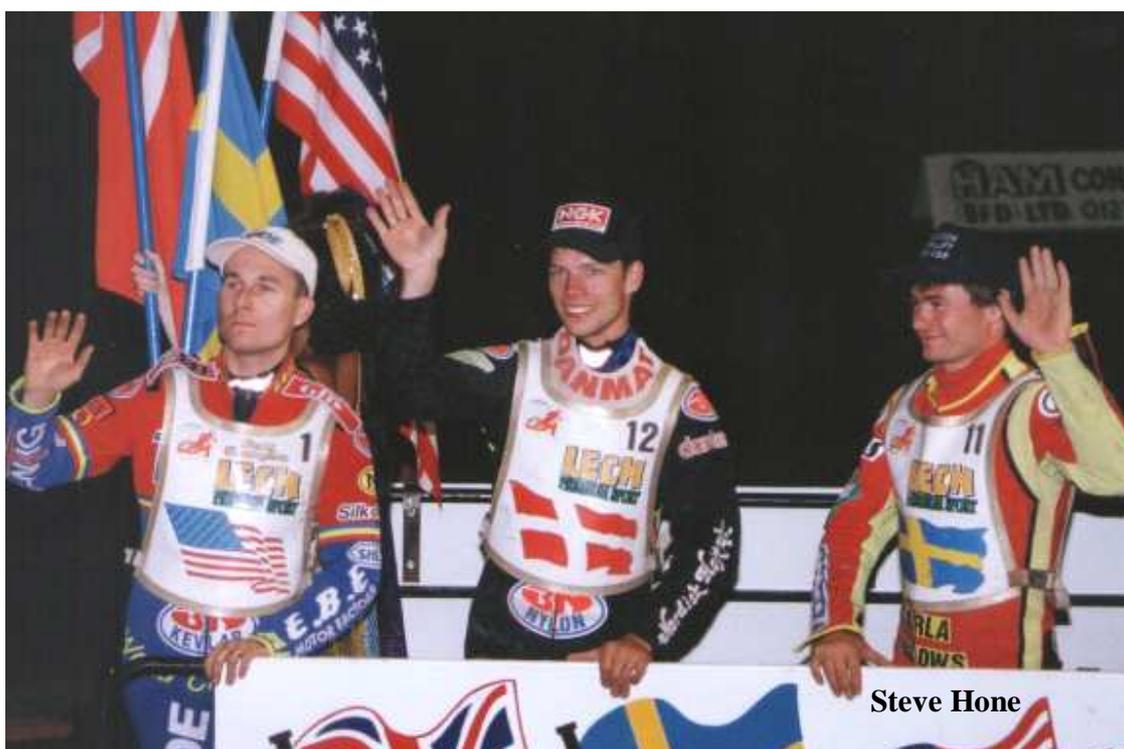


THE FIRST EVER FREE SPEEDWAY MAGAZINE!

THE VERY BEST OF

SpeedwayPlus

ISSUE 4 – SPRING 2006



Steve Hone

**EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH
BRIAN ANDERSEN**

JASON CRUMP BOOK EXTRACT

GIFFY THE STUNTMAN!

ON TOUR WITH THE HAWKS

**NORFOLK
ARENA**

**THE PAIN
OF THE
RAIN**

**GRABBING
THE
HEADLINES**

**THE MIKE
BENNETT
COLUMN**

ALMERIA

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Welcome to the spring edition of our little magazine. Our headline feature in this issue is an exclusive interview with Brian Andersen, a true world star throughout the nineties and a rider who was hit hard by injuries just when he seemed to be reaching his peak. In this very honest and open interview, Brian recalls his time in the GP, in the British League and the injuries that plagued his career. He also tells us about his new life as a tuner to stars like Antonio Lindback, Morten Risager and Tony Rickardsson.

Thanks to Martin Rogers we're able to bring you an exclusive excerpt from the new Jason Crump autobiography. Jason outlines the demands now made on GP stars and shares his thoughts on the set-up at Belle Vue.

Dave Gifford was a hilarious interview subject in our first issue, he now returns as a columnist and he tells us about his off-season occupation – television stuntman!

Chris Seaward reflects on the recent ELRC and wet meetings in general.

No magazine would be complete without a column from Mike Bennett. He's never short of a word or seven and this time around he's campaigning for the British GP to be moved to Norfolk!

As always, we must stress that we couldn't produce the magazine or website without the contributions we receive. If you're an aspiring writer or photographer then get in touch and we'll put you to work!

Edition five of the magazine will be available on the site towards the end of July.

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SpeedwayPlus always welcomes unsolicited contributions.

“ At the time I didn't think about it, but I should have known you can't go out and win a Grand Prix with a broken collarbone. ”

World Under 21 Champion, British Grand Prix Winner, Danish International – there's not much that **Brian Andersen** didn't achieve. We caught up with Brian at his tuning workshops in Denmark to find out about his new life and to look back on his glittering career.

Brian, Thanks for agreeing to take part in this interview

No problem. When you've been part of speedway for many years and been professional for 10 years you're used to being in the spotlight and then all of a sudden, within a few seconds, you're not. Which can sometimes be quite hard to get used to.

If I could ride speedway tomorrow I would, not for being in the spotlight, but just because I love to ride speedway bikes. When I was twelve years old it was what I wanted to do. It's nice that people still take an interest in what you do and where you've gone to.

Let's start by talking about your tuning business

I work with quite a few riders, a mixture of top riders and up and coming youngsters. Grand Prix riders – Antonio Lindback, Tony Rickardsson and I work with Piotr Protasiewicz. It's difficult to take in too many Grand Prix riders because it's very demanding to do the engines as the meetings are every fortnight.

Do you actually travel to the GPs?

I do yes. Last year I had a deal with Antonio to help him out at the Grand Prix rounds. A lot of people asked how I could just work with one rider, but I'd helped him for three years and going into the GP was a big step for him. He's only 20 years old and I've always been interested in helping the youngsters and he needed an extra pair of hands. He decided to pay for all my travel and for me being there, but it takes three to four days out of the week so it's a big thing to lose that many days throughout the season.

I've been going to all the GPs, I think Lonigo was the only one I didn't go to last year. Mainly because I also help Morten Risager on a personal note. I've been working with him since he started on the 500cc's. Morten is more of a personal project, it's how far can you get these youngsters by guiding them and passing on your experience? I really enjoy that. Hopefully they won't make the same mistakes that I did!



Brian in his workshop

I do a lot of different riders' engines and we run the company so that no matter who they are, they get the same kind of service. That's our main aim.

You can look on our website and see what our tuning business does. We're selling our own products. We're making fly-wheels and all that for Speedway.

We take orders by email, but we deal direct with our biggest customers as we're doing all their engines. These days you have to build the engine up to individually suit each rider to give

him the set up he likes. This means different types of fly-wheels, different size of crank pin and other parts. We have a GM import in Denmark so we're importing a lot of parts and tuning engines for our riders. We have so far around 32 or 33 different riders.

Could you take on more riders if they want to get in touch?

Yes, they're very welcome to give me a ring or send me a mail. We have a mixture of riders, we're based in Denmark but I think we only have three Danish riders. So it's mainly foreign riders – Swedish, Polish, English – we have a good mixture.



