

# *The Speedway Researcher*

Promoting Research into the History of Speedway and Dirt Track Racing

Volume No.2 No.1 - June 1999

SUBSCRIBERS : 100 +

## THANKS FOR THE SUPPORT

The response to our second volume is very welcome and the response to our questionnaire is very heartening. We welcome the warm words of support and it appears we are keeping most of our subscribers happy. We are particularly delighted to read of new contacts being established and the helpful exchange of information. We are even more delighted to read of new research work being undertaken after *The Speedway Researcher* sparked off the work. We probably will never reach the 100 pages per edition asked for by one reader but we will add another four pages from the next edition onwards. If we want to go even bigger we will need more from you, so keep at it and pass on your contributions.

## A FEW THOUGHTS

Normally we use this space for an editorial message. For a change, and to reflect our desire to hear from you, we will use this space for contributions from our subscribers. We start the ball rolling with a contribution from **Hugh Vass**.

The December 1998 issue of "*The Speedway Researcher*" mentioned that I had volunteered to compile meeting details for seasons 1939,1946 and 1947. Perhaps some background explanation to this would be helpful. Anyone attempting to research speedway's records and riders' statistics is hampered and frustrated by the sometimes chaotic and sloppy manner in which such things are reported, or not reported, for posterity. There has been an improvement since say 1965 when the then British League was formed. But before 1965 going back to the arrival of speedway in Great Britain, the overall situation is less than ideal notwithstanding various publications of that time.

For several years I have thought it should be possible for enthusiastic "amateur" speedway historians to get together and co-ordinate an ambitious project which would attempt to record and present in a consistent format, full results from every speedway meeting held in Great Britain. An ambitious idea ? Of course ! Impossible ? Perhaps

1 - but we shall not know until we make the effort ! How many people are interested ? Who knows until we start !

I thought the launch of "*The Speedway Researcher*:" would be an ideal catalyst to get the project underway. To varying degrees I had started working on 1939,1946 and 1947 seasons in "fits and starts". That is why I have offered to do these seasons. Perhaps other enthusiasts would consider doing other seasons ? What I need is people who can volunteer information to get in touch with me. Although I'll be very interested to have the details, the project is not for my personal benefit alone but hopefully will form an authoritative source of help for genuine researchers in the future.

Obviously there will be a number of matters to be considered if the project develops. Such as - How will the information be stored, presented and disseminated ? What about costs and charges ? Should we aim for formal publications under "*The Speedway Researcher*" ? Does it "cut across" any projects being carried out at present on individual tracks ? Comments and discussion on any aspects are invited.

In the meantime I look forward to hearing from anyone who can help. Reports on progress (or non progress) should appear in due course in future issues of "*The Speedway Researcher*."

## Data Base Formats

Barry Stephenson and others are working on a major exercise and he deserves all the help he can get. It will form the basis for the work of those trying to identify meetings to compile a list of programmes, will help statisticians trying to quantify details to provide performance indicators for riders and will help those trying to compile A - Z records of riders. Barry Stephenson's data base is set out as follows :

Date	Home Track	Opposition	Type	Sundry Info	Result
12/05/1946	Rye House	Open	y Individual		
09/06/1946	Rye House	Victory Cup	y Individual	4th Meeting	
29/09/1946	Rye House	Chalfonts	y Challenge		
06/10/1946	Rye House	Supporters Trophy	y Individual		

y means that the meeting has been confirmed from some definitive source. In this case a list of programmes which were offered for sale. This list is incomplete.

If you can help Barry with anything in his list in the "Can You Help" section it would be appreciated. It would be helpful if you could supply the information in the above format and indicate your source of information.

## WELCOME BACK

It is smashing to be able to welcome back two venues into the fold. They are Workington's Derwent Park and Ashfield Stadium, Glasgow. Sadly we see Glasgow's Shawfield close but the sport is still alive in the city. **2**

### **Brighton Speedway - Gone To The Dogs**

The legendary Australian speedway impresario - Johnny Hoskins - was brought over to Britain by a syndicate headed by a Major Kindersley supposedly to manage ten new dirt tracks under the banner of Associated Southern Speedways Ltd. (ASS). When the boat from Australia docked at Tilbury and the young Hoskins met the "Major" he was surprised to discover that his task was to locate football stadia, pieces of land, greyhound stadia or basically any arenas in which to build new dirt tracks. It proved not to be an easy task in those very early days.

Without consulting Hoskins, the "Major" made a deal with the owners of Brighton Greyhound Stadium at Hove, on the outskirts of the south coast town, and Johnny was given the task of organising the construction of one of the earliest British dirt tracks.

The stadium had been opened at the beginning of June 1928 by the Greyhound Racing Association (Brighton) Ltd. and featured twice weekly greyhound racing. It had been built with a spacious grandstand overlooking a 525 yard dog track. Johnny Hoskins did not take long to get a quarter mile dirt track built there, although, according to Johnny, "a London engineering firm laid the track with enough material to lay the foundations of a dozen or more tracks - those engineers must have thought there were millions to be made in speedway."

