

The Speedway Researcher

Promoting Research into the History of Speedway and Dirt Track Racing

Volume No. 6 . No. 4 March 2004

Edited by Graham Fraser and Jim Henry

Subscribers : 162

The End of Another Volume

Despite the heading Volume / Number being confused a couple of time, this is the end of Volume Number 6. The good news is that we will continue with the magazine and progress to Volume Number 7.

We will, however be seeking a modest (in absolute terms) increase in price of £1.00 raising the annual subscription to £4.00. This is to cover the increasing cost of photocopying and paper. We hope this keeps those of you who have complained of our low cost publication. We will be moving the production from the long serving Macintosh Performa 6200 running on Clarisworks to a PC machine running Windows XP and, maybe, just maybe, we can look at a revamp of style. Maybe, too, we will be able to experiment with photographs. We would love your views on this - we prefer a lot of words and limited amount of wasted white space. As usual we include our annual end of edition reports. Please fill in the form and tell us what you thought of Volume 6. We do try to incorporate your suggestions in your next Volume. Please let us know what you are doing as we will get round to publishing a who is doing what section in the next volume.

Please use the form to let us know your wants as the first edition of the new volume is quite strong on readers' needs.

Thanks for your support but we do want more items from you. There is still a lot of digging into the past days before we can see the speedway rival to Cricket's famous Wisden. Still it is great to see our friends out there producing some great books arising from their research and giving us a superb credit in the acknowledgements. We are chuffed to bits when we read these and it makes working in the garret (Scottish loft) so worthwhile and rewarding.

Can You Help ?

Phil Hood, 21 Riverside Gardens, Thorpe Meadows, Peterborough, PE3 6GE. Tel: 01733 247725 is looking for details of 4th placed men in the following 1938 meetings versus Newcastle: 10.5 at Nottingham; 28.5 at Norwich; 2.6 at Sheffield; 1.7 at West Ham; 2.7 at Leeds; 13.7 at Southampton; 20.7 at Birmingham; 30.7 at Norwich; 8.9 at Sheffield. He is also looking for details of 4th placed men in the following 1939 meetings at Newcastle; 10.4 v Wembley; 17.4 v Hackney Wick; 1.5 v Stoke; 8.5 v Sheffield; 15.5 v Middlesbrough; 22.5 v Middlesbrough; 29.5 v Stoke; 5.6 v Crystal Palace; 12.6 World Championship Round; 19.6 v Hackney Wick; 26.6 v Norwich; 3.7 v Bristol; 10.7 England v Dominions; 17.7 v Norwich; 31.7 v Belle Vue Reserves; 28.8 v Sheffield, and the following 1939 Newcastle away fixtures: 21.4 at Middlesbrough; 4.5 at Stoke; 20.5 at Hackney Wick; 25.5 at Sheffield; 26.5 at Middlesbrough; 8.6 at Stoke; 24.6 at Norwich; 7.7 at Bristol; 15.7 at Norwich; 19.7 at Belle Vue; 22.7 at Hackney Wick; 29.7 at Norwich; 3.8 at Sheffield; 23.8 at Belle Vue.

Robert Bamford, 3 The Mews, Gastons Road, Malmesbury, Wiltshire, SN16 0BE Tel: 01666 823469 is looking for heat details (or scores if heat details are not available) for the following:

Southern Junior League 1983. Exeter v Oxford; v Swindon; v Weymouth; v Wimbledon; v Reading. Oxford v Exeter; v Weymouth; v Wimbledon. Reading v Wimbledon. Weymouth v Exeter; v Oxford; v Wimbledon; v Crayford; v Exeter; v Oxford. Wimbledon v Weymouth.
Anglia Junior League 1984. Ipswich v Rye House; v Stoke. King's Lynn v Hackney. Mildenhall v Milton Keynes; v Rye House; v Swindon. Rye House v Stoke; v Swindon. Stoke v Hackney; v Mildenhall; v Milton Keynes; v Rye House.

Wessex Junior League 1984. Exeter v Poole; v Reading; v Weymouth. Poole v Swindon; v

Weymouth. Weymouth v Exeter; Weymouth v Poole; v Reading; v Swindon.

Oops!

R.Martin, 23 Westfield Avenue, Wigston, Leicester LE18 1HY suggests that we have errors in the tables for the National League Division Two North and South Leagues shown in Volume 6 No.1 June 2003. Thanks for this effort. Anyone like to check the scores in Volume 5 No.4 and the tables in V6 /No.1 and get back to us?

Nuggets

Deborah Cherry, our lady researcher who is working on a history of female speedway riders, sends us a couple of nuggets. The first is from the Daily Mail dated 11.4.1938. "The 25,000 spectators at the opening meeting of the season at Harringay on Saturday did not realise that Norman Parker, the English international was riding with a six inches part of his body uninsured. Parker sustained a double fracture of his left arm in a track accident last April and had not ridden until Saturday. All riders must be insured before competing but earlier in the day the insurance company contended that Parker was unfit to ride as he had not recovered from the year-old smash. The Harringay medical advisor disagreed with his opinion so Parker was rushed for a Harley Street specialist for examination and as a result he was declared fit. The insurance company was again approached and an unusual compromise was agreed. They agreed to insure Parker against risk of accident except to the previously fractured part of the arm - three inches above and three inches below the left elbow. Parker played a big part in Harringay's 40 - 32 win over West Ham scoring 9 out of a possible 10 points." The second is from the Daily Mail of 12.4.1938. "Spectators going into Wimbledon Speedway last night were surprised to see a police car dash up to the entrance shortly before racing began. Two officers jumped out and entering the manager's office asked for the gun used to signal the finish of a race. The management had forgotten to obtain a licence. At first the police insisted on removing the gun but after the start of the meeting had been delayed for several minutes a compromise was reached. Wimbledon were allowed to use their gun after undertaking to take out a licence today."

The Early Days of Suffolk Speedway Part 2

We continue with **Keith Farman's** history of the pre-war action in Suffolk.

Gunton Speedway 1934

The club moved to the new track in 1934, and was advertised as the only Private Track in the country, with five meetings being reported in the local press. Plus, they also advised that they were affiliated to the A.C. U.

Mr Meadows, an excellent name for a farmer, farmed the surrounding land, but one field remained under the control of the Country Club, that Chatsworth, one of the leading lights of the Lowestoft Club owned. Late on it was owned by Mr Lambert of Lambert's Tea who turned it into a Holiday camp and later still Warner's Holiday Camp, who now use the field for recreational purposes.

The main approach to the track was from the Lowestoft to Yarmouth road (A12), the other entrance was off Corton Long Lane via the Meadows farm, leading to the Hall where parking would be, then on to the field.

Mr Meadows would take his daughter and son Dennis to watch from a hedge close to the track. As Dennis recalled as a five year old, he enjoyed the racing and the loud roar of the racing bikes but they were long delays between the races, as it seemed there were so many accidents that meant long delays.

The first meeting was held on Sunday 17 June. The next meeting was the usual handicap races but the last four all featured team racing. Suffolk defeated Essex 43 - 20, Norfolk 29 - 24 and, in the last meeting, Suffolk lost to The Rest 26 - 20. The riders were mainly the same in all the matches. Sparkes was the top man and I would guess that he was in fact Fred Leavis. The track was not ideal, as from the start the riders went downhill into the first bend, and of

course, that meant they would be going uphill on the back straight. This was not the only cause for concern as there were three large trees by the side of the track.

