

# The Speedway Researcher

Promoting Research into the History of Speedway and Dirt Track Racing

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## Good Bye to Volume 9

We draw another Volume to an end and they seem to come round faster every time. Yet again we think about whether to continue and have decided to give it a another go and run with Volume 10. As ever we do ask you to give us material to put in the magazine and to help us with taking the web site forward. We cover a wide range of topics and like to hear your thoughts from various slants.

Renewal slips are included as usual and we take the chance to sound you out on our performance. However, the ultimate decision is to re-subscribe or not. As we still are operating in the black – we'll keep the price at £4.00 for the four issues - (£6.00 Overseas). AND we'll put all of Volume 4 on the web. (On that note can anyone send a photocopy or lend an original 4 no.4 as Jim is having trouble sorting this out – neither Editors now have a paper copy.

## Don Gray

It was a great deal of sadness we report the passing of one of our staunchest of supporters **Don Gray**. Don passed away towards the end of 2006 and we will miss his contribution to speedway history which he set out in his beautifully written hand which belied the problems he was having with his eyesight in most recent years. We send Mrs Gray and Don's family and grandchildren our our deepest sympathy. Thankfully Don's records will not be lost as he has ensured they will go to contribute to the archive at the new Speedway Museum which is about to open its doors to the public. **Jim**

## and Graham

I never met Don, but, like many of the circle of folks this magazine reaches, Don was a friendly voice on the end of the phone who was always willing to help by drawing on his immense wealth of knowledge both sides of the war. You always got Don the same way – he was always a cheery voice with time to blether about a myriad of speedway and other things and I think we **1**

often set the world to right by the time we'd finished. I now regret not visiting Don when I was down in the area for a family funeral – there was always tomorrow – a tomorrow which sadly hasn't come. My geography had Waterbeach well away from Cambridge and all too late I realised Don wasn't so far away and, if I'd planned ahead – I could have called in.

I recall one of our last blethers – we talked about the problems with his eyesight and I felt I put my foot in it at every twist and turn – you know those types of conversations. I phoned back to apologise for my crassness and he said not to worry – his eyes had never been 20/20 – not even when he was a fighter pilot during the war. He laughed saying very modestly that it was his relatively poor eyesight that led him to flying – he'd wanted a ground based job but his eyesight wasn't good enough for that.

I will miss Don, his cheery voice, his love of speedway, his never ending willingness to talk speedway, his readiness to pass on information, his readiness to pen articles, but I won't forget him.

**Jim Henry**

## **Morley**

**Bob Ozanne**, dare I call him Mr Pre-War Speedway for all his hard work immersed in this era?, has passed on some details of a venture at a place called Morley in Leeds which may be referred to as a dirt track in the pioneer days. Despite being called Morley Speedway this was a dirt track yes, speedway style dirt track it was not. In modern parlance it would probably be called a moto cross track.

The track was located in an old quarry and the dirt surface was loose earth rather than the speedway cinders or shale. The track had a part known as the "T.T. Section" where the bikes negotiated steep hills and tight corners.

Contemporary photographs published in the Yorkshire Evening News shows the riding up a steep hill and angling their bikes over into a sharp bend.

Men who would emerge as stars of the speedways appeared at Morley and circuit records were held by Eric Langton and his brother Oliver also raced at the Leeds venue.

The races featured both solos and sidecars and the latter occasioned a court case after a member of the crowd had fallen and broken his wrist. He didn't just fall, he was a member of the crowd who, like those round him, scattered to avoid a sidecar crew heading straight for them after a big slide had diverted them from the others racing round the fenceless track.

The unfortunate was not injured by the machine, which, after its detour, continued on its merry way. He had been pushed over by others in the 2 scramble to get away.

The man received nothing as the court ruled that there was no case to answer as the safety standards for this new sport were not yet clear and the management had made it plain to all spectators that they attended at their own risk. (How times have changed!!!)

## **Sneaky Visit South**

Thanks to **Ian Sommerville** I was able to travel to Ryton in Dunsmore for the Autumn auction event. I was a bit of the spur of the moment to be honest, but, with the full knowledge I was bloody mad in the head for forsaking my bed in Edinburgh at 1.30am, I drove to Linlithgow to meet up with Ian. We drove to Hamilton to collect Alan Watt and then on to Coventry with a breakfast at dawn stop in some fantastic monstrosity of modernity in roadside services .

It was great to put a few faces to voices and look at the piles of raw data – sorry programmes – changing hands off the stalls and at the auction. I'm sorry if – like Vic Butcher – I missed speaking to you.

Now I've recced the place I am keen to press on with a get together. I have spoken to **Nick Barber** about the possibility of piggy backing his event and he was not phased by the idea. Maybe we can do something in 2007? **Jim Henry**

## **Publications**

**Homes of British Speedway** by John Jarvis & Robert Bamford –  
Pub: Tempus Publishing Ltd, The Mill, Brimscombe Port, Stroud, Gloucs.  
GL5 2QG @ £18.99 + P & P

Many subscribers will have bought the original volume of this weighty tome when it first came out 2/3 years ago – the product of many years research on speedway sites in Britain by John Jarvis, the foremost authority on the subject. This is an update taking into account new research, new track sites, and lots of new information about those tracks included in the first edition. As usual the book is liberally sprinkled with track photographs, many being of sites long gone so providing an invaluable historical record for researchers of the sport and local history. This is the definitive A-Z of places where speedway has been known to have taken place. Track lengths, years of operation, team and league information, training tracks, ice speedway as well as a potted history of teams that have ridden those tracks – all in one volume. Can't recommend it highly enough for speedway historians and researchers – it will surprise many speedway fans with details of local tracks that they **3**

never knew operated from the earliest years of the sport. We at the Speedway Researcher hope that it will stimulate readers to get out into their local libraries to search out new facts and information about their local tracks.

**75 Years of Eastbourne Speedway** by Norman Jacobs & Ken Burnett – Pub: Tempus Publishing Ltd, The Mill, Brimscombe Port, Stroud, Gloucs. GL5 2QG @ £14.99 + P & P

Norman has become one of the most prolific authors in the Tempus library of speedway histories both regional and track histories in southern England and this is a welcome addition to that growing body of speedway research that Tempus have facilitated. This Eastbourne history, co-authored with his friend Ken Burnett, marks the team's diamond anniversary of providing speedway at the same Arlington track.

