

# The Speedway Researcher

Promoting Research into the History of Speedway and Dirt Track Racing

**Volume No.8 No. 4 March 2006**  
**Edited by Graham Fraser and Jim Henry**

## Another Volume Bites The Shale

Well, the end of another Volume and we think we've come a long way since Volume 1 No.1 and the manifesto. OK, We've probably not achieved all we set out do but maybe we should do a review once we end Volume 10 and revise the manifesto for the next 10 years? Anyway, we are prepared to give Volume 9 a go and hope you'll renew your subscriptions and keep the items flowing. Volume 8 has seen the electronic age come and we thank **Ron McNeil** and all the contributors for our site in the web which grows ever larger. Volume 3 will be on line very soon. Yet again we include our survey form which seeks your responses and subscription renewals to carry us on to 2007. Yet again we are not going to skin you and will keep the subscription at £4.00 for the four editions inclusive of postage and packaging. Hands up – guilty – we have not managed to organise a get together but it is not forgotten about.

**Editors**

## Match Formats

A big thanks to **Barry Stephenson** from Workington for the details of the 1950 Spring Cup (National League Division One) match format. This was a 20 heat event with 10 men in each side. The team's 1 – 6 men were in the main team and 7 – 10 men were reserves. The format is Ht1 1,2 v 1,2; Ht2 3,6 v 3,4; Ht3 2,4 v 5,6; Ht4 7,9 v 7,10; Ht5 3,4 v 2,3; Ht6 1,6 v 4,6; Ht7 3,5 v 1,5; Ht8 8,10 v 8,9; Ht9 1,5 v 2,3; Ht10 2,6 v 1,6; Ht11 1,3 v 3,5; Ht12 7,10 v 7,9; Ht13 4,5 v 2,4; Ht14 2,3 v 1,5; Ht15 5,6 v 2,4; Ht16 8,9 v 8,10; Ht17 1,4 v 3,6; Ht18 2,5 v 4,5; Ht19 4,6 v 1,6; Ht20 Nominated riders v Nominated riders.

[It would be interesting to see this revived if only once. It might be good for Conference League level to give (say) the under 16s the experience of outings, albeit in the reserve berths, in a match 1

environment or even use it to give Under 16s and their senior men (rider coaches even) a couple of races against their peers. The format suggested is 1 – 6 experienced Conference Level riders, 7 – 10 Under 16s or 7 – 8 Under 16s and 9 – 10 seniors / rider coaches.] **Jim Henry**

## Clapton 1933 Part Two

**Alan Bates** continues his report of the hazy Clapton venue.

On 19 July Clapton lost the first leg of their National Trophy tie at Sheffield by 55 points to 71 when Tommy Gamble recorded a 24 points maximum for the home club. Jack and Norman Parker scored a combined total of 33 of Clapton's total. At Wimbledon on 24 June Clapton began well to lead 18 – 17 after five heats, But Vic Huxley and Syd Jackson returned maximums for the Dons who eventually won 37 – 26. A few nights later Clapton took on Sheffield in the return leg of the National Trophy and were still ten points behind on aggregate after eight heats, but they won eight of the last ten heats for a convincing 80 – 43 win on the night and went into the Semi Finals with a 21 point win (135 – 114) on aggregate. Jack Parker notched a 24 point maximum in this match.

Back to League action and on 29 July Clapton easily beat bottom of the table Coventry by 45 – 17 in a match that featured very slow race times because the match was raced on a very wet track. Phil Bishop recorded his first League maximum of the season. At Plough Lane on July 31 Clapton lost to the Dons for the second week running. This time the fixture was a London Cup first round first leg tie. Don's Syd Jackson with 20 points and Vic Huxley with 18 points were the best riders on display that night when Dons triumphed 71 – 54.

5 August saw a big crowd at the Lea Bridge track for the return leg and Clapton made a fine start in their attempt to pull back the seventeen point deficit. After heat eight Clapton led 33 – 23 but a disastrous Heat 9 saw Billy Foulds and Norman Parker fall and the resultant 0 – 6 set in the rot and they lost the next five heats and ultimately suffered a 57 – 68 home defeat. Jack Parker and the visiting Vic Huxley both scored 22 points.

After this disappointment Clapton did very well to force a 31 all draw at Wembley on 10 August thanks to Wally Lloyd and Phil Bishop winning the last heats after Clapton had trailed 23 – 25 after seven 2 heats. Two days later they defeated Wembley's Lions 34 – 28 at

home in front of a 12,000 crowd despite losing Norman Parker after a crash in heat 2. Norman's brother Jack turned in another maximum winning performance.

After these good performances Clapton were rather surprisingly hammered 22 – 41 by lowly Nottingham on 17 August when the home side recorded four 6 -1s (win 4, second 2, third 1) and only Jack Parker managed to win a heat for the visitors.

Jack recorded his 10<sup>th</sup> League maximum of the season two days later when Clapton just pipped Wimbledon 32 – 30, but the Dons were unlucky as top man Vic Huxley had a fall and an engine failure. Away to Coventry on the Thursday Clapton recorded their third draw of the season when a win by Phil Bishop enabled them to level at 31.5 – 31.5. Dicky Case broke the track record in Heat 1 on his way to a maximum. Another two days later there was a big crowd at the Clapton v West Ham match when the visitors came from behind to bag four 6 – 1s and to run out winners by 41 – 22. The Hammers' Danish star Morian Hansen scored a maximum.

Next up was the first leg of the National Trophy semi-final at home to Belle Vue on August 30. Clapton had the worst possible start on a rough track when Jack Parker fell and broke a bone in his leg which put him out of action for the rest of the season. The Aces then romped away with seven wins in the first eight heats and in all won twelve of the eighteen. Norman Parker was Clapton's top scorer in the match with eighteen as Clapton went down 54 – 70. For the return at Belle Vue on Saturday September 2 the Daily Mail sponsored a train for Clapton supporters at a return fare of 12/6 (62.5p) which included a reserved seat, admission to Belle Vue Zoo, a free ride on the giant racer and a fireworks display. The Clapton fans probably wished that they had not gone to the speedway as a Belle Vue gained a massive 98 – 28 win. Belle Vue won every heat bar one, when Phil Bishop came home first in Heat 5. Belle Vue chalked up twelve 6 – 1s.