In 'Team Lindback' colours

Looking back on your own career, you started out when you were 12 at Fredericia. What was the 80cc speedway like?

Yeah, that's where the Danish riders learn to ride the bike. 80cc bikes are not the easiest to ride on, you don't really have enough horsepower to get the wheel spinning. You have to really ride hard, use your throttle control and your body to get the bike to ride properly and the rear wheel spinning. In speedway you can't turn your bike unless your rear wheel is rotating, spinning loose off the track, if there's full traction all the time you can't turn it. You have to slide and get your wheel spinning, it's a crafty thing, you have to get the technique and you learn that from an early age. In my first season it took me the whole year to slide the bike, I did it for the first time in the last meeting. Up until then I'd been two-wheeling the bike. All of a sudden it just clicked and it worked. From then on it gets into your backbone and stays there. I went out riding at the end of last season, just for fun, and the riding style is the same as when I got off the bike three years ago. It's just

something in your spine and you can't change it that easily.

Is there no way you could consider a comeback, would your injuries not allow that?

No, since my injury, a prolapsed disc in my neck, I still have a lot of problems. Mainly to do with the muscles in my neck, every time I get a problem it puts pressure on my spinal cord and the muscles surrounding it tense up. I get a lot of headaches from that, almost on a daily basis. That's naturally keeping me away and not tempting me. I was out at Coventry's last meeting in 2005 and the Coventry riders asked me and my brother Jan to come over and have a match-race. I did that and I was very happy about it, but it didn't do the neck much good. I did have a lot of headaches from that. If I didn't have my neck problem I would definitely ride tomorrow, that's for sure.

You first became known on the world stage back in 1991 when you won the Under 21 World Championship, what do you remember about that night?

That's a few years ago but that's when I first broke into the news in England. I had spoken to Coventry a little while before the final at Coventry. Tommy Knudsen was a good friend of mine and asked me if I wanted to come to Coventry. I was in the middle of my apprenticeship so it wasn't really the best time. Eventually I agreed to do the rest of the season but then all of a sudden the averages didn't fit and I never got to ride for Coventry that year.

Didn't you sign for Newcastle at that stage?

Yes I did. After the World Final, Newcastle signed me for the rest of the season. There was only three weeks left and it was only for three meetings. I did a deal with my employer and they agreed I could take time off if I made the hours up afterwards, so I had a busy time in the winter making up those hours! I rode the three meetings for Newcastle and that was my introduction to British Speedway. It was quite good fun as a young guy, I was only 20 at a time, so it was good experience.

The following season you signed for Coventry

Yes, it was obviously in the pipeline as they had already contacted me. So in my contract with Newcastle it said I was free to go at the end of the season. Tommy found me a family to stay with, Craig and Angela, who lived a little bit outside Leicester and I ended up staying with them for three seasons. It was a good place for me, as a young rider, to get established. I was like one of the family, with Sunday dinner which

we're not used to in Denmark. It was quite nice when you're away from home to be part of someone else's family.

You stayed with Coventry for almost 10 years, what were the highlights of your time there?

First of all, I should stress that Coventry was my favourite track. The old track, before they changed it, was for me the best track in the world and the best home track you could ever wish for. It was big shame for me to see that getting changed.

We didn't really win any silverware at Coventry apart from the Craven Shield. We had some really, really strong sides on paper but we got hit by a lot of injuries. The team never really seemed to perform as it should.

I really enjoyed Coventry and I had the opportunity to ride with a lot of good riders. When I first came over there was Rick Miller, Tommy Knudsen and John Jorgensen. There was also Peter Ravn at one stage, Simon Wigg and Hans Nielsen. I've been able to ride in the same team as a lot of good guys. I was all ears and eyes, studying their professional approach, I think that helped me during my career.

What about the Grand Prix, your first year in it was 1997 and you actually finished sixth that season.

I was actually second at one stage in the Grand Prix standings after my victory at Bradford, which was obviously one of the highlights of my career. I was second in the standings and only seven points behind Greg (Hancock). Things were going good, even in Elite League meetings, until three or four days before the next GP at Wroclaw. I broke my collarbone.

Was that the first time you'd broken it?

Yes, the very first time. On 80cc in 1987 I broke my foot, otherwise I'd gone through ten years without major injury, which is obviously quite good for a speedway rider! In '97 I unfortunately got hit by this injury before Wroclaw. What I did then I've regretted many times afterwards, until I spoke to specialists. I broke my collarbone in Sweden on the Tuesday and on the way back I spoke to Tommy Knudsen who organised for me to see a doctor on the Wednesday. I consulted him and on Thursday lunchtime I went to get my collarbone plated. I went for an operation, had a plate put in and on Friday I went on an airplane to Wroclaw and on Saturday night rode in the GP.

Unfortunately the track was very, very rough as it had rained a lot and it looked like it may be called off. Unfortunately it wasn't and I had to go through the pain barrier big-time as you're

not allowed to take any painkillers, because of doping. I'll never forget that!



Celebrating Victory at Bradford
(Picture by Steve Hone)

Do you think may have affected the injury in the long-term and you may have been better to rest then?

A lot of people said that and I had that in the back of my mind. People have said I shouldn't have done that and "It ruined the rest his career". I've been talking to specialists and they say the healing process of a bone can actually stop if a bone breaks with a very high force. The people I've been speaking to have said that if I hadn't had it plated it might not have healed anyway. I'm now thinking that maybe I didn't do anything wrong. It was wrong of me to ride three days after the injury, that was stupid, whether it was plated or not! If you have the ambition to be world champion you do anything within your power to compete. At the time I didn't think about it, but I should have known you can't go out and win a Grand Prix with a broken collarbone. I never had that thought in my mind, I've thought about it afterwards, but not at the time.

I still managed to win the 'D' final against Leigh Adams and another couple of guys (Henka Gustafsson and Rafal Dobrucki), so I wasn't doing that badly with a broken collarbone and it was something of an achievement.

If I recall it, that was actually the night that Princess Diana got killed, I always remember that. I couldn't sleep that night because I was in such pain. All I had was a water cooler, a thing that you wrapped around your shoulder, just to take some of pain away. I remember I couldn't

INTERVIEW – BRIAN ANDERSEN

sleep and then we heard on the news that Diana was killed in a car crash. I have many memories of that GP!

You were still in the Grand Prix as recently as 2001, but your performances after that '97 crash were never at the same high level.

No, a lot of people don't know but after I had my collarbone plated, the following season I broke it again with the plate still in. I actually went to my doctor who took the plate out and he said they could tell from the x-ray that the collarbone had healed. I could just feel that it hadn't. I could put my fingers down and feel the two bones and they weren't following each other. I never felt 100% and I also broke my left collarbone. I think that my collarbone injury has cost me a lot in my career, there again, the decision I made at that time may not have made any difference.

I did struggle along in the Grand Prix for five years and it wasn't always fun psychologically as I felt I could do better. It never really went right for me after that. You can have regrets but I did my best and even though I didn't get the best results in the GP, I still put everything into the sport and everything into my bikes and had a professional approach. I did fitness training and everything to make good results but it didn't work out. I just wanted to make sure that when I was sixty I could look back on my career, with my grandchildren around me and say I did my best. I may not have been World Champion but I did everything within my power to get there.