This is a decade by decade history of speedway at the south-coast track from 1929 up to 2006 and what is particularly noticeable is the range of team and rider photographs, most strikingly one taken at the opening meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> August 1929.

The second world war saw the demise of the Arlington site and during the war was occupied by the Canadian Army. I liked the comment in this book that in 1946 "Before speedway could resume at Arlington after the Second World War, the track didn't only have to be relaid – it had to be found! The stadium was under six feet of thistles, rubble and muck"

There have been other potted histories of Eastbourne and this adds another layer to our knowledge about Arlington and the Eagles so is a well written and welcomed addition.

**Wembley Speedway: The Pre-War Years** by Norman Jacobs & Peter Lipscombe – Pub: Tempus Publishing Ltd, The Mill, Brimscombe Port, Stroud, Gloucs. GL5 2QG @ £14.99 + P & P

I have always found it surprising that a detailed history of Wembley Speedway has never been written before. True there have been Supporters' Handbooks, magazines and pamphlets produced about Wembley throughout its history as, given the level of support the London track pulled into the Empire Stadium, there was a ready audience for team and track publications.

Johnny Hoskins was involved with Wembley in the pre-war years along with team owner, Sir Arthur Elvin, famously known as "Mr Wembley". Wembley were the glamour team in those early days of the sport and the famous old stadium was recognised around the world as the home of the sport, hosting individual events, including the World Championship Final. The Wembley team that rode in the pre war Southern League and later 4 National League won three league titles in the early 1930s and were

runners –up a number of times. They were always the team to beat especially when racing against their London rivals and Belle Vue. This book covers the Wembley speedway team history from its 1929 roots up to the outbreak of war in 1939. It's a good read about the activities of the team, its riders, its results and a whole range of other activities that surrounded the glamour team of the sport before the war. There are also potted biographies of five Wembley Greats: Colin Watson, Wally Kilmister, Ginger Lees, Frank Charles & Lionel Van Praag.

This is a most welcome new addition that fills a gap in the team/track library of research into speedway in Britain and I hope to see a second post-war book soon to complete the Wembley story.

**Graham Fraser**

**Reviews by**

## **CLAPTON 1932 Part 1**

**Alan Bates** from Folkestone tells us a bit more about this hazy London venue.

When interest in speedway was on the decline at Southampton's Bannister Court in April to May 1932, the then management team of Jimmy Baxter, Tom Bradbury-Pratt and Charle Knott relocated to Lea Bridge and re-named the team Clapton. The riders that moved were: Jack and Norman Parker, Wally Lloyd, Roy Barrowclough, Billy Dallison, Phil Bishop and Alf Foulds.

At the time of the move, Southampton were lying seventh out of the ten teams who competed in the National Association Trophy League, with only three wins from eleven matches.

Their first match under the name of Clapton was at home to Stamford Bridge on June 1<sup>st</sup> and they couldn't have got off to a worse start, as Jack Parker fell in heat 1 and they went 2 – 10 down after two races. Jack won his other two heats and brother Norman top scored with 7 as they went down 22 – 31.

The following Wednesday they were at home again and despite a maximum from Jack Parker they only won one heat and lost 25 – 29 against Coventry.

It was very much a surprise the very next evening when they travelled to Coventry and won after a very tight match when five of the nine heats were shared. Norman Parker was top for Clapton as they won 31 – 23.

10,000 turned up at Lea Bridge on June 15<sup>th</sup> as Clapton demolished Plymouth by 37 – 16. Norman Parker won all his races and brother Jack and Ernie Rickman were unbeaten by an opponent. The following Tuesday however they were trounced at West Ham by 34 – 17 after only trailing 10 5 – 11 after four heats. Jack Parker was Clapton's only neat winner with two

first places.

After losing 23 – 31 at home to West Ham in a challenge match on June 22<sup>nd</sup> they were again beaten away, losing 19 – 33 at Wimbledon who had Vic Huxley and Dicky Case in maximum form.

On June 29<sup>th</sup> Clapton completed their league fixtures for the first part of the season by losing at home to Crystal Palace by 22 – 32. Nobby Key got the lot for the Palace as Clapton could only supply two heat winners. Clapton finished 7<sup>th</sup> out of 10 in the League after gathering 10 points.

The League was won by Stamford Bridge with 16 wins from 18 fixtures.

Next on the agenda was the National Trophy first round matches with Plymouth. In the first leg in Devon on July 5<sup>th</sup> Clapton again showed their liking for the Deveon track by taking home a 6 points advantage by virtue of a 50 – 44 success. The Parker brothers scored 11 each as did home star Bert Spencer.

The following evening at Lea Bridge Clapton had an easy win by 57 – 35 to go through to the next round.

Another week on and another crowd of 10,000 saw Clapton go down again at home to West Ham, this time by 21 – 31 in a league fixture. Jack Parker won all his races but partner Phil Bishop fell twice. The next day July 14<sup>th</sup> Clapton won the first heat 4 – 2 at Wembley but the Lions soon got into their stride and won convincingly by 33 – 20 as Ginger Lees helped himself to a maximum. Jack Parker was the best for Clapton with 8.

On July 20<sup>th</sup> there was a good crowd of 12,000 for the London Cup first leg match against Crystal Palace. This meeting produced many falls and engine failures. The Clapton riders managed six falls and the Palace four as the visitors won by 48 – 42. Jack Parker with a maximum 12 and Steve Langton on 10 were the pick of the home riders while Ron Johnson 10 and Tom Farndon 9 were the best for Palace. Clapton put up a good fight in the return leg three days later and were only 2 points behind after 7 heats. However, they fell away and went down 42 – 54. Ron Johnson bagged a maximum for the home side and best for Clapton were Wally Lloyd 11 and Jack Parker 8.

To be continued.

## AN EPIC DIRT TRACK TALE

As we don't want anyone reading The Speedway Researcher to be offended, we took the liberty of editing **Ian's** verse. **Ian** was annoyed and wrote to us both saying it was all or nothing. Ian made the point that the words he uses **6** are not unheard in modern parlance and we must agree that is true.