The next match was also away to Belle Vue, but this time the Clapton riders put up an excellent show and led 26 – 23 with two heats left before losing this League encounter by 30 – 33.

Billy Lamont (the Cyclone himself) made his debut on September 9 when Clapton were surprisingly beaten at home by lowly Nottingham when the visitors won the last heat 5 – 2 to take home the League points by 32 – 31. Clapton won six of the nine heats. **3**

At home to bottom of the League side Coventry on September 16 Clapton ended a run of five successive defeats with a 39 – 24 win as Norman Parker returned a maximum. Clapton followed this up with a 33 – 30 victory at Sheffield thanks to a last heat 6 – 1 by Phil Bishop and Wally Lloyd.

Home and away fixtures with Crystal Palace on September 23 were both rained off. On September 27 Clapton made it three League wins in a row with a home 35 – 27 win over Belle Vue. This ended the Aces run of 20 consecutive wins. In this fixture Norman Parker notched another maximum.

Next followed home and away Essex County Challenge Shield matches with West Ham. In their home leg on September 30, Clapton went behind after the first heat and after that it was all West Ham as they gained an easy win by 74 – 49 with Bluey Wilkinson scoring 22 and Tiger Stevenson who scored 20 as their top scorers. On the following Tuesday at Custom House Stadium the margin in favour of the Hammers was even greater as they won 84 – 40. Bluey Wilkinson again scored 22 and this time Tiger Stevenson notched 21 points.

On Thursday October 5 Clapton gave another poor performance in being thrashed at Nottingham by 18 – 40. This match featured only one heat when all four riders finished the race. Clapton riders suffered seven falls and one race saw a Clapton man suffer engine troubles. The last two fixtures were the re-arranged matches with Crystal Palace, with Clapton taking the points at Lea Bridge after a 33 – 30 win while Crystal Palace won the return on their Sydenham circuit 32 – 29. Glaziers' Tommy Farndon scored a maximum at Clapton but only managed to score four points on his own circuit. In the second match Ron Johnson had a fall and collided with a track official who sustained a broken ankle.

Clapton finished the 1933 League season fifth out of ten with a 31 League point total. Belle Vue were champions with 62. Jack Parker was top League points scorer with 250.5 despite having missed ten matches and his brother Norman was next on 232 which was gathered over six more matches. Billy Dallison also topped the 200 mark, collecting 210 from a season where he missed only one League match.

Clapton used sixteen riders in their League matches and had twenty maximums – Jack Parker 10; Norman Parker 6; Wally Lloyd, with **4** Billy Dallison and Phil Bishop scoring one apiece.

[Thanks to **Alan**. Hopefully full details of this season will appear on the web in due course.]

### **Was John Lennon a Fleetwood Fan?**

On 8<sup>th</sup> December BBC Radio Scotland carried an interview with John Lennon's cousin who now lives in Largs on the west coast of Scotland. He recalled how he and John had been close as youngsters and how John had visited his family in Fleetwood for his summer holidays. As the interview closed John's cousin recalled happy days in Fleetwood "including chasing speedway riders from up and down the country around."

It also begs the question – did John Lennon ever go to see the Chads in his native Liverpool?

**Jim Henry**

### **Can You Help?**

**Jim Henry** (Joint Editor) is seeking heat details for Holbeach, Bell End v Wigan meetings 10.8. and 5.10. both 1947. Also seeking full meeting details for Bradford v Newcastle and Middlesbrough 4.5.1946. (Jim refers you all to the Work In Progress section of the web where a record of information required on a track by track basis is being compiled. Any information to fill any gaps most welcome.)

**Ken Burnett**, T2TV, 23 Eastbourne Road, Westham, Pevensey, East Sussex, NN24 5NE Tel: 01323 469105 or 07751978331 is seeking details of the 1938 Sunday Dirt Track League which featured teams from Eastbourne, Newmarket, Romford, Dagenham, Smallford, Cambridge and possibly Rye House.

**Nigel Bird**, 38 Blakemore Drive, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands, B75 7RN 0121 329 3942 is seeking copies of details from programmes from Birmingham Perry Barr 1928 SUNBAC and dog track 1929/30 or other sources of information about these venues.

**Kerry Pomroy**, [kerry@pomroyinc.biz](mailto:kerry@pomroyinc.biz) is seeking details of one of the pioneers William James Pomroy. Kerry wants to know if anyone has any records of Jimmy or Bill Pomroy in the very pioneer days. According to Kerry, William James Pomroy was born in Australai and during WW1 was a dispatch rider. He later joined the RFC and flew with them.

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Kerry knows William trained as a mechanic. He lived near Olympic Park Speedway in Sydney which opened in Maroubra in 1926 and Kerry notes William raced there winning the Maroubra Silver Cup in the very last meeting. Can anybody shed any light on what William Pomroy did in the UK as he is recorded as having come to the UK with the pioneers in 1928. [From Jim Shepherd's book History of Australian Speedway it looks like Maroubra was a concrete "bowl" speedway rather than a dirt track as we might think of it now.]

### **The Birmingham Motor-Drome (Greet)**

**Nigel Bird** assisted by **Roger Beaman** sets out a bit of history about a real obscure venue.

As the dirt track swept across the country, the Birmingham Motor Cycle Club (BMCC), the second largest in the country with 360 members, were quick to jump on the bandwagon and organise the first event in the Midlands at Wolverhampton (May 1928). Not content with this, the club wished to be the first with their own track but were beaten to it by SUNBAC Club with its Perry Barr circuit. The members list of this club (BMCC) reads like a Who's Who of all the motorcycling disciplines. Members included Jack and Norman Parker, the Dallisons, The Tafts, Bert Perrigo and others who were later to make their names in the sport.

Jack Parker may well have been a motivating force behind the club's interest in Dirt Track racing. A plot of waste land next to the BSA (motorcycles company) factory in Colebrook Road, Greet, in the heart of Birmingham was apparently given to the club by a former President of the club. The cost of the 350 yards circuit, for that's all it was, no terracing, no floodlights, no stadium, was £1,000 which seemed cheap even for those times. Prior to the first meeting many of the club members practised, Billy Dallison and others taking their first steps at learning the art of broadsiding.

