

# The Speedway Researcher

Promoting Research into the History of Speedway and Dirt Track Racing

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## **Dirt Track Racing In Dunoon**

I can forgive you if you think that this is an April Fool a month early, but it isn't.

I must admit that when I first came across a reference to the possibility of dirt track racing in the town on the Cowal Peninsula which is normally reached by a ferry across the Firth of Clyde from Greenock in a 1932 edition of The People's Journal I was sceptical. Dunoon is probably best known as the biggest town which was close to the now closed American submarine base at Faslane.

After all, the newspaper's pedigree publishing articles which had Colin Watson being born in Kirriemuir in Angus (the town where the author of Peter Pan was born) and articles claiming both Col Stewart and Billy Galloway were born in Glasgow didn't exactly give it much credibility. However, some of these daft tales are worth following up and lo and behold the daily Record for 16<sup>th</sup> May 1932 carried an article headed "New Dunoon Attraction Dirt Track Racing Project Try Out A Success."

The article went on to tell of the trial on an unspecified date organised by the Dunoon Athletic Football Club at The Recreation Park, Dunoon by an Archibald Dick and a James Shannon. The purpose of the try out was to convince the Dunoon Town Council's Burgh Surveyor that this would not damage the track at the stadium.

The moving force behind the proposal were the Dunoon and Cowal Agricultural Society and they wanted to stage dirt track racing on the day of their annual show scheduled for Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> June. The Town Council accepted and the advert in the Dunoon Observer and Argyllshire Standard for the show intimated that dirt track racing would take place. Four races were scheduled and they were to feature established men such as Alfie Williams, Bill Naismith, Andy Nicol and Sam Aitkenhead.

The only report to hand confirmed racing took place on a very dusty track and in the second heat a rider, a Mr James M. McArthur of Carntyne crashed, knocked himself out, and, hurt his hand. After a trip to hospital he recovered and went home to Glasgow.

Thanks to Pam Horton at Dunoon Library for supplying scans of newspaper articles in the local newspaper. **Jim Henry**

## **Star Championship Trophy Competition 1933**

**Stuart Staite Aris** has compiled details of the Star Championship for 1933 as follows: Each of the ten National League tracks were to run a series of scratch races open to only the tracks contracted riders. The winner of each tracks qualifying event and the second placed man were to represent their track at the Star Championship Final at Wembley on September 14<sup>th</sup>. The championship sponsor the Star newspaper was to give the scratch race final winner at each track a bronze star.

### **National League Qualifying Events**

#### **Wimbledon – Monday June 26<sup>th</sup> 1933**

The Wimbledon Star Final eliminator produced plenty of good riding but very little close racing. Vic Huxley was an easy winner on his Heat, Semi Final and the Final.

**Ht 1 1<sup>st</sup> Vic Huxley 2<sup>nd</sup> Gus Kuhn Time 76.0 s Won by 50 yds Ht 2 1<sup>st</sup> Syd Jackson 2<sup>nd</sup> Wal Phillips Time 76.6 s Won by 50 yds Ht 3 1<sup>st</sup> Claude Rye 2<sup>nd</sup> Geoff Pymar Time 79.0 s Won by 8 lengths Semi Final 1 1<sup>st</sup> Vic Huxley 2<sup>nd</sup> Wal Phillips Time 76.2 s Won by 10 lengths Semi Final 2 1<sup>st</sup> Syd Jackson 2<sup>nd</sup> Gus Kuhn Time 77.0 s Won by 40 yds Final 1<sup>st</sup> Vic Huxley 2<sup>nd</sup> Syd Jackson 3<sup>rd</sup> Wal Phillips 4<sup>th</sup> Gus Kuhn (mt) Time 76.0 s** Vic Huxley won the Final very easily. Syd Jackson who had easily won his Heat and Semi Final made a poor start and wouldn't have qualified for the Wembley Final but for Wal Phillips over sliding when making a last effort to go inside Vic Huxley on the final corner. Gus Kuhn stalled his machine right at the start and wheeled his machine onto the grass.

#### **West Ham – Tuesday June 27<sup>th</sup> 1933**

**Ht 1 1<sup>st</sup> Arthur Atkinson 2<sup>nd</sup> Phil "Tiger" Hart 3<sup>rd</sup> Harold Stevenson (f) 4<sup>th</sup> Rol Stobart (f) Time 89.0 s Won by 6 lengths** Harold Stevenson who had just received a presentation to mark his fifth year as captain of the West Ham team fell on the first corner with Rol Stobart. Stobart was carried off. The two remaining riders who automatically passed into the final took care not to do themselves any damage by too fierce racing.

**Ht 2 1<sup>st</sup> Arthur “Bluey” Wilkinson 2<sup>nd</sup> Tommy Croombs Time 88.0 s**  
**Final 1<sup>st</sup> Arthur “Bluey” Wilkinson 2<sup>nd</sup> Tommy Croombs 3<sup>rd</sup> Arthur**  
**Atkinson 4<sup>th</sup> Phil “Tiger” Hart Time 87.2 s Won by 8 lengths** For a lap or two there was a real dog fight between Wilkinson, Croombs and Atkinson. Gradually Bluey Wilkinson forced his way to the front and won by several lengths from Croombs.

**Sheffield – Wednesday June 28<sup>th</sup> 1933**

**Ht 1 1<sup>st</sup> Eric Blain Time 78.05 s Ht 2 1<sup>st</sup> Walter “Chun” Moore Time 78.9 s**  
**Ht 3 1<sup>st</sup> Herbert “Dusty” Haigh Time 79.80 s Final 1<sup>st</sup> Eric Blain 2<sup>nd</sup> Walter**  
**“Chun” Moore 3<sup>rd</sup> Herbert “Dusty” Haigh Time 78.90 s** Eric Blain won the Sheffield Star Championship qualifier from Walter Moore with Herbert Haigh having to settle for the Sheffield reserve slot. Squib Burton the logical Sheffield representative who could compete with the best star riders was still absent due to injury.

**Nottingham – Thursday June 29<sup>th</sup> 1933**

There was a surprise winner in Jack Chapman who hadn't yet shown his best form on his new home track. He had the best luck though as along the way several of his main opponents were obligingly removed either by falls or poor starts.

**Ht 1 1<sup>st</sup> Fred Strecker 2<sup>nd</sup> Ivor Hill Time 80.4.s** Fred Wilkinson did not start so leaving a two rider race and Fred Strecker won comfortably.

**Ht 2 1<sup>st</sup> Les Wotton 2<sup>nd</sup> None Time 82.0 s** Fred Tate and Charlie Blacklock collided and both fell in this heat. Les Wotton thus had a solo ride after the second lap as both his opponents had by that time fallen.

**Ht 3 1<sup>st</sup> Charlie Shelton 2<sup>nd</sup> Jack Chapman Time 79.4 s** George Dykes appeared for the first time since injury and he rode well despite wearing a huge knee protector.