One of the local lads was Roy Munnings who rode under the name of Jack Royal. Frederick Newson, who good at nicknames, called him Spike as Roy was very moved by Spike Rhiando. Once Roy actually rode under the name of Spike Royal.

One of the most talked about events at Gunton was when Roy swerved into one of the track side trees and was thrown 20 feet into the air.

Roy was the top of the local Lowestoft riders and with better machinery he could well have become a reasonably competent professional rider. At the track he would get his son Jack to cover his Rudge with an old coat. This was done so that if an ACU official came along he would not be recognised.

Roy was one of the many riders who would change his name. Often this was done for tax purposes. I believe he used the name J.Munn to race with some success at Bradwell. In 1934 Roy raced at the Firs Stadium in novices' races but here he used his own name. He also raced under his own name at Holbeach.

After the speedway had finished at Lowestoft Road, Roy met a sad death. He had gone on a works outing to Ipswich and had to be back for his shift. He hitched a lift back to Lowestoft on a lorry. On the way back another lorry had broken down by the side of the road and was parked without any lights. The driver of the lorry in which Roy was travelling failed to notice it until it was too late and collided with it. Sadly Roy was killed in the crash.

East Coast Speedway Pakefield 1935

The East Coast Speedway ran for two seasons, 1935 and 1936 staging a number of meetings on Sunday afternoons at 3 o'clock. They now were not only affiliated to the ACU, but also they had a permit number B524. They were run under the auspices of the Lowestoft and District Motor Club. The track was in a large field which is south of the present Safeway Supermarket on the A12 just off the Gisleham road.

The Eastern Coach Works sponsored the track as it was their sports field. I believe that it was not the same track was used in 1933. It was certainly a better track than that at Gunton as it did not have the hazards associated with the slopes and the trees.

This track however did have a dyke (ditch in this area) near the paddocks (pits) and in one race Jack Colby all but ended up in it. Jack was one of the local riders and was nicknamed Pinny as he always had an old grey bike. His father was a very successful fisherman and Pinny was one of the great characters of the Lowestoft club.

Jack's wife Mag was pleasant happy girl well aware of her husband's love of gambling, She would often claim that Pinny would bet on the outcome of two flies climbing up a wall.

Jack would go on to make his fortune in the world. He became a millionaire, owned a Rolls Royce and smoked large cigars. When he retired he became the local school lollipop man.

In 1935 Fred W. Samwell was the leading light behind this track as he was the honorary secretary, clerk of the course and announcer, plus he wrote all the notes for the club in the Lowestoft Journal.

The meetings would start to the strains of the club's signature tune "Blaze Away" and now, with the backing of the ACU, the track was no longer a flapper track, allowing riders to compete under their own names. Two exceptions were Jim Millward who was programmed as Dusty Flint and local lad, Roy Munnings, who rode as Jack Royal.

Roy was the best of the local lads who rode at this track, and after the meetings the riders would go to his house in Yeovil Road.

[The story goes that Roy's wife was a maternity nurse at Lowestoft Hospital and was also a prolific orange wine maker. She was abundantly supplied with fruit by Durrants the wholesale fruiterers whose warehouse was not far off. At Covent Garden Mr Durrant senior bought slightly over-ripe fruit and gave it away prices at the end of the sale, a lot of which was only suitable for wine making. It was given to Mrs Spike (Rhiando) for the asking. At one of the wine drinking sessions stocks were getting low and they drank wine that was still fermenting. This of course had a very intoxicating effect on those taking part. 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 Jimmy Millward left in the early hours, a bit worse for wear, to drive back to his Newmarket home. He had a small garage and had to open it up for business on the Monday morning.

Straw bales were provided for the fans to sit on and all kind of refreshments could be obtained in all the enclosures. A programme was on sale for 2d (1p). Pencils could be obtained from the programme sellers for 1d. (this was well before the advent of biro pens.) Pencils were certainly needed because no names were printed in the programme for any of the events. Even the team events did not have any riders programmed in the heats but the rider's names were given at the top of the page with their numbers.

The first meeting on the track was held on 22nd April 1935 when 19 riders took part with Norfolk defeating Suffolk by 28 - 24. Fred Leavis was the top rider winning three races. Jim Millward and R.Elder had two wins each. This is interesting as now riders could use A.C.U. permits and ride under their own names.

I have a copy of the programme dated 26th June 1935 which is an Eastern Counties v London fixture which was raced over 9 heats with four riders per race. The exception was the last heat which featured the top three riders from each team.

The format was a very strange one indeed as the teams had 12 riders each. Eastern Counties did not use three riders, one of whom was Wal Morton and London did not use Alan Smith. (Both riders would go on to ride for Norwich in 1937.) It's possible that this format was because not all riders would arrive at the track and they could also be graded to keep the racing closer. With no set format it's interesting too that four riders did not ride and eight had just one ride, seven had two rides while four riders had three rides. Ted English with seven points had four rides.

The 1935 meetings were 23rd June (Eastern Counties 29 London 25 (9 heats)), 14th July (East 37 South 35 (12 heats)), 4th August (Suffolk 29 Essex 35 (11 heats)), 11th August (Lowestoft 36 London 30 (12 heats)), 1st September (Lowestoft 18 Hackney Wick 28 (8 heats)), ? September (Lowestoft 22 London 25 (8 heats)). The rest of the Lowestoft v London programme had to be cancelled because of heavy showers. It had been advertised as all square scratch races between Fred Leavis, Squibb Burton, Jim Millward and Jack Sharpe.

Although heats varied it would appear that the six riders always rode in the last race. The programme was completed by track record attempts and handicap races.

At the 11th August meeting the track records were - One Lap Flying Start - Fred Leavis and Tiger Hart 22.2 seconds. Four Lap Records - Rolling Start - Fred Leavis 93.2 seconds. Standing Start - Tiger Hart 93.0 seconds. Clutch Start - Fred Leavis 89.0 seconds.

The results were announced by loud speaker, installed by Surtees' Marconi Super Sound Equipment, supplied from Surtees' Garage and Wireless Department. This company was owned by the chief steward G.F. Surtees.

Surtees was of German origin and seemed a very prosperous garage owner, as was Boggis of Kessingland and Prime of Wrentham. He was also host to the German Hockey Teams visiting the Lowestoft Hockey Festival. He was a member of the Brown shirts - a British organisation which were similar to the Nazi Black Shirts. (See recent article re Fay Taylour.)

In those happier times of 1935 Surtees put up the Surtees Challenge Cup. It was presented to the rider securing the most points in every race throughout the season, with the prize fund increasing each week. At 23rd June it stood at £4.42p and by the next meeting it had jumped to £10.18p Fred Leavis was the winner for 1935. His record was 34 races and giving him 86 points. Ted English was second. The previous week all the leading scorers had been listed in the programme and the list, third place downwards was Tiger Hart, Jack Royal, G.Tidbury, Reg Thorn, M.Quatril, Jack Colby and Vic Houston.

