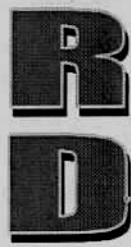


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Secretaries Notes January 2010

Committee Meeting Wednesday Jan 20th 2010

The Way Ahead.

At the committee meeting the future of the VCSRA was discussed and it was decided that bearing in mind the increasing average age of the membership and the general reluctance we find there is to travelling any distance to meetings and events etc that we would concentrate our activity solely on publishing the 'Track Record', issuing the 'Directory of Members' and maintaining and updating the VCSRA Web Site. Social events, Rambles, Golf Days and the like, we suggest are better arranged and organised locally, as they already are in many cases by the interested parties concerned and advertised in the 'Track Record'. Info received by Bill or Myself by the middle of January, April, July or October will be included in that months issue.

AGM 2010

It has also been decided that the AGM provisionally pencilled in for Saturday 17 April 2010 will be postponed until March 2011. It was agreed that reverting to a spring AGM was ideal but that there was not enough time to organise a meeting for spring of 2010.

Annual VCSRA Dinner/Dance

We received only ten responses, representing 20 guests to our request for support for a D/D on 13th November at the Plough at Bulphan and as a consequence the committee agreed that the provisional booking made with the Plough should be cancelled. As several members have expressed a opinion that the venue for the event should be changed and bearing in mind that all those who replied were from the London or South Essex area the committee are looking for a volunteer to look at the hotels etc available and organise a smaller regional event

Nominations for President

12 nomination forms were returned, 6 nominating Pete Leckie, one for Roy Garnham who has declined to stand for election and 5 nominations for myself. Voting forms are enclosed with this issue of the TR.

Correspondance

We have learned via the 'Grape Vine'/John Brown that a great character from 50's & 60's South Essex cycle speedway Bob Pike has passed away. He will be remembered by many with affection.

We have received an email from Tony Emmott, our Yorkshire correspondent.

"Dear Colin - Hope you have had an enjoyable Christmas and are looking forward to the New Year. Some sad news I am afraid from the Yorkshire scene. I am still in touch with an 'old' Cycle Speedway friend of mine Adrian Berry - in his younger days always called Bill. He emailed me over Christmas with the sad news that Kit Lunn had died following a long illness with a kind of blood disease. I remember Kit very well - his whole cycle speedway career was with the Bradford Moor Vulcans during the late 1950's and early 1960's in the Bradford Cycle Speedway league. He captained the Vulcans for most of this time - their track was at Myra Shay (part of the grounds of Hanson Grammar School) built on the top of a high 'slag heap' with a track surface as hard as they come. I was allocated to Bradford Moor Vulcans from the Elmfield Eagles for a couple of seasons riding with both Kit and Bill. Kit was always a do and dare rider no gap was too small for him to have a go at and he never gave up. You were never sure you had beaten him until you had crossed the finishing line! Kit had joined the Jehovah Witnesses by the time he was 20 ish, met and married Judith from the same sect and went on to have 6 children. He was very successful in business and moved to the Isle of Man whilst still quite young when Bill lost touch. Latterly Kit moved to

Spain and joined other local expat witnesses in a community there. Kit died last June so actually predeceased Mike Cockroft reported recently so Bradford and Yorkshire cycle speedway has seen the death of two of its legends in the same year. Sooner we see 2010 the better.

Tony Emmott "

We received an email from Derek (Del) Baker,

"Hello Colin Are you still in the game of collecting cycle speedway memories?. If so I will search my memory for some. Derek W Baker ex Wantz Wallabies Dagenham"

You can read his memories elsewhere in this issue

We also received an email from Bill Pettingale too late to put the details in the October Issue unfortunately,

"Hi Colin, Came across a snippet of information that you may be interested in. The Morden club of many years ago are to hold a reunion at The George (Harvester) London Road Morden on Sunday the 3rd of Jan 2010 from 7-30 to 11.00. It has been arranged by Neil Argent.

Should you be interested Neil can be reached on neilargent@hotmail.com

Bill Pittingale"

One of our members in South London I am sure will remember Neil and may have even been to the reunion mentioned, why not give him a call and see if he is interested in joining the VCSRA.

Many thanks to all those who contacted us and also for the Christmas cards I received, much appreciated. And don't forget Bill or myself are always pleased to receive copies of your old photo's or memories for inclusion in the Track Record or on our Web Site.

Directory Additions/Changes

New Members

Austen Horrex - 'Gable Oaks', 6 Broome Road, Billericay, Essex, CM11 1ES.

Tel. 01277 658591

Bill Pettingale - 'Thornley', 20 Queens Street, Spooner Row, Wymondham, Norfolk, NR18 9JU

Tel. 01953 602179

Stan Barrett - 26 Inmans Road, Hedon, Hull, East Yorkshre, HU12 8LG

Tel. 01482 896495

Vic Hinchcliffe - 43 The Turnpike, Marple, Stockport, Cheshire, SK6 6HG

Tel. 0161 449 8262

Alfred Still - 10 Bronte Close, Braintree, Essex, CM7 1BQ

Tel. 01376 322813

Jim Cooke - 93 Redhill Drive, Ensbury Park, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH10 6AG.