**Semi Final 1 1<sup>st</sup> Fred Strecker 2<sup>nd</sup> None Time 81.4 s** Les Wotton was a non starter and as Charlie Shelton fell on the second lap it left Fred Strecker to finish alone.

**Semi Final 2 1<sup>st</sup> Les Wotton 2<sup>nd</sup> Jack Chapman 3<sup>rd</sup> Ivor Hill Time 80.8 s** Les Wotton turned out in the second Semi Final and a fine race developed. Wotton hit the front on the second turn and after a wheel to wheel struggle he won by just two lengths from Jack Chapman.

**Final 1<sup>st</sup> Jack Chapman 2<sup>nd</sup> Les Wotton 3<sup>rd</sup> Fred Strecker Time 79.0 s** Fred Strecker made a poor start in the final and Jack Chapman capitalized on this by getting off the mark very quickly and was always in the lead in what was the fastest winning time of the event. Strecker

almost passed Les Wotton but Wotton managed to hold his place to qualify for the Wembley final.

**Belle Vue – Saturday July 1<sup>st</sup> 1933**

**Semi Final 1 1<sup>st</sup> Frank Varey 2<sup>nd</sup> Bob Harrison Time 83.2 s Won by 2 lengths Semi Final 2 1<sup>st</sup> Joe Abbott 2<sup>nd</sup> None Time 84.4 s Final 1<sup>st</sup> Frank Varey 2<sup>nd</sup> Eric Langton 3<sup>rd</sup> None Time 81.4 s Won by 2 lengths** Frank Varey gained a narrow victory from Eric Langton while behind them Joe Abbott and Bob Harrison collided.

**Clapton – Saturday July 1<sup>st</sup> 1933**

The surprise at Clapton was Jack Parker not getting very far in the Star Final qualifier. Arthur Westwood was close to him for most of the time in his heat and in the Semi Final Jack got left at the start and was not too enthusiastic in his efforts to catch up after that.

Jim Kempster also struggled finding the racing much faster than before his 2 year semi retirement.

**Ht 1 1<sup>st</sup> Jack Parker 2<sup>nd</sup> Arthur Westwood Time 89.8 s Won by 10 lengths**

**Ht 2 1<sup>st</sup> Norman Parker 2<sup>nd</sup> Billy Dallison Time 89.6 secs Won by 4 lengths**

**Ht 3 1<sup>st</sup> Roy Barrowclough 2<sup>nd</sup> None Time 92.0 s** Phil Bishop did not complete the race having fallen but as the only other rider in this heat he was awarded a Semi Final place.

**Semi Final 1 1<sup>st</sup> Billy Dallison 2<sup>nd</sup> Roy Barrowclough Time 90.2 s**

**Won by 3 lengths Semi Final 2 1<sup>st</sup> Phil Bishop 2<sup>nd</sup> Norman Parker**

**Time 88.2 s Won by a length** Phil Bishop proceeded to win a magnificent race with Norman Parker

**Final 1<sup>st</sup> Phil Bishop 2<sup>nd</sup> Norman Parker 3<sup>rd</sup> Billy Dallison Time 89.0 s Won by 6 lengths**

**Plymouth – Tuesday July 11<sup>th</sup> 1933**

**Ht 1 – Re Run 1<sup>st</sup> John Glass 2<sup>nd</sup> Reg Stanley Time 81.3 s Won by 5 lengths**

Bill Clibbett and John Glass crashed and Clibbett was unable to ride in the re run through injury to a shoulder.

**Ht 2 1<sup>st</sup> Frank Goulden 2<sup>nd</sup> Ben Living Time 82.0 s Won by 2 lengths**

**Ht 3 1<sup>st</sup> Bill Stanley 2<sup>nd</sup> Jack Sharp Time 81.4 s Won by 1 length**

**Final 1<sup>st</sup> Frank Goulden 2<sup>nd</sup> Jack Sharp 3<sup>rd</sup> Bill Stanley Time 80.0 s Won by 5 lengths**

**Coventry - Thursday July 13<sup>th</sup> 1933**

**Heat 1 1<sup>st</sup> Stan Greatrex 2<sup>nd</sup> Roy Dook 3<sup>rd</sup> Stan Dell Time 79.2 s Heat 2 1<sup>st</sup> Dicky Case 2<sup>nd</sup> Cyril Taft 3<sup>rd</sup> Bill Pitcher Time 79.7 s**

**Ht 3 1<sup>st</sup> Triss Sharp 2<sup>nd</sup> Wal Morton 3<sup>rd</sup> Alf Mattson Time 80.2 s**

**Final 1<sup>st</sup> Dicky Case 2<sup>nd</sup> Stan Greatrex 3<sup>rd</sup> Triss Sharp 4<sup>th</sup> Roy Dook (mt) Time 79.7 s** The Coventry representatives in the Star Trophy final went

to those riders in form and were to be Dicky Case and Stan Greatrex with Triss Sharp as reserve.

#### **Wembley – Thursday August 10<sup>th</sup> 1933**

**Ht 1 1<sup>st</sup> Colin Watson 2<sup>nd</sup> Harold Riley “Ginger” Lees Time 82.6 s**

**Won by 5 lengths Ht 2 1<sup>st</sup> Harry Whitfield 2<sup>nd</sup> Hal Herbert Time 83.2 s**

Harry Whitfield the first Star rider Wembley ever signed on won a very fast heat from latest Wembley recruit Hal Herbert.

**Ht 3 1<sup>st</sup> Gordon Byers 2<sup>nd</sup> Norman Evans Time 83.0 s Won by 10 lengths**

**Final 1<sup>st</sup> Harry Whitfield 2<sup>nd</sup> Colin Watson 3<sup>rd</sup> Gordon Byers Time 83.8 s**

**Won by 15 lengths** Harry Whitfield had the advantage of being the rider with the fastest motor and he made sure he got the best out of it.

#### **Crystal Palace – Saturday August 12<sup>th</sup> 1933**

**Ht 1 1<sup>st</sup> Tom Farndon 2<sup>nd</sup> Joe Francis 3<sup>rd</sup> Eric Hustwayte Time 84.0 s**

Joe Francis was left at the start and was unable to make up his lost ground in this heat.

**Ht 2 1<sup>st</sup> Harry Shepherd 2<sup>nd</sup> George Newton 3<sup>rd</sup> Jack Jackson Time 85.0 s**

**Won by 6 lengths** Although Harry Shepherds win wasn't as fast as the first heat George Newton finishing not far behind him did enough to qualify for the Crystal Palace final as the fastest second.

**Ht 3 1<sup>st</sup> Ron Johnson 2<sup>nd</sup> Jack Riddle 3<sup>rd</sup> None Time 88.0 s Won by 5**

**lengths** Ron Johnson who only had two novices to beat toured round until one of them tried to go inside him. Ron then opened the throttle a little wider until he had again drawn to the front and then immediately resumed his tour.

