

The Speedway Researcher

Promoting Research into the History of Speedway and Dirt Track Racing

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Lee Richardson

The tragic loss of Lee Richardson has had massive coverage in other publications. We would just like to add our sincere condolences to Lee's wife and children and to his family and friends. **Editors**

Speedway in Australia 1926

In 1926 Lionel Wills visited Australia and his thoughts on speedway in Australia was published in The Motor Cycle on November 25th of that year. We now reproduce that article.

“Motor racing,” an Australian daily paper remarked recently, “has definitely become one of the major sports of Sydney.” In Australia, in other words, a motor race meeting often draws as big a crowd as does a football match, and the time is obviously approaching when it will rival horse racing, the Australians' favourite pastime. Now even with the increasing popularity of the T.T. races, the same cannot be said of England, and it may therefore interest home readers to hear how it is done on the other side of the world.

In cinder-track racing Australia has discovered a type of event which is as thrilling as the “T.T.,” and even more spectacular than sand-racing; in addition, it requires a not very great outlay of capital, and the track is easily accessible from the big city. Ten minutes on a tram, fact brings Sydney to the Speedway Royal, which is simply, a broad unbanked cinder track constructed round a football oval. Australian football is played on an oval field, and the track round it is about one-third of a mile, with huge stands all round, having accommodation for thousands of people.

Skidding a Solo Machine

Very high speeds are naturally impossible : machines begin skidding on the bends at anything over 30 m.p.h. Here, of course, is the point. The

crack riders lap at 55 m.p.h. – solo! Skidding is the essence of the game, but no one who has actually seen it can realise the extraordinary thrill of watching a rider skid *both* wheels of a solo machine. The front wheel, of course, is turned outward – *i.e.* , into the skid – and as the motor cycle itself leans inwards as a tremendous angle, the whole machine appears to be out of control, and a smash is a certainty.

Quick turning round a flag, as in sand racing, can never appear so spectacular, for on the cinder-track speed never falls below 50 m.p.h. or so, even on the turns.

Foremost among the writer's recollections are F.W.Dixon breaking records on Kop, the late Dario Resta's Sunbeam car on Aston Clinton hill. But even these memories pale before the recollection of a low lean "I.O.M." Douglas almost flat on its side, swooping round the cinder-track in one wild, hair-raising mile-a-minute skid. The effect is as if someone had spread three inches of sand round Hillbery Corner on the "T.T." circuit – and then induced riders to make a habit of overtaking one another on the bend.

Would your "T.T." riders corner as fast under such conditions as they do now? Judging by Australian comparison, a little practice would make them as fast as ever and twice as spectacular!

Racing at Night

Somewhat naturally, then, motor cycle racing is popular in Australia. Race meetings are held at the Speedway Royal every Saturday *evening* – by electric light. The whole track is surrounded by a vast ring of lights, and every line of the great stands is outlined by electric globes, Wembley-fashion. The effect is eerie in the extreme - roaring machines skid round the track, flinging clouds of black cinder dust into the air, shooting flashes of flame from their exhausts, and in the half-light the goggled and crash-helmeted riders look like the very demons from the infernal regions.

The spectacle unfortunately cannot be reproduced by the camera, which requires strong sunlight for moving objects. Something like forty minutes would be required to take a motor cycle by electric light – and the motor cycle is probably lapping in about twenty-three seconds, the result would be a trifle elongated!

The impression the spectator gets is machines skidding straight at him out of control – his first impulse is to leap up and make for the back woods: and the impression of extreme danger never goes. During practicing, a rider can fall as often as he likes on the cinder-track

without hurting himself, provided he misses the outside fence, and provided he is not run over from behind.

These meetings, in fact, seem to be singularly free from trouble. The writer has witnessed five in five weeks, without seeing anyone hurt! The few minor spills which do occur only add to the interest!

Four riders only are allowed on the track together, so that events are run off in heats. Each race is of five laps, or slightly less than two miles, and is over in 2.5 minutes. The organisation is perfect – a meeting may consist of as many as forty races; yet it starts at 8 p.m. and is always over before eleven.

Thousands watch these races every Saturday. In the usual Australian temperature an open space is an acceptable alternative to the theatre, and the entrance fee of two shillings, is no more than for a cinema. That these tracks pay the promoters is evident, for in addition to the Speedway Royal, Sydney has two other race tracks in regular use; the concrete track at Maroubra, and a dirt track at Penrith. A fourth – a cinder-track – is in the course of preparation.

London, with its population seven times as great as Sydney's should be able to run to half a dozen such tracks, even though their use would probably have to be confined to the spring and summer months. A half-mile track (the ideal size) could easily be laid round the Wembley Stadium. If this were done, thousands of Londoners would flock weekly to see our Dixons and Le Vacs.

The objection may be raised that this would cheapen the sport; but it is only by obtaining popular support that the restrictions which have curtailed activities at Brooklands, not because horse racing is less objectionable to outsiders, but simply because the masses would not tolerate any such interference with their amusements. If motor cyclists want freedom for their sport they must make it universally popular, and cinder-track racing would be an excellent beginning.

Jim Milward

We fell heir to a pile of CD's compiled by the late **Keith Farman**, who tho' best known as the Keeper of The Bloater Pond, was very into the history of tracks in his beloved East Anglia. This is an item from one of the CDs which is worth publishing.

