

BOSTON:

In 1970 Boston was one of the newest Second Division tracks and in their first season finished 13th in the league. In 1971 they were fourth and runners-up in 1972 when Arthur Price was second in the Division Two Riders' Championship.

The Barracudas won the 'double' in 1973 when they won the league by a clear 14 points and clinched the Knock-out Cup. Price went one better in the Div. Two Riders' Championship and Boston had arrived. The following year Carl Glover won the Riders' Championship and his team finished third in the league. They were fifth the following season but helped Michael Lee become a star. At the end of the season their skipper Bruce Forrester retired and Lee and David Gagen went to King's Lynn in Division One.

Robert Hollingworth quickly established himself at National League level and at the end of the season the New Hammond Beck Road team were 12th in the league. Although Wolverhampton signed Hollingworth for over £3,000 he remained with the Barracudas for the 1977 season.

In 1977 they reached the semi-finals of the Knock-out Cup and National League Four Team Tournament, as they had done in 1976 and reached seventh position

CANTERBURY:

When Canterbury first joined the Second Division in 1968 they finished seventh but, more importantly, won the Knock-out Cup at the very first attempt. The following year they were sixth and in 1970 league champions. What a tremendous way to start as a club.

However, in 1971 they fell to 14th position and never made better than tenth until, in 1976, the club was given new promoters who brought Reg Luckhurst out of retirement and the inclusion of a former World finalist in the club helped the team to pull their socks up and finish fourth in the league.

CRAYFORD:

Racing returned to Crayford in 1975, having first been staged there in 1968. Always a Second Division track, the Kestrels were sixth in 1968 and fourth in 1969. That same year Geoff Ambrose won the Second Division Riders' Championship. In 1970 they were 14th in the league.

On their return in 1975 they finished eighth in the table and number one Laurie Etheridge won the New National League Riders' Championship. The team that year included former Ipswich and West Ham rider Alan Sage, George Barclay, Tre-

vor Barnwell and Alan Johns. In 1976 the Kestrels improved their league position and finished in sixth place with Mike Broadbanks, Richard Davey and John Hooper coming up trumps on many occasions.

For the 1977 season they signed Poole rider Colin Goody and finished in 10th position.

EASTBOURNE:

The history of Eastbourne speedway goes back to 1928 when the current National League and Knock-out Cup champions started racing at Arlington Stadium.

Their first bite at the cherry came in 1947 when they won the National League Division Three

The Eagles joined the Second Division in 1969 and finished

Colin Richardson was their number one, winning the National League Riders' Championship and the coveted Wimbledon Laurels.

ELLESMERE PORT:

It was Patricia Phoenix who opened speedway at Thornton Road in 1972 and only in recent years that the Merseyside outfit have really come into their own. During their first season as a Second Division side they finished 15th and 14th the following two years.

In 1975 they were ninth in the league overall with John Jackson so very strong as a number one at Second Division level. The following season has been their most successful to date when they were runners-up for

Henry the key men in 1977 the Fen Tigers set the pace early in 1977 and ended up in eighth place in the final league table.

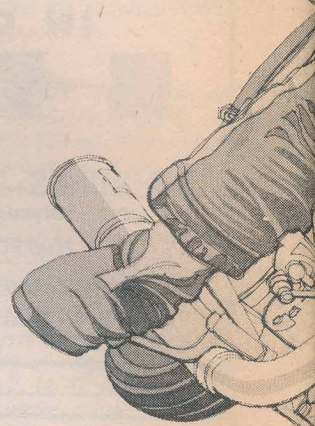
NEWCASTLE:

Undoubtedly the success story of the seventies, for when they reopened in 1975 everyone told them it would never be a success. The following year they scooped everything the New National League could offer.

Racing at Brough Park started back in 1930 when Newcastle could be found in the Northern League, where they were tenth that year. Since then they have produced three World Champions and there are surely more to come from them.

The Diamonds did not race between 1952 and 1960 but in

Speedway's Golden Jubilee National League



eighth. In 1970 they were runners-up for the title and their number one Dave Jessup won the Second Division Riders' Championship. The next few years were to be outstanding for the Sussex club. They won the league title in 1971; were fifth in 1972; and third in 1973 when Bobby McNeil was runner-up in the Second Division Riders' Championship. For the second time they took the runners-up position in 1974 and signed veteran Division One rider and former Eagle Pete Jarman.

Teenager Neil Middleditch was crowned Junior Champion of the British Isles in 1975 and team partner Steve Weatherley was second. Eastbourne won the New National League Knock-out Cup and finished fourth in the league.

At the start of 1976 they lost their two top men, Middleditch and Paul Gachet, but Weatherley was a superb number one, finishing second in the Junior Championship to Michael Lee . . . by half a wheel. Loanee from Reading Ian Gledhill was like gold dust.