**Final 1<sup>st</sup> Tom Farndon 2<sup>nd</sup> Ron Johnson 3<sup>rd</sup> Harry Shepherd Time 82.0 s**

**Won by 15 lengths** Ron Johnson made a poorish start in the final and was last for a lap but that didn't last long. He soon made up two places and once in second place he did not seem to be troubled greatly knowing that he had a secure Wembley qualifying place. Tom Farndon had made an excellent start and well deserved his win and would have taken someone a super human effort to catch him.

#### **National League Riders Star Final Championship**

#### **Wembley – Thursday September 14<sup>th</sup> 1933**

Twenty riders were to take part in the Star Championship Final. These included the ten men who had won their track qualifying event and the ten riders who finished in second place in their track qualifying event.

- 1<sup>st</sup> Place – A Silver Star and £100.00
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Place – A Bronze Star and £50
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Place - £25

## Star Championship Qualifiers 1933

Team	Club	Qualifier
Belle Vue	Frank Varey	Main Qualifier
	Eric Langton	Second Placed Qualifier
Coventry	Dicky Case	Main Qualifier
	Stan Greatrex	Second Placed Qualifier
Clapton	Phil Bishop	Main Qualifier
	Norman Parker	Second Placed Qualifier
Crystal Palace	Tom Farndon	Main Qualifier
	Ron Johnson	Second Placed Qualifier
Nottingham	Jack Chapman	Main Qualifier
	Les Wotton	Second Placed Qualifier
Plymouth	Frank Goulden	Main Qualifier
	Jack Sharp	Second Placed Qualifier
Sheffield	Eric Blain	Main Qualifier
	Walter "Chun" Moore	Second Placed Qualifier
Wembley	Harry Whitfield	Main Qualifier
	Colin Watson	Second Placed Qualifier
West Ham	Arthur "Bluey" Wilkinson	Main Qualifier
	Tommy Croombs	Second Placed Qualifier
Wimbledon	Vic Huxley	Main Qualifier
	Syd Jackson	Second Placed Qualifier

The Star Final was described in the Speedway News magazine as the best Star Final ever seen and one of the most exciting meetings of any kind ever held. Tom Farndon won due to a combination of factors. He started better than anyone else, he had a lot of speed in his engines and his riding throughout was superb.

### Heat Details

Ht 1 1<sup>st</sup> Les Wotton 2<sup>nd</sup> Dicky Case 3<sup>rd</sup> Vic Huxley 4<sup>th</sup> Tommy Croombs (f)  
 Time 78.8 s Won by 6 lengths Les "Smiler" Wotton transformed as a

rider by the big occasion posted what was to be the fastest time of the meeting. Wotton was the winner all the way after he had firmly but fairly dealt with the challenge of Dicky Case early in the race.

**Ht 2 1<sup>st</sup> Tom Farndon 2<sup>nd</sup> Walter Moore 3<sup>rd</sup> Frank Varey**

**4<sup>th</sup> Norman Parker (f) Time 79.2 s** Tom Farndon won his heat easily and by some distance ahead of second placed Walter “Chun” Moore.

Norman Parker fell while holding a secure second place and looking all set to reach the Semi Finals. Farndon’s win was just 3/5 of a second

away from the Wembley track record **Ht 3 1<sup>st</sup> Eric Blain 2<sup>nd</sup> Harry Whitfield 3<sup>rd</sup> Phil Bishop 4<sup>th</sup> Jack Sharp Time 80.2 s Won by 6 lengths**

Eric Blain recorded a well deserved win.

**Ht 4 1<sup>st</sup> Arthur Wilkinson 2<sup>nd</sup> Eric Langton 3<sup>rd</sup> Stan Greatrex (mt) 4<sup>th</sup> Fred Strecker (Non Starter) Time 80.4 s Won by 6 lengths** Eric Langton finding he would have to ride very fast to beat Arthur “Bluey”

Wilkinson decided instead to settle for second place which was good enough to reach the Semi Final stage. Wilkinson by winning reached a Semi Final which was somewhat easier than Langton’s.

**Heat 5 1<sup>st</sup> Ron Johnson 2<sup>nd</sup> Syd Jackson 3<sup>rd</sup> Frank Goulden 4<sup>th</sup> Colin Watson (mt) Time 80.8 s Won by 10 lengths Semi Final 1 1<sup>st</sup> Tom Farndon 2<sup>nd</sup> Les Wotton 3<sup>rd</sup> Harry Whitfield 4<sup>th</sup> Eric Langton Time 79.0 s Won by 12 lengths** Tom Farndon was away first with Les Wotton left trailing.

Wotton speedily put Harry Whitfield behind him and on the second lap went inside Eric Langton and filled him in. Wotton then chased after Tom Farndon but didn’t have the necessary speed to catch him.

**Semi Final 2 1<sup>st</sup> Arthur Wilkinson 2<sup>nd</sup> Syd Jackson 3<sup>rd</sup> Eric Blain (f) 4<sup>th</sup> Dicky Case (ret) Time 80.2 s Won by 2 lengths** The early race order

saw Syd Jackson leading followed by Eric Blain, Dicky Case and then Arthur Wilkinson. Bluey Wilkinson then started to make his move initially getting past Dicky Case then halfway through the race he went inside Eric Blain with such speed that the Sheffield man came off.

For the rest of the race Wilkinson was engaged in defeating Syd Jackson. Syd however put up a great fight back. On the third lap Wilkinson went inside Jackson and bumped him hard however Jackson didn’t move off his line and it was finally by going around him that enabled Bluey to take up his winning lead.

**Semi Final 3 1<sup>st</sup> Ron Johnson 2<sup>nd</sup> Phil Bishop 3<sup>rd</sup> Walter Moore**

**4<sup>th</sup> Vic Huxley Time 81.4 s Won by 5 lengths** Ron Johnson was an easy winner from Phil Bishop. Vic Huxley and Phil Bishop had reached the Semi Final as the two fastest third placed men in their heats.

**Star Championship Final 1<sup>st</sup> Tom Farndon 2<sup>nd</sup> Ron Johnson**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Arthur Wilkinson Time 79.6 s** Tom Farndon and Bluey Wilkinson fought over the lead for the first two laps. Farndon went ahead on the second bend and thereafter slowly but surely asserted his superiority. Wilkinson looked all set for second place until he lost his front tyre and was only able to crawl over the finish line with Ron Johnson well in front of him.

**Second Half Details National Speedway Association Trophy**

**Ht 1 1<sup>st</sup> Norman Parker 2<sup>nd</sup> Morian Hansen 3<sup>rd</sup> Stan Greatrex**

**4<sup>th</sup> Vic Huxley Time 81.2 s** Colin Watson still troubled by a rib injury was replaced by Dane Morian Hansen. Hanson took second place behind Norman Parker who was to do very well in this event.

**Ht 2 1<sup>st</sup> Syd Jackson 2<sup>nd</sup> Harry Whitfield 3<sup>rd</sup> Walter Moore**

**4<sup>th</sup> Sebastian Roth Time 81.2 s Won by 12 lengths** Syd won easily.

**Ht 3 1<sup>st</sup> Phil Bishop 2<sup>nd</sup> Ron Johnson 3<sup>rd</sup> Tommy Croombs 4<sup>th</sup> Jack Sharp Time 82.0 s Won by Inches**

Phil Bishop won by inches from Ron Johnson which kept up the high standard of racing that had been on show throughout the evening.

