

# The Speedway Researcher

Promoting Research into the History of Speedway and Dirt Track Racing

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## **Constructive Debate**

Those of you who follow the Old Time Speedway chat room web site will know an article we published some time ago has been the cause of some, let us say, passionate, debate and questions about the accuracy of some of our articles.

In the light of this we would like to say that we set up to achieve the sub heading above but never set up to make any claims about the accuracy of the material we publish simply because we cannot check every item we receive and publish. We accept, in good faith, that the article represents the honest belief of the contributor. Equally, that should anyone consider there are factual inaccuracies in any article that they let us know their differing opinion and we will publish it provided it is not going to land us in court i.e. isn't offensive to or is a personal attack on anyone.

We would like to move on from this episode positively and, as a magazine which is nearing the half century edition, would like to see it continue to hit the 100, have everyone pulling together in pursuit of a common chequered flag.

## **Keith Cox an original Edinburgh Monarch**

**Tony Webb's** coverage of the lesser known lads continues.

Keith Cox had a long career in Australia from 1946-1958, he ranks as one of the few Australian legends who never reached his true potential in Britain. However in Australia his test match average of 34 points from 4 call ups gives him the second best average of all time. It was only the parochial attitude of the Southern based selectors that he did not appear on other occasions to wear his country's colours.

It is fair to say that an Australian speedway rider's lot was very basic in austere Great Britain in the post war years. Coming from the sunshine of Australia, leaving your loved ones behind to seek fame and fortune in a

different land was a tough call. Food and petrol rationing, inclement weather and tiny tracks must have tested those that ventured to the utmost.

In that 1948 season there were many Australians in the second division so Keith was always meeting up with riders who he had raced against in Brisbane. At nearby Glasgow the Tigers Buck Ryan and Junior Bainbridge, in the North east, Newcastle had three Queenslanders, Bonnie Waddell, Keith Gurtner and veteran Charlie Spinks. Among fellow countrymen racing in England in the second division at the time were Gruff Garland, Jack Bibby Arthur Payne, Graham Warren and Buck Whitby. Charlie Spinks who had spent the war years in the UK stated on his return to Brisbane that he lived on horse meat during 1948, I suspect the standard of living in post war Britain was a shock to many riders at the time.

A keen all round motorcyclist Keith now in his 85th year lives in the South East Brisbane area. Still keenly interested in speedway he attended the Australian veterans dinner in Sydney in 2002.

Born in the Brisbane suburb of Corinda, Queensland in 1923, he recalls hearing the sound of speedway motorcycles at Davies Park from his bedroom window. The family moved to Pomona, near Gympie where he showed early promise as a boxer, but motorcycles were to be his life. The first machine was a 350 Douglas which he rode from the family farm to school, Starting in scrambles in 1945 on a 500v twin road bike, he progressed to a Jap engined Enfield and a Velocette Viper , winning a Queensland title on the way. Keith also won the last road race at the almost forgotten venue of Kingston, now a heavily populated Brisbane suburb and competed in motorcycle events at Strathpine and Lowood. His speedway career began at Brisbane's Ekka under Frank Arthur in late 1946. On a Rudge machine, his promise was recognised by Victorian rider Andy Menzies who took the young Queensland under his wing. Andy prepared a new machine for Keith and taught him a lot of mechanical skills, his career took off from that point. There was a lot of competition in that first post war season in Brisbane. Archie Neill, New Zealander Harold Fairhurst, Hughie Geddes, Morrie Bond, Keith Gurtner and Andy Menzies all provided some tough opposition for the young rider

In his first meeting on September 7 1946 Keith won his handicap event, by the next meeting he was on a 10 yard handicap. He missed the meeting of 28 September after being involved in a road accident with a

three ton truck. He was injured again in a track spill in October but bounced back to record his first scratch race win in November. In that first season he won an interstate pairs with partner Keith Gurtner. His success continued during the 1947 season when he was spotted by Clem Mitchell for the newly formed Scottish team Edinburgh for the 1948. UK Second Division season, Australian team mates were South Australians Clem and veteran Bill Maddern.

Keith arrived in Scotland for his first meeting on April 24 1948 for the match against Bristol Bulldogs, after a last in his first race, he gained a valuable third in his second ride beating Johnny Hole, as Clem Mitchell came first this gave the Monarchs a 4-2 heat win. Over the next few meetings he was paired with the experienced New Zealander Dick Campbell, Londoner Eddie Lack and Bert Shearer. He established a good understanding with Campbell and they team rode efficiently. A workshop was set up under the grandstands at Meadowbank where Keith was able to learn the tricks of the trade from his experienced team mates. The following week he got his first race win in a five paid six against the Sheffield Tigers. He endeared himself to the Monarchs supporters with 4 point score in a 45 –39 home win over the Fleetwood Flyers on May 8. Birmingham Brummies were the visitors to Old Meadow Bank on May 17 when Keith continued his early promise with a 3 point return he had now got the hang of the 368 yard circuit

On May 20 Keith had his first visit to the Middlesboro track but could not adjust to the tricky Yorkshire circuit and scored one paid 2 in the Monarchs defeat. Back in Edinburgh on May 29 he got his second race win in the 46-38 defeat of Sheffield with a final score of 4 paid 5. At home the following week for reasons unknown he did not ride.