Other riders that appeared in 1935 were Jeff Dixon, Roy Jackson, Max Cremer, Sid Warren, H.Edwards (a farmer from Attleborough), Jack Ford, Claude Rye, Reg Thorne, D.Pye, Alan Smith, Frank Hodgson, Wal Morton, and Clem Thomas. In addition Aussies Doug McLachlan and Jack Bibby also took part as John Deeley who would go on to manage Walthamstow. Sid Warren of Attleborough set up the fastest time of the season of 1 minute 35 seconds. This was established when he won the East Coast Handicap on 12th July.

One of the top attractions was the challenge races for the Individual Championship of the East

Coast. In one event Leavis defeated Tiger Hart and Jim Millward (who was programmed as Dusty Flint.) while Squibb Burton won another after Leavis had pulled out due to an ankle injury.

It seemed that Squibb Burton was a great friend of Samwell's, as they had been club members since 1925. Squibb was better known as a top notch speedway rider in the pre-war days. He was quoted as saying that the track was one of the finest of that kind he had ever ridden. He also paid tribute to the "local boys" and all the supporters who, he said, were not afraid to give a "stranger" an ovation when they beat a home based man.

The track had been good for the meeting that Squibb had referred to, as in the previous week it had been very wet. This was not always the case as it was a large track, 640 yards, the grass was completely worn away leaving a dirt surface full of ruts and bumps. On a hot and dry days lots of dust would ruin the meetings.

To Be Concluded.

A Little Bit of Whimsy

Every so often I get the notion to burst into print. This time I was thinking about rider's surnames and how they could be put into categories. So here we go. I've started with the easiest one - Artisans - Professions if you like.

I can think of: Ernie Baker (Wolverhampton); Glen Baxter (Scottish for baker) (Mildenhall); Alan Butler (Belle Vue); Johnny Carpenter (Leicester); Wayne Carter (Edinburgh); Ian Cartwright (Halifax); Bernie Collier (Belle Vue); John Cook (Eastbourne); Cyril Cooper (Ashfield) George Farmer (Middlesbrough); Bob Fletcher (Coventry); Bruce Forester (Middlesbrough); Len Glover (Oxford); Dave Mason (Rye House); Brian Mercer (Linlithgow); Tommy Miller (Glasgow WC); Don Potter (Stoke); Nigel Sadler (Rye House); Harry Shepherd (Cradley Heath); Andy Smith (Coventry); Carl Stonehewer (Workington); Bill Thatcher (Southampton); Alf Webster (Liverpool); Arthur Wright (Bradford). How many others do you know and, are there any other names that could be listed. I have thought of church related (e.g. Charlie Monk), colours (e.g. Jack White), confectionery (e.g. Paul Fudge) and topography (e.g. Roger Hill) related. On you go and see what you can come up with. The best lists will be published!!

Jim Henry

One More Lap

Robert Andrews, PO Box 84094, Westgate, Auckland, New Zealand Tel: +64 9 832 1974 email speedwayarchives@ihug.co.nz and www.speedwayarchives.com publishes a magazine called One More Lap. Robert issued the first edition of this six per year magazine in September / October and Volume 1 No2 came out in November / December. The subscription rates are very attractive to UK subscribers set at £10 for the full year inclusive of postage. In Volume 1 No. 2 Robert, who is related to the ex-Wimbledon and Wolves rider, looks back at 1955 and 1965 with the help of items from various publications of the day with a strong Antipodean slant. It is packed with photographs covering UK to Australian and New Zealand action.

At £10 for six chunky volumes it is value for money.

Jim Henry

Meadowbank Memories

Vic Vanni a firm fan of the Tigers who comes from Glasgow recalls a favourite venue which did not impress on his first visit.

When speedway returned to Edinburgh in 1948 information about the new track at Old Meadowbank Stadium appeared in the press. I read that it was 365 yards in length, had banked corners, a red shale surface and a board fence.

It all sounded very strange to me. After all, as a Glasgow Tigers fan I only knew the White City track and the type of racing I saw there, so I couldn't really envisage anything very

different. The White City track was 430 yards, had long straights, tight corners with a nasty camber, a blackish surface, a wire-mesh fence and was surrounded by a dog track. Anyway, one Saturday in July me and another Tigers teenager decided to see Old Meadowbank for ourselves and watch the Monarchs take on Sheffield. Although we knew things would be different, what things would be different, what we saw once inside the stadium still amounted to a culture shock. For example, as there was no dog track, spectators were leaning over the safety fence, the banking was so steep that it rode to a hump at the apex of the corners and the red shale was more like crimson.

All of this was as nothing compared to the racing which followed. At White City riders throttled right back going into the corners, slid the bikes round them at half speed and, if they could, never strayed far from the white line. That camber severely limited the number of outside overtakes.

This was in complete contrast to the racing at Old Meadowbank. In heat one Monarchs' Clem Mitchell and Dennis Parker hit the front from the tapes, roared at full throttle up the banking and right out to the fence. We fully expected Sheffield's Stan and Len Williams to come through on the inside as they would have done at White City, instead, they took the same line as the two Monarchs and the four of them hurtled back down the banking in single-file and onto the back straight.

That's what it was like in every heat. The reason for this was that the football dictated that the track had to have squarish corners and the so-steeply banking was an attempt to compensate for this. This meant that there was only the one racing line and any overtakes we saw only happened if a rider made a mistake. This high speed follow-my-leader racing put me off going back in 1948.

However, by my next visit early in the 1949 season the track had been greatly improved. A deal had been done with the stadium owner to have the football field shortened and this allowed for the corners to be rounded off and the excessive banking reduced. The result was that there were more racing lines and the track was now one of the best in Britain for fast, exciting racing with plenty of overtaking. Its closure at the end of the 1967 season was a great loss to Scottish speedway and especially to me.

(JH - let me echo Vic's sadness when Edinburgh's Old Meadowbank closed its doors at the end of 1967. I spent many happy years on the run down terracing watching the Monarchs there. Are there any venues you liked - disliked? Go on tell us where and why. For all I liked Old Meadowbank, I have to admit that my own favourite is Sunderland. Whilst I only saw a couple of meetings there, they were crackers.)

World Championship-Winning Machines

Franco Oliani yoghi59@hotmail.com writes - I used to check Chris Byles' Workshop on a regular basis and while browsing 'The Grosskreutz' page I've found an enlightening passage: Praggie (Lionel Van Praag)used a (Pea) Shooter frame.

I have a picture of Van Praag which is assumed to be taken in 1934-1935. Looking at the forks, frame and rear mudguard, the layout of a Harley Peashooter is clearly recognisable, the bracing struts in the rear were common in these days.

I believe the World Championship bike was a development of the above mentioned one.

A moulded fuel tank was fitted under the diamond's upper tube (which is hidden on Harley machines) with two lengths of frame bracing under. I think a flattened oil tank was located behind the saddle downtube. The bracing struts were removed.

So, Van Praag did not win his world championship astride an Excelsior JAP as I suggested in Vol 4. No. 1, but on a custom bike we may call a 'Peashooter JAP.'

Looking at several pictures from dating from 1936 - 1937 it is clear that Jack Milne rode a Comerford-JAP in those years. It seems unlikely he could have used an Excelsior-JAP when winning his world championship, as I stated. The right bike should be a 'Comerford-JAP.'