We therefore apologise to **Ian** for taking that liberty as we know the epic was

written as a bit of fun and we would like to think that, whilst Ian has a dig or two at things and some folks along the way, at no time did **Ian** set out to offend anyone.

On balance we have decided to respect Ian's wishes and go on with the epic as we think it is a different look at the history of speedway in verse which reads easy. To paraphrase the late Magnus Magnusson, we've started so we'll finish. We can only emphasise that the epic was written, and should be read therefore, in the spirit of the fun and the 'tongue in cheek.' We will therefore continue his epic journey through speedway in verse as written in the source material. Editors

### THE MACHINERY

The magic names, like Harley D,  
Commerford, Scott and O.E.C  
New Hudson, Norton or Sunbeam,  
Calthorpe, Cotton, OK – Supreme.

Coventry Victors, James Vee Twins,  
Zeniths, Enfelds, Indains,  
Velocettes, Wallis's, B.S.A.s  
Were just a few from the early days.

The pioneers of the Speedway game,  
All loudly praised the Douglas name.  
Crowds loved to hear its motor scream,  
It really was a 'trailer's' dream!

Back then the tracks were inches deep,  
Around the fence these bikes would sweep.  
With plumes of cinders flying high,  
Those low slung twins could bloody fly!

But seasons passed, and tracks got slicker,  
And Ridges could be ridden quicker,  
Foot forward styles were now in fashion,  
So Douggie riders got a thrashin'.

So ride a Rudge, and you'll be master  
"Their four valve motors are much faster",  
These were the words of the dirt track men,  
(Yanks raced 'eight valves' in nineteen ten!)

For two years Ridges ruled the track,  
But development was falling back.  
The 'four valve' guys would get a shock,  
From J.A.P., 'the new kid on the block!'

In thirty-one they brought it out,

“A sure-fire winner, there’s no doubt!”

That’s what the riders had to say,

The dirt track J.A.P. was here to stay.

This motor, through its incarnations,

With ‘fours’ and ‘fives’ and variations.

Big valves and cams and such recourse,

They upped its power to ‘fifty horses’!

But J.A.P., (No longer forward thinking),

Its fortunes, were slowly sinking.

Track domination could not last,

The ‘Czecho’ boys were catching fast!

A ‘camshaft’ motor sealed its fate

The right direction (years too late!)

And just like other British farces,

They won, then sat back on their arses!

‘Way back in nineteen sixty-four,

We heard the ESOs start to roar.

Eight thousand revs and oil-tight,

They filled the riders with delight!

But when you went to purchase it,

They were as rare as rocking horse shit,

The wait to get one drove you crackers,

But ‘Briggo’ had you by the knackers!

You greased his palm, with heaps of gold,

But “wait your turn” you’d still be told.

Division one boys got their gear,

But you’d be told “come back next year.!”

They didn’t really have more ‘poke’

(Just a tidied J.A.P. with a shorter stroke)

But unlike the J.A.P. that was a pain,

These were so easy to maintain.

Now ESO (Like those gone before)

Made minor changes and no more.

And just like J.A.P. (who they had bested)

Sat back and on their Laurels rested!

Their world beater had found fame

But all they did was change their name.

Their old design was getting tired.

**8** And riders moaned “More power required.

They said “two valves are not enough

Our JAWA's running out of puff."  
So Weslake said "I'll give you four"  
(Just like a Rudge in days of yore!)  
'Conversions' came in seventy-six,  
With tuners out to 'get rich quick'  
Like 'Luckhursts', 'Rickssons', 'E.R.M's.  
These four valve tops were little gems  
Then they moved the cam upstairs  
Sometimes singly, (mostly pairs)  
With 'Godden', 'JAWA' or 'GM'

In constant search of R.P.M.

It really is a big mistake  
(twelve thousand revs and sevety 'brake').  
More passing's wanted, not more speed,  
So 'bring back torque' to fill the need.

#### THE IMPOSTER

From Poland, what the hell is this?  
A bloody 'J.A.P.', cloned, called a 'FIS'.  
Or 'JOLI' from the land of dykes,  
Dutch fitted to their speedway bikes.  
Simandel's ESO was no botter  
He'd copied J.A.P. right to the letter  
But like the Brits he met his fate,  
Because he did not innovate.

#### THE UNSUNG HEROS

Behind closed doors these wizrds toil  
So often burning the midnight oil.  
They rebuild engines, ever better,  
Or make new frames that are trend setters.  
Now Haring, Allott, Godden, Street  
These tuning guys were hard to beat.  
Like 'Lattenhammers' great renown,  
But who the "F\*\*\* was 'Charlie Brown^'?.?

{^Charlie Brown, nom de plume of Giuseppe Marzotto of G.M. fame.}

Or 'Mosley', 'Mitchell', 'Mattingly'  
(The top frame builders of their day.)  
Then 'JAWA' came and frames stagnated,  
Till 'Lay-downs,' 'Pinfold' advocated!  
But 'McEvoy' tried out this design  
'way back in nineteen-twenty-nine.

When 'Pinfold' heard the air was blue,  
Saying "Jesus Christ is F\*\*\* all new?"

### LIBERATED LADIES

In twenty-nine, who was the first,  
To bring the sport a different twist?  
By introducing racing ladies,  
Who brought promoters, bigger, paydays!  
Fay Taylours name was up in lights,  
This brand new star, had scaled the heights  
Some thought that girls who raced were silly,  
But Fay broke records willy-nilly!  
The glamour girls had crossed the fende,  
They hoped to rise to prominence.  
A few of them became 'Top Billers',  
The rest, just pretty stocking fillers!

Now the A.C.U. (To their disgrace),  
Forbade the dirt track girls to race  
The reason given still astounds,  
They stopped the show, 'on moral grounds!'

If during racing they got hurt,  
Or lying senseless on the dirt  
The First Aid lads would be forbidden,  
To uncover parts, most times well hidden!  
This seemed a rather sordid reason,  
They'd raced uninjured for a season.  
I think a much more likley story,  
The girls were stealing too much glory.

To be continued as Ian turns to look at other aspects of the sport.