This was the start of a three match period beset with misfortune. A taste of the inclement British weather was experienced when the Monarchs travelled to Sheffield to meet Birmingham on June 5 when torrential rain caused the stoppage before Keith could experience the larger 395 yard Owlerton track., a second away match at Middlesbrough was also disastrous with a fall, an engine failure and a meagre 1 point return. The travels around Britain continued with a meeting at Birmingham on 12 June but the gremlins struck again with engine failure.

The Monarchs could only raise 20 points to the Tigers 64 when they were thrashed at Sheffield on June 24, but Keith had his best meeting of the month with a score of 3 paid 1.

The month of July opened with a score of 2 plus 1 when he was the match winner in a 42-41 home victory over Fleetwood at home. A visit back to Perry Barr on July 5 saw a 1 paid 1, but a return to Middlesboro again proved a bogey track with a duck on July 15. Then a good home score against the Bristol Bulldogs on July 17 with a 4 paid 6. Three days later the team were in the north-west for a meeting at Fleetwood where on another new circuit Keith did well to score 1 paid 1. These bonus points were crucial to the team's performance in these close matches. With the summer evenings now closing in there were less matches in August, at home against Fleetwood a 4 paid 6 and a 3 paid 4 against Bristol, then a better return away at Sheffield with a 4 paid 5 on August 19. (Note: Bonus points were not introduced until 1950 but it helps put the scores into a modern context. Eds)

The season began winding down in September, but Keith was just starting to hit the traps. A score of 8 plus 1 at home to Middlesbrough was his best of the season, a lapse at the tricky 290 yard Knowle track in Bristol with a zero, and a lowly 2 at Norwich, a 425 yard track that one would have thought he would excel on., were then counter acted with a terrific 6 paid 2 when the Norwich Stars led by Queenslander Bert Spencer came to Scotland on 20 September. This was to be Keith's final appearance at Edinburgh. The fans clamoured for his return in 1949, but this was not to be.

His British career finished with away meetings at Fleetwood on October 5 and his final meeting at Sheffield on October 7 when a 2 plus 1 was his final contribution to the Monarchs first post war season.

In that season Keith rode 22 league matches to score 51 points and 5 challenge matches that gave him a first year league average of 2.32. Sadly this was to be his only season in UK much to the disappointment of the thousands of Edinburgh fans who had taken the Aussie trier into their hearts. British promoters continued to make overtures but Keith, who had a steady job with PMG, resisted all offers. It is easy to see the promoters interest as Keith had proved to be the best of the Queenslanders in UK in 1948. His team riding had produced bonus points and often his contribution was the difference between a win or a loss for the Monarchs. Reflecting on his decision not to return to Edinburgh in 1949, Keith reckons that the Monarchs benefited as his replacement was a young unknown from Adelaide who was to become A double World champion...Jack Young!

Back home in Brisbane Keith soon put his overseas experience to good use and soon became the man to beat at the EKKKA track, although he had to give second best to veteran Dick Smythe in his first two meetings in Brisbane. In the 1948/49 Australian title held in Brisbane he scored 6 points. At Lismore speedway in 1949 Keith won the Lismore and Northern Rivers championship on a rocket powered bike which was the first and last time he tried the alternative power, he still remembers the pain from his scorched leathers which made sitting down impossible for a couple of weeks afterwards!

During 1947-49 the two Keiths Gurtner and, Cox were the idols of Brisbane speedway faithfuls. Often starting 150 yards back Keith Cox's surges around the outside where angels fear to tread thrilled the fans at every meeting. Talking of handicaps in Melbourne he was placed a massive 220 yards back...1948-1958 he won the points score 8 times plus several Best pairs meetings with his great friend Keith Gurtner There were no shortage of meetings at that time with Ipswich, Toowoomba, and Lismore NSW all popular venues.

Keith's remarkable test match career began in 1949 when he scored 8 points in the third test against England in Brisbane. He was to repeat the same score in his next two test caps, Brisbane again in the 1950/51 and 1951/52 series. His final Australian appearance in 1952/53 he was in the double figures with a score of 10 points.

Keith's Australian title records were a bronze medal in 1947 when he ran third behind his mentor Menzies and winner Charlie Spinks at the Ekka. In the Queensland Solo title solo titles his best performance was in 1958 when he won the title from Keith Gurtner and Peter Dykes. He was runner up in 1954 and 1957. His other rostrum places were joint third with Vic Sage in 1953 and third in both the 3 lap and 4 lap in 1956. It is a moot point with Keith that historians overlook the fact that arch rival Gurtner won 5 of his 7 titles after he had retired!

