



SEPTEMBER 2009

Life with **The Lions**

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE LEICESTER SPEEDWAY SUPPORTERS CLUB

After 26 long years there's just one thing to say.....

YES!

Tuesday 4th August was one of the most important days in the history of Leicester Speedway as the plans for a new home for Leicester Lions at Beaumont Park received the unanimous approval of Leicester City Council's Planning Committee.

The formal description of the decision is of 'Approved with Conditions'. The good news is that these conditions were all expected and do not present any serious obstacles. More details on this and a diary of the events surrounding the successful application can be found on pages 2 and 3.

Pictured opposite are a group of club members who attended the meeting and were met by Central News' live TV reporter Rajiv Popat outside Leicester Town Hall for an exclusive media 'scoop' on the night!



Chairman's Message

Hello again. Well folks, I must be the happiest man alive.

After 20 years we have finally got Planning Permission. And they said it would never happen! Many thanks to everyone who has contributed to this cause over the years.

Now the hard work begins, and our role as a "Supporters Club" comes into its own. One of the most important things we can do is to create a 'volunteers' list of everyone who can lend a hand to help speed things up and meet the deadlines to get racing for March 2010. For further details on this please contact me by

email Hurriken1@hotmail.co.uk or call me on **07870 489569**. Any assistance you can offer, be it with construction expertise or with simple manual help, will be much appreciated!

I hope you all enjoy reading this 'bumper' 8 page one-off celebratory edition of the newsletter. My sincere thanks go to all our advertisers for making it possible to produce. Their ads are on the back page so please support them if you can.

Finally, I hope to see you all at the Celebration/Xmas party on Saturday 21st November. Please see page 6 and the enclosed insert for all the details on getting tickets. I think we all deserve what promises to be a great night out!

Ken Naylor - LSSC Chairman

PLANNING APPROVED!

An official statement from the LSSC committee

We are thrilled to announce that on Tuesday 4th August formal Planning Permission was granted by the City Council's Planning Committee on the proposals for Beaumont Park submitted by Beaumont Sports Complex Ltd. The plans received unanimous support in the Chamber making it a marvellous victory for all our efforts over the last couple of years.

Many thanks to all our club members who played such a vital role in our campaign, and to all the people who added their support via emails, letters and petition signatures. Each and every one of you are part of this historic achievement.

The Leicester Speedway Supporters Club committee would also like to record individual thanks to the following people;

To David Hemsley, and his fellow BSC Ltd directors for their massive input into making this happen. To the three Beaumont Leys ward councilors who had the vision to support the plan: Vi Dempster, Paul Westley and Keith Lloyd-Harris. To Patricia Hewitt MP for also providing much help and support. To Gary Coltman of Leicester Road Racing Club for being a key part of the development and also to former Leicester Lions legends Ray Wilson, Les Collins, Norman Hunter and Vic White for regularly offering up their valuable time and support to our cause. Our apologies to anyone we've missed out - there's been so many!

Now it's all systems go to get league racing back in Leicester for March 2010. There's a lot of hard work to be done to be ready on time but after 26 years we certainly don't want to put it off any longer!

The Supporters Club will be holding a "celebratory" party night held in Leicester at the Abbey Sports Club to mark the end of 26 long years with no team to support. Former Hunters and Lions riders and officials will be there to join us and this will take place on the evening of Saturday 21st November - and who knows, we may even get to meet the new Promoter - whoever that might be! For full details see the article on page 6 of this newsletter.

The Committee - LSSC



On Beaumont Park with Central News

The following is an account of how events unfolded in the days before and after the application was heard on Tuesday 4th August.

Words by Steve Chilton. Photos by Nigel Ritchie.

