

The Speedway Researcher

Promoting Research into the History of Speedway and Dirt Track Racing

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Edited by Graham Fraser and Jim Henry

Update

Our welcome back for Plymouth now appears to have been a bit premature and we await further developments on this proposed new venue.

On a more positive note we have seen the photographs of the new venture at Scunthorpe which show that track work is well advanced. We look forward to the new venue opening and would be grateful for information such as address and track length so we can add to our track A – Z.

Finally, we note that the Sittingbourne track now appears to have cleared the planning hurdles after a long and fraught struggle.

Ouch!

There is no doubt that speedway can be a painful sport and that some odd injuries can befall riders taking part. One of the oddest happened to Australian Ron Phillips who was riding for Motherwell at Edinburgh's Old Meadowbank Stadium in 1953. Ron was the victim of flying lumps of rubber when his tyre burst during a race in the Queen's Cup fixture between the Eagles and the Monarchs. Whilst Ron managed to finish the race he had to pull out of his last programmed ride to his injuries. This set me thinking as to what other odd machine – equipment related injuries I was aware of and these are a few that spring to mind.

Flying chains have been a source of injury as they come apart during a race. The oddest chain related injury I have seen also happened at Old Meadowbank. If I recall correctly it was in 1963 and the race involved two Kiwis, veteran Trevor Redmond and up and coming Wayne Briggs. At the time of the incident Wayne was chasing Trevor and, on **1** the third and fourth bends, both slowed. What had happened was that

Trevor's machine threw its rear chain and caught Wayne in the mid-rift winding him.

Whilst I can't quote specific incidents the breaking of chains, particularly primary chains, could result in the chain flailing and striking riders. Modern machines must have a peg fitted close to the clutch to prevent this although on laydown machines some rear frame units incorporate the peg as an alternative to fitting it on the engine plates.

One, perhaps more amusing tale is that of Joe Crowther, who, during a race, lost the cap of his fuel tank. The methanol started to splash out of the tank and landed squarely on Joe's private parts. The evaporation of the alcohol fuel was quite a chilling experience but it is not known if Joe was the first rider to suffer from frostbite. Certainly it was recorded in the contemporary newspapers that it was not a particularly good experience.

Given the limited contact with the machine it is surprising that there have not been more injuries when handlebars have broken. This happened to 1976 World Champion Peter Collins but he managed to finish the race steering the machine with the remaining half in one hand while he carried the detached part in his other hand.

Frames breaking, thankfully is a rare occurrence. However, it did happen to the aforementioned Wayne Briggs and he resulting fall ended with Wayne breaking a leg.

Modern bikes tend not to lose wheels but Aussie Dudley McKean of Edinburgh was injured at Sheffield in the early 1960s when a spindle broke.

To be fair, most of speedway injuries are a result of crashes and falls but we must not forget that there is also a danger from the machines they use to compete.

Jim Henry

Speedway Celebrities – The First Real Sporting Stars?

Andrew Welch, our expert on Welsh speedway, ponders the question above and writes the following article.

It often seems that the sporting star is the phenomenon of our time: almost any sports person thought to merit a mention in the media seems to be dubbed a "star". It wasn't like this in the old days, but in **2** speedway at least, it just might have been.....

This article looks at some of the media coverage of speedway in South Wales during the pioneer years of the late 1920s and early 1930s and suggests that riders in this era were receiving the kind of publicity which made them real sporting stars.

“The sight of a generation of young men on their flying machines, rigged out like mediaeval jousting knights of old, captured public imagination in a revolutionary, hero-worship way that pre-dated bobbysoxers, beat music and Beatlemania,” writes Dev Lanning in *Speedway and Short Track Racing (Hamlyn, London, 1973 p.7)* One reason for the early speedway riders receiving star status was that they were professionals. As Jack Williams notes in his 1999 Sportspages lecture (The Speedway Researcher Vol.2 No.3), speedway in Britain was always a commercial venture, and amateur speedway was virtually non-existent. Even the at its humblest levels, riders raced for cash prizes, Williams states.

Although South Wales could be regarded as slightly removed from the speedway mainstream (There was no league team until Cardiff joined the Provincial League of 1936 – and then folded before the season was over), there was plenty of money on offer. At the start of the 1930 season, for instance, the Cardiff management, Welsh Speedways Ltd., even offered £200 to any team which could beat the Cardiff side at their White City stadium.

Although there were professionals in other sports, this kind of brash commercialism distinguished speedway from other sports at this time, with the exception of greyhound racing, with which it often shared stadia. The media played a key role in generating interest in the sport and the celebrity status of the riders. At Cardiff’s earliest meetings, in late 1928 and early 1929, nicknames were already being used by local riders. For example “Champ” Upham, “Hurricane” Hampson, “the Cardiff Cinder Shifter”, “Lightning” Luke and “Whirlwind” Baker, to name but a few.

It seems that the names were generated by the promoters with the media’s compliance, while the riders themselves had little, if any, say in the matter.

In April 1929, Jack Luke told *The Western Mail* columnist “Cyntrax” that he had reluctantly accepted the title “Lightning” in preference to those alternatives of “Lurid” and “Lively”. However., if he could
3 choose, “he would rather remain as just J.H.”

Later that year another of the Welsh speedway pioneers, Cliff “Champ” Upham, had star status conferred upon him by becoming the subject of a “Cinder Celebrities” interview in *The Auto Motor Journal* (Southern editions can be read at British Library at Colindale). He acquired some trappings of celebrity, too, in the shape of a speedboat – with “Champ” signwritten in large bold capitals on the side. Upham was reported to have been seen practising his broadsiding in the Bristol Channel, and he took a *South Wales Echo* reporter on a high speed dash to England – completing the 10 mile crossing from Penarth to Weston-Super-Mare in 26 minutes. “The craft come out of the water twice,” reported the journalist, “and it was touch and go whether she would capsiz.” A follow-up attempt, this time accompanied by his fiancée, Jessie Barnet, shaved a minute of the previous time, and the feat even made the pages of the national *Daily Express*, as the first time a woman had crossed the Channel in an outboard speedboat. Pratt fuel company capitalised on its association with this star and his achievement by running press advertisements headlined “Big Outboard Achievement on Pratts in Bristol Channel” and concluding “The advertisement reported the record set by Mr Upham, the Dirt Track Star” and concluded “This fine performance was made with an Evinrude engine fuelled with Pratt High Test Petrol.”