A remarkable career came to a close on June 25 1958 after his Queensland title win , he had also won the Queensland grass track title , so he retired on a winning note. He did return to race in a Memorial meeting for speedcar star Steve Howman who lost his life in a track crash in Adelaide.

Fishing on Moreton Bay with close friend Gurtie and family became his focus from there on. Although fierce rivals on- track, the two Keiths enjoyed a close friendship off- track. Both had homes on Moreton Island.

Throughout his career Keith was very fortunate with injuries. In March 1956 he suffered a broken collarbone. He was also a victim of a spectacular crash at the Ekka on December 5 1953 when his machine broke in two causing him to somersault twice landing within inches of the fence. but he survived this one without injury. His luck was out that evening as he was one of five riders to come down after Harry Adams the limit man fell in front of the field, but again escaped injury. Other injuries were a broken scaphoid and the loss off a couple of teeth.

In recalling the stars of the past Keith is quick to name Lionel Levy, Jack Young Graham Warren and Aub Lawson as the super stars of the 1950's. He also pays respect to the help he received from pioneers Charlie Spinks on getting his head into gear with his mental approach and Andy Menzies for his mechanical skills. Of the British riders who rode in Queensland, he remembers Howdy Byford as a great entertainer both on and off track, and the skills of Ken McKinlay, Olly Hart and Eddie Rigg. Of the 1948 UK season Keith astounded his team mates at Newcastle one night when he attempted to take Alec "Farmer" Grant on the outside at the tight Brough park circuit. Unknown to Keith this was a no-no at Newcastle as "Farmer" was blind in the right eye, but he lived to tell the tale.

Keith returned to the track on his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday, rode in an exhibition race at the Ekka clocking a time of 19 seconds only 2 seconds slower than his race times of his vintage years.

Nowadays his main interest is the Ulysses Motorcycle club, to be a member you can join at 40 but remain a junior until you reach 50. The clubs motto is 'Grow Old Disgracefully'. Keith was President. 1993-1995 and has seen the club grow nationally from 2,500 members in 1988 to 22,000 today. The club are respected for their charity work that includes the Annual Mater Hospital Lollipop run and they are leading contributors to the Arthritis Foundation.

Keith and his wife Myra have travelled around Australia twice by motorcycle, also taking many interstate trips including a trip to Adelaide from Brisbane in 48 hours.

Keith follows the Grand Prix series on DVD and is well up on present day speedway, although he considers it was more spectacular in his day. Townsville resident Ray Braund, son of former Brisbane rider Bill Braund, remembers working at the Post office in Brisbane where several former speedway riders worked, among them Keith, Dicky Smythe Des Simon and Keith Gurtner.

Barry Forsyth respected Brisbane Speedway researcher considers that Keith had the most potential of all post war Brisbane riders. He recalls with admiration Keith's ability to put on a show every time he rode and his skill in going through almost non existent gaps to avoid fallen riders in the hurly burly of handicap events.

Barry, who as a youngster worked for Vic Huxley Motorcycles remembers how the Adelaide street workshops were a haven for Brisbane riders, Keith included, to call in for a yarn and a brew. Speedway has always been a family sport, the halcyon years of the fifties and sixties are still vivid memories, the exploits of Keith Cox are indeed legendary and are an important part in Queensland's speedway and social history.

Statistics

1948 EDINBURGH DIV 2 22 MEETINGS 51 POINTS CMA 2.32

Australian Caps

1949-50 Brisbane 8 points

1950-51 Brisbane 8 points

1951-52 Brisbane 8 points

1952-53 Brisbane 10 points

Australian Title

1947 Second

Queensland titles

1953 third

1954 second

1956 third

1957 second

1958 first

### **Alec Jackson**

The Wembley programme of 15<sup>th</sup> September 1949 dropped a bombshell on its readers in announcing the retirement of the guru of Wembley, Alec Jackson. The story is as follows:

On the advice of his doctors, Mr. Alec Jackson, Speedway Manager at Wembley since 1932, is to retire at the end of this present season. He is to take up farming in the North.

His successor at Wembley will be Mr. Duncan King, who has been Assistant Speedway manager since the inception of the sport at Wembley in 1929.

Mr. Jackson's valued advice on Speedway matters, however, will still be available to Wembley and he intends, during next January and February, to give his personal attention to schooling, at Rye House, a number of ex-Army riders who aim to become future speedway riders.

#### Discovered Many Star Riders

Mr. Jackson is known as the "talent spotter" in speedway racing, for during the course of his association with the sport since the early days of Belle Vue, he has introduced many new stars such as Tommy Price, Aub Lawson, Bob Wells, Split Waterman, Fred Williams, Bill Gilbert, among others.

Under his managership the Wembley Speedway team have won the National league on three occasions, and need only two points from their remaining four matches to win the title again this year.

Wembley have also won the National Trophy twice and the London Cup four times with Mr. Jackson.

