



STARS IN MY EYES



A Pocket History Of

"Sunderland Speedway"



SUNDERLAND SPEEDWAY

Speedway first came to Sunderland in 1964. Before then, Newcastle's Brough Park was the nearest track for the Wearside speedway fans, Sunderland missed out on the heyday of the dirt track.

For its first attempt at the sport you might say it was a disaster! opening in April and closing in June. I somehow can't go along with the reason of poor attendance's as being the main cause of it's closure. When the track reopened in 1971, crowds of 6,500—8,500 which they got in 1964, would have been more than enough to keep the 70's speedway alive longer than four seasons!

When speedway did return in 1971, they came back as the "Stars", the 1964 "Saints" lasted just a few weeks, would the "Stars" do any better ?

Well four seasons is a vast improvement, but if they had got crowds of 6,500 plus in 74 , how much longer could they have run !

The fans who did support Sunderland Speedway in the 70's, were very loyal to their team, yes they could have done with more support, but what support they got was first class. Some twenty seven years since the roar of bikes was last heard around the Boldon Stadium, the bond between ex. riders and the fans is as strong as ever, recent reunions held at Boldon have been hugely successful.

To recap, I can see that poor attendance's in 1974 resulted in the closure of the track, but somehow 1964 just does not add up, they could have had a fairer crack of the whip!



*Colin Armitstead • Graeme Smith • Jack Millen • Peter Wrathall • Jim Wells
George Barclay • Dave Gatenby • Russ Dent (on bike)*

SPEEDWAY COMES TO SUNDERLAND

1964 "Speedway bursts onto the sporting scene", the Sunderland Echo announced.

Mr. Mike Parker and Mr. Bill Bridgett were the promoters who opened up the sport to Wearside. Mr. Parker was in charge of the highly successful Newcastle Diamonds, and so had knowledge of speedway in the north east, his partner Bill Bridgett was the nephew of former Sunderland footballer Arthur Bridgett.

A new track had been laid at the greyhound stadium at Boldon, the surface was said to be fast.

The team were to be known as the "Saints" and signed up two young Australians, Gordon Guasco and Jim Airey, the Australian match race champion. They were joined by South African Dave Collins and former Harringay racer Stan Clark.

The first meeting was against local rivals Newcastle Diamonds. "Saints swamped in first match" was the headline in the local press. They lost 32-44, with a young Ivan Mauger scoring 12 pts. for the Diamonds. Also in the Diamonds team was another young man who would go on to become captain of the 1971 Sunderland Star team, Russ Dent. Russ scored 5 points that night. (21/4/64)

It was a difficult first meeting, a hard Tyne-Wear derby was one thing, but it didn't help when a thunderstorm hit Wearside on the afternoon and a gang of twenty men were needed to clear away the flooded track, so it was tricky surface when the meeting took place.

The Saints lost their first six matches, the first being a challenge match followed by five Northern League defeats. Their first win coming against Glasgow when they won 48-30. They went on to loose their next four matches before gaining their second victory and revenge against Newcastle, 39-37. This was followed by their third and final victory at home to Wolverhampton, 41-36. The following week was to be the last seen of the ill-fated venture into speedway at Sunderland. It was the "Cock O The North" open meeting and was won by Mauger with a 12 pt. maximum. Bill Bridgett announced to the crowd that speedway was to be discontinued at the Boldon Stadium, blaming lack of support as the main reason. After nine meetings it was all over for the "Saints".



1964 Results....

Tues	April	21	Newcastle	Challenge match	H	32-44	lost	
Thur	April	23	Sheffield	Northern League	A	20-58	lost	
Tues	April	28	Edinburgh	Northern League	H	30-47	lost	
Wed	April	29	Glasgow	Northern League	A	28-50	lost	
Tues	May	5	Sheffield	Northern League	H	37-41	lost	
Frid	May	8	Middlesbrough	Northern League	A	38-39	lost	
Sat	May	9	Edinburgh	Northern League	A	Rained-off		
Tues	May	12	Glasgow	Northern League	H	48-30	won	
Sat	May	16	Cradley Heath	Provincial League	A	34-44	lost	
Mon	May	18	Newcastle	Northern League	A	25-53	lost	
Tues	May	19	Middlesbrough	Northern League	H	24-53	lost	
Frid	May	22	Wolves	Provincial League	A	26-52	lost	
Tues	May	26	Newcastle	Northern League	H	39-37	won	
Tues	June	2	Wolves	Provincial League	H	41-36	won	
Tues	June	9	"Cock O The North Trophy" (open) H Winner Ivan Mauger 12pts.					

Only seven meetings were held at the Boldon track.

Ivan Mauger rode three times at the Boldon track, winning all his 19 rides.



Of the riders from 1964, Jim Airey went on to be a World Finalist, he rode at the top level for many years. Of the other riders, Bill Bridger announced that Ken Sharples, the captain and Graham Coombes would go to Newcastle, while Gordon Gunco and Colin Mc Kee would join Jim Airey at Wolverhampton.

1964 averages.

	M	R	PTS	BO	TOTAL	AVE
Ken Sharples	10	41	65	3	68	6.83
Maury McDermott	8	24	33	6	39	6.50
Colin McKee	7	27	38	5	43	6.37
Gordon Gunco	11	43	59	7	66	6.14
Jim Airey	13	55	71	8	79	5.75
Vis Ridgson	11	43	59	7	66	4.32
Graham Coombes	12	42	35	6	41	3.90
Paul Sharples	2	4	2	1	3	3.00
Dave Collins	8	21	13	1	14	2.67
Ray Day	3	9	3	0	3	1.33
Ken Cameron	1	2	0	0	0	0.00



SPEEDWAY RETURNS

In 1971 Allied Presentations Ltd. with Len Silver promoting, reopened the Boldon track. Speedway was back with the **Sunderland Stars**. New names to get used to, Russ Dent, George Barclay, John Goodall, John Lynch, Alan Mackie and John Knock were some of the early riders. Racing was good on the 310 yd track, but the team wasn't too strong. Dent, Barclay and Goodall (until he walked out on them) shared the job of scoring points, at least the bulk of them! In particular Russ Dent and George Barclay kept the ship afloat that first season. Russ was known as "Captain Scarlet" and he certainly led by example.

How's this for an uncanny fact! The 64 team lost it's first six matches, the 71 team, guess what, that's right, they also lost their first six matches. The 71 team did have a very hard start however, all their first matches were away from home.

The 1971 season started with a challenge match at Hull, they went down heavily 25-47, the day was April 7 th. They had to wait until May 2nd for their first win, local rival's Teesside went down by a 40-38 score line in a North East Trophy match at the Boldon Stadium, the "Stars" claimed their first scalp!

Was the first season hard? You bet it was! In all they won 11, drew 2 and lost 27 matches, that included league, cup, and challenge matches. No surprise that they finished bottom of the league, but the fans were seeing **Speedway** as they liked it, what's more they took the riders to their hearts, they were **their** lads out there and they were bloody-well going to support them

Brian Whaley, Gerry Colin Robertson, Bernie first season. Also 71 saw stiffen the team as well as

Right at the end of the season, something to shout about, he Teesside. Scoring 14pts, he tied and Mal. Shakespeare. Russ won around Forrester's home track.