The first meeting, a motorcycle gymkhana (motorcycle football etc) with the addition of Dirt Track races, took place on Bank Holiday Monday 6<sup>th</sup> August 1928). Birmingham's Jack Hood, British and European welter-weight boxing champion performed the opening ceremony and blew a whistle to start the first event – Sidecar Polo!

6 They eventually got round to the Dirt Track races.

The results of these races have yet to be found but John (Jack) P Lloyd, a medical student, set the first track record. {A couple of years later Dr John P Lloyd, on the occasion of his marriage, flew his bride to a Paris honeymoon in his own bi-plane.}

The second meeting took place on Wednesday afternoon 8<sup>th</sup> August 1928. A clash with the SUNBAC club's event at Perry Barr may be blamed for the meagre 2,000 people that turned up to watch a match race between Sprouts Elder and Ivor Creek., Elder winning. Prior to the match race Ivor Creek broke the previous track record set up on the Monday by J P Lloyd. Billy Dallison also made an attempt on the track record but failed. The Dirt Track finals were, 350cc and 500cc, were both won by Bert Perrigo.

No other meetings appear to have been staged until Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> May 1929 when the Birmingham MCC organised its 10<sup>th</sup> annual charity gymkhana and Dirt Track races with some trick riding by Frank Newman of Crystal Palace thrown in. The Greet Handicap was won by J P Lloyd from Arthur Johnson and Bunny Wilcox. The next event was the surf riding; the mind boggles at what this involves [no need Nigel – contemporary photos of this kind of event show a solo motorcycle pulling a board with a person sitting on the board and hanging on with all their might - see Motorcycling and Motorcycle magazines.JH]. The scratch race final for the golden-winged helmet was won by Jack Parker from Tim Read and Joe Hassell. It is sad to relate that the newspapers reports give full details of the side-car polo match but little mention of the Dirt Track racing. I have not so far found any other recorded meetings at the Motor-Drome but practising still took place there and Jack Parker made full use of this facility.

By 1930 the circuit had now become known as the 'works track'. A young BSA employee, Pat Biddle, learned to ride Dirt Track here prior to his debut at Perry Barr in June 1930. He apparently holds the unofficial Greet track record amongst his work mates. In 1932 Pat turns up at the Tamworth pirate track billed as a 22 year old American star. Yes, I can hear the groans, a Yank with a Brummie accent, very convincing! {Ever listened to Peter Karlsson on SKY? He has a magic Brummie accent for a Swede. JH.}

There is now a twist in the story of the track. In a Birmingham newspaper article written in 1931, W.J. Cearns (Hall Green promoter) in a bitter attack on the Birmingham public's perceived indifference to speedway, in particular Greet, claims that the track was built jointly

by himself and BSA as an experiment. In yet another twist to the story it is claimed that BSA, at a cost of £2,000, built the track for Jack Parker's exclusive use to individually test every BSA Dirt Track bike. What is certain the track at some stage became the property of BSA. The Birmingham MCC is now sadly small organisation and all its records have long since gone. However, this is not the end of the story.

## Feedback

**Nigel Bird** advises that Jack Parker was excluded for looking back at Wolverhampton in 1928. He adds: a) that Colin Ford (Stamford Bridge) was born and brought up in China where his father worked as a missionary and became a missionary himself when he retired from the dirt tracks; b) the aforementioned Clapton team had seven men from Birmingham on their books: Jack and Norman Parker; Wally Lloyd, Billy Dallison, Harry and Cyril Taft and John Deeley; c) two nearly tracks in 1928 were located at the Rover Cars sports ground and Butts Stadium, Coventry. (Must be an article on the never made stadiums its somewhere?); d) the English Amateur Athletics Association decreed that any athlete competing in dirt track racing for prizes or money would lose their amateur status.

**Nigel** mentions Don Smith who was a convert from Trials before and after a spell on the speedways. Don was a works Greeves rider and helped turn out a two-stroke powered speedway machine. For the mechanical amongst you a two stroke is not burdened by valves and fires every up and down movement of the piston unlike the conventional four stroke which fires every second up and down movement. Nigel is of the opinion that the two stroke delivered too much wheel spin compared with the grip derived from a four stroke. [Again for the mechanics amongst you – Did the Douglas twins fire at the same time delivering four stroke power or was there a power stroke from alternative cylinders delivering power like a two stroke? ]

**Ray Bysouth**, bysouthmax@ntlworld who runs the West Ham web site \*\* mentioned above was seeking information about one Sawdust Sawdy of 1936. We were able to put him in contact with Don Gray who immediately remembered Alfred "Sawdust" Sawdy as a West Ham second half man and should be able to fill Ray in on the man **8** nicknamed by J.S.H.

**The Editors** noticed an item in The Broadsider magazine of 3.6.1948 which recorded Eric Chitty of West Ham being fined £2 for looking back during a race and Ron Johnson being excluded for a similar offence. Quote “Action was taken against Johnson and Chitty because they failed to heed a previous warning about looking round. It is felt that continually glancing round can cause (i) accidents; (ii) obstruction to opposing riders, (iii) and in some cases provides a display of showmanship.”

**Vic Vanni** from Glasgow advises that Graham failed to mention that Chris Morton rode for Sheffield in 1993 in his write up on Chris’ book. Not to be out done Jim has been taken to task by **Adrian Pavey** who asks has Jim forgotten about his book Speedway in the North-West covering many of the Lancashire track Jim mentioned in his item about the lack of overall coverage of Britain by the Tempus “Speedway In” series. Jim apologises to Adrian on this one and Jim is pleased to note that Adrian is intending to produce a second volume covering tracks such as Liverpool, Rochdale, Bolton, Wigan, Warrington and possibly Newton Heath and Ellesmere Port. (That still leaves a pile to do and I can but urge you to give it a go. JH

**Adrian** also advises that there was a rider called Percy Day who rode at Fleetwood. Day was an Australian who initially spannered for Jeff Crawford and Harold Bottoms and others at Highbury Avenue Sports Stadium. Page 115 of Adrian’s book shows Percy on his bike after he had taken to the shale himself following some good second half showings.