**Ht 4 1<sup>st</sup> Arthur Wilkinson 2<sup>nd</sup> Les Wotton 3<sup>rd</sup> Frank Varey (f)**

**4<sup>th</sup> Dicky Case (fell) Time 79.8 s Won by 2 lengths** For three and a half laps Wilkinson and Wotton were almost dead level and they quickly left Frank Varey and Dicky Case well behind them. Varey and Case were both later on fallers in this heat. On the last bend Bluey dived through and probably as much by extra speed than anything else won by a couple of lengths.

**Ht 5 1<sup>st</sup> Tom Farndon 2<sup>nd</sup> Eric Blain 3<sup>rd</sup> Frank Goulden 4<sup>th</sup> Eric Langton (ret) Time 82.0 secs** Eric Langton's machine failed on the first lap.

**Semi Final 1 1<sup>st</sup> Arthur Wilkinson 2<sup>nd</sup> Norman Parker 3<sup>rd</sup> Syd Jackson 4<sup>th</sup>**

**Phil Bishop Time 80.6 s Won by 8 lengths** Norman Parker managed to stay with Bluey Wilkinson for three laps with Syd Jackson right behind them. Jackson however couldn't find a gap into which to place his machine to make a challenge and the riders ahead of him were also going so fast that he had to work hard to keep anywhere near them.

**Semi Final 2 1<sup>st</sup> Tom Farndon 2<sup>nd</sup> Les Wotton 3<sup>rd</sup> Harry Whitfield**

**4<sup>th</sup> Ron Johnson (f) Time 81.4 s Won by 5 lengths** Tom Farndon beat Les Wotton who was much slower than himself although second place ensured Wotton a slot in the final. Ron Johnson caught his handlebars in the safety fence near the pits and went clean over them. Ron walked away uninjured

**National Speedway Association Trophy Final 1<sup>st</sup> Arthur Wilkinson 2<sup>nd</sup> Les Wotton 3<sup>rd</sup> Tom Farndon 4<sup>th</sup> Norman Parker Time 80.0 s**



**Won by Inches** Les Wotton managed to retain a slight lead which was usually well under a bike length until the last corner when he drifted ever so slightly off the racing line. The space he left was big enough for Bluey Wilkinson who drove hard through it and he came into the finishing straight about a length and a half in front. Wotton on the outside line with more speed slowly closed the gap resulting in almost a dead heat finish. The Steward awarded the win to Arthur Wilkinson.

#### **International Two Lap Dash Match Race**

Sebastian Roth and Morian Hansen took part in a pair of two lap dashes but Roth fell once and on neither occasion did anything as well as he had shown in the past. **Ht 1 1<sup>st</sup> Morian Hansen 2<sup>nd</sup> Sebastian Roth Time 39.2 s Won by 10 lengths Ht 2 1<sup>st</sup> Morian Hansen 2<sup>nd</sup> Sebastian Roth (f) Time 39.8 s**

## **AJ HUNTING AND THE SOUTH AMERICA STORY**

At the close of the 1928 s UK season, while the Australian riders departed from England to their homeland, AJ was reunited his wife Ethel, who had arrived in Liverpool from Brisbane on the “Hobsons Bay” on September 22 1928. International Speedways Ltd were promoting at White City Manchester at the time of Mrs Huntings arrival at nearby Liverpool. Strong connections had been established by AJ with the Belle Vue riders and officials and the North Manchester Motorcycle Club which would feature in future developments in South America. A particular friendship was established with John Iles who was the mastermind of the Belle Vue Zoological Gardens. The Huntings travelled to Buenos Aires, departing on October 10 1928 from Genoa after a whirlwind autumn tour through Europe.

Before we get into the story of South America we should mention a suspected involvement by A J with a mystery speedway in Paris. In a letter written in 1940 he refers to a promotion at Port Doree in Paris during 1928/29 as one of his achievements. AJ was indeed in Paris in 1928, there is also a photo of Bert Spencer flying to Paris in 1928 and a letter written from Paris by AJ. Nothing has been recorded in speedway history about this venue, but there was a company registered in 1928 named Continental Speedways Ltd, which seems AJ’s style.

To get back to South America, AJ would later reflect on the good times they had in what he always referred to as “The Argentine”. It was also Ethel’s happiest times as the wife of a speedway promoter, although the

children were still in Australia. Ethel had no love of speedway but the social whirl of Latin America was a great compensation. In later years she would display her ability to dance the Can Can and other South American dances.

Argentina was home to over 50,000 Brits at the time who controlled the £700 million economy. AJ found over 50 Australians living in the city and organised them into a dinner on the first Wednesday of the month. He was also able to win over the local press who wholeheartedly supported this exciting new sport.

After a winter in Buenos Aires AJ and Ethel returned to England for the new English season departing from Montivideo on January 29 1929 aboard the “Dunstan Grange” of the Houlder Line. Ethel carried on to Brisbane on the Hobsons Bay. This was reported in the Adelaide newspaper’s “About People social column on April 11 1929

***Mrs. Hunting, wife of Mr. A. J. Hunting, president of the Dirt Track Motor Cycle Company, Brisbane, was a passenger on the Hobsons Bay, which passed through Adelaide yesterday.***

By mid 1929 there were warning signs that the halcyon days of speedway in England were coming to an end. There was a tightening of belts by the promoters with finances drying up, England was also in the grip of the depression with the result the paying public had less money to spend on entertainment. AJ was also aware that there were now several controlling bodies within speedway, all ready to inject their two bob’s worth, but never offering any financial solutions. It was no surprise to those in the know when AJ booked a ticket on the S.S.

Almeda from Southampton to return to South America on July 10 1929. Building on the plans laid the previous winter he formed two companies, World Wide Speedways Ltd, /BT/33100/240643/, with the American rider Sprouts Elder and John Henry Iles of the North Manchester MCC as directors. The second company was South American Speedways, bt31/33100/23377 both companies were registered in London with records in the National Archives.

Plans were made with Club Atletico Huracan to open at the La Huracan soccer stadium in Buenos Aires in October 1929. Due to weather conditions this date was delayed to November. The 350 metre banked track had long straights and tight bends, the surface was a brick dust composition. The entire perimeter of the track and pits area was surrounded by a 3 metre high mesh fence as the volatile Latin American crowds were known to throw bottles and whatever else was handy to

register their displeasure at the competitors of any sport. To the riders they must have felt like Roman gladiators at the mercy of the baying crowd. The first star riders to arrive from England were Sid Newiss, Eric and Oliver Langton, they set about an advertising campaign and gave exhibition rides in the interval of a soccer match at the La Huracan stadium. Sid Newiss became the first speedway rider film star when Movie Tone news filmed him in action, This film was shown in over fifty cinemas across South America. This publicity caught the attention of a director of Raleigh Motorcycles who invited the riders to race in two 180k sidecar road racing events, the Fernet Brianca Trophy on November 11 1929 and the South American Championships on December 11 1929 more, about those events later.