Richardson, Paul Scarlon, Aldridge, they all rode that Peter Wrathall brought in to the young Dave Gatenby.

Russ Dent gave the fans won the Farewell Trophy at with Teesside's Bruce Forrester the three man run-off, no mean feat

Sunderland Speedway survived that first season and looked forward to 1972, they would be stronger this time. In came Jack Millen and the stylish Graeme Smith, both were an instant success, they took a lot of the burden away from Russ and George, with four reliable riders and promise from the lower order, things looked a lot brighter.

All the riders were highly thought of, but "**Crazy Jack**" was something else! This man became the idol to many fans, when he was killed in a car crash in 1978, stunned is the only way to describe his loss. No Sunderland fan would have swapped him for any world champion!

The Stars kicked off the 1972 season with a team that looked like this

- 1 Russ Dent (capt)
- 2 George Barclay
- 3 Graeme Smith
- 4 Peter Wrathall
- 5 Jack Millen
- 6 Brian Whaley
- 7 Dave Gatenby

V Teesside, April 9th, (home) 39-39.



For the next home match, Jim Wells replaced Brian Whaley, not a bad team, especially if it had been kept together for a couple of seasons. The big four were strong, Wrathall was steady, while Wells and Gatenby were both to come on good.

The start of the season didn't get off to a great start, better than the previous season but not good by a long way. Of the first 8 matches, 4 were drawn and 4 were lost, by the end of June it read

P 25 W 7 D 6 L 12

From July to Sept, it read

P 21 W 10 D 0 L 11 (better)

P 46 W 17 D 6 L 23

Not quite as good as the fans had hoped for, but better than 71 when it read.....

P 40 W 11 D 3 L 27

They did achieve one victory of note in 1972, they won the Four Team Tournament between Berwick, Teesside, Workington and themselves. The Stars came second in all the away legs, winning their home leg to finish in first place.

At Berwick	B 36	S 34	T 16	W 10
At T/Side	T 37	S 28	W 21	B 10
At W/Ton	W 40	S 24	B 22	T 10
At S/Land	S 30	T 28	W 26	B 11

Agg. result. S/Land 116, W/Ton 97, T/Side 92, Berwick 78.

So how did the Stars measure up in 1972? Well it should have been better, but why not? **Jack Millen** was going down a storm, but his riding style meant a season that was interrupted with the odd injury, no big deal for Crazy Jack, but he was badly missed when not in the team. Graeme Smith could beat the best, **if he was in the mood to do so**, but in my programmes I often wrote, "lack of effort" next to his name, maybe unfairly, but I felt he had more to give! Graeme never scored a full maximum in any league or K O cup match for Sunderland even though he ended the season with a good 8.29 ave. second to Jack Millen. **Jack gained another scalp for the Stars, winning the Eddie Crooks trophy at Barrow with 14 pts. Lou Sansom was 2nd on 13pts and George Major 3rd on 11pts.**

Russ Dent and George Barclay battled on yet again, not quite the force that they were the previous season, never the less still solid and reliable, that is until George's luck ran out. A fall in the Rider of the Night final in the home match against Peterborough on Aug. 8th... George broke his leg and that was his season over.

Both **Wells and Gatenby** took a while to settle in, Gatenby was the first to pick up the pace, a 12pts at Ellesmere Port on May 30th. gave him the boost needed, he followed it up with a 10pts. against Scunthorpe at the end of June, then a week later he got 12pts against Crewe, both at the Boldon track. Dave ended the season with a 5.27 ave. Jim's progress was slower, he finished on a 3.82 ave. Next season would see him almost double his scores.

Russ Dent finished the home programme on a high, scoring 11pts. against local rivals Teesside in a challenge match. Russ had battled all the way through the season, missing only one match, he certainly didn't let anyone down.



Jim Wells

Another young rider to make his entrance into speedway in 1972 was local lad **John Robson**, he made half a dozen appearances, found it hard going, but you couldn't fault his effort and it was a start for him.

WILL THEY RUN

Wasn't it great to see the league table at the end of 72 ? 12th out of 17, things were looking better for the Stars. The question being asked was, will they run in 1973 ?
The answer was yes!

They opened with a new promoter, new announcer, new programme and new race jacket. Gone too was Graeme Smith from last season.

For the opening match against Hull in the N E Trophy, the team looked like this, Millen, Gatenby, Wrathall Barclay, Wells, and John Robson joined by new boy Terry Barclay, son of George Barclay. But no **Russ Dent**, Russ was in dispute with the new promotion, big blow for the fans !

The new promoters were the **Taylor family** who had run Berwick speedway for a number of years, Liz Taylor and son Ken now held the reins.

Without Dent the Stars still managed to beat Hull by 42-36, Millen and Gatenby stole the show, each scoring a 12pts. maximum, good start !

The fans didn't have long to be upset about Russ Dent, back he came for the next home meeting against Berwick, contract sorted out and 9pts. in the bag, welcome back Russ, and another win, could this become a habit ?

The race jacket was different in 73, the red and white stripes were gone, the new design was a red star with a yellow S, on a white background. But would it bring more luck to the Stars ?

What a difference the home results turned out to be in 1973. In 22 matches they won 18, drew 2 and lost only 2. Away from home it was pretty well the same as in 71, 72. They rode in 22 matches, losing 21 and drawing 1. They did however win two challenge matches away from home, beating Newtongrange 41-37 and Hull 40-38. Newtongrange being their first ever away win.

They got used to winning in 73, **Russ Dent** won the Northern Star Championship on his own track, while father and son, **George and Terry Barclay** took the Best Pairs also around the Boldon track. Terry Barclay did quite well for a young lad in his first and only season at Sunderland, his ave. 4.66 included some very good scores.

They may have won the Four Team Tournament in 72, but what a difference a year makes, this time round they finished last.

Four Team results.....

At S/Land	T/Side 34	S/L 24	W/n 24	Ber 14
At Berwick	Ber 31	T/s 30	W/n 23	S/L 12
At T/Side	T/Side 34	W/n24	S/L 22	Ber 16
At W/Ton	W/T 26	T/S 21	Ber 15	S/L 10

Agg. T/Side 119 W/Ton 97 Berwick 76 S/land 68

So what about 1973 ? It was their best season without doubt (four team results apart). **Millen** hit his highest ave. for the Stars, 9.74 from 23 matches, having missed sixteen meetings, he suffered that season ! **Gatenby and Wells** both shot up their ave, near to 7.5. **Dent and Barclay** slipped a wee bit, but still put in some sterling work for the team. Young **Terry Barclay** finished with a creditable 4.66 ave getting through a tiring 34 meetings. **Brian Havelock** came in, found it hard going, but won the fans over with the promise of better things to come, he finished with a 4.64 ave.

John Robson kept plugging away, always there when needed, what can you say ? a hell of a trier !