### Wally Higgs

**Keith Farman**, the man who keeps alive the Yarmouth legend has sent us this interesting item about one time Bloater Wally Higgs. Keith advises that the Yarmouth programme gave Wally Higgs date of birth as July 4<sup>th</sup> 1923 but it semms that the Yarmouth manager had taken 7 years off as he was born in 1916.

**Keith** has copied the following email from a contact called Andrew in Australia who knows Wally.

**10** His (Wally's) birthdate was 4th July 1916. I met him on his 90th birthday and he was in fine form pretending to ride a speedway bike on the front drive

of his 50,s house set among giant modern homes of the rich, in Halls Head, a Southern Perth suburb! His house was the only one built there in the 50,s.

He remembers his year at Yarmouth with affection and always talks about a family who looked after him and fed him well at a time when people were struggling after the war!

He is suffering a little from memory loss and will forget who he is talking to. He does however have a younger lady friend living with him. She was once a grasstrack passenger in the U.K.! She looks seventy something ! She is able to ask him questions so I will check up on your correspondence! Wally is very physically fit and still works at fixing childrens bicycles. He travels around in a seventies Mercedes and enjoys the cafe life neighbouring Mandurah has to offer.

He is better known here in Perth for his driving of the old TQ cars on the speedway here! When he turned to 4 wheels he really went well around Claremont, and he had his own auto paint shop and garage at the time.

## **Using Archives in Your Research**

**Liz Rees**, Tyne & Wear Archives Service has kindly penned this article about archives services.

For speedway researchers a recent find at Tyne & Wear Archives Service in Newcastle was able to confirm the existence of an early dirt track at Houghton-le-Spring. While pretty well everyone is aware of how libraries can help with research of any kind, far fewer people know about the rich resources of the network of archives and record offices that exist throughout England and Wales.

Mainly run by local authorities, record offices preserve a vast quantity of original documents, and they're all open and accessible to anyone who wants to use them. As well as the records of local authorities themselves, record offices and archives services hold records of central government functions operating locally (such as courts, coroners and the health service) and enormous numbers of private records donated or deposited by institutions, organisations, businesses or individuals.

Most users of these archives are pursuing personal heritage or family history, but the records can throw a light on almost every aspect of life in an area, sometimes as far back as the early middle ages, although most records will date from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. This article mentions just some of **11** the resources that may be available for research into sport, and speedway in particular.

The obvious first source is the records of clubs themselves. Availability of these will depend on someone having had the foresight to deposit them with the record office for future preservation, but records of motor clubs are held by Cheshire and Chester Archives, Cumbria Record Office, Walsall Local History Centre and Lewisham Archives and Local Studies, amongst others. Items relating to sporting events can also be found in the papers of individuals. Greater Manchester Record Office has the papers of George Drew, whose father and uncles were speedway riders in the early days of the sport, papers of Frank Douglas Smith, former mayor of Ilford, at Redbridge Archives and Local Studies, include an early copy of *Speedway News* from 1929, while the papers of Cynthia Mosley, wife of Oswald the fascist leader, at Birmingham University include a 1930 letter from one Agatha Beasley telling of her desire to become a speedway rider.

Local authority records can also be a mine of information. Many local authorities operated sporting venues themselves, or at least inspected and licensed them. So Brighton Borough Council (records at East Sussex Record Office) for example, had a Speedway Track Site Committee in the 1940s, while most others will have had general Leisure or Recreation committees that may contain useful information. There may also be legal papers in relation to licensing of tracks – for example Dudley Archives and Local Studies has papers relating to the licensing of Cradley Heath Greyhound Stadium for motor cycle racing in the 1940s.

Another well-used local source is building control plans, which in some areas may date back to the mid 19th century. These are plans deposited with the local council to obtain permission to build, and include many different kinds of structures such as grandstands, ticket booths etc as well as more typical buildings. Many thousands are preserved in archives throughout the country and can help to date building developments as well as providing illustrations of them.

Plans of sports grounds can also be found with records of architects' firms responsible for building them, and the records of companies operating sports venues may also be preserved. For example the records of Wembley Stadium Plc are at London Metropolitan Archives, and Hereford Race Course are at Herefordshire Record Office.

Some types of sporting operation were licensed by the local magistrates, particularly if alcohol was served, so records may survive alongside other court registers. Court records will also throw light on any criminal activities **14** associated with sporting venues such as illegal betting or pick-pocketing at large events. Records of local police forces may also illuminate this aspect of sporting events.

With a basic idea of the types of records you might find, how do you go about getting access to them? A good place to start is the National Archives website [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk). This not only contains information about the national archives themselves but has links to archives throughout the country. First ARCHON <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archon/> gives contact details for every archive in the country; secondly the National Register of Archives gives brief details of collections held in them at <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/nra/> and last but not least you can search across the catalogues of many archives through the Access 2 Archives project, or A2A, at <http://www.a2a.org.uk/> or linked from the TNA site. If you can't find what you're looking for here check the websites of the individual record offices (links from ARCHON) as not all catalogues are included in A2A, but may be accessible from the office's own site. Remember too that most archives will have old catalogues that are not accessible online, so if you still draw a blank it's worth writing or e-mailing for information.

Not many actual documents are yet available online, so if you do find something of interest you'll probably need to visit the relevant office to see it. It's well worth looking at that office's website before making a visit to see if there are any special arrangements, such as advance booking or registration requirements. A widespread scheme is the County Archives Readers' Network (CARN), which gives you a ticket you can use at any member archive once you've registered at one. Registering is free of charge and all local authority archives are free to use.

Although relatively small numbers of people have discovered archives and record offices, surveys show those who have almost universally find them friendly and helpful places, so if you'd like to take your research a step beyond the library why not see if your local office can help? You may find yourself becoming a regular!

## **1928 London Transport Poster**

A request to London Transport's Museum for information about a card featuring a sketch showing dirt track action which is part of a London Transport poster reveals that the Museum can supply A4 copies of the poster for a fee of £2.50. Further contact indicates they have one other poster from 1929, copies of which can also be purchased.

Terry Stone has been browsing the London Transport Museum web site **15** and advises they have a photograph gallery which has a limited coverage of speedway.

