

Transcription of an interview conducted 14 March 2018

Interviewees: CHRIS RASOM (CR) and PETER GILES (PG)

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Ewell, England

Transcription: [] and JAREK ZABA

[00:00] Hello this is Alex Beard and today I'm in Ewell and we're doing an interview on cycling speedway, particularly the Tolworth Tudors. Today's date is the 14th of March 2018. And I'm joined by-

PG: Peter Giles. I'm one of the original riders from Tolworth Tudors.

CR: Chris Rasom who rode from - from - from 1975 to 1980.

[00:33] So a lot of people listening to this probably won't be familiar with the sport cycle speedway. So I'm not asking for a complete - complete run down of every rule but just in general could you maybe explain for someone that - who doesn't know anything about the sport what it is?

CR: I suppose the simplest analogy would be its comparison with motorbike speedway. Where both sports are on an oval track. The races take place over four laps. Erm. And riders score points for the position that they finish. Generally there's four riders in a race. If it were a team match then it would be the team that accumulates the most points with four points given for a win. In the modern times three points for a second. Two points for a third. And one point for a - a fourth finish. Whereas in Peter's day it was three points for a win. Two for a second, one for a third and nothing for coming last. And the rule was changed to encourage people to finish. Erm. So if it was an individual competition you'd get five rides. Within 20 heats against 16 other riders. And naturally there's rider who scores the most points would be the winner. Although it wouldn't be uncommon for two riders to tie on the same number of points. In which case there would be a race off to see who was the winner s-or second place, third place, they might tie for that as well. Er if it were a league match then there generally would be two teams comprising again it - think in the early days it was seven in a team.

PG: Eight.

CR: Eight. So it was always eight in a team. It was eight in my day. Eight in Pete's day. You'd race at four [milliwere], everyone raced err - no that's not true. Most people raced scheduled five rides. You'd have two reserves who were scheduled to ride probably three rides but could be brought up for others. So over something like between 13 and 18 heats then again the team scoring the most points was the winner.

PG: That's it.

CR: You could have a draw of course.

PG: Yeah.

CR: And then you would get awarded league points in the same way as most sports leagues.

PG: Yeah. But there was a change in format, wasn't there? Like you jus-like we just said. It was erm - 3 2 1. Nothing for the fourth. But then there was a difference in format where you used to ride erm - y-you had to sort your teams out because certain riders got it - I mean was nu-I was number four. You went out in the heat two four and six and you finished by heat ten. So by heat ten a lot of the times you was more rested and the rest - a lot of the other erm riders and then you'd g-you likely get nominated. There was always one last space was nominated. So you'd nominate a pair but in that - in that heat i-in our two and four we always had to take erm a reserve out. So you didn't have your - didn't have your pair in all the time, you had - you would take one reserve out with your - in - in the

other one would take one reserve out and the other one would be put between the two. So you only used to get three rides.

CR: Yeah. That could be true. So the - generally the track lengths probably about between 80 to a hundred metres. Which might look quite small on the outset but believe me it's bloody hard work. So proper high intensity cycling. Erm. Usually with a very small gear so you can come on par length, set up your something like 32 sprocket on the front and 18 at the rear. So it was quite a low gear. But er which was needed to get a quick start. Cos that's a very important part of the race, you can get the first bend first then you got a good chance if you're good enough to stay in there. Erm. Other riders use different gears but that's generally a pretty common one.

PG: Yeah most - in the early Tudors runs we used to ride the 44 24.

CR: Yeah believe 33 18's a common one.

PG: Yeah and then we never used to worry about offset pedals in those days either. When you had a longer pedal on for the gating. So-

CR: So your second foot - cos you'd start pushing down on your foot the other one would come up a little bit past the leading point, you probably know from being a cyclist. Max power is not at the top of the stroke is it? It's when you've got to about five past 12 you can really put the power on. So we'd have the bottom bracket with an offset of about five degrees so that when this pedal arm was down this one was already slightly forward. To get that second rear big **[05:00]** power push in.