In the first ever meeting held at the Firs on Sunday 17 August 1930, G. W. Milward came second in the one-mile open handicap. He fared better in the second meeting held on 14 September, as he won a heat winner in both the one-mile rolling start and two-mile heats. This meeting was run in difficult conditions because of increasing rain, and as the grass became sodden it made the track treacherous. In the final of the two-mile handicap he met with an accident, when he crashed and injured the calf of his leg. After being attended to by members of the British Red Cross Society, he was taken to hospital, in their ambulance, and was released later that night.

Just the two meetings had been held at the Firs in 1930, but that was to change in 1931, as at least fifteen meetings were held. In the fifth meeting held on 12 July, G. Milward number 29, riding a Special, gained fourth place in the one-mile open handicap, and he repeated this performance on the 23 August.

Now the question must be answered, was G. W. Milward in fact Jim? It would certainly look that way, as the programme for the meeting held on 13 September had in event 3 of the two miles open handicap, number 29 J. Milward riding a Special. But why the reports of the early meetings had him as G. W. Milward will now almost certainly never be known. He later advertised his garage business, as J. W. Milward. There have also been occasions when he has been programmed as Millward, spelt with two l's. This was mainly during 1937 when he was riding for Norwich and programmed as Jim Milward.

Incidentally, for the meeting held at the Firs on 13 September 1931, the track had been changed from a grass track to a dirt track. Also at this meeting the first team match was held at the Firs, and as Jim was not included in the team match, it would tend to prove that at that time at the Firs, he was not one of the top riders.

However, towards the end of the season, Jim did gain some success as on 4 October, he gained second place in the semi final of the one-mile handicap. This was after the 7,000 fans had seen a thrilling team match, in which Cambridge had defeated the home side 28-26.

At the Firs in 1932 Jim was number 11, and again he listed as was riding a Special, and it was one that he was forever experimenting with. At one time he used a car tyre, because it was larger than the usual motorcycle tyre he believed that it would give him improved grip. There was very little mention of Jim in the results at the Firs during the 1932 season. On 19 June Don Dimes beat him in a two-lap dash. He did

well on 24 July, winning the Junior two-lap Handicap in a time of 50 2/5 seconds, and he also came second in the same meeting to the Norwich captain Arthur Reynolds (*Fred Leavis*), in heat 2 of the Stadium Handicap. But in the report of the meeting held on 26 September Jim stole the headlines, with **MILWARD'S POPULAR WIN**. This win was in the Stadium Handicap, that he won from the Norwich captain Arthur Reynolds and Gill. Riding from a three second handicap Jim rode brilliantly to stave off the challenges of Reynolds, who was never far behind. Jim was the tracks most cherry rider, week after week some slight trouble had stopped his machine or when leading he had overslid, but nothing had removed his smile. The crowd cheered a smiling Jim, who had stuck to it and had finally gained his reward. There was plenty of racing locally during the 1932 season as the Waveney Speed Track ran 11 meeting at Doles Meadow, Bradwell. The first was held on Saturday 28 May with 3 p.m. start. Jim was one of the stars of this opening meeting winning the two-mile (open).

A week later the second meeting was held, and Jim was rapidly becoming the idol of the Bradwell Speedway supporters, and one of the chief reasons was his fine sporting spirit that he displayed. A daring and skilful rider, whether winning or losing, he always had a smile. In his heat against Geoff Pymar in the mile handicap he accidentally pushed the Norwich man, but refused to take the advantage it gave him. He waited for Pymar to catch him up, returned to the post, and the heat was re-run. Jim lost, but he was the first to congratulate Pymar, who must have appreciated Jim's sporting spirit.

At this same meeting Jim had bad luck in an attempt to beak the track record, for something appeared to go wrong with his machine on the first straight. Although he finished in breakneck style he was over one second outside the record.

Jim was certainly the idol of the Bradwell crowd, as he was involved in many exciting races and close finishes. One of these was in another race with Geoff Pymar, for a second place. Pymar was slightly ahead, but on the last corner Jim made a fine attempt to pass. They raced to the finishing line, and passed almost together. The judges gave the second place to Pymar, but this decision did not please some of the spectators. Jim took the decision in his usual sporting manner, as he though that Pymar had won by a few inches.

Crouching over his machine with that smile, which won him great fame, he went on to win many races at Bradwell. Jim was always trying to

improve his position, and would try and make his machine do impossible things, and consequently had severally crashes. In one he ripped his front tyre, and he appeared badly hurt, but much to everybody's surprise he picked himself up smilingly shook off the dust, and taking one look at his machine he thrust his hands in his pockets and matched off towards the starting post-still grinning.

Jim featured in more results during the 1933 season at the Firs. For the meeting held on Sunday 2 July the track had finally gained A.C.U.

Permit. Jim was reserve for the Rest but he failed to score, as the Rest defeated Case's Team by the narrow margin of 28-26.

On 17 September the Firs held the Eastern Motor Club Senior and Junior Championship. Fred Leavis won the Senior Championship and Jim was included in the Junior Championship. The heats were match races, with Jim defeating Fred Ralph in a time of 1 minute 28½ seconds. Four riders contested the Semi Final that was from a rolling start, with the first and second going into the Final. Dick Wise won this race, and it looked as if Stew Fairburn of Clapton, had secured his place in the final But he kept looking round for Jim, who came "all out" to beat him to the post. Stew had only rode once before at the Firs, and after that he had a bad crash at one of the London tracks, and had only ridden twice since then. The final was from a rolling start, with Dick Wise being too good for Jim, winning in a time of 1 minute 25.2 seconds.