Practice runs for budding local riders started what was three weeks before the track opened for public consumption and these events continued once a week thereafter. Aussies Charlie Datsun and Ron Johnson, who had sailed over from Australia with Hoskins, plus Londoner Lionel Wills, competed with a number of local hopefuls at the opening meeting of Brighton Speedway on Saturday 23rd June 1928.

The Brighton Argus records a crowd of "several thousand" at the opening meeting which featured 16 events. H. Miller won the £50 Hove Handicap, Charlie Datsun won the £40 Brighton Scratch and Ron Johnson defeated Lionel Wills in a match race. The track record set at this meeting was 1min 39.6 secs.

Johnny Hoskins, in his book "Speedway Walkabout", records that the ASS promotion ran only one meeting which was a flop. As a result the syndicate folded and Hoskins and the "Major" parted company. However, speedway continued at Brighton Stadium and the local press gives no clue as

to who promoted the sport after ASS pulled out. An educated guess would be stadium owners continued the speedway experiment.

The midweek practice sessions prior to the second meeting drew a crowd of nearly 1,000 and the second meeting was watched by a crowd of 7,000. The spectators at this meeting saw Aussie Sig (Sigmund) Schlam competing against fellow Kangaroos Datsun and Johnson (who really **3** was a Scotsman) plus up and coming British riders Johnny Broughton and Les Barker. Datsun won the Scratch Race, Broughton coming out on top in a match race against fellow local Barker and Brighton's George Lewis won the Handicap Race.

There are only four more meetings recorded in the local newspapers in which visiting English riders included Fay Tylour (Irish) and J (Probably Arthur) Willmott of Crystal Palace, plus the regular Australian trio of Schlam, Datsun and Johnson. The bulk of the riders competing were from around the South of England and included riders such as C E Budden, T (Tommy) Croombs, A (Alan) Kilfoyle and C R Parker. In addition to the solos sidecar action was featured at some of the meetings.

The English riders used a rich variety of machines, probably all stripped down road machines. These include machines manufactured by Rudge, AJS, Matchless, Norton, New Henley, Ariel, Cotton, HRD, Coventry Eagle, Calthorpe, Harley Davidson and, surprisingly, the Scottish built New Gerrard.

The local lads usually raced in the handicap events and the Handicapper, who was charged with trying to ensure all the riders reached the finish line together, gave allowances ranging from 4 to 18 seconds. (Sprouts Elder considered 1 second to be worth about 25 yards). When they raced against the Aussies in the scratch events they were generally outclassed.

A favourite feature of these early meetings was lap record attempts. On Thursday 12th July Charlie Datsun clipped a full 7 seconds off the previous record to set a time of 1 min 32.6 secs.

The final meeting was staged on 21st July but the management continued with regular midweek practice sessions in the hope that they might unearth some more local talent. This continued into early August when, according to the Bright Argus "the organisers of the meetings at Brighton have decided to postpone further meetings until the completion of artificial lighting installation which is now being erected and due notice we given of the resumption of the meetings." This due notice never appeared as the local press stopped reporting any speedway activity.

A less than fulsome check through the local press did not indicate any activity at Brighton but there has been an odd reference to Ron Johnson racing

at Brighton in 1929. This requires some further work to check the accuracy of this reference.

Several post war attempts have been made to stage speedway at Brighton and all have been knocked back due to objections lodged against the various planning applications. Maybe the modern silencers and dirt deflectors could help swing a decision. The stadium is still used for dog racing and features on cable television events.

**Graham Fraser**      **4**

**Our Friends Out There**

DEBORAH CHERRY      33 Shuttleworth Road, Preston,  
Lancashire, PR1 6DB  
Telephone: 01772 881105  
Email : dcherryatcorto.demon.co.uk

Our first lady historian, Deborah's interest is female speedway riders. In particular she is interested in those who rode in the pioneer era before they were banned in 1930. The more famous names are Fay Taylour, Eva Asquith, Babs Neild, "Sunny Somerset", Dot Cowley, Jessie Hole and a good few more besides. In recent years, in Scotland, we've seen female riders like Debbie Arneil, Angela McCalden, Michelle Gate and Jennifer Smith, the last three all have appeared at Linlithgow in recent years. As you probably all know Angela has made history by being named No.8 in a Premier League team after riding for the Lightning in the Conference League. If you discover anything about female riders, please let Deborah know. There are a fair few photographs of the ladies and they did command a fair bit of press coverage in the early days. We will include an article on lady riders in a future edition.

ERIC ABBOTT      5 Ryedale Avenue, Knottingley,  
West Yorkshire, WF11 0LN  
Telephone : 01977 675404

Eric's main interest is compiling the history of the activity at far flung Plymouth since it opened away back before the war until its demise to provide a site for a school. Gaps in Eric's information base include 1935 and 1937, the years it appears the Plymouth team raced a season of open fixtures. Other gaps in Eric's information requirements will appear in forthcoming editions. Closer to home Eric intends to research the tracks which are local to his home including Leeds, Wombwell (hopefully both South Yorkshire Stadium and Ings Road), Huddersfield, Thorne and Stainforth. (He may also find Barnsley (Lundwood), Bradford Autodrome and Post Hill, Pudsey.) While he is doing

this research, Eric will be keeping an eye out for any of these rare tracks and we await with interest just what he might find.