Tel. 01202 528313

David Stearn - 24 Berehurst, Alton, Hants., GU34 1PA.

Tel. 01420 544017

Bill Punter - Flat 64 Harrison Close, Northwood, Middlesex, HA6 2PN

Derek Baker - 112 Moore Lane, Cranham, Essex, RM14 1ET.

Tel. 01708 226888

A new issue of the VCSRA Directory of Members will be issued with the April Track Record.

Events

A Celebration of Speedway

Sunday 21st February 2010

The High Beech Anniversary Event will be held at
Paradise Wildlife Park & Speedway Museum
Broxbourne Herts EN10 7QA

The VCSRA will be having a stall/display in the pavilion and be presenting a Trophy to the winners of Cycle Speedway Challenge Match being organized (weather permitting) by Terry Stone & Dave Hunting of the Ipswich CSC. The riders taking part will be the youngsters from Dave's club and it will be raced on a track laid out on the car park adjacent to the Speedway Museum.

The park will be open from 10.00am and ENTRY will be FREE.

Show your Membership Card or Just tell the person manning the pay kiosk that you are going to the Speedway Museum

Veteran Speedway Riders - Buffet Lunch

Saturday 8th May 2010

Paradise Wildlife Park & Speedway Museum
Broxbourne Herts EN10 7QA

Buffet available from 1.00 pm onwards - VCSRA Members Welcome

*Tickets are £15.00 and are available from,
Vic White, 90 Ruskin Ave., Long Eaton, Nottingham, NG10 3HX. Tel. 0115 973 6041
Please make cheques payable to :- WSR*



The Cycle Speedway Section at the Speedway Museum at Paradise Park

'Speedway Ace' Sees Dream Come True

Twenty-four-year-old Bill Punter, manager-rider of South Ruislip Aces Cycle Speedway Club, Middlesex, saw his dream come true when the club's new track was ready.

To add lustre to the occasion Bill, first assistant at Kenton shop, invited film star Shirley Eaton to perform the opening ceremony.

Shirley, a customer at the shop, was only too ready to oblige. . . . When

she stepped out on to the flag-decorated track last month there were more than 200 people to see the ceremony.

The bouquet was nearly forgotten. Bill had hastily to pick a bunch of lily-of-the-valley from the garden and wrap them in silver paper. These were presented to the local-born star.

When she managed to escape from the crowds of autograph hunters, Shirley mounted a bicycle and raced three club members to win by half a wheel.

Bill Punter, who joined W.H.S. in 1955, started speedway cycling when he was 13 — with the South Harrow Greyhounds.

After National Service with the Royal Signals in Trieste, he joined Uxbridge Meteors, whom he later captained. He reached the finals of the Middlesex Individuals and was runner-up in the Best Pairs.

But his aim was to re-start the South Ruislip Aces and put the club once more on the cycle speedway map. Bill approached the local council for land and was given permission to build a track.

So far everything has gone well: the Aces have won their first three matches. Selected to ride for Middlesex against Leicester in the 'B' test, Bill now wants to add another trophy to his collection of one cup and six medals.

When he is not riding, Bill is rockin' 'n' rollin' with the Cool Kats, a local group with whom he plays, working on his stamp collection, or supporting the local football team.



Film star Shirley Eaton steals the show in a race after the opening of the cycle speedway track. Jockeying for position is Bill Punter, first assistant at Kenton shop—where she is a customer.

From The V.C.S.R.A Archive

No.1 Jan. 2010

LANCASHIRE & CHESHIRE
CYCLE SPEEDWAY

'BULLETIN'

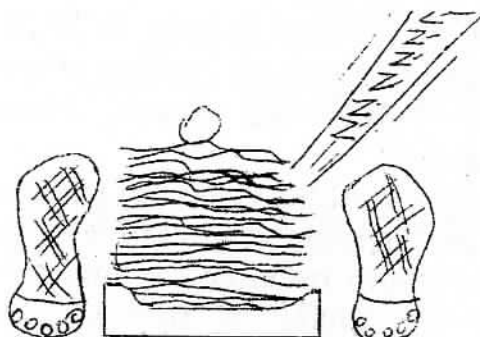


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EDITION NO. 123

22ND JULY 1961.

3, KEDLESTON AVENUE, VICTORIA PARK, MANCHESTER, 14.Editing and Typing attempted by Mike Wansborough.Duplicating by F. Ashtonhurst Esq.A recent picture of the
Editor at work.....EDITORIAL

As you can see from the above address, the Bulletin has once again changed hands. After the excellent standard maintained by Derek Garnett, who has to relinquish his duties due to lack of time, an immediate drop in the standard of presentation will probably be appreciable. I shall, of course, in order to match my bad riding, do my worst to ensure that this decline continues!!!

Seriously, I think I shall be able to maintain the usual rate of one-a-month if I get plenty of reports, particularly those on matches outside the area.

Mike Wansborough.

MANCHESTER LOSE AT BIRMINGHAM!!

On June 18th., a convoy of vehicles carried the Manchester riders down to contest the first leg of the inter-city test match. The track, which was reached in good time, turned out to be that of Aldridge Hammers. The surface consisted of loose dust mixed with large pebbles and the edges were marked by means of banks of earth. The starting gate was ingenious, being a TRIPLE SIMULTANEOUS HORIZONTAL ELASTIC DISPLACEMENT (Three tape fly-across) and this seemed to demoralise the Manchester team, who couldn't get any drive out of the gate at all.