Friday 31st July

Following Andy Joyce (our Publicity Officer) sending out invitations to various media outlets about a press conference on Wednesday 5th August - the day after the planning meeting, a few of the reporting teams made it clear they wanted to give the story even bigger coverage. BBC Radio Leicester were first to show their hand and they got in touch with our chairman, Ken Naylor for an interview. They went to his house (and even asked him to start up his speedway bike - to which he politely refused!) and recorded his views. They also sent a reporter to Beaumont Leys Shopping Centre to get the views of a selection of locals - all of which were positive. These were broadcast on the Friday and Saturday.

Monday 3rd August

I received a call from Ken saying that Central TV's News team had been in touch and wanted to record some footage tomorrow lunchtime for Tuesday evening's news bulletin at 6pm.

Tuesday 4th August

We managed to gather a small crowd of supporters at the Beaumont Park site at 11.30am for a meeting with Central News reporter Rajiv Popat and his cameraman. They wanted to record footage for that evening's news programme and had us walking around the park looking at plans and pretending to discuss what goes where. Must admit this was all a bit staged and it felt like we were actors rather than speedway supporters! They also recorded interviews with Ken and myself for broadcast that evening. Talking to Rajiv afterwards it became clear he thought this was a real "good news" story and told us he'd be talking to his producers about sending an outside broadcast unit to the Town Hall to be there for the decision by the Council Planning Committee that evening. The meeting was scheduled to start at 5.30pm and our application was third on the agenda. Rajiv rang me that afternoon to say that they'd definitely be there, but not only that, he'd persuaded the council's 'powers-that-be' to change the agenda so that our application was heard first! That meant he could be assured the first news of the decision would be heard on his Central News 6pm bulletin. Nice work from Rajiv as getting a council agenda changed at the last minute is no mean feat!

I walked round the Town Hall at 5.15pm and it was great to see that a good group of our supporters had also turned up to be present at the meeting and hear for themselves the outcome of what has been a two and a half year long campaign for the site at Beaumont Park. We all filed into the impressive City Council Chamber in the Town Hall where the Planning Committee, including it's chairman, the meeting recorders and all three Beaumont Leys Ward Councillors were gathered. We sat quietly in the public gallery and waited for the meeting to start, reading the Planning Officers report as we did so. First on the agenda was actually the aforementioned change to the agenda, courtesy of Central News. Those present formally agreed to the request and the hearing for Beaumont Sports Complex began. Much to our amusement one member immediately declared an "interest" in so much as he'd been a Lions fan in back in the sixties and had also signed one of our petitions six years ago to get speedway back in Leicester! However, as none of that was relevant to this particular site it apparently didn't matter.

Councillor Paul Westley spoke on behalf of his fellow Beaumont Leys Ward Councillors and it was fantastic hearing what he had to say. He was firmly behind the proposals, making a very eloquent and forthright case for the application to be approved, finishing by saying he really wanted this to happen in his ward. I'd vote for him! Each Planning Committee member in turn then stated their opinions on the application and it was increasingly exciting to hear one after another say what a great benefit to the local community this project is and how they're fully supportive of the Planning Officers' recommendation for approval. It was made known by the chairman that over 100 letters of support were received by the Planning Department as opposed to just 9 objections. In addition to this we had also handed over a petition of well over 500 names collected at the two Beaumont Leys Shopping Centre open days we held. With the weight of such statistics in our favour it looked very promising indeed. Of those objections, most were on technical grounds that David Hemsley had already addressed, such as the Flood Risk Assessment, but there were a couple that were more emotive and referred to objections based on a change in quality of life for the locals. One member did say that these objections should be formally acknowledged and responded to at the appropriate time. However, as the chairman pointed out, the pros massively outweighed the cons and the overall benefit to the community must be measured against one or two individual concerns. He also went on to praise the quality and thoroughness of the application (all credit to David and his team for that) as well as the sheer amount of public consultations that we had done over the last couple of years.