#### Had a Colourful Career

An experienced motor-cyclist himself, Mr. Jackson has won more than 200 awards in all forms of motor-cycle sport. He won the Belgian Grand Prix in 1932 and the Lancashire Grand National in three successive years. He was also a trick cyclist, a stunt merchant, and a parachute jumper.

During the 1914/18 war he was a despatch rider, later, commissioned in the R.F.C.

In the last war he served as a Major with the R.E.M.E

It is a heavy blow to lose our popular manager but the doctors have decreed. And so we echo the thoughts of all speedway followers that Alec will soon be restored to full health.

His successor at Wembley, Mr. King, is almost as well-known as Mr. Jackson himself in Speedway racing circles.

During the War he served as a navigator with the R.A.F.

## **AUSTRALIANS IN UK 1928 - 2007**

S/H = Second half rides only. ISL = International Speedways Ltd. DSL = Dirt Track Speedways Ltd T/A = track accident R/A = road accident



I welcome readers input for updates, corrections and omissions on [binbooks@inet.net.au](mailto:binbooks@inet.net.au) Tony Webb, 15 Tranquil Street, Sunnybank Hills, Queensland, 4109 Australia. 3711 5885. This list is by no means complete, or claimed to be 100% accurate and will be updated every 6 months.

Ramm Leo John	SA b.Clare 1927	Coventry/S/Rovers
1956 WA 1959/60	QLD 1960-3.	Edinburgh.1964. died 4/3/2004
Ralston Don	WA	Yarmouth 1954
Randall Frank	QLD	West Ham/Crystal Palace 1931
Redmond Lee	WA	
Regeling Steve	QLD	Ipswich 1979, Workington 1980, Boston 1981, Leicester 1981/3, Kings Lynn 1984/7, Sheffield/Ipswich/Kings Lynn 1988, Exeter 1988/91
Reinke Steve	QLD	Exeter 1974/5
Richardson Damon		Ipswich 1990
Rivett Allan	QLD	Peterboro 1984, Exeter 1986/88, Long Eaton 1989, Berwick 1980
Rogerson Col	QLD	Halifax/Teesside s/h 1973
Russell Kevin	WA	<b>Cowdenbeath 1965</b> Edinburgh <b>SH 1965</b>
Ryan ( <b>Keith</b> ) Buck	NSW	Glasgow 1947/9
Ryman Jim	NSW	Boston 1968/72
Rout Alan		Nottingham 1930
Rusby Bill	NSW	Whitely Bay 1929
Sage Vic	NSW	QLD resi. Edinburgh /Newcastle /Wimbledon 1951, Ipswich 1952
Sadler Nigel	SA	Skegness 1996, <b>Isle of Wight</b> Peterboro 1998
Sanders Billy	NSW	Ipswich 1972/85, Kings Lynn 1988, Hull 1980, Birmingham
Sansome Lou	SA	Workington 1970/3
Saunders Brett	NSW	Berwick 1980/2, Edinburgh 1982/6, <b>Sheffield 1993</b> Middlesboro 1993
Sawyer Les	WA	Oxford/Exeter 1982
Saville Les	WA	Swindon 1953 Bradford 1954
Scanlon Paul	SA	Canterbury 1970
Schiebs Ron	QLD	Peterboro 1989
Schlam Sig	WA	1928

Schlien Rory	NT Berwick 2001, Edinburgh 2001/6, Coventry 2006/7
Scott Bert	QLD Plymouth 1931/2
Scott "Bluey" Eric	SA Motherwell 1951/4, Southampton 1954, Ipswich 1955, Long Eaton 1963, Middlesboro 1964, Glasgow 1965/6. QLD promoter 1968-70
Scott Jack	SA Southampton 1959/60, Plymouth 1961, Cradley 1967
Scott Troy	NSW Wimbledon 1990 Berwick 1991
Sedgeman Ryan	VIC 2006
Seers Dick	NSW Fleetwood/Glasgow 1948, Halifax/Odsal/Bradford 1949/54
Simmonds Mick	NSW Norwich 1957 Holland 1957 NZ 1959
Simpson Darryl	SA Canterbury 1981/2
Simpson Nathan	SA Wimbledon 1989
Sharp Bob	NSW Ashfield/Glasgow 1952/3, Ipswich 1954/8
Sharpe Jack	WA High Beech 1930, Plymouth 1934, Hackney 1936, Wimbledon 1937/8
Sharpe Les	WA Halifax 1969/74
Sheilds David	NSW Oxford 1979
Sheilds Adam	NSW Isle of Wight 1999, Eastbourne 2006 Arena 2007
Sheilds Ben	NSW Edinburgh 2000
Shirmer Alvin Shorty	NSW Norwich 1958, Ipswich 1959, Liverpool 1960 Edinburgh <b>1963</b>
Slee Neville	NSW Ipswich 1969
Smart Frank	WA Exeter 1988, Newport 1999
Sly Paul	NSW Canterbury 1969
Spilsbury John	TAS Middlesboro 1968/9
Spillsbury Les	VIC 1958 Rye House School
Smith Scott	QLD
Smythe Dicky	QLD ISL 1928, Stamford Bridge 1931/2, Wembley 1935, Harringay 1936/7
Snyder Geoff	SA Paisley 1975. Born Adelaide 25/10/1953
Spelta Bob	QLD Canterbury 1976/8, Exeter 1976/7
Spencer Bert	QLD ISL 1928, Exeter 1929, Leicester 1930, Plymouth 1931 Wimbledon 1936/7, Norwich 1938/49