It all suggest that Champ, Lightning and the rest were stars every bit as much as today’s pampered sporting celebrities. Perhaps the big difference is that the brave men who risked their lives on Britain’s first dirt tracks may have actually deserved the title.

Peter Craven

The following items were published in the Edinburgh Evening Dispatch. The newspaper merged with the Edinburgh Evening News late in 1963. The first two items were published on Saturday 21 September 1963. The first item was published on the front page under the last photograph taken of Peter, the one which shows him talking to George Hunter, prior to the fateful race, The item was not attributed to any author and was headlined **Speedway Rider is ‘serious’**.

The wife of former world speedway champion Peter Craven was today at the bedside of her husband who is “seriously ill” in Edinburgh Royal Infirmary after crashing at Old Meadowbank in a challenge match
4 between Belle Vue Aces (Manchester) and an Edinburgh Select.

Mrs Brenda Craven 29 year old mother of two children left her home in Manchester on hearing that Peter (30), who was captain of the Belle Vu team had skidded in a race and smashed through the safety fence. He sustained head injuries.

World Champion last year, Craven had won his earlier races against the Select, then came the second last race.

A crowd of about 10,000 watched as the leading rider, 24 year old George Hunter of Edinburgh Monarchs was flung from his bike after a skid. Racing close behind, Peter Craven slewed round to attempt to avoid the fallen rider. His machine went into a skid and smashed through the fence.

Unconscious

He was carried into the stand unconscious.

Said Hunter, who had a bruised foot. "I got off lightly, and I'll definitely ride for the Provincial League against Belle Vue at Manchester tonight."

Later Hunter visited the Infirmary but was told that Craven was too ill to see anyone.

Gordon McGregor, veteran Scots rider with Belle Vue commented. "It was really hard race and both boys were going all out. It was bad luck."

Corner

Old Meadowbank promoter Mr Ian Hoskins added: "It was a hard sporting contest, and our man might just as easily have been hurt."

The breach in the fence happened only a yard or two away from the spot where Monarchs' Alf Wells crashed earlier in the season, breaking his wrists. It is fast becoming known as "hell-fire corner" for both home and visiting riders.

Note – The Select won 40 – 38.

(The report is inaccurate in that the fence was not breached.

Photographs published in the Edinburgh Evening Dispatch on 25th September 1963 show the extent of the damage to the fence. The crash featuring Alf Wells and Ernie Baker mentioned in the report was illustrated in the contemporary editions of the Speedway Star and News JH.)

The following report was published on page seven and was attributed to John Gibson. It was headlined **Craven gives fans a big thrill.**

Boy, but can Peter Craven really go! The Belle Vue flier last night showed the 9,000 Old Meadowbank crowd exactly why he figured so prominently in the World Speedway finals in the past ten years.

Edinburgh Select beat Belle Vue Aces by 40 – 38 in the challenge match but the score was virtually "by the way". All eyes were on Craven and the chunky little Manchester rider duly turned in a dynamic performance – until a nasty spill in the second last heat.

Craven, the most stylish rider in the game walked away with his first three races. He seemed to be sitting astride some nuclear-powered machine as he roared to a fantastic lead in each outing.

Only in the fateful outing did he run into any sort of formidable opposition, this inevitably from Monarch of the moment, George Hunter. George gated beautifully and stayed just ahead until the first bend of the second lap.

Craven looked like taking him on the inside when first the Fifer and then the Englishman came off. Messy finish to a great struggle, though almost everybody's money would have been on Craven to storm on to his 12 point maximum.

Veteran Scot, Gordon McGregor and Swede Sven Sjosten, piled up the points too, but Aces, like the Select, didn't carry much sting in their "tail."

Guest Jimmy Squibb (Exeter) topped the Select's score-sheet with ten and Doug Templeton and Hunter were next in line on eight.

Not a particularly rewarding night for the other "reinforcement", Middlesbrough's "baby" Bear, Eric Boocock. The teenager was runner-up in his first two heats, ten spluttered into a load of mechanical snags. [The report then records the match scorers.]

The following report was published in the Edinburgh Evening Dispatch on 25th September 1963 in the Midweek Sports Dispatch. It included a photograph of the first bend at Old Meadowbank Stadium taken from low down near the middle of the stand and a photograph of the author of the article, John Gibson, standing beside the damaged section of the fence showing the boards which were damaged. (The photographs clearly show the fence was not breached.)

The headline was **Peerless Peter was everybody's friend.**

Everybody liked Peter Craven. And that's saying something because professionally he was the Denis Law of Speedway. He skippered Belle Vue Aces, the Rangers of Speedway. Somebody so successful usually has his antagonists. Not the chunky, cheery, 29 year old redhead. He

6 was in the words of Edinburgh Monarchs promoter Ian Hoskins ---

“...A gentleman. He would help anyone. Some riders of his standing and there are a few--are reputedly ruthless, but Peter, although he always rode to win, never roared round the track regardless of the opposition. No one spoke badly of him.”

Won Everything

Craven, who leaves a six year old son and a two year old daughter, won everything speedway had to offer...the world championship last year and in 1955.... The Golden Helmet for the British Match race Championship.... The Silver Sash.

At Wembley a week last Saturday, a 50,000 crowd saw him fall off his bike twice without serious injury in a typically whole hearted attempt to hold on to the world crown.

Craven was a speedway ambassador for Britain. He rode all over Europe, including Russia and Poland. He was highly respected in Australia too. For the past decade he was Britain's No.1 rider, staying in the world class. His big time career began with his home town team, Liverpool, in 1951.