After two drawn heats, Birmingham took the lead when Blackwell and Quick got a 4-2 over Garnett. They then proceeded to score 4-2 and 5-1 in heats 6 and 7 to make the score 25-17. Brian then put in a wonderful team-ride with McGee to get a 5-1 over Tamlyn, making the score 26-22. However, Darling and Bartholomew were out-gated in the next race and this restored Birmingham's 8 point lead.

In heat 10, Marsland and Garnett got together at last, recording 5-1 over Heaton, to reduce the arrears to 4 points. Then Dockerill and Tamlyn scored a 4-2 over Hinchliffe and in the next race Quick held Moston into last place and, with Blackwell first, the score became 40-32. Marsland and Garnett won heat 13 with a 4-2 over Dockerill, to show them that Manchester was still fighting.

Darling was excluded in heat I4, apparently for flying the gate, but Tom Lawton, substituted for Bartholomew, held on grimly to second place, to the accompaniment of considerable Openshaw vocal encouragement, while the 'race' was taken at a crawl. After three more drawn heats, Bartholomew and Darling reduced the deficit to six with a 4-2 over Heaton in heat I8, but a 5-1 by Beasley and Wilkinson over Moston won them the match. In the last race, Vic Hinchliffe and Lawton got second and third spots behind Quick, holding the hitherto high-scoring Blackwell into last place.

BIRMINGHAM: 65 C. Beasley (Kingstanding) I4; J. Heaton (Aldridge) I2;

P. Blackwell (Kingstanding) IO; J. Dockerill (Kingstanding) 9;

P. Quick (Kingstanding) 9; A. Wilkinson (Kingstanding) 6; E. Tamlyn

(Aldridge) 4; J. Ward (Kingstanding) I; P. Kiernan (Kingstanding) O.

MANCHESTER: 55 V. Hinchliffe (Offerton) I2; D. Garnett (Offerton) 8;

V. Marsland (Gorton) 8; D. McGee (Carrs Wood) 8; B. Moston (Carrs Wood) 6;

J. Bartholomew (Gorton) 6; T. Lawton (Openshaw) 3; J. Darling (Longsight P.) 3;

J. Watling (Gorton) I.

-O-

FIRST DEFEAT FOR WILMSLOW!

Longsight Pegasus became the first side to beat Wilmslow this, thus keeping their 2 year old unbeaten record at home, but the absence of Lomas, Moore and Worthington from the Hammer's team removed most of the gloss from the Pegasus victory. Longsight led from heat I with a Jolly-Rogers 4-2 over Hollins and increased their lead with a 5-1 in heat 3, after Mottershead had dropped his chain. Jolly scored a 'max' for Longsight, whilst J. Davies and Blinston were both 'paid' for 9. Hollins, Hewitt and Mottershead did the bulk of the scoring for the depleted Hammers.

Longsight P. 4I Jolly I2; Blinston 8; J. Davies 7; Bowe 5; Rogers 4;

Hampsey 3; K. Davies 2.

Wilmslow 3I Hewitt II; Hollins IO; Mottershead 7; Parsons 2; Brecknell I.

D. Blinston.

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The Article below is an extract from
The Lancashire & Cheshire Bulletin, Edition No. 127 29th Nov. 1961

CHESHIRE WIN INTER-COUNTY LEAGUE

Cheshire were winners of the 1961 three-cornered inter-county league between Yorkshire, Lancashire and Cheshire by virtue of their 64-56 win over Yorkshire at Offerton. Cheshire, weakened by the loss of Bevin and the non-appearance of Scales and Nanfan, brought in 9th man Fletcher and rode with 7 riders. By heat 4, the 'White Rose' were two points up and the 'Cats' were struggling. With Hinchliffe and Garnett winning, the Yorkshire riders were packing into 2nd and 3rd places to keep the scores level. At the half-way stage, the score stood at 30-30, which was also the half-time score in their previous encounter at Elmfield.

Heat 11 saw Hinchliffe away to a 5-1 over Johnston. Wins from Moston and Garnett kept Cheshire in front. Yorkshire's chance of pulling back a 5-1 in the re-serves race was stopped when Fletcher and Rankine rode a 'blinder' to hold a 3-3 against Ormondroyd and Rowntree. A 5-1 from McGee and Moston increased Cheshire's lead and with last 4 heats resulting in 3-3s, Cheshire won the match by 8 points.

For Cheshire, Garnett and Hinchliffe on their own track scored maximums and were well backed up by Moston, with the rest of the team scoring the third places that counted. Johnston was in good form for Yorkshire with good backing from Brooke, Cockcroft and Ormondroyd. Only Johnston and Ormondroyd won races for Yorkshire, Cheshire supplying 16 heat winners.

CHESHIRE 64 Garnett 18; Hinchliffe 18; Moston 13; McGee 8;

Lawton 3; Fletcher 2; Rankine 2.

YORKSHIRE 56 Johnston 13; Brooke 9; Cockcroft 9; Ormondroyd 7;

Wells 6; D. Bates 6; Meadowcroft 4; Rowntree 2.