Spinks Charlie	QLD Exeter 1929, Lea Bridge 1931, West Ham 1932/9, Newcastle 1946/8
Stayte John	QLD Peterboro
Stephens Harry	NSW Southampton 1928/9 Whitely bay Aus v Eng 0 PTS.
Stevens Dave	Edinburgh 1990 (?)
Stevens Ted	NSW Wolverhampton 1951
Stevens Jaye	NSW Wolverhampton 2003
Stevens Harold	QLD Exeter 1929, Leicester 1930, Lea Bridge 1931, Belle Vue 1932
Sticpewitch Charlie	QLD <b>Rochdale 1930</b>
Stokes Mark	Edinburgh
Street Neil	VIC Exeter 1952/5, Swindon 1956, Bristol 1977, Newport 1974
Sommers George	WA Exeter/Plymouth/St/Austell 1961/1962. Originally grasstracker from Scotland
Sulway Dick	NSW Southampton 1930
Stewart Col	VIC Glasgow 1929
Sullivan Ryan	VIC Peterboro 1993, 2006, Poole 1998, 2004/5
<b>Summers</b> Aaron	SA <b>Edinburgh 2007</b>
Sweeney Jack	NSW Wolverhampton 1929
Tabet Bob	NSW Canterbury 1969
Taafe Ray	NSW Long Eaton 1986 Milton Keynes 1990
Tapscott Harry	VIC Eastbourne 1949
Taylor Alby	SA Rode QLD 1928 Coventry 1931
Taylor Chum	WA Ashfield 1951, Cardiff 1951/3, Bristol 1954/5, Southampton 1957/60, Poole 1964, Cradley 1966
Taylor Glyn	WA Peterboro/Crewe 1972, Reading 1974, Berwick 1994/6, Edinburgh 1995, Bradford 1996, Newcastle 1997
Taylor Jim	NSW Southampton 1950, protégé of Vic Duggan
Taylor Ray	NSW Clapton 1932, Wimbledon 1938
Thompson Peter	WA Exeter 1976. Died WA 23/5/2004 Age 56
Thorpe Bluey	QLD 1939 UK Tamworth 1947, Yarmouth 1948, Norwich 1946/7. Ex RAAF

Thomas Roy	NSW St Austell 1953. NT Champion 1967/1968
Thorley Noel	NSW 1958 <b>Second halves Bradford 1953</b>
Titman John	QLD Halifax 1972/4, Exeter 1975/7, Leicester 1978/81, Hackney 1982/3, Wimbledon 1984 . World finalist 1978/79
Torpie Kevin	QLD Middlesboro 1962/3, Edinburgh 1964/6
Toth George	WA Weymouth 1979
Tulloch Terry	VIC Weymouth 1979/81
Turner Paul	ACT Milton Keynes 1981
Turner	ACT Brother of Paul
Tracy Fred	VIC Lea Bridge 1934
Tracy <b>Fred</b>	VIC Coventry 1948
Underwood Doug	WA Scunthorpe 1972/4, Teeside 1975, Leicester 1975/7, Reading 1977/8 Hackney 1990
Unicombe Mark	
Unwin Ben	QLD ISL 1928
Valentine Bob	NSW Workington 1970, Sheffield 1973/4, Coventry 1975/6
Van Briba Dean	TAS
Van Praag Lionel	NSW Wembley 1934/9 1947
Vandenburg Peter	VIC Poole 1961/70, Newport/ Wolverhampton 1966/70 Ipswich 1954
Veal Keith	
Vine Stephen	
Volpe Daryl	QLD Scotland 1970-
Watt Davey	QLD Isle of Wight/Newcastle/Kings Lynn 2004/5, Oxford 2006, Eastbourne 2007
Wade Darren	
Waddell Bonnie	QLD Newcastle 1947/48, Plymouth 1948/9
Wainwright Rusty	WA St. Austell 1950, Plymouth 1951
Wall Allan	NSW Poole 1950
Walker Bart	NSW West Ham 1969, Aboriginal rider. “Crazy horse”
Walker Cecil	Coventry 1930
Wallace Colin	
Wallace Rick	