TONY LETHBRIDGE 6 Lower Kings Avenue, Exeter, Devon, EX4 6JT

Tony Lethbridge is addicted to Exeter Falcons and as club press officer has established the official Falcons archive which includes every home programme since 1931 and all but 7 away matches since 1947. Tony's interests lie in mainly anecdotal and photographic material rather than statistics but has all match scorers (with Christian names) home and away 47 - 64 available on computer. Published "The Story of Exeter Speedway - Volume 1" in 1989 and aims to bring out Volume 2 covering the years 1947 - 64 in 1999. Co-wrote "Speedway and Grass Track in Cornwall" with Dave Stallworthy and is currently researching a book on Plymouth speedway with other enthusiasts. Also very interested in Exeter training tracks at Alphington and Peamore, as well as general speedway stadia and race jackets.

BARRY STEPHENSON      Broadlands, 1 Brierydale Lane, Stainburn.  
Workington, Cumbria, CA14 4UH.  
Telephone : 01900 604256

With others, Barry is compiling a database of fixtures from 1928 to date. No mean task in anyone's book !!!!! The project started in 1992 when Barry and Trevor James decided to compile a database for Belle Vue fixtures. It extended to include lists for Newcastle and Odsal and it has just grown from there. Why not do the lot is Barry's philosophy. To date Barry holds a database of some 50,000 speedway meetings which is an astounding number to say the least. A sample of Barry's record system can be found on page 2 and a list of gaps in his records are to be found in the "Can You Help" Section. Barry acknowledges that the database he has compiled is the work of many people and he would like to thank everyone who has contributed to date.

ALAN HUNT      52 Gunner Lane, Rubrey, Birmingham,  
West Midlands, B45 9EX.  
Email Alan@gunnerlane.freemove.co.uk

Sadly for Alan, the apple of his eye, Cradley Heath's Dudley Wood Stadium is still the subject of redevelopment threats. Alan is working on a history of Cradley Heath which will include a database on every meeting raced by the Midlands team from 1947 onwards. (We hope that 1994 was not the final chapter and we will see the track rise and be a force in British Speedway

again.) He hopes to publish the history in book form but still has a few details of Cradley's away fixtures in the 1947 season to find to complete his records. If you are looking for heat details of fixtures against Cradley Heath then do contact Alan by letter and he will see what he can do to help you. In addition to his work on the Cradley Heath history, Alan is a major contributor to the database of meetings that Barry Stephenson (above) is compiling.

6

## Newspaper Information

**Bristol** : Tracks : **Knowle Stadium** which operated both before and after the war until closed down at the end of 1960. **Eastville Stadium** which hosted Bulldogs 1977- 78 until the powers that be closed it down. The legal battle for Eastville is chronicled in a contemporary publication for professional planners. It is interesting to note that one of the things the local authority objected to was the smell of speedway "smoke."

Newspapers : (57) South Bristol Free Press and Bedminster, Knowle and Brislington Record 1928 - Jan 1931; (58) Bristol Evening News 1929 - Jan 1932; (59) Bristol Evening Post March 1932 - Jan 1962; (60) Evening Post Jan 1962 - Date; (61) (Bristol Evening Post) Green Un Jan 1955 - June 1959; (62) Evening Times and Echo 1928 - Jan 1932; (63) Bristol Guardian, Gazette, Somersetshire Times and Gloucestershire Weekly News 1928 - March 1935; (64) The Bristol Observer 1928 - June 1962; (65) The Bristol Paper Feb 1932 - Jan 1933; (66) Bristol Times and Mirror 1928 - Jan 1932; (67) Evening World Oct 1929 - Jan 1932 and July 1958 - Jan 1962; (67) Evening World and Evening Times and Echo Jan 1932 - Oct 1933; (68) Bristol Evening World and Evening Times and Echo Oct 1933 - July 1943; (69) Bristol Evening World March 1946 - June 1958; (70) The New Observer 1977 - Date; (71) North Somerset Gazette, Bristol, Keynsham, Salford, Tiverton and Bath Advertiser 1929 - March 1933; (72) South Gloucestershire Gazette, Shirehampton Times, Bristol and Avonmouth Weekly Gazette 1928 - March 1935; (73) Sports Week, The Pink Un 1928 - Jan 1932; (74) The Green Un, Sports Times 1928 - July 1929; (75) Sports World Oct 1929; (76) The Western Daily press 1928 - Feb 1932; (77) The Western Daily Press and Bristol Mirror Feb 1932 - Sept 1960; (78) Western Daily Press and Times and Mirror Sept 1960 - date.