Peter Wrathall

One sad loss in 73 was the retirement of the popular **Peter Wrathall**. Injuries and costly machine problems finally took its toll, the likeable Midlander was badly missed around the Boldon track.

So the season finished with Sunderland 11th, out of 18 in the league, it was to be their best season in speedway. But still the question remained, would they run again in 1974 ?

GLADIATORS

1974.....The Stars became "Gladiators" , was it an omen ? we all know the fate of most gladiators, they die a death. And so it turned out to be, a tragic death for the Sunderland speedway and its supporters, a club that so much **wanted to live**.

The season opened with a challenge match against Bradford, the "Gladiators" earned their first "kill".....The team lined up like this.....

1	Jim Wells	8pts.	
2	George Barclay	6pts	
3	Dennis Gavros	3pts	
4	Brian Havelock	6pts	
5	Russ Dent	11pts	
6	Paul Callaghan	5pts	
7	Vic Harding	7pts	score 48-32



Millen, T. Barclay and Wrathall were gone. Gavros, Callaghan and young Vic Harding were brought in. The ever reliable Russ and George were still there, along with Havelock and Wells. John Robson and Brian Johnson were waiting their chance along with new lad Derek Fell.

Also new was the promotion team of Ron Fell and Alan Charlton, they kitted the team out in new race jackets, a white shield with a black letter G set on a red background with crossed swords behind the shield. This was the most unpopular race jacket that the team would ever wear !

Despite a promising start, Vic Harding was to struggle, being in and out of the team all season. This most likeable of lads never gave up and finished his season with an ave. of 3.71. Vic was to go on to be a very good rider before he was tragically killed in a track crash at Hackney Stadium a few years later.

What happened after that opening win doesn't bear thinking about. A disastrous 19 match run between 24th April to 7th July, saw the team loose 17 times, with just 2 wins. At one point they lost ten on the trot.

Gavros after an early 12 and 11 pts, just never got going, missing 7 matches he scored very few points when he did ride, by June he was gone.

By now the writing was on the wall ! Gone too in June was the promotion of Fell and Charlton, leaving the Taylor family to come to the rescue, but it was all too late..



Under the Taylors some respectability came back, 16 matches brought 8 wins and 8 losses. Andy Meldrum came down from Berwick in June and in July Tim Swales came to try and shore up the "battered" team. They did help but more bad luck was to follow. In August, sadly the team lost **Gentleman George Barclay**, the long haul north each week finally proving too much for the much respected rider. George rode his last meeting on August 16th. The far from well George still managed to go out on a high however, taking only three rides he scored a paid maximum. George won his first race, a second plus bonus and then he bowed out with a win in his very last race for Sunderland.

George Barclay

If that was tough, barely a week later Andy Meldrum called it a day and retired. Tim Swales stayed on until the end of the season, scoring well. But too many knocks had been taken by the Gladiators. They would go on to win their last ever three matches, including their one and only league win away from home, at Weymouth, this coming the day after a thumping defeat at Birmingham, 17-60 being the score.

The heavy defeat at Birmingham wasn't the only one in 74, on the 26th. April, Peterborough hammered them 18-60, then on the 12th. June Coatbridge took them to the Cleaners, 16-61, ouch !

Looking back over the season, we saw Jim Wells break the track record on 2/8/74 in a time of 63.4 sec.. Then John Hart broke it for the last time on 23/8/74, in a time of 63.2, the same day John also broke the three lap record with a time of 48.0 sec.

The end for Sunderland speedway came on Friday 13th. Sept. Stoke were the last visitors to the Boldon track, Sunderland winning 41-37. Brian Havelock won the last ever race in the Rider of the Night Final, Brian's winning time was 66.4 sec.

So the Gladiators went down fighting, the four seasons had been hard but very, very enjoyable. Due to the early finish at Sunderland, **Wells and Havelock** joined Berwick' to see the season out. **Russ Dent** retired, the others went to new tracks. **Havelock and Swales** rode for the newly reopened Newcastle Diamonds in 1975.

John Robson rode a number of meetings for both Newcastle and Teesside.

Could it have been different ? My personal opinion is **yes**, if the Fell- Charlton promotion hadn't taken place, it was a disaster, a death blow for the Wearsiders. The die- hard fans stayed loyal, but the all important floating support was lost in the first half of the season, they never recovered.



*Left to right: Paul Callaghan • George Barclay • Brian Havelock • Vic Harding
Jim Wells • Colin Armitstead • John Robson • Russ Dent (bike)*

Twenty six years after speedway closed at the Boldon Stadium, a reunion was held at a local pub. The response was unexpected, it was like the clock had been turned back in time, another was planned six months later. From the mists of time came faces from the past, ex. riders, Russ Dent, George Barclay, John Robson, Brian Havelock, Pete Wrathall, Dave Gatenby, Brian Johnson, Lloyd Dobson. The "Stars" were back together again! Also to attend were ex. Teesside man Frank Auffret, ex. Berrwick rider Rob Grant with his son, sixteen year old Rob jr. in his first season with the Diamonds. Andy Buck was another rider to attend.

The reunion proved that the bond between ex riders and the fans is as strong as ever, a great testament to the lads that wore the red and white of the "Stars"

FACTS—FIGURES

1971—1974 **League only** Total matches 134 W47 D3 L81

At home W47 D3 L17 Away W1 D2 L64

Points scored.

At home 2,869
 Away 1,849
 4,718

Points against.

At home 2,336
 Away 3,361
 5,697

Ave. Points scored per match 35.2

Ave. points against per match 42.5

League Positions.

1971 Last out of 17
 1972 12th out of 17
 1973 11th out of 18
 1974 17th out of 19



Challenge Matches.

1971 away lost 25-47 Hull	1972 away drew 39-39 Ellesmere
1971 away lost 23-53 W/Ton	1972 home won 42-36 Teesside
1971 away drew 39-39 Scunthp	1972 away lost 37-40 Barrow
	1972 home won 53-25 Barrow
1973 home won 48-30 W/Ton	1974 home won 46-32 Bradford
1973 away won 41-37 New/gr.	1974 home won 46-32 Berrwick
1973 away won 40-38 Hull	

Matches, 12. W 7 D 2 L 3

Points for, 471.....Against, 456

NORTH EAST TROPHY

1971	home	won	40-38	V	Teesside
1971	home	won	43-35	V	Berwick
1971	away	lost	28-50	V	Berwick
1971	away	lost	33-45	V	Teesside
1972	home	drew	39-39	V	Teesside
1972	home	drew	39-39	V	Berwick
1972	home	drew	39-39	V	Hull
1972	away	lost	31-46	V	Berwick
1972	away	lost	31-46	V	Hull
1972	away	lost	33-44	V	Teesside
1973	home	won	42-36	V	Hull
1973	home	won	43-34	V	Berwick
1973	home	drew	39-39	V	Teesside
1973	away	lost	38-40	V	Teesside
1973	away	lost	33-44	V	Berwick
1973	away	lost	35-42	V	Hull

16 matches. W 4, D 4, L 8. For 586pts. Against 656pts.