GILDA LIONS WON 1950 BRISTOL LEAGUE. By Robin Martakies.

1950 was a boom year for Cycle Speedway. For the first time ever the sport was organised nationally by the National Amateur Cycle Speedway Association. One of NACSA's first jobs was to draw up a set of rules. This was done and, before long, copies of the regulations were distributed to affiliated clubs. Although the first rules were not fully comprehensive they did at least put racing into some sort of order.

Much space was given to Cycle Speedway by both the National and Local press. 'Everybody's' and 'Picture Post' carried illustrated articles about the sport and many Speedway magazines published lengthy Cycle Speedway columns. The 'Speedway Echo' was responsible for organising the National match race competition and riders from all over the country were given the chance of winning the trophy.

Towards the end of the season, the 'News Chronicle' organised the biggest Cycle Speedway event ever - the National Team Championship; 277 teams from all over the country took part in the competition, including a number from Bristol. Shirehampton Tigers (Gloucestershire) and Clutton Pirates (Somerset) won their respective county championships but both teams were beaten in the next round.

The final was held before an estimated 5,000 crowd at the Empress Hall, London. Gem Pirates (Dorset) and Chorlton Aces (Lancashire) were the finalists. The Pirates ran out winners by 54 points to 51. On the same night Holland beat England by 49 points to 47 in the first international match organised by NACSA.

Earlier in the year, Cycle Speedway was represented for the first time at the Festival of Sport in London. This was organised by the Central Council for Physical Recreation. The racing was between London and the Home Counties. London won 50-46 and the team was presented with medals by 'Sportsman of the Year', cyclist Reg Harris.

The BBC also lent a helping hand. Both Richard Dimbleby and Lionel Gamblin broadcast commentaries and interviews on the radio; the BBC television service broadcast a meeting from a north London track. Cycle Speedway also earned itself free publicity in the cinema. A short history of the sport was filmed in the

'This Modern Age' series - number 33.

The National Playing Fields Association offered to help the sport by drawing up plans for tracks. In addition, the Amateur Athletics Association kept a watchful eye on the welfare of the riders.

Many of the recognised youth organisations began to take an interest in the sport. The Air Training Corps, the YMCA and the National Association of Boys Clubs championed Cycle Speedway as a healthy and rewarding pastime. At Hastings, the Royal Airforce Association presented a magnificent trophy for local league competition. Some Local councils provided tracks and track sites for teams to develop.

Crowds at matches were also on the increase. An appreciative gathering watched Cycle Speedway demonstrations at Eton and a crowd, claimed to be several thousand strong, watched an inter county match at Plymouth.

In Bristol, the St Martins Lions, captained by Bruce French, won many friends staging exhibitions at flower shows, sports meetings and in country villages. At a Brislington Youth Week event, held at Victory Park, Bristol, A.T.C Eagles stole the show with a stirring challenge match tussle against Gilda Lions.

Racing on the centre green at Bristol's Knowle Speedway Stadium, also attracted much attention. At that time the Bristol Bulldogs were attracting regular weekly crowds of between 12 and 20,000.

The Bristol Speedway Supporters Club provided a Cup for the match race championship (held by Ken Worlock throughout the entire season) and also provided stewards (referees) for league matches.

Whitby Lion, Doug Wooton, was called up for National Service and was stationed in the army at Catterick. He had not been there long before he had a team together and a track laid. In October his team went on tour to Scotland and Doug had a match race against Scottish Champion, Bill Ritchie; he was narrowly defeated.

The winners of the 1950 City and County of Bristol League were Gilda Lions. Captained by 'Bristol Evening World' champion, Colin Gunton, they put up many first class performances and fully deserved the title. Runners up were Clutton Pirates; third were Brislington Eagles.

The biggest surprise of the season was the only home defeat of Gilda Lions by the lowly placed St. Martins Lions.

The Gilda team consisted of Colin Gunton (captain), Conrad Fox, Phillip Keall, Don Saunders, Brian Coles, George Slcombe, Dudley Smith and Cyril Anderson.

The Bristol rankings for 1950, as supplied by Control Board manager F. G. Bence. Were as follows: 1. Ken Worlock, 2. John Gregory, 3. Don Saunders, 4. Colin Gunton, 5. Johnny Branch, 6. Phillip Keall, 7. Mike Sage, 8. Eddie Butler, 9. Ken Kendall, 10. George Cumell.

Editors Notes.

We welcome Bill Punter as a new member. The article on page 5 is from the W.H.Smith magazine, this was a major publicity coup, as all the local papers carried pictures of Shirley Eaton with the Sth Ruislip Aces team. Also the front cover picture is from Bill.

In 1957 North West Middlesex League seemed all set for one of their best years ever, they now had a total of eight teams. Newcomers were Langley Lions (Stevenage) from the disbanded Hertfordshire League, Weston Stars, South Ruislip Aces, Wembley All Stars and their second team Hendon Stars, both of whom had spent the previous season travelling up and down the country riding challenge matches. Other teams were Harefield Pirates, Hillingdon Stars and Langley Leopards.