PG: But in the days - in the early days - well in all the days I suppose the power you put into it we've had bottom bracket sheer off, you've had pedal arm sheer off, you've had handlebars come up and smack you in the face.

CR: [Laughs]

PG: Y'know I mean I-I- the-

CR: You could possibly break anything.

PG: You could. The pressure you used to put on that gating was unbelievable. It really was.

[05:23] And it's it's - am I right in thinking it's kind of a quite a rough and ready in-in there's crashes and things?

PG: Oh yeah.

CR: Yeah there was.

PG: But there's rules in it.

CR: There are rules and y-y'know. Like all rules they're there to be broken. But y'know generally it's i- I think analogy sometimes uses rugby on wheels. Cos you were allowed shoulder barge and stuff like that as long as it was fair contact.

PG: No wheel tapping.

CR: You weren't supposed to hook your foot over someone's wheel but I could show you some photographs where that did go on. Erm. But yeah you got four guys trying to move pretty quickly in pretty small proximity so inevitably things go wrong. And - and there were some dirty riders as well [?] y'know.

PG: That's the sort of thing.

[06:10] Yeah wow. So. Yeah you can see how close the [?] is to gears.

CR: It is pretty close [?] stuff y'know. I mean it might string out about as the race goes but certainly those f- opening laps y'know everyone's-

PG: That's a picture of Ray Wallace, he's one of the lads who started Tolworth Tudors.

Oh wow. [Laughs] I love the expression on his face.

PG: Yeah.

CR: But y'know it was a very homespun sport. Y'know and that was the beauty of it. Guessing y'know when you started up there was - there was land around that you could use erm - y'know the bomb sites was quite common wasn't it?

PG: Yeah.

CR: And it didn't take much if you had the nous to set up a track and your first one you used fireman hoses to mark it up.

PG: We did. Yeah. We did.

CR: And then you made the starting gates etc.

PG: But originally Chris it was only a bar in to- across the thing with the bungee rope.

CR: Yeah you just flick across.

PG: You just fling em across and then it was flicked across y'know that was the original one. But they used to get caught in the number 1's wheel quite a lot

CR: [Laughs] Yeah. So I think the beauty about it was like all things it progressed it perhaps got a bit more - in a good way more professionalised and there was more specialist equipment. But y'know its crudest form when it's i-it was a very simple sport for to put on, to set up, to get going. And get people y'know-

PG: Yeah.

CR: [Laughs] Out of trouble.

PG: It did.

CR: And give em something to do. And it was lots of teams to go and race and that.

PG: And some good trophies come up didn't it?

CR: Some good trophies. So I mean all around I think it was an excellent idea, we didn't come up with it. It's just a shame that kind of spirit doesn't really exist now I don't think. I mean you don't get erm - I dunno because from my own kids they do sports but they rather like it all be sorted out for em. Y'know whereas these guys when we did it y'know you wanted a track, you went a built one. They got permission for a bit of land. And then they club got together and they - they built it. Y'know you'd be down there in the winter mixing concrete, laying the surface on the track.

PG: Yeah. Originally turf-turfing the thing to start with.

CR: Yeah.

PG: Then banging nails in round the fireman's hose.

CR: So y-then y'know th-that's when it started but then some of the erm later tracks y'know little mini stadiums really.

PG: Yeah well the council put a couple in for people didn't they?

CR: Council built one at s-y-south London at Garrett Lane.

PG: Well Raynes Park had a bit of - bit of a do cos there had the race ones. Do you remember?

CR: Yes.

PG: In Raynes Park. It was a bit naughty when you went off the edge .

CR: Yeah. [Laughs] They did have a fence didn't they?

PG: Yeah. Yeah.

CR: But no so it's good so y'know - I mean it was mainly boys. I think there were a few girls, I know girls race now. It was mainly lads in those days. Erm. Y'know they could - they could go and race at cycle speedway with very little money.

Mm.

CR: If you had the will to do it and you could cobble together a bike you were off and running y'know.

PG: Yeah well going back to Tolworth y'know you used to have test matches.

Mm.