In '97 things were working out well but it wasn't to be. That was my biggest chance of the title and I enjoyed that system, it worked for me. The following season they changed to the 'cut-throat' system and I was not that kind of rider. If you look back on my '97 GP season I almost always threw my first race away. I don't know if it was nerves, it just never worked in the first heat – even at Bradford I was third when I snapped a primary chain. I made a full house after that. All the other GPs were the same, I might as well have thrown away the first race and not taken part. I think it was nerves, after the first race you settle and then go to work.

Of course, in the new formula if you messed up the first race you were in trouble.

I felt that quite often you would get out on gate three or four and then if you make a bad start in the first race then you've got one leg out of the door. The spirit between the riders totally changed. I remember at the Bradford GP everybody talked and had a laugh, it was serious racing when the meeting was on, but before and after it was like a normal league meeting. We would help each other and lend

people things. I remember the Bradford Grand Prix when Greg Hancock's van went on fire on the way up to the meeting. I offered him a loan of my bike even though he was my closest opponent, we were fighting for first and second place in the GP. I loaned him my bike and Norrie, Mark Loram's mechanic, was there changing tyres and loaning him tyres.



On Top of the World – Odsal '87
(Picture by Steve Hone)

That wouldn't happen today, after the system changed it went 'cold air' between everybody, in the pits and even after the meeting around the vans. It lost that big family feeling. I personally liked that, when you could talk before you got down to the serious business. It wasn't like that when the new system came in. I don't think people could face each other and be nice to each other when they knew that when it came to the crunch they had to put people in the fence. I didn't like it and I know a lot of other people didn't like it.

We also see now that they've changed it back again that a lot of the more steady riders' results are starting to get better again. I'm thinking about a rider like Bjarne Pedersen, he's more my type of character. He doesn't make out he's the World Champion, he's very quiet and concentrates on his racing, he's not a wild guy but he makes good results because he's a good speedway rider. He's not a dirty rider and in the end he's going to win if they keep this system. This system will help him as he's there all the time and all of a sudden he's got enough points and he's in the 'A' final.

You didn't win anything at Coventry, but you moved to Oxford and won the league.

Yeah, that's one of the highlights in my English career. I didn't manage to do it with Coventry, which I had very much wanted to. I always quite enjoyed Coventry, the way we did the contracts and the way I was involved with the team and the team managers.

Things did change a little bit when Colin Pratt came in and took over as co-promoter. Things went in a different direction to what I liked and

INTERVIEW – BRIAN ANDERSEN

in the end we couldn't agree terms and I sat out for quite a while until Colin Meredith called me up. That was at the end of 2000, he phoned and asked if I was interested in coming to Oxford. I agreed to go there and was quite happy and agreed to stay there.

The following season we had a very good side. I especially enjoyed my partnership with Todd Wiltshire, I'd had a similar partnership with John Jorgensen one year. I'd say that would have been '94 or '95. John and I were paired on 3 and 4 and we scored so many 5-1's together and had so many great races. That year with Todd was the same, we'd swap racejackets and score a lot of 5-1's. It's a very nice feeling as a rider when you don't really have to talk, because you know on the track what the other one is doing. It took a little while before Todd realised how I would team ride, once he clicked that we were quite an awesome pair.

That was definitely an enjoyable season and we became good friends with Colin Meredith and his wife Norma. She's actually staying here, she came today for a short holiday. They're more or

less our English grandparents for my daughter. I got to know them when I was Coventry and I lodged with them when I went to Oxford.

That was an enjoyable time and I was riding for them again in 2002 until I crashed. I think it was the first time in all my English career that I started off with some really, really good scores. I usually started off slow, with sixes and sevens. That year I started with elevens and thirteens, before I crashed!

And you missed your own testimonial meeting

That was a big shame as I was very much looking forward to that. You can't do anything about injuries.

Speedway Plus would like to thank Brian for taking the time to speak to us. You can find out more about his tuning business – Brian Andersen Engineering – by visiting his website at <http://www.bar-engineering.dk>

TRACK PICTURES: ALMERIA

Harry Ward captured these pictures of the new circuit in Almeria (Spain). Former rider Russell Paine is building the track as a warm weather training camp. A formal opening will take place later this year.





THE PAIN OF THE RAIN

Chris Seaward reflects on the recently abandoned Elite League Riders Championship and wonders whether 'wet meetings' are gone forever.

Whatever happened to the once casually 'lugged about' speedway phrase 'He's good in the wet'? What modern day speedway riders can you confidently brand wet track riders? The introduction of air fences certainly hasn't encouraged top flight riders to brave the wet conditions, so why is it that the rain now plays a larger role in speedway than ever before?

Is the rain a scapegoat for many riders' true feelings? Does even the slightest drop of moisture reveal the lack of passion, and furthermore uncover the business characteristic, of being a top class speedway rider? And what has the sport in Britain done in the last ten years to actually confront the problem of rain? Where are the covers, the dry shale and the impetus to overcome adversity? How are we going to keep Sky Sports on our side when Formula 1, Motocross, Moto Gp and most other forms of motor sport can manage to operate in the wet? Why are we so fragile, flimsy, negative and quick to admit defeat?

The ELRC had the makings of a fantastic evening's entertainment. Some careful planning had made sure most of the top names were present and, despite a slight shower shortly before the off, everything looked set for a cracking night.

It's fantastic for the sport staging a prestigious meeting like the ELRC in front of a big Easter Sunday audience with a prime time slot on Sky Sports 2. After six fairly decent races, which included some classic passes from Mark Loram and a slab of controversy courtesy of Hans Andersen, things were shaping up nicely. The track seemed to be improving and there was certainly no sign that any rider was struggling to adapt to the conditions. Lap times weren't phenomenally quick but they certainly weren't slow so it was a surprise when the track action took an abrupt halt after heat six. The following thirty minutes for any passionate speedway fan was horrendous, all the sport's darkest secrets were vividly splattered in front of a critical Sky Sports audience.

A psychologist would have thrived on the tension, animosity and ambiguity between riders, officials, fans and television pundits.

The riders were visibly weighing up the options, trying to subtly convey their true feelings through polite smiles and fake camaraderie. What was running through their minds? Maybe Poland the next day, would the meeting over run and therefore cause them to miss their flight? Or perhaps some were considering the opening round of the GP series a week down the line.

During the Sky TV Coverage the jovial Steve Johnston, whilst being interviewed, joked that real Speedway fans were extremely resilient. This is undoubtedly very true and it's that group of supporters that every week during the season will follow the sport regardless. They're the backbone that pay the riders wages, the ones that allow individuals like Johnno to make a living riding a motorcycle. Shouldn't they therefore be treated with slightly more respect?

It's not this hardcore, glutton for punishment, bunch that needs to be persuaded about the sport's entertainment value. What about the first time viewer? What would they have thought about a damp track, slight drizzle and a rabble of riders?