After only two matches, the Hillingdon pulled out of the league. As the Hoddesdon Kangaroos, after the break up of the Herts League looked to be spending the season riding challenge matches, I suggested that I should invite them to take Hillingdon's place, they accepted by phone, telegram and letter!

Next the Langley Lions, who had been soundly beaten in all their matches, pulled out. Although I was riding for the Wembley All Stars at the time, I was also helping Frank Males to reform the Bushey Aces

The plan was to ride challenge matches with the view of joining the league the following year, but with teams reluctant to race us I decided to ask if we could take over the Lions fixtures. (A year later I bought their colours and we became the Wembley Lions) Although the team was very weak at least we would get regular matches. As luck would have it our first match was home to Hoddesden Kangaroos!

Bushey 30. B.Gadsby 7 E.Wells 7

Hoddesdon 80. C.Hitch 20, A. Catley, & V. White 12, D. Hutchin & D. Hannington 9, T.Kilby 8

It had been decided to change the points scoring for this season 1st 4 points 2nd 2 points & 3rd 1 point.

This was to help teams like Wembley All Stars and South Ruislip Aces, who could often only field five man teams, but despite this the Aces pulled out of the league and all their results were deleted.

Favourites to win the league were Hoddesdon and Weston who were determined to win by hook or by crook. When they visited Bushey they were expecting an easy win. We nearly pulled off the shock of the season, but when the Stars realised that they might lose the match, they used every tactic that they could think of to delay the match., then with three races to go they claimed that it was too dark to race and insisted that the match be abandoned and rerun at a later date.

Bushey Aces 49 Dewhurst 14, Wells 12, Gadsby 8, Bodmin 6, & Crews 5.

Weston Stars 41 Shaw 12, Cable 10, Webb 6, Riley 4, Betts, Jenkins & Humphries 3

Of course they made sure of winning the rerun.

Bushey 41 Dewhurst 11, Crews 10, Pinnock & Porter 5, Gadsby & Wise 4 & Birch 2.

Weston 70 Hammond 15, Betts 11, Luke 10, Cathcart 9, Riley 8, Shaw & Jenkins 6 & Harvey 5.

The League came to a very unsatisfactory end. There was a dispute over the match between Hoddesdon & Weston. The Kangaroos protested about the result, but did not know the correct procedure. This was to mark the match programme with a "P" and send a written protest with the appropriate fee within 7 days.

So although most people thought that the complaint was justified, Weston insisted that the control board could not consider it. This led to the Hoddesdon manager storming out of the meeting, saying that he was withdrawing his team from the league, without riding their final match.

FINAL LEAGUE TABLE	HOME				AWAY			PNTS
	PL.	W	D	L	W	D	L	
Weston Stars	12	5	1	0	4	1	1	25
Harefield Pirates	12	3	2	1	5	1	1	23
Hoddesdon Kangaroos	11	4	0	2	4	1	0	22
Wembley All Stars	12	3	0	3	4	1	1	20
Langley Leopards	11	2	0	4	0	0	6	4
Bushey Aces	12	2	0	4	0	0	6	4
Hendon Stars	12	2	0	4	0	0	6	4

The photos on page 15 are from the first International Grand Prix, held at the Whipps Cross Comets track in July 1958.

Winner Keith Taylor (England) 13 points, second after run off Eric Hemsley 12 pnts. 3rd Johnny Brown (England) 12

Sid Kingsnorth (Wales) 10 Sid Pipe (England) 8 Hamish Orr (Scotland) 8 Joe Letts (Scotland) 8 Terry Platford (England) 7

Bill Punter (Wales) 6 Bob Bray (Scotland) 6 Johnny Gillies (Scotland) 6 John Woolnough (England) 5 Terry Howes (England) 4

Paddy Hunt (Ireland) 2

Cycle Speedway in the Dagenham/Barking area. 1947-1952

Introduction

Speedway, speedway, speedway. That was the thing dominating our teenage years after the end of the war. Every Tuesday at West Ham at 7.45pm was the home of our hero's, Eric Chitty, Malcolm Craven, Benny King, Aub Lawson and visitors such as Vic Duggan and his brother from Haringay, Ron Johnson from New Cross, Bill Kitchen and Split Waterman from Wembley and so on. Everything speedway did - we did. We copied the bikes, the clothes, the tracks, the starting gates, the supporters clubs - everything we could copy from senior speedway was copied.

Some of the Dagenham clubs

Foxland Panthers. This was my first club where I rode for a few months. Managed by Jack South the track was dug from a field situated behind Foxland Parade shops and adjacent to May and Baker chemical works in Rainham Road North, Dagenham. It was not a very competitive club so being the best in the club I was soon 'headhunted' by the Captain of **Wantz Wallabies** to ride for them. The Wallabies were a much more organised and, locally, were reasonably competitive but never on the same level as teams such as Stratford Hammers. The track was on waste ground at the Eastbrook junction of Oxlow Lane and Rainham Road North Dagenham and was dug in the customary way and fitted out with a concrete starting area and gate and concrete edges to the bends. Who the owner of the ground was never known and we never cared! It also had a pits area and banking for spectators.