Publications

Speedway - The Pre-War Years

Robert Bamford, assisted by **Dave Stallworthy**, has pulled together an interesting publication on my favourite era and it was devoured in a small number of lengthy sittings. I admit to being very interested in this era, particularly in the more obscure venues.

Staying on the food theme, I can recommend this book if you want the taste of the era. It does not go into great detail and this has to be left to other track or location specific publications. I only hope it gives you a hunger to add to the feast of information this book lays before you. The book draws on a wide range of sources including *The Speedway Researcher* and puts it between one cover to provide a useful compendium publication. The only venue I noted posted missing was Ayr in 1937, but I can live with that.

The photographs and programme covers have reproduced well and they add to the value. The stats are, to use a lovely Scottish word, "crabbit" - on the small side if you like - or maybe I need better glasses. However, there are some stats which is an improvement on many of the *Tempus* books which by and large shy away from numbers.

It is my hope that this, together with *Homes of British Speedways*, will inspire you all to research those hazy venues mentioned in passing in this book and perhaps, just maybe, uncover other venues that have been lost in the mists of time.

We say this so often - this is a must for any speedway historian's collection and is good value at £14.99 plus postage and packaging from *Tempus Publications Ltd*, The Mill, Brimscombe Port, Stroud, GL5 2QG.

Book Reviewed by **Jim Henry**.

The Complete History of Stoke Potters

Another publication written by **Howard Jones** out of his *Speed-Away Promotions* and those of you who have bought any of Howard's other publications will be familiar with the house style. Similarly those of you who subscribed to Howard's part work, "The Potter" will have much of the information. So this book appeals to those who did not get "The Potter" and want a Stoke Speedway history and those who did will find it a handy reference book which brings the Stoke history up to 2003. The format is a potted decade by decade history from the two pre-war years 1929 and 1939 through to the present day and from Sun Street to Loomer Road; add in the Stoke Spitfires inaugural season, a complete season by season Potters results / scorers history and lavishly illustrated with black and white photographs and programme covers, a must for speedway historians and researchers.

Priced £12.99 plus £2.00 P & P from *Howard Jones, Speed-Away Promotions Ltd.*, 16 Poachers Trail, Lytham St Annes, Lancashire, FY8 4FF.

Book Reviewed **Graham Fraser**.

Peter Craven: The Wizard of Balance

Brian Burford has, as readers of *The Speedway Researcher* will know, previously published biographies of The Moran Brothers and Sam Ermolenko, and has now moved on to catalogue the life and speedway career of post-war speedway icon, Peter Craven.

This book, too pulls together known information from a wide range of sources, both written and oral, plus it has obtained a wealth of photographic history, some of which must have come from Craven family sources.

I am not sure this book will tell the Craven aficionados out there much more than they already knew of the man and his career but for the uninitiated it will pull together the details of a charismatic speedway rider's tragically short career. Worth adding to your speedway library. I know my Co-Editor is unhappy about the section on the events surrounding the tragic accident at Old Meadowbank in 1963. However, he does not wish to re-open the debate without having first completed a thorough literature and factual bit of research into the topic to back up his personal recollections.

Price £14.99 plus P & P from *Tempus Publishing Ltd.*, The Mill, Brimscombe Port, Stroud, Gloucestershire, GL5 2QC. Book Reviewed by **Graham Fraser**

A History of Wolverhampton Speedway

One welcome trend in recent times has been the publication of self-financed speedway team histories, books that the author has put his own savings into producing as a labour of love. Many would not have seen the light of day without their author commitment.

One such publication is the Wolverhampton history by fan **Mark Sawbridge**, a large format gloss paper book that lovingly details the Wasps and Wolves history from 1928 - 1930 and 1950 to 2002. It is a fascinating history which Mark has obviously enjoyed writing. His approach is a unique one - taking events and star riders as the focus of different eras of the club. I quite liked the short box sections spread throughout the book, which picked up on the details of individual meetings.

Well researched and written and nicely illustrated this is a must for Wolves fans and speedway historians everywhere. Buy it.

Price £12 plus P & P from Mark Sawbridge, 29 Viaduct Drive, Dunstall Park, Wolverhampton, WV6 0UX. Book Reviewed **Graham Fraser**

Glasgow's Speedways: The Pre-War Years

What can I say about the publication of my colleague, **Jim Henry's** long awaited pre-war Glasgow speedway history? Well it has taken a number of years for Jim to find a publisher and the wait has been well worth it.

Those of you familiar with the first part of the Edinburgh Speedway history, The Marine Gardens Years (co-written by Jim Henry and Ian Moultray), will know that publication set the standard for speedway team histories in style, layout, detail and accuracy and this book adopts a similar approach.

Produced in a spiral bound form and a weighty 262 plus pages it is as comprehensive a history of Glasgow's speedways as is possible to produce. (after lying on a shelf for some years only waiting for a publisher it is ironic that within weeks of its production as set of Glasgow pre-war filled-in programmes suddenly surfaced and purchasers will get this information too. [Early purchasers will be sent an Addendum and the information has been incorporated into versions now being published].) It is not just a Glasgow team history but a history of all the early dirt tracks that helped pioneer the sport north of the border.

Starting from the earliest Scottish speedway in 1928 it catalogues in words and individual meeting information of Glasgow Nelson, Carntyne and Celtic Park. The book also goes into comprehensive detail of every meeting at White City. Each track has a rider A - Z and there is a scattering of photographs, some rare, from the pre-war era.

With this publication and the Marine Gardens book, researchers and general readers will have an almost complete history of Scottish speedway before the war as is possible to get and I cannot recommend it too highly. The Marine Gardens book sold out quickly and is a sought after collectors item. This one should be available more readily in the longer term but don't hang about if you are into the pre-war era.

Priced £17.99 plus £2.00 P & P from Robert Bamford Speedway Publications, 3 The Mews, Gastons Road, Malmesbury, Wiltshire, SN16 0BE.

Book Reviewed by **Graham Fraser**

Malcolm Simmons

An Overnight Sensation After Two and Half Years

Norman Jacobs writes. Recent issues of the Speedway Researcher have featured the 'meteoric rises' of Tommy Miller and Jack Young. At the end of the article on Jack Young the editors said they would be pleased to publish articles on other star newcomers. By no stretch of the imagination could it be argued that Malcolm Simmons (Simmo) had a 'meteoric rise' to stardom, but as someone who watched his more gradual rise from novice to the day he suddenly became a star I thought I'd take the editors up on their offer and detail Malcolm's rise as I saw it from the beginning of 1963 to the end of the 1965 season.

When Hackney reopened on 10th April 1963 after 24 years out of the sport, heat one of the

second half Reserves Scurry featured a 17 year old rider named in the programme as Malcolm Simmonds (sic). He had been spotted by Ernie Hancock who recommended him to Hackney promoter, Mike Parker, after seeing him at Mike Broadbank's Rye House Training School and in a couple of second half rides at New Cross.

Malcolm finished third in his first race at Hackney, behind Geoff Penniket and Trevor Hedge but in front of Joe Davies. Hedge was unable to take his place in the final and was replaced by Malcolm who came second behind Penniket, pushing Hackney's No.7 John Poyser into third place. For this he was rewarded with a place in the main second half event, finishing third behind Stan Stevens and Tic Read in a three rider race.