PG: We used to have floodlit test matches, sort of 12 o'clock night times to start. And I can remember when we to uh- we had two test matches in a day and every Tolworth rider was-in - was roading these two test matches. So y'know other other other team members coming from other other parts of it like but every time the Tolworth Tudors always filled - always had their team fielded in there cos we was good in them days.

CR: Well basically you got the Dutch national team didn't you?

PG: Yeah we did yeah. That was nice because we went to Hilversum and they closed the roundabout and built stadium round it. That was 6000 people in that weren't they?

CR: Yeah you'd have to tell me.

PG: And then we went to the marine barracks in Utrecht. And we beat em again there. And that was - that was hard work cos that was on [10:00] cobblestones. But it w-

[10:02] This was a tour in Holland?

PG: Yeah. Yeah.

Yeah, wow.

CR: Did you go to the national champions?

PG: No.

CR: It was before that.

PG: Before that, yeah. In fact it was in between us losing the first one and winning the second one.

CR: Oh right. Cos the - your - each team got to the national final in 1955. Who did you lose to, was it-

PG: Er can't remember. Was it [Poole ?]?

CR: Could have been yeah.

PG: And then it was - th-the other one was [?] w-we beat.

CR: Yeah they got back there again the next year, now bearing in mind there was probably some 200 cups we entered that to get to two finals back to back and then win the second one was quite some achievement.

PG: No it was good.

CR: Heck of an achievement. There is a picture in this book ain't there?

PG: Yeah.

CR: You gotta keep talking. [Laughs]

[10:50] I wonder if you could each tell us about your first involvement with the Tudors. How did you first decide to get into it?

PG: Well exactly that. There was Richard Whicher and Ray Wallace they got together and there was about another half dozen of us who used to ride around on a bit of waste ground and they said why don't we just form a team which they did. Well, Richard Whicher was more on the clerical side he got us into a lot of the friendlies while Rich he made the breast plates - I remember him mucking up his auntie's sewing machine. I remember that vividly and that was it. We then built the track between us. Me and Wal were both engineering apprentices at the same time and we built the first up and over starting gate for us, so that was good.

CR: And that track was in Davis Road wasn't it?

PG: Yeah that was in Davis Road and nobody ever knew who owned that bit of land. We could never find anybody who owned that bit of land. We must have been there for over 10 or 12 years. I can remember.

CR: So you know where the factory estate is in Chessington?

[12:06] So where you're going down towards Leatherhead.

CR: No, where we were talking about earlier where Corinthian Casuals is. If you come back towards Chessington - you've got the factory estate behind that. So that was the first track that you built then they moved after you'd finished with it

PG: I went into the forces then and I never came back.

CR: They then had a track in Berrylands which I don't know anything about because that was before my time, Then my first involvement was when they got the track started to be built in Jubilee Way, and at the time me and friends at school were all speedway mad. We used to go to Wimbledon Speedway to watch motorbike speedway. So we built bikes to look like speedway bikes, you know -cow horns and long saddles and stuff and we marked out our own track; one at Copse Lane and one in Surbiton at Ferguson Avenue , so we used to mess about on them and then someone said: 'Someone's building a proper track.' at Jubilee Way, so off we went to have a look at that and then we used the track a couple of times and then we bumped into the actual guys that were building it

and obviously they were more than happy for us to come and join the club as they needed young riders cos the team had been homeless for a couple of seasons until they got this track built so that was my start there, That was 1964.

PG: But then don't forget you used to travel farther than we did because you used to travel right down to Devon and places like that for your matches, didn't you?

CR: Well Tolworth only raced mainly in the southern counties league so that was racing in teams in London down to the South Coast but I moved team in 1980 I went to race in South London and was racing in the English League which took us all round the country so that was like the big national league.

PG: I remember the first time I met you, you'd been away to down to the coast somewhere.

CR: Yeah it was an epic weekend: we had one weekend we did a national trophy meeting in Halifax on the Saturday.

PG: Yeah that's it.

CR: Then we had a League match in Exeter the next day, so that's commitment for you.

PG: It's a lot of driving [Laughs] -

CR: By the way, when you look at them photos you've got British championship and then you've also got the national champions and that's the difference.