Among teams now forgotten were **Dagenham Aces** who made their fast but small track on some disused tennis courts in Gorsebrook Road, Dagenham while **Stadium Stars** used a cinder covered car park not far from Fords factory and Chequers Corner. They were named after the nearby greyhound stadium and the old disused pre-war Dagenham speedway.

Thameside Tigers were a strong team down on Barking Marshes under the shadow of the now demolished Barking power station.

A little further afield, but still within train and pedalling distance, was **Bermondsey Aces?** just south of Tower Bridge, then **Hackney Stars** ??? and the much feared **Stratford Hammers** who set the standard for all others in the East London area. The Stratford cinder bomb-site track was large with each straight being about 80 yards or so. Although we always tried very hard, defeat at their hands was always inevitable. Most of the time we were terrified by these tough East London boys. The well known Len Silver (later manager of West Ham Speedway) was almost a legend outside Stratford. In **Barking Park** was an officially built track by the local council. Quite small and very circular this venue always attracted a good crowd particularly on Sunday afternoons.

Participation in the National knock out competitions meant travelling even further afield with major expenses and a drain on teenage pockets. The **Wallabies** were drawn to several faraway teams including **Hastings**, **Eastbourne**, **St Mary Cray** in Kent and **Drayton St Leonard** a small village near Oxford. Sometimes a coach was hired for transport but more often a friend's lorry was used. Usually these matches were friendly enough but after defeating the Eastbourne team the Wallabies were pelted with grass turves as we departed singing 'Maybe it's because we are Londoners!' At Hastings the track was in the Old Town near the fishing sheds. More about Drayton St Leonards and St Mary Cray in a moment.

Some of the remembered riders

Wantz Wallabies

Roy Johnson, captain, pretty good rider always with a good machine. He lived in Forth Avenue, Rush Green, Romford with neighbouring riders **Dennis Polley** and **Ron Pracey**. Despite often suffering badly from asthma Ron was a daring rider who once dislocated his thumb in a race then pressed it back ready to race in the next heat.

Ted Jones (from your website we learn he went on to ride for Stratford Hammers) was a very good and consistent team man. He was tall and often looked a bit ungainly on his bike. Red headed **Ted Risley** was a character and a very strong rider. Humorous and a trumpet player he is remembered for playing a tune on a funnel stuffed into a bit of old hose pipe. He could also ride a bike from one side standing a one pedal.

Ron Martin and **Don Whitlock** were late arrivals at the Wantz and in the early days were trained by myself. Don again is shown on the website as also joining Stratford in later years. He was well known for his sartorial dress usually in all over maroon (more later on this).

Peter Webb and **Tony Spence** were average riders and Peter was pretty unreliable. **Roy Went** was a casual reserve but our equipment was always stored in his back garden just across the road and his sister Eileen married the Wallabies captain Roy. **Wally Boughton** was another character and manager of the Wallabies for some years. He never was a rider and always a bit odd. And that only leaves me **Derek (Del) Baker**.

I lived in the Old Dagenham village and was a schoolmate of Ron Martin and Don Whitlock. We three were pupils at the South East Essex Technical School. Ron and Don came into speedway through me and I taught them both the name of the game. I was much better than them to begin with but as I lost form they went on to be much better riders.

Romford riders

Les McGillivray and his brother were superb riders and rode for a Romford team in Jutsums Road Romford. Les was possibly the best in the area and went on to ride for Rayleigh Rockets speedway professionally. Two others were a chap nicknamed '**Sleuth**' and his friend **Jacky Smith**. Sleuth was a middle class lad and we never knew his real name (more later). Jacky Smith was a good rider but was killed in Korea while on National Service. Cycle speedway teams suffered a lot from the loss of riders due to call-up for two years National Service. For example, Tony Spence went to Hong Kong, Ron Martin to Malaysia and regrettably Jackie Brown never returned from the Korean war.

Clothing

Apart from wearing old sweaters, trousers and boots, clothing soon became an important part of the team's image. At Wantz we wore the very new US style fleece lined wind-cheaters (now called sweatshirts). These were then decorated (by my mother and sister) with the team's black Wallaby insignia on the yellow sweatshirt embroidered appliqué style. Trousers were optional but some wore corduroy riding breeches. Most clothing was purchased from the many WW2 surplus stores particularly the almost obligatory ex- despatch rider trench boots suitably studded. Other clubs often used team coloured tabards over their usual clothes. Crash helmets were attempted but were never successful but good gloves were necessary often ex-WW2 gauntlet type. Mention was earlier made of Don Whitlock's clothing style. He favoured an all maroon outfit with maroon coloured breeches, sweater and brown trench boots coloured with ox-blood dye. Very dashing.

Bikes

The bikes were always home built usually from scrap. But as time went by and funds improved machines were improved with new wheels, new handlebars, cranks, gears and so

on. Mudguards and brakes were never used because senior speedway bikes never did. Tyres were a problem and those who could afford them used Michelin tyres because they looked the part having the nearest appearance to the knobbly tyres used by speedway riders. Gearing of cranks and freewheels was a personal choice but were often 44: 22 if my memory is correct. The lack of brakes and lights were concerns to us particularly when riding from track to track in central London.! But we were good riders and I cannot remember having any difficulty. When one needed to stop one simply put a foot between the lower frame and the front tyre or a boot heel against the rear tyre and the rear lower fork. And we never rode on the pavements unlike today. There was a high degree of mechanical skills before and after the racing. In the pits wonders were performed such as wheel rebuilding following collisions where wheel spokes were ripped out. Often a wheel could be rebuilt and re-spoked between one race and the next scheduled ride. Riders usually carried spare spokes like arrows in a quiver and a spoke key was a rider's best friend.