**Bryan Tungate** has come back about the handicap system with the following:

There is no definitive list of who had the “front” starting positions for the 1963 season. The system was as follows:--

Only Reserve (No.7) riders were allowed the front gates.

The rule was that the lowest scorer over the last 6 matches was to be the No.7. If the teams were riding at home the last six matches were to be considered and if the No.7 had an average of less than one point per ride (CMA 4.00) he was allowed a front gate.

If the team was riding away then the last 6 matches were used to calculate the No.7 position.

Again if the rider concerned was averaging less than a point per ride he was allowed to use the front gate (of 3). The system meant that the visiting No.7 was mostly the only one riding off the front gate. 9

One night at the Firs (Norwich) Swindon Had Teo Teodorowicz in the position of No.7 with a low average getting the front gate. He took five rides that night and got two wins, the other three times Ove, “Maximum” Fundin took wins.

In one of the other seasons handicap racing was used some riders like Ron How, Peter Moore and Ken McKinlay were handicapped for HOME matches but not away ones.

## Who was Who ?

Sammy Samuel’s Speedway Guide of 1931 has a section entitled Who’s Who – And Why with the sub heading Personalities on the organisation side. In essence this provides an insight into the men who were involved in running the sport and it may help shed a little light on names in old programmes or article from early magazines. We reproduce it verbatim:

Mr E.J.Bass is the secretary of the National Speedway Association (Southern) Ltd., a body which is representative of all tracks in the South. Mr Bass is also interested in the Lea Bridge track, which was specially constructed for speedway racing in 1928.

Col. W.C. Bersey is a director of International Speedways Ltd. (Stamford Bridge, Wimbledon and Harringay tracks). He is generally regarded as the “strong man” of Southern speedway circles, and his guidance has proved of immense value in stabilising the sport.

Mr George Baxter – popularly known as “Jimmy” Baxter – is the presiding genius at Southampton, where he has made Bannister Court one of the most attractive tracks in the country. During 1928, 1929 and 1930 he managed West Ham which has now, however, come under the control of Wembley Stadium, Ltd.

Mr W.J. Cearns has many speedway interests. In addition to being a director of International Speedways Ltd., he is responsible for the High Beech and Hall Green (Birmingham) organisations. Several of the speedways in the country were originally constructed by Mr.Cearns.

Mr Norman Coates is the guiding star of the Leicester Stadium, where, despite keen competition (for Leicester boasts a competitive track) he has built up a strong following. The Leicester team is one of the best in 10 the provinces, and is particularly hard to beat at home.

Mr A.J.Elvin is the managing director of Wembley Stadium, Ltd., which shares with Belle Vue, Manchester, the reputation of being the most consistently successful speedways in the country.

Mr W.M.Haslam is the general manager of the Olympic Speedway, Nottingham – a track which deserves a far greater measure of success than has fallen to its lot. Mr Haslam takes a great personal interest in his riders, and if his scheme for installing private workshops materialise the Nottingham track will develop into one of the best equipped in the country.

Mr J.S.Hoskins – “Johnny” to every speedway enthusiast in the South – is the live wire of Wembley and West Ham. Australian by birth, he was one of the very first to be interested in the sport, and has been responsible for introducing some of the best Australian talent into this country. He is an immensely popular figure at all tracks.

Mr J. Hill-Bailey is responsible for High Beech, which, as explained earlier in this book, was the first speedway to operate in Great Britain. Despite its isolated position in the centre of Epping Forest, High Beech consistently attracts large crowds – a striking testimonial to Mr. Hill-Bailey’s organisation.

Mr.A.J.Hunting, together with his brother, Frank, are Australians who were originally responsible for the opening of many tracks that are now famous, including Wimbledon, Harringay and Hall Green (Birmingham). During the last two years the brothers Hunting have established the sport in South America, where they are responsible for meetings held in Buenos Aires.

Mr.A.T. Izzard is the secretary of the British Dirt Track Riders’ Association, an active body which exists to safeguard the interests of those who earn their living on the speedway.

Mr T.W.Loughborough is the secretary of the Auto-Cycle Union, which, as explained at length in an earlier section, is the governing body of the sport.

Mr R.S.Maybrook is the general manager of International Speedways, Ltd., and Clerk of the Course at Harringay, Stamford Bridge and Wimbledon. He has a particularly well-developed sense of showmanship, and the manner in which the famous Test Match at Stamford Bridge was staged last season still lives in the memory of those who were fortunate enough to be present.

Mr Fred Mockford is a director of London Motor Sports, Ltd., the body which controls speedway racing at the Crystal Palace. Mr Mockford 11

is an old rider himself, and before he introduced speedway racing to the Palace he staged very many spectacles of a motor-cycling nature in which he used to participate.

Mr A.G.Pickering is prominent amongst the stewards appointed by the Auto-Cycle Union to supervise speedway meetings in the South. His intimate knowledge of racing details causes him to be in popular demand for the major events.

Mr Norman Pritchard is the Editor of “Speedway News.” He is an Australian and was originally brought over to this country by Mr A.J.Hunting at the very inception of the sport.

Colonel The Master of Sempill, whose activities in other sporting directions are so well known, is a director of International Speedways, Ltd. In addition to the managerial side he takes great personal interest in the riders, and is altogether a most popular figure.

Mr C.L.Smith is interested jointly with Mr Fred Mockford in the running of the Crystal Palace track. He is also a member of the Track Committee of the A.C.U. To the frequenters of the Palace he is known as the “man with the golden voice” as he is responsible for the announcing to this ground.

Mr E.O. Spence is the manager of Belle Vue (Manchester) Speedway, and an immense power in both Northern and Southern League circles. His organisation at Belle Vue set a standard for all tracks.

Mr E.B.Ware is a prominent Auto-Cycle Union steward. Old time motorists will remember him as a successful competitor at Brooklands over a period of years. Mr Ware’s activities in the speedway world are, to a great extent, limited to the North.