**Burnley** : Track : **Burnley (Towneley)** which operated for a short time in 1929.

Newspapers : (79) Burnley Express and Clitheroe Division Advertiser 1928 - Dec 1933; (80) The Burnley News 1928 - Dec 1933. (see Vol.1 No.3).

**Buxton** : Tracks : **High Edge Raceway** and the adjacent **High Edge Speedway Stadium** must be amongst the deepest rural tracks in the UK.

Newspapers : (81) Buxton Advertiser and Herald and High Peak News 1994 - date.

**Caerphilly** : Track : **New Virginia Park**. To the best of our knowledge this venue only staged one meeting in 1931. The meeting is reported in "The Auto" so it did stage speedway as a one meeting wonder venue.

Newspaper : (82) Caerphilly Journal 1931. The Southern Auto is at Colindale.

**Canterbury** : Track : **Kingsmead**. The Crusaders burst on the 1968 Second Division scene and stayed the pace until closed down because of noise complaints. Pity some people can't let others enjoy a bit of noise.

Newspapers: (83) Kentish Gazette 1968 - date; (84) The Kent Herald 1968 - date. (See also The Kent Messenger)

**Cardiff** : Tracks : **White City (Sloper Road)** in the pre war era opening at the end of 1928 and **Penarth Road** in the early 50s. Newspapers probably have information on **Taff Vale Park in Pontypridd** and **Tradegar which ran 1929 - 1930**.

Newspapers : (85) Cardiff and Suburban News Jan 1929 - Oct 1964; (86) South Wales Evening Express and Evening Mail and Evening News 1928 - May 1930; (87) South Wales Football Express 1928 - Jan 1930 ; To Be Continued. 7

## Roll of Honour

Continuing the list of those riders who were killed or fatally injured on the speedways of the world. If you can fill any the information gaps or correct any errors, please do not hesitate to contact the editors.

Walter BROWN	32	Scottish	Marine Gs.	Marine Gs.	11.05.29	11.05.29
Roger BROWNE	30	N.Zealand		Sydney S.Gn.	15.02.69	15.02.69
Leonard BURTON		19 Australian		Gympie		06.06.39
06.06.36						
Maurice BUTLER		English	Belle Vue	Belle Vue		22.08.45
23.08.45						
Con CANTWELL		Australian	Wimbledon			
.32						
James CARNIE	23	English	Preston	Preston	24.07.30	24.07.30
George CHAMBERS		N.Zealand		Monika Pk. Ch		22.11.30
22.11.30						
William CHANDLER		Australian		Newcastle NSW	14.11.49	15.11.49
Rizard CHRUPEK		24 Polish		Tarnow Tarnow		06.05.79
06.05.79						
Norman CLAY	27	Australian	Exeter	Sydney Sp.Gn.	20.01.50	21.01.50
Alan CLEGG	22	English	Unattached	Hackney		07.01.72
07.01.72						
Stuart COBCROFT		Australian		Sydney S.Gn.	06.10.30	06.10.30
Larry COFFEY		Irish	London.	W.C.		
Graham COOPER		Australian		Alice Springs		
.74						
Peter CRAVEN	29	English	Belle Vue	Edinburgh O.M.	20.09.63	24.09.63
Reg CRAVEN		English	Yarmouth Poole		26.04.48	04.05.48
Geoff CURTIS		Australian	Reading	Sydney S.Gn	15.12.73	15.12.73
Marek CZERNY	22	Polish	Czestocowa	Rzeszow	31.08.72	26.09.72
Ivan DAUGUARD		Australian		Maribyrnong		25.10.47
25.10.47						
Ron DEAS		Australian		Claremont	27.02.37	27.02.37
Stephen DEFEW	18	English	Unattached	Peterborough	09.07.77	13.07.77
Harry DENTON	52	Australian		Adelaide	03.11.67	03.11.67

Fritz DIRTL		Austrian		Oberhausen		
.56						
Stanislaw DOMANIECKI	24	Polish	Torum	Gorzow	15.08.62	15.08.62
James DONAGHY		Australian		Sydney S.Gn	25.02.27	
25.02.27						
Ewald DOUBEK	21	Austrian		Natschbush	05.07.97	05.07.97
Henryk DROZDEK		Polish	Lodz	Rzesnow		25.09.78
25.09.78						
Eric DUNN	33	English	Hastings	Eastbourne	13.06.48	15.06.48
Ray DUGGAN	33	Australian	Harringay	Sydney S.Gn	20.01.50	20.01.50

## Publications

A couple of new books have been published by Jeremy Jackson, 85 Park Way, Fairfield Park, St. Austell, Cornwall PL25 4UR. They are "The St.Austell BWOC Gulls Fly again," which is a joint venture with David Collins, and "The Mighty Atom : The Life and Times of Len Read." Both are priced £3.99 plus £0.75 postage and packing.