The speedway stars had made their way on different ships to Buenos Aires, as their riding commitments in England finished ready for a winter of sunshine and racing under contract to AJ. At the time there were several ships on the South American route departing from ports at Southampton, Liverpool, Newcastle and London. It must have been of some concern and a matter of relief to AJ by the time his full contingent of riders and officials finally assembled in Buenos Aires. The assembled group consisted of a number of Belle Vue riders and staff. The second group to arrive were Frank Varey and the Jervis brothers, Arthur and Hugh, who travelled on the **Norman Star** from Newcastle on October 10.1929 the Jervis brothers shipped five new Ridges, whilst Varey had three Scott motorcycles.

The third party of Buzz Hibberd, Ivor Creek, Dank Ewen, Bob Harrison, Dusty Haigh, Joe Gooding, Arthur Westwood, George Corney Tom Wainwright and Frank Goulden arrived on the **Stuart Star**.

There was a further shipment of six brand new Douglas DT 500's and spare engines. AJ had plans to sell speedway machines in South America and placed a large order with the Douglas factory in Bristol for this purpose. Apart from the riders there was a management team of Queenslander Jack Harris Belle Vue team manger and mechanic, Frank Hunting, Bernard.L. Brock Belle Vue manager, A.W. Smith, H.W. Moss, A. Williams, P. Mackey and C. Clarke. Some of the rider's wives including Mrs Grosskreutz, and Mrs Elders were also in the party. The scale of this expedition eclipsed the original first fleet of speedway riders to England in 1928, there was much at stake.

With the arrival of Max Grosskreutz Frank Duckett and Sprouts Elder with six brand new Douglas DT500 machines and six engines, it

seemed all systems were ready to go. On the official practise day, the police were so alarmed at the spectacle of speedway bikes broadsiding around the spacious track that they promptly banned the sport as too dangerous and planned to place a police guard on the stadium to prohibit any further riding.

The opening night was planned for October 25, weather conditions delayed this until November 9. A capacity crowd of 20,000 people clamoured to see this new spectacle of speedway racing. Some reports state that the police still tried to stop the meeting and that the crowd broke down the police barriers. An opinion on this issue was that the local cinema operators were fearful of the effect on their businesses and had lobbied the police to take action. Half the crowd had complimentary tickets, anyway, a move that the promoters hoped would be re-couped in future meetings. The impact that the sport had on the Argentinian public was certainly enthusiastic as they took to the concept of speedway with all the Latin American passion,

For the riders there were some notable differences to their previous experiences. The track was surrounding by a twelve foot high wire fence with four strands of barbed wire on the top. This was standard sporting stadium regulation as the public were excitable and partisan would throw anything at the riders. Certain riders soon became the villains. The Red Devil of Death was the name given to Frank Varey, The "Terrible Tornado" applied to Eric Langton, Ernie Evans was "The Little One" and sprouts Elder, "The King of the Track". The crowd would vent their displeasure by whistling. If the rider was in favour he was showered with flowers and kissed, even by the male supporters. The night's racing started ten pm and would finish after midnight. Frank Varey related this in the Speedway News publication. Frank recalled that it was wise to keep clear of the law. If you were involved in a motor accident, the car was roped off and left on the street until the drivers, who had been flung into jail, appeared in court. The legal side extended into the speedway racing.. Frank was in hospital after a collision with Syd Newiss and Frank Duckett. A lawyer appeared by his bed asking him to sign a document accusing Syd and Frank of attempted murder! Shootings were common place. Frank claimed there was a notice at the speedway ordering "No shooting in the pits"<sup>2</sup> Support was forthcoming from wealthy businessmen and the local press. The Golden Helmet, known as Casco de Oro, raced for in a

scratch race heats, semi finals and final formula was sponsored by the daily newspaper Critica.

The winner at the first meeting was Oliver Langton in a blanket finish with Queenslander Max Grosskreutz.. Dusty Haigh and Australian Frank Duckett also made it to the semi finals. The locals went into hysterics when home town boy Roberta Singrand, riding from a generous 100 metre start, won the handicap final from Buzz Hibberd, Eric Langton and Sprouts Elder.

The riders soon got acclimatised enjoying the relaxed lifestyle and the speedway meetings late start. It was often almost breakfast time by the time the riders returned to their accommodation after a night's racing. There was a mix of English and Spanish titles for the various officials, the announcer was known as "Megafonista" and the timekeeper "Cronometrista", the clerk of the course and the machine examiner retained the English names.

Encouraged by the success of La Huracan, Hunting set up a second track known as River Plate speedway on November 30, a smaller 300 metre circuit, with narrow straights. There were now several Argentinian riders taking part. The promoters were able to track two teams who raced on a progressive points system over all the matches for the season. The Hurricane speedway was running on Saturdays and Wednesdays and River Plate on Sundays.

December 11 saw Frank Varey win the Silver Gauntlet at Hurricane, the biggest thrill of the night was when one of the locals broadsided through the pit gate scattering riders and officials everywhere, luckily with no injuries.

The following night at River Plate on December 12 the biggest crowd since speedway opened in the city vented their wrath on the English rider Eric Langton who persistently jumped the start. Langton was cautioned several times, the crowd whistled and hissed, but then went into raptures as Langton the villain was beaten fair and square by Sprouts Elder in the Grand Final. Geoff Kilburne won the handicap final. It was announced that earlier in the day Kilburne had taken part in a 240k road race at Mercedes some 80k outside the city. This news was received with a standing ovation for the English rider.

By this time the riders were racing at speedway three nights a week and road racing once a week. The racing was proving to be fast and furious with several riders receiving serious injuries. Max Grosskreutz, Eric Langton and Frank Varey were all sidelined for several weeks. Frank

Varey was one of the crowds favourites his red jersey and red painted machine earned him the title of “El Diablo Rojo,” the Red Devil, a name that stuck with him the rest of his life.

AJ then encountered similar problems as he had in Brisbane with the Ekka owners, the Royal National Association, who granted free entry to their members. The members of the La Hurane Soccer Club also had free admission to the stadium. This was proving a financial handicap. The promoters halted the Wednesday night meetings while the matter was resolved.

The local interest was improving with the quick progress of the young Argentine riders, Juana Pagano, Robero Sigrand, Jose Gonzales, Alfredo Torres, Juan Salatino, Enrigue Moyana, Salvador Valdala and Angel Renquire. They were improving rapidly under the tutor ship of the English riders, so much so that a wealthy Buenos Aires identity put up a Silver Gauntlet for home riders only

The Argentine Individual Championship on February 12 was the last big meeting of the first season. The format for this popular contest was by elimination, the two riders to contest the final were Sprouts Elder and Frank Varey. It was reported that the large crowd went wild with excitement as Elders on his Douglas and Varey on a Scott went neck and neck for the whole distance with Varey gaining the verdict on the line. Varey’s time was 81 seconds, which worked out to 72 kph.