## **New Magazines**

**Howard Jones**, Speed-Away Promotions Ltd, 19, Arundel Road, Lytham St.Annes, Lancashire, FY8 1AF has produced a couple of new magazines.

The first, Speedway Team Pix Monthly is a 20 page magazine packed, as the title suggests, with team pictures. Whilst the older ones are in black and white many of them are in glowing colour giving details of club colours and, for bike buffs, the contemporary machinery. There is a brief commentary on most of the teams and most line ups are correctly named. Printed on good quality paper it is priced at £3.00 a 14 copy or subscription of £36.00 per year for 12 editions post free.

The second is entitled The Speedway History Magazine and is produced in a similar format and is priced the same as its new stable-mate. The magazine which can be viewed as contributing to our knowledge of the past covers a range of topics and eras. The copy for review reports on the sad demise of Odsal Stadium as a speedway venue. It also shows the new hospitality suite which, strangely, seems to follow the sweep of the outer edge of the old speedway fence – now that place would offer some spectacular views of action on the bends but on wet night the window cleaners would be working overtime – dirt deflectors or no dirt deflectors.

Both magazines add to the history of the sport and we won't complain about that.

**Editors**

### **The Grading System 1946**

We have asked a few times about the grading system which operated in 1946 and it seems that the answer was under our noses all along. Good old Jim Stenner covered the issue in his 1947 Annual. No mention of the start of the system but a couple items on the review of the season explains all. It seems the pay issue was the nub of the problem. On May 10 the entry reads: Riders' Association refusing to sign 1946 contract, send deputation to Control Board with new contract containing amended conditions and demand that agreement be reached by 5.00pm May 13. Four instead of five payment grades wanted. Grade 1 £1.50 a start £1.75 a point; Grade 2 £1.25 a start £1.50 a point; Grade 3 £1.00 a start, £1.25 a point; Grade 4 £0.75 a start, £1.00 a point. Association also want riders' promotion – relegations system based on monthly performances abolished in favour of clubs up and down grading own men with appeal committee for disputes.

On May 12 Riders' Association extend ultimatum from 5.00pm on May 13 to midnight on May 16.

On May 14 it is reported that Settlement reached between Riders' Association and Control Board effective from May 20. The agreed rates were as proposed for Grades 1 – 3 above with Grade 4 £0.80 a start, £1.00 a point; Grade 5 £0.70 a start and £1.00 a point. Promotion and relegation system between the grades to stay until position is reviewed at end of June period.

May 19 results of first period of promotion – relegation between riding grades show Statham, Bradford captain relegated from Grade 1 to 2; **15**

Craven (West Ham), Goffe (Wimbledon), Pitcher (Belle Vue), Lloyd (Belle Vue) from 2 to 3. Wotton (New Cross), Clarke (Bradford), T.Price (Wembley) promoted to Grade 1.

May 20 Riders protest against gradings. Riders' Association call extraordinary general meeting for May 26.

May 26 Riders' Association at extraordinary general meeting, decide to present clubs with ultimatum expiring noon May 29, that unless the grading system is abolished and riders are paid a flat rate of £2.00 a start, £2.00 a point in National League and £1.00 a start, £1.00 a point in Northern League – “further action will be taken.”

May 27 Clubs after six hour meeting, call on Riders' Association to withdraw ultimatum before discussing revision of payments. Association refuse.

May 28 Compromise effected in pay dispute. Riders' Association withdraw ultimatum. Clubs agree to abolish grading and pay £1.75 a point, £1.75 a start in National league and £1.00 a start, £1.00 a point in Northern League pending round table conference with Control Board on June 6.

June 7 (Announced that) As a result of round table conference between Control Board, clubs and riders it was agreed to pay National League riders £1.75 a start, £2.00 a point; Northern League riders £1.00 a start and £1.00 a point for crowds up to 12,000. £1.25 a start and £1.25 a point for crowds between 12,001 and 15,000 and £1.50 a start and £1.50 a point for crowds between 15,001 and 20,000.

It must be concluded that the grading system ended as part of this exercise.

**Editors**

### **The Day That The Rains Came**

**Barry Stephenson**, from Workington sent in the following details compiled over the period 1946 to 2004 which gives an indication of how many meetings have fallen victim of the weather. The information is given in the following format Year – Meetings – Rained off\*– Percentage.

1946 – 400 – 3 – 0.8; 1947 - 700 – 5 – 0.7; 1948 – 950 – 18 – 1.9; 1949 – 1150 – 9 – 0.8; 1950 – 1250 – 31 – 2.5; 1951 – 1250 – 24 – 1.9; 1952 - 1050 – 28 – 2.7; 1953 – 900 – 38 – 4.2; 1954 650 – 31 – 4.8; 1955 – 500 – 14 – 2.8; 1956 – 400 – 23 – 5.8; 1957 – 370 – 14 – 3.8; 1958 – 300 – 21 – 7.0; 1959 – 350 – 9 – 2.6; 1960 – 525 – 30 – 5.7;

1961 – 600 – 17 – 2.8; 1962 – 575 – 28 – 4.9; 1963 – 580 – 33 – 5.7; 1964 – 580 – 24 – 4.1; 1965 – 550 – 26 – 4.7; 1966 – 590 – 40 – 6.8; 1967 – 585 – 31 – 5.3; 1968 – 700 – 40 – 5.7; 1969 – 925 – 30 – 3.2; 1970 – 1075 – 35 – 3.3; 1971 – 1100 – 40 – 3.6; 1972 – 1100 – 48 – 4.4; 1973 – 1200 – 84 – 7.0; 1974 – 1150 – 82 – 7.1; 1975 – 1250 – 55 – 4.4; 1976 1250 – 71 – 5.7; 1977 – 1250 – 65 – 5.2; 1978 – 1300 – 88 – 6.8; 1979 – 1275 – 103 – 8.1; 1980 – 1250 – 116 – 9.3; 1981 – 1175 – 111 – 9.4; 1982 – 1075 – 67 – 6.2; 1983 – 1100 – 85 – 7.7; 1984 – 1040 – 63 – 6.1; 1985 – 1025 – 104 – 10.1; 1986 – 1025 – 113 – 11.0; 1987 – 985 – 138 – 14.0; 1988 – 860 – 105 – 12.2; 1989 – 850 – 75 – 8.8; 1990 – 805 72 – 8.9; 1991 – 800 – 71 – 8.9; 1992 – 765 – 95 – 12.4; 1993 – 700 – 100 – 14.3; 1994 – 700 – 78 – 11.1; 1995 – 700 – 45 – 6.4; 1996 – 670 – 43 – 6.4; 1997 – 820 – 86 – 10.5; 1998 – 770 – 96 – 12.5; 1999 – 735 – 51 – 6.9; 2000 – 900 – 115 12.8; 2001 – 870 – 90 – 10.3; 2002 – 935 – 90 – 9.6; 2003 1075 – 65 – 6.0; 2004 – 1090 – 160 – 14.7. Overall 1946 – 2004 – 51100 – 3472 – 6.8.