Untimely End

At the end of that season, the team went defunct and the following year he joined Manchester's Belle Vue Aces, staying with them until the untimely end to a brilliant career that could have lasted another ten years.

I spoke to Craven in the Meadowbank pits before his final fateful race. He talked about opening his own motorcycle business in Lancashire and denied rumours that he was thinking of retiring from speedway next year at the age of 30.

I asked if he would follow his normal practice in the National League matches and start off a 20 yard handicap in his next race with Monarchs' George Hunter and Willie Templeton.

“The way these boys have been going tonight” he said “I honestly doubt if I could start 20 yards behind and have any chance of beating them. But if the fans want it that way it suits me....”

The fans didn't want it that way, so the seemingly unbeatable Craven was off scratch with the other three riders and the drama packed duel ensued. The race which normally takes just under 70 seconds was cut short before it was half way over and resulted in the first speedway fatality in Scotland since the war.

But it was an accident....just one of these things in a scrupulously clean
7 race.

Tragic

Said Craven's 31 year old brother Brian who captained the Newcastle Diamonds' side against Belle Vue Aces in a similar challenge match in Newcastle on Monday night.

“George Hunter can't and shouldn't have the slightest feeling of guilt in this case. Every rider – and that includes George himself--has a one time had to take violent evasive action to avoid a fallen rider on his bike. Only this time the consequences were more tragic. It was a thousand to one chance.

Promoter Hoskins would not hear of claims that Old Meadowbank, post war home of the Monarchs, is a “killer track.”

“This is a positively ridiculous accusation. There is nothing of the killer about our circuit and never has been. Indeed we've been remarkably clear of serious injuries over the years here.”

Mrs Brenda Craven, who maintained a constant vigil at her husband's bedside along with his parents also insisted that the crash was purely accidental.

This last item was also reproduced in the booklet “Peter Craven – Tribute To – A Great Little Champion” which was published by Shaleway Publications and edited by Ernest C. Hancock.

Yarmouth Speedway

Keith Farman, who covered the pre-war era in Suffolk has been researching his beloved Yarmouth Bloaters for many years. Keith now shares his memories of the Bloaters who raced in Great Yarmouth from 1948 to 1953 and 1957 to 1961. The stadium at Caister Road was a tricky raceway and has also featured greyhounds and stock cars.

1932

In 1932 Don Hannett, who started the Firs in Norwich in 1930 promoted two meetings at Yarmouth Stadium; this was in the field south of the present Stadium. Although they were advertised as Speedway it was a grass track on which they had staged greyhound meetings on on Good Friday. Arthur Reynolds (Fred Leavis) was the top man in the meeting held on the afternoon of Thursday 14 July. The second was on the following Sunday at 8 pm and was a team meeting **8** in which Yarmouth lost to Staines 22 – 28. Jack Smythe (Jack Sharp)

was not beaten in his four rides, but the rest of the riders had only three rides. That same year there had also been racing at the Waveney Speed Track at Bradwell, a village south of the town.

1948

The directors of Yarmouth combined with those at Norwich to run the new track. This meant that former Australian Test rider and pre-war Norwich captain, Dick Wise would be manager of both teams. A 327 yard cinder track was constructed inside the greyhound track and it was agreed that during the racing, tarpaulin would be put over the dog track. This became a difficult task in wet weather when it would be covered in wet cinders.

In the winter of 1947 – 48 Dick set up a training school at Norwich that was run by Paddy Hammond and Sid Hipperson. The best of the training school riders and the 1947 Norwich team riders Hammond, Roy Duke, Bluey Thorpe and Charlie Smith competed in the first meeting at the track which was staged on 20 April 1948. It was an individual meeting for the East Coast Trophy.

The first race was won by Ted Rawlinson and it was his brother Bert who won the meeting with 14 points. Paddy Hammond was disqualified for crossing the white line but rode unbeaten in his remaining four rides to score twelve points, a score equalled by Reg Craven. The experienced Sid Hipperson, who had ridden for Norwich in 1939, did not ride in this meeting but he turned out for the team for their first National League Third Division meeting, away at Hull. Suggestions for the team name included the Mariners and the Seaside. The local football team were known as the Bloaters as at the time the town had a very large fishing industry and was famous for its smoked herring which was known as a Bloater. In addition people from Yarmouth are referred to as a Bloater, so, it was inevitable that there was a local desire to call the speedway team The Bloaters.

The original team race jacket featured red and black squares but during the 1948 season the design was amended to feature a silver Bloater on the red and black background.

It was decided that the rider who scored the most points by the end of June would become the team's first captain from the start of July onwards. As it turned out Paddy Hammond was the man who assumed the first captaincy but Sid Hipperson took over in August and September. He, in turn, handed on the captaincy to Reg Morgan for the 9 month of October.

Early season novice Reg had not been in the original starting line up and he is probably the only rider to go from novice to captain in the space of a season.

The meeting against Exeter on 29 June was decided in the was decided in the last race. Yarmouth's two young stars, Billy Bales and Reg Morgan lined up against the Roger brother, Bert and Cyril. Bert got away fast but Bales passed him.... Cyril and Reg passed and re-passed. On the last bend Reg led by inches but in a desperate move Cyril cut in and collided with the Bloater who was sent flying from his machine. Cyril was immediately disqualified. Reg, who was lying on the track injured being attended to by the medical staff, was awarded third place. It was not the habit of Stewards to award points in these days and many a rider who was the victim of wrongdoing by another rider lost out on the race points they would award today.

This early, if not first, awarded point gave the match to Yarmouth by 42 – 41. Exeter protested and Reg's point was deducted so the Speedway Control Board effectively handed a draw to Exeter with the score 41 all.

During the season the team was hit by injuries and two of them were fatal. In the first ever race at Poole, at the first bend, Reg Craven crashed and was hit by two following riders. Sadly 180 hours later he died from his injuries. The other fatality took place in the second half of the thirteenth meeting at Yarmouth which was staged on 13 July. Yarmouth had won the meeting and had gained 13 league points. The Australian, Max Pearce, who had won his first race struck the fourth bend fence and tried to keep going but was dragged half way down the straight in a horror crash. Thankfully this was the only fatal crash at Yarmouth.