**Jim Henry**

## Feed Back

**John Jarvis**, author of “Homes of British Speedway” (Editions 1 and 2) passes on some information about “Hampton Court Speedway.” John advises that the Hampton Court and District M.C.C. ran a “grass track” event at the horse racing track Hurst Park in 1927 and (23.10.)1929 in the aid of a local hospital. It was a quarter mile roped circuit in the centre paddock. John advises that Hurst Park was lost to a housing development in 1962 with the last race meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> October of that year. John has not found any reference to the word “speedway” but if Colin Chubb can confirm the type of activity, John will add it to the venues in “Homes.”

John also noted the item about Les Blakebrough and mentions that the 500cc final of the meeting staged on 18.6.1927 at Hurst Park was Les Blakebrough, shown in the local press as Blakeborough.

**Phil Hood** mentions he has come across a couple of references to Houghton-Le Spring which indicate meetings were staged on 19<sup>th</sup> July and 9<sup>th</sup> August 1930. The first report refers to “the new speedway on the racecourse, Houghton-Le Spring” organised by the Hetton Racing Club while the second refers to the Houghton-Le-Spring dirt track. References were made to standard machines and dirt track machines and one of the competitors was well known dirt track rider Bud Thompson.

Contact with Sunderland Libraries confirms that the events took place as they are recorded in the The Sunderland Echo.

More work on this one reveals that the Tyne and Weir Archive which is based in Gateshead has archives belonging to the Hetton Racing Club which was the organisation that owned the horse racing club. Anyone down Newcastle way who could have a dig around in this archive? **(Jim Henry)**

## Can You Help?

**John Dixon**, 5 Cavendish Road, Aylestone, Leicester, LE2 7G Tel: 0116 2247390 Email john.dixon938@ntlworld.com is seeking information about the changes to helmet colours over the years. He has come across a programme showing the home riders using red and white and visitors using blue and yellow. John asks when red and blue and white and yellow/ yellow and black introduced. Does anyone have the time to track the progress of **16** helmet colours and do an article on this topic? (Eds)

**Colin Parker**, 59 Clinton Lane, Kenilworth, Warwickshire, W8 1AS Tel: 01926 854852 has sent in photocopies of two postcards he has acquired. The

cards show (No.3) Bert Jones and (No.6) Harry Lewis each seated on their machines. Colin thinks Harry Lewis was an Aussie known as Tiger who moved from Leeds to Wimbledon in 1932 tho' possibly attached to West Ham. Tiger was allocated to Coventry in June 1933 by the SCB but he only managed a few meetings at reserve plus some second half outings. Colin notes that Tiger captained the Brandon Riders Club team in a match against The Rest winning a couple of races in his team's 37 – 25 victory. Colin thinks the cards date to the time when Jones and Lewis rode for Southampton in 1936 and wonders if anyone can confirm this. (JH adds there were two men called Harry Lewis. The other rode in the pioneer days of 1928 but packed in the dirt tracks to go off to work in a tea plantation in Assam. )

### **Welcome Brummies**

Judging by recent photos in the Speedway Star I think we can safely welcome back the Birmingham Brummies to the fold. The sport is moving back into the home of the Brummies but in a much more plush looking stadium than in former days. The photos put me in mind of Powderhall with longish straights and tight bends, but, if so, it will create some good speedway in good a good quality arena. (Maybe my view of the photos is just nostalgia.) The Perry Barr area venue is set to come back yet again and it must be hoped it sparks of renewed interest in the Midlands. Brummies, Heathens? plus an equivalent of Tamworth?

**Jim Henry**

### **Nigel's (Bird) Natters II**

#### **Cyclone Danny**

Former Wall of Death rider Cyclone Danny (Carter) performed motor cycle stunts as an interval attraction at speedway meetings; I have reference to him performing at Hall Green and Middlesborough in the 1937. Another interesting fact is that Cyclone Danny's name appears in the credits of the film "Money for Speed". (1933) I believe he performed the motorcycle stunts. Other well known names in the credits are, Jonnie Hoskins, Lionel van Praag, Ginger Lees, Frank Arthur, Jack Ormston, Colin Watson, Tom Farndon, George Greenwood, Bluey Wilkinson, Jack Parker, Vic Huxley, Eric Langdon, Tiger Stevenson, Ron Johnson, Billy Lamont, Wal 17 Phillips, Frank Varey, Alec Jackson, F. Mockford, E.J. Bass, A.J. Elvin) The alternative title is "Daredevils of Earth"

Two copies survive? a French dubbed version and a subtitled German one.

I do not think the film is commercially available?

I have been informed the BFI library may have a “viewing” copy.

### **Speedway in Marseilles**

M. A. McAvoy a man known for mechanical genius and the designing of early speedway bikes including a Laydown version also riding speedway at Wolverhampton in 1928.....was involved with promoting at Nottingham in 1929. His company ‘Olympic Speedways Ltd’ with £7000 of capital were building a speedway track on the site of the Tornado club’s grass track, but faced with a British winter, decided that the equitable climate of the south of France would be a nice place for a second track. So he constructed one in Marseilles, which was due to open in early 1929. Apparently the sport was well received by the French. McAvoy decided to employ the services of Clem Beckett and Skid Skinner but was somewhat anxious that these two hell raisers would arrive on time and not get locked up on the way by the local gendarmes, for they were to be filmed by Pathe`.

Was this film ever made? If only we could find a copy!

This track definitely needs researching, anyone speak French? ...Volunteers for the south of France! I bet.....you wish!

Although we have British Pathe`, Pathe`was originally a French company and still is, not only were they prolific makers of all types of film (dramas, documentaries, news etc.) but were also one of the biggest manufacturers of cinematographic equipment in the world. It is probable that Pathe` filmed at Marseilles. The question is how much early speedway film lies in French Pathe’s archive? Before World War II there was quite a lot of speedway in places like France, Belgium, and Holland etc. British riders perhaps making up a large portion of the participants, yes difficult to research, but could be very worthwhile! What photos and film await discovery!

### **Don Johns the first broadsider?**

History is only true until someone comes up with evidence to challenge the existing facts. This may be the case when it comes to who was the first to use the broadsiding technique. The consensus in the UK suggests that the men responsible are Americans Maldwyn Jones and Ed Brinck (Jones was of Welsh decent. ok, ok, so that wasn’t hard to figure out!). American Don Johns, son of a Welsh immigrant farmer, is perhaps another candidate. ‘Hard Case’ Johns started riding in 1909 at the tender age of fourteen. Prize money was high in the tough and competitive world of US dirt track and board **18** racing, fists would fly in this no holds barred atmosphere, John’s fighting was as good as his racing. By 1914 his peers recognised him as the greatest dirt track rider ever. Quote:- (1914) He would ride the entire race course wide open, throwing great showers of dirt into the air at each turn.