A note here on the handicap racing which provided the thrills and spills with six riders in a race. The Argentine riders came on in leaps and bounds through these regular races the rider to emerge was Juan Salatino known as “Sally” who in later years was the Argentine Champion up to 1939.

The last meeting of the 1929/1930 season was at La Huracane on February 26. The riders started their voyages back to England for the new season, they had been paid in gold sovereigns. There were many a game played and fun filled days on the trip home.

Frank Hunting had already returned to Australia where he managed speedway at the Melbourne Exhibition speedway until April 26 1930, this is confirmed in the programme for that date.

### **Second season**

Approaches were made to the 1929/1930 riders later in the year. Most of them re signed for the new season opening in November. A new addition was the sixteen year old Australian sensation Ernie Evans

Back in Australia there was concern that the South American developments would be detrimental to Australian speedway as in this report in the Brisbane Courier newspaper:

***“Information received in Brisbane is that Australian Speedway fans will not see many of the world's leading riders in action this season, for it is understood that the best of the speedmen who were riding in England this year intend to journey to South America for the coming season. The unfavourable position of Australia regarding the rate of exchange doubtless has caused many of the dirt track champions to look askance at our country”.***

Ernie Evans arrived on the Austurias on November 21 1930 with Frank Hunting, Arthur Westwood, Tom Wainwright, Geoff Kilburn, Bob Harrison, Jim Gooding, Dicky Wise and Frank Goulden. Frank had returned from Australia direct to Buenos Aires.

One of the mysteries of the South American story is the belief that Queensland rider Bruce McCallum, who died in tragic circumstances in Manchester England in 1931, was a member of the party. The true facts are that a mechanic by the name of Pug McCullum, note the two “u”s in the name, was a member of the 1930/31 team, where Pug originated from is unknown. He did obtain publicity when the local paper printed his name under a photo of Eric Langton. Bruce who was a Belle Vue rider never rode in South America. Another mystery was the report in a Spanish language newspaper that Australian Bert Spencer was on board the SS Arlanza. This was not true.

One of the strangest decisions for the second season was the banning of Rudes for the English riders. This may have been a move to give the home riders an advantage. The Douglas, AJS and JAPS all encountered tuning problems possibly due to the climate. The Rudge issue was later overturned with the ruling that Rudes can be used for all riders except World Championships and scratch races, which specify Douglas machines. The exact logic behind these rulings is unclear and some misunderstanding arises in the translation from Spanish to English in the relevant reports.

A lavish special luncheon, hosted by International Speedways Ltd was served in the Grand Saloon the La Emiliana Restaurant in Cala Paraus on October 30 1929 to honour the press and the new riders for the 1930/1931 season. Present at the luncheon were the directors of ISL, AJ and Frank Hunting, Jack McDonald, Dr. Aldolfa Orma jnr, Messrs F R Limpenny, A J McLaren, J R Crawford, Leicester Miles and Reginald

Hastings. AJ would often refer to Hastings in letters, commenting on his formal English style of dress with striped trousers and long tailed coats. Tributes were given to the press for their support during the previous season. AJ gave an address, which was translated into Spanish by Mr F R Limpenny. Mr Jack McDonald also spoke in the language of Cervantes.

A press day and trials were held at the newly laid 350 metre track at River Plate on November 6. Billy Lamont set the track record at 77 sec. Lamont was announced as the captain of the River Plate team.

Accidents were the order of the day in the second La Hurcane meeting. A spill in every single race created injuries to Ernie Evans, broken nose, and Dicky Wise torn ligaments. As the season progressed the injury toll mounted with Joe Gooding and South Australian Dicky Wise both sidelined with collarbone injuries in December.

Stars of the third meeting at La Hurcane were Sprouts Elder who won the Silver Helmet and Argentine champion Juan Pagano. Many of the overseas riders were still on the high seas, which gave opportunities for the local lads to show what they could do. Enrique Moyano made a good show against Elder in a match race and the Rudge mounted Pagano finished the night off by beating Arthur Westwood in a match race.

The new season opened at the River Plate Speedway on November 14 1930 with a spectacular crash between local rider Angel Requino who fell in front of Eric Langton who in a brave attempt to avoid the fallen Requino who had parted company with his machine. Langton clipped the machine and went straight into the fence. The 25,000 crowd rose to their feet in horror. It was several minutes before either rider stirred. Both were taken to hospital with concussion. The star of the night was the young Australian Ernie Evans who twice won in 71 seconds to establish a new track record.

To the fans delight Frank Varey the Red Devil was back in town for the meeting on November 22, piling up spectacularly in his first ride to avoid the fallen Tom Wainwright. His anger boiled over when he was excluded from the re-run. He let the Spanish speaking official have a full blast of his broad Yorkshire accent, with either side not understanding the words but the body language spoke volumes. Completely wound up, Varey blasted the other riders in all his following races to win the El Grafico-the Enamel Helmet.



Back at the River Plate on November 23 Bob Harrison was the surprise winner of the Golden helmet from Billy Lamont, Oliver Langton and Ernie Evans. Lamont, who blew his JAP in his last meeting had persistent problems with his new Douglas.

The English riders, Varey, the Langtons, Harrison, Kilburn and Allan Jefferies, mechanic to Sprouts Elder, entered as a team for the Argentine road race championship on November 30. This was held at the Mercedes circuit a dusty 12 kilometre dirt surfaced track 80 k north east of Buenos Aires.

Competing in the road races became a regular pastime for a lot of the English riders with mixed results. The Argentine Grand Prix was contested by twenty two riders. Frank Varey set a new record at a speed of 136kph on an AJS, unfortunately the motor blew up on the last lap. A third track across the River Plate at Montivideo in Uruguay was opened in January 1931. The Langton brothers, Bob Harrison and Joe Gooding were transferred to the new track to assist the local riders. Gooding recalled his time in South America saying,

*“We lived in a small resort at Malvin on the coast. It was paradise, semi tropical, wonderful sands and the Atlantic Ocean breaking gently on the beach, and what nights they were under the Southern Cross.”*

The career of Frank Varey almost came to a tragic, premature end whilst competing in the second Agoail Trophy Sidecar Challenge on the Mercedes circuit over the Christmas period. Taking up the story from the Auto Journal correspondent who wrote:

*“The accident happened some thirty seconds after the start. When driving his sidecar combination at 60 mph Varey crashed into a horse drawn watercart, which was being driven across the track. Varey was lying fourth at the time. The first three drivers managed to avoid the cart, but Varey blinded by the dust careered straight into the cart, killing both horses and the driver. Argentine rider Antonia Gerli, following close behind Varey hit the debris and died instantly. Varey was taken to hospital unconscious, and was not expected to live. He surprised everyone by recovering a few hours later. It was several weeks before he rode again. The police arrested all the officials. They were released later without charges being laid”.*

The off track excitement continued when Billy Lamont and Geoff Kilburn were thrown into jail when caught driving a borrowed car down a one way street. They were released from jail after the car's owner

turned up at the police station, but Kilburne the driver was fined for not having a driving licence.