Then came the moment of truth as it was put to the vote. To our absolute delight the application was unanimously approved - beyond our wildest dreams of two years ago. I desperately wanted to cheer (in the same manner as when I witness Leicester City score a goal) but it wasn't appropriate given the formal setting. We all had to sit on our hands and suppress our delight before quietly filing out of the chamber. Then we celebrated! There were many hugs and handshakes as well as a general sense of disbelief that we'd finally achieved something we'd dreamt about for 26 long years. Rajiv and his Central News team were there to greet us and several minutes later we were live on TV outside the Town Hall. We gathered as a group and he got quick words from myself, Malc Halford and young Amba Hunter before we all gave it a big Lions roar! (another thing that was staged and rehearsed prior to being on live!).

The week that was.....



Outside the Town Hall with Rajiv Popat of Central News

Then the mobiles started going off! Loads of messages from friends and family who'd seen it on the tele, messages of congratulations from the likes of Ray Willson and also a call from Andy Joyce - who'd missed everything by being on holiday in Cromer with his family! He interrupted his crab sandwiches and pint of Norfolk bitter to find out all the details. We then headed to a nearby pub to celebrate. Ken Naylor even marked the occasion by buying a round! I then had a call from BBC Radio Leicester and had to do a brief interview on the steps of the Highcross pub for inclusion in their news bulletins - as well as being asked to come into the studio next morning on the breakfast show.



Leicester Mercury photo call for Vic White, Steve Chilton, David Hemsley, Gary Coltman & Ray Wilson



Radio Leicester's Martin Ballard interviews LSSC Secretary Steve Chilton

Wednesday 5th August

The day started early for me as I got to Radio Leicester at 7.00am for an appearance on the Ben Jackson show. Sadly Ben was away and I ended up being interviewed by a stand-in presenter who's name I've forgotten already. It still annoys me I got up at 6am to talk to this guy. He was playing Devil's Advocate, which is fair enough as that's his job. However, he also seemed disinterested in the story and quickly wound up the interview when I wouldn't divulge the names of the people putting the money up. Obviously that's none of his business and I politely sidestepped the question. He never even said "thank you for coming in" - something that in my previous experiences on radio, all presenters do as a matter of courtesy. Some people have their own agendas I suppose.

At midday we held the formal press conference indoors at Beaumont Leys Leisure Centre (it was raining!). David Hemsley was there to explain fully to the assembled media what the plans and timescales were from this point and to describe the aims of the facility in terms of the local community and beyond. As well as several of us from the supporters club, also present were Ray Wilson and Vic White, both of whom we thank very much for attending. Gary Coltman of British Cycling was also there with his road racing and BMX bikes. From the media we again had Rajiv, who recorded an interview with David that was shown that evening. Martin Ballard (a true professional radio presenter!) from Radio Leicester's Sports Time programme, Chris Finn, the Leicester Mercury's motor sports correspondent and Pete Ballinger from the BSPA's press office, who recorded the interviews with David and Vic that you can see on our website via YouTube.



Rajiv Popat of Central News interviews David Hemsley

It was great to tune into Sports Time later that evening and hear on a contemporary sports programme interviews with Graham Onions (England Test Cricketer), Matty Fryatt of Leicester City and the legendary former Lions' skipper, Ray Willson! The following day's Mercury also had speedway back in the sports section - which is excellent. And we look forward to it being there every week next season!



The Press Conference at Beaumont Leys Leisure Centre

The future

This is now a key time as the Lions are not back yet. There's a tremendous amount of work to be done between now and next March if we are to achieve the target of getting the Lions roaring again for the 2010 season. The council have to provide Beaumont Sports Complex with the official signed paper, something that takes a month or so apparently. In addition, all the financing has to be put in place and contractors need to be given the go-ahead to commence the work on site. We will no doubt need volunteers to help speed up the process in the coming months so keep up to date via our website and emails from LSSC.

Congratulations messages

Featured below are a selection of the messages we've received as emails, a text or postings in our website guestbook. Thank you to everyone who took the time to get in touch. All of these comments were received in the week after approval.