At the end of the season there were 13 riders in the Yarmouth team who had scored more than Pearce and his match average was 1.3. Due to all the injuries the team used 22 riders including one, George Harper, who failed to score in the National Trophy match versus Poole at Caister Road. A rider called Bill Williams, who was wrongly programmed as Dave Williams, has caused some confusion for many people trying to compile records for the Third Division of 1948. Yarmouth used Doug Wells, the pre-war Hackney rider who had taken a very bad crash at Odsal in Bradford, in a single meeting for the 10 Bloaters but he failed to score.

Another one match wonder was Len Cooley who scored seven points from three rides in his only appearance. Les did not return as he had picked up a good job in London.

Bloaters had only one ever present in the shape of Roy Duke (not to be confused with Roy Dook). Unfortunately Roy's form dipped towards the end of the season. Yarmouth used Fred Rogers, who had been with a few tracks including Glasgow White City and Newcastle, but as he was on loan from Norwich, the Stars recalled him when they were hit by injuries. Paddy Hammond was also recalled by his parent team Norwich.

Results wise it was not a bad season for the Bloaters. The team lost all of its away fixtures and they lost eight other matches at home. Only Wombwell had a worse record.

The highlight of the opening season was the form shown by Billy Bales who was given his chance because of injuries to other riders. Billy started in the first home match against Poole and only a collar bone injury ruled him out of taking over the captaincy.

1949

Yarmouth opened their 1949 season with four away meetings. Dick Wise had predicted that his team would win two of them but he was proved wrong as they won all four. They lost the next meeting at Rayleigh in the National Trophy. But for a team that lost all their away matches in the previous season, this was some going.

The team lined up for the 1949 season with Sid Hipperson as captain, Bert Rawlinson, Billy Bales, Bill Carruthers and Reg Moragn from the 1948 season. Jack White had been signed from Hull and, by the way Johnny had ridden as Jack White at Bradford. This was because Johnny Hoskins had said "There is only one Johnny here and that's me." The reserves were Joe Rodwell and Harold Simms. Harold Simms was also programmed as Eric Simms and H.G. Simms. After three matches Harold was injured and was replaced by a young London lad, Stan Page.

The team was now a formidable unit but Hipperson lost form and was dropped to reserve. At this point Sid asked for and got a transfer to Leicester. This allowed Tip Mills to join the team and Fred Brand was also added to the Yarmouth books. A rider called Cliff Ladbroke was also given a few outings at one of the reserve berths.

11 For a team that could not win away in 1948 Yarmouth had the best

away record in the Third Division in 1949. They did however lose two matches at home going down to Poole 41 – 42 and to Plymouth by the narrow margin of 43 – 41. They reached the Division Three Final of the National Trophy but lost out to Hanley (Stoke) 101 – 113 on aggregate. It was also Yarmouth and Hanley that fought it out for the League championship. Yarmouth's last meeting was at Hanley where a crowd of 20,000 witnessed a great battle.

Going into the last race Yarmouth led by a point 38 – 39. Bales and Brand shot away from the gate and the 5 – 1 had given Yarmouth the match by 39 – 44 and, so it seemed, the Championship.

The next Tuesday the Yarmouth fans welcomed their team back thinking that they would be champions. However, it was not to be as Hanley had two home matches left and they won both by large scores to win the Championship by 0.01 of a race point. In the last meeting of the season the Bloaters rounded off a great year by defeating their Second Division neighbours, Norwich by 56 – 28 in a special challenge match.

Billy Bales was near on unbeatable. During the season he had scored more than any other rider in the three Divisions. Billy had 18 full and six paid maximums in the League plus an 18 point maximum in the National Trophy. This gained him the Mr. Maximum title from the Speedway Echo. He was also very fast which resulted in him breaking 9 track records. Billy's explanation was that he had his first new bike and just wanted to see how fast it would go.

With the Yarmouth season over Billy rode at St Austell and defeated the reigning World Champion, Wembley's Tommy Price three times. Billy and Bill Carruthers had proved to be one of the best pairings for the Bloaters. At home in 64 races together they scored 37 5 – 1 wins and 15 4 – 2 wins. They only conceded two heat defeats. Away from home in 64 races they collected 17 5 – 1s and 19 4 – 2s with nine defeats.

The rest of the team all rode well with the team of eight riders gathering a collective calculated match average of 62.00. The biggest improvement was shown by Fred Brand who came on leaps and bounds as the season progressed. Tip Mills matched Billy Bales scoring at home but could not sustain the level on away tracks while Reg Morgan proved a valuable captain following the departure of Sid Hipperson.

To Be Continued.

14 Get out your pen and tell us about your track!

Meeting Formats

From time to time we include details of meeting formats. The reason is to help fellow researchers piece together match results from the bits of information they have gathered in the absence of full heat details.

This format probably will not be of much use but it is of interest as it was an experimental format used at Motherwell on 10 October 1951 at a time when serious thought was being given to reducing team sizes from eight a side to six a side. As far as I am aware this was the only full blown experimental fixture but maybe someone has details of other experimental events they could pass on to us.

A side branded as Motherwell faced a Glasgow Select side over fifteen heats. The team managers could substitute riders when ever they wanted and in this match the Glasgow side did just that to great effect as they won 48 – 42.

The planned format was Ht1 1&2 v 1&2; Ht2 3&4 v 3&4; Ht3 5&6 v 5&6; Ht4 1&2 v 3&4; Ht5 3&4 v 5&6; Ht6 5&6 v 1&2; Ht7 1&2 v 5&6; Ht8 3&4 v 1&2; Ht9 5&6 v 3&4; Ht10 2&6 v 2&3; Ht11 4&5 v 4&5; Ht12 1&6 v 1&6; Ht13 3&5 v 3&5; Ht14 2&4 v 2&4; Ht15 1&3 v 1&6.