Amazing

CR: The national champion is the one to beat.

[14:34] I wonder if you could just tell us your memories of that trip to Holland, How old were you?

PG: How old was I? So 18 then. Where did we go as I say we went to Hilversum and we went to the Hook of Holland first on a boat – everyone was seasick. I remember it -we didn't have eight bikes we only took six **[15:00]** so when we got to Hilversum they closed the roundabout down then they put built up scaffolding stands - six thousand odd people in there; actually quite six thousand in there - which we won that match then we went from there to Utrecht in Belgium and that was in that Marine barracks in there and gosh that was a hectic day! It was all cobblestones and it was real teeth basher that was. And we won that one and they ...

CR: Was it a close match?

PG: Everything was close in them days. Something I heard the other day – they rode odd size wheels- do you remember?

CR: Yeah

PG: They had like an ordinary twenty- six inch wheel in the front and something like an 18 diameter wheel in the back - crazy it was and they had real high pressure tyres cos I remember one exploded half way round. I thought I'd been shot because it was in a big barracks that echoed- sounded like gunfire.

CR: I think it was generally the case wasn't it that the Dutch raced on tarmac hard surfaces, whereas in England it was generally on a loose surface so it would be a gravel ...

PG: With treaded tyres wasn't it?

CR: Yeah with treaded tyres, so their style of it was much different from – certainly from the pictures I've seen. You'd be able to lean the bike much lower on a hard surface on a tarmac surface than you would on a loose surface quite different.

PG: And they had a genuinely bigger track than what we was used to. We used to call ours the Tolworth saucer.

[16:38] So was there a - did you feel a home advantage when you were racing?

PG: Yeah absolutely

CR: I think so yeah but no more than football.

PG: You work your team out you got to know who your riders are and who to place inside and who not to place inside. And so like I say I was number 4 and if they chose the toss up - whoever chose it- if they chose the inside, we was outside all the time. Number 2 the pairing of the two like 2 and 4 all the time we were

CR: So imagine on the starting grid there's four riders lined up. So the inside grid is 1, 2, 3, 4. So you'd have alternate places if it was a team match and each heat you'd swap so then if you had the insides your riders would be on grid 1 and 3 - outside would be 2 and 4, so the usual advantage was to have the 1 and 3 position but you're only gonna get that every other heat so, but you know good riders would adapt to new tracks very quickly anyway so

PG: The name of the game was when you f-win your 5 2s if you could, and draw your outsides and if you get a 4,2 you can't lose. And our system was if you assisted and come 1st and 2nd no problem to race against your mate and knock him off you would get the bonus cos if it was your maximum you'd get your 40 smacks and if you already got a maximum or you got it by bonus, that still counted against your averages that's how we used to work it.

CR: Yes. But if you finished 1st and 2nd, one rider would get 3 points in your day and four in mine and 3 for 2nd but on your average scores which was really important to us actually, you'd be given four points cos you can't beat your team mate. You don't want to race you team mate do you. A bit like Formula One today . You're not supposed to race your team mate knock him off - similar thing in a way.

PG: So all in all it was a thing to be involved in, in them days mate wasn't it?

CR: It was good. I loved it.

PG: I loved it an' all

CR: Time well spent.

PG: I can remember we was apprentices Wally and I, I remember we had a there was a sports match between our firm and the next firm and me and Wal went to the sport's match and we won all our prizes at that and then we both and my wife – she jumped on my crossbar and Wally and this girl jumped on his crossbar . We rode down to the Toby Jug got on a coach and went off to Hungerford to the test match.

CR: That was a floodlit one wasn't it.

PG: Yeah that was a floodlit one yeah.

[19:22] I wonder if you could – something you said earlier before I started recording about how the National Service broke apart the original Tudor's team.

PG: Yeah it was a funny thing. It had already started with Rich and Wal and the rest of us and then all of a sudden Mickey Little came and Kenny White came and I've never knew where they come from but they obviously knew Wally and them from before I knew them and that then give us a bit more of a side. So then of course I went into forces, Wally went into forces, [20:00] Because we were apprentices we got deferred until we was 21 not 18 and then we went to go in the forces but I never knew whether Paul Murden went in – he was one of the top thirty riders of all time. He was in our side he was our captain and I never knew if Richard went in.