K.O. CUP.

1971	home	lost	37-41	V	Workington
1971	away	lost	31-46	V	Workington
1972	home	won	55-22	V	Workington 2nd rd.
1972	away	lost	31-46	V	Workington
1972	away	lost	25-53	V	Crewe 3rd rd
1972	home	won	42-36	V	Crewe
1973	away	lost	30-48	V	Teesside
1973	home	lost	38-40	V	Teesside

1974 Did not compete.

Matches 10. Won 2 Lost 8 For 348pts. Against 428pts.

FOUR TEAM TOURNAMENT

1972.	S/land	Ber	T/Side	Work.
AT BERWICK	30	36	16	10
AT TEESSIDE	28	10	37	21
AT WORKINGTON	24	21	11	40
AT SUNDERLAND	30	12	27	26
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	116	79	91	97



1973.

AT SUNDERLAND	24	14	34	24
AT BERWICK	12	31	30	23
AT WORKINGTON	11	24	28	33
AT TEESSIDE	22	16	34	24
	<u>69</u>	<u>85</u>	<u>126</u>	<u>104</u>

1974.

AT TEESSIDE	25	12	28	31
AT SUNDERLAND	26	19	29	22
AT BERWICK	24	19	30	23
AT WORKINGTON	15	12	23	46

Sunderland finished 1st in 72, 4th in 73, 3rd in 74.

TOP MAXIMUM MEN.

RUSS DENT	12 Full	2 Paid
Jack Millen	9 Full	3 Paid
George Barclay	4 Ful	5 Paid
Jim Wells	4 Full	1 Paid
Dave Gatenby	3 Full	2 Paid
Brian Havelock		6 Paid
Graeme Smith		2 Paid



Russ Dent

MOST MATCHES (League and cup only)

RUSS DENT	139	T. Swales	18
G. Barclay	120	A. Meldrum	15
J. Wells	104	D. Gavros	9
D. Gatenby	74	G. Moore	5
P. Wrathall	63	P. Scanlon	4
B. Havelock	60	J. Bower	4
J. Millen	55	P. Callaghan	4
G. Smith	36	C. Robertson	2
J. Robson	35	S. Pearce	2
T. Barclay	31	L. Dobson	1
J. Knock	27	J. Wilson	1
A. Mackie	27	P. Cairns	1
G. Richardson	26	J. Alexander	1
V. Harding	25	B. Murray	1
B. Johnson	21	D. Fell	9
J. Lynch	20	B. Aldridge	6
B. Whaley	19	R. Hodgson	3



MOST RIDES (League and cup only)

RUSS DENT	569	B. Johnson	63
G. Barclay	486	A. Meldrum	56
J. Wells	407	D. Gavros	28
D. Gatenby	307	D. Fell	24
B. Havelock	247	G. Moore	17
P. Wrathall	224	B. Aldridge	15
J. Millen	219	P. Scanlon	12
G. Smith	151	P. Callaghan	11
J. Robson	112	J. Bower	11
T. Barclay	103	R. Hodgson	11
A. Mackie	95	C. Robertson	4
J. Knock	92	L. Dobson	4
V. Harding	82	S. Pearce	2
G. Richardson	81	J. Alexander	1
T. Swales	75	J. Wilson	1
J. Lynch	73	P. Cairns	1
B. Whaley	65		



Once again Russ Dent tops the chart ! **Mr, Consistant.** And once again George follows him, what a pair of trusty riders !

If we look at the charts, we see what a wonderful job the two of them did for Sunderland.

If we go back to the maximum men, we see that **Graeme Smith** despite a good ave. in 1972, has only a couple of paid maximums to show for it. Yes he scored a good few points for the team, but how much more was in the tank. **remember he could beat the best when he wanted to !**



George Barclay

TOP POINTS SCORERS + BONUS

(League only)

RUSS DENT	931 + 61 = 992	B. Whaley	58 + 8 = 66
G. Barclay	726 + 74 = 810	V. Harding	59 + 17 = 76
Jim Wells	613 + 65 = 678	J. Lynch	65 + 9 = 74
J. Millen	474 + 14 = 488	J. Robson	57 + 8 = 65
Dave Gatenby	424 + 55 = 479	B. Johnson	48 + 15 = 63
B. Havelock	353 + 41 = 394	D. Gavros	32 + 3 = 35
G. Smith	297 + 16 = 313	D. Fell	14 + 1 = 15
P. Wrathall	198 + 41 = 239	G. Moore	13 + 2 = 15
T. Swales	115 + 12 = 127	B. Aldridge	10 + 2 = 12
T. Barclay	107 + 13 = 120	P. Scanlon	8 + 1 = 9
J. Goodall	117 + 2 = 119	R. Hodgson	3 + 1 = 4
A. Macki	90 + 15 = 105	J. Bower	1 + 1 = 2
J. Knock	70 + 18 = 88	L. Dobson	1 + 0 = 1
A. Meldrum	78 + 7 = 85	P. Callaghan	1 + 0 = 1

All other riders failed to score

TOP BONUS POINT MEN

GEORGE BARCLAY 74 Bonus Pts

Jim Wells	65
Russ Dent	61
Dave Gatenby	55
Brian Havelock	41
Peter Wrathall	41
John Knock	18
Vic Harding	17
Graeme Smith	16
Alan Mackie	15
Brian Johnson	15
Jack Millen	14
Terry Barclay	13
Tim Swales	12
John Lynch	9
John Robson	8
Brian Whaley	8

Not quite this time Russ. George heads the chart with 74 bonus points, followed by Jim Wells, pushing Russ into third spot. "Top Man" George, good team man !

RUSS DENT

Russ Dent, local lad from Consett, Co Durham. Russ started speedway with Newcastle Diamonds in the early 60's, he also rode for Glasgow.

Russ rode for Newcastle in the very first meeting to be held at the Boldon Stadium back in 1964. The Diamonds were the first team to visit the newly formed Sunderland "SAINTS". Russ scored five points that night.

Seven years later he led the reformed "STARS" back into speedway, 1971 was the year. Wearing his red leathers, he quickly aquired the nickname of "Captain Scarlet"

Quietly getting on with the job of point scoring, Russ along with George Barclay carried the "Stars" through that first difficult season. **They kept the ship afloat, without them it would have sunk without trace !**

Russ was to ride for Sunderland in all four seasons that they competed in , from 71-74. Russ would go on to ride in the most matches, had most rides, scored most points and scored most maximums.

Russ Dent was still captaining the team when speedway closed in Sept. 1974. No team could have asked for a better "Skipper", completely reliable, Mr.Dependable, Russ was for me , **"Mr. Sunderland Speedway"**

At the recent Sunderland speedway reunion held in June 2000, Russ Dent was the first ex. rider to arrive, twenty six years after Sunderland had closed, who else but Russ would lead the "STARS" again !

Speaking to Russ it was clear that he loved the chance to talk to all his old pals and the fans that supported them, you could sense the pride when he spoke of the days when as "Captain Scarlet" he led the team. So much to talk about and so much for us the fans to be grateful for.

