Since I heard it from the lips of Ivor Powell himself, I've always believed that the 'Ossie' became 'Aussie'.

Roll of Honour

Surfing the web I came across an item by **Audrey Lange** from New Zealand who was looking for information about a rider fatally injured in that country. Audrey advises us that Douglas William Pulford was a solo rider aged 30 when he was fatally injured at Western Springs Stadium, Auckland on 29 January 1948. Douglas, a Kiwi, died the following day. Contact Audrey on a.lange@clear.net.nz **Jim Henry**

That Tax

The Speedway Control Board sent out a letter to all Promoters on 22nd June 1951 on the subject of the Entertainment Tax. It was an article published in the London Evening News on 16th June 1951. The promoters were asked to publish the article went as follows:

Tax and Tracks

The long debates on the Finance Bill have seen much weariness and little unanimity. On one subject, however, there was remarkable agreement between Conservative and Socialist (Labour Party) backbenchers – and even a guarded note of sympathy from the Government – the heavy, entertainment tax on speedway racing. Mr Ian Orr-Ewing, who suggested a two-thirds reduction of the tax, pointed out that four tracks have now closed and another six are in imminent danger of closing.

For many years The Evening News has been pleasantly associated with this sport. It has no betting element in it. It is spectacular and intensely exciting – prigs and prudes may say "sensational". Well, let them. Countless thousands of young people have made speedway racing their first contact with certain virtues which are not negligible: **20** courage, resolution, swift judgement and dash. Perhaps from

watching they may learn to emulate and seek themselves to practise these virtues.

Having thus sent the prigs off the course in a cloud of dust and exhaust let us also say that speedway racing is thrilling.

And we feel, with all the M.P.s on both sides of the House of Commons who asked for concessions for speedway racing, that here is a chance for the Government to stop behaving in a mean and Scrooge-like fashion and act graciously and generously.

Even Mr Jay, the Government's Treasury spokesman on this matter admitted the "speedway racing is a fascinating form of entertainment," but made the old, old plea about the cost of defence plus the social services. However, he and the Chancellor have now committed themselves to "a review" of all entertainment tax.

Thankfully for this mercy, let us urge them to persevere in well-doing and set the speedways free.

Feedback

Nigel Bird (who acknowledges the assistance by **Roger Beaman**) writes: Coventry and the Pirates of Tamworth 1934

It seems myself and perhaps one or two others have been under the impression that the events at Coventry 1934 were pirate (non-licensed) affairs. This is not the case for it transpires that all the riders rode using their real names and one of the events was a home and away match against Hall Green (Birmingham). The Hall Green promoters, Charles Knott and Tom Bradbury Pratt would not have been party to pirate events. The Coventry promotion of CH Trimnell and C W East employed G Southouse as Manager, who was former organiser and announcer at Wolverhampton in 1930. The intention of the promotion was to build up a team so that they could enter League racing in 1935.

At the end of 1934 Trimnell fell out with East, possibly over the sale of rider assets, and left, East carrying on alone. While all this was going on Birmingham business man CH Trimnell was also running the "New Mile Oak" pirate track. It would not take Poirot to work out who was involved with Mile Oak. It would have been easy for ACU officials to find out who was who, in fact many officials knew riders personally. This would imply the tacit approval of Mile Oak by the ACU or at least turned the proverbial blind eye. This may be the **21**

reason why some riders did not use pseudonyms. It is possible the Speedway Control Board was happy with the situation because it gave the lesser lights more riders and experience. Had star riders appeared, there might have been a different response.

The Coventry team of 1934 included, amongst others, included Jack Parker, Squib Burton and Mike Erskine, the latter riding at Mile Oak under the name of Smudger Smithers. Some of the riders to appear at Coventry that year were Norman Trimnell plus the builders of the original Tamworth track, Jack Moulton and Alan and Eric Butler (Pork Butcher Tamworth). Eric Butler and (Percy) Norman Trimnell rode in the Hall Green second team. Hall Green first team raced as the Birmingham Blues in 1934.

Publications

Speedway In Leicester: The Lions Roar by Alan Jones

(Self Published) @ £15 + p&p from Alan at 24 Purbeck Avenue, Shepshed, Loughborough, Leics. LE12 9HD (Tel: 01509 561521)

This is the third and last volume of Alan Jones's excellent and comprehensive history of Speedway in Leicester and cover the Lions period from its reopening under Reg Fearman and Ron Wilson in 1968 until the sale of Blackbird Road Stadium in 1983. It maintains the high standards of the previous two volumes including year by year reviews; an insider's view of the sale of the stadium; season by season match results and a thumbnail biography of Lions riders over their short history.