..:un quote. I believe the only way you can send showers of dirt into the air on the bends is by broadsiding. Unfortunately this description is not proof, one hopes a photograph of him broadsiding will eventually turn up. In my minds eye I can see him broadsiding. The bikes had no brakes, no throttle control, the carburettors were set wide open and the only control was the cut out (kill) button. (Thanks to Daniel K. Statnekov USA)

### **OAPS Never!**

In the "Illustrated Sporting World" 1929 journalist Lawrence Cade refers to the Stamford Bridge team as the Brigands (July 1929). This is at the beginning of league racing! In August he exclaims, 'the Brigands have avenged themselves on the Saints'. I don't think Cade invented this name. If they had been known as the Pensioners I don't think he would have referred to them as the Brigands? (It is quite common for journalists to attribute football club nicknames to speedway teams)

Stamford Bridge boss show biz impresario Claude Langdon, knowing something about entertainment is I think unlikely to have christened his team the 'Pensioners'. I now think it most probable they were known as the Brigands from the off. I believe it most likely that the Pensioners moniker was attributed by later journalists. {Note Langdon not Langton}

An interesting man our Mr. Cade, for he was reporting on motorcycle events before the First World War. He claims to have sent a denunciation of what he called saucer track racing to the USA which helped get it banned, a somewhat arrogant assumption and also incorrect as this type of racing was never banned in the US. Racing on the one eighth to one quarter mile velodromes (Boards) with their 60 degree banking was indeed dangerous but only one track was ever closed by the authorities. It was considered that the small dromes were too dangerous for the speeds attained. The mile became the most common, but some reached two miles in length. Board tracks were still in use in the late 1920s. Australian Billy Galloway raced on the board and dirt tracks when he toured the USA in 1927.

It was at the Newark, New Jersey velodrome that the horrific disaster happened (1912), in which two riders and six spectators were killed. Subsequently the authorities closed the track. The grim reality of Newark and the resultant publicity marked the beginning of the decline for the short motordromes or murderdromes as the press labeled them. This was the first and only time motorcycling made the front page of the 'New York Times'. For those interested the National Newspaper Library at Colindale has 19 copies of the 'NY Times'.

### **Incy Wincy Time (Web Time)**

The web continues apace and we start by thanking **John Jarvis** and **Robert Bamford** for the great plug for the site in the second edition of Homes of British Speedway.

The post war crew would also like to thank **Howard Jones** for printing our requests for Stoke 1947 information in the Stoke v Edinburgh programme. If you are into Cradley Heath, **Nigel Nicklin** and **Roger Beaman** added data to the site from the late 1940s and early 1950s while the same duo have added information on the post war Brummies to the site. Further raw data is coming from a number of sources including **Tony Southwart** (Bradford), **Ray Bysouth** (West Ham), **John Jarvis** (Bristol), **Peter Jackson** (London Tracks) and **Glynn Shailes** who added a pile of information to boost **Richard Hine**'s 1948 Poole data. There are also many more helping include **Charles MacKay** who has helped with Bradford data.

**Barry Stephenson** has kept the supply of Belle Vue material flowing for some time has retired and is now compiling 1954 Aces action and **Bryan Tungate** is bashing on with Norwich in the same year of 1954.

The web site has a list of those who have helped to date and it continues to grow. Sometime soon we will publish the list in the magazine. You will see that we do our best to thank everyone who contributes so we apologise to anyone we have missed.

The pre-war crew with **Bob Ozanne** at the helm continue with apace with additions featuring on a regular basis. Currently they are concentrating on the team competitions but they would love details of any other meetings between 1928 and September 1939. Can't finish without thanking **Ron McNeil**, our long suffering webmaster, who deals with all the tasks of keeping the files up to date and available and our man with the Rembrandt touch, **Eric Watson**, for the colourful opening pages.

## Zamalek

Despite sounding like something from a disc by Dave Dee, Dozey, Beaky, Mick and Titch the word is the name of a track in Cairo, Egypt which staged meetings during the winter of 1928 – 1929. **John Dixon** from Aylestone asks about this venue as he had seen a scan of a programme on Ebay and wanted clarification about this venue. I'm sure I've seen an article **20** somewhere about Zamalek written by Billy Galloway who was involved in building the track and running the meetings. **Jim Henry**

## Auch Aye Milngavie

For those of you from south of the Border Milngavie is pronounced Millguy. It is in the Craigmaddie part of this north of Glasgow suburb, which many would consider to be awfully posh, that Alan McFarlane boasts his own speedway track. Alan's wee 105 metre track in his front garden (and used by the man for pure enjoyment) was featured in The Sun on 20 December 2006 in an article written by Jeff Holmes (One time editor of the Glasgow Tigers programme). Alan, who got planning permission for his garden track, has used 18 tonnes of scalpings (run of quarry crusher material) and 45 tonnes of shale from near Armadale to build his circuit. The track has been used by Les Collins, George Stancl, Shane Parker and other lesser experienced men, one of whom demolished a bit of the fence and ended up in the burn (stream) next door. John Jarvis, the keen track collector, has had an inkling about Alan's track for a while and at last, thanks to The Sun, it has outed. (Could Alan be forgiven for gardening at this track ? – sorry.) **Jim Henry**

## **All Time World Championship**

### Match Report by **Keith Farman**

Heat 1 At the first bend Williams goes wide and takes Young to the fence and he then streaks away leaving Young in last place. Young riding the outside is past Price at the start of the second lap. On the last lap he goes round Williams who tries to stop him leaving a gap on the inside that Parker nips through to gain second place. Young, Parker, Williams, Price- 68.8