I hate watching speedway gruesomely humiliate and shoot itself in the foot in front of thousands of people. To watch something in which you passionately believe unnecessarily degrade and destruct itself in the most farcical circumstances makes you wonder why you bother. Why am I writing this article? Why will I continue to closely follow a sport that is so horrendously disjointed? Because I know it's worth it, so do you. Try persuading the unsympathetic Joe Public, who reached for his remote and navigated away from Sky Sports Two on that Sunday evening, that this summer our sport could provide him with a fantastic night of entertainment.

A WORLD OF MY OWN

Jason Crump has attracted plenty of acclaim for his newly-published life story *A World of My Own*, co-written with Australia-based journalist and former promoter **Martin Rogers**.

In this edited excerpt from the book, which is already breaking sales records in England and Europe, Jason discusses the demands of the hectic schedule which confronts the modern Grand Prix rider.

IN AMERICA, baseball and basketball players are out there doing their thing four or five times a week. Not many other sports demand so much of the participants, but speedway riders are able to identify with that sort of schedule. At the height of the season I might ride half a dozen times in a week in three or four different countries. It's a hectic and sometimes exhausting lifestyle. But then, at 6.30 or seven o'clock when it's time to compete, I just put on my race face and my weariness goes away for a while.

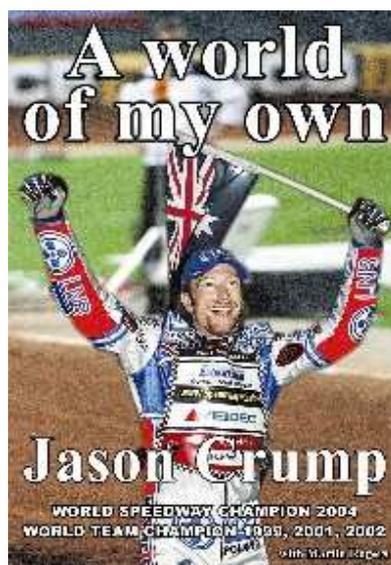
When the Grand Prix series is in full swing it's flying followed by practice followed by the race and back to the airport again. A successful season in England can involve 50 or 60 meetings. Then there are around 20-odd trips to Poland and Sweden during the year. I've been to Prague 30 times but, though people say it's one of the most beautiful cities in the world, I've never seen the sights. But there should be time for that later. My wife Mel and the kids get glimpses of some of the exotic locations because we've made it a habit to treat the GPs as our opportunity to travel as a family. It will be great to go back to some of those locations in a few years' time and have a proper look around.

In the meantime, it's business as usual. It would be a mistake to look too far ahead because in sport you never know what might happen next. My game plan for the start of 2006 was never going to be much different from previous years. I want to win the world championship. I hope to be capable of challenging for a few years yet.

The fact that Tony Rickardsson has announced that it will be his last season before he moves on to four wheels isn't going to affect my mindset too much, other than to say that this probably will be the last chance of beating him.

But nothing is for ever. Rickardsson starts 2006 level with everyone else on no points. If he

performs this year as he did last, he'll be the benchmark again, but hey, several of us will go into the season determined to show that he can be beaten, that he's just another guy, that maybe it's time for a changing of the guard.



I have learned not to get too far ahead of myself. It's one step at a time. This year is yet another season in which, hopefully, a lot of little steps may take me to where I want to be. I'm encouraged by the thought that last season, things went a lot better for me in the later GP rounds, and need to focus on that. You win things by getting your own act together. Get that right and the consequences can take care of themselves.

At a club level, I am very keen to win a few more titles. We went so close at Belle Vue last year, winning the KO Cup and being pipped in

the play-off final after being the team to beat in the league.

Going to Belle Vue was a challenge. There is so much history about the place, several of the best riders of all time have ridden for the Aces, and I would like to think I can do a job for them on par with all those other world champions.



Hyde Road
(Picture by Kathy Hitchen)

I don't have any real recollection of the Hyde Road track and what you can see on video or DVD doesn't necessarily convey the full picture. A lot of the fans there still love to reminisce about how it was when Ivan, Peter Collins or even before them, Peter Craven ruled the roost.

Fortunately, the success we started to enjoy last season means that an increasing number of fans have a current team to excite them rather than having to rely on past memories. They happen to think that what's going on now is as good as it gets and I'm with them.

John Perrin battled for years to give the people of Manchester what they wanted and there were a lot of reasons why it didn't happen for him as he would have hoped. He was a straight shooter who I must say was very good to me, always backed me 110 per cent in any and every situation, and riders appreciate having a promoter like that.

Tony Mole has been responsible for reviving and resurrecting more tracks than it's decent to recount, but you sense he is getting as much pleasure from the Belle Vue revival as anything else he has done in the sport in the past. And if an owner is going to put his trust in an experienced promoter to front the show, they don't come much more canny than Ian Thomas.

Sure, I have a two and a half hour trip just to home meetings but no complaints about that, the place suits me in so many ways. The fans are good, they want access and that's understandable, but not being based in the city

or even nearby does give me and the family the breathing space and privacy we like and to which we are all entitled. It can be quite different in Poland, which often tends to be pretty hectic. The fans are there in such numbers and they do like to get involved. It's definitely inspirational if you have several thousand of the crowd cheering for you and it has the ability to be a bit intimidating if you are at an away track and there's a close-to-unanimous disapproval rating going on. But whether they are for you or against you, the Polish speedway fans love to be entertained. If you put on a real show, they appreciate that. They've had a tough history, they appreciate people who put themselves on the line and for the most part the energy and excitement that's generated at meetings there is something special.

Riding full-time in three leagues, as I did for several years, is a huge commitment. Particularly with my GP ambitions in mind, it is something I simply did not want to continue to do indefinitely. Some people think you can lock into automatic and keep on doing the business day in, day out, in one country, then another, without a break. It's not as simple as it appears.

I am fortunate to have a great set-up, people around me who help organise my affairs, keep my schedule in order, make sure everything is ready to go on any given day of the week. But I've felt better since scaling back in Sweden and cutting my meetings from around 100 a year to something like 80-odd. And I'm certain it has helped me as far as the world championship is concerned.

As things stand, I enjoy racing in Sweden as much as I have done in the past, but if I was going to cut down on my schedule, this was the league which had to go. It suits me very well to do a limited number of meetings there and Bo Wirebrand at VMS Elit has been able to accommodate my wishes and still serve the best interests of his club.

Obviously if they are involved in a particularly important phase of the season and want me to do an extra meeting here or there, then I am going to do the best I can to help. But it's not smart to do someone else a favour if it can rebound on you and you end up doing yourself a disservice.

That might sound selfish, and to an extent it is, but that's the nature of elite sport. Don't forget, though, that a lot of people invest a great deal of time and effort into giving me the best possible chance of achieving my goals and it's only right that their take on it has to be considered as well.

JASON CRUMP – BOOK EXTRACT

As long as I am with the Aces, though, it's always going to be a tricky one to do the Swedish League on any sort of regular basis. There are plenty of good reasons for doing Poland - I'm riding for Wroclaw this year - and after going to and from for a while, Belle Vue have made Monday nights their own. That means backing up on Tuesdays a big ask. There's Poland every Sunday - sometimes arriving from a Grand Prix, other times flying out of England on the Saturday and stopping over in Copenhagen before completing the trip next day. Then there is the return trip to Manchester, as often as not getting in there in the afternoon and grabbing half an hour's rest before going off to race. You can never reckon to be back home and in bed before midnight and more often than not it's 12.30 or later.