This a book not only packed with facts and figures and photographs of Lions riders but also lots of inside information from someone who was involved at Blackbird Road throughout this era. Its easily readable text and layout make this a book that you can read from cover to cover or pick out chapters of interest to read first. The three volume history of Leicester Speedway follows the excellent three part history of Exeter Speedway by Tony Lethbridge published in recent years as models for would-be team/track historians in the future. Highly recommended. Review by **Graham Fraser**

Swindon Speedway: The Definitive History of the Robins

by **Robert Bamford** @ £16.99 + p&p from Tempus Publishing
22 Ltd, The Mill, Brimscombe Port, Stroud, Gloucs. GL5 2QG

Robert and his colleague, Glynn Shailes have spent the last five years cataloguing the history of Swindon Speedway initially through two self published match result booklets, then a version of the Tempus 50 Greats for riders from the Blunsdon team. Now they have produced the 'definitive history' for Tempus which takes a season by season look at the Robins from 1949 to 2004 with a concise review at each year, together with match and second-half results; rider averages; league tables positions and results from shared events. What many historians will probably find particularly useful is the team photographs for nearly every season as it can often be difficult for researchers to find a photograph of that 'journeyman rider' who rode in 1953.

Swindon must now be the most researched track in British Speedway and we await the Tempus update in ten years time! Another for the speedway historians' library. Reviewed by **Graham Fraser**
Chris Morton: Until The Can Ran Out by Chris Morton & Brian Burford @ £20 + p&p from Tempus Publishing Ltd, The Mill, Brimscombe Port, Stroud, Gloucs. GL5 2QG.

For some reason Tempus publish some of their speedway biographies in hardback rather than their normal softback and nice as this is on the shelf it does bump up the price a bit, in this case to £20. This is actually an autobiography of a racer whose whole 20 year career apart from an initial year at Ellesmere Port, was spent at his beloved Belle Vue. He also proudly captained the England team.

This is a warts and all journey and the names of star riders of the era are liberally sprinkled throughout the text and it does make a refreshing change for a speedway riders experiences to be given first hand and there are times when you can feel you were really there at this meeting, that track or involved in that crash. This is a story of highs and lows with more highs than lows for a rider who maintains an interest in the sport (this reviewer was at Buxton in 1995 when Chris promoted at that Conference League track for a couple of years and he was very hands on). We are not sure if this will come out in softback format but it's a good read in either format and a recommended buy. Reviewed by **Graham Fraser**

Footnote

Graham's review of the Swindon book set me thinking that the Tempus Speedway In series is far from complete and wondering 23

if anyone is moved to get on with completing the jigsaw. There is still scope for The North East [Berwick (2 tracks) Felton, Newcastle Brough, Newcastle Gosforth, Ashington, Sunderland, Houghton Le Spring (still a ?) Whitley Bay, {Clear up Burnhills once and for all}, Newton Aclyffe plus sand venues and grass tracks] Yorkshire [Hull (4 tracks), Middlesbrough, Sheffield, Rotherham, Halifax, Bradford Odsal, Bradford Autodrome/Greenfields, Doncaster, Stainforth, Castleford, Leeds Barnsley, Wombwell (2 tracks), Huddersfield, plus longtracks, and grass] Lancashire [(Preston, Barrows) Fleetwood, Blackpool South Shore, Blackpool, Highfields Road, Liverpool Stanley, Seaforth, Bolton, Rochdale, Salford, Belle Vue (2 tracks) White City, Warrington, Nelson, Burnley, Walley, Newton Heath] Midlands and Lincolnshire [Cradley, Wolverhampton, Birmingham (2 Perry Bars, Hall Green, Thorne, Scunthorpe (3 tracks), Skegness, Coventry (2 tracks), Brafield, Long Eaton, Tamworths]. The lists are not meant to be exhaustive, just indicative of the scope for the work. Anybody out there prepared to give it a go? **Jim Henry**

Wot No Times?

Gordon Fraser has a lot to answer for resurrecting Chad in the Armadale Dale Devils programme. Anyway – I digress. You may be aware that Walthamstow experimented dispensing with the times for a spell in 1951. Bristol's open season of 1946 similarly did not bother with times and now, thanks to Hugh Vass, I've noticed that Wimbledon's 1946 programmes did not have provision for times. Anyone know of anywhere else this practice was adopted excluding those pioneer days when the average speed of the winner was announced as an alternative to the time. **Jim Henry**

Deadline for the next edition is 31st January 2006

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1949 National League Division Two