By 1933 the old road machines of 1930 had all gone, and now all the riders at the Firs were riding machines made for the job, no brakes, no clutch, no kick starter, not running on petrol, but "dope at 6/8 (34p) per gallon, and doing just six miles to the gallon. There were fifteen riders programmed for the Championship meeting, all rode the J.A.P machines, with the exception of Fred Ralph (ex Wembley), Wally Banner and E. Cooper of Nottingham, who were still loyal to the Rudge machine.

The Waveney Speed Track at Bradwell only staged meetings in 1932, but the Lowestoft and District Motor Club ran meetings at Kessingland Road 1933. Jim's name did not appear in any adverts or in the results, so it would seem that he did not appear at that track. It is of course possible that he rode under another name.

In 1934, Jim was signed as a junior for the famous Wembley Lions, and he was attached to them for the next four seasons. Jim never rode in a leagues meeting for the Lions, but during that time he did captain the Reserve/Cubs team. I know little of his career at Wembley, but I do

have a copy of one programme, on the day I was born (16th May 1935). The meeting was a League match against Harringay, that the home side won 41–31. The meeting opened with two junior races, and in the first heat Jim came second to the young Australian Ray Taylor, in a time of 83 seconds, this was by far the slowest time of the meeting. The fastest time of the meeting was 78.2, set by Jack Ormston and Jack Parker, in heats 6 and 7 of the League match. Les Bowden then beat Jerry Williams in the next heat in a time of 81.4.

Two match races of two-lap dashes then followed the 12-heat league meeting. Bluey Wilkinson, West Ham's Australian star won the first in a time of 39.6 seconds and Lionel Van Pragg then defeated Norman Parker in 38 seconds. Then it was the junior scratch race final, between the first and seconds of the two heats. It was recorded that Jim had a spill, with Ray Taylor winning the race, from Les Bowden and Jerry Williams.

Jerry Williams was also one of the riders that appeared at Lowestoft (*Speedway Williams*). After that there were four heats and a final for the Wembley Scratch Race, which was won by Jack Parker, from Wilkinson and Byers. So in all there were twenty-two races on this programme.

The programme had an advert for the next meeting, (23 May) Wembley V West Ham, two lap dash match races - Frank Charles v Dicky Case and Billy Lamont v Eric Gregory. Wembley Juniors v West Ham Juniors and Scratch races. So it would seem that Jim would have been included in the reserve match.

During 1934, Jim was one of the stars of the Lowestoft Clubs meetings at as they advertised "the improved Gunton Hall Speedway" Now as a professional rider he rode under the name of Dusty Flint. In this form of racing he very did well, he captained Suffolk (19 August), and scored a 9-point maximum, in a 34-20 victory over Essex. Suffolk defeated Norfolk 29-24 (2 September), with *Dusty* gaining 5 points. He was involved in an exciting incident when he skidded and fell as he was going all out to overtake the leader. Jack Tidbury (Norfolk) was close behind, and to avoid a collision he was thrown from his bike.

Nevertheless Dusty still managed to come second to T. Sparkes (*Fred Leavis?*) in the Ellandee handicap.

In 1936 both Jim and Tommy Price were loaned out from Wembley to Provincial League clubs for the season to gain more experience, Jim to Nottingham and Price, who would become World Champion in 1949, to

Cardiff. Unfortunately I have no details of how Jim fared at Nottingham.

There was very little racing at the Firs in 1935, but the Lowestoft Club, who had moved to Pakefield at the East Coast Speedway. They also advertised that they were affiliated to the A.C.U. So like their neighbours at Norwich, it allowed the riders to appear under their own names. Strangely Jim was still advertised as “Dusty” Flint (Wembley) for the first meeting of the season. In later meetings it was Jim Milward (Dusty).

Dusty was involved in several crashes during the 1935 Lowestoft season. He also had bad luck in the third meeting, when he “cranked” his new motor on the practice lap prior to the programme proper. He was loaned Jack Ford’s J.A.P. and began to settle down in his spectacular fashion, when this engine also went on “holiday”.

The track staged a match race for the Individual Championship of the East Coast. Fred Leavis held this and *Dusty* was programmed to be his challenger, but because of his bike problems it was postponed to the next meeting. In this meeting Jim was on top form, winning three races for in the team event with just Fred Leavis beating him. Then Fred also defeated Dusty by two races to nil in the Championship.

There was no racing at the Firs in 1936, apart from the Speedway and Rodeo stunt show. But the East Coast Speedway kept the local fans happy, with Jim being featured as one of the top riders of the club, but sadly at the end of the season the club went “broke”.

During the two season of racing at the East Coast Speedway there had been some riders of note who appeared. A young Eric Chitty (West Ham) held the track record. Others advertised were: - Fred Leavis, Wal Morton (Wimbledon), Ted English (Wembley) Claude Rye (International Ace), Clem Thomas (Australia and West Ham), Tidbury Brothers (Wembley) Reg Thorne, Clem Thomas, Reg Thorne, (West Ham), Tiger Hart (London), C.V. (Squib) Burton (Hackney Wick), Jack Sharpe (Australian Test Rider), Tiger Lewis (Southampton), John Deeley (Hackney Wick), Douglas McLachlan (Australia). Jim had ridden well against them, and he was also very popular with the fans.