Injuries.

Apart from the many cuts, grazes and bruises injuries were very few. Pulled back muscles were common and there were some dislocations. I broke my right arm thus excusing me from PT (now PE) much to the fury of our PT master Mr Thomas. My most horrible graze was down the whole left side of my face from forehead to chin.

Management

Again what the speedway world did – we did. So where the senior sport was controlled by the ACU (Auto Cycle Union) we had our own local control board based at Cambell School, Becontree. The control board kept records of teams and riders and controlled the transfer of riders from team to team. It dealt with test matches between areas e.g. Romford v Dagenham, and disciplined riders for infringements of the rules. Of course it had no real legal authority but it did its work well simply because there was an understanding that some order was necessary to control the sport. One amusing example was the case of the rider who failed to turn up for an important test match. He had been chosen to ride for Dagenham test team but failed to show. He was hauled up before the control board and justice was seen to be done by imposing a suspension for some period. The earlier mentioned 'Sleuth', being an educated lad, was chosen as the defending counsel and the 'trial' was a very fair one.

Supporters clubs

Many clubs had supporters clubs which were mainly friends and families of the riders. Certainly in the case of Wantz Wallabies this was true where almost half of the supporters alone were from the large family of Ron Pracey. There were about 20/30 supporters who not only helped with their membership subscriptions but lent a hand with various tasks at the track. Away trips by coach were a great success with the club's friends and when we visited St Mary Cray in Kent their eyes were opened to what a real supporters club could do. Being a more affluent area the friends of that club had more cash and the track had crash barriers, separate pits for home and visiting teams, floodlights for evening races, uniforms and so on. Mind you it did not have the same enjoyment feel that we had. Maybe this was due to the over involvement of the adults and parents. When we raced at Drayton St Leonards the supporters came too and after the match everyone was entertained to tea in the village hall. This gave us a problem because where could we reciprocate this hospitality when they visited the Wantz for the return match. Eventually the problem was solved when the local café proprietor closed his café and laid on a spread for our supporters and the visitors.

Charities and carnivals.

As well as the usual local league events and test matches Wantz

Wallabies had fun supporting some local charity events with demonstrations of cycle speedway. Two such events were in the grounds of South Ockenden hospital to raise cash for the hospital and the other was involvement in raising money for charity in the well known Barking Carnival. During one such event, following a recent rocket propelled speedway bike demo at West Ham, we did the same with golden rain fireworks attached to the rear forks of the bikes. !

Sponsorship.

Nationally the best sponsor was the then 'News Chronicle' newspaper who promoted the new sport nationwide and provided the main trophy for the national knockout competition. Locally the 'Dagenham Post' enthusiastically supported cycle speedway thanks to efforts of its Editor who regularly published race and match results and provided a trophy for the Wallabies team. These reports can still be inspected at the Newspaper and Periodical Library (part of the British Library) at Colindale North London. Other support came from the local cycle dealers namely Sisleys and Castle Sports. Sisleys in particular could not believe the stress to which we subjected our bikes. Regular failures of gears, handlebars, cotter pins etc were studied by the shop and trials took place to find solutions to the problems.

In conclusion

Without cycle speedway BMX bikes and mountain bikes may not have developed as they did. The frames, the tyres, the lack of mudguards were all features of our sport. The one thing today's bikes introduced were those silly pointless styrene crash helmets!. We would never have been seen dead in such a daft item of clothing. But more important that that was the comparison with today's teenagers.

The teenagers of the late forties and early fifties created a sport with no help from anybody. No adults, no money, no recognition – we did it all ourselves which was remarkable when one stops to note the ages were around 15 to 18 years old. There was no hooliganism, no drugs and no alcohol but there was creativity, exercise, companionship, adventure and organisational work. In many cases it bought the respect and support of parents and friends, the police and local authorities.

That's all I can remember

Derek (Del) Baker Wantz Wallabies

. The article above was submitted by Derek 'Del' Baker who rode for the Wantz Wallabies In the 40's. Derek contacted the VCSRA on Boxing day after visiting our web site . I am pleased to say he is now a member. I am sure there are many members in the East London and South Essex areas that will remember him.



Dagenham's Match Race Champion, Don Whitelock, looks very pleased with the trophy just presented him. Hold him someone !

H. Messum (A.C.S.) Photo.

To support Derek's article we have included this picture from the winter of 1950/51 edition of '*Amateur Cycle Speedway*'. Can anyone identify any of the others in the picture?



V.C.S.R.A Archive Do You Remember Scrap Book

The article on the left was reproduced from **'Graham Payne's Cycle Speedway Annual for 1953'** I wonder if Dennis Bottazzi, who has been a VCSRA member since 1996 remembers the track.

For myself my first thought was that the picture had been taken outside the Bank of England!