EMAIL & TEXT MESSAGES:

Just wanted to email you to say how thrilled I am at the fantastic news this week. You and the team deserve a medal for all your tireless hard work in making this 26 long year dream finally come true. I was only 15 in 1983 but I used to walk from Western Park to Blackbird Road every Tuesday evening and dad would come and pick me up at 9.45pm. I was introduced to Leicester Speedway by my brother in the 1980/81 seasons and for much of '81, '82 and '83 I hardly missed a home fixture.

I am really thrilled that the Lions are finally 'coming back home' and I will definitely be there on opening night!!

Tim Clarke - Scraftoft, Leicester

I wanna wish everyone involved a great well done. It couldn't have been possible without all!!

Steve Burton - Leicester

Absolutely brilliant news. All the old memories come flooding back, Ray Wilson, Anders Michanek, John Boulger. Who can forget all the tussles Ray Wilson had with Nigel Boocock? Awesome Tuesday nights! I wish the Lions every success.

Rich Goddard - Leicester

Wonderful news - thank you for keeping me posted. At risk of sounding like Mr Grace in Are You Being Served - well done everybody!

Beverley Heath - Leicestershire & Rutland Wildlife Trust

Congratulations to you all for your hard work! To hear the LIONS roar again will be all I could have hoped for in my lifetime! Many thanks and be assured of at least 7 regular attendees at the new venue!!

Well done and please continue to ensure the gates open on time !

Glynnis Sutton and family

Great News indeed. Looking forward to filling my programme in again on the first bend!

Tony Steele (Speedway Referee) - Leicester

CONGRATULATIONS! Hooray & yippee

I immediately thought of you when I saw the BSPA news today. A huge amount of work has into this campaign so it's marvellous news!! I'd like to write something on various stages of the process for my book/books (at some point). Best wishes

Jeff Scott (Speedway author) - Brighton

That's fantastic news. Cant wait now, its only a ten minute drive for me up to the new site, can finally buy a season ticket at last and attend every week.

Amanda Bruce - Leicester

Brilliant news! Well done everyone. Just reward for all the Supporters Club's efforts. My best wishes to you all!

Ray Wilson (former Leicester Lions skipper) - Leicestershire

Congratulations on the successful application for the new speedway track in Leicester, I was a regular visitor to the old Blackbird road stadium as a child.

Phil Woodhull - Leicester

Well done. Look forward to visiting in 2010.

Steven Crawley

Well done to you all - great news yesterday. You have my full support and we'll be there at Beaumont Park in 2010.

Andy Cross

Just heard the great news about the possibility of racing there next year. Well done and many congratulations.

Dave Hayes - Leicester

We hear planning permission has been okayed - great news.

If you can let us have any contact details for prospective organisers/promoters we would like to contact them directly with our congratulations.

Martin and Lin Rogers (the last Leicester promoters back in 1983) - Australia

May I offer my huge congratulations on securing the return of Speedway to Leicester. I have followed your fight with interest via your website and the Leicester Mercury online and this is fantastic news, it was great to see the news also made ITV teletext.

Gary Barson - Coventry

Great news about your planning permission for a new site for Leicester Speedway. I must admit to being quite excited by it all. I'm just hoping my team (Reading) can get their new stadium sorted.

Andy Povey (BSPA press office) - Reading

Congrats to you all on receiving planning permission, I hope that all goes well from here on. Look forward to seeing you soon (if you are competing at our level) or we will be over to see a meeting when you are up and running.

Neil - Buxton Speedway - Media Relations

GUESTBOOK MESSAGES:

First attended Leicester Speedway - The Hunters - 1959. Hope to attend the opening fixture and many more... it is great to have Speedway back in the City!

Adrian - Beaumont Leys

Well happy. Been so so longI'm wetting my pantsBe great to have it back!