Barry has broken down the information on a month by month basis which is a bit too detailed for publication. The worst Month in Barry's records is October 1980 when a staggering 40 meetings were lost to bad weather. \* Not impossible that some of the early season fixtures fell victim of snow.

Barry poses the question – Was 2004 the wettest speedway year ever? And answers it with – In short – Yes! IN 1946 only three meetings were off.

1970s onwards there are lots of rained off meetings. Why? Some reasons could be:

1. Climate changes during the last 50 years.
2. Track materials and absorbancy / drainage.
3. Tyre and rubber compounds.
4. Type of back wheel (diameter) and width of tyre.
5. A combination of items e.g. track materials and soft rubber tyres.
6. More meetings being held.
7. The season starting earlier and finishing later.
8. The power of modern engines / traction.
9. Some speedway riders don't like wet tracks.

Barry points out that he has only listed meetings that never started and he has not included abandoned meetings.

For collectors the big question is: How many of the 3472 match programmes were destroyed and never used? Even worse, how 17

many rained off meetings where only a handful of programmes escaped the track. For example Belle Vue v Bradford 24.10.86, when programmes were issued to season ticket holders etc. the public was not admitted into the stadium. The next morning the rest of the programmes were in the bottom of a skip under water and an estimated 70 programmes “escaped” that night. [Often the track will issue the programme the next week, or a reasonably soon after re-staging, with a slim wrap round or, as an example at Old Meadowbank in the mid sixties, when the programme was reused with a single sheet insert which carried information about the following week. The most illusive was the 1962 Neath Rained Off which was difficult to spot as the cover photograph was used again the following week versus Stoke. JH]

### “Buck” Whitby was Syd

A recent item on the West Ham dedicated web site\*\*

[www.freewebs.com/customhousekid](http://www.freewebs.com/customhousekid) led to us being able to contact Buck Whitby's daughter. There has been speculation as to what Buck's real name was and she advised that Buck's real name was Sydney (Syd). The item on the web site also advises that Buck was killed in a motorcycle accident not long after his return to Australia, as similar fate to that of Aussie World Champion Bluey Wilkinson.. I have taken the opportunity of advising Buck's daughter about the web site so she can see how her Dad did in his time with tracks like West Ham, Harringay and Birmingham and his pre-war exploits will also be added in due course

**Jim Henry**

### New Zealand History

We had an email the other month ago from **Dave Gifford** who many of you will recall as rider with Berwick and a few more besides. Dave, who was full of praise for our site, is heavily into speedway history in his native New Zealand and it heartening to see an ex-rider taking an interest, an interest he admits to having since long before he took up the sport. There is a link to the web site in New Zealand at the Speedway Researcher web site if you want to see what they are up to. Otherwise 18 you can contact Dave at [giffords@xtra.co.nz](mailto:giffords@xtra.co.nz) .



## Second Halfs

Those of you looking at the web results will often see a ? symbol some way to the right of the time for the winner in the results of a second half event which is staged over three heats and a final. It is not clear if the rule was to time the second man and the fastest of the three went to the final, or, if some tracks (like Harringay for example) merely took the second man in the heat which had the lowest time as the fastest second. Can anyone shed some light on this as it could save fruitless searches for times to complete the second half details. On the web needs lists I have been showing the need for times for the second man as SH Times 2<sup>nd</sup> Men.

**Jim Henry**

## Roll of Honour

It is with deep regret that we add another name to the Roll of Honour. Young Aussie Ashley Jones was fatally injured at Myrtleford in his home country on Saturday November 12 2005 aged 23. Ashley had ridden for King's Lynn and had been a member of their KO Cup and Young Shield winning squad. Our sympathies go to Ashley's family and friends both in Australia and in the UK.

The Roll of Honour is now on the Speedway Researcher web site. There are plans to include a Roll of Honour as a feature at the new Speedway Museum near Rye House.

**Editors**

## Web Words

The web continues to grow and we must thank **Ron McNeil** for patiently developing the site and thank **Eric Watson** for his graphic skills. The Magazine now has a "crest" in heraldic style thanks to **Eric**. In Scotland the Lord Lyon would forbid us to use an unmatriculated heraldic device as drawn by **Eric** would you believe? **Ron** did tell us what the translation of the Latin motto was as he used some computer wizardry to translate Eric's words into Latin. Maybe Ron can put in sub titles for those of us deficient in Latin. We could list all the web site carries but we do suggest that you have a look and see. Additions since the last edition includes material on Belle Vue, West Ham,

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Harringay and Bradford in the immediate post-war days and the pre-war section continues to grow apace. Help is always welcome.

We would like to thank **John Whitaker** for his generous help with the record of the first season at Bradford's Odsal Stadium (1945). In the thanking mode we must not forget **Hugh Vass** (who has been elevated to sainthood for his patient and thorough checking work [much to the amusement of Hugh's good lady] by Ian Moultray) for his generous help with seasons 1946 and 1947. Eds.

## Testimonials

**David Hartley**, from Sowerby Bridge, West Yorkshire has kindly sent in an update of the Testimonials (or other as stated) to add to the lists published in earlier volumes. All the following are 2005.