	Max											
	M	R	1st	2nd	3rd	Unp.	Pts	Bon.	Total	F	P	Ave
1971	34	153	62	45	28	18	304	8	312	6	1	8.16
1972	35	139	41	37	43	18	240	12	252	3	1	7.25
1973	34	134	33	27	38	36	191	17	208	1	0	6.21
1974	36	143	24	44	36	39	196	24	220	2	0	6.15

Apart from the above league figures, Russ rode (to the best of my knowledge) in 37 other matches, including cup, 4 team, challenge and open meetings.....

	M	R	1st	2nd	3rd	Unp	Pts
	37	170	57	49	44	20	313

Russ won the Teesside Farewell Trophy in 1971,

In 1973 he won the Northern Star Championship at Boldon



All in all Russ Dent was a credit to Sunderland Speedway, and we the fans say a very big thank you to him !



(L to R Back Row) Colin Armitstead, Brian Johnson, George Barclay, Russ Dent, Lloyd Dobson, Brian Havelock. (Centre) John Robson. (L to R Front Row) Peter Wrathall and Frank Auffret (former Teesside 'Tiger')

GEORGE BARCLAY

What can you say about George Barclay ! Well George and Russ Dent were like "salt and pepper" or fish and chips, they were two of a kind. George, like Russ, rode all four seasons for Sunderland. Sadly George was unable to complete the full 1974 season, the long journey north each week finally became too much for him. He had put in sterling work for the Stars, track preparation as well as riding, a great ambassador for Sunderland speedway. He was sorely missed !

George is one of life's "nice people", if that's not too old fashioned a statement these days ! There is no other way to describe the man, it is a fact, hence his "Gentleman George" tag.

George made the long trip up north from his London base each week, and although it was all very tiring, he made time for the fans, the ladies especially adored him, to say he was well liked is an understatement.

When George's son Terry arrived to ride for Sunderland in 1973, the two of them won the Best Pairs Championship at the Boldon track, George guided Terry round 12 points, scoring 11 points himself. (Mr. team man again).

George was another to attend the recent reunion, he really enjoyed himself, talking to all his old friends and supporters that thought the world of him, and as I said before, the ladies, "wow" did they enjoy seeing him!



Whoever George was paired up to ride with, he was always the perfect team man. One of only two riders to ride all four seasons, George had a distinctive, stylish riding style, easy on the eye, a grand sight when out in front !

	<u>M</u>	<u>R</u>	<u>1st</u>	<u>2nd</u>	<u>3rd</u>	<u>Unp</u>	<u>Pts</u>	<u>Bon</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Full</u>	<u>Paid</u>	<u>Ave.</u>
1971	34	142	47	37	30	28	245	11	256	4	1	7.21
1972	27	107	26	26	28	27	158	26	184	0	2	6.88
1973	34	135	24	41	28	42	182	24	206	0	2	6.10
1974	25	102	20	34	23	25	151	13	164	0	0	6.43

When George and Terry won the Best Pairs Championship at Sunderland in 1973, George's 11pts and Terry's 12, was enough to beat nearest rivals, Dave Mills and Pete Boston, they could only manage 16 points between them.

On top of his league record, again to the best of my knowledge, George rode in 24 cup, four team, open meetings etc.

<u>M</u>	<u>R</u>	<u>1st</u>	<u>2nd</u>	<u>3rd</u>	<u>Unp</u>	<u>Pts</u>
24	107	18	36	25	28	151

Once again all we can say is "Well done George". It was a great effort that he put in for Sunderland Speedway. Like Russ Dent, it is uncanny how after all those years, these riders are still respected if not revered by the fans who supported them all those years ago.

Don't look at the results, look at the whole picture, it tells you that Sunderland Speedway was "something special". And so was George !

JACK MILLEN

Many things can be said about Jack Millen, and many things were said about him. Many were true, but many were not. "Crazy Jack", "Millen the Villain", hell-raiser, ladies man, controversial, colourful character.

Jack hailed from New Zealand and was a larger than life whirlwind, he brought a breath of fresh air to the sport he loved, and he did love speedway, it was his life. He was once quoted as saying, "I could never do a 9 till 5 job".

Jack Millen paid dearly for his "please the crowd" style of riding, be it winning races or being just plain controversial, he loved a "Rough house". It was no good him going down to our "Nearest and Dearest" local rivals Teesside and being **Mr. Nice Guy**, he was expected to "Raise Hell", and he did ! On one visit the Stars made to Cleveland Park, the track-side announcer handed Jack the mike and asked if he would like to say a few words, Jack took the mike and told the crowd, "I'm too good to be here", the crowd responded with an ear splitting barrage of boos and unmentionable curses from the Teesside fans. To rub salt into the wounds, he went on to score a faultless maximum.

Jack's track battles with Frank Auffret were legendary, the apparent hatred between the two was real, not just for the crowd. I recently spoke to Frank about the feud, according to Frank, it all started by accident. In a race where Frank was partnered by Mick Moore, Frank knowing Mick would ride the bends wide, cut inside, Jack chose the outside run. The result was that Jack finished up over the fence, but he blamed Frank for the crash..



I once met Jack purely by accident, I had gone into my local pub for a drink, walking into the small back room that was usually quiet, who should sit in the corner but Jack Millen, with a lady friend. It was the one and only time I ever saw him in that pub! I said hello to him and he said "sit over here", he then spent over an hour talking to me about speedway. The more and more he talked about speedway, the more the young lady became irritated, being aware that world war three was about to take place, I decided to withdraw, wise decision! I had however seen another side to "Millen the Villain", a pleasant friendly man, his real love affair was with speedway. And what had I learned from my little chat with Jack? Well for one thing, I learned how to lay a speedway track, (worth listening to).



Crazy Jack he may have been, but what effort, what guts. I once saw him in a race where he was last going into the third bend, when he came out of the fourth bend he was in first place. How did he get there, by using his bike, his arms, his elbows, his legs, his backside, and guts! That was "Crazy Jack", the risk taker, the crowd pleasure, and of course he kept the promoters happy. Jack was a one off, the likes of which we will never see again.

Five years after he left Sunderland. Jack was killed in a car crash, April 1978. His car was in a collision with a lorry, on the A1 between Edinburgh and Berwick, where he had just started to ride that season. Jack and his mechanic both died in the flames of his burning car, identified only by the plates in his body. Some say he died as he had lived, right on the edge! One thing is for sure, nowhere was his death felt more than on Wearside, it was hard to bear.

Had Jack stayed clear of the many injuries that he suffered, who knows how many more points he would have scored.

If I have spent more time reviewing Jack Millen, then I apologise to the other riders, no disrespect intended, I somehow think they will understand, besides he is no longer with us to tell us his speedway tales!