A week before Motherwell had featured a nine heat six a side match against Edinburgh as the second half of the League match v Cradley Heath.

Jim Henry

Can You Help?

Roger Beaman, 47 Peel Way, Tiviedale Oldbury, West Midlands, B69 3JX. Tel: 0121 532 8614 is seeking details of Alan Hunt's meetings in South Africa during the winters of 1955/56 and 1956/57. Roger is also seeking details of Cradley Heath's second half details (with rider helmet colours as per programme if at all possible) as follows: Home – v Fleetwood 11.9.50; v Leicester 6.8.51; v Yarmouth 25.4.52; v Oxford 18.7.52; v Ashfield 26.9.52. Away – at Hull 3.4.48 and 1.5.48; at Stoke (Hanley) 24.7.47; 28.8.47; 18.9.47; 15.7.48; 7.4.51; at Tamworth 25.6.47; 4.8.47; at Wombwell 20.6.47; 22.8.47; 9.4.48; at Fleetwood 8.9.50; 30.5.51.

Sydney Dobson, 59 Longfields, Swaffham, Norfolk, PE37 7RT. Tel: 01760 722395 is looking for details of meetings staged at Rye House 15 from 1933 – 1939. (Can we suggest that you look at Motor Cycle

and Motorcyclist magazines at Colindale plus any local newspapers. Editors.)

Michael Gardner, 65 Lindley Street, Norwich, Norfolk, NR1 2HF. Tel 01603 616609 is looking for bonus points and last placed riders in the following meetings involving Norwich: at Middlesbrough 2.5.46; 13.6.46; 29.8.46; 1.7.48; 27.7.48; at Sheffield 16.5.46; 22.8.46; 12.9.46; 13.5.48; 16.9.48; at Exeter 17.5.48.

Nigel Bird, 38 Blakemore Drive, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands, B75 7RN. Tel 0121 329 3942 asks if anyone can advise when the use of the red, blue, white and yellow and black helmet colours were introduced. Nigel advises that in the early years team helmet covers were related to the team colours and quotes examples of Wembley using red and white halves in 1929 and in 1930 the Lea Bridge helmet covers were half black and half black and white check.

Mike Smallman, 26 D'Eyncourt Road, Wednesfield, Wolverhampton, WV0 0SX. Tel: 01902 732817 is looking for full heat details of the Nelson v Wolverhampton B meeting staged at Seed Hill on 12 August 1967. (Can anyone give us a list of meetings staged at Seed Hill in 1967?)

Nigel Nicklin, 73 Court Crescent, Kingswindsford, West Midlands, DY6 9RN. Tel: 01384 401499 is looking for details of the date and place of birth for the following riders who rode for Cradley Heath. 1947 – 1952 Era: Arthur Abbott; Derek Braithwaite; Stan Crouch; Fred Evans; Don Prettijohn; George Scrivens; Frank Young. 1960 – 1966: Goog Allan; Bengt Andersson; George Bewley; Jack Biggs; Errol Brook; Tim Bungay; Glyn Chandler; Bill Coleman; Graham Coombes; Ron Cooper; Tony Eadon; John Edwards; Richard Eslick; Cyril Francis; David Harvey; Chris Hawkins; Frank Holmes; Ivor Hughes; Lars Inge Hultberg; Jan Jakobsen; Niklas Karlsson; Matt Mattocks; Nick Nichols; Geoff Penniket; Fred Priest; Ronnie Rolfe; Ian Ross; Dave Schofield; Jan Simensen; Roy Spencer; Dave Still; Joe Weichelbaur; Joe Westwood; Geoff Woodhouse; Archie Wilkinson; John Woodcock; Peter Wrathall.

More Feedback

R.M.Young, Kellaway Avenue, Henleave, Bristol, BS6 7XY. Tel: 0117 983 6911 writes to say he does not like the page after 16 page of requests for obscure heat details and asks does anyone

really care. Sorry Mr Young but The Speedway Researcher is dedicated to the research into speedway and dirt track history and the information sought section in the Can You Help? Section is one of the main reasons for setting up the magazine. We would fill the magazine with requests if needs be. We do however, try to strike a balance between lists of items required and other helpful, and hopefully, interesting, items.

Mr Young asks if we can provide information on Non-League speedway such as Reserves Leagues, Southern Area Leagues and other minor competitions. The answer is yes, we will do so and would welcome items on these competitions from readers. Mr Young also asks about British Long Tracks and we refer him to the book by John Jarvis and Robert Bamford – Homes of British Speedway (published by Tempus) which includes these venues.

Arnie Gibbons, 11 Thornhill Bridge Wharf, Caledonian Road, London N1 0RU suggest that we might like to provide a full list of meetings at short lived tracks / open licence venues. Any feed back on this one from our readers ?

We could try to provide lists of meetings staged at venues but what should the cut off point be? For example Glasgow White City had a short season in 1956 and staged the following meetings: 16 May Scotland 49 England 57; 30 May Glasgow 48 Birmingham 48; 13 June Britain 56 Overseas 38; 27 June Glasgow 58 Bradford 38; 11 July Glasgow 54 Norwich 41. Would information in this format suffice?

Nigel Bird, writes to advise us that Arthur Browning, who rode for Birmingham and Scunthorpe, was a world class moto-cross (scrambler) in the 1960s. He was a works rider for the Greeves company which was based in Essex and Arthur featured in many of the events televised by the BBC. At that time Arthur also competed in trials events. After retiring from speedway Arthur competed in a few grass track and trials events and also in pre- 1965 (vintage) moto-cross events. It is in these events Arthur uses a converted 2 valve JAWA.

Nigel also advises that the Grahame brothers, Andy (Milton Keynes), Alan (Birmingham) and John also started out in moto-cross. Alan and John took part in sidecar events and Andy raced solos. All returned to moto-cross after retiring from speedway and are still involved in the sport today.