Wallis Charlie	VIC Rye House /Eastbourne /Southampton /Ipswich 1959, Aldershot Poole 1960
Walshaw Alf	
Walsh Ken	VIC Haringgay 1952, Exeter 1950/52, Weymouth 1955
Ward Darcy	
Wark Danny	
Warren Graham	NSW Birmingham 1947/56, Wolverhampton 1961/6. Died QLD 2005
Warren Mark	NSW Glasgow 1980 son of Graham.. Ref Speedway Mirror 1980
Wassell Jim	1928
Water Bobby	
Watkins Adam	
Watson Cliff	NSW West Ham 1952/3
Watson Craig	NSW Poole 2000, Newport 1999/2007
Watson Noel	NSW Ashfield Motherwell <b>1951/53</b> . Killed Sydney Sportsground 6/11/53
Webb Bob	WA Middlesboro 1962
Webb Neil	WA Workington 1980
Weichlbouer Joe	WA Cradley 1966/7, Reading
Wheatland Dave	NSW Glasgow 1979
Whaley Brian	SA Middlesboro 1969, Glasgow 1968
Whitby Buck	SA West Ham 1946/7, Birmingham 1948/9
	<b>Liverpool Southampton</b>
White Doug	QLD Kings Lynn 1967, Wolverhampton 1968
Widt Steve	QLD Ipswich 1989, Berwick 1990
Williams Marcus	QLD Exeter 1979 Hackney/ Oxford Anglia league 1979
Wilkins John	SA Bradford 1975 born Mannum SA 4/10/1951
Wilkinson Bluey	NSW West Ham 1931/8
Wills Dave	VIC West Ham 1966. Died West Ham 22/6/66
Winkler Daren	QLD 1991/2 <b>Edinburgh</b>
Wise Dicky	SA Stamford Bridge 1932, Nottingham 1933, Haringgay 1934, Norwich 1938/39
Williams Graham	NSW Fleetwood 1951, St. Austell 1953

Wilson Guy	WA	Workington 1978/80, Boston 1981/83, Poole
Wiltshire Todd	NSW	Wimbledon 1988/9, Oxford 2006 Reading 1990
Wood Ray	VIC	1980 MK
Wood Raymond	VIC	Milton Keynes 1980 grandson Tom Wood
Wood Tom	VIC	Kings Oak 1930
Woodcock John	QLD	Belle Vue 1967/8
Woodfield Brett	SA	Skegness 1997, Ipswich 1999, Peterboro 1998
Wright Keith	WA	Exeter/Poole 1981
Young Frank	SA	Cradley 1952. Brother of Jack
Young Jack	SA	Edinburgh 1949/52, West Ham 1953/6, Coventry 1960
Young Bob	NSW	Sydney 21/1/44 Reading 1970 Rayleigh 1971/73. Kings Lynn 1972

### **Coventry Lythalls Lane Planned Revival 1938**

**Stuart Staite-Aris**, who, together with colleagues, has gifted records of Coventry post war to the web site, adds a bit to our knowledge of the pre-war Coventry venue Lythalls Lane.

#### New Track For Coventry - February 10<sup>th</sup> 1938

It was reported that a new Speedway track was to be constructed at the Coventry Lythalls Lane Greyhound stadium.

The man behind the venture was Tom Bradbury-Pratt the joint managing director of the Harringay track in London.

He stated that he had reached agreement with the Coventry stadium authorities and had plans to enter a Coventry team into the Provincial section of The National Speedway League.

The plans were for a track of 360 yards and slight banking on the bends. As far as the team members there was speculation that members of the Southampton team were likely to end up at Coventry as it was unlikely that the Southampton promotion was to run in 1938. The riders in question were Frank Goulden, Bert Jones, Billy Dallison, Cyril Anderson, Syd Griffiths, Ivor Creek and Jack Hobson.

Colonel Vernon the managing director at Lythalls Lane told the Midland Daily Telegraph that negotiations were not yet complete but he had hoped to be in a position to make a statement on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> February

#### Mr Bradbury – Pratt Explains Promotors Scheme

A final definite decision was reached on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> February to build a first class Speedway circuit at Lythalls Lane Greyhound stadium. Local contractors were to be engaged to lay the circuit with a considerable sum of money to be invested. Once operational a large staff of local people were to be employed on meeting nights.

Tom Bradbury-Pratt obtained a long tenancy with the stadium and had applied for a licence to run Speedway with an opening date scheduled for Easter. Thereafter meetings were to be run on Fridays at 8pm reverting to Thursdays at the end of June.

The team colours were to be Crimson and Gold halves. There was to be a competition amongst fans to choose a team nick name with the winning entry receiving a prize of season tickets.

Mr Bradbury-Pratt had intentions of involving fans by setting up a Supporters club to ensure a team enthusiasm would prevail. Club members were to benefit from various concessions including reduced admission charges to meetings.

Tom Bradbury-Pratt was quoted as saying

*“ Coventry has always appealed to me from a Speedway point of view and I have been successful in arranging with the owners of the palatial new stadium for a long tenancy agreement under the terms of which I shall proceed to organise a first class Speedway promotion there with the hope that the re-establishment of the sport in the heart of Coventry will meet with success.”*

*“After all the town is possibly the most progressive in the whole of the country and its long association with the sport of Speedway racing is such that it should most certainly participate in the boom that the Speedways are enjoying nationally”*

He stated that he was looking for riders in England, Australia and America capable of putting Coventry at the forefront of the sport and worthy of representing Coventry in the same way as the past star names associated with the club.