Away Team Home Team	Ashfield	Bristol	Cradley	Coventry	Edinburgh	Fleetwood	Glasgow WC	Newcastle	Norwich	Sheffield	Southampton	Walthamstow
Ashfield	xxxxxx	38-46	45-38	45-39	39-45	45-39	35-46	52-32	50-34	40-43	40-41	48-36
Bristol	xxxxxx	42-42	33-51	54-30	39-45	45-38	51-33	51-33	34-50	41-43	37-47	53-31
Cradley Heath	63-21	xxxxxx	62-22	67.5-16.5	68-16	61-22	62-22	60-24	66-18	55-29	56-27	60-24
Coventry	63-21	xxxxxx	53-31	52-29	60-24	67-17	70-14	60-24	68-16	65-19	55-26	51-33
Edinburgh	48-36	34-50	xxxxxx	59-25	54-30	50-34	56-27	49-35	45-38	61-23	48-34	52-32
Fleetwood	57-27	54-30	xxxxxx	53-21	50-34	44-40	59-25	51-33	56-27	60-24	49-35	57-27
Glasgow WC	38-45	35-48	42-40	xxxxxx	44-39	35-49	45-39	47-37	53-31	32-50	42-42	45-39
Newcastle	55-29	38-46	36-48	xxxxxx	38-46	46-38	52.5-30.5	46-38	38-45	35-47	36-47	36-47
Norwich	57-27	40-44	44-40	53-31	xxxxxx	45-39	43-41	52-32	43-40	34-49	54-29	45-39
Sheffield	51-33	44-40	57-27	45-37	xxxxxx	58-26	61-23	54-29	55-29	45-39	58-26	61-22
Southampton	45-39	46-38	46-38	53-29	57-27	xxxxxx	38-46	47-37	30-53	51-33	48-36	54-30
Walthamstow	52-30	39-44	64-18	53-31	35-49	xxxxxx	56-28	53-31	35-49	46-38	49-35	41-43
Ashfield	52-32	27-57	54-30	59-25	50-34	68-16	xxxxxx	53-31	48-36	45-39	64-20	52-32
Bristol	49-35	35-49	51-33	35-49	48-34	51-33	xxxxxx	51-32	47-36	45-39	58-26	39-45
Cradley Heath	54-30	29-55	60-23	53-31	49-34	45-39	43-40	xxxxxx	37-46	47-36	53-31	41-43
Coventry	54-29	28-56	42-41	56-28	59-25	49-35	49-34	xxxxxx	48-36	30-54	50-33	42-42
Edinburgh	48-36	52-32	58-26	67-17	58-25	58-26	57-27	59-24	xxxxxx	46-38	61-23	57-25
Fleetwood	64-20	45-39	41-43	62-22	61-23	48-34	58-26	63-21	xxxxxx	41-43	61-23	56-28
Glasgow WC	52-31	49-35	50-34	58-26	49-35	60-24	59-25	48-36	34-50	xxxxxx	69-15	56-27
Newcastle	57-26	56-28	49-35	58-26	63-21	43-40	68-16	48-36	48-36	xxxxxx	57-27	48-36
Norwich	50-34	45-39	37.5-43.5	55-28	50-31	41-42	43-41	45-39	55-29	41-41	xxxxxx	52-29
Sheffield	45-39	41-42	52-32	54-30	53-31	51-33	52-32	47-37	44-40	50-34	xxxxxx	42-41
Southampton	44-39	46-37	45-39	67-17	58-26	42-42	48-34	48-36	40-43	40.5-43.5	41-41	xxxxxx
Walthamstow	54-29	35-49	54-30	49-35	53-31	62-21	56-27	50-34	55-28	52-32	51-32	xxxxxx

Team	Home											Away					
	R	W	D	L	F	A	PTS	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A
Bristol	44	34	1	9	2290.5	1393.5	69	22	0	0	1344.5	495.5	12	1	9	946	898
Sheffield	44	29	1	14	2017.5	1667.5	59	21	0	1	1179	665	8	1	13	838.5	1002.5
Norwich	44	27	0	17	2031	1649	54	20	0	2	1221	620	7	0	15	810	1029
Cradley Heath	44	25	0	19	1908.5	1771.5	50	21	0	1	1146	697	4	0	18	762.5	1074.5
Edinburgh	44	24	9	20	1803	1878	48	20	0	2	1099	742	4	0	18	704	1136
Walthamstow	44	21	3	20	1840.5	1833.5	45	17	2	3	1090.5	745.5	4	1	17	750	1088
Southampton	44	21	3	20	1741.5	1942.5	45	18	1	3	1045.5	787.5	3	2	17	696	1137
Glasgow WC	44	20	0	24	1757.5	1924.5	40	18	0	4	1081	763	2	0	20	676.5	1161.5
Fleetwood	44	18	1	25	1765	1916	37	16	0	6	1038	802	2	1	19	727	1114
Newcastle	44	17	1	26	1735	1949	35	16	1	5	1018	821	1	0	21	717	1128
Ashfield	44	12	1	31	1645	2034	25	11	1	10	957	882	1	0	21	688	1152
Coventry	44	10	1	33	1540	2134	21	9	1	12	908.5	926.5	1	0	21	631.5	1207.5