CR: It must have shredded the side though didn't it?

PG: Yes absolutely – decimated it.

CR: And if you'd gone in at 18 it would never have been the team you were.

PG: And Derek Bailey. We were four engineering apprentices in the same team.

[20:38] What was the firm?

PG: Mollart Engineering, down Roebuck road. It's still operates. I worked there for 50 years. They were very good cos they closed a bit of a blind eye while we was working on all the starting gates and bits.

CR: We used to get very good crowds to a lot of these, particularly in the fifties to some of the big meetings. You can see on YouTube – huge crowds.

[21:15] Just at sort of regular Tudors race nights?

CR: Might not be a Tudor's match but you'll see big crowds what was going on in Tolworth was going on all over the country. It wasn't unique they just happened to be the best team

PG: Once you got a bit of support it was great.

CR: A bit of that was make you run fun stuff cos it was post war days. There was a lot of austerity around people hadn't got much, so make do and make up your own entertainment

PG: There was interference. If you look in that book one of the matches, I can't remember which one, the Teddy boys all walked in and stopped the match. You remember the Teddy boys and the Mods don't you.

CR: No!

PG: I tell you what there's been a few fights in the pits when they all turned up I tell you.

[22:11] Was that one you were involved in?

PG: No, we used to get one every week. There'd always be some stroppy person. I was also quite lucky, I won the London and Home Counties individual championship. That was in Chertsey somewhere I think. And as it happened I beat Paul Merdon the top rider. Me and him in a ride off. It's a bit uncanny really because Mick Little was also one of our people and he was the steward and in the end I actually just crossed the line and he excluded Paul Merden – wouldn't even let him finish.

CR: There was a particularly galling rule in cycle speedway and that was when you were at a gate at the start. There would be a call you were under starter's orders and you'd be in position to start - very tense but if you moved, you were out of the race. So the slightest twitch or someone cough or drop something or drop a spanner in the pits. That's all it needed.

PG: That's all it needed.

CR: because you completely tuned in to - some people watched the tapes, personally I listened for 'em. You only had to hear the slightest movement and you were off. And that was a really cruel rule I always thought.

CR: Cos you can imagine well in any race but particularly if it got super important; the tension is immense and to get excluded at that point. A friend of mine was in the National Junior individual final, and there was just two of them in the run-off for the title but he moved on the gate and that was it. They don't even do that in athletics do they? If you make a false start you get like a yellow card now don't you? And you get another go. It was too cruel.

PG: They fine tuned that too much didn't they?

CR: Yeah

PG: Originally you had two touches of the tape and that was it. You was gone. I know you said you used to listen, but I used to watch the rope on that.

CR: A pin watcher.

PG: Yeah

CR: Which is fine if you're on the two outsides. But anyway you're focused on seeing or hearing anything move.

[24:54] So Chris, it sounds like you got into it in a big way and it became a big part of your [25:00] social life.

CR: It was. I mean it became my social life for sure because the friends that I made through cycle speedway are still friends now. You end up spending a lot of time with those people because if you're racing at weekends as we did you know, driving off to different parts of the country to compete there isn't really much time left for other people. And of course you get friendly with people from other teams etc so, as a 14 year old I went in as, it's part of your life – it forms your life. It was great cos you have a good experience and you end up knowing people all round the country – everyone knows one another over a period of time. If you're turning up for one of the bigger national meetings there's going to be a lot of people there that you know. It did definitely shape my personality for

PG: And not only that. You got to look at a rider and you thought – you gotta watch him.