The league and Cup double was theirs in 1977 when they resigned Dave Kennett, five years after selling him to Hackney.

the league honours. In Jackson and Chris Turner they had the National League Best Pairs Champions with Jackson also runner-up in the National League Riders' Championship. The Gunners were third in the National League Four Team Tournament and semi-finalists in the Knock-out Cup.

The Gunners were third in the league last season; semi-finalists in both the Knock-out Cup and the National League Four Team Tournament and in John Jackson, Phil Collins and Steve Finch had the most dangerous trio in the division. Collins was a very creditable second in the Junior Championship to his elder brother Les.

MILDENHALL:

They started racing in 1975 and finished in 19th position but made steady progress to finish 13th the following year. This was not a bad performance at all with most of the team being made up from teenagers from their training schools. Their very consistent number one is Bob Coles and he received first class support in 1976 from Mick Bates, Mike Spink, Robert Henry and Neil Leeks. With Coles and

1961 joined the Provincial League only to finish bottom again. Three years later they made it to the top to win the League title, but had to wait another 12 years before they won it again.

Newcastle were founder members of the British League

At the end of the 1970 season Newcastle closed the doors on racing.

When they returned in 1975 they came with a bunch of highly promising British and Australian teenagers eager to see the Diamonds back on the top again. They were an overnight success and finished a creditable second in the final league table at second division level. How long would it be before they were back racing at senior level.

So we now come to 1976 and what a year it was. Newcastle won the League, Knock-out Cup and National League Four Team Tournament. They were runners-up in the NL Best Pairs and in Joe Owen had the number one rider in Great Britain. He retained his Silver Helmet for the whole season; averaged 11 points a match, was only beaten at home once the whole season, won the National League Riders' Championship and 20 other

trophies. His brother Tom was second behind him all season.

Despite problems in 1977 the Diamonds still managed to keep smiling and finished sixth in the league.



forced to close and the team moved to White City Stadium in London.

It was a long fight to keep speedway at Cowley but the promoters won in the end and speedway was back at Cowley in 1976... but as a National League track and the supporters were annoyed by the fact that First Division racing had been taken away from them. As a second division track Oxford Cheetahs reached the quarter finals of the National League Knock-out Cup and finished 14th in the league.

The promoters did a fine job in building up a respectable team and signed Martin Yeates from Weymouth. Yeates was the most improved rider in the National League last season and is going to remain with Oxford for 1978 which is good news.

In 1977 Yeates won the Warners' Grand National at Hackney, ended the season as the Silver Helmet holder, was third in the NL averages and runner-up in the National League Riders' Championship.

NEWPORT:

Up until 1977 speedway had been ridden at First Division level at Somerton Park but they were forced to sell their licence at the end of 1976 and the Newport team moved to Bristol to race. Newport thus recruited National League riders and at Second Division level raced in 1977.

Newport joined the First Division in 1965 and finished fourth, but in the five years that followed their highest position was 13th in 1968. They moved up to eighth in 1971 however, after being left at the bottom the previous season. The next two seasons were disappointing as well but in 1975 the Somerton Park squad finished third and Phil Crump, Steve Grasham and Phil Herne worked well together. The following season Crump, the undisputed number one Australian in British speedway, finished third in the World Final

and ended the season as Golden Helmet holder. Newport came eighth in the league.

Last season they rode at National League level with brand new riders. They were 12th overall and in Jim Brett have a rider to watch.

OXFORD:

Oxford first raced in 1949 in Division Three of the National League and finished bottom of the pile, but in 1950 put on a tremendous show to win the coveted league title.

The 1960s were very cruel to the club and their best placing was fourth in 1965 and the seventies were just as bad.

The Rebels were 13th in 1970 and in both 1971 and 1972 17th. The following year they were 11th and in 1974 bottom of the table. Their best season for 21 years was 1975 when they finished in seventh position, but at the end of the season were

PETERBOROUGH:

The Panthers first appeared on the scene in 1970 and came tenth in the league although in the season that followed they finished 16th. One of their better seasons was 1972 when they were finalists in the Knock-out Cup and finished third in the table. In 1973 they were fourth overall but in the following year fell to eighth position and then way down to 18th in 1975, although that season their match against Crewe was not ridden.

It wasn't until 1975 that Peterborough, who race at the East of England Showground in Alwalton, found the team members to put them high in the table. They reached the semi-finals of the National League Four Team Tournament and Ian Clark showed a lot of potential. They finished ninth in the league and in 1977 were even better to finish fifth. Brian Clark and Ian Clark

(they are not related) were the backbone to their team's success and Nigel Flatman was instrumental in Peterborough winning the National League Four Team Tournament Championship.