Jim had enjoyed some good time at Lowestoft. Roy (Spike) Munnings was the best of the local lads who rode at this track, and after the meetings the riders would go back to his house in Yeovil Road. Roy's wife was a maternity nurse at Lowestoft Hospital and also a prolific orange wine maker. She was abundantly supplied with fruit from

Durrants, the wholesale fruiter, whose warehouse was not far off. At Covent Garden Mr. Durrant senior bought slightly overripe fruit, at give away price at the end of the sale, a lot of which were only suitable for wine making and given to Mrs. Spike for the asking. At one of the wine drinking sessions stocks were getting low. So they drank wine that was still fermenting, this of course had a very intoxicating effect on those taking part, but they all sobered up by the morning. Mrs Spike was on night work and it was never known if she ever missed a few bottles of her latest batch.

After sampling Mrs. Spike's excellent home made wine Jim left in the early hours, a bit worse for wear, to drive back to his Newmarket home, as he had open his garage for business on the Monday morning.

The Wembley manager, Alec Jackson, was so happy with the form of his top riders in 1937, that he once again agreed to loan out other members of his team to help the lower division clubs. It was because of this that Jim returned to the Firs, when Max Grosskreutz brought League racing to Norwich.

In the lower form of racing Jim did quite well. On 1st May 1937 the first ever meeting held under ACU rules, the Norwich team lost to Liverpool, in a National Trophy meeting 51-30. Jim scored 6 points for the Stars and only Wilf Jay, with 8 points outscored him. Two nights later in the second leg at Liverpool Jim and Dick Wise topped scored with 7 points each.

On the 22nd May Norwich lost the home match 28-49 to Nottingham with Jim taking a bad fall in the third heat, and was not fit to ride in the remainder of the meeting, but the next week he again top scored with Dick Wise.

It looked as if Jim was going to make a name for himself in the Norwich team, but Jim was a rider who never gave up and therefore he had always crashed a lot. He had not got out of this habit, and so with injuries and the team signing more riders Jim had very few meeting in the second half of the season.

Strangely Jim was back at Wembley for 1938, but he did appear at the Firs for Wembley against New Cross in an English Trophy meeting held on May 7. It was no fairytale comeback, as riding at reserve for Wembley; he scored just one point in his two rides. He also had a ride in second half coming third against two well-known riders, Tommy Price and Vic Duggan.

In the English Trophy meeting against Wembley, the Lions were not allowed to use their heat leaders and so Jim was given one of the reserve spots, and again he scored the solitary point.

In 1939 Jim opened Newmarket Speedway, and ran several meetings that season, mainly against the other non-league clubs, while also still running his garage in the town. The local press reported that the efforts of the Newmarket Motor Cycle Club, under the direction of Mr. Jimmy Millward, deserved unstinted support by the sporting public of Cambridge and district. The speedway demands the very best from man and machine, and practically from the man. Note that the report had his surname with two l's

The teams for the Easter Sunday meeting were Newmarket Tiger Hart, Colin Appleby, Paddy Mills, Wilf Plant, Arthur Sweaby, S. Williams with Reg Holland and Ted Gibson as reserves. Their opponents were a side labelled Eastern Centre, that consisted of Alan Smith, Ted English, Sam Warren, Ken Tidbury, Jack Tidbury, Tip Mills and the reserves were Edwin Youngs and A. Gregory. The press had S. Williams as Steve, but I would think that he was in fact Stan Williams. There was also a mention that Roy Duke also rode at the track.

Without doubt Jim was one of the popular riders who appeared in early meetings at the local tracks of Norwich, Bradwell and Lowestoft. He also rode professionally as a contracted rider for both Wembley and Norwich, but did not meet with much success as a professional rider. This is possibly why he is one of the early stars at these local tracks that are all but forgotten.

Speedway Stars

Steve Wilkes, our 1965 onwards man, is looking to acquire copies of the following Speedway Star magazines: 21 June 1952; 28 November 1953; 27 November 1954; 4 February 1956 but, if he can't buy copies, he would like scanned versions. If you can help Steve, contact him at steve@wilkes1.freeserve.co.uk .

Walter Brown

Unless you've read the book on Marine Gardens, Edinburgh the name Walter Brown probably won't mean much. Sadly Walter from Musselburgh was killed on the track in 1929 and the obituary

mentioned he had won the Croix De Guerre and the Military Medal for service in the First World War. The story of how he won the former medal has only come to light in a contemporary copy of the Peoples Journal.

It seems he was in the Western Front in 1918 and he and his fellow soldiers had to beat a hasty retreat. In order to get to safety they had to cross a pontoon bridge over a river. Just as they were about to cross it was hit by a shell blowing a hole in it.

Without considering his own safety Walter flung himself to bridge the gap and he urged his colleagues to run over him to safety. Before he could scramble up and cross the remains of the bridge himself another shell landed on the bridge and blew him off it into the water. Luckily he wasn't injured and his deed was witnessed by a Belgian officer who recommended him for the honour.

Jim Henry

Speedway in the Soviet Union

Alan Bates has been looking at speedway in the east.

