

## **A Trip to the Eastern States**

*By Steve Harland*

In October/November 2006 I was fortunate enough to spend some time touring round New Zealand with my fiancé. One Saturday teatime we were travelling towards Picton on South Island when we came across a sign saying 'Eastern States Speedway'. My curiosity got the better of me and after driving up a dirt track for what seemed like an eternity we finally came across a speedway track in the middle of nowhere, next to what I think was a cement works.

I'm not sure if they stage 'solos' here but I took some photos of which only four remain as my good lady decided to delete half a dozen others - no comment! There was no cover for spectators just grassed areas and a safety fence that reminded me of the old Aycliffe stock car track in the days before health and safety became such an issue.

The track is situated in the Marlborough district of Renwick in Blenheim. The track looked big and fast with long straights and a clay surface. Having checked online the track is 422 metres long and four more photos can be found on the following website link: [www.easternstatespeedway.co.nz](http://www.easternstatespeedway.co.nz)





We missed a meeting at Ronnie Moore Park in Christchurch by just two days and had no luck in seeing the 'solo' boys in action though we did attend a motocross meeting at Taupo which featured Stefan Everts and Joel Smelts.

Rugby, horse racing and car racing seem to be the big sports in New Zealand and 'solos' seem way down on the list of priorities for natives. I wonder if we will ever see a New Zealand world champion again in my lifetime?

One genuine speedway connection was located the day we were flying back, we bumped into former Ipswich and Peterborough promoter James Easter at Auckland airport. The Travel Plus boss was there with two other people wearing Speedway Star Travel Club jackets. We exchanged a brief conversation; to my surprise James Easter was well aware of my involvement with the Boro Bears junior team.

The biggest disappointment though was being given former Rayleigh/Hackney/Teesside/Workington & Berwick rider Roger Wright's contact details the day we were due to leave. Roger lives in his hometown of Christchurch and I had wanted to meet up with him. Funnily enough the contact who provided those details came through a third party.

Former rider Malcolm McPhie - he won the Stars of Tomorrow at Berwick in 1971 and promptly disappeared off the face of the earth, held a kart racing enduro event at

South Tees Motorsport Park as part of his 60th birthday celebrations recently. One of the competitors was a gentleman called Stuart Collin. Stuart had a dabble with speedway in 1974/5 appearing in second halves at tracks such as Teesside and Workington, as well as being involved with training schools at Stoke. Roger Wright and Tom Black stayed with Stuart on his farm at the English version of Picton when they rode at Teesside in the mid 1970s and Stuart was the contact who provided the details - what a small world we live in!

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