They were all captains in 1947

A NOTHER memory photograph for many. It shows (left to right) D. Bottazzi, J. Walker, K. Godwin and J. Buttery all ready for the "Off!" in a Captains' race back in '47.

Yes, in those days these riders were all captains. Bottazzi of the West End Wanderers. Walker of the Islington Tigers. Godwin of the Edmonton Eagles and Buttery of the London Pirates. Only the Wanderers and Bottazzi are together and still in operation. The

other three have long since "retired" from the sport.

This is a typical photograph from the "bad ole days." The track was probably of earth. It is raining heavily and a small crowd stay behind gamely to watch the racing. The old fashioned single elastic "fly-across" starting apparatus was used. And, if you look closer, you will see that Buttery (extreme right) is using a hub brake on his front wheel. In 1952, this sort of attachment is banned and is classed as "dangerous."

What year was this presentation, does anyone remember the track behind Pirrelli's cable works and who where 'The Turfs'. This item was taken from a 1951 edition of **'Amateur Cycle Speedway'**

Happy? We'll Say We Are!

They're mighty happy down Southampton way, and our picture shows a group of riders who took part in an Individual Championship some seasons ago. In the centre is Elderidge of the Turfs and on his left is Cecil Bailly, well known speedway rider who presented the trophies. It's an old photo, but one which we feel will bring back memories to many south coasters.

The championship was held in aid of the R.A.F. Association and was raced on Southampton's newest track behind Messrs Pirrelli's Cable Works.





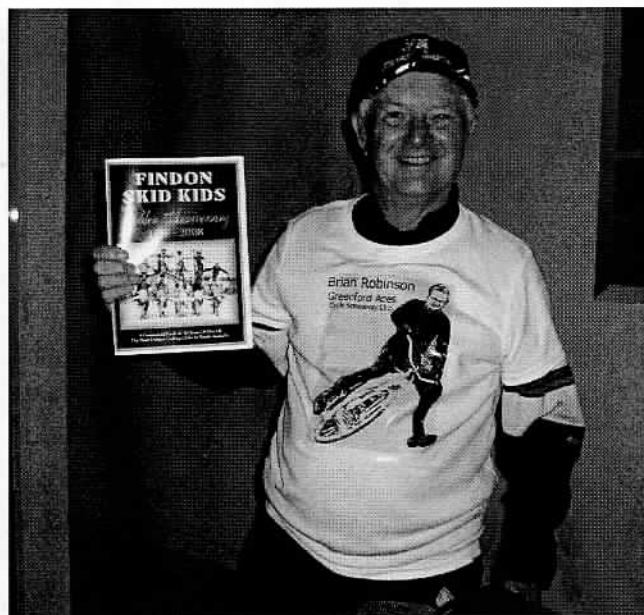
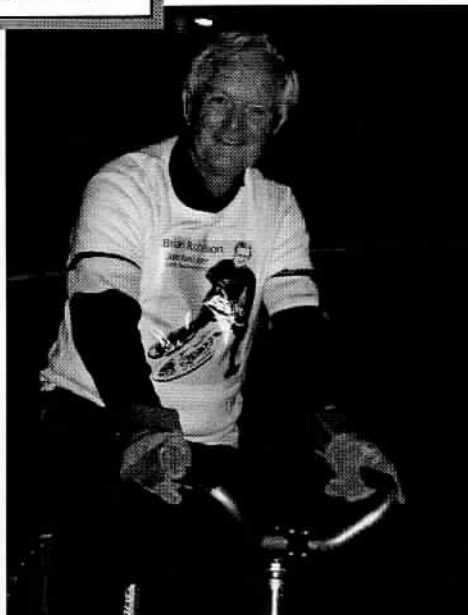
Scottish Riders crowding out Terry Platford.

1957 Glasgow League Champions
Knightswood Toffs at the Whipps
Cross Comets track in 1958.
Team members (in no particular order)
Johnny Gillies, Jor Letts, Hamish Orr,
Doug Maxwell, Jimmy Cobaine &
Bob Bray.



Irish Individual Champion
Paddy Hunt leads Eric Hemsley
& John Woolnough.





I am writing about a recent visit to the Eastern States of Australia, from Perth, where my wife Joan and I live. After a lovely time seeing relatives and all the sights, we ended up in Adelaide. I had already been in touch with Mike Harley who runs the Findon Cycle Speedway Club and arranged a visit on one of their practice nights and to have a few laps for old times sake. I even made a tee shirt with a picture of me and the Greenford Aces printed on to it for the occasion. We were made most welcome and Mick soon had a bike out for me to ride on. I ride most days around our retirement village, so I was looking forward to riding on the Findon track.

The amenities are very good indeed, they think they have the best in the world and with showers, club room and a shed full of bikes and riders from about 5 years old and upwards and a beautiful floodlit track, I think it probably is. They held the recent World Championships there and it was said to be the best ever. As soon as I got on the bike it felt just like old times and after a couple of laps I got into the old style! Altogether I did around thirty laps during the evening and thoroughly enjoyed it. Mick gave us a tour of the facilities and presented me with a Findon Comets hat and a fifty year history of the club, which is very interesting and also several DVD's of the World Championships. I then signed the wall they have for visiting riders to leave their names and the team they ride for before we made our way back to the hotel. It was a very special night to remember.