Roger Hulbert, 6 The Garth, First Lane, Anlaby, Hull, HU10 6UY has updates of his Hull History available for sale. Contact Roger for details. **8**

## The Foreign Invasion

We all know that the sport of speedway was introduced by the Aussies Billy Galloway and Keith MacKay and we know that Sprouts Elder brought his brand of American magic very soon after. However, what about our continental cousins ? When did they first appear on the scene.

Among the first Europeans were the Frenchmen Charles Bellisant, Camille Tanton and Yves de Lathe. In all probability they were introduced to the sport in Paris where Sprouts strutted his stuff on his Sundays off.

In 1929 the first Scandinavians started to appear and Belle Vue was a happy base for Norwegian Paul Sande and Danes Walther Ryle, Nils Sorenson and Kai Anderson. The greatest pre war Dane, "Morian" Hansen, was also a Belle Vue asset in his inaugural year 1930. Sorry West Ham fans, you didn't get him first.

The best known centre in Denmark was a track in Copenhagen which claimed the life of English rider Ernie Greenhall.

Over in Germany the speed sport was taking hold in 1929 at Hamburg with the trackless Burnley star Ginger (Henry Riley) Lees setting speed record after speed record. Pioneer German was Max Winder.

The Low Countries lone representative in 1929 was Lou Burger from Belgium and he was joined by a couple of French riders Ferdinand Mynier and Andre Bourgeois.

1930 saw Germans Arnold Stolting and Fritz Niemeck arrive, probably with their sensational water cooled D.K.W. machine. Forecast to take speedway by storm this machine did not cut the mustard. Gustav Kellner did a little better and, riding as "Bill" Kellner, he eventually made it into the Preston team.

Danes Ryle and Anderson were still in circulation operating out of Belle Vue and were joined by Hansen.

The Madrid exploits were producing riders in Spain and gentleman (or hombres) called Angel Arche, Ameliane Sanz, Francisco Cobo and Guillermo Garcia appeared to show us what they had learned from the visitors to their country.

Austria did not send anyone until 1932 when Les Killmeyer and Sebastian Roth appeared on the scene.

From further afield the first man from the Argentine in Britain was Juan Pagano who arrived for seasons 1929 and 1930 while from South Africa the 1930 season attracted Will Nicholas, Alan Reeve and Stan Collins.

Not many visitors held down team places but they all added to the colour and international flavour of the sport in these pioneer days when travel was not as easy as it is today.

(Thanks to **Don Gray** for the information for this article) **9**

## CAN YOU HELP ?

**Hugh Vass**, 111 Arthurview Crescent, Danderhall, Dalkeith, Midlothian, EH22 1QS has now managed to gather all the heat details of the Provincial League 1960 - 64 inclusive. Hugh would welcome help with cross checking his riders statistics against anyone who has records for this era. He also would like to clarify some anomalies in his records. Hugh would particularly like contacts for Sheffield 1960-64; Liverpool 1960; Middlesbrough 1961-64; Neath 1962; St.Austell 1962-63; Hackney 1963-64; New Cross 1963; Newport 1964, Glasgow 1964; and Sunderland 1964.

**The Friends of Edinburgh Speedway** c/o Jim Henry, are looking for the heat details for the Edinburgh Monarchs October 1965 tour of the Polish tracks. Only a list of scorers was included in the contemporary speedway press. Even uncompleted programme details would be helpful. Also scores, heat by heat, for Wayne Briggs and George Hunter in The Battle of Britain Trophy at Middlesbrough 14.9.1961, Bernt Persson at Malmo 27.5.1968, at Gothenburgh 28.5.68, Linkoping 30.5.68; Reidar Eide at Kumla 1.5.1969 and Linkoping 30.5.69.

**Barry Stephenson** (See Our Friends Out There section) is looking for details of meetings staged at the following tracks for the following years : \*Ainsdale 1950; \*Airdrie (Chapelhall) 1951; Aldershot 1957; \*Exeter Alphington 1948 -

1951; \*Aycliffe 1953; Bell End (Holbeach) 1946, 1947, 1949; \*Bothwell 1948 - 1950; \*Bournemouth St. Leonards 1946, 1947; Bradford 1957; Brafield 1954, 1955; California 1949 - 1954. 1957; \*Chesterfield (Glass House Farm) 1949, 1950; \*Coppull Wigan 1947.1948; \*Dagenham 1947; \*Earls Barton 1950; Eastbourne 1946; Fleetwood 1953; \*Grays 1950; High Beech 1948 - 1950; \*March (Cambridgeshire) 1946 , 1947; Middlesbrough 1953, 1954, 1955; \*Newton Heath 1950, 1951; \*Newtongrange 1950; \*Peterborough Fengate 1946, 1947; Ringwood 1950, 1952 - 1955; Rye House 1946 - 1953, 1956; \*Swindon Stretton Park 1947; Wisbech 1946 - 1948. \* means training track or amateur status venue. This list raises a lot of interesting venues and dates and an opportunity for some good research work.

