

OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

had not had to cry off due to his mother taking ill.

Dave, Rob and Steve all have Boston connections, of course, as did most of the guests, ranging from former Barracudas promoter, 81-year-old Cyril Crane, down to 12-year-old junior rider Mickie Simpson.

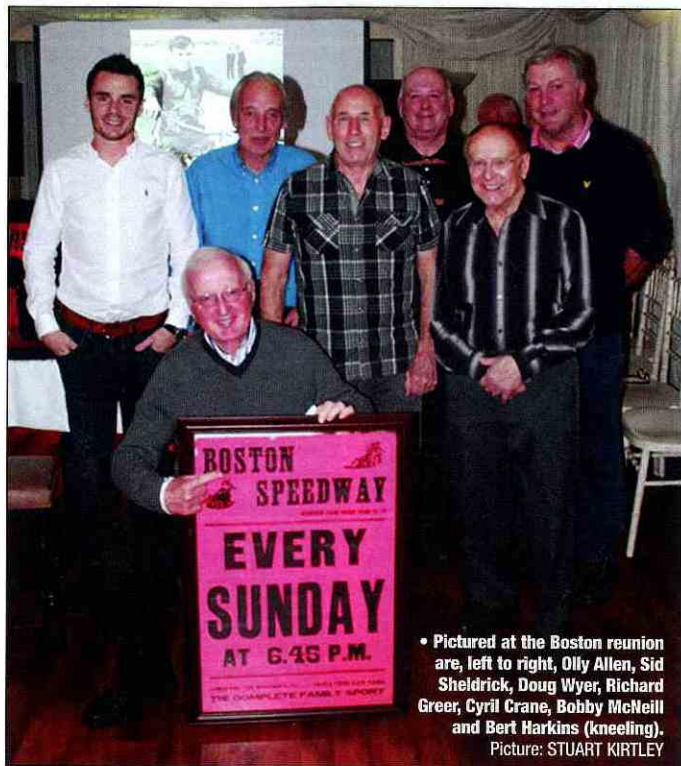
Amongst the display of Weslakes, Jawas and a Simon Wigg replica Godden, Mickie had his little 125cc bike on show. Although there is no speedway in Boston these days, Mickie has ridden all over the UK and his parents have even taken him up to Scotland to have a few laps around the Ashfield track, so he is super keen to follow a career in speedway.

A nice touch by the organisers, Graham Brown and Graham Kirtley, was to surprise Mickie by handing over the proceeds of sales of a Boston poster to the youngster to help with his speedway expenses. And in another surprise, Peterborough promoter Ged Rathbone asked young Mickie to become the Panthers mascot next season.

Still with the youngsters, Oly Allen was there to explain the speedway apprenticeship he is running in conjunction with Poultec. It covers on-track and off-track tuition, with lessons on bike maintenance, track surfaces, healthy diets and a whole host of things that are required to become a top class speedway rider.

Sheffield legend Dougie 'Flyer' Wyer kept everyone amused with tales of his racing days and tours of Australia with the British Lions, while Bobby McNeil also shared his memories of racing at the frightening Sydney Showground, which was a huge car racing track with an unforgiving wood and concrete 'safety' fence.

"When I first went there," said



• Pictured at the Boston reunion are, left to right, Oly Allen, Sid Sheldrick, Doug Wyer, Richard Greer, Cyril Crane, Bobby McNeill and Bert Harkins (kneeling).

Picture: STUART KIRTLEY

Bobby, "I was shown different parts of the circuit by one of the track staff. 'That's where so and so lost a leg and that's where so and so was killed,' said the guide in a matter-of-fact Australian way so by the time I got onto the track, I was really nervous."

Sydney Showground was similar to Exeter, but bigger. To win races, you really had to ride right up on the outside wall.

"One night, I thought I had mastered it," said Bob. "I rode as close to the fence as I dared and then suddenly, Nigel Boocock came around the outside of me. As he did so, Bill Landels was riding around the outside of Nigel!"

A late arrival was Belle Vue's Bernie Collier, who had been sightseeing in Boston during the day and got waylaid in a local pub where he was watching Andy Murray's tennis match on TV. At least that was his excuse!

That other Belle Vue legend, Taffy Owen, had to call off due to ill-health.

Unfortunately, this may well have been the last Boston reunion for the time being as the organisers, Graham Kirtley and Graham Brown, and their 'better halves' are finding the going tough, so hopefully someone will step forward next year to keep this great event alive.

Report: BERT HARKINS