30.3. Magnus Zetterstrom – Poole; 8.4. Leigh Lanham – Arena Essex (Postponed); 2.6. Jeremy Doncaster Farewell – Ipswich; 17.7. Shane Parker – Glasgow; 23.7. Alan Mogridge – Stoke; 2.8. Ray Morton – Isle of Wight; 24.9. Carl Stonehewer – Workington; 5.10. Leigh Lanham – Arena Essex; 8.10. Brent Werner – Rye House; 9.10. Malcolm Holloway Farewell – Swindon. Thanks to David for the Memorial meeting details.

## Brotherhoods

**Fred Paul** from Cornwall writes in relation to brotherhoods to mention the Courtneys. He recalls Mark and his brother Sean (who are well known to us who watch our speedway up in Scotland) and Mark's two boys Scott and Jamie who have turned their hands to speedway as well. Mark and Scott were, at one time, in the same Glasgow side as another father and son duo of Les and Aiden Collins. We await with interest someone to come up with a list.

Three rider generations are probably a bit rarer but could be considered. Three spring to mind immediately – Alec Grant, Rob Grant (Snr) and Rob Grant (Jnr); Guy Allott, Nicky Allott and Adam Allott and Charlie Dugard, Bobby and Eric Dugard and Martin Dugard. We would suspect the Swales lads from Osmotherly in North Yorkshire way (Jackie, Tony, Tim, Andy, Johnathon to name but a few) would be able to claim **20** three in a row. For the by marriage links gives us Neil Street, Phil

Crump and Jason Crump. Are there any others we have missed? And, Who will be the first to be the fourth generation? **Editors**

### **Fond Farewells**

It is always a regret to report the imminent demise of another ex speedway venue. This time the stadium on the block is The Grove way in Milton Keynes which is reportedly going to be used for housing. Anyone out there fancy compiling a list of stadiums which have fallen prey of housing or other uses. Powderhall (Edinburgh), Cradley Heath, Bristol (Knowle) and West Ham are four that spring immediately to mind. Glasgow White City and Blantyre (Greyhound Stadium) both fell victim to road building while Newcastle (Gosforth) and Harringay both were redeveloped for retail uses. **Jim Henry**

### **A Hauf an' a Hauf**

Those with West of Scotland connections will be aware that the above was a well known way of ordering a half pint of beer and a whisky (a wee hauf). That aside we reported some time ago about the rider who scored half a point. Working on 1946 Bradford information supplied by **Hugh Vass** light was shed on a meeting where both teams (Bradford and Wembley) had riders who only scored half a point. Charlie Oates and Charlie May both ended up with the unusual score. More unusual still is that this meeting featured two dead heats with Bradford's Ernie Price gathering 5.5 and Wembley's Bill Gilbert scoring 1.5. Price and Gilbert finished level in heat 5 whilst Oates and May could not be separated in heat 12. **Jim Henry**

### **Publications**

**A History of the Speedway Ashes - by Peter Foster** - Pub. By Tempus Publishing Ltd, The Mill, Brinscombe Port, Stroud, Gloucs GL5 2QG @ £18.99 + p&p

At a time when Australian speedway is at something of a crossroads; tracks with an uncertain future but a steady stream of Aussie youngster continuing to come across to the UK to plug gaps in the bottom end of many British teams, it is perhaps appropriate that **21**

this weighty tome should remind us of the great days of rivalry between these old rivals.

Its author, Peter Foster, will be remembered from his invaluable Tempus two part history of Cradley Heath. In this book he looks back nostalgically at the heyday of the sport when just the mention of a Roos team would bring the crowds flocking in the thousands. The format is a decade by decade review of the meetings between the two sides. Sensibly it does not include the lower division 'test' matches between riders of the two countries. Frustratingly for many researchers it only details the result and individual riders points totals, no heat details are included. I suppose that, in trying to cover nine decades of meetings between the two countries, such information would have produced a book twice the size - it would no doubt have been twice the cost as well - so you can't have everything! The meeting reports are compact as are the scoring details and the photographs, although fascinating are compressed into two sections, and although there are programme cover illustrations this book still has a wordy feel to it. This is one for the nostalgists and the historians but will provide a fascinating insight into a chapter of the sport which no longer excites speedway fans the way it used to. Review by **Graham Fraser**

### **Speedway's Classic Meetings by Norman Jacobs & Chris**

**Broadbent** - Pub. By Tempus Publishing Ltd, The Mill, Brinscombe Port, Stroud, Gloucs GL5 2QG @ £14.99 + p&p

Now there's a title to stir up controversy!! I can see it now hordes of speedway historians, pens poised, to tell us how they disagree with the choice of meetings for this title and what their own choices would have included. **(Eds: Please let us have your own favoured classic meeting for us to include in a future Researcher - with luck this could become a regular feature).**

Nothing wrong however with someone putting their head above the parapet with their own favoured classic meetings and as Norman & Chris indicate in their Introduction this is not merely their preferences but those of a long list of people who they have sat down with and made a judgment of the basis of their memories.

This title could run and run into several volumes - if people are excited by the idea of this book and perhaps the controversy over the **22** selection of meetings. The choice is spread across the history of

the sport with meetings from every decade - not all internationals or including only the star names but also lower league clashes that are described in nailbiting fashion in the style of the cliffhanger.

A good read liberally illustrated with rider and action photographs from each era. Want to read more choices of 'classic meetings' then go out and buy this book and/or just let us have your own classic meeting story for the Researcher. It's down to you now!

Review by **Graham Fraser**

The Very Best of Speedway Plus - free download from [www.speedwayplus.co.uk](http://www.speedwayplus.co.uk)

The internet has been steadily developing as an important source of information about current speedway for many years and speedway chat rooms offer ample opportunity for fans to exchange views on any speedway topic under the sun. It is only in recent times that speedway history has started to figure on the Internet however. (We like to think our own website [www.speedwayresearcher.org.uk](http://www.speedwayresearcher.org.uk) is a contribution to this process which allows speedy and easy exchange of information for speedway historians).