Jack Millen's record at Sunderland (League and K O Cup)

	<u>M</u>	<u>R</u>	<u>1st</u>	<u>2nd</u>	<u>3rd</u>	<u>Unp</u>	<u>Pts</u>	<u>Bon</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>P</u>	<u>Ave.</u>
1971	2	7	0	1	3	3	5	0	5	-	-	2.86
1972	30	127	60	37	11	19	265	11	276	2	2	8.69
1973	23	85	59	12	3	11	204	3	207	7	1	9.74

To the best of my knowledge he rode at least 24 other ass. matches.

<u>M</u>	<u>R</u>	<u>1st</u>	<u>2nd</u>	<u>3rd</u>	<u>Unp</u>	<u>Pts</u>
24	96	54	21	5	16	209

Jack won the Eddie Crooks Trophy at Barrow in 1972

If I can finish with one last story about Jack Millen, it comes from a piece written in a programme by announcer Barry Wallace. Following a home match against Berwick, he wrote as follows.....Only "Iron Man" Millen could have survived such a fearsome pile up in the tenth heat and then come bouncing back like a rubber ball to win the twelfth heat some five minutes later, the very thought of the crash would have frightened most riders off for weeks!

DAVE GATENBY

The grass-tracker from 30 mile down the road at Darlington. Came to Sunderland at the back end of the 1971 season, found it hard going in the four matches that he rode in, but Dave came back the following season to show a great deal of promise, ending up with an ave. of 5.27 in 1972.

Always regarded as the quiet man in the team, Dave was equally happy riding with "Crazy Jack" or the complete opposite, "Gentleman George". Brought into the team just ahead of Jim Wells, he progressed a little quicker than Jim in the 72 season.

By the end of the 1973 season, Dave had took his average to 7.56, he was looking good ! Sadly after winning over the fans hearts, Dave moved on in 1974, he took up riding for Halifax dukes in the top league. Riding in the first division. Dave progressed steadily until a nasty accident knocked him back.

After his injury Dave came back to ride for Teesside, but he was never the same rider that we knew of old.

(League and K.O. Cup)

	<u>M</u>	<u>R</u>	<u>1st</u>	<u>2nd</u>	<u>3rd</u>	<u>Unp</u>	<u>Pts</u>	<u>Bon</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Max</u>	<u>Pd</u>	<u>Ave</u>
1971	4	13	0	0	2	11	2	1	3	-	-	92
1972	35	139	24	25	37	53	159	24	183	-	1	5.27
1973	35	155	38	59	31	27	263	30	293	1	1	7.56

To the best of my knowledge Dave rode in 25 other matches for Sunderland.

<u>M</u>	<u>R</u>	<u>1st</u>	<u>2nd</u>	<u>3rd</u>	<u>Unp</u>	<u>Pts</u>
25	108	30	24	18	34	156



JIM WELLS

Like Jack Millen, Jim came from New Zealand, Jim was Jack's pal and it was Jack that got him riding at Sunderland. Coming into the team in 1972, Jim struggled to get going, but with Jack watching over him he slowly matured into a very good rider.

If his first season was slow, he certainly picked up the pace in 1973, to almost double his average. Always laughing and smiling, Jim soon won over the supporters, just like his mate Jack.

Finishing the 73 season on an ave. of 7.44, Jim moved up a shade in 1974, topping the Stars averages with 7.92. He played an important part in keeping the team going in that very difficult season.

Jim broke the track record in 1974, but lost it to John Hart (Birmingham) a short while later. Jim went on to ride for Stoke Potters with Jack Millen. Always an excellent team rider and very adaptable.

(League and K. O. Cup)

	<u>M</u>	<u>R</u>	<u>1st</u>	<u>2nd</u>	<u>3rd</u>	<u>Unp</u>	<u>Pts</u>	<u>Bon</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Full</u>	<u>Pd</u>	<u>Ave.</u>
1972	32	106	8	15	35	48	89	12	101	-	-	3.82
1973	36	157	35	52	49	21	258	34	292	1	1	7.44
1974	36	144	51	41	53	21	266	19	285	3	1	7.92

Other matches.....	<u>M</u>	<u>R</u>	<u>1st</u>	<u>2nd</u>	<u>3rd</u>	<u>Unp</u>	<u>Pts</u>
	31	127	25	24	40	38	163



BRIAN HAVELOCK

Another rider from the Teesside area, Brian came to Sunderland in 1973, and like Jim Wells he made a slow start in the Stars line-up. But the promise was there and Brian stuck to the task and soon won the fans over.

Brian finished the season with a 4.64 ave. with the prospect of more to come, which it did. In his second season Brian pushed his ave. up to 7.23, that being the Stars final season in speedway. Brian moved on to ride for the reopened Newcastle Diamonds in 1975, from there he moved to Workington Comets where he put in some sterling work for a number of seasons. Brian would go on to ride for Stoke and Teesside, before retiring.

Having rode the back end of the 74 season at Berwick after Sunderland closed, he therefore had the distinction of riding for all four North East teams.

Brian won the Best Pairs competition with Tom Owen in 1975, while with the Newcastle Diamonds. Always a hard man to beat, always on a good average.

Brian Havelock goes down as being the last rider to win a race at the Boldon Stadium, that was the Rider of the Night Final in the match against Stoke Potters.

As a matter of interest, young Gary Havelock who would go on to become World Champion, he used to ride his little bike around the track during the interval, just a little lad those days !

(League and K. O. Cup)

	<u>M</u>	<u>R</u>	<u>1st</u>	<u>2nd</u>	<u>3rd</u>	<u>Unp</u>	<u>Pts</u>	<u>bon</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Max</u>	<u>Pd</u>	<u>Ave.</u>
1973	22	81	6	18	28	29	82	12	94	-	-	4.64
1974	38	166	42	53	39	32	271	29	300	+	3	7.23

Other matches, 4 team, open, challenge etc.....

	<u>M</u>	<u>R</u>	<u>1st</u>	<u>2nd</u>	<u>3rd</u>	<u>Unp</u>	<u>Pts</u>
	16	62	9	19	22	14	87



Brian is one of only three riders to score 300 or more points in a season.

PETER WRATHALL

"Speedy Pete" came to Sunderland from Long Eaton in 1971, he had requested a transfer to the Stars, and promoter Len Silver agreed to sign him. He rode in nine meetings at the back end of the season, returning an ave. of 4.92.

Peter never quite achieved his scoring potential for the Stars, but he was a great team man, very reliable and willing! Always happy to talk to the fans, he was most popular.

There was a story going about that Pete used to carry an engine about in the boot of his car, it was an engine that he had used one time when he had beaten the great Barry Briggs, he kept it for good luck.

Peter left half way through the 1973 season, he felt that he needed a change. He moved on to Scunthorpe, but had a bad accident in his first meeting there, he retired shortly afterwards.

(League and K. O. Cup)

	<u>M</u>	<u>R</u>	<u>1st</u>	<u>2nd</u>	<u>3rd</u>	<u>Unp</u>	<u>Pts</u>	<u>Bon</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Max</u>	<u>Pd</u>	<u>Ave.</u>
1971	9	39	3	9	14	13	41	7	48	-	-	4.92
1972	36	127	9	16	50	52	109	23	132	-	-	4.16
1973	18	58	4	7	22	25	48	11	59	-	-	4.07

Other Meetings.....M 16, R 62, 1st 9, 2nd 19, 3rd 22, Unp 14, Pts 87.