#### Residents Opposition to Speedway Project

Saturday February 19<sup>th</sup> 1938

The residents in the Foleshill area particularly those living in Lythalls Lane opposite the stadium were in opposition to the plans to launch Speedway at the Greyhound stadium.

Ex councillor Arthur Day stated that what sort of action to be taken was being considered with a solicitor being consulted. Mr Day would not reveal the number of residents involved in the complaint or confirm rumours that a High court injunction was being applied for to prevent Speedway racing taking place.

Mr Day was personally involved as he lived at The Firs in Lythalls Lane. He was of the opinion that a Speedway track would ruin the value of his property. He stated that it was the noise factor he objected to.

What Mr Day didn't elaborate on was that his property grounds had been used extensively for years by church and charities for garden parties and similar functions. He was afraid of losing this business which he had bookings for 12 months in advance.

On being pushed further on the subject of a Speedway being at the stadium before Mr Day said that he hadn't complained then as he knew it wouldn't last very long. This time though with a long tenancy in place Mr Day objected vehemently.

He went on to explain about noise affecting people who were in bed in the early hours of the evening who worked on shifts at the local collieries.

On being questioned other residents had mixed views. The elderly in general expressed a dislike for Speedway due to the noise nuisance and one resident had bought a property before the stadium had been built and was sure the stadium had caused their property to be devalued.

Younger residents however welcomed the sport to the area saying that they enjoyed the sport and didn't foresee any more nuisance in the area than at present.

Residents in Lythalls Lane 100 yards from the stadium were interviewed although most didn't have an opinion one way or another. One man stated it had never caused any trouble before and all he could see was increased traffic on meeting days which he was already used to when Dog meetings were run.

Trades people in the area were unconcerned as their shops were shut when racing was due to take place.

#### Construction Work Begins Tuesday February 22nd 1938

The Speedway promotion announced that construction work had begun on the new Speedway track with the foundations being prepared.



The interest in a Speedway revival was high with a large number of letters being received at the Stadium supporting the sports re-launch along with applications to join the Supporters club.

Tom Bradbury-Pratt stated

*“I have been advised that certain opposition to my plans to re introduce Speedway racing in Coventry is likely but only from people residing close to the stadium. These people apparently anticipate that a considerable amount of noise will be occasioned, but Speedway racing under modern conditions cannot possibly constitute a nuisance.”*

*“One meeting a week is to be held during the summer months only lasting about 2 hours and terminating not later than 10pm. During each meeting approximately 20 races will take place each race lasting on average for 60 seconds”*

*“The machines used will be fitted with the new slotted exhausts specially designed by the Auto Cycle Union to reduce noise to a minimum and no practise or preliminary tuning up will be permitted.”*

*“More than 5,000,000 people attended Speedway racing last season and it is a fact that several tracks are situated in the heart of residential property, but no complaints were made by neighbours. Speedway racing took place in London, Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Bristol, Nottingham, Leicester, Southampton, Norwich, Middlesbrough and Cardiff. Meetings at these tracks were run under the rules of the A.C.U. while hundreds of meetings were held by local motor clubs all over England without a single complaint being made.”*

*“Coventry is the home of the motor cycle industry and I want to establish a first class Speedway in the town. The sport appeals to young people who are able to find entertainment in the open air during the summer months. Betting is strictly prohibited and there are no objectionable features associated with Speedway racing.”*

*“I am surely not unreasonable in suggesting that the minority of the 200,00 and more residents of Coventry will wish the venture well and hope that in the interests of progress my scheme will meet with success.”*

*“I am entitled to a fair deal and my initiative is deserving of proper consideration. If a small minority are opposed to my plans at least sportsmanship should prevail. I do not want to occasion a nuisance of any kind and will do my utmost to ensure that Speedway racing at the new Coventry stadium will not interfere in any way with the reasonable comfort of a single individual.”*

Coventry Speedway Project at Lythalls Lane Stadium Dropped

Monday February 28<sup>th</sup> 1938

Colonel A.J. Vernon the Lythalls Lane stadium Managing director issued a statement that there was to be no Speedway racing at Lythalls Lane stadium in 1938.

*“It has always been the aim and ambition of the Directors of Coventry Stadium Limited to provide for their patrons the finest possible sport and entertainment and comfortable even luxurious accommodation”*

*“Further it is their most earnest desire that the amenities of the district and the home life of their immediate neighbours should in no way be impaired.”*

*“The new Coventry stadium is a sports arena in which Coventrians are justly proud and no expense has been or will be spared to maintain this enviable reputation, and every care will be taken to avoid any annoyance or inconvenience”*

*“In furtherance of this policy the Directors have decided not to proceed with the promotion of Speedway racing at this stadium.”*

#### Residents Reaction

Mr Day the main objector on hearing the news of the statement said he was very glad to hear it. He stated that he had received support from numerous other residents also objecting to the project.

