

THE MANCHESTER "17" MOTOR CYCLE CLUB

NEWSLETTER - NOVEMBER 1973.

Dear Member,

Once again the Annual General Meeting of the Club is imminent and we want a good attendance to elect your new committee and discuss the past year plus of course the future plans and ideas. The club is going through one of its' quiet periods and membership is around the seventy mark when we prefer a figure of about 125. The principle difficulty is the lack of a regular 'home' for club meetings and this makes the task of planning social events and films almost impossible; consequently the attendance on Wednesdays has fallen right off and sometimes only a dozen members turn up. We can not hope to attract new members to bolster the road-going enthusiasts numbers - for these are the club night types - when we have nothing to offer them.

At the AGM on Wednesday November 14th you will hear how we have been searching for a suitable room in the Stockport area in which to hold our meetings. Of the two large rooms at the Robin Hood, one is under alteration and has no roof at present and the other has to be used by the gun-club, a pony-club, cabarets, whist drives, dart matches and band practices as well as ourselves so you can appreciate the problem. We are looking for a room about the size of those at the Robin Hood which will be exclusively ours every week on the same day - preferably Wednesday, but Tuesday or Thursday would do. If any member knows of such a room in a pub within a mile or so of the A6 through Hazel Grove and Stockport please contact a committee member.

*** ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - Robin Hood Hotel. A6 High Lane ***

** 8.00pm Wednesday November 14th **

There will be a great deal to discuss so please come early. All members arriving before 8.00pm will be entitled to a free half pint of beer at the club's expense!

All the committee posts are open to nominations so if your nominee agrees, or you yourself fancy a year working for the club, get the names down on or before the meeting on the 14th.

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Hon. Secretary (retiring?) Dave Rowland has not been in the best of health lately but, as always, you won't hear him complaining. We wish him all the best in the future.

Marius Tolhurst, Commando-riding road-race fan, was involved in a very unfortunate accident on his way to the Race of the Year at Mallory which resulted in him losing his right leg below the knee. He is at present in Wythenshawe Hospital, Ward F1.

With true motorcyclist's grit, I understand Marius is bearing up quite well through several operations. The club have sent a card to which Marius replied expressing his gratitude for the well wishes and the company of his many visitors. I'm sure he would appreciate any member calling to see him and any motorcycling literature you may have lying about would help pass the time during the long road to recovery.

The Annual Presentation of Awards will be integral with a Buffet Dance next year and will take place at the Ram's Head, Disley on Saturday January 26th 1974. The cost of a Dinner Dance was becoming rather high for many members and a sit-down meal always reduces the numbers which can be accommodated. The tickets will be about £1.65 and approaches are being made to Irish road-racer Tommy Robb to speak as Guest of Honour.

TRAINING SCHEME

Our RAC/A-CU Training Scheme is in full swing at Stockport Tram Sheds on Sunday mornings at 10am. We have about forty trainees to handle and those with their own machines have been out on public roads for several weeks. The rest are struggling a bit due to the usual shortage of machines and practice thereon. We are expecting three new bikes from the powers-that-be in London - the government grant having been increased to £20,000. New faces are always welcome to assist the regular instructors - Trevor, George, Jim Phillips and myself.

TRAMPS SUPPER

Nine members went up to Heywood, Bury on Friday October 5th to a Tramps Supper organised by the South Lancs Trials Group. Sharman and I, Pete, Mike, Ernie and Paul all went to the trouble of "dressing up" as tramps and entering the competition but we were completely overshadowed by the Shaw tramps who had twenty five/

vagrants entered. The Lancs club won the team prize and one of their number was the (male) Premier Award Winner. A banjo band provided the entertainment and a good time was had by all. A hot pot supper would have been better than the pork pie and cakes however but Pete and I are working on a club function on similar lines which would include hot-pot and folk-dancing. Watch this space for further details!

HELICOPTER FUND

Moses refers to the 24hr. sponsored ride in his Grand Prix story later on but in case you hadn't heard, he works Trident completed 33 laps of the TT course in all. The Press let Ian down badly with the preview of the ride and failed to turn up at all at the finish when they had agreed to. A dummy finish was made later in the week for photographs to be taken. Various members have sent cheques over to the Island and we have asked Ian for a report of the bank balance as it stands. Anyone owing money promised on the sponsorship forms please pay up as soon as possible so we can see the total earned by the ride.