Gutty B - Sileby, Leics

I'm so pleased for all involved in bringing speedway back to Leicester. Having moved away a couple of years ago to Wiltshire. I will make a point of coming back for the opening meeting in March 2010. Congratulations to everyone and something positive for Leicester speedway fans to look forward to at last. My very best wishes and thanks to all the people who never gave up hope and the hard work that you put in to making the Lions roar again.

Mark Barsby - Wiltshire (Leicestershire exile)

Fantastic news, Just spoke to my parents back home, so thought I'd better check it out at the local Internet cafe to make sure they were not pulling my leg. Huge thanks to Andy & all connected with the campaign, & roll on March 2010.

Ian Coles (on holiday in Spain!) - Mountsorrell, Leics

Congratulations on all your hard work. I can't wait for speedway to return. I'll be there on that first night.

Bob Milnes - Coalville, Leics

To all involved, congratulations and thank you. Lets go racing!

Martin Holt - Thurmaston, Leics

Great news. Speaking as a Brummie fan I know exactly how you feel. Looking forward to some great local derbies.

guitar_art - Birmingham

Congratulations you Lions fans, so glad your team is back from a fellow happy speedway fan at the Brummies. Looking forward to visiting you with our team, yipeeeeeeeeeeee.

Terri - Birmingham

Wonderful News about Beaumont Park! Best wishes to all my old speedway mates from 68 onward. Can't wait til the Lions roar again.

Well done to all the campaigners too, the public are behind you.

Mick Clowes - Quorn, Leics

Congratulations on today's news! We're looking forward to resurrecting some old rivalries! You might even persuade us away from Brandon!

Paul, Maggie, Andy & Scarlett - Whetstone, Leicester

About time! The last 26 years is lost, but if the new track is as good as the old then it will be worth every day that we lost.

Graham Warrington - Leicester

Fantastic news about the stadium very well done by everybody involved. Can't wait to get there!

Dave Wileman - Measham, Leics

Well done Leicester, you've managed to do something Cradley haven't. Best wishes for the future.

Kinsells - Cradley, West Midlands

The LSSC Bike Display Show

By Chris Pople - LSSC

It was a nice mild summer Sunday afternoon when the LSSC descended on the Blackbird pub for a get-together involving my perfect combination, speedway bikes and beer.

Attendees were treated to a display of speedway machines from across the decades that included a 1920's Douglas, plus Japs, Jawa's and GM's from as far back as 1940 up to present day.



Leicester born Kings Lynn rider Adam Lowe was in attendance with one of his current racing machines, and former Hunters rider Mike Lawrence was there with his original Hunters race jacket and leathers, and three vintage machines.



Coventry and Cardiff GP machine examiner Ron Jones, who is also one of the "Blast From The Past" classic speedway riders, came along with 2 fully chromed Japs that he regularly rides at tracks up and down the country. He also displayed some of his collection of race jackets. Special guest, Lions legend Ray Wilson mingled and chatted with fans past, present and future whilst milling round the sizeable crowd that attended the event, and said that he thoroughly enjoyed the day.



In addition to the machines on display there was also memorabilia including the original flag that flew at the Blackbird Road Stadium during the last season. There were also road bikes on display including Yamaha, Ducati, Suzuki, race machines



and low riders amongst them. Former World Cycle Speedway Champion David Hemsley was also at the show with one of his cycles too.

All in all it was a successful event that provided a perfect opportunity for speedway fans and bike enthusiasts to meet and mingle in the midday sun. Whilst we regret that we cannot mention everyone in person, LSSC would like to thank all those who gave up their time to bring along and display their machines and memorabilia. We would also like to thank all who attended and showed support to the event.

LSSC's new Honorary Vice-President... Vic White!



Following all the support Vic has given us over the recent campaign and beyond, the committee decided that we would like to formally invite Vic to join Les Collins and Norman Hunter in becoming an "Honorary Vice President" of our club. As a former rider, team manager and promoter at Blackbird Road, Vic holds a unique place in the history of the Leicester Lions. Therefore, we are proud to announce that he has kindly accepted the offer and we look forward to making a formal presentation to him in the coming months.