Jason – Ready For the Off
(Picture by Ashley Sutton)

When I was doing Sweden on a regular basis it was a case of setting the alarm for seven in the morning, off to the airport again - and rocking up at Norrkoping or some other track about six feeling like doing almost anything but getting on a bike to race. It is too easy to end up knackered yourself, failing to turn in the performances you expect of yourself and others expect of you, and it was getting out of order. Of course we have a limited career span, there always is the temptation to take every opportunity you can, but in the final analysis it wasn't doing me or my speedway any good. I

am sure it knocked some of the edge off me during the Grand Prix campaigns and honestly, I'd rather be doing 80 meetings and feel keen about all of them rather than doing 100 and wishing I was somewhere else on perhaps 30 per cent.

A lot of people who have to go to work five days a week probably think that pampered, overpaid sports stars shouldn't complain about their lot, and that's fair comment. It doesn't mean to say, though, that we should be held prisoner 24/7 by the expectation of the public or officials. It was no coincidence that the consistency and the staying power which got me to the world title at last coincided with the first year in something like seven or eight seasons in which I hadn't chased every meeting. The fact that I won in 2004, after some near misses and many years of trying, doesn't make me any less keen to show that I can do it again. Maybe you have to give up a world title to fully appreciate what it means to win one.

The whole point of racing speedway at the highest level is to expose yourself to the toughest test of skill, character and staying power. Negotiate one hurdle, there will be another one along in just a minute. Pass one test, then prepare for the next. And if at first you don't succeed, then you need to do whatever it takes to sort yourself out and then come back for more, positive, focused and energised and with your attitude - and appetite - even stronger.

ORDERING DETAILS

Mail order copies of the book are available from:

**'MLR Book',
6 Crown Close,
Long Eaton,
Nottingham
NG10 3QP.**

Please send cheque or postal order for £21 (including P+P) payable to 'MLR Book' for your advance copy.

Orders from Europe send £22 (including P+P).

A Swedish edition Min Egen Varld (249SEK) is now on sale, with details on www.jasoncrump.se



NOT BENNETT?... NOT BENNETT?... **IT'S BENNETT!!!**

LIFE AFTER ASHLEY

It's been a strange old start to the season at the Norfolk Arena. Not so much on the track – despite the arctic conditions of the early part of the year- but the general atmosphere has been a little subdued. Obviously there are new faces in the side and they'll take time to settle in but it has been harder to recreate the unbelievable buzz that we had around the place last year.

Like it or not, we are missing Ashley Jones and I'm convinced that, had the opening night not been rained off, we would have been able to stage a great memorial meeting as a tribute to him and it would have helped us to open the next chapter in the book, without ever forgetting "Our Ash". His presence in the pits was worth as many points as he ever scored on the track and that just can't be replaced.

I had the privilege of meeting his brother Mark and interviewing him on the radio and it was a humbling experience to hear him talk about Ashley and the impact this has had on the family. That young man will be a fine asset to any speedway team that takes him on board and I know everyone at Kings Lynn wants to see him there. The physical likeness is quite eerie and, just like his much missed brother, he is a very likeable and charming young man. The girls will just love him too!



King's Lynn Stars 2006
(Picture by Steve Hone)

As for the team, they are saddled with the 'favourites' tag and that brings its own pressures. Having said that, try telling Kevin Doolan about pressure! He's picked up where he left off last year and then some. He, more than anyone else, wants to dedicate this season to Ash as they were life long friends and his start to the year has been sensational.

We just need to get the noise levels back up again and we'll be fine!

THE NORFOLK ARENA – WORTHY OF A GRAND PRIX?

It takes years to get a catch phrase and when you do, it's never the one you expect so when Sky started to use an advert for Skybet featuring the "Not Bennett" phrase, it seemed too good an opportunity to ignore! For most of last season, people would come up and say that (as if it was the first time I'd heard it!) and it seemed to stick. Trouble is, they've dropped the ad now so I guess I'll be looking for a new page heading soon! Bet some of the visiting fans could come up with a few ideas eh?

I'd be interested to know what you think of our facilities at the Norfolk Arena and perhaps you would compare them to some of the 'interesting' venues that have staged Grand Prix events in the past? We now have a grandstand (known as the royal box), some of the cleanest and most modern loos in the sport, a great café/snack bar, a brand new PA that has now been tweaked so we can all hear it (!) and, without doubt, one of the best race tracks in the country.

For years and years, Kings Lynn was renowned for being a great track but a less than average stadium. The quality of the surface, the preparation and overall track condition has had riders from all over the world singing its praises for decades, it was always the lack of facilities that let it down. Even so, over the years we have staged many FIM World Championship events such as the Commonwealth Final, the Overseas final, The old British Semi Final and many more big events. That's why it's great to have a stage to display our new look facilities to people who may not otherwise visit us during the course of the domestic season.

An obvious question springs to mind... Why do we not stage more big events? Would it not make sense to run the Elite League Riders Championship here and the Premier League Riders on an Elite League track? Seems fairly logical and I can't see any reason why not – can you?

I know it's not the first time this question has been asked but I'm still waiting for an answer????

The riders would relish the opportunity to race on the open spaces we have here and, yes, I know we don't have an air fence but with enough notice and young "Mr Fixit Chapman" working on sponsorship to hire one, I don't see it being a problem.

So, assuming we can get round the safety fence issue, why stop at the ELRC? What about the World Team Cup? What do Reading have that we don't (answers must avoid the blatantly obvious please!) or Swindon for that matter? We have the track and facilities now - including hospitality areas for meeting sponsors (known as the Wendy Huts for those who haven't been to the Norfolk Arena before) and the only fully concrete centre in the world (might need to verify that but I'll take a wild guess that there are not too many others like it in speedway!).

Cardiff is a brilliant event but still takes place on a "one off" track specially laid for the occasion.

We have a ready made track so how about giving Wales a rest one year and staging the Grand Prix in Kings Lynn? It's probably the only chance I would get of presenting one!!!

Seriously though, If not a Grand Prix there's no reason why we shouldn't be considered for ANY major event so, if you like what you've seen, why not drop Keith or Jonathan Chapman a line of support or post your comments on the internet? The British Speedway Forum gets read by a lot of promoters so your voice can make a difference!

CARDIFF – WHY IT'S JUST NOT GOING TO HAPPEN

Last year I lost my Cardiff virginity and enjoyed the entire experience! Let's face it; you never forget your first time do you? The entire experience was unique but I felt that there were some areas that could have been even better.

The pre-meeting entertainment was very professional but I would have liked to see more of the youngsters on the track and less of the highly entertaining, but slightly over long, Abba tribute act. There could have been a lot more

crowd involvement and even simple things like riders walking the track could have been turned into an event.

As a result of a very flattering discussion thread on the British Speedway forum, I thought I'd drop BSI a line and offer to come down to London to suggest some ideas of really getting the crowd involved before and during the meeting. At the same time, some of the very loyal Kings Lynn fans took it upon themselves to contact BSI by email suggesting my involvement in the meeting presentation. At least they received a reply – which is more than I did!

