

## Riders to Remember...Eric Boothroyd



Eric Boothroyd

Eric Boothroyd was Halifax's favourite greengrocer and the man for whom the word avuncular could have been created.

Like many others his career started on the makeshift tracks in post-war Germany as he rode in meetings for service personnel. Boothroyd served as a corporal dispatch rider in the Royal Signals and was stationed at Hanomag. He finished third in the army championship within months of his first appearances.

On demob he returned to the UK and started his career for real, turning out for both Tamworth and Cradley Heath in the 1950 season.

He put down roots at Birmingham the following season and enjoyed it so much he stayed for seven years. During his years as a Brummie he became a regular England international, even top scoring on the tour of South Africa in the winter of 1956-57.

Individual success also followed as he qualified for his one and only World Final in 1956. Eric started well and scored five points in his first two races, including leading home Ronnie Moore. He could only muster two points from his remaining three rides and finished in a disappointing tenth position. Ove Fundin scored thirteen points under the Wembley lights to win his first World Title.

A move closer to home followed in 1958 when he turned out for Bradford, then short spells with Leicester and Oxford followed.

By the turn of the sixties the National League was toiling and a new Provincial League had been formed by Mike Parker and his associates. The league utilised many

venues that had not staged the sport for many years, Middlesbrough's Cleveland Park being one such example. Reg Fearman reopened the track for the 1961 season and installed Eric as his team captain.

Eric made his experience count and he proved to be a huge scorer in this lower standard of racing. His best season was in 1962 when he was the top scorer in the league and averaged over 11 points a meeting (though averages were calculated slightly differently back then).

He was still on the World Championship and international stage as well. He finished runner up to Ivan Mauger, and there's no disgrace in that, in the Provincial League Final of the 1962 World Championship. He also had the honour of captaining England in Provincial League internationals against Scotland.

Into every life a little rain must fall and Eric's lowest point came when he was riding for Long Eaton in 1964. He was unfortunate enough to be behind Charlie Monk when the Aussie took a spill at Sheffield. Eric rode right into Monk's out of control machine and fractured his pelvis. Given his relatively advanced years it's not surprising that he seriously contemplated retirement at that point.

He probably would have been lost to the sport had Reg Fearman not reopened Halifax for the 1965 season. The chance to ride for his home-town team was too good to resist, particularly given his business interests in the town. The National and Provincial Leagues amalgamated that season so the standard of competition was much higher. Despite this Eric was able to average over eight points a meeting, coming third in the Dukes' averages behind Eric Boocock and Dave Younghusband.

The highlight of Eric's career came in his second year with Halifax (1966). He captained the Dukes to a treble (British League, KO Cup and Northern League). He later remarked:

"Leading the Dukes to the British League championship in 1966 and to winning the Knock-Out Cup gave me more pleasure than winning a World Final would, for I have always considered myself as a team man. Without team racing, which is the bread and butter of the sport, speedway in this country wouldn't be the success it is today."

Eric continued to turn out for the Dukes until the end of the 1968 season, before heading into retirement. Although he was no spring chicken the retirement was perhaps a little premature as he was still capable of scoring eight points a meeting.

His association with Halifax Speedway was far from over however. He immediately joined the board of Northern Speedways and ran the track in conjunction with Fearman. He was still running the club when the Dukes moved to Bradford in 1986.

---

---

We always welcome and value any feedback from our visitors. If you'd like to comment on this article then please fill in our feedback form at <http://www.speedwayplus.com/EricBoothroyd.shtml#feedback>