CALLING ALL VOLUNTEERS

Anyone keen to lend a hand and help achieve our target of being ready to race in March 2010?

If so, please contact our club Chairman Ken Naylor on **07870 489569** asap.

The more volunteers we get, the quicker we can get things done! At this stage we need skilled and unskilled people to help with a variety of on-site work in their free time.

Jim Buxton 1939-2009

We were very saddened to hear from Lion's fan Jim Buxton's sister, Sylvia Bills, informing us of Jim's recent passing.

Most of you will remember Buxton's Coaches - that was Jim! He had been a lifelong supporter of Leicester Speedway, firstly with the Hunters, travelling with Sylvia on a Midland Red bus every Friday night.

When he bought his first coach he immediately started a Tuesday evening service to see the Lions at Blackbird Road, expanding to putting on two coaches if it was a big match against one of our main rivals.

Jim also linked up with George Hylton and between them they provided valuable coach services to many away tracks, Cradley Heath, Kings Lynn and Wembley amongst others.

Jim was also a regular at Blackbird Road and Brandon following another love, stock car racing.

We would like to pass on our sincere condolences to Sylvia and the rest of Jim's family.

SUPPORTERS CLUB EVENTS

“The Lions are Back”

CELEBRATION PARTY!

SATURDAY 21st NOVEMBER

At: The Abbey Sports & Leisure Club
70 Slater Street, Frog Island, Leicester, LE3 5AS

Time: 8pm - til late!

We've waited 26 long years so it's now time to all let our hair down (those of us still with some!) and celebrate together with many specially invited speedway guests, ex-riders and officials.

THIS EVENT IS ADVANCE TICKETS ONLY
ADULTS £5. AGED 15 & under FREE.

*All Supporters Club members receive first take up on the tickets so please respond by filling out the **ENCLOSED FORM ASAP!***

Only after confirmation of numbers from our membership will the event be opened up to the general public.

New LIONS merchandising
only from the LSSC! see www.leicester-speedway.co.uk for details

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ONLY £3!

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Size: 280 x 60mm

Adhesive to face for proudly displaying in your car!

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Speedway... it's easy isn't it?

Supporters Club Secretary Steve Chilton decided he wanted to find out. This is his first hand account of his "speedway experience" day.

Back in June I went along to the Norfolk Arena at King's Lynn to experience what the organisers call a 'Powerslide Day'.

This 'experience day' was a birthday present from my wife, kindly donated after she'd carefully checked the potential pay-out on my life insurance policy in the event of my untimely demise! I should point out that I have never ridden a motor bike of any description before, never even twisted a throttle in fact - which added greatly to my mix of excitement and apprehension. However, I wasn't going to let that deter me as I'd always heard that bikers need to forget everything they know before attempting to ride a speedway bike. Additionally, it had been a lifelong ambition to give it a go on a proper track - and I was running out of time before I got too fat to fit into a set of kevlar's!

I headed over to Kings Lynn on a sunny Saturday morning with my 11 year old daughter Molly for company and to act as my 'event recorder'. My wife, who dislikes speedway anyway, needed to sit at home with the aforementioned policy close to hand. As we neared Saddlebow Road I started to question my own sanity, but before I could turn around I found myself in the Norfolk Arena car park and one by one, my fellow Powersliders started to arrive. With very few tracks now able to operate outside of their licence conditions the NA attracts people from all over the country, making my two hour run from Leicester seem a short trip. A guy called Tony was up from Dover, John was from Swindon and we also had a couple who had come down from Berwick. After a few brief "hellos" to each other we gathered at the hut near the pits to



Our 'group' prior to taking to the track, with Jan and Kozza

be kitted out. It was here we were met by the Powerslide manager, Nathan Hollands. He was a very friendly and affable chap and made us all feel most welcome as each of us in turn received kevlar trousers and tops, protective body suit, knee pads, gloves, boots, steel shoe, goggles and of course, a helmet.