The first appearance of speedway in the Soviet Union is believed to have taken place in 1930 when a Lancastrian called Clem Beckett took a squad of riders to Russia. They performed during a Physical Training Festival at Dynamo Stadium in Moscow. The spectators are said to have been amazed at the incredible speed of the riders around the cinder track.

In a article, in the 'Soviet Union' magazine by the deputy chief engineer of the Lenin Stadium, M.Goldin, states that the first speedway in the USSR was held on the day before the Sports Festival. The top athletes were worried that their performances would suffer if the track was churned up by the bikes. In the end it was decided to lay a protective layer of brick chippings, mix it with clay and put a heavy roller on it, When the speedway was over the upper layer was then swept off.

As regards Clem Beckett, he apparently was last heard of fighting for the International Brigade during the Spanish Civil War.*

The true date of the birth of speedway in the Soviet Union is reckoned to be on 10th June 1958 when the first competition was held in the Lenin Stadium at Luzhuki, in Moscow. It was organised by Vladimir Ivanovich Karneyev, who wrote a book on Soviet Speedway and was probably the Soviet version of Jonnie Hoskins. Karneyev died in 2007 at the age of 94.

For this first meeting in 1958, the Soviets purchased Czech built ESO machines and the Polish built FIS machines. In the first heat were Leonid Diominskiy (Minsk), Envid Kruze (Riga), Boris Samorodov (Ufa), and Viktor Simonov (Moscow Region). The winner of the inaugural heat was Boris Samorodov. In fact the competition was spread over three days and there were 63 heats in all. Boris Samorodov won on the 10th and 12th June and Victor Kuznetsov (Moscow), won on the 11th.

*Beckett was killed in Spain fighting for the International Brigade.
(Eds)

Another First For Scotland

Digging through the People's Journal for 1928 I chanced to note that the regular radio programme of music from the Marine Gardens Ballroom to be broadcast on 19th May was to be interrupted. This was to be for a 15 minute visit to the new motorcycle track next door in order to broadcast details of the International Motorcycle Race.

As a lover of firsts I must admit that I am going to claim that this is the first ever public radio broadcast of a speedway event in the UK unless anyone can come up with any earlier broadcasts. **Jim Henry**

Hunting For Publicity

Tony Webb gives another insight into A.J.Hunting.

From his early days A J HUNTING (AJ) was aware of the power of the press. He also recognised that to own the press was even a bigger advantage.

His first foray into publishing was in 1918. It was at Wangarratta that AJ wrote his first book, "A Practical Treatise on Poultry Feeding for Profit." :with the long subtitle "Essential to every Poultryman, large and small with monthly feeding tables : symptoms and treatment of 66 diseases of Poultry, Standard for Selection of Layers, Incubation, suitable to Australian conditions" now a rare book that is held in the National Library in Canberra

When he moved to Brisbane in 1926 he started the Speedway News which was first printed in October 1926, doubling up as the programme

for the Brisbane Exhibition Speedway. this was a newsy magazine which proved very popular, the editor was Norman Pritchard, it was printed in Brisbane by Shipping Newspapers Queensland limited of whom A J was also a shareholder. The banner was also used for the Townsville speedway with exactly the same format but called Northern Speedway News.

Davies Park Speedway opened in August 1927, AJ published a magazine called Town Topics which incorporated the speedway news and the Davies Park programme. it was also billed as the official organ of the Queensland Auto Cycle Union.

The export of the speedway concept from Davies Park, Brisbane Australia to England in March 1928 included the Speedway News staff. Editor Norman Pritchard was a member of the Hunting Australian party. Norman established the Speedway News in London, printing the first issue on 19 May 1928, this was printed in the same format as his Speedway News in a Brisbane and was to become the leading speedway magazine in the world.

Originally the content publicised only International Speedway Ltd tracks and riders, in the 1929 season the magazine expanded to cover the entire speedway scene, Still under the editorship of Norman Pritchard the operations were shifted from the International Speedways Ltd offices at 19 Sergeants Inn, 40-43 Fleet Street to 26 Long Acre London WC 2.

The Speedway News continued to be the premier speedway magazine, post war it became Speedway and Ice news up to 1956. It was taken over by the speedway star and became speedway star and news. The "News" was dropped in the mid sixties, Speedway Star is alive and well today.

AJ's prolific writing was an important part of his life. The brisbane courier mail would carry at least one AJ letter every week on a variety of subjects. A random selection was IQ tests for members of parliament, fair go for primary producers and views on tourism. In the family archives are letters between AJ and Australian Prime Minister Menzies who shared AJ's ideas on the economy. I found over 120 letters in the newspaper archives.

AJ was quick to respond in the press to criticism, when there was a riders strike over pay in 1926 he published the extensive earnings of the riders, this swung opinion against the riders. Later on the inquest on the late Tommy Maher, fatally injured at the Ekka (Brisbane Exhibition

Speedway) in 1927, revealed he had fallen twice previously in the same meeting. It was customary to give a shot of brandy to revive a rider. the inference was that this was not a good practice. A J went public and declared the practice would be discontinued. He had the skills to change a situation to his favour.

On the literary side, it is a little known fact that AJ also introduced the Speedway Coat of arms in 1927, FORTITUDINE A C VIRTUTE , by "Endurance and Valor". This motto was featured on the Speedway News banner and many of the early speedway trophies.