The following week, Simmo was promoted to the team proper at reserve but at the last minute his place was taken by John Poyser. However, he did win his first race at Hackney, when he took the first heat of the Reserves Scurry from Brian and Joe Davies.

Hackney's third meeting, on 24th April, saw Simmons at last make the team, scoring one point from three rides in a Southern League match against Poole, his first league point coming in heat 9 when his partner, Trevor Hedge, fell. In the programme notes for the meeting, Mike Parker wrote, "One bright young junior prospect Malcolm Simmonds (sic) rides better every time he sets foot on the track. I consider Malcolm one of the best prospects in the sport today. Keep it up lad!"

For the next few matches, Malcolm was in and out of the team, but continued to ride in the second half. On May 15th, he even reached the final of the main second half event, finishing second - although it has to be said there were only two finishers as Norman Hunter and Jimmy Heard both had engine failure.

Malcolm was a late addition to the team in the home match against Newcastle on 5th June, taking Trevor Hedge's place. In his first race he came second to Ivan Mauger. But it was a good night for the young Simmons as he scored 5 paid 6 points, including a second place to his partner Tich Read (George Snailum) in heat 9.

By the time the 12th meeting, he was really beginning to make the Hackney faithful sit up and take notice. Against Cradley Heath on 26th June, he scored eight points from four rides including two race wins over the likes of Derek Timms, John Hart and Harry Bastable. Unfortunately, the following meeting against Sheffield, saw him back to scoring just one point. However, he had by now established himself as a regular team member and was riding at number two with Norman Hunter as his partner.

By the end of the season Hackney's first pairing had become a vital factor in knocking up some convincing home wins, for example, two 5 - 1s and a 4 - 2 against St Austell on 18th September helped the Hawks to a 54 - 24 win. Simmons accounted for Trevor Redmond, George Major, and Ray Cresp on his way to a final tally of eight paid ten that night.

The final match of the season saw Simmons score seven paid eight (with one engine failure) against a team labelled The Rest. Simmons scalps that night included Pete Jarman, Wal Morton and Reg Reeves.

By the end of the season, Simmons had ridden in a total of 18 Provincial League matches, scoring 79 points plus 12 bonus points at an average of 5.35. His highest score being 11 against Edinburgh on September 2nd.

The following season, 1964, was, of course, the year of the big split, when the Provincial League was 'outlawed'. Simmons turned out at Rayleigh on Good Friday, having been assured that this would not affect his ACU licence. This was of great importance to Simmons as he was a leading grass track exponent and couldn't afford to be 'outlawed.' Shortly afterwards he was informed that he had been given the wrong information and because he had ridden at Rayleigh his licence would have been revoked. Simmons appealed to the Speedway Control Board who agreed to reinstate him as they agreed it was not his fault he had turned out at Rayleigh and that he had been given the wrong information. His reinstatement was conditional on him signing for a National League team.

1964 was also the year West Ham reopened and promoter, Tommy Price, wasted no time in signing up the youngster. He had his first ride at Custom House on 28th April (still as Malcolm Simmonds) in the second half 'Reserves Romp'. Unfortunately he suffered engine failure and did not finish. Later in the same meeting he took part in a race imaginatively

called 'Another Reserve Romp.' This time he did finish, coming third behind Stan Stevens and Bobby Dugard but in front of Coventry's Howie Booton.

The 18 year old Simmons was finding it much tougher going in the National League. Having finished the previous year in the Provincial League as a good class second string, he was now struggling and his appearances in the second half reserves' events generally resulted in a last, or at least, third place, for the next few weeks.

In spite of his lack of success in the second half, Simmo was drafted in to the team on 23rd June as a replacement for Stan Stevens, who was suffering from tonsillitis. Amazingly he contributed a reserve's maximum with four paid six from his two rides, managing to beat Bob Andrews, Ernie Baker, Jim Tebby and Keith Whipp. His success against Wimbledon was to be a scoring theme! In the second half he still only managed two third places in the Reserve events. In the programme the following week, Tommy Price had this to say. "The style and dash of teenager Malcolm Simmons shocked many people - Wimbledon particularly. But not me. I've had faith in Malcolm all season. His machine was a little out of tune earlier this season, but now it is in excellent order and Malc is improving with every ride."

Simmons kept his place for the following week's match against Norwich. But this time he only managed one point. His third place coming at the expense of Star's captain, Reg Trott. Unfortunately, Malcolm injured his ankle and missed a number of matches. He next appeared in the team on 1st September against Swindon, scoring three paid four from two rides beating Roy Bowers and Bob Kilby. By now, he had ridden in nine matches, including away matches, scoring a total of 13 plus 6 bonus at a Calculated Match Average (CMA) of 4.00. He continued in this vein until 29th September, when in the final of the London Cup, he once again showed his liking for Wimbledon opposition by scoring seven points from three rides, this time accounting for Sverre Harrfeldt, Gote Nordin (f/exc), Ernie Baker and Keith Whipp. He also won both the second half reserves races.

At the end of the season Malcolm had ridden in 16 matches, scored 30 points plus nine bonus points for a total of 39 points at a CMA of 4.20. Price's summing up at the end of the season: "In Malcolm Simmons and Bob Dugard we have reserves with a golden future...Malcolm has come on a bomb recently. These are the lads who will carry the future of West Ham on their shoulders next year."

In spite of Simmons opening match being against Wimbledon, the 1965 season, which saw the start of the new British League, did not start too well as he only managed two points from four rides, his two third places coming from two opponents suffering engine failure. Just two points against Newport on 27th April followed, but he seemed to be getting back to his old form on 11th May with six points against Cradley Heath. This was followed by six paid eight against Hackney the following week and five paid seven against Coventry on 25th May.

He remained fairly steady around the six or seven mark for the next few weeks - apart from a slight setback against Belle Vue on 22nd June when he managed just three. Nine paid ten against Edinburgh on 13th July, including victories over Colin McKee, Bert Harkins, Wayne Briggs, Henry Harrfeldt, Bill Landels and George Hunter, showed what Simmons could do. However, this was followed by more fives and sixes until once again Simmons took it out on Wimbledon on 3rd August in the knock-out cup match..., scoring ten points from five rides. Though in each race he lost to the Wimbledon heat leader.

This match finished 48 - 48 thanks to Reg Luckhurst blowing up his engine in the last race; otherwise Wimbledon would have won, However, this fortunate piece of luck meant a replay was necessary at Wimbledon the following week on 14th August. Already the underdogs for the return, West Ham turned up at Plough Lane without the services of two of their heat leaders, Sverre Harrfeldt (eye injury) and Norman Hunter (friend's wedding!). Sure enough, after six heats, the Dons were already 21 - 15 up. Heat seven however saw a 5 - 1 to the Hammers as Simmons and tactical substitute, Ken McKinlay, beat Bobby Dugard and Keith Whipp. It was not a great surprise but from then on Simmons took hold of the match and, although it was a great team effort, West Ham's ultimate amazing victory by 49 points to 47 was down to the new star they had discovered. A victory over Olle Nygren in heat ten was followed by another victory over him in heat 13. With just one heat to go the score was 45 - 45. Simmons and McKinlay were out against Reg Luckhurst, the only man to have beaten

Simmons that night, and Keith Whipp. In spite of the tension of the moment, Malcolm appeared as cool as a cucumber as he once again swept to victory from Luckhurst and McKinlay. It was an absolutely astonishing performance from the 19 year old. Not only had he scored 14 points away, but he had beaten Olle Nygren twice, had set up the two fastest times of the night and went on to win the second half final, again from Olle Nygren and Reg Luckhurst. To finish off the evening he took part in a special event in which he was handicapped ten yards behind Nygren. Yet again he defeated the Wimbledon skipper. It was the night Malcolm Simmons became a star. Of course he had been improving all season, but there had been nothing before to suggest that he could pull off something like this.