TERRY BARCLAY

When speedway resumed in 1973, George Barclay brought his son Terry to have a go with the Stars, and have a go he did!

Coming in for his first match of the season away to Boston, he collected his first point as the Stars went down 28-50. Terry had mixed fortune through the season, but showed plenty of promise as he wore the Stars colours a total of 41 times in all matches he took part in. While not always hitting high scores, he did get 12 pts. in the Best Pairs which he won with George. He followed that with 12pts. in the next match against Ellesmere Port.

Terry did hit double figures again, round the Boldon track, but not for Sunderland. In a home match against Chesterton on April 23rd, the away team were a man short, so Terry was loaned to them, (not yet being a team regular with the Stars). What did Terry do? he top scored for Chesterton with ten points. He didn't do too much damage though, Sunderland still won by 43-35.

It was a pity Terry decided not to return the following season, it would have been interesting to see how he would have progressed with the Stars.

(League and K. O. Cup)

	<u>M</u>	<u>R</u>	<u>1st</u>	<u>2nd</u>	<u>3rd</u>	<u>Unp</u>	<u>Pts</u>	<u>Bon</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Max</u>	<u>Pd</u>	<u>Ave.</u>
1973	31	104	18	13	27	46	107	13	120	-	-	4.66

Other known matches.....M 10 R ? Pts. 34



JOHN ROBSON

Local lad John comes from Sunderland, just a few minutes away from the Boldon Stadium. John first appeared in 72, he rode until they closed in 1974. He then went on to wear the colours of Newcastle and Teesside Tigers.

Never a high scorer, John was never the less a faithful servant to the Stars, always willing to do his best when required. They say that John's bike appeared in more races than he did, reason being, if someones bike refused to start, it was always John's bike that came out to replace it.

John found it hard going, but as team manager Colin Armitstead once wrote, "What a hell of a trier". Likeable lad John has two sons who are in speedway, Scott and Stuart, both have done well riding for Coventry in the Elite League.

John was another ex. rider to attend the recent reunion, he helped to entertain everyone, playing in the "Speedway Band".....Boom Boom !

(League only)

	M	R	1st	2nd	3rd	Unp	Pts	Bon	Total	Max	Pd	Ave
1972	6	20	0	2	3	15	7	2	9	-	-	1.80
1973	8	21	0	1	4	16	6	0	6	-	-	1.80
1974	21	71	3	7	21	40	44	6	50	-	-	2.82

Other matches.....M 4 Pts 10



BRIAN JOHNSON

Brian rode only one meeting for the Stars in 1973, that was the very last match of the season, a home match against Workington. Brian scored two points from three rides, so he was off the mark !

1974 saw Brian ride in twenty meetings, showing some promise. **It tends to be forgotten the part played by Brian in helping Sunderland through that very difficult season.** He didn't set the place on fire, but he did enough to show that there may have been more to come, with scores like eight points against Crewe and seven points against Long Eaton.

(LEAGUE RECORD)

	M	R	1st	2nd	3rd	Unp	Pts	hon	Total	Max	Pd	Ave.
1973	1	3	0	0	2	1	2	1	3	-	-	4.00
1974	20	60	3	10	17	30	46	14	60	-	-	4.00

TIM SWALES

Signed up mid-way through the 1974 season in a bid to prop up the struggling team. He did a decent job, the highlight being his fourteen points against Boston at the Boldon track.

Tim ended the season on a very decent average of 6.77, it was a pity that Sunderland hadn't got hold of him sooner, as it was, well done Tim !



(LEAGUE RECORD)

	M	R	1st	2nd	3rd	Unp	Pts	Bon	Total	Max	Pd	Ave.
1974	18	75	16	23	21	15	115	12	127	-	-	6.77

ANDY MELDRUM

Like Tim Swales, Andy was signed on in June 74, two matches before Tim. Andy made his home debut against Crewe, scoring five points.

Andy decided to retire shortly after George Barclay was forced to call it a day, once again reflecting on what might have been ! Like Tim, Andy had a decent average of 6.07. **If only the pair of them had done the full season !**



(LEAGUE RECORD)

	M	R	1st	2nd	3rd	Unp	Pts	Bon	Total	Max	Pd	Ave.
1974	15	56	11	12	21	12	78	7	85	-	-	6.07

VIC HARDING

A lovely likeable lad was Vic, he used to call in on the Supporters club now and again, always a welcome sight.

Vic found it very hard going in 1974, but managed to string together twenty five matches that season. His average of 3.71 did not reflect how good a rider he would later become, he scored really well for Weymouth, before he was sadly killed in a track accident at Hackney.

(LEAGUE RECORD)

	M	R	1st	2nd	3rd	Unp	Pts	Bon	Total	Max	Pd	Ave.
1974	25	82	1	10	36	35	59	17	85	-	-	3.71



The one rider who **let Sunderland down very badly**. The New Zealand rider was in the Stars line up when speedway returned in 1971. A good rider with great potential, well liked by the fans. Alas, he walked out on them midway through the season.

Goodall had been given a great deal of help and support to enable him to become a top class rider. He was given a job and financial loans for new equipment, **he just walked out**, and that is all I'm going to say about him !

(LEAGUE RECORD)

	M	R	1st	2nd	3rd	Unp	Pts	Bon	Total	Max	Pd	Ave.
1971	19	74	22	16	19	17	117	2	119	-	-	6.43

OTHER RIDERS.....Alan Mackie, John Lynch, John Knock, Gerry Richardson, Brian Whaley, Bernie Aldridge, Colin Robertson, Paul Scanlon, all rode in 1971.

The following seasons saw Garry Moore, Russ Hodgson, Lloyd Dobson, Derek Fell, Jon Bower, Paul Callaghan and one or two more made the odd appearance, including Dennis Gavros in 1974. After making two double figure scores, he did very little and was on his way after only nine matches. His record reads.....

M	9	R	28	Pts	32	Bon	3	Total	35	Ave.	5.00
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Bernie Aldridge used to travel all the way from down south, with his bike on the back of a Mini pick-up, just on the off chance of getting a ride for the Stars. "Bless you Bernie"

A great story from Peter Wrathall tells of the time some of the riders rode around the inside of Roker Park football stadium, to drum up support for the speedway. It was the 5th. round of the F. A. Cup, against Luton. The B.B.C. had the camera's there recording the match. Under the stands, the lads were warming their bikes up during the first half. The punch line is, the magento's on their machines were interfering with the recording's, so the B.B.C. lost the first half of the match !

I was talking to **George Barclay** recently, he looked at a picture of **Jack Millen** , I asked him about Jack, was he really the bad guy that he was painted ? George turned to me and said, **no, "look at those eyes"**, pointing to Jack's picture. They are the eyes of a kind man, not a bad man !

Having had the privilege of speaking to both men, I think George is right, a rascal yes, a scallywag yes, but not a bad man.