As a further point of interest the BBC commentator for the 1960s BBC **17** events was Mr Formula One – Murray Walker.

On a different tack Nigel considers there is confusion over the Birmingham tracks known as Perry Barr. Nigel advises that the original dog track on the Walsall Road was demolished in the mid 1980s to make way for yet another shopping centre. The stadium was the home of speedway in 1929 – 30 and the Brummies in the 1970s and 1980s. Meanwhile half a mile away the Alexander Sports Stadium (home of the SUNBAC speedway of 1928, Birmingham Brummies 1946 – 57 & 1960 and athletics) had fallen into decay. The reason for the dereliction was a brand new athletics stadium built half a mile up the Walsall Road in Perry Barr and called Birmingham Alexander Stadium. Sometime later, in the late 1980s the original Alexander Stadium was refurbished as a dog track.

Finally, Nigel provides us with some information on the world of horse racing and its links to former speedway riders. Did you know that Reg Lambourne (ex-Bristol and Fleetwood), Jack Ormston (pre-war Harringay) and Ron Mason (Bradford / Birmingham / Belle Vue) all became successful race horse trainers. Amongst the most famous horse with speedway connections was called Track Spare and was owned by Ron Mason. [Now if I'd have been a betting man I would never have backed a horse called Track Spare as it was named after a bike that could be used or abused by anyone. Unlike Ove Fundin's bikes, the track spare was more often than not the biggest pile of scrap to grace a speedway and could not inspire any confidence. Jim Henry] Diminutive Kiwi Bill Andrew who rode for Newcastle and Poole in the 1960s was a racing jockey and rode horses in between speedway meetings.

Nigel Nicklin raises an interesting point in his feedback replay in suggesting that we provide information on how to get books published. Does anyone have any advice on this topic so we can publish reasonable advice? We have a few subscribers who have published their own books and maybe they could give us some advice on this aspect.

Brian Crutcher's Winning Run

Vic Butcher has sent us in the following item on a winning run by Southampton's Brian Crutcher which lasted from 30 April to 28 May 1957. Vic asks if this is the best winning run for any rider in the history **18** of the sport.

Brian's run was as follows – 30 April v Norwich Britannia Shield 15 from 5 rides; 2 May at Ipswich Britannia Shield 15 from 5 rides; 7 May v Rayleigh Britannia Shield 15 from 5 rides; 11 May at Rayleigh Britannia Shield 15 from 5 rides; 14 May v Swindon Britannia Shield 15 from 5 rides; 27 May at Wimbledon Britannia Shield 18 from 6 rides and 28 May v Ipswich Britannia Shield 15 from 5 rides.

Brian's run came to an end when he dropped a point at Swindon on 1 June but he scored 17 from 6 rides. The gap in the team meeting record on 21 May saw Brian win an open meeting at Southampton scoring 15 points from 5 rides.

Anyone better this performance? Over to you.

(Jack Young rode throughout the National League Division Two Northern Shield competition at the start of the 1951 but how long did it take and was it part of an unbeaten run? JH.)

Publications

Speedway in Leicester : The Hunters Era

Alan Jones is our man in Leicester and has published the second in the Leicester trilogy. This time Alan is looking at the 1940s through until the early 1960s when the team were known as the Hunters. The book charts the ups and downs of the team that progressed from the Third Division before making it into the top flight. However, it is no fairy tale as the Hunters ended by dropping down to the Provincial League then dropping down to an open licence season, albeit with mostly top league riders taking part, before it closed for a spell.

The book is very thorough and looks at various aspects such as team events, the individual efforts of the Hunters' men on the World Championship and Midland Riders' Championship trails. It looks at the Hunters' men who chased Match Race Championship glory, local derbys, the often unsung Junior riders, and includes a welcome section containing facts and figures. For those of you into biographies Alan has included a Who's Who section. Finally, I can't complete a book review without mentioning the wealth of photographs that put faces to many of the names of I have encountered as I have researched this era myself.

As a Scot I'm pleased that Ken McKinlay is well featured and the book provides a source for anyone thinking of advancing a claim for Ken to be included in the Scottish Sporting Hall of Fame.

Yet again I can but commend that you add this book to your collection

19 as it is very readable and very informative. Roll on the next one.

Available from Alan Jones 24 Purbeck Avenue, Shepshed, Loughborough, Leicestershire, LE12 0HD Tel: 01509 561521.

speedwayinleicester@hotmail.com

http://uk.geocities.com/leicester_speedway The book is priced £15.00 plus £2.00 postage and packaging. Review by **Jim Henry**

British Speedway Who's Who

This is a companion to a small booklet, British Speedway Who's Who 1999, produced by the prolific pen of erstwhile promoter, manager, newspaper columnist, journalist and publisher, Peter Oakes. It is 256 pages which details the complete career details of all current registered riders competing or available to ride in British Speedway. There have been similar books in the past and I have always found them invaluable reference books when carrying out research or settling arguments contained in many a speedway trivia quiz.

It is well laid out, contains season by season records and many photographs. Certainly a reference book for the speedway bookshelf which in many years to come will catalogue not only the riders from 2004, but also the start of the careers of many future stars.

Available from Peter Oakes, 4 The Green, Yaxley, Peterborough, PE7 3LT priced £12.99 plus postage and packaging. Review by **Graham Fraser**.

Poole Pirates Speedway

When speedway teams win championships these days it has become the norm for a championship publication to be produced. Edinburgh Speedway produced a very glossy brochure for its historic 2003 championship and now Pool has produced a very glossy hardback 160 page book which details, mostly in colour photographs, every meeting. It also includes rider profiles. It mainly captures the atmosphere of speedway meetings both on and off the track and in the pits. I'm not sure it will be everyone's cup of tea as it is aimed predominantly at Pirates fans who will no doubt relish re-living their team's treble winning season – a feat which may not be repeated for many years to come. Given the price of £14.99 (plus P & P) and the lack of text it is probably one for the completist book collector like me! Available from Speedway Track Shops and Poole Speedway.