RYE HOUSE:

Since Colin Pratt became co-promoter with Len Silver at Rye House speedway the team have really come to the fore in National League racing and at the end of 1977 featured in two television series.

The Rockets were granted an open licence in the 1930s and in 1949, riding under the banner of Rayleigh, were in Division Three of the National League.

In the sixties they joined the Provincial League and from 1968 to 1973 operated in Division Two of the British League from the old Rayleigh Weir Stadium.

Their league positions looked very encouraging for the years ahead. In 1968 and 1969 they were fifth, as they were in 1971. In 1970 they were 12th. Hugh Saunders represented the Rockets in the Division Two Riders' Championship in 1971 and came home third and the team reached the quarter-finals of the Knock-out Cup. The following season Alan Emmett won the Junior Championship and Rayleigh enjoyed their best season for some time when they finished fourth in the division.

In 1973 they slumped to a humiliating bottom of the table position and in 1974 moved to their present home in Hertfordshire at the Hoddesdon Raceway. Under new management they only made it to 16th place.

The Rockets, now known as the Rye House Rockets, signed Ted Hubbard for the 1975 season. Hubbard, runner-up in the 1974 Division Two Riders' Championship and former Canterbury rider.

Their youth policy paid off for them in 1976 and they received invaluable sponsorship from Infradex, the heating company in Hoddesdon. Team spirit put the Rockets into fifth place in the league, quarter-finals of the Knock-out Cup and semi-finals of the National League Four Team Tournament.

Although Rye House were without Hubbard and Fiala for most of the season because of injuries, they finished runners-up in the league table and Infradex sponsored the whole team, making them the first team in the history of the sport to be fully sponsored.





SCOTTISH TRACKS:

It would be impossible to look at the Scottish tracks individually because they overlap and intertwine with each other so let us look at Scottish speedway as a whole.

Speedway racing in Scotland took place 50 years ago but didn't really take off until 1930 when Edinburgh and Glasgow joined the Northern League. Edinburgh finished eighth and Glasgow on the bottom. Only Glasgow rode in 1931 and that was at the White City track there.

Between 1939 and 1946 there was no racing in Scotland but after the war Johnnie Hoskins became promoter at Glasgow's White City. The Glasgow Tigers in 1947 could be found in Division Two of the National League and in 1948 the old Meadowbank Stadium in Edinburgh was opened and they joined Glasgow in the Second Division. Racing in Scotland experienced a tremendous boom in the late forties and early fifties. Glasgow (White City) and Edinburgh were joined in 1949 by Glasgow (Ashfield) and in the following season Glasgow (White City) finished second in the league, Edinburgh eighth and Glasgow (Ashfield) 11th.

In 1951 another track opened. This time at Milton Street in Motherwell and Jack Young (Edinburgh) became the only Second Division rider to reach the World Final... and win it. His team were third in the league that year.

In 1952 all the Scottish tracks finished in fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth positions in the table and then Glasgow (Ashfield) closed the shutters on speedway. By the end of the 1954 season no Scottish clubs were racing.

In 1959 however, speedway up north was revived. An American student named Ian Hart was studying at a Scottish university and was asked for his thoughts on a fund raising scheme for Edinburgh University's charity week. He suggested that a charity speedway meeting should be held at Meadowbank. It was staged. It was a success and when attempts to bring speedway back to Meadowbank were tried in 1960 there was little trouble in the sport being accepted. Edinburgh joined the newly formed Provincial League and for the next four years was the only track in action in Scotland.

In 1964 Glasgow's White City reopened and was a success until it closed in the early 1970s.

In the 1967/68 winter months it was announced that the 1970 Commonwealth Games were to

be held in Edinburgh and a new stadium had to be built — but it would not cater for speedway. It posed a few problems and it was finally agreed to open a track in Berwick in Northumberland.

Berwick opened in 1968 in the British League Division Two and finished in tenth position. Although geographically they are in England they are regarded as a Scottish track.

After a couple of bad seasons they finished eighth in 1971 and in 1972 won their first match away from home in three seasons. The result was 43-35 at Scunthorpe. The seventies have not been very kind to Berwick in the league but in both 1976 and 1977 they were runners-up in the Knock-out Cup final.

Speedway started in Coatbridge in 1974 and the Tigers finished in ninth position in the league that year. The following season they were 12th and seventh in 1976. At the end of the season it looked doubtful if they would be able to race in 1977. In April their licence was sold and the whole team moved to the Glasgow Blantyre circuit. They were eleventh in the league but their highly promising Graham Dawson suffered severe brain damage in a crash and is still paralysed down one side. The side struggled on without him with Brian Collins a worthy number one.