I'm not after the announcers' job thanks. The chap who did it last year was very good from the box and that's not what I was looking to do. My ideas involved working with him (or whoever is in the box this year) but bringing back some info from the pits and generally keeping the crowd up to date with news from behind the scenes. Add some pre meeting ideas (that I'm not sharing!) and parade suggestions (didn't like last year – supporters like to see the riders!) and basically that was it. Thought it might have been worth a chat but obviously not.

So Bonnie Tyler £XXXthousand for 45 minutes or MB for expenses plus a couple of tickets for the family? You do the maths! No disrespect intended to Ms Tyler but this is a speedway event, not a concert and, in my most humble opinion, half of the crowd won't even know who she is.

Oh well, It was worth a try and the event will be fantastic even without my input – but I bet I could have made it even better!!!

RADIO SILENCE?

There have been a lot of changes at North Norfolk radio recently and **Bennett's Breakfast Bonanza** has fallen victim to the new rules involving full time staff manning the station at weekends instead of freelance bods like me.

Now, many of you expected to tune in your radios for the final **Bennett's Breakfast Bonanza** recently and of course, the last "Chapman FM" interview. Imagine the disappointment of receiving a call on the Wednesday morning to be told by the management of the station that they didn't like the fact I had told my listeners (too many times!) that next week was to be the final show and they decided that they would rather not let me say my goodbyes to all the regular listeners and speedway followers.

Mike Bennett



GRABBING THE HEADLINES

Dave Green outlines his five step plan to put speedway back into the general public's consciousness.

Handing out leaflets in shopping centres, local radio advertisements, features in the local paper – is that really the best that speedway can do to attract a new audience? This is 2006, we're in a multimedia, celebrity obsessed, culture and the old methods don't work anymore. We need a new dynamic approach to courting the press, stealing those all important column inches in Heat magazine and creating a buzz in the playground.

That's why I've come up with this revolutionary five point plan to make speedway the sport that everybody's talking about. I can't do it on my own, I need volunteers to fill key roles in my team, get in touch if you're willing to take on one of these hazardous assignments.

1. Marry Britney Spears

Okay, she's already married – but that's not going to last. We need a speedway fan, preferably one with his own teeth, to court the current Mrs Federline and marry her in a blaze of publicity. Ideally the groom will wear a pair of Arena Essex kevlar for the ceremony and persuade Britney to get an 'I Love Speedway' tattoo on her upper arm. Given her track record, a scruffy guy would be our ideal candidate for this mission and we shouldn't require him for more than a day or two.

2. Stir up the Fanatics

Jeff Baker's cartoons in the Berwick programme generally demonstrate a gentle humour that will not offend. That has to change, instead he needs to start pillorying all the world's major religions and political figures. Once these cartoons are published we can ensure that these are passed onto our friends in the tabloids who will help us whip up some hysteria. We'll then organise a march on Berwick's Shielfield Park and invite all those outraged to join us in our protest. Once our group of rabid protesters see the entertainment on offer they'll recognise that watching speedway is a better way to spend their time than religious fanaticism and we'll reap long term benefits.

3. Win Big Brother

The easiest one of all for us to pull off. We need to recruit a moronic person who can be trained to parrot key phrases like "I don't know nuffink, about nuffink, but I love speedway" and "I'm

going to nominate Phoenix because he doesn't like speedway and it's really good value for money and fantastic fun for all the family".

History shows that the public will be enraptured by this gormless creature and will flock to meet them at public appearances at every track in the county. Anyone with even a semblance of geographical knowledge need not apply. Interviews will be held in Newport – car parking is available in nearby Dundee.



A vital part of step one

4. Change the name of our sport

The word "Speedway" itself is too old fashioned and dull to attract today's kids – it includes some vowels for gods sake! From now on we should rebrand the sport as "Spdwy". The fans of the future will luv it. They'll think it's wkcd, book and gr8. We can also take things a bit further by removing all punctuation from the programme, or perhaps even removing all the words entirely.

5. Create a moving human interest story

There are numerous magazines and television shows that allow people with an unusual or moving story to grab a bit of publicity. We need to create a sensational story that will have them biting our hand off to feature us. We need to find a very special person in order to garner the maximum publicity from this one. That person would ideally be a morbidly obese transexual who has fallen in love with their Mother in Law. Ideally the relationship with the Mother in Law would have started after they spent enjoyable evenings together at Monmore Green. If we make it clear that they're regular attenders then a few rubberneckers are bound to come along.

THE NORFOLK ARENA – KING’S LYNN



TRACK REPORT BY ALEX RABY

The first speedway meeting to be held at this venue was way back in 1952, when a speedway track was laid inside of the existing greyhound track. Only three meetings down the line, speedway was stopped at the stadium until 1965 when a full-scale speedway track had been created.

The first full-time team to ride at the track was in 1966, when Kings Lynn's team was known as 'the Stars'. They since changed their name to 'the Knights' when moving into the Elite League, and have now returned to the nickname of 'the Stars'.

The stadium has had a speedway team at almost every different level, having had teams in the Amateur League and also in the Conference League.

It was not until 1999 that the stadium became known as the Norfolk Arena, as new promoters took charge at the track. As well as speedway, the stadium is also home to mini-motos, stock cars, super cross, quad biking and various other shows throughout the year.

If you are thinking of planning a visit this season, then there are ample parking facilities, as well as three bars and three cafes.

ON TOUR WITH THE HAWKS

Andy Davidson shares his recollections of Hackney's tour of Poland in 1980. Andy was one of three mechanics on the trip.

It was a Wednesday morning in 1980 at the Hackney Stadium, the late Bert Bush, who was the head mechanic for Hackney Speedway, Keith White, Sean Willmott, two other mechanics, myself, a Ford transit Van and nine speedway bikes were present. We were all off to tour Poland. It was part of the deal for having Zenon Plech and Roman Jankowski, Hackney had to ride at their Polish clubs - Gdansk for Zenon and Leszno for Roman.

The bikes were loaded into the back of the van (sponsored by Auto Rent) by putting one bike in backwards, removing the front wheel and turning the handle bars down. The next bike was put in to the van frontwards, then the next was put in the same way as the first one and so on. Eventually all nine bikes were in the van and the front wheels were placed on the top of the bikes.

So with all the paperwork for the bikes done, money, passports (which had to be stamped before they would let us into Poland), travel bags, the three "mechanics" head off to the Harwich Ferry terminal and a boat to Hook-of-Holland for an overnight crossing.