From then on, there was no looking back for the former teenage grass track star. He became in effect West Ham's fourth heat leader and from that night on they did not lose another official fixture that season, taking the inaugural British League, the Knock Out Cup and the London Cup.

Malcolm himself went on from success to success. Runner up in the World Championship, 1976; World Pairs Champion, 1976 / 1977 / 1978; World Team Champion 1973 / 1974 / 1975 / 1977; British Champion 1976; Capped 80 times for England, 7 times for the British Lions (touring Australia), 5 times for Great Britain, 4 times for the Rest Of The World.

Australian "Cigarette" Card Information

Graeme Frost, 8 Strathbogie Avenue, Findon, South Australia writes:

Although not strictly cards, another set I have is a set of seven black and white photographs called Favourites of the Speedway - presented by 'Champion'. They are in a concertina fold out format. Each panel measures 6.5 cms by 4.5cms and the photographs are of Billy Lamont (action), Eric Langton (portrait), Jack Ormston (seated on bike), Frank Arthur (action), Max Grosskreutz (portrait), Vic Huxley (seated on bike), Jack Parker (action).

There are three known sets of Australian cards all issued in the 1920s. Details are as follows: Allen's

Dark blue and white portrait photos of riders in racing gear. Different Allen's confectionery product advertised on each card. Probably issued in 1925. Catalogues say set of 51 but 53 cards known.

No.1 Tom Benstead, No.2 Unknown, No.3 A.Aggitt, No.4 J.McLean, No.5 Dave Brewster, No.6 Paul Anderson, No.7 W.Mills, No.8 J.S.Hipwell, No.9 C.D.Philip, No.10 L.Manning, No.11 A.Blackburn, No.12 Louis Petersen, No.13 & 14 unknown, No.15 R.Hipwell, No.16 Harry Slade, No.17 Scotty McGill, No.18 Mick Brenan, No.19 George Robbins, No.20 Harold Brown, No.21 Teddy Williams, No.22 Jack Harris, No.23 Gus Clifton, No.24 Tom O'Dea, No.25 Frank Howarth, No.26 W.Thompson, No.27 E.Thoms, No.28 W.Schwer, No.29 Harold Wood, No.30 Paul Romaley, No.31 Spencer Stratton, No.32 W.Thoms, No.33 Orié Steel, No.34 D.Koker, No.35 Arthur Bide, No.36 Ron McKeller, No.37 Bill Conoulty, No.38 Charles Disney, No.39 W.D.Merchant, No.40 E.J.Black, No.41 Bill Crampton, No.42 Tom Sharp, No.43 Major Tegg, No.44 Jock Glover, No.45 H.Lister, No.46 Bill Payne, No.47 G.J.Kirkwood, No.48 A.McFarlane, No.49 A.Kirkwood, No.50 A Sadler, No.51 C.Trevellyn, No.52 Leo Moroney, no number Late Harold Parsons.

Famous Newcastle SpeedoJoys

Issued by Davies and Herbert Ltd who were Newcastle (NSW)'s leading Manufacturing Confectioners. The number of cards is unknown and they were un-numbered as such. Most of the cards sighted do have a number but the number is the rider's racing number not the card number. Probably issued during the 1926/27 Newcastle season.

No.1 J.Benstead (Tommy), No.5 Bill Thoms, No.8 Kev.Carmody, No.9 Teddy Rees, No.12 Sid Bayley, No.22 Jimmy Datson, No.24 Arthur Wardell, No.27 Ern Buck, No.28 Tom Sharp, No.32 Jack Turner, No.34 Eddie Brinck, No.49 Charlie Datson, No.60 Billy Lamont, No.72 A.Khan, No.87 Paddy Dean, No.90 Howard Moore, No.109 Mo Jones, No.111 Jack McIntosh (on bike 122), No.118 Pat Hamilton, No.121 Norman McIntosh, No.138 Leo Melville, No.153 Moss Williamson, no.156 Cecil Brown, No.160 Arthur Agate, No.223 Spencer

Stratton, No numbers - Gus Clifton, Irvin Jones (sic), Len Jones, Dick Salway, Jack Sweeney, Newcastle Speedway.

Morrows Dinkum Sports Speedway Riders Series No.2

Probably issued in the late 1920s by Morrows Limited, Brisbane, Australia. "Sovereign" Biscuits, Chocolate and Confectionery. 36 in the series (note: Series 1 & 3 did not feature speedway riders.) Black and White portrait pictures of riders in suit and tie.

No.1 Tommy Benstead, No.2 Dickie Smythe, No.3 Don Tracey (sic, should be Tacey), No.4 Frank Arthur, No.5 Jock Binney, No.6 Len Percival (sic. real name Lionel Davey), No.7 Ben Unwin, No.8 Clarrie Barkell, No.9 Hilary Buchanan, No.10 Dick Sulway, No.11 Jimmy Datson, No.12 Don McPherson, No.13 Alby Taylor, No.14 Syd Bayley, No.15 Buff (Doc) Benton, No.16 Irving Jones (sic.Irvine), No.17 Jock Hollis, No.18 Billy Lamont, No.19 Geoff Smith, No.20 Archie Pritchard, No.21 Vic Huxley, No.22 Charlie Spinks, No.23 Cecil Brown, No.24 Max Grosskreutz, No.25 Harold Stevens, No.26 Les Van Praag (sic), No.27 Frank Pearce, No.28 Bruce McCallum, No.29 Arty Waddell, No.30 Harry Mangham, No.31 Ernie Odum, No.32 Les Lawrence, No.33 Arthur Yenson, No.34 Bruce Richmond, No.35 Sprouts Elder, No. 36 Bert Jones.

Graeme has sent a couple of snippets from a magazine called National Speedway Weekly published in America in 1934/35.

The issue of 25th July 1934 said "Innisfall (in USA not Queensland) inaugurated a new custom in motorcycle racing that was very agreeable to the riders. Two kegs of beer were placed in the pits, and from the showing of the Class C boys, they had more than their share. Jimmy Miele, the Hoboken fence buster, forgot to crash in customary style. "Where was the wall?" Jimmy swears he could not find it."

The other in the issue of January 19th 1935 went: We will give a free subscription to the person who sends in the best answer to the question asked by a fan as he stood watching the boys flying round the track "What is the purpose of this racing?" is the question.

The Greatest Escape?

At the end of close meetings at Armadale the theme tune to the film "The Great Escape" has been heard. It came to mind as I was working on my post war Glasgow history as I went over the heat details for the Edinburgh versus Glasgow Scottish Cup Semi-Final First Leg match staged at Old Meadowbank on Saturday 28th June 1952.