20 Review by **Graham Fraser**.

No Bull: The Authorised Biography of Billy Hamill

Brian Burford is becoming the speedway rider's biographer. Apart from his recent biography of Peter Craven he seems to be specialising particularly on American riders of recent times, having produced books on Sam Ermolenko, the Moran Brothers, and now Billy Hamill. The title, co-authored with the rider himself, follows very much the format of his previous titles – the chronological life and career of Billy Hamill interspersed with comments from Billy himself as well as those closest to him in the sport and some never seen black and white photos from the Hamill family archives. There are a number of action photographs from Billy's star studded career which has its high spot so far in his World Championship success.

Hamill is an entertaining 100+% rider who is associated mainly with Cradley Heath. When Heathens closed he rode for Belle Vue for a season before moving on to Coventry where he last appeared in British Speedway. I was surprised to discover that Billy's British career only started in 1990 and continued, despite some serious injuries, until 2003. Billy is riding on the continent this season and is based in Sweden. Whether we will ever see Billy Hamill in a British Speedway team remains to be seen but so many riders who have left our shore have given it one more go and I would not be surprised to see him here again.

This book is a must for followers of Cradley and Coventry and will have something of interest for any modern speedway fan. The book is perhaps a tad expensive at £19.99 (plus postage and packaging) but it must be noted that it is a hardback book which is always a more expensive and durable format. Perhaps in the fullness of time it will be published in softback.

Written by Brian Burford and Billy Hamill the book is published by Tempus Publishing Ltd., The Mill, Brimscombe Port, Stroud, Gloucestershire, GL5 2QC. Review by **Graham Fraser** (Brian's book co-authored by Sam Ermolenko is now available in a softback version.)

Newsplan East Midlands

A few editions ago we started to cover the information on local **21** newspapers in the Newsplan series. We continue with information

from Report of the Newsplan Project in the East Midlands April 1987 – July 1988 by Ruth Gordon. Published by The British Library.

If you intend to try to consult these publications please check the current availability with the source libraries or other locations mentioned. It may be worth checking to see if you can see them at Colindale. Cambridge Evening News [Cambridge Library 1928 onwards missing Jun - July 1931 July – Dec 1932 and Jan – July 1935. Cambridge University Library holds 1928 onwards]; Cambridge Times and March Advertiser [Cambridge Library 1970 onwards]; Cambridge Weekly Times [Cambridge Library 1981 onwards]; Peterborough Advertiser [Peterborough Library 1928 onwards]; Peterborough Evening Telegraph [Peterborough Library 1968 onwards; Peterborough Evening Times Offices 1948 onwards]; Peterborough Standard [Peterborough Library 1928 onwards]; Wisbech Advertiser [Wisbech Museum 1928 – 1944; Wisbech Library 1928 – 1964]; Buxton Advertiser [Buxton Library 1994 onwards]; Buxton Times [Buxton Library 1994 onwards]; Derby Evening Telegraph [Burton on Trent Library 1948 – 1977; Derby Local Studies Office Library 1957 onwards]; Derby Express [Derby Local Studies Library 1928 – 1932]; Derby Mercury [Derby Local Studies Library 1928 – 1933]; Derby Reporter [Derby Local Studies Library 1928 – 1930]; Derby Advertiser and Journal [Derby Local Studies Library 1928 – 1976]; Derbyshire Times [Chesterfield Library 1928 onwards]; Football Express [Chesterfield Library 1928 – 1933]; Long Eaton Advertiser [Derbyshire Records Office 1928 – 1929; Long Eaton Library 1930 onwards]; Leicester Chronicle [Leicester Library 1928 – 1979]; Leicester Football Mail [Leicester Library 1928 – 1931]; Leicester Mail [Leicester Library 1928 – 1963 & 1982 onwards]; Leicester Mail Sports [Leicester Library 1931 - 1963]; Leicester Mercury [Leicester Library 1928 onwards]; Leicester Mercury Sports Mail [Leicester Library 1976 onwards; Leicester Mercury Office 1928 onwards with gaps]; Melton Times [Melton Library 1928 – 1981; Leicester Library 1928 – 1981]; Boston Target [Boston and Sleaford Target Office 1984 onwards]; Skegness Extra [Skegness Library 1998 onwards]; Skegness News [Skegness Library 1998 onwards]; Skegness News [Skegness Library 1998 onwards]; Eastern Daily Press [Norwich Library 1928 – 1978]; Eastern Football News [Norwich Library 1954 onwards]; King's Lynn Leader [King's Lynn Library 1988 onwards]; Lynn News and **22** Advertiser [King's Lynn Library 1944 onwards]; Norfolk Chronicle

or the Norwich Gazette [Norwich Library 1928 – 1955]; Norfolk Leader [King's Lynn Library 1986 onwards]; Norfolk News [Norwich Library 1949 – 1961]; Yarmouth Free Press [Great Yarmouth Library 1928 – 1939]; Yarmouth Mercury, Gorleston Herald and North Norfolk Advertiser [Great Yarmouth Advertiser 1928 onwards]; Evening Herald and Daily Chronicle and Advertiser for Northampton District [Northampton Library HQ 1928 – 1931]; Football Echo (Northampton) [Northampton Library HQ 1928 – 1939]; Mercury and Herald (Northampton) [Northampton Library HQ 1928 onwards]; Milton Keynes Gazette [Brackley Library 1978 onwards]; Northampton Herald [Northampton Library HQ 1928 – 1931]; Northampton Mercury Daily Reporter [Northampton Library HQ 1928 – 1931]; Northampton Evening Telegraph [Kettering Library 1928 onwards]; Evening Post (Nottingham) [Nottingham Library 1928 onwards]; Mansfield and Notts Advertiser [Mansfield Library 1928]; Mansfield Reporter and General Advertiser [Mansfield Library 1928]; Nottingham Daily Express [Nottingham Library 1928 – 1953]; Nottingham Daily Guardian [Notting Evening Post Offices 1928 – 1953]; Nottingham Evening News [Nottingham Library 1928 – 1955]; Nottinghamshire Guardian [Nottingham Library 1928; 1930 – 32; 1934]; Evening Star [Suffolk Records Office 1928 onwards with some gaps]; Ipswich Mercury [Suffolk Records Office 1980 – 1983]; Lowestoft Journal [Suffolk Records Office 1928 onwards]; Lowestoft Mercury, Oulton Broad and Waveney Valley Advertiser [Suffolk Records Office 1928]; Newmarket Weekly News [Cambridge University Library 1981- date] and Suffolk Chronicle and Weekly General Advertiser and County Express [Suffolk Records Office 1928 – 1980].