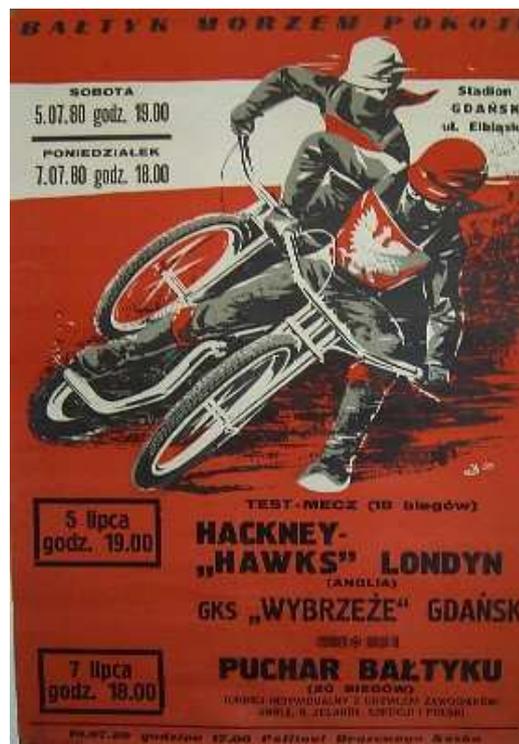
As the Hackney riders had to ride on Friday they would be flying out early on Saturday Morning making their way to Gdansk for a Saturday Open meeting.

The Hackney team was Len Silver (team Manager), Barry Thomas, Keith White, Jimmy McMillan (on the tour as a guest), Andy Fines, Sean Willmott, Zenon Plech and Roman Jankowski.

Bruce Cribb was down to be a guest rider but was unable to attend.

All was ok on the ferry, as the hours rolled by it was time for some shut eye, as you might know there is not much space on a ferry and all the seats were full and the only free space was the floor. The night went ok but in the early hours of the morning someone thought it would be fun to put some money in the Juke Box and selected Desmond Dekker's hit 'The Israelites'. If you play it you will see the funny side of it.

So we arrived at Hook-of-Holland on Thursday Morning and the boat docked and we waited for the ramps to go down and we were off for the long drive across the borders of Holland. Stopping only for petrol, something to eat, and comfort stops, we took it in turns driving and reached the West German border without incident. We travelled on to the East German border where they had a careful look at what we had in the back of the van and a close look at our passports. We were soon back on our way again through East Germany to the borders of Poland, and this is where the fun starts.



We arrived at the Polish border in the late afternoon, about 5.00pm on the Thursday, we pulled up at the check point and handed our passports to the officer, who then went away and came back and wanted to have a look in the back of the van. Seeing there were 9 speedway bikes in the back he told us that we would have to unload them, we told the officer that it had taken us four hours to load them and that this was not a good idea.

HACKNEY'S 1980 TOUR OF POLAND

It seemed the paper work was not right it said two bikes and we had nine, we suggested he phone the President of Gdansk Speedway and talk to him.

Still holding our passports he went off to make the phone call.

So we just had to wait, it seems that we were to meet someone from Gdansk who was not there at the time we arrived at the Polish Border and that he would help us to get through the red tape.

We waited most of the early evening and into the night, not finding it easy to sleep in the van's front seats.

After several hours of waiting someone arrived from Gdansk, and spoke to the border officers and we got our passports back and were on our way again. We never did have to unload the bikes. Now with 4 people in a van that had only 3 seats, space was at a premium and I offered to get into the back with the bikes - bad mistake! To say it was 'uncomfortable' is way off the mark, but at least we were making progress again.

After several more hours on the road we arrived in Gdansk in the mid morning and headed to the hotel for a good sleep and wash and brush up before taking the van and bikes down to the track and unloading them.

We took the van down to the track and started to unload, a number of people who worked at the stadium watched us unloading the bikes.

The Hackney bikes stayed at the stadium overnight in the workshop, which also housed the Gdansk team bikes. Their bikes were looked after by a team of full-time mechanics.

And so ended the Friday and we went back to the hotel for a bit of a rest and to talk about what we were going to do that night, it was decided that we would go out for a meal and call it a day.

On the Saturday morning it was down to the track to get the bike ready for the Hackney team to arrive in the bus. The riders had a practice before the meeting to get used to the track.

Everything went well and the riders were happy and with a few minor adjustments to the bikes - all was ready.

The meeting started...With a parade involving all the riders walking around the track and then returning to the pits.

After the meeting we had to pack the bike up and load them into the back of the van, it did not take as long as it did at Hackney as all the riders helped to load up.

We were then all invited to dinner with members of Gdansk team, staff and managers of the club. There were a number of speeches some in Polish and some in English.

I cannot remember what we had to eat, but it was about 4 courses.

So after the dinner was over we then went to the hotel for some sleep, mindful that early on the Sunday morning we would have to head off to Leszno, again a long drive ahead. It was going to be a little easier as we now had a bus to follow. As there was a lot of space on the bus it was decided that one of the mechanics would go in the bus giving a bit more room for the other two.

So I went with the bus and the riders, after a number of comfort stops it was back on the bus and on our way again. During the drive I kept feeling what felt like a fly landing on my ear so I kept brushing it away with my hand, but it kept coming back time after time. By now I was getting a bit pissed off with the fly, so I waited for it to land again to see if I could hit it, and there it was. I was just about to swot it when I turned around to find a laughing Jimmy McMillan sitting behind me and he had a long grass stork with a feathery seed head and was flicking my ear with it!

When we arrived in Leszno we headed straight for the track, it was unusual to see people looking at the van with GB number plates (remembering it's the 1980s).

One or two of the riders needed some spare parts and rear tyres and so went off to see if they could find a speedway bike shop and get the spares and tyres, which they did.

The rest of the day was spent cleaning the bikes and we were shown to our room as we were going to stay at the Stadium for the night. Leszno have a hotel in the complex.

In the afternoon there was time for team photos.

HACKNEY'S 1980 TOUR OF POLAND



The Hackney Touring Team
(Picture by Andy Davidson)

After the meeting was over we found out that there was going to be another meeting back at Gdansk on Monday evening and so we had to drive all the way back to Gdansk for that meeting, which was an "Open" meeting.

We were again invited by the Leszno club to a dinner in their restaurant/bar of the stadium.

On the tables there were 3 large crystal vases, about 15 inches high and they looked very nice indeed.

I thought to myself "some lucky rider is going to get one of those vases, and they deserve it."

I assumed it was for the highest scorers over the 2 matches so I carried on eating my dinner.

Again speeches were made in Polish and English, Len Silver made a speech thanking the club for their hospitality.

After the speeches someone from the Leszno club asked if the three mechanics from England would stand up and come to the top table, we did and to our great surprise we were given each a crystal vase. They were engraved with a brass plate.

We thanked them for the gift of the vase. to this day it is one of the things I hold dear as I remember the good times of the trip.

So after all that it was time to head off to bed, I turned in early and was sharing a room with Jimmy McMillan who, with the rest of the Hackney team, headed off into town.

At about 2.00am or 3.00am I heard a crash and the sound of glass falling to the ground and shattering. The riders had come back, found

themselves locked out, and someone (and I know not who) broke the glass door to let themselves in.

When Jimmy Mac came in to the room I asked "what was that noise", all he would say was "a glass door has been broken".

On the Monday morning we headed off back up to Gdansk for the "Open" meeting.

Sean Willmott was feeling a bit off colour from the night before and we had to stop for Sean to be sick on the side of the road.

We arrived at the Gdansk Stadium unloaded again and got set up for the afternoon's meeting. The riders had their practice and got ready for the meeting.

All was going well until Sean Willmott, who was still feeling under the weather, was sick in the pits. Len Silver called for the Doctor, who could not speak English and therefore Sean had to withdraw from the meeting. All the riders received coloured vases as trophies.