**Alan Robertson** , 28 Riverside, Salford, Lancashire, M7 1PP is looking for heat details for the following 1954 Southern Area League fixtures : 25.4 Eastbourne (E) v Rye House (RH); 2.5.Ringwood (R) v Aldershot (A); 12.6. A v B (Brafield); 13.6. B v R; 27.6. B v A; California (C) v E; R v A; 3.7. A v E; 1.8. C v B; 29.8 B v RH.

**Alan Batt** , POBox 19 - 687, Woolston, Christchurch, New Zealand, is looking for any details / photographs of the UK careers of Reg Ranby (Wembley - 1929) ; Charlie Blacklock (Crystal Palace / Stamford Bridge - 1931 - 34); Jack Hobson (Wembley / Hackney - circa 1935 - 36), and Alf Matson - (Leicester - 1931.) **10**

**!!!! Roll Up The Sleeves Time!!!!**

As we said in the last issue we are crossing the seas to Ireland and asking if you can help with **Belfast's** venues at **Dunmore, Dunroyd Park, Gibson Park, and Windsor Park**. To be honest we don't know very much about any of these tracks and details beyond that held by John Jarvis will break new ground. There have been other tracks in Northern Ireland with meetings at Ballymena but, it was I think, a one-off .

There were also venues in **Dublin** at **Chapelizod, Santry, Harolds Cross** and **Shelbourne Park** at various times and yet again these venues, the 1940s and early 1950s at Shelbourne and Chapelizod excepted, are all quite hazy. The Jim Henry medal for the worst ever team name goes to Chapelizod where "The Lizods" once raced.

A lot of the mainland based tracks raced in Ireland in the 1940s and 1950s and the chances are that your team made an appearance there. As we always say - all contributions welcome.

We also seek help from Londoners who can tell us about **Catford, Clapton, Lea Bridge** we feel that these are very hazy venues which require some light to be shed on them. Another interesting venue, which was one of the real pioneers, the trotting track at **Greenford**. The very early meetings are

featured in Motor Cycling and Motor Cycle and photographs show solo and sidecar action. Billy Galloway and Keith MacKay both raced on this big venue.

From knowing something to being hazy is no sin. This page need not be devoted solely to tracks - if you have snippets on anything which need amplification - let us have them and we'll progress the research.

Next time we will talk a bit about **Bolton's Raikes Park, Salford's Albion Speedway, Seaforth in Liverpool, Hazel Grove in Stockport, Audenshaw** and **Luton**. All of these venues are quite obscure and worth a bit of research.

## JUST A THOUGHT

Way back in 1963 the Speedway Star & News published an article in which a fan listed all the stadiums he could think of that might be capable of staging speedway racing. It was a bold venture and how many of the venues listed subsequently staged speedway is not known.

OK, there is the hurdle of planning permission, legal agreements with the owners and so on. However, it strikes me that there must be a few places that you, the subscribers to The Speedway Researcher, might just have a notion about as a potential speedway track.

For my own part I recall visiting Shawfield in 1968 and thinking - no chance of speedway here while the football club is still here. Yes Clyde **11** left and the Tigers moved in. Similarly I recall passing Armadale in the bus and thinking - tarmac track so no speedway. Yes ! years later there I am helping to build the track; the tarmac ripped up and shale laid instead. What about it ? Have you a pet idea for a venue ? Let's hear them and maybe that will be the spark for establishment of another track. After all there are upteen places like Norwich, Birmingham, Bristol, Southampton, London, etc crying out for speedway and **you** may have the answer.

## PUBLICATIONS

For those of you gathering statistics, let us commend to you publications by Peter Jackson, 41 Riversfield Road, Enfield, Middlesex, EN1 3DU, Tel: 0181 366 3295. Peter has produced a statistical report of the National League First Division for seasons 1948, 1949 and 1950. They provide results and scorers tables and each are priced £5.00 plus £1.00 Postage and Packaging. The only information the reports do not have is match by match heat details. Interested in the history of Swedish Speedway ? The excellent production on this topic which, despite the fact that the text is in Swedish, is still a very

interesting book due to the quality of the photographs, is available price £25 from Peter Lipscombe at 1 London Road, Aston Clinton, Buckinghamshire HP22 5HG. The books are sent direct to your home from the distributor in Sweden..

The Preston publication, A Brief History of Farringdon Park (Preston Speedway) by Paul Baron, has gone to a reprint and is obtainable from Peter Lipscombe priced £5.95 including P & P.

## TEAM NAMES 1

All fans will all be familiar with the team name The Aces. Belle Vue was one of the first to adopt a team name. However it is hard to say who was first. I have seen Sheffield referred to as The Cutlers in 1930 and about the same time Crystal Palace were known as The Glaziers and High Beech had a team called The Foresters. Wembley's Lions probably date from this era too.

Indulging a little bit of fun I've tried to group together names in "family" groups. I'll start with Aces and Diamonds (Newcastle) from the playing cards. Belle Vue have almost always had the club symbolised on playing cards but once were supplied, by mistake, with race jackets with the ace of spades. Southampton took a card related theme and had a race jacket with heart shaped symbol but the team were known as The Saints.