The match opened with a 4 - 2 from Tommy Miller and Alf McIntosh giving Tigers a two point lead. A draw in heat two saw the two point margin remain. Tigers went six up in heat three with a McIntosh and Junior Bainbridge 5 - 1 when Monarchs heatleader Don Cuppleditch suffered engine failure. Harry Darling and Jock Scott pulled back a couple in heat four then Ken McKinlay and Bainbridge gave Tigers another 5 - 1 as this time Bob Mark of Monarchs suffered bike failure, Five gone and Tigers were 19 - 11 ahead.

Miller and Peter Dykes opened the gap to 23 - 13 as this time Cuppleditch lost a tyre. Dick Campbell of Monarchs had bike troubles in heat seven and McKinlay and Don Wilkinson took another 5 - 1 to establish a Tigers lead of 28 - 14. More agony for Monarchs fans in heat eight as Miller and Wilkinson took the sixth Tigers advantage to give them a 33 - 15 lead.

At this stage Tigers were 18 points up and with ten heats remaining those not so faithful to Monarchs were leaving the stadium in droves, fully convinced a hammering was on the cards. Had they stayed they would have witnessed the great escape.

Heat 9 saw Miller suffer engine failure and Monarchs Mark and Cuppleditch took a 5 - 1 to reduce the gap to 14. Tigers steadied the ship with a 4 - 2 in heat 10 so the leeway was 16 with eight heats to go.

Mark suffered a burst tyre in heat 11 and the gap stayed at 16. Harold Fairhurst and Campbell took a 5 - 1 in heat 12 and the gap was down to 12 and by the end of the next it was down to 10 as Mark and Johnny Green took a 4 - 2. The reserve pairing of Darling and Scott took a vital 5 - 1 for Monarchs in heat 14 to reduce the gap to six with four left.

Heat 15 was drawn as Harold Fairhurst rode the race of the night to beat Tigers heatleaders

Miller and Bainbridge. Six down with three to go. Heat 16 was won by Eddie Lack from Campbell to reduce the gap to two points. It was 49 to 47 in favour of Tigers at the start of heat 17 and at the end it was 52 - 50 in Monarchs favour as Campbell and Cuppleditch snatched that very vital 5 - 1.

The last race decider went 4 - 2 to Monarchs with Bob Mark winning from Tommy Miller, Harold Fairhurst and Ken McKinlay to give a final score of 56 - 52. Have you any details of great escapes, they can be great revivals or even great slumps. If so - tell us about them.

1937 - The Season of Trouble and Strife

Mark Sawbridge from Wolverhampton sends us in an interesting article about 1937.

Some years ago, I was talking to an American about the wonders of baseball, a sport which I enjoy greatly. He was, to put it mildly, underwhelmed. "I have refused to watch it ever since the strike," was his blunt assessment. In the early 1980's baseball in the USA was suspended after a strike by players over pay. When it was resolved, many, like friend, felt the game had lost its innocence.

We can all be thankful that speedway has never been hit by such an action. Yet, amazingly, the sport came within minutes of its own national strike. The year in which this occurred was 1937.

It was a year in which rider and employer clashed as never before, as rows flared up over issues such as basic pay and bonuses. But the item which really got the riders' danders up was over foreign riders.

You have to remember that in 1937, "foreign" riders were those from non-Empire countries. Therefore, Canadian Eric Chitty was classed as British but Americans were not.

The Speedway Riders' Association, the riders' Trade Union if you like, were always against foreigners taking the place of British riders. In 1936, however, their appearance became a necessity. The death of Tom Farndon at the end of 1935 had left a huge gap in the New Cross team, and the Speedway Control Board allocated Jack Milne to the "Frying Pan Bowl" team. Hackney Wick were also in trouble having lost Dusty Haigh and Fred Tate from their previous season's team. They were therefore allocated Cordy Milne and Danish legend Morian Hansen.

All three foreigners were a huge success in 1936. This led to the sport's authorities lobbying the Ministry of Labour for more work permits in 1937. They were granted an extra two. As Wimbledon had seen their two best riders, Vic Huxley and Wal Phillips, retire at the end of the season, they had severe problems and were allocated both foreigners.

One was American Wilbur Lamoreaux, who was an enormous success. The other was fellow-countryman Miny Waln. Unfortunately, Waln was a flop, and was soon replaced by German rider Alfred Rumrich. He did no better, and was sacked by the Dons in mid-season. Rumrich later became a Luftwaffe pilot. Perhaps it was his bombs that destroyed part of the stadium during the blitz! His replacement was American Byrd McKinney, who performed better than either Waln or Rumrich but was a class below the Milnes and Lamoreaux.

The SRA kept its beady eye on the situation. The Association's natural dislike of foreign labour was rather silenced by the enormous impression that the 1936 version had created. However, the failure of Waln, Rumrich and, to a lesser extent, McKinney, gave them a strong card to play in opposing any expansion of work permit numbers.

The problem reared its ugly head several times throughout the season. In mid-April Wimbledon boss Ronnie Greene asked the ACU to investigate illegal payments to foreign riders by tracks desperate for new riders. Whether this was followed up or not is not recorded, but there was a bigger problem to come.

Relationships between the SRA and ACU had deteriorated since the start of the season, with riders threatening strike action over bonus payments. Some hasty negotiations saw the dispute resolved, but some promoters feared that the riders were merely flexing their muscles and that there was more trouble in store. They were right.

The trouble began when four young American riders (Eldon Campbell, Pete Coleman, Earl Farrand and Manuel Trujillo) arrived in Britain. The SRA had several concerns. Firstly, the Americans could take rides that would normally be filled by British riders. Secondly, the

National League promoters would be keen to fit any of them, who looked like potential stars, into their teams, again pushing British riders out of work. Thirdly, if the troupe rode at Provincial League (speedway's lower league) circuits and were a success, fans would demand to see them and, perhaps others, with the effect that the Provincial League would start losing its popularity.

The SRA then threatened that they would take strike action commencing on Monday July 26th, if the issue had not been resolved. Bare in mind that the Association only wrote to the ACU on Wednesday 21st July, hardly giving time for the ACU to draft an appropriate response.

The Speedway Control Board met on Friday July 23rd. In a stern reply, the SCB stated that their initial response was to call the riders' bluff, as they considered the threat of strike action was "undignified and unconstitutional." The SCB also chided them for not finding out the full facts before issuing their letter. It appeared that the SCB negotiated terms with the Ministry of Labour before allowing the American riders to have work permits. The agreement stated that the permits lasted for three months only, that the riders were not allowed to become registered members of any club, that they could not ride in league or cup fixtures and that they could not take over or operate a speedway track in this country.

The letter went on to insist that the riders withdraw their threatened strike action immediately and that any failure to do so, or any similar future demands, may lead to official recognition of the SRA being withdrawn. It was stern stuff which was bound to get an equally confrontational reply from the riders.

That came in a swift response from the SRA. Kenneth Duthie stated that the SCB's suggestions were "not satisfactory" and that the crisis could have been avoided if the Association had been consulted before the Americans were invited to Britain. Furthermore, Duthie made a reasonable point that the Board had reneged on an agreement at the start of the season which stated that work permits would only be requested in circumstances where a team was under-strength. Anyhow, the failure of Waln and Rumrich at Wimbledon showed that foreigners were not necessarily better than their British counterparts.