Mr Day stated that a petition had been organised amongst local residents and arrangements had been made for several streets in the vicinity of the stadium to be canvassed that evening.

#### New Proposal for Lythalls Lane Stadium

Following the failure of the effort to re launch Speedway further proposals were made for the dual use of Lythalls Lane stadium.

The main suggestion was the stadium being used for Cycling and Athletic events with the foundations of the old dirt track making it easy to construct a cinder of gravel cycling track inside the Greyhound course. It was stated that Lythalls Lane stadium would make an ideal home for Athletics meetings with the facilities being ample for all requirements and with first class accommodation for spectators.

As far as Speedway was concerned it was suggested than Mr Bradbury-Pratt would be better to go into a joint venture for the use of Brandon stadium along with Midget Car racing. The surface could be designed to suit both Bikes and Car as had been achieved at UK circuits in London and Belle Vue Manchester. It would be unlikely that there would also be any outside opposition to the sport out at Brandon.

## **Nigel's Natterings**

A few more items from **Nigel Bird**.

### **One offs.**

Plymouth and Cardiff ran just one meeting each in 1937 to celebrate the Coronation. It is reported that Cardiff ran one meeting in October 1934, no results found so far.

Crystal Palace: can only find one meeting in 1936 and 1937. Seems 1938 was Midget cars.

### **Lady Rider**

A Miss Pursey had several practice runs at Sloper Rd Cardiff and was due to give a demonstration ride in July 1930.

### **A Boocock in 1929**

Perhaps early day Leeds rider Harry Boocock of Pudsey should have stuck to Dirt track racing? His appetite for speed led him to power boat racing which sadly ended up with his drowning in the river Ouse.

(Marine Gardens rider Oliver Goodfellow was drowned in a boating accident. **Eds**)

### **Harold Stevens**

Exeter's popular Australian Harold Stevens was actually born nr Cullompton Devon in 1903 but migrated to Oz in 1908.

### **Stainforth 1930**

Stainforth, located in South Yorkshire, was another track to use stacked turves as a safety fence (a la Burnley). [ It has an unusual claim to fame as it operated briefly as a riders' co-operative. **Eds**]

### **Forgotten Aussies**

Jack Gorman was born in Sydney and grew up in Kensington. Took up speedway as a solo rider at Cumberland Oval and later became a top B grader, verging on A grade, at the Sydney Sports Ground and Sydney Showground. Recommended to Birmingham by Graham Warren and given a contract in, 1953. Jack settled in very quickly in the UK and after a number of second half wins, was actually drafted into the First Division side as No. 1 reserve. Sadly, in his last second half outing he suffered severe head injuries, remained in a coma for weeks and never fully recovered. He married a Birmingham girl and never returned to Australia. He died in Birmingham a year or so ago. He did a few laps at Cradley Heath in the 1960's and looked quite fast but didn't have the funds to set himself up for another try at speedway, although he was keen to do so. He was a very affable bloke.

Jack came to England at the same time as another young Australian hopeful by the name of Maxwell (Max) Seward who rode a few times in the old Southern Area League for Brafield but never made the grade. Max also stayed on in England and married a Black Country girl. He later had three sons Garry, Alec and Karl who all rode for a local Cycle Speedway Club, 'Sandwell'. As far as I know, he still lives in the Black Country. (Thanks to Brian Darby, Jim Shepard and Brian Buck)

### **Sunday Independent : The Cornish Version**

**Bob Ballard** from way down in Somerset has sent us an extract from a newspaper published in Liskeard, Cornwall which has amazing speedway coverage. It covers the whole South West and has specific editions for Bristol, Somerset, Dorset and Wiltshire; Devon and Plymouth, and Cornwall with the speedway coverage common to all. The forty four page sports special in tabloid size and the extract covers Plymouth Speedway and Somerset Speedway and the edition Bob sent has an item about Exeter. It devoted almost two full pages to speedway. The paper is glowing colour with really good quality photographs and lengthy reports. This sets the standard for local / regional speedway coverage. It isn't on line just now but the publishers hope to go on line about Christmas so we'll update you when it does. **Jim Henry**

### **Another Track Out of the Woodwork**

**John Skinner's** excellent Defunct Tracks web site is carrying an item about a 1939 venue at venue called Little Wheatley Farm at Rayleigh. It yet again begs the question – how many more pre-war venues lie hidden in the pages of dusty newspapers? For John's site which is well worth a look, go to [www.defunctspeedway.co.uk](http://www.defunctspeedway.co.uk) **Jim Henry**

Belle Vue Book Review

Contact details for Colin Parker – Author of Coventry's Two Speedways have changed / were incorrect. Email now [cparker274@btinternet.com](mailto:cparker274@btinternet.com)  
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