After the meeting had finished and the riders had helped us to load the van, they got changed and they left for the Airport to fly back to the UK.

Leaving us mechanics to do the long drive back to England as quickly as we could...because there was a meeting at Poole, Poole vs Hackney in the British League.

Everything went well on the return trip, the ferry crossing was okay and as we headed down the A12, we called in to Hackney Stadium, only to find the meeting at Poole had been called off because of a waterlogged track.

So in closing it was a very good trip to Poland, but very hard work, driving long hours, cleaning the bikes, not getting much sleep, finding the speedway track when people you ask for help don't speak English.

I would like to thank Len Silver, for trusting the three mechanics to take the van and nine bikes over to Poland, the Hackney team for a great few days together and the Leszno and Gdansk clubs for their hospitality.

Do you have a story to tell? Drop us an email at speedwayplus@hotmail.com and we'll get right back to you.

THEY CALLED ME DARLING!

Former rider **Dave Gifford** provided us with a brilliant interview a year or so back and has shared many anecdotes with us since. In this article he recalls the winter of 1967 when he kept the wolf from the door by becoming a television stuntman!

Yes, it's true, they really did, even some of the girls! It happened when I became involved in showbiz back in the winter of 67. Grim times they were, I'd like to say we were poor but happy, but we weren't, we were poor and bloody miserable. Now I have many old friends in Manchester whom I wouldn't dream of offending, but let's face it, there couldn't be many places that were less appealing than that great old city in the middle of winter's icy grip. Reading springs to mind, or Sunderland, but that's about it.

Grey skies, grey people, grey buildings, still dark at nine in the morning and dark again by three and I was depressed. I should have been lying on one of our fabulous beaches here in New Zealand having sand kicked in my face by big guys, but instead I was eking out a living working as a mechanic for a trucking firm while waiting for the next season to begin.

But one day a tiny glimmer of light, a message from my promoter Mike Parker, could I meet him at his office to discuss something that would be to my advantage as soon as possible? Well the next chance I got to road test a truck I called in to see him to find out what was so urgent. Now Mike had a mate by the name of Tommy Mann, an ex pro wrestler turned night club owner, who also worked as a stunt coordinator for Granada TV and at that time they were filming a series that called for some motor cycle stunt work to be done and Mike had thought of me. "There's a crash scene in it Davey ludd, so I thought of you immediately, you're a bluddy natural, so I want you to get yourself geared oop and get down t'studio to meet t'head of casting" I asked what was in it for me and Mike assured me that I'd be well paid "there'll be brass, ludd" so I decided to give it a punt.

Three of us went down to the Granada Studios so they could pick someone the right size, Australian Allan "Skippy" Paynter who rode for us at Newcastle a few times was one, but I can't remember the third person. Actually Skippy was the hairiest guy I ever saw, when he took his leathers off it was like he had another set on underneath. Some people do say that evolution travels at a more sedate pace in Australia.

Well I got the job and was given instructions to meet the film crew in the car park of a certain restaurant, somewhere near the East Lancs Road, at lunchtime the following day, which I duly did. I wandered over to the group that was gathered around some Granada TV vans and asked who was in charge. "I am" said one of them, "I am the Director, and you are?" "I'm the stuntman" I replied. "Oh, how simply super" he said. "We're all going to have lunch and then we'll go and have a look at the location". Being a Kiwi I asked the inevitable "Who's paying?" and he laughed. "This is Television" he said "we pay for everything, it's called expenses, darling". It had taken just five minutes for me to become one of the "in" crowd, free meals and I was a darling already!

Lunch took about two hours and over a few drinks for medicinal purposes, the plot was explained to me. The story was about an escaped convict on the run who needs transport so he takes a mirror (standard kit for blokes on the run) and waits for a motorcyclist to approach at night and then he reflects the bike's headlight glare back into the rider's eyes with the mirror and the guy loses control and crashes and our fugitive steals the bike.

The guy who was Betty Turpins' son on t'Street played the main character and the series was a follow on of "The Man in Room Seventeen" and that's all I can tell you about it.

The location was a road on a private estate and to set the scene for the crash the props guys had built a dummy hedge that they placed diagonally across the road and we built and concealed a small ramp at the base of the hedge. The idea was that I would become airborne on the ramp, and just prior to landing, I would apply full lock on the handlebars, the front wheel would bite on landing, and the bike would flip creating a realistic accident.

The director came over and asked "where do you think you'll land, we need to position the cameras for the shoot". Well I had no idea really, so I waved my arm in an arc that covered most of Lancashire and half of Cheshire and said "about there", hoping that would do. "Do you think you could be a bit more specific, darling,

we don't want to have shoot it more than once do we?" he said putting me on the spot. Well I pointed to an area about forty feet past the hedge and said, " I don't think I'll go past about there" which seemed to satisfy him. My heart sank though when the floor manager got one of the drivers to park the huge generator and control room truck across the road about twenty feet past my hoped for landing place. It was a case of fall off or ride straight into the side of the truck so there was no chance of turning chicken at the last moment.

It was bitterly cold and wet as night fell and the director, being a well meaning sort of a bloke, kept my coffee cup topped up with whisky from a bottle he seemed to be permanently attached to "can't have you catching a chill can we?" he said. Broken legs and arms are OK but not a chill?

The time finally came for my big moment and the guys who were supplying the bikes fired up an old Triumph twin and got it warmed up while I put on the ill-fitting crash helmet and clothes I had to wear. I would like to be able to say I charged down the road at seventy miles an hour but I didn't, I was only doing about forty when I hit the ramp and sailed off into night. The whole thing went off perfectly, the bike flicked me off on impact with the road and somersaulted to a stop and I hit the deck pretty close to my intended target area. I could hear the old bike still running as I lay on the ground as I had been told to and then the director yelled "cut" and it was all over.

I picked myself up and did a quick check to make sure no body parts were missing, while the crew offered their congratulations with calls of "well done darling" and "super crash sweetie."

I had hoped that some of the dolly birds that were there for decoration would come over and whisper "you're ever so brave" but they didn't. Still, the guys seemed to be impressed which was a start I suppose.

The next day I had to ride at high speed down an old abandoned railway cutting, as part of "the fugitive on the run" section, while they filmed from an overhead bridge. The rails and sleepers had been removed and the whole floor of the cutting was as rough as guts and to add to my woes the bike I had to ride was a Norton Dominator café racer with clip on handlebars which would make for an interesting ride. The director wanted me to come towards the cameras at sixty miles an hour, so I cruised up the next bridge, turned and commenced my run. Well, I managed to hold on to the bike and make the run, I guess my time riding at Brough Park gave me an edge, but it was pretty scary trying to dodge the worst craters. The run proved to be acceptable and that was the end of my brief time in showbiz.

There was another job I tried to get which would have meant jumping off a six story building into one of the Manchester canals. I don't think it would have been too hard to do as the building wouldn't even be moving, but I didn't have an Equity card and without one there was no chance. Equity was the Showbiz Union and I couldn't join unless I was a stuntman and I couldn't be a stuntman without an Equity card, the ultimate catch 22. Still, it had been fun and I'd moved in a different world for a time and pocketed a hundred and fifty quid for doing something that Mike Parker only ever gave me abuse for!!

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