The ACU batted the problem over to the promoters who were, after all, responsible for the new Americans arriving in Britain, The following Sunday, one day before the strike deadline, the promoters met at Wembley Stadium. The meeting was described by Speedway News as "scarcely a harmonious occasion." Terms were drawn up which stated that: (a) the only foreigners allowed in National or Provincial League speedway for the rest of the 1937 season and in 1938 would be the existing five; (b) that the four new Americans only ride on Provincial League circuits; (c) that they could take part in any meeting apart from League and Cup matches and (d) they would form an international team to compete in five test matches. A meeting of the SRA was held in the dressing rooms at Wimbledon, twenty minutes before the strike deadline. The riders accepted the terms, provided that they were ratified by the Speedway Control Board. This was swiftly concluded and strike action was avoided.

In the 65 years following this incident, speedway racing has never been so close to a national rider's strike. Let us hope it stays that way.

Clem Beckett's Crash Helmet

Norman Briggs from Manchester writes to tell us that a crash helmet which belonged to Clem "Daredevil" Beckett has been donated to the Oldham Galleries, a local museum. Clem was a blacksmith who took up the dirt track sport with some gusto and lived up to his nickname adopting a somewhat forceful style of riding. He was killed in Spain during the fighting in the Civil War.

It is a pity more places don't have an interest in their speedway history. It might be worth finding out what local coverage there is in various speedway towns - anyone interested in having a go?

Welcome Back Plymouth

The closure of St Austell / Trelawny was a downer and the last ditch efforts to salvage a season failed, but it looks that there will be a bit less gloom down in the South West of England with the news that speedway is about to return to Francis Drake country. Let us wish the new venture in Plymouth all the luck in the world and we look forward to chronicling the opening date, track length and track address.

Team Nicknames - Was Speedway The First To Use Them?

I don't suppose that I am the only one who has had the thought but may be there is someone out there with an all round perception of sport who can provide an answer. Am I talking a load of old rubbish or not?

The notion I have is that speedway was the first sport to adopt team nicknames. Off the top of my head I can't think who was first but Belle Vue must be an obvious candidate with the Ace motif on their very early team race jackets. I'm sure that at the same time I've seen reference to The Blades from Sheffield and the Pensioners for Stamford Bridge (Chelsea's speedway.) Certainly the idea of naming teams has fairly caught on in a number of sports since those early days. I think ice hockey was probably among the next sports to adopt this - the 1950s speedway magazines of the winter months chronicling the ice action of Monarchs, Lions, Rockets and so on.

Football teams have had nicknames but apart from West Ham few have a name associated with them - West Ham sharing the name with the speedway team from the area - the Hammers. While Aberdeen has the Dons the idea has not really taken off in that vastly over-rated and over-exposed sport.

In more recent times rugby has adopted names and we have seen the Bradford Bulls (?) take over Odsal in Bradford before moving on ? and so on. Maybe we should be more positive about the good things speedway has passed on to other sports. Other sports such as basketball and baseball use team names - maybe we influenced them too - and what about cricket - once the staid white flannels - did the colourful leathers encourage a change in this sport too?

As ever I look to you out there for an answer.

Jim Henry

Deadline for items for next edition is : 30th April 2004

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Britannia Shield 1957

Northern Section

Team

Team	Belle Vue	Bir	Cov	Lei	Oxf	Ipswich	Ips	Nor	Ray	Sou	Swin	Wimb
Belle Vue	xxxxxx	67 - 28	61 - 36	54 - 42	55 - 41	Ipswich	xxxxxx	40 - 55	53 - 43	51 - 44	51 - 45	54 - 52
Birmingham	44 - 52	xxxxx	39 - 57	57 - 39	Not R	Norwich	59 - 37	xxxxxx	64 - 32	70 - 26	50 - 46	68 - 28
Coventry	48 - 48	50 - 46	xxxxxx	49 - 47	43 - 53	Rayleigh	52 - 44	54 - 42	xxxxxx	43 - 52	46 - 50	34 - 62
Leicester	50 - 46	57 - 37	53 - 43	xxxxxx	50 - 46	Southampton	70 - 26	54 - 41	48 - 48	xxxxxx	57 - 39	55 - 41
Oxford	48 - 48	65 - 30	59 - 37	49 - 46	xxxxxx	Swindon	62 - 34	45 - 51	65 - 31	52 - 44	xxxxxx	40 - 54
Wimbledon	51 - 44	44 - 52	64 - 31	59 - 37	67 - 29	xxxxxx						

Southern Section

Team

Team	M	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	Team	M	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	
Belle Vue	8	5	2	1	431	336	12	Norwich	10	8	0	2	552	406	16	
Oxford	7	4	1	2	361	309	9	Wimbledon	10	7	0	3	522	434	14	
Leicester	8	4	0	4	384	383	8	Southampton	10	5	1	4	487	470	11	
Coventry	8	3	1	4	362	406	7	Swindon	10	4	0	6	473	485	8	
Birmingham	7	1	0	6	283	387	2	Ipswich	10	3	0	7	424	533	6	
Birmingham v Oxford	abandoned. Not re-run								Rayleigh	10	2	1	7	414	544	5
Final First Leg	Belle Vue 48			Norwich 48			Second Leg	Norwich 46 Belle Vue 50 Belle Vue won 98 - 94 on aggregate.								

Britannia Shield 1958

Northern Section

Team

Team	Belle Vue	Coventry	Ipswich	Leicester	Oxford	Norwich	Poole	Soton	Swindon	Wimbledon	
Belle Vue	xxxxxx	67 - 27	Not raced	54.5 - 50.5	56 - 40	Norwich	xxxxxx	62 - 33	55 - 41	45 - 51	47 - 48
Coventry	41 - 55	xxxxxx	45 - 51	51 - 45	60 - 36	Poole	53 - 43	xxxxxx	44 - 52	28 - 68	47 - 49
Ipswich	46 - 50	52 - 44	xxxxxx	43 - 53	54 - 42	Southampton	64 - 32	58 - 38	xxxxxx	57 - 39	46 - 50
Leicester	42 - 54	46 - 50	51 - 45	xxxxxx	60 - 36	Swindon	47 - 49	52 - 44	64 - 31	xxxxxx	42 - 54
Oxford	47 - 48	36 - 60	48 - 48	55 - 41	xxxxxx	Wimbledon	53 - 43	68 - 28	58 - 38	65 - 31	xxxxxx

Southern Section

Team

Team	M	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	Team	M	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Belle Vue	7	7	0	0	384.5	285.4	14	Wimbledon	8	8	0	0	445	322	16
Coventry	8	4	0	4	380	388	8	Swindon	8	4	0	4	394	373	8
Ipswich	7	3	1	3	339	333	7	Southampton	8	4	0	4	387	380	8
Leicester	8	3	0	5	378.5	388.5	6	Norwich	8	3	0	5	376	390	6
Oxford	8	1	1	6	340	427	3	Poole	8	1	0	7	315	452	2
Final First Leg	Wimbledon 49			Belle Vue 47			Second Leg	Belle Vue 53 Wimbledon 43 Belle Vue won 100 - 92 on aggregate.							