AJ Hunting believed in the power of the pen.

British Library Newspaper Library Update

We keep on extolling the virtues of the British Library Newspaper Library at Colindale as a source for speedway information.

Brian Collins gives us an update on what is an exciting new development.

The British Library website can be found at <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>

The current objective of the Library is to transfer the British local newspapers held at the British Library newspaper section at Colindale, North London, onto the internet. This exercise was begun a year or so ago, and will take many years to complete. A list of newspapers (and years of publication) which have been uploaded onto the net so far can be found at <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/home/NewspaperTitles>

Much of that which has been uploaded so far is from the 18th and 19th centuries (I guess many users are looking to compile family trees from that period), but there are early and mid 20th century papers there as well which will interest many of us on this group. I have found invaluable news and meeting reports from tracks such as Exeter, Plymouth, Tamworth, Hull, Stainforth, Mansfield, Nottingham and Bristol so far, and of course new newspapers are being uploaded every day.

The site has a comprehensive search engine, so just try a search for speedway or dirt-track, then select which years you are interested in, or which newspapers. (Might be some grass track information as well.)

The site allows free use to try it out, but then charges for various periods of use, or numbers of searches. Unrestricted use of the site costs

about £80 pounds a year.

I can thoroughly recommend the site - it's at least worth giving it a try. For our members outside the UK - sorry, I have no idea whether it will work for you, but would be interested to hear whether it allows you access.

For the record – this is the list of newspapers 1928 onwards on line at 4th August 2012 which might just have some speedway items: Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette 1760 – 1949; Chelmsford Chronicle 1783 – 1950; Cheltenham Chronicle 1809 – 1950; Cornishman 1878 – 1950; Derby Daily Telegraph 1881 – 1950; Dover Express 1901 – 1949; Essex Newsman 1870 – 1949; Exeter and Plymouth Gazette 1827 – 1950; Gloucester Journal 1941 – 1949; Hereford Times 1868 – 1934; Hull Daily Mail 1885 – 1950; Morpeth Herald 1854 – 1945; North Devon Journal 1824 – 1950; Nottingham Evening Post 1878 – 1944; Tamworth Herald 1870 – 1944; Taunton Courier, and Western Advertiser 1833 – 1949; Western Daily Press 1858 – 1949; Western Gazette 1863 – 1950; Western Morning News 1922 – 1950; Western Times 1827 – 1950.

The archive web site also enables you to find the articles on speedway using the site search facility try “Speedway” and “Dirt Track Racing” for example . The site is well worth a look.

A few newspapers have made their back numbers available on line and it might be an interesting exercise for someone to compile a list which we'd be happy to publish.

100 Aussie Legends of the Speedways

This is a new book, the first to be written by Speedway Star's Australian scribe Peter White (former team manager of West Ham, Eastbourne and Barrow). It will be published on October 20 in hard cover, A4 format in full colour and features 32 Solo riders ranging from Frank Arthur to Todd Wiltshire and Jason Crump as well as legendary Speedcar and Sidecar riders in Australia. There are 100 stories including many stars of the dirt track killed in action - Jack Biggs, Gordon Guasco, Ken Le Breton and Lionel Levy. Read all about the careers of greats such as Vic Huxley, Vic Duggan, Billy Lamont, Graham Warren, Jack Young, Chum Taylor, Phil Crump, John Titman, John Boulger and Billy Sanders. Cost: \$A49.95. Sea mail to UK: \$A18.11. Air mail to UK:

\$A31.26 The book can be ordered via PayPal by going to <http://www.peterwhitesspeedwayworld.com/> Or from Peter White, PO Box 666, Chester Hill, NSW 2162, Australia

Web Update

The number of files on the web site continues to increase and, thanks to the kindness of John Somerville, we now have a vast amount of details for Norwich in 1931 and 1932. John also supplied details of the only meeting at Carlisle in 1937 and this can be viewed on the site.

Jim has added almost all the 1963 details he has been able to draw upon from the Speedway Star and has been very greatly assisted by **Steve Wilks** and **Keith Corns**. Work has started on 1964 and will appear on the site in due course.

Roger Hulbert has supplied all his Hull data and hopefully, following a capacity upgrade, we'll get it all on line.

Webmaster **Matt Jackson** has been doing a great job juggling the items and hopefully he won't need to do that for much longer.

Mark Aspinell keeps on compiling more modern files and must spend hours on adding to our blue tagged years on the site.

The History of Preston Speedway – Part 2 – 1930 Concluded

The previous part of this history in Volume 14 No 4 (March 2012) saw Preston Speedway making steady progress with fine home form and steady results away in the Northern League. The end of July saw the league leaders Belle Vue inflict only the second defeat of the season at Farringdon Park by the narrowest of margins 17.5-18.5 (the previous defeat came at home to Liverpool in early June).

As the season moved into August local press reports indicated that with teams withdrawing from the league during the season, as they had on 1929, it made something of a mockery of the competition. That included Barnsley after 13 meetings and White City (Manchester) after 15. It was speculated that if teams with lower levels of support were excluded from the Northern League it could put them on a par with the stronger Southern League.