CR: There was always someone new coming along as well. But I absolutely loved it, I was passionate about it

PG: Every weekend wasn't it. Every single weekend and then all the time during the week you'd be

practising . I lived at Mount Road and if you went down the bottom to Cox's Lane across the road and there it was- the track. To cut a long story short – I used to, in the mornings ride my bike down Mount Road , cross the road, cross our speedway track, throw my bike over the railway line go over the embankment down the other side. Our works is on the other side, so I used to come out in the works

CR: I think that before that I wasn't really good at any sports because I didn't have the confidence, but I took to that one like a duck to water and then within a couple of years I raced in a National Junior final so you think yes, actually I can be good at something and that is a great thing in life because I then got confidence to take on other things in the future. You know. If you just try hard enough you can achieve things.

PG: I can tell you what, if you wanted to know the names of that team I could tell you them all but one. If you give me that book, I'll try to recognise their faces, Chris might even remember the other names.

CR: I only know two for sure. There's a member of Pete's national team winner who was still with the club as the manager when I joined.

PG: Who's that?

CR: That's Mick Little I know. They're the only two I really know.

PG: That's me, that's Richard Whicher there's Wal - Wallace Derek Bailey down there, my partner , Paul Merdon and Kenny White - he was one of the top thirty riders of all time he was.

CR: So this fellow was at the club when I joined and was the team manager by then and when he found out I was dating your daughter he said, 'You'll never be as good as Pete Giles.'

[28:10] So tell us about that, that sounds like a crazy coincidence – You two didn't actually meet as I assumed through the Tudors.

CR: No we met through work so I used to be an electrician then and Linda had just got a job in New Malden ,she has worked in London, and we were sent over there to do some work in the office. And I did know her face cos I'd seen her around. We didn't live that far apart . You were in Hemsbury Road and I was at North Parade. I knew she was a local girl, so I just got chatting to her and ... The rest is 'history' as they say. And I think she mentioned to you that I'm going out with this new fellow and he does some bike racing or something . Then the penny dropped for you what it was. It was a good introduction with the father in law.

[All laugh]

CR: Got on the right side of him from early doors

PG: Well you'd have done that anyway wouldn't you?

CR: It was nice to have that in common. For all the people that did take part it probably always was a bit of a minority sport.

PG: But I think a lot of the people couldn't handle the physicality of it. Because it's like running the 100 metres - you gotta be there. Be flat out from start to finish, cos there's no in between. If you do, you just don't win. And that's the difference between, like we were saying earlier, you have to sort your team out. You have to know what blokes are good at inside and others that are better at going from the outside and like I say, three and four, we would finish by Heat 10, so quite often **[30:00]** then we was more rested by the time it came round to Heat 20 odd, or the nominated , so you'd get the extra ride. So you know you'd have better chance. So there's lots of races being run on a nominated.

CR: I'm sure yeah. They were gone in my day but..

PG: Well I say you got your 15 or your 12 whichever case it may have been. So all in all, a bloody good sport. Just a shame it's not as popular now as it was then.

[30:32] When did you stop riding?

CR: I stopped riding in 1984, by then of course, I was engaged to Pete's daughter and we wanted to buy flats and things so money was a bit tight and I didn't really have the money to spend or that time travelling anymore. And I could have gone back to racing more locally but to be honest you

know, I was racing a very high standard up to then and I thought I'd rather stop doing it altogether than sort of see myself slide backwards. Anyway, I joined the athletics club after that. I joined Epsom/Ewell down here, so I started a new sport which was good and you can do running much more locally of course you know

PG: But didn't they you to have veterans because we went to South London?

CR: They did yeah.

PG: A veterans' meeting and they was still riding like maniacs then.

CR: Yeah, they had over 50s, over 60s championships

PG: You get the other end and bomph boomph the old ticker going. You'd have the ambulance.

CR: That's pretty common in all sports. Veteran sports it's really taken off in the last twenty years, thirty years. People who want to carry on, there's stuff for em to do.

[32:03] From what I read online, it seemed that the club folded in 1990.

PG: No '92

CR: Yeah we think about '92

PG: We got it written here.

CR: If and when you meet Len, he'll be able to tell you.

PG: I never rode with Len did I?