Staying with Southampton and an ecclesiastical theme I obviously offer the Saints (Southampton, Scunthorpe, Sunderland, Newtongrange, Lea Bridge). Add to this the Heathens (Cradley Heath), Angels (Hull-Hedon) and Anglian Angels (Ipswich / King's Lynn), Devils (Plymouth), Dale Devils (Armada) Demons (Exeter) and Red Devils (Rye House).

On the other side I offer Wizards (Weymouth, Ryde (IOW)) and Witches (Ipswich).

Staying with baddies let me remind you of Bandits (Berwick), Highwaymen (Crayford), Pirates (Poole, Liverpool), Rovers (Rayleigh), Warriors (Wigan and Western), Border Raiders (Berwick Amateurs), Hit Men (Buxton), Rebels (White City, Oxford) and Gladiators (bad if you were a Christian in Roman times) (Sunderland). The Braves from Skegness also could come into this category if you are a cowboy fan.

To counterbalance this I will return to the goodies with Monarchs (Edinburgh, Coatbridge, Armadale) Scottish Monarchs (Glasgow), Dukes (Halifax, Weymouth), Kings (Crewe, Castleford), Barons (Bradford), Crusaders (Canterbury and Sittingbourne), Knights (Milton Keynes, King's Lynn) and I think there was a team called the Earls from somewhere. A team

called The Royals were based at Weymouth in the early 1960s racing in the Metropolitan League.

Dynastic teams follow on neatly with Tudors (Odsal Bradford), Saxons (Hastings) and Vikings (Hull). Military / naval links give us the Admirals (Nelson), Rangers (New Cross, Long Eaton), Archers (Long Eaton), Gunners (Ellesmere Port) and Tars, another word for sailors, at Sheffield in the 1950s. To this could be added Bombers (Romford, West Ham, Barrow) and there are links to Daggers (Dagenham), Shots (Aldershot) and Arrows (Ashington) suitable for inclusion here.

Astronomy and space has inspired promoters. There have been Stars (Norwich, King's Lynn, Sunderland), and Comets (Workington) while on the same theme there have been Rockets (Rayleigh, Rye House, Newtongrange) and Invaders (Long Eaton).

Oddments like Nomads (Chiswick), Giants (Ashfield), Racers (Harringay, Reading), Hammers (West Ham, Arena Essex), Blues (Birmingham), Starlets (King's Lynn), Boomerangs (Odsal Bradford), Happy Faces (Barrow), Pixies (St. Austell), Bloaters (Yarmouth), Tammies (Tamworth), Rangers (Long Eaton and New Cross) and Sprockets (Swindon), Barracudas (Boston).

Plants now. The Thistles grew in Marine Gardens, Edinburgh and Poppies came from California at Wokingham (Are you old enough to remember the scent of California Poppy?). Finally a team at Ringwood was called the Turfs. Maybe it would be eaten by the Rabbits of High Beech.

Reading this over it struck me that speedway stole a march on other sports as we see them adopting team names in ice hockey and basketball.

Anyway - more in the next edition.

Jim Henry

13

## TRACK RECORD UPDATE

"It was twenty years ago today" sang The Beatles on their album Sergeant Pepper and it is almost appropriate because 21 years ago Martin Rogers published his book "The Illustrated History of Speedway." In it he included a section compiled by Mike Rumens giving a track by track history.

It is high time this was updated and we intend to serialise an update starting in this edition. Drawing upon John Jarvis' superb record system we start with the first half dozen.

The update will not be as comprehensive as Martin's as we don't yet have the information to update details of promoters, leading riders appearance and score data. We shall therefore concentrate on the track information.

As ever we throw things open to you to chip in information if you think we have got it wrong. Corrections should be backed up with references to support your statements. i.e. source, date, day, page, programme notes etc. The symbols (N) = a new entry not in Martin's book. (U) = update of information

in Martin's book. Tracks for cities will included under that name eg Ashfield will be included under Glasgow.

ALDERSHOT : Sports Stadium, Boxhall Lane, Aldershot. Length : 440yds, 1st meeting : 3rd July 1929. Only known season 1929. 8 meetings 3/7 to 5/8. The stadium site on the Ordnance Survey maps circa 1930 show a roughly oval shaped track. Suspect the track was inside a greyhound stadium not shown on the map. Site developed as reservoir surrounded by housing. (N) Did it operate any other season ?