One notable Preston rider who came to prominence during this season was Claude Rye. The Londoner was only 22 during the 1930 season

and developed through the Preston youth ranks. Born in London he started off racing in the first year of the sport in the UK, 1928. Initially he rode one or two meetings at White City (London) and Stamford Bridge. He moved north to Lancashire and rode in the first open meeting at the Farringdon Park track in 1929. He developed gradually, winning open events at Preston but it was when he acquired a new and faster machine that brought him to the fore. 1930 saw him become classed amongst the best in the Preston team. He had a liking for the Barrow track where he was track record holder and Golden Helmet winner three times, resulting in the trophy being presented to him to retain. His brother, Percy, also rode at Preston in 1929 but a leg break forced him into retirement.

On 6th August a league fixture at Stanley Speedway, Liverpool was cancelled owing to a waterlogged track, so it was a week before Farringdon Park saw action again with an Open Meeting. It was a star studded field contesting for the Golden Gauntlet Standing Start Handicap), Golden Helmet (Rolling Start), the Merigold Trophy (Junior Riders) and the Golden Sash Knock-Out (Rolling Start) in front of 8000 fans. Frank Varey, the Belle Vue Ace was competing for trophies and prize money with stars names like Billie Lamont (Australia & Wimbledon); Buzz Hibberd (Australia & Newcastle) and Ivor Creek (Belle Vue). Throw the Preston home stars into the mix and an interesting competition was assured. Varey captured the Golden Gauntlet but homester, Tommy Price picked up the Golden Helmet when Varey's bike failed in the final.

The Golden Sash racing was the highlight though. In the preliminary round Frank Varey beat Claude Rye; Bob Harrison beta Buzz Hibberd; Tommy Price beat Ivor Creek and Joe Abbott triumphed over Billie Lamont. In the Semi-Final Varey beat Harrison and Abbott beat Harrison. Varey gated best in the final and easily beat Joe Abbott by 35 yards at the line. Despite it being reported Abbott had been unwell through the evening he still finished second in the Golden Gauntlet and finalist in the Helmet – was this the start of Joe's reputation as the "iron man" of speedway?

It was also interesting that the topic of betting at dirt track racing via the totalisator was being floated by the Liverpool promotion, much to chagrin of the other speedway promoters. Liverpool felt that as they already had dog racing at their track the infrastructure was already in place. Opponents felt it would alienate their traditional speedway fans

and introduce a different kind of audience; cause delays between races as bets were placed; and it could leave riders open to accusations of throwing races. It was reported that in the early days of dirt track in Australia Johnny Hoskins tried betting there were incidents of machine tampering; broken glass being thrown in front of riders. As many of you will know betting was banned in speedway until the next century and lasted only a short period, mainly I suspect through lack of interest rather than any illicit activity.

At that time plans were being considered for a National League to include only the strongest tracks in the Northern and Southern Leagues, with the weaker teams racing alongside reserve sides in a second division (split between northern and southern sections).

It was back to team action at Preston on 14th August when a Lancashire representative side met an Australian select. The teams were Lancashire: Joe Abbott, Norman Dawson, Tommy Price and Jack Tye; for Australia it was Vic Huxley, Max Grosskreutz, Brice McCallum and Clem Cort. Now a Harringay rider, Huxley had a night to remember winning every race he entered. This included a successful track record attempt, reducing Joe Abbott's mark, setting new record of 19 seconds, knocking .4 of a second the previous best. He then reduced the standing start time by .6 of a second and then dropping the rolling start record held by Frank Varey by a massive 3.6 seconds.

The team race saw points equal at heat six, in the 7th Lancashire took a slim lead but it was Australia, led by Huxley that scraped together the points in the final heat (8) to win 27-25.

Two days later Preston resumed their league fixtures with a tough meeting at Hyde Road against league leaders, Belle Vue and a crowd of 15,000. The Belle Vue team was: Frank Varey, Eric Langton, Dusty Haigh, Bob Harrison, with Clem Cort at reserve. Preston featured Joe Abbott, Tommy Price, Claude Rye, Jack Tye with George Reynard at reserve.

Reports on the meeting are sketchy to say the least but the result is known is the result an unsurprising 22-13 win to the Manchester team who completed the double over Preston.

The following Tuesday, the Preston squad made their longest trip to rave Glasgow at their White City track which only went ahead after torrential rain through the sterling work of the Glasgow Fire Brigade. In the event racing was reported as "something of a lottery" and after five heats the only Preston rider with a functioning bike was Joe Abbott.

The Glasgow riders and their bikes obviously adapted better to the track conditions as the scoring charts reveal:

Glasgow White City 20

Billy Galloway 7+1 ; Col Stewart 2+1; Arthur Moser 7+ 1; Andy Nicholl 4+2; ; Norrie Isbister 0

Preston 12

Joe Abbott 10; Tommy Price 0; George Reynard 1; Ham Burrill 1
Glasgow were 8 points ahead by the final heat 6 and with only Joe Abbott's bike working the Glasgow promotion allowed him to take an extra race so their duo had someone to race against and the crowd something to shout about.. It is reckoned that Joe Abbott's 10 points (including that 'extra' ride) was the highest individual points total record for that seasons league competition.

In that week the Speedway Columnist for the Lancashire Daily Post reported that both northern and southern promoters, looking ahead to the next season, were becoming convinced a single national league was needed. Speculation was that the northern tracks could include Belle Vue; Sheffield; Leeds; Preston; and Liverpool, whilst the southern teams were likely to include Wembley; Wimbledon; Coventry; Stamford Bridge; Birmingham Hall Green; Southampton; West Ham, Crystal Place and Leicester. It was anticipated that tracks would have a roster of 20 paid "star" riders and there would be little chance that junior riders would get a look-in. As history shows it all cam to nothing but it is interesting to see which of those tracks stayed the course in the pre-war years and which closed their doors.