Once in the changing room it was a major feat trying to work out what went where and how to do things up. My body suit, made largely of netting with hard plastic back, elbow and shoulder supports, was a bit of a mystery - and I wasn't alone. After several attempts and various combinations we were all able to finally step outside the changing rooms in full racing gear! My daughter squealed with delight, saying "Dad, you look really funny in that costume!"

Then, after we'd all mastered walking in a steel shoe (not easy!), we gathered around as Nathan introduced our two instructors for the day, namely King's Lynn Stars' riders Kozza Smith and Jan Graversen. After a brief group photo the 12 of us in the group made our way out onto the track where we split into two groups of 6. We had been informed that we would initially learn how to ride a 125cc speedway training bike, ahead of the 500cc laydown Jawas which awaited us later in the day. The idea being that we all needed to get used to the feel of the bike, and become accustomed to the clutch and throttle, before being let loose on the scary 500s!

The main aim of the day was not just to ride these awesome machines but also to learn how to slide them! As a non-biker that seemed like a ridiculous notion to me - I just wanted to coast around and finish the day without the need for a visit to the very solid looking NA fence, or indeed the nearby King's Lynn hospital!

Jan was my instructor and he coached the six of us about the need to 'step forward off the bike' as it goes into a corner, whilst opening up the throttle at the same time. By sitting forward your weight transfers to the front end of the bike

enabling the back wheel to do a 'controlled' slide sideways. Yeah, right. After demonstrating this to us, he simply announced that he learnt when he was 8 years old and it was easy - second nature to all Danes apparently!

Jan then set up a couple of cones on turn one near the pit gate that made a very small oval for us to ride around. And I mean very small! After watching the first couple of guys tentatively crawl around the cones it was my turn. I sat on the bike, slightly panicky, as Jan attached the cut-off around my wrist (a device that cuts the engine off in the event of a fall). He told me to gently let the clutch out whilst twisting the throttle towards me. I did this as gently as I could and lurched forward like I'd been pushed in the back by Mike Tyson! Not a great start I thought. However, regaining my composure I moved off towards the cones. With no brakes and about 5 meters between the cone and the fence I wasn't about to start opening up the throttle just yet! Watching from the stands Molly later told me I was travelling at something resembling walking pace. Hmmm.

The morning progressed with lots more goes each, and to my amazement I did build up a bit of confidence, and on my third go I started to try and step forward to slide the back end. When it happened that first time I was thrilled to bits. It's just an amazing feeling when you've never done it before. And then it happened... I fell off. I wasn't even riding at the time. I was trying to come to a stop using my steel shoe to slow me down when I did something silly. I grabbed the clutch. Being unexpected this caused the bike to rear up and it threw me off the side before landing on top of me. I wasn't hurt physically - just my pride as I felt pretty stupid lying there with a bike on top of me!

Still, I wasn't alone. Several of our group did experience some gentle fall offs as they tried to slide around the cones. Biker John from Swindon managing an impressive 6 falls! The lady from Berwick opened up her throttle as she went round a cone and then forgot to turn! She t-boned the fence and promptly went over the handlebars! She was ok though after she'd picked herself up and dusted herself down.

After about an hour we were let loose on the full circuit. To ride round the first bend and then open up the throttle down the back straight, feeling the wind rushing past me, was just awesome. Dropping my left foot down onto the track I coasted round the bends - which were surprisingly rutted and rough - before whizzing down the home straight past the grandstand. I did four full laps before being called back for other people's turns. I will never forget those first few laps when I achieved what had been a lifelong ambition.