CR: No Len who hopefully you'll meet was in a club from the 60s to the end and I think a lot of clubs were going through a difficult time, membership was dropping and teams were folding up, there was less opportunities to race locally When you getting kids a along in the early days, juniors, not many of them are going to want to travel long distance or their parents aren't going to want them to travel long distances so you need local team around you to get em interested , get some competition going you know. And that was getting more and more difficult so a lot of teams dropped out at that stage. So it was possibly one of the low points in the sport. It's picked up a bit since I think, particularly when the international scene come a bit more alive too.

[33:16] Did you ever travel abroad with the team?

CR: I didn't. No the nearest I got I mean in 1982, they sent a team to Australia because they discovered there was a pretty strong scene there I think mainly in Adelaide around that area. It's not a completely national thing in Australia and they actually, they sent a team, a pretty good team actually but it was a team made up of people who could afford it.

PG: Was that the World Championships?

CR: They did do a World Championships there yeah. You know the people who could get enough time off work and could afford the fare etc. But it was a pretty fair side and they did win but what we used to do we had test matches and such but it would be between leagues; so I rode for the Southern Counties Test side in 1977 and we beat every league that was out there so we had a clean sweep so that was pretty much nearest you could get in those days which was a shame, but I think the Polish scene didn't really come to the fore til probably the mid 90s and probably no coincidence, I don't know if you know, Polish people are absolutely batty about motorbike speedway - really big sport there you know . Being a lot of the English riders go to Poland now to race for their teams and earn good money so on the back of that I guess there's a pretty flourishing speedway scene. They're generally big fit lads actually as well. They're very impressive looking. Yeah they're good.

PG: Tolworth did [35:00] quit in 92.

Oh OK.

CR: Well they quit that league didn't they?

PG: Yeah

CR: Whether they carried on trying to get some friendlies . I think that was probably very much it.

PG: It due this getting some transferring and what have you and people wanted to go to better sides I think after that because they just didn't seem to be able to gel anymore.

CR: I suppose sadly I probably played my own part in that to some degree.

PG Was that when you went to South London from there?

CR: Yeah there was a core of us at Tolworth and some were particularly friendly with and one of them just had a baby with his wife and he decided he couldn't carry on racing anymore and then Jonny you may meet who's my best friend, best man at my wedding and still we're very close friends now . He decided he was going to South London and I thought I really don't wanna stay here without those guys there. You know it's not going to be the same.

[35:55] So you seriously made some of your best friends through the sport.

CR: Yeah absolutely yeah.

AB: Made lifelong friends i'nt ya?

CR: I mean John I don't see him as much he lives just down but we see each other at least every month and sometimes holidays together. Our families have had holidays together, best man at the wedding etc etc. As I say, mad a real lifelong friendship there.

PG: He's a nice man is John. He always ribs me about the national trophies and stuff. He's a nice lad.

[All laugh]

CR: Because he'd liked to have had it.

PG: He'd have liked to have had a bit of it yeah.

[36:37] Just a couple of last things, if I could ask you Chris, was the Jubilee Home track pretty much your home track in your era.

CR: In my era

I wonder if you could tell us a bit about what it was like there

CR: What it was like? Well, when I first arrived there it was pretty much a bare track. You know they'd marked out the outside with concrete stones and we had and the inside oval was created Then a shale surface was put on it. They started league racing etc. We then got some money from the Council to build a fence around it so we spent the winter cutting up bits of wood making this fence. It was very much do it yourself stuff. A pits area. It was pretty tidy little circuit by the time we finished.

PG: Had its own little pits didn't it?

CR: Yeah.

PG: Little pits.

CR: We staged there now in 1978 it was the club's 25th anniversary.

PG: Some jubilee thing wasn't it?

CR: Yeah so we staged the jubilee 25th anniversary meeting there which you came along to.

PG: Came along to yeah.

CR: Invited as many ex riders for the team as anyone could remember or find. We had 16 of the best riders in the country come and race in the meeting. Erm. We had the mayor come along - the mayor of Kingston. Surrey Comet as they were then, y'know local paper came and covered it. It was er - it was quite an event. We had a good crowd out for that too actually.

PG: Yeah it was. Yeah it was.