Issues one and two of this Internet publication is now available and possibly even no 3 so get searching. I am reviewing issue 2: Autumn 2005,

It includes an interview with Reg Fearman; a column from Norfolk radio presenter Mike Bennett; a non-essential guide to the Workington Tigers from 1987 and other recent nomad teams; columns by Dave Green and Chris Seaward; a track photograph review of the Arena Essex Purfleet track and the old Belle Vue at Hyde Road; an interesting article by Stuart Cosgrave who promoted speedway in Ireland at Shelbourne; and a large extract from the new Chris Morton book 'Until the Can Ran Out'

Well worth a viewing, especially as it's free on the internet. (There has been suggestions that the Researcher magazine ought to go online instead of a paper copy - we are aware however that many readers either don't use computers or just like paper! We will continue to produce the Researcher in paper form as long as there are enough subscribers out there to covers costs of production/postage etc. The Researcher website will run in tandem to allow detailed exchange of research information to best build up a database of detailed speedway history available to all). Review by **Graham Fraser** 23

## Glasgow Pre War History Update

Thanks to **Brian Collins** in sunny Brighton for filling a small gap in my Glasgow History. Brian uncovered that the White City Manchester v Glasgow White City did take place on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1929. The result was a 23 – 4 win for the home side but there are currently no further details. Brian's information confirms a view held by **Trevor James**, joint author with **Barry Stephenson** of the excellent history of speedway in Manchester up to the end of the war, the Manchester Guardian is well worth a look for pre-war speedway history information. **Jim Henry**

## Speedway and Golf

Nobody took us up on our race jacket words but **Nigel Bird**, has come up with a lovely bit of speedway whimsy. He has come up with a speedway team by golf. No name for the team but Nigel suggests that the race jacket should be an ace of clubs.

At number 1 Johnnie Hole .....a hole in one; number 2 Billy Hole....the second hole; number 3 Jack Wood... number three wood; at number 4,6 or 6 Eric Irons.....4,5 or 6 club irons; number 5 Putt Mossman ..... five putted; number 6 Bill Pitcher....Putt and Bill paired would be known as Pitch and Putt; number 7 Wally Green (or Richard) .... The green at last. [What Julian Parr ...something to do with scores; (Eastbourne ) Eagles..... something to do with scores; while the bunkers could have been filled with silver sand left over from West Ham or sand used at Bristol Eastville? **Editors**]  
Anyone come up with something similar? EDS.

**Deadline for the next edition is 31<sup>st</sup> May 2006**

**Webmaster Ron McNeil** [www.speedwayresearcher.org.uk](http://www.speedwayresearcher.org.uk)

**Contact Ron on** [info@speedwayresearcher.org.uk](mailto:info@speedwayresearcher.org.uk)

**The Speedway Researcher is edited and published by :**

**Graham Fraser**

**7 B Bruce Street**

**Stirling, FK8 1PD**

**24 Tel: 01786 471992**

**Jim Henry**

**90 Greenend Gardens,**

**Edinburgh, EH17 7QH**

**Tel: 0131 664 7185**

## National League Division One 1938

Away Team	Home Team						
	Belle Vue	Bristol	Harringay	New Cross	Wembley	West Ham	Wimbledon
Belle Vue	xxxxxx	49 – 35	53 – 31	42 – 41	48 – 36	43 – 41	50 – 34
	xxxxxx	54 – 30	45 – 39	40 – 44	43 – 41	36 – 47	50 – 34
Bristol	40 – 41	xxxxxx	47 – 36	34 – 46	37 – 47	44 – 39	41 – 41
	45 – 38	xxxxxx	42 – 41	52 – 31	32 – 50	39.5 – 44.5	40 – 44
Harringay	51 – 30	41 – 42	xxxxxx	59 – 24	38 – 45	43 – 39	54 – 30
	52 – 32	45 – 39	xxxxxx	52 – 32	47 – 37	42 – 40	46 – 38
New Cross	55 – 28	51 – 33	56 – 28	xxxxxx	45 – 39	53 – 30	51 – 33
	55 – 29	48 – 34	54 – 39	xxxxxx	45 – 39	50 – 34	39 – 45
Wembley	54 – 30	57 – 27	50 – 34	37 – 46	xxxxxx	44 – 40	43 – 41
	47 – 36	54 – 28	49 – 35	35 – 48	xxxxxx	48 – 35	45 – 39
West Ham	46 – 38	55 – 29	55 – 28	41 – 39	40 – 34	xxxxxx	57 – 27
	56 – 28	54 – 30	50 – 33	42 – 42	50 – 34	xxxxxx	42 – 41
Wimbledon	48 – 38	53 – 31	41 – 41	44 – 39	42 – 42	49 – 34	xxxxxx
	51 – 31	47 – 35	48 – 35	43 – 39	47 – 36	45 – 39	xxxxxx

### 1938 National League Division One

Team	R	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
New Cross	24	15	1	8	1072	925	31
West Ham	24	13	1	10	1050.5	939.5	27
Wembley	24	13	1	10	1043	963	27
Wimbledon	24	12	3	9	1005	996	27
Belle Vue	24	11	0	13	949	1052	22
Harringay	24	10	1	13	980	1018	21
Bristol	24	6	1	17	890.5	1106.5	13

### 1938 London Cup

First Round
Wembley (60 - 44) 109 Harringay (59 - 49) 103
Semi-Finals
Wimbledon (66 - 42) 127 Wembley (47 - 61) 89
New Cross (62 - 46) 114 West Ham (56 - 52) 102
Final
Wimbledon (57 - 49) 109 New Cross (55 - 52) 102
Winners Wimbledon

### 1938 Inter Club League (Table Not Complete. Can you fill any gaps?)

Away Team	Home Team				
	Dagenham	Eastborne	Romford	Rye House	Smallford
Dagenham	xxxxxxx	39 – 44	44 – 39	[26 – 56]	49 – 33
	xxxxxxx	[39 – 43]	56 – 26		
Eastborne	[57 – 27]		[53 – 23]	[56 – 27]	[55 – 28]
	[44 – 39]		Cancelled		
Romford (at Dagenham)	39 – 43	46 – 33		26 – 56	40 – 42
Rye House		[29 – 52]			46 – 37
					[44 – 39]
Smallford		54 – 27		51 - 33	