ALDERSHOT : Tongham. Add 1953 Open; 1958 Open; 1959 Southern Area League. (U)

ARENA ESSEX : Arena Essex, Arterial Road, Purfleet Essex. Length : 254m. 1st meeting 5th April 1984. Built inside a stock car track and originally used without a safety fence. Team name : Hammers.1984 - 90 National League; 1991 British League Division 2, 1992 - 94 British League Division 1, 1995 Premier League, 1996 Conference League, 1997 - 99 Premier League. (N)

ARMADALE : Armadale Stadium (also known as Lothian Arena), Bathgate Road, Armadale, West Lothian. Length : 280m. 1st meeting 4th April 1997. Built inside a dog track on the site of a former tarmac stock car track. 1997 - 99 Premier League. Team name : Edinburgh Monarchs. (N)

ASHINGTON : Portland Park Stadium, Ashington, Northumberland. Length : Not Known. 1st meeting 5th April 1972. Team name : Arrows. 1972 Open (2 meetings only) (N)

Without the intro we'll be able to give details of more tracks next time round. This should build up into a very comprehensive record. **14 The 1929 English (Northern Dirt) Track League**

In the last edition we included the 1929 League Table for the teams that completed the table. Now we publish Trevor James's table for all the completed matches withdrawn or otherwise. Match format changed early season - original match scores stood. Scoring 4 -2-1.

Team	P	W	D	L	For	Against	Pts
White City Manchester	23	21	0	2	972	481	43
Leeds	23	17	1	5	822	610	35
Preston	26	16	0	10	905	714	32
Halifax *	25	15	1	9	845	718	31
Rochdale	25	12	1	12	777	785	25
Liverpool	22	11	0	11	682	683	22
Leicester Stadium **	24	10	1	13	715	779	21
Newcastle Brough Park	20	10	0	10	622	610	20
Salford	25	10	0	15	729	810	20
Barnsley	25	8	0	17	583	854	16

Sheffield	21	6	1	14	559	751	
13							
Warrington	21	6	1	14	539	774	13
Belle Vue	10	6	0	4	332	290	12
Middlesbrough	20	6	0	14	541	694	12
Burnley	4	2	0	2	128	122	8
Bolton	1	1	0	0	35	24	2
Hanley	5	0	0	5	64	248	0

\* Rochdale v Halifax originally Rochdale win but match awarded to Halifax because of illegal use of rider. Race points not adjusted. \*\* Shown in Vol 1. No4 as Leicester Super in error- My Fault - Jim Henry. Note: These tables subject to updates !!!!

### Did You Know ?

Thanks to Terry Stone I can reveal that "Butch" Williams was plain old John. Seems he rode in the mechanics race at West Ham at the end of the 1937 season and was programmed under his real name. (Question : Which current referee rode in a mechanics race at Berwick many moons ago and came quite a purler ?)

The track in New Brighton was located at New Brighton Tower Speedway Stadium. The meeting promoted by Wirral Heath Motor Cycle Club staged on Saturday 11th August 1934 featured, amongst others, Eric Worswick, George (GB) Mortimer, Tommy Price, Stan Hart, Oliver Hart, a character called "Sprouts" Griffo and an A. Grant from Newcastle on Tyne. The track length was 511.66 Yards and the one lap flying start record was 22.6 seconds held by Tommy Price (not the World Champion).

The track length suggests that it wasn't located at the dog track. Graham is sure that the stadium is that featured in the picture "Escape to Victory" **15** which featured Pele and other football stars. As always we welcome contributions of more information on obscure venues like this one.

According to Peter Oakes the meeting at Coatbridge on 28.9.1973 was staged without a programme due to an industrial dispute. A programme for Hackney's Golden Jubilee in February 1978 was in The Speedway Star.

The idea that a speedway track should have bends which are a different shape promulgated (excuse me - burp - dictionaries are hard to swallow) by the organiser of the Herexheim Long Track in Germany (See Speedway Star 14.2.99) (and Eastbourne ?) is not new. Way back in 1928 the then Jack Nixon-Browne, later, an MP, and enobled as Lord Craigton, built the track at Carntyne Stadium in Glasgow (Note the spelling CARNTYNE) with one bend which followed the curve of the dog track and the other with a hairpin bend. He even had the foresight to expect riders to crash at the hairpin and piled peat at the outside of the track to cushion the riders landings.

Glasgow Nelson and Blanytre “One” also had bends of different radii, the former a 1928 & 1932 venue, the latter 1977 plus.

Talking of soil. Did you know the Barnsley Lundwood Track had a fence made of turf which had been dug up before the cinders were laid down. The another odd ball thing about Lundwood was that it seems it was well out of town. Finally the track was not built on the flat, the straights were not at the same elevation. Correct us if we are wrong please, but Buxton’s current venue has a difference in level between the two straights.

### **Deadlines For Copy**

The deadline for copy is two months before month of publication. Deadline for next edition is the end of July for September publication. We welcome submissions for publication and will do our best to include requests for information - as detailed as possible please - as soon as possible.

### **FORTHCOMING PUBLICATIONS**

Glynn Shailes and Robert Bamford are about to publish a history of Swindon Speedway. Look out for details in the speedway press. Tony Lethbridge has completed his research on the second part of Exeter Speedway History. Again, watch the press for details.

**The Speedway Researcher is edited and published by :**

**Graham Fraser  
7b Bruce Street,  
Stirling, FK8 1PD  
Tel : 01786 471992**

**Jim Henry  
90 Greenend Gardens,  
Edinburgh, EH17 7QH  
Tel : 0131 664 7185**