THE MONETARY CRISIS

Going back to the low membership this year, several members who always join have not paid up this year and should send their £1 with membership cards to Doreen for registration. Postal charges have just gone up again and we can not afford to "lose" £15 to £20 subscriptions. We may also have to pay a small fee for a clubroom in future so your 5p room charge will become more important; please tip up willingly on Wednesdays so we can see what amount we could afford to pay a landlord.

ACU MATTERS

Dave Rowland has been directed by Cheshire Centre to vote against the new licence proposals for all sports which you have read about in the motorcycle press. Along with other Centres, the alternative proposal will be that the general ACU members levy be increased. This would have to be passed on by the affiliated clubs to all members, but the system would be far easier and cheaper to implement. Although the non-sporting member would pay more for no advantage to himself, the competitors would be really hit in the wallet under the ACU's proposals, and this could be very detrimental to the sport which is costly enough as it is.

NORTHERN EXPERTS TRIAL - DECEMBER 16th

This year's Experts will start at High Edge, near Booth Farm, Buxton with sidecars leading off at 10am. The Moorlands Cafe is not available and Cluelow is not ready for business yet. Duncan is keen on a different route to avoid the trial becoming stale. For this year amenities will therefore take the form of a mobile tea-wagon and snack-bar. If you're interested in helping to organise the trial you are welcome to attend the Experts Subcommittee meetings - the next one being on November 8th.

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CHESHIRE TRIALS CHAMPIONSHIP

Cover-boy on the current Cheshire Handbook, Peter Salt, is once again the Centre Trials Champ. Peter finished with 107 points closely followed by Ray Darlington. Henry was third overall, Mike Leddy fourth and Steve Thomas fifth so we have two members in the top five which can't be bad.

CHESHIRE CENTRE A-CU DINNER

Cheshire MCRRC are organising this years Centre Dinner which will be held at Quaintways, Chester on Friday 10th January 1974. Tickets are £2.50 and Doreen will be able to order them for you.

BRITISH SIDECAR TRIALS CHAMPIONSHIP

Congratulations Jack Mathews and Ray Armstrong who have virtually sewn up the Sidecar Title for 1973. After a close season-long battle with Steve Kenworthy and Frank Griffiths, Jack has pulled away in the last two rounds and now only needs a third place in either of the final two rounds to clinch the title. Steve is currently building a Montesa powered outfit for the '74 season but was very unlucky to have the Triumph special (on which he helped the "17" to win the Manx Two Days team award by taking the Premier) stolen on the eve of the crucial Sam Seston trial.

Moses is out to convince the general public once and for all that motorcyclists are completely mad! As you may know, Dave has been building a full size kite for the growing sport of slope-soaring with your own fixed wing. The dart-shaped projectile is nearly finished and the first flight is scheduled for the next few weeks. Mick Capper and Ernie are also involved in this escapade so there should be at least one survivor to report back to me with details for the next newsletter!

A Tombola will again be organised at the Buffet Dance and prizes will be required. It is difficult to make the game pay unless the prizes are donated so please scout around for items such as booze and tobacco, chocs and tableware etc. which committee members will gratefully relieve you of. Everyone has some source of reduced cost articles; let us know what you can give before January.

IMPORTANT DATES:

- November 14th AGM Robin Hood 8.00pm (Free 1/2 pint for early birds.)
- November 8th Northern Experts Sub-Committee.
- December 16th Northern Experts Trial.
- December 26th John Hartle Trial.
- January 10th Cheshire Centre Dinner.
- January 26th Buffet Dance and Presentation of Awards.

Below is reprinted the Editorial Column of the Peterborough Evening Standard dated July 13th, 1973. The extract was circulated to BMF members along with several letters sent in reply. After the reprint I've reproduced the letter sent by the Standard's Editor in reply to my good wife's letter of complaint. I'll leave you to draw your own conclusions!

THE STANDARD COMMENT - BUZZ BOYS OUT!