There are many conflicting reports over the success or otherwise of the South American venture. One thing is certain the riders did earn good money. After three months racing some of the earnings in Argentine dollars were stated to be Lamont \$3783, Oliver Langton \$3454, Varey \$3335, Juan Gaganó \$2983, Evans \$2733 and Westwood \$2682. No mention is made of Eric Langton and Elder's earnings possibly because they were shareholders in the promotions.

As the season drew to a close the injury list grew longer. Regulars at the British hospital were Elders, water on the knee, Eric Langton shoulder injury, Kilburne foot injury, Wainwright poisoned foot and Wise damaged thigh. Varey was still recovering from his road race crash. The Red Devil returned to the track on February 10 only to crash again and break seven bones in his left hand. Not surprising he returned to England on the RMSP Asturias on February 22.

The La Hurracane speedway had suffered badly through the wet weather with a total of sixteen postponements. There was to be no racing during the Carnival week. The directors then decided to close the track down early and concentrate on the River Plate and Montevideo promotion, hoping for improved gates from the thousands of visitors expected for the British Empire Trade Fair which opened in March.

Rumours were rife among the riders regarding the financial prospects in England for the 1931 season, due to the ban on appearance or signing on fees. AJ had realised earlier in 1929 that the writing was on the wall for speedway in England. He had opened negotiations to promote in New York with Sprouts Elder. Australians Dicky Wise, Billy Lamont, Ernie Evans. Argentine stars Juan Pagano and Juan Salatino were all contracted to travel to New York for the proposed May start.

According to the Auto magazine, AJ departed from Buenos Aires to Santiago en route for New York on Sunday February 15. His future address was given as the Anglo-South American Bank, 40 The Broadway New York. A copy of a letter of introduction from the Anglo South American Bank to AJ was issued on February 10 1932 The journey to Santiago was by rail. Santiago itself was not a seaport. The nearest port was Valparaíso 120k northwest. British researcher Nigel Bird states that AJ berthed at Key West Florida from Cuba on March 7 en route to New York. Reports in the press of the speedway promotion

in New York are unfounded although a company was formed for that purpose.

What is known is that AJ was active in other business ventures. He commissioned the printing of a number of four page comics with the company of King Syndicates Incorporated of 235 East Street New York City. In 1941 AJ had correspondence with the company again with an idea of publishing comics in Australia. In another letter to a friend in New York AJ recalls visiting the “speak easies” which were a type of illegal drinking den, quite unlike AJ who always appeared temperate. The USA Taxation Archives revealed that AJ was in New York 1-3-1931- 15-4-1931 and sailed on the MV Norvai. His own personal Atlas indicates he returned the same route to Valparaiso and then across the Pacific to Australia. The Atlas is marked in his handwriting with a note on the miles sailed everyday. From this we conclude that given the short time he was in New York, there was never any speedway staged there under his promotion.

Whilst in Argentina AJ did apply for a patent on a type of pre cast concrete construction for roadworks. As the documents are in Spanish it is hard to know the full details. Later correspondence revealed he had an expectation of funds from his business transaction in South America. He later refers to his former business partners in scathing terms so we suspect he consider he was cheated in some way. The shipping records show that Frank Hunting returned to England on April 28 1931, and then back to Melbourne. See this report below from Melbourne Age 9-7-1931.

***Dirt Track Sport Popular.***

***Dirt track motorcycle racing as a variation to the thrills of the bullfight has been introduced to the excitable Latin crowds of South America. Two Australian brothers, Messrs. F. A. and A. J. Hunting, constructed the tracks and introduced the sport to Buenos Aires and MonteVideo.***

***Mr. F. A. Hunting, on his return to Melbourne in the Commonwealth and Aberdeen Line steamer Moreton Bay, said that the meetings drew crowds of 20,000 in those cities. Thirty overseas riders (including many Australians) and 24 Argentinians took part in the races. Ernie Evans, an 18-year-old Melbourne rider, put up some of the best performances. In England, which he also visited, Mr. Hunting found that tracks he put down in 1928 were still in use.***

***"The Australian dirt track racing standard Is the highest in the world," he said. "Twenty-one Australians are racing in England, with Huxley still on top. In Germany Bill Lamont, the Australian, is drawing £600 a meeting."***

What happened to the three Australian riders in the period February to May is unclear. Evans arrived in England in May to ride for Wembley, Lamont turned up in June as a freelance rider, of Wise there is not a record of him riding in England in 1931, but he did arrive back in Australia in November 1931. Evans did return to America in 1935. It is possible that he had made some American connections, but this is pure speculation. Research has revealed that there were three tracks operating in New York State at the time of AJ's arrival. They were Brighton Fairground, Bearsville Woodstock], and Cambridge Fairgrounds all dirt tracks capable of staging speedway. To date I have been unable to discover any meeting details or connection to AJ. Under the heading "Speedways abroad Success in South America" the West Australian newspaper of June 9 1931 carried this report,

***To select riders for speedways in England and in South America. Mr. Frank A. Hunting reached Fremantle yesterday from England on the liner Moreton Bay. Five years ago. with his brother, A J Hunting he took teams of Australian riders to England and South America, to introduce the sport in those countries. Speaking of dirt track racing abroad, Mr. Hunting - 'said that the boom in England had subsided, and left the sport on a much sounder basis. Two years ago there were over 90 tracks in England, but they had been reduced to less than 60, and there were signs indicating that about half that number would survive this season. In his opinion, the sport would be a permanent feature in England if occasionally stimulated by international contests and the introduction of new riders. At all the successful tracks Australian riders were the star attractions. ' Last October Mr. Hunting took to South America a team of 16 riders, including Spouts Elders, Dick Wise (Adelaide), Ernie Evans (Melbourne), and Billy Lamont (Sydney). He established three speedways, and engaged 30 Argentine riders. The sport was most encouragingly received, crowds of 20,000 attending four nights a week..***

The Huntings never returned to promote in South America but an ill fated expedition headed by Eric and Oliver Langton, with Belle Vue riders Frank Varey, Clem Cort, Bob Harrison and mechanic Allan Jefferies appeared at the Montivedeo track for the 1931/32 season. The

team was contracted to a Jack Nelson who asked them to bring over six new machines in addition to their own. This was not a successful venture, which has, to a certain extent, placed a shadow over the AJ ventures, which were a financial benefit to all concerned. The Langtons' venture was tinged with hardships and tragedy.