Two days after the debacle at Glasgow, Preston hosted Glasgow at Farringdon Park in the return league fixture and again the rain fell and the track was described as a quagmire. The Glasgow team was likely to have been the same as the earlier fixture except for Allan Campbell (real name Allan Tagg) in at reserve and Norrie Isbister replacing Andy Nichol in the main body of the team. In a complete reversal of fortune Preston triumphed 26-9, again Abbott top scoring with 9; Tommy Price 8; Ham Burrill 4; Jack Tye 3 & Claude Rye 2. The Glasgow scorers were not reported.

Two days later Preston travelled top Leicester Super for encounter. Leicester were a mid-table side and picked up most of their league points at Melton Road. For this fixture their team was Captain by Arthur Sherlock, supported by Hal Herbert, Fred Wilkinson who scored all their points – their fourth rider and reserve is unknown. Preston

fielded Joe Abbott, Ham Burrell and Tommy Price + AN Other. The rains were following Preston at that stage of the season although it stopped for the meeting which saw good racing and a narrow 19-17 win for the Super team.

Meetings then came thick and fast as the season moved to its conclusion. White City were the next visitors to Preston and featured the strong Manchester side in what must have been one of their last meetings before the team withdrew from the league that season. 10,000 fans crowded around the Preston track for an eagerly awaited clash of two of the most entertaining Northern League sides. Heat 1 was notable for a dead heat between Wally Hull and Frank Charles for the Manchester team, relegating Tommy Price to third. By heat six White City had managed three heat advantages to Preston's one and even a home 4-2 victory in the final heat could not stop White City sneaking an 18-17 win at their local rivals. Arthur Jervis top scored with 9 for them and Preston's leading scorer on the night was unsurprisingly Joe Abbott with 7. The meeting concluded with Vic Huxley failing in two attempts at the British Mile Record being at best 3.5 seconds off the pace. Five riders from both teams then attempted to beat the Lancashire Mile Record of 1min 24.8 but all failed, Joe Abbott coming closest getting to within 1.6 secs of that record.

In the first week in September 1930 Preston and Liverpool raced in a "Broadsiding" Challenge match at Farringdon Park over 16 heats with the home team showing its rider strength in depth coming out winners by 57 points to 39. This format was something more akin to today's 15 heat competition although I have not seen it repeated in that era.

Two days later both teams got down to the serious business of league competition at the Stanley Speedway, Liverpool over the normal format of six heats. There is little detail about this fixture other than Liverpool triumphed 20-16. An Open meeting took place two days later at Preston and it did not seem an inspiring event as the highlights were an appearance by Sprouts Elder and Preston's news signing Ivor Creek, the latter being the former in an entertaining match race. This date also marked the departure of Preston Captain, Ham Burrill.

Two days later a challenge meeting between Preston and White City (Manchester) was scheduled at the neutral venue of Leeds Fullerton Park. I have not been able to find if that match took place or any result. Can anyone help?

Obviously crowds were by now insufficient to pay the overheads at Preston because on September 10th 1930 a Creditors Meeting took place where the directors offered its creditors 5 shillings in the pound in preference to the company going into liquidation. It was reported the Company had been founded in 1929 with a share capital of £6,000 of which £3500 had been issued and subscribed. Farringdon Park was rented at a cost of £260 annually and the sizeable sum of £2,087 was spent on 'necessary preparations' (presumably that was rider costs and/or track creation?), with other expenses amounting to £1000. In that 1929 season the company lost ££255. Subsequently four new directors put in £2000 and they had later advanced moneys totalling £1042 which was now due to them. If the offer to creditors was not accepted the club would be forced into liquidation. The 1930 season had been a financial disaster primarily due to the weather and the exorbitant fees demanded by riders. An example was cited – on August 28th the gross receipts for the meeting with White City and subsequent individual racing was £505, but riders took out of that £202. On another occasion riders took £235 out of gate receipts of £600. With other overheads a six=sizable chunk of the clubs income.

Creditors pointed out that £6000 had been put into company since its inception yet £10,000 had been spent in a period of 60 meetings. In conclusion it was reported that in recent weeks attendances had dropped steadily so that in the previous six weeks crowds were between 1,000 and 4,000. Compared that to a meeting in April which saw 17,000 pass through the gates. In the end creditors accepted the 5s in the £ offer and the club survived, but the warning signals were there. The Directors must have been keen to wind things up for 1930- at that stage.

A wet Thursday the following week saw Preston meet Leicester Super in a league encounter and with Abbott, Creek and Price all scoring 8 for the home side, Preston ran out easy 26-9 winners. The local paper reported it was watched by a "handful of supporters". A final meeting was attempted on Thursday 18th September but the weather caused that to be abandoned and the Directors declared the track 'Closed Down'. It was reported a number of the Preston stars were heading to the continent to race at Copenhagen and Hamburg.

It had been an up and down season for Preston who in another non-completed league competition saw they finish in fourth sport and a record of:

P18 W10 D 0 L 8 Pts 20.