Here are some riders nicknames.....

Captain Scarlet.Russ Dent

The White KnightGraeme Smith

Crazy JackJack Millen

The Candy KidJohn Knock

Bernie The Bolt.Bernie Aldridge

Gentleman GeorgeBarclay

SpeedyPete Wrathall

Flyin BrianBrian Havelock

John the BikeJohn Robson

Len Silver introduced them all with these words,

"Welcome to sunny Sunderland"



THE TEAM MANAGERS

When Sunderland Speedway returned to the Boldon track in 1971, the position of team manager was filled by Alan Middleton, previously with Rochdale Hornets.

Alan didn't remain in the job for very long, leaving in July to take up another position.

In August the post of team manager went to **Colin Armitstead**, Colin would go on to hold the position until Sunderland Speedway closed in 1974.

Colin was and still is a keen photographer, many of his photograph's were used in the programmes, and very good they were too ! Also in the programme, Colin wrote a weekly article, these too were always interesting and informative, keeping the fans up to date with what was going on behind the scenes.

I remember his end of season notes were always interesting, he always came up with some facts and figures that you couldn't quite remember yourself.

Colin was another one to come along to both of the recent "Stars" reunion's, and always has an interesting tale to tell.

MORE FACTS AND FIGURES

Fastest time of the season ...1971	65.8	Russ Dent	V	Rayliegh	9th. May
.....1972	64.8	Graeme Smith	V	4 T. T.	3rd Sept
.....1973	64.2	Dave Baugh	V	Bradford	22nd June
.....1974	63:2	John Hart	V	Birmingham	23 Aug (Track Record)

Dave Baugh had a liking for the Boldon track, he won "The Northern Star Championship" twice, in 1971-2. He also appeared as a guest for the Stars against Teesside in the final match of the season in 1972, scoring nine points.

In Sunderlands final home match of the season in 72, among the programme notes was the following....."NEWS FLASH"



JACK MILLEN IN BAD SMASH AT BARROW !

During the late stages of the challenge match at Barrow last Tuesday, Jack Millen was involved in a serious crash, breaking his leg, two collar bones, a shoulder blade, and two ribs, in addition to aggravating his already broken shoulder and wrist.

He is at present in ward 5 of the North Lonsdale Hospital, Barrow. He is likely to be hospitalised for a considerable period.!

STRANGE FACT.....The late **Colin Robertson** rode two meetings for the Stars in 1971, he failed to score a single point. In the meeting against Long Eaton he replaced the injured George Barclay in the second heat of the Rider of the Night final, he finished in second place. As the fastest second place, he qualified and rode in the final, finishing in fourth place.....(His second place being the only point scoring position ever for the Stars)

FACTS AND FIGURES.....ODDS AND ENDS.

Away to Hull, 11th. Aug. 1971. **John Lynch** top scored with 12 pts.

Away to Ipswich, 16th. Sept. 1971. **Bernie Aldridge**, 2nd highest scorer, 5pts.

30th. June 1972 The Stars were **unbeaten** by the opposition in the match against Scunthorpe, winning 57-21.

OH-NO, NOT BIRMINGHAM ! Do we have to ride at Birmingham ?

The Stars could be forgiven for thinking along those lines when the Birmingham away matches came around.

Take a look at the results over the four seasons.

1971	S/land	26	B/ham	52
1972	S/land	24	B/ham	54
1973	S/land	15	B/ham	63
1974	S/land	17	B/ham	60

OUCH !

1971, **Russ Dent** scored as many as the rest of the team put together with 13 out of 26

1972, **Graeme Smith** scored more than the rest of the team put together, when he scored 13 out of the Stars total of 24pts.

In 1973, **Terry Barclay** top scored with just four points. And in 1974, **Brian Havelock** was the top scorer with just six points.

A case of "**Brummie Bashing**", with the brummie's doing all the bashing . It must have had some affect however, after the 74 thrashing, they went down to Weymouth the following day and won their one and only away league match !

17th. Aug 1971, **Russ Dent**, a guest for Berwick, top scored with ten points.

Jack Millen was born part Maori, in New Zealand in 1943, making him 35 years old when he died in 1978. Rarely did you see a zero against Jack's name in the programme, but in 1973 when Jack's average "peaked" 9.74, three times he recorded nil. Home and away against Ellesmere Port and away to Rayleigh. Each time he was injured in his first race and took no further part in the meeting.

In eight seasons of racing in this country, Jack rode for Crewe in 1971, (also two meetings for Sunderland) In 1972-3 he rode for Sunderland, in 1974 he was back at Crewe again (an injury hit season meant he only rode in ten meetings). 1975-6 saw Jack ride for Stoke Potters, while 1977 saw him ride for Edinburgh Monarchs. And finally his last team was the Berwick Bandits. The "battle weary" Millen, who had done a lot of hard pre-season track work for the Taylor family on the Shieldfield racing strip, started like a bomb, scoring a maximum in his first match. After nine meetings for the Bandits, it was all over for the man they called "**Crazy Jack**".

Ivan Mauger remains unbeaten around the Boldon track, but how many other world champions have ridden round Boldon? Peter Collins rode there in 71, for Rochdale Hornets, and can we include Gary Havelock, he "rode around" the track as a little lad on his tiny bike!



THE SUPPORTERS

We couldn't end without a mention about the great supporters and track helpers.

The Stars had a really good supporters club, chaired by the late George English.

George and his wife Joan, and his son, young George (now promoting at Newcastle), they were very active in the running of the club. Keith and Rossanna Goodwin both did the job of secretary.

Harry Harwood and his son, also Harry, both did a lot of track maintenance, both went on to work at Newcastle's Brough Park track.

The supporters club were always looking for ways to plug the speedway, driving around the town centre, handing out leaflets. Many helped out around the track with repairs and preparation of the track itself. We spent many long cold days during the winter at the track, but we made many friends.

Many of those supporters attended the recent reunions that we held, too numerous to mention them all, but it was great to see them all again. While on the subject of reunions, I would like to express my whole hearted gratitude to Keith and Rossanna Goodwin, Roy and Margaret Willis, Ian and Elizabeth Martin, who along with my wife Molly and myself they helped to organise the two most fantastic get-togethers, they really worked hard, here's to the next one !

A little tale about three supporters, Tommy Rowe, Malcolm Weatherburn and my late brother in law Gordon Johnson. Before a local derby match against Teesside, held at the Boldon track, these three guys spotted Jack Millen and Jim Wells. "If you get the red wellies tonight, there's a crate of beer waiting for you". The "Red Wellies" was Teesside's Bruce Forrester who always wore red boots. I don't remember who it was but one of our Kiwi lads beat the very hard to beat Bruce. The crate of beer was duly presented after the match to Jack and Jim, who went home "quite merry".

THAT WAS THE STORY OF SUNDERLAND SPEEDWAY AS I SAW IT, AND TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE

I hope you enjoyed reading the story of Sunderland Speedway, as much as I enjoyed being part of it !

BOB FERRY