Clem Cort was fatally injured in a motorcycle sidecar accident. Bob Harrison and Oliver Langton were travelling with him when they were hit by a car driving without lights. Harrison was jailed as he was the motorcycle driver, but managed to get out on bail. The riders ran a charity meeting to pay for Clem's funeral and assist his wife to get home to Australia. It should be mentioned that some writers have claimed Cort broke his neck on the racetrack. This is incorrect. The riders were then unable to raise their own return fares to England. Promoter Nelson was delayed up country and unable to pay them. A plea for help to E. O Spence at Belle Vue was met with a return cable saying "SWIM"!! Eventually the fares were raised from the sale of the bikes they had shipped over. It is not known if AJ was a director in the company with Nelson. I suspect that he was not involved otherwise the affairs would have been conducted more efficiently.

Apart from Billy Lamont, AJ was never to meet any of his riders again. He had nurtured them and set them on the right course to become successful in many ways. He did keep in touch by letter with some of the officials and Billy Lamont. He was very disappointed to not meet again with the Langtons when they were in Australia and expressed his sadness in a letter in 1940. For the record, Eric Langton became a top rider, running second in the 1936 World Final and later manufactured the Langton Maxie frame with his brother Oliver and Max Grosskreutz. The last named became manager at Norwich and rode until 1947. Ernie Evans became an Australian test team rider and rode up to 1938. Dicky Wise took over as manager at Norwich after Grosskreutz. Frank Varey and Arthur Franklyn also became promoters. Dusty Haigh and Buzz Hibberd both lost their lives on the speedway track. Sprouts Elders died in tragic circumstances in July 1957, AJ had always kept in touch with his wife. Up to 1946. Arthur and Westy Westwood became a well known midget and solo promoters. Everyone learnt something from AJ, that is part of his legacy, sowing the seed.

It should be noted that the two seasons in South America under AJ failed to receive any recognition in speedway history publications. Cyril May gives a couple of pages in his Complete History of Speedway, but

Tom Stenner, Thrilling the Million 1934, and more recently Robert Bamford in the Pre-War years and Phillip Dalling in the Golden Years ignore South America. The latter three all mention speedway around the world but not South America. It must be said that researching South America is very difficult. Thanks must be given to Rutland UK historian Colin Jewes who has carried out some dedicated work in the compiling of this previously overlooked period of time.

**TONY WEBB BRISBANE 2-1-2013**

### **Can You Help?**

1951 California Trophy winner was Arthur Flack. I am presuming it was staged 14/10/1951?. Can anyone confirm this date and even better has anyone got a scan of the programme? 1952 California Trophy winner was Jim Tebby. It was advertised as 28/09/1952 but was possibly postponed??? (unsure). Can anyone confirm the date it was run and also confirm if the same programme was used or another one was issued, again any scans would be appreciated. Please reply to my email address or phone numbers 0118 981523 07825 149700 **Les Hawkins**

### **End Of Another Volume**

We have reached the end of another volume and we hope you'll stick with us into the 16<sup>th</sup> Volume in June. We have managed to keep the cost of the magazine down to £5 for the last few years but we are going to have to ask for a wee bit more and hope that going to £7 for the four magazines won't break the piggy bank. The rise is due to the cost of postage and the fees for increasing the size of the web space.

As ever we make a plea for articles and we would be delighted to publish your articles. After all we set up to share information and views and help you find information you are seeking. The renewal form is enclosed. Also enclosed is the list of programmes and photos we are auctioning off to raise some income to support the web site. As ever we are prepared to help those with no access to the web by means of supplying files on CD if this would help bridge the gap. We'd also like ideas on how we might be able to adapt to help you even more and will not ignore any suggestions. **Graham and Jim**

## Web Wonders

The web is becoming ever more extensive. The bulk of the work 1945 – 1964 is now up on the site and **Jim** hopes to tackle a few more of the years post 1965 in the future. It will depend on what Speedway Stars come readily to hand. **Bob Ozanne** is still working on the pre-war newspapers while **Steve Wilkes** is in charge of the 1965 onwards section. **Mark Aspinell** is soldiering away on a number of fronts in this era including splitting up some of the large season long files into team by team files which is a useful exercise. If you do have a collection of programmes, please do look at the information needs section and see what you can provide to help fill the gaps. We can handle the information in loads of ways but scans of programmes are by far the best. Can't forget the splendid work done by our webmaster **Matt Jackson**. **Matt** it is who keeps the site up to date. Please do look at it – you might just be surprised to find what we have on it **Jim**

## Motherwell 1930 and 1932

This sketchy venue known as Paragon Speedway has been the subject of conjecture for some time and much of the evidence has pointed to the venue to be at Airbles Road, Motherwell. Airbles Road was certainly used in 1932 but articles uncovered in The People's Journal for 1930 places some doubt over the location of this venue.

The paper of 2 August reports that Alfie Williams has a practice track near Wishaw on land owned by Lord Belhaven. The track is 440 yards with a rough cinder surface. The report suggests riders can lap it in 19s., a figure from other reports I recall reading on the 1930 venue. Alfie mentions that the activity drew quite a crowd of spectators. Proposals to formalise the venue was turned down by Lord Belhaven.

Local information shows that Lord Belhaven's land surrounding Wishaw House to the east of Motherwell and not near Airbles Road. Interestingly it is close to a place called Craigneuk and I recall one time Secretary of the White City Speedway Supporters Club, Jimmy Lumsden, mentioned Craigneuk when asked about the 1930 venue. The People's Journal for 18 April 1931 mentions Alfie Williams had been practicing during the winter on a cycle track near Wishaw which had a cinder surface.

However, the mystery was solved by The People's Journal of 1932 which at long last confirmed the 1932 venue in Airbles Road was indeed the site of Paragon Speedway. It advised that the track was up and running for practice in early April 1932 but suffered a setback when a big area of the 4440 yard track, which was apparently built on a waste tip, subsided by a few feet. However, repairs were undertaken and a few more practice sessions were staged in April 1932, one of which featured Drew McQueen who was preparing himself for a season at West Ham. The promotion was headed by Alfie Williams, Billy Llewellyn and Hugh Adamson appointed Bill Naismith as Racing Manager and employed Patrick Nugent from Carfin in Lanarkshire as the Manager. The opening meeting as staged on 5<sup>th</sup> May and another was staged on 12<sup>th</sup> May. The subsequent two meetings on the following Wednesdays were rained off and it is not known if any other events were staged after the two rain offs.

It is known greyhound racing started at the site in July 1932 and it is suspected the venture folded due to lack of real support and the dog track was a way to cut the losses. The reports in The People's Journal also end quite abruptly supporting this opinion.

Alfie Williams, who was the driving force behind the project did stage events at Glasgow Nelson in 1932 and had been trying to get the use of Scotstoun Showground while fellow promoters Billy Llewellyn had been trying to obtain sites in Coatbridge without any luck. **Jim Henry**

### **Rudge Correction**

**Stuart Towner** advises that Ridges went into Liquidation in 1936 and moved to Hayes in 1937. Motor cycle production ceased in 1939 and the Autocycle went to Norman for 1940.

**Deadline for items for next edition is 30<sup>th</sup> April 2013. We welcome items on any topic related to the history of speedway and welcome material about more recent times – post 1964.**

**Web Master: Matt Jackson**

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