Heat 2 Fundin get a fast start and on the second lap Briggs spots an opening on the inside that he took at full bore. Fundin was then on the outside, and trying to come back on the line-but by then Briggs had levelled with him. Fundin still kept making for the line, trying to come across Briggs. In fact Fundin was crowding Briggs at this junction. Then while Briggs maintained his straight course down the straight they seemed locked together as they raced into the pits bend. Fundin had no hope of staying on, as he lost control for a split second, and went spinning crazily round like a top and goes down. The race is stopped with Fundin lying in a heap by the side of the air fence, where he stays for some time before he gets to his feet. Les Mullins helps him back to the pits and he receives a big cheer from his fans. The referee, Tony Steel, takes some time to make a decision but after watching the replays from the Sky Sports, he excluded Fundin from the re-run. This **21** announcement is met with a torrent of booing. Fundin and his helpers are on the phone to Steel arguing that Briggs was at fault, but Steel would not change his decision, and a furious Fundin throws down the phone and

walked back to see that Mullins was checking his bike In the re-run Craven, who has the outside gate finds that without Fundin off gate 3 that he has a lot of room going into the first bend. He gets a flyer and this time Briggs has no answer, as Craven wins easily and in doing so he breaks the track record by 0.2. Craven, Briggs, Moore, Fundin Ex- 66.6

Heat 3 Mauger all the way from Olsen, with Penhall taking Gundersen on the run in to the line. Mauger, Olsen, Penhall, Gundersen – 67.0

Heat 4 Rickardsson gets a fast start with Nielsen putting in a good challenge. Rickardsson, Nielsen, Crump, Collins – 67.5

Heat 5 Nielsen out again but is beaten by the fast starting Mauger with Briggs having a real go to pass Nielsen. Mauger, Nielsen, Briggs, Parker – 67.4

Heat 6 Rickardsson wins from his favoured gate one from Olsen and Moore with Price tailed off. Rickardsson, Olsen, Moore, Price 67.2 Heat 7 A very determined Fundin streaks away from the start and makes light of his previous fall as he wins by 60 yards and he equals the track record set up by Craven in heat 2. Young takes Penhall on the last lap. Fundin, Crump, Young Penhall – 66.6

Heat 8 Craven at his spectacular best wins in another fast time from Gundersen with Collins taking Williams on the last lap. Craven, Gundersen, Collins, Williams – 66.8

Heat 9 Moore gets a fast start and leads all the way with Penhall passing Parker and Collins on the third lap. Moore, Penhall, Parker, Collins 67.6

Heat 10 Briggs roars round Gundersen on the second lap with Crump getting close to Gundersen on the last lap with Price again in last place. Briggs, Gundersen, Crump, Price – 67.2

Heat 11 Craven from the inside gate gets to the bend just before Mauger and wins in another fast time as he again equals the track record of 66.6 Rickardsson, who did not look happy off the outside gate just cannot make any impression and he cannot find away round Young. Craven, Mauger, Young, Rickardsson – 66.6

Heat 12 It's Fundin again in a fast time as he beats Nielsen with Olsen easily beating Williams. Fundin, Nielsen, Olsen, Williams 66.8

Heat 13 Fundin is out again. This time it's a battle between the two "Super Swedes" with Fundin winning all the way. No one would think that Fundin **22** was injured in his first race, as he had to set a new track record of 66.2 to defeat his Swedish challenger, who was five yards behind at the flag. Fundin, Rickardsson, Gundersen, Parker.

Heat 14 Nielsen makes a brilliant start from gate 2 and holds off the determined challenge by Craven. Nielsen, Craven, Penhall, Price – 67.2

Heat 15 Briggs and Olsen pass and re-pass with Briggs just getting the verdict on the run in to the line. Briggs, Olsen, Young, Collins – 67.4

Heat 16 From the inside gate its an easy win for Mauger. Crump almost gets Moore on the line Mauger, Moore, Crump, Williams 67.2

Heat 17 Craven is winning when his bike goes bang on the last bend. Crump in second moves wide taking Olsen with him and Parker took full advantage of the gap and just gets to the line first. Parker, Olsen, Crump, Craven – 67.8

Heat 18 Fundin rides round Mauger on the first bend and it leaves Mauger chasing shadows as he again lowers the track record with Collins an easy third. Fundin, Mauger, Collins, Price – 66.2

Heat 19 Moore never in the hunt against Nielsen with Young taking Gundersen on the third lap – 67.2

Heat 20 After a ding-dong struggle Rickardsson just gets home in front of Briggs, with Penhall making no headway on the top two. Rickardsson, Briggs, Penhall, Williams – 67.2

First Semi-Final The first Semi looks the stronger of the two. It's Rickardsson V New Zealand. Mauger picks gate one and gates like a rocket with Rickardsson looking for an opening that just is not there. Briggs gets by Rickardsson on the third lap but Rickardsson goes high on the third bend and seems to ride off the air fence to pass Briggs in a spectacular move as he wins by inches. Moore was always last. Mauger, Rickardsson, Briggs, Moore – 66.8

Second Semi-Final Fundin and Nielsen into the first bend neck and neck, but its Fundin who pulls away to win again as he brings the track record down to 66 seconds. A great scrape for third place that is eventually won by the spectacular English star Craven from Olsen. Fundin, Nielsen, Craven, Olsen – 66.0

Final The crowd is buzzing as the four greats line up for the start of the Final. As the top scorer Mauger got the pick of the gates and takes gate one. He spends a lot of time with his gamesmanship at the gate as he continually rolls up and down. When the tapes final go up he gets a jet propelled start and leads into the first bend with a two-yard lead. But he does not pull away from Fundin who catches up on the second lap. Going into the third bend Fundin makes a move to go inside but it seems that there is no gap there. Somehow Fundin makes one by going over the white line with his foot and front wheel. Mauger seemed shaken by this audacious move and moves **23** out as Fundin roars under him. This leaves a gap that Rickardsson takes full advantage of and he then sets off after Fundin, but it's a vain hope and he still had to hold out Mauger and Nielsen was also up very close. Fundin wins by 30 yards, with the other three very close at the flag. The crowd are all up

at the end cheering a great champion and they all gasp as the time is announced as Fundin had again lowered the track record to under the 66 seconds barrier to an amazing time of 65.9 Fundin, Rickardsson, Mauger, Nielsen – 65.9

At the pits gate Fundin was given the traditional bumps by the riders and warmly congratulated by his rivals. It was noticeable that Briggs went up to Fundin and shock his hand as the first race crash was just one of those hard racing moments.