CR: And the following season sort on the back of the success of that erm we applied to put on the league individual championship. Erm. To stage it and promote that which we did. And we had the same - we didn't call it the Tudor League trophy but we call it the Tolworth Rose Bowl cos Tolworth Tudors the rose emblem etc. Erm so that began an annual er meeting there so it was a fl-flourishing club. We also got erm a local league set up between us there was a club at Morden. Er south London as well. And we had I think at one stage we had in this midweek league sixteen teams all competing midweek with - we had about 30 kids in our junior side alone. Erm. So it was really flourishing, it was really going good we had a lot of local interest. We had Len Dutton's boys come and race for us then. Erm.

PG: Oh it died didn't it then? Len's died.

CR: Yeah. So yeah it was erm - it was a pretty good scene for a while yeah.

[39:12] So would there be crowds coming to watch was there like er - for a spectator was there like a tea bar or a bar?

CR: Yeah we used to set one up, in fact my mum and my nan used to man it to help out. It was that kind of thing. And I think for the big meeting we used to get some scaffolding erected to make some sort of tiered stuff y'know a certain area. I know we made a very special one for the mayor when he came down especially.

PG: Took the splinters off. [Laughs]

CR: Show you some pictures of it, it was terrific. But yeah i-it was - it wasn't one of the best erm er setups in the country. But it was-wasn't half bad, and the thing was it was all done by the club. By the volunteers themselves y'know. Very little help from anyone else. The council gave us the bit of land but they didn't construct the track. **[40:00]** It was all done by the club members so. So it was all-all very much a - do it yourself stuff. And I think sometimes I- better for it.

[40:12] That sounds really nice. And then just the other thing I don't think we've covered. Was there a Tolworth Tudors colour or uniform or is that how it was?

PG: Yeah. Tudor rose on the front. That was the-

CR: Well what they used to do-

PG: Red and white.

CR: I don't know if you - if you're familiar with old motorcycle speedway, they don't do it now but they got a thing called a breast plate which is a double sided erm-

Mmm.

CR: Jacket if you like - race jacket was another name for it and it would have an emblem, on it. And the Tudors was the tudor rose. Erm.

PG: As design-as designed by Ray Wallace.

CR: As designed by Ray Wallace. South London for example had a Maltese cross. Erm. Tottenham had - Tottenham Kangaroos had a kangaroo. So it was a bit like-

PG: It was a bit like the old speedway, real speedway. Bellevue and Wimbledon.

CR: Old speedway clubs it was the name of the town plus a nickname. So cycle speedway followed the same formula. In about 1980-

PG: [Coughs] Excuse me.

CR: That got dropped for more conventional cycling jerseys. So it was a bit of a shift towards - it was quite - and again not a bad thing - there was a bit of a shift towards this reliance on - o-o-or parallel motorbike speedway to try and be seen as more serious cycling sport. So I mean now cycle speedway is run by the British Cycling Federation whereas it used to have its own little federations and things, and there was always one of those things where it was always splitting. Some of them would set up a new federation and some clubs go without but it's all under the British Cycling umbrella now so as I say there was a shift in the 1980s to be seen as more a cycling sport than a copying motorbike speedway. Which I think was a - obviously you can never change its origins but I think there was a good shift so th-the dress kind of changed a bit to suit that so it became more cycling jersey. Obviously long trousers cos you don't want your knees going down on that surface if you crash but erm. Yeah. So that was the main difference. And then a lot of clubs became known as cycling clubs y'know rather than cycle speedway clubs, things like that. Erm.

PG: Do you know what I've lost my - I lost my two national medals. I think I know w-w - me and Ann was talking about it I think I know where it was now, I think it was when we moved house from Mill Road I was in the army. And I'm - I swear my mum and dad must have left it up in the loft somewhere with all my other bits and pieces. Yeah that's why all of a sudden we didn't have it all.

CR: So Pete hasn't got the medals.

Oh blimey.

PG: [Coughs] No, not the coveted medals.

CR: Cos if he doesn't want em, I do.

[Laughter]

[42:55] No that's really great guys. Thank you very much.

CR: Pleasure.

PG: You're more than welcome.