Paisley Lions rode in 1975 and 1976 but after that was forced to close and despite numerous pleas and petitions from the loyal supporters the Paisley riders had to find new homes on British tracks. In the league table for both 1975 and 1976 the Lions ended in 15th and 16th positions in the division.

In 1977, joining Coatbridge (later to become Glasgow) and Berwick was Edinburgh. After many years the sport returned to Powderhall and was back in the capital. Led by Bert Harkins, with Dave Trownson, Charlie Monk and Colin Farquharson the Monarchs are back and speedway in Scotland is again successful.

SCUNTHORPE:

The Saints first rode speedway in 1972 and were 17th in the table. In 1973 they moved up to 16th position but went back down to 17th in 1974.

They have had little success and in 1975 were 13th, 17th in 1976 and 14th last season.

The Saints will have to move from Quilbell Park for 1978.

STOKE:

Like Scunthorpe the Stoke Poters have only been racing in the seventies. In 1974 when they first started they finished 13th in the league but in 1975 made rapid

improvement to finish third overall. At the end of the season racing at the Newcastle Stadium was expected to cease when their licence was put on ice for 12 months, but a revival was just around the corner. The training school had produced a handful of promising riders and a new team was set up at Chesterton Raceway. They completed their 1976 season 11th in the league.

TEESSIDE:

The Tigers started racing in 1968 in fine fashion finishing third in the league that season. The following year Graham Plant won the Junior Championship and the team were ninth, finishing fifth the following season but 13th in 1971.

Their number one Bruce Forrester quickly established himself at International level and in Roger Mills, Tom Leadbitter, Tim Swales, Terry Lee and Frank Auffrett the Cleveland Park side had some fine prospects. The biggest disappointment the club has ever experienced must be their second round draw of the 1971 Knock-out Cup. In the second round they were leading Bradford by 14 points during the meeting but lost 38-40.

The following year was equally as disappointing when they failed to win a match away from home and ended in 10th position in the table. For the next two seasons they held on to sixth place but fell to seventeenth in 1975.

Alan Emerson, who had joined the Tigers in 1973, found his form and in 1976 finished fourth in the National League Riders' Championship. He became their number one that season but as yet has refused to move up to Division One.

In 1977 Pete Reading, who had been with the club since 1968, was given a testimonial meeting and at last it looked as if Teesside could put the pressure on other league clubs.

WEYMOUTH:

When Weymouth began their revival at Radipole Lane in 1974 the outlook for them appeared to be very dim. Even though the Wizards only won 10 of their 36 matches in 1974 and ended on the bottom in both 1974 and 1975 they have seen a handful of their riders make it to the senior grade.

In 1976 Martin Yeates became their number one and although Vic Harding and Chris Robins brought some encouraging points home it was not enough against the rest of the opposition in the league. On June 3 the Dorset club won their first match away from home for two years and signed some great teenagers. Ricky Owen, Danny Ken-

nedy, Gerald Purkiss, Roger Stratton and the British Speedway Supporters Club Junior Champion Billy Spiers were the new names but still the Wizards found it difficult to cast a spell on their opposition.

In 1977 Spiers moved to Division One joining King's Lynn and into his place came Sean Willmott. Only 16, Willmott is already World class and has won more grass track trophies than anyone else for his age in this country.

Willmott and Kennedy struck up a good riding partnership and Chris Robins has a great future. Having already lost Spiers, Weymouth also lost Yeates to Oxford and in mid-season Vic Harding to Hackney. They were 17th in the final league table.

WORKINGTON:

Although they did not start riding until 1970 the Workington Comets have made such an impact on Second Division racing that every season they are favourites to win the league title.

At the end of their initial season in the Second Division they were 11th and 15th the following year. With Taffy Owen as their number one in 1972 and Lou Sansom, Mal MacKay, Mitch Graham and Kym Amundson the Comets finished seventh and in 1973 were runners-up for the league title. They were finalists in the Knock-out Cup and Sansom third in the Second Division Riders' Championship.

The next three seasons were the best for the Cumbria clan. They were fourth overall in the 1974 league table and sixth in 1975 when they were also Knock-out Cup finalists. They showed consistent form in 1976 when they reached the quarter-finals of the National League Knock-out Cup and final of the National League Four Team Tournament.

The highlight of the season had to be their progress in the Inter-League Knock-out Cup. In the first round they beat Ipswich 40-38 and in the second round King's Lynn by the same scoreline both at their Derwent Park home. In the semi-finals of the competition they lost to Hull, the eventual champions, 54-23 and were the only National League club to ever get so far in the competition.

Steve Lawson and Brian Havelock plus Ian Hindle, Colin Goad, Mick Newton and Chris Bevan worked hard together to try to keep the Comets in the top three (they were third in 1976), but they could only make 16th position. — LOUISE QUINNELL