With the crowd cheering the Queen presented a smiling Fundin, who was still limping from his first race crash, with the All Time World Championship.

Later at the reception the Duke of Edinburgh was seen in deep conversation with the reserve Vic Dugan as they reminisce about when the Duke had presented Duggan with the British Riders Championship in 1948. The Royal Princess who had been excited by the thrills of the sport had promised to come again. Prince Harry was all for having a go and “Buster” Chapman who overheard this remark was in like a flash. “We run training Schools at the Norfolk Arena and you would be very welcome to have a go.” As the Norfolk Arena was near Sandringham and Harry would be there at Christmas “Buster” suggested “that if the weather was ok then Harry could have a go behind closed doors, if he so wished.” Ove then volunteered to give Harry “a few tips” and the daredevil Prince was more than happy to agree to this. **KF** (Fantasy Speedway if you like but clearly Keith has put a bit of thought into this. We are sure we could all have a go at this as, to be fair, Keith has not looked at any real pre-war candidates. Once we have all the data into the web site maybe we could look at this and be able to compare riders on the basis of the calculated match average. **(Editors))**

**Deadline for items for next edition is : 30th April 2007**

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### National League Division One 1947

Home/Away	Belle Vue	Bradford	Harringay	New Cross	Wembley	West Ham	Wimbledon
Belle Vue	xxxxxx	45 - 39	54 - 30	47 - 37	35 - 49	57 - 27	38 - 46
	xxxxxx	51 - 33	46 - 38	50 - 34	49 - 35	52 - 29	41 - 40
Bradford	42 - 42	xxxxxx	41 - 43	46 - 38	50 - 33	52 - 32	40 - 44
	37 - 47	xxxxxx	53 - 30	44 - 37	38 - 46	51 - 33	50 - 34
Harringay	47 - 33	38 - 45	xxxxxx	44 - 40	34 - 46	42 - 41	42 - 42
	38 - 46	55 - 28	xxxxxx	39 - 44	38 - 46	50 - 34	34 - 49
New Cross	36 - 46	38 - 45	42 - 41	xxxxxx	33 - 51	47 - 37	50 - 34
	49 - 35	58 - 26	52 - 31	xxxxxx	39 - 45	59 - 25	47 - 37
Wembley	54 - 30	52 - 31	52 - 32	50 - 34	xxxxxx	60 - 24	41 - 42
	49 - 35	60 - 24	57 - 26	57 - 27	xxxxxx	55 - 27	47 - 35
West Ham	41 - 43	38 - 45	44 - 40	47 - 37	42 - 41	xxxxxx	39 - 45
	48 - 36	52 - 32	43 - 40	45 - 39	40 - 42	xxxxxx	44 - 40
Wimbledon	51 - 33	50 - 33	40 - 44	50 - 33	43 - 39	54 - 30	xxxxxx
	36 - 47	42 - 41	50 - 34	39 - 45	38 - 46	43 - 39	xxxxxx

### National League Division One 1947

Team	P	W	L	D	PtsF	PtsA	Points
Wembley	24	19	5	0	1153	846	38
Belle Vue	24	15	8	1	1038	965	31
Wimbledon	24	13	10	1	1024	977	27
Bradford	24	10	13	1	966	1038	21
New Cross	24	10	14	0	995	1011	20
West Ham	24	8	16	0	901	1102	16
Harringay	24	7	16	1	930	1068	15

### National League Division Two 1947

Team	P	W	L	D	PtsF	PtsA	Points
Middlesbrough	28	20	8	0	1363	977	40
Sheffield	28	17	9	2	1315	1022	36
Norwich	28	16	12	0	1182	1142	32
Birmingham	28	14	14	0	1118	1222	28
Newcastle	28	12	14	2	1128.5	1200.5	26
Bristol	28	11	17	0	1125.5	1215.5	22
Wigan	28	9	17	2	1068	1266	20
Glasgow	28	10	18	0	1044	1299	20

### National League Division Two 1947

Home /Away	Birmingham	Bristol	Glasgow	Middlesbrough	Newcastle	Norwich	Sheffield	Wigan
Birmingham	xxxxxx	53 - 31	60 - 24	44 - 40	47 - 36	47 - 37	55 - 29	48 - 36
	xxxxxx	44 - 40	59 - 24	39 - 45	35 - 49	48 - 36	45 - 39	47 - 37
Bristol	35 - 49	xxxxxx	57.5-26.5	47 - 35	62 - 22	39 - 44	47 - 36	37 - 43
	60 - 24	xxxxxx	57 - 27	38 - 45	51 - 32	62 - 22	46 - 38	47 - 36
Glasgow	40 - 44	48 - 36	xxxxxx	48 - 36	45 - 38	38 - 44	32 - 52	43 - 41
	54 - 29	48 - 36	xxxxxx	36 - 48	40 - 44	50 - 34	47 - 37	56 - 27
Middlesbrough	56 - 28	61 - 23	56 - 28	xxxxxx	57 - 26	55 - 29	43 - 39	62 - 22
	64 - 20	59 - 25	46 - 38	xxxxxx	52 - 31	64 - 17	54 - 30	55 - 29
Newcastle	42 - 38	50 - 34	43 - 41	40 - 43	xxxxxx	40 - 37	38 - 45	53 - 31
	48 - 36	53 - 31	39.5 - 44.5	44 - 40	xxxxxx	55 - 28	39 - 42	47 - 37
Norwich	46 - 38	58 - 26	58 - 25	48 - 36	47 - 37	xxxxxx	45 - 39	54 - 30
	55 - 28	55 - 29	61 - 23	47 - 37	52 - 32	xxxxxx	37 - 47	56 - 26
Sheffield	60 - 24	60 - 24	58 - 26	34 - 50	42 - 42	54 - 29	xxxxxx	65 - 19
	58 - 26	57 - 27	57 - 27	49 - 35	54 - 29	46 - 37	xxxxxx	56 - 28
Wigan	53 - 30	49 - 35	56 - 27	35 - 49	42 - 42	39 - 40	32 - 51	xxxxxx
	51 - 33	41 - 43	45 - 39	43 - 41	47 - 37	52 - 32	41 - 41	xxxxxx