1970

David Selby, 39 Paddock Drive, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 6SS. Tel: 01245 464922 is frustrated that speedway results are not easily and readily available. Many researchers share David's concerns so full credit to David for trying to move things forward. He has pulled together the details of meetings staged in 1970 and would like others to tackle a similar exercise for other seasons. Whilst David would like to swap his 1970 details for other season, by way of a taster of the product **23** David is offering to provide full details of these meetings to readers

of The Speedway Researcher who send him a blank CDR and the cost of return postage and packaging. The information is stored on the CD in JPEG format.

(Certainly if a few people work together the available information could be collated and shared and we can but encourage this effort by David to move things along on the statistics front. Please contact David directly if you wish to work with him on this information collating exercise. **The Editors.**)

Speedway Books from the Past

In previous editions of The Speedway Researcher we have published lists of publications which have been compiled through lists provided in other publications and lists compiled by other researchers. The list comprised material that was a speedway publication (book or booklet), not a magazine, fanzine or other material.

Whilst the list we published provided only a title, author and date of publication we thought that readers might find it interesting and useful to hear of the contents of older (usually out of print) publications that, in our view, are indispensable aids to those producing speedway histories or wishing to research aspects of speedway's past. Some of the books may save researchers from re-inventing the wheel or, if you like, covering old ground. In addition the review may point out books with likely sounding titles that fail to deliver the expected goods.

We intend to start the series with an article on the book British Speedway Leagues 1946 – 1964 which was written by Conference League supremo Peter Morrish.

We would welcome reviews of other books which are now out of print that readers consider to be of value and in particular would welcome reviews submitted by you.

This will also help collectors wishing to bid for books at auctions being more aware of what the book is about.

Deadline for the next edition is 31st October 2004

The Speedway Researcher is edited and published by :

**Graham Fraser
7 B Bruce Street
Stirling, FK8 1PD**

**Jim Henry
90 Greenend Gardens,
Edinburgh, EH17 7QH**

24 Tel: 01786 471992

Tel: 0131 664 7185

1953 Coronation Cup

Away Team Home Team	Belle Vue	Birmingham	Bradford	Bristol	Harringay	New Cross	Norwich	Wembley	West Ham	Wimbledon
Belle Vue	xxxxxx	51 – 33	50 – 34	56 – 27	44 – 40	50 – 34	59 – 25	38 – 46	54 – 30	50 – 34
Birmingham	58 – 26	xxxxxx	51 – 33	52 – 32	56 – 28	45 – 39	46 – 38	34 – 50	43 – 41	38 – 46
Bradford	47 – 36	43 – 41	xxxxxx	55 – 27	55 – 27	41 – 43	42 – 42	55 – 29	44 – 40	49 – 35
Bristol	63 – 21	50 – 34	56 – 27	xxxxxx	36 – 48	Not Raced	56 – 28	36 – 48	44 – 35	48 – 36
Harringay	51 – 33	67 – 17	48 – 36	54 – 30	xxxxxx	Not Raced	56 – 28	52 – 32	58 – 26	45 – 39
New Cross	47 – 37	43 – 40	42 – 42	41 – 43	56 – 28	xxxxxx	63 – 21	49 – 35	41 – 42	44 – 40
Norwich	57 – 27	48 – 36	46 – 38	54 – 30	38 – 46	37 – 47	xxxxxx	47 – 37	50 – 34	56 – 28
Wembley	40 – 44	54 – 30	39 – 45	59 – 25	38 – 46	Not Raced	48 – 36	xxxxxx	49 – 35	51 – 33
West Ham	65 – 29	44 – 40	45 – 39	58 – 26	52 – 32	40 – 44	51 – 33	40 – 44	xxxxxx	32 – 52
Wimbledon	46 – 38	60 – 24	56 – 28	34 – 50	31 – 53	44 – 40	52 – 32	47 – 37	41 – 43	xxxxxx

The results grid above includes New Cross results. New Cross withdrew from speedway without completing the Coronation Cup fixtures. The table below is the official table without the New Cross results.

Team	R	W	D	L	For	Against	Points
Harringay	16	12	0	4	766	578	24
Wembley	16	9	0	7	701	643	18
Bradford	16	8	1	7	661	679	17
Belle Vue	16	8	0	8	656	686	16
Norwich	16	7	1	8	654	690	15
Wimbledon	16	7	0	9	670	674	14
West Ham	16	7	0	9	636	699	14
Birmingham	16	6	0	10	633	711	12

1950 Division One Spring Cup

Pool 1							Pool 2								
Team	R	W	D	L	For	Against	Pts	Team	R	W	D	L	For	Against	Pts
New Cross	6	6	0	0	402	311	12	West Ham	6	4	0	2	400	381	8
Belle Vue	6	4	0	2	397	314	8	Bradford	6	4	0	2	375	342	8
Wimbledon	6	1	0	5	321	396	2	Harringay	6	3	0	3	377	340	6
Bristol	6	1	0	5	310	409	2	Birmingham	6	1	0	5	283	435	2

Final 1st Leg West Ham 45 New Cross 73 (May 9th) 2nd Leg New Cross 70 West Ham 50 (May 10th) Aggregate **New Cross** 143 West Ham 95.
 Thanks to **Michael Gardner** from Norwich for help with Coronation Cup and to **Alex Broadhurst** for the 1950 Spring Cup information.