After a couple more goes each we broke off for lunch, provided by the Powerslide organisers in the Kings Lynn Pit Stop Cafe. Molly joined me and said she couldn't believe that her old man was riding a speedway bike! She didn't think I could do it so I must confess I was quietly thrilled at being able to impress my trendy daughter for once!

After lunch came the big moment. Kozza Smith gathered us together and asked if we were ready to try the 500cc bikes. No-one dared lose face and opt out but as the bikes were brought out onto the track, followed by an ambulance and a team of paramedics we all looked a bit, well, terrified I guess. My turn came around and as I sat astride a 500cc speedway bike for the first time Jan warned me of the power difference between this and a 125cc. He wasn't wrong! One slight twist of the throttle and whoosh... I was away and disappearing down the home straight. The difference was incredible and in just one lap my respect for the machine, and anybody who is

Jan Graversen sends me on my way



In my 'costume'

crazy enough to race one of these things, went off the scale. I learnt you have to keep the revs up to keep it going but as soon as I did that I was shooting towards the fence! I must have looked a bit jumpy on that first lap but as my confidence grew I absolutely loved it. On my second go I thought I'd 'step forward' as we'd been told. The first and second turns were the roughest so I waited until I was halfway around turns 3 and 4 before doing so, and giving the throttle a twist. And then it started... I was sliding the bike like a proper rider and coming off turn 4 into the straight at a decent speed with the back end skidding. Inside my helmet I had the biggest grin on my face ever - whilst at the same time trying to turn the handlebars so I didn't end up in the fence! Once I'd done 4 laps I was called in and got off the bike to watch the others before my next turn. Even though poor old Biker John fell off yet again, it was interesting to see that those of us in our 40's were much more concerned about self-preservation than doing anything crazy.

Whizzing past my daughter's seat in the stand!



A couple of younger lads on the course looked like they'd done it before and were really going for it. For my part I was just loving the sensation of riding a speedway bike on a speedway track and achieving the odd skid here and there. I should also mention how exhausting it is. When the day came to an end I was completely knackered!

As I headed for the changing room I was handed my certificate for completing the Powerslide course by Nathan. This included the group photo and is a nice memento of the day, which I now have proudly hanging on my office wall.

My daughter Molly was a great companion and she took all the photos (as well as a few videos, which frankly, don't look very fast!). As a thank you to her we then headed up the coast for a paddle on the beach. It made for a nice contrast to spend time relaxing with her before the long drive back to Leicester.

All in all it was a very special experience and one I'll always remember. I'd sincerely recommend it to anyone who has always wondered what it's like to have a go. The people who run the course are excellent and you're not expected to do anything you can't handle. I went on the 'Gold Course' open to all ages with no experience necessary. To find out more about Powerslide visit the Kings Lynn website at www.klstars.co.uk or call Nathan Hollands on 01553 771111. You'll never moan at a rider's performance again!

A NOTE TO CONTRACTORS AND PROSPECTIVE STADIUM EMPLOYEES

Since the recent announcement that planning permission has been secured for a new sports facility at Beaumont park, we have received many emails from contractors and individuals expressing their interest in working at the venue.

Leicester Speedway Supporters Club will never be in a position to hire contractors or employ individuals at the new Speedway stadium. This will be done by the professional body running the Speedway club.

However, offers of professional services from contractors can be directed to LSSC Secretary Steve Chilton via steve@chiltz.co.uk who will pass them on to the relevant people within Beaumont Sports Complex Ltd.

LSSC COMMITTEE

The Supporters Club is now on Facebook!

If you're a "Facebooker" please search for "Leicester Lions" and add us as a friend! You can join the many people from the speedway world already our 'friend', view the photos and keep up to date with all the latest Supporters Club news items and events.



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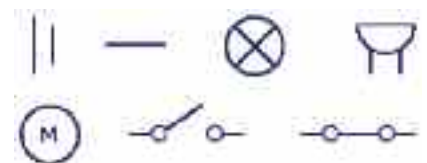
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