All kinds of insects are at their buzzing busiest at this time of the year and one of the most noticeable is the motor-cyclist.

Like the butterfly, the motorcyclist comes out in warm weather, but unlike that graceful insect he has no colour, grace and elegance to compensate for the damage he does.

He looks drab, dirty and dull and behaves without the slightest thought for anyone else. The motor-cyclist, in fact, is a pest, and I would be delighted to hear from anyone who can prove otherwise.

Pound for pound, he is probably the noisiest beast alive. While ice-cream sellers are forbidden to sound their dulcet chimes after 7.30pm., that is the time motor-cyclists emerge from wherever they hole up during the day, shattering the peace apparently convinced that by-standers are full of admiration. The police appear to be powerless.

If he stopped to think (and I doubt whether he either stops or thinks) he would soon realise that the major thought in most people's minds is not one of admiration, but the fact that a length of piano wire stretched across the road would do as great a service to mankind as ridding Africa of the tsetse fly.

More humanely, we could do with a super fly-killing aerosol spray, the invention of which would deserve the Nobel Peace Prize. I would happily take my place among the rest of the guerillas lurking behind walls and hedges, squirting the stuff at the awful plague as they come round the bend. If that failed, we could go for 'em with the empty cans.

Modern motor-cyclists, I need hardly add, are a vastly different breed from those I was proud to belong to in my youth.

28th August, 1973

Dear Mrs. Tootall,

Thank you for your interesting letter referring to my comments about motor-cyclists. It is one of many I have received, in addition to phone calls.

All of them have at least one point in common: they all claim that selfish motor-cyclists are the minority. I believe the reverse is true. Those who have consideration for others, like yourself and your colleagues in disciplined clubs, are the minority. Most riders have no thought for the peace of anybody else.

One reason for this, I think, is that the machines themselves are noisier than they were 20 or 25 years ago, and I suspect the manufacturers are largely to blame for this. With the best will in the world it must be difficult to drive one of these machines quietly, and unfortunately the youngsters who own them don't seem to be endowed with much good will towards others.

Although I received many letter from motor-cyclists objecting to what I wrote (I certainly didn't expect them to thank me for it) there has been a great deal of support. My critics were all motor-cyclists, and I feel they may be mistaken in their assessment of their public image. I regret this, because my own motor-cycling days are not so far off that I have forgotten the enormous pleasure I had. I don't know what the answer is because I think the problem is linked with other factors, but it may mean a lot of hard work by the few responsible people like yourself to convince the majority that they are doing their reputation no good.

Yours sincerely,

MIKE COLTON - Editor

MANCHESTER "17" M.C.C. TRIAL CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND,

This was the final round of the Cheshire Centre Championship and decided the final championship positions. Though Ray Darlington won with Peter Salt in second place the final championship positions were in reverse order.

This was our first event run in conjunction with Peak MCC. It enabled a one lap trial to be run because of the advantage of an increased number of observers and helpers but this led to some amusing difficulties in co-ordination. For instance, two adverts in MCN for trials by different clubs starting at the same place on the same day, and about 15 observers at Hawk's Nest and none on other sections, but despite these minor problems the trial ran very smoothly; one lap trials always being popular.

Again congratulations to Duncan on a first class effort. His new group at Edgertons was really good, especially the first section, although more fearsome than impossible. The sections tended to be perhaps a wee bit on the hard side especially the top sub at Cumberland Corner (only 3 threes). Someone got slightly carried away. On the whole riders who entered seemed to enjoy it, but the entry was lower than expected. Constructive suggestions as to why this was so are invited.

Again a big thank you to obervers, helpers and land owners without whose generosity and patience the trial could not have been run.

HENRY.

AWARDS

PREMIER	R. Darlington	41.
1st Class	R F. Salt	47.
	I. Dodd	52.
	H. Rosenthal	53.
	I. Darlington	57.
	G. Darlington	58.
Best Int.	P. Scotney	78.
2nd "	R.H. Critchlow	84.
Best. Novice	A.P. Cooper	89.
1st Class	A. Harrison	93.
	C. Stonier	98.

RACING A HILLGATE VINCENT IN THE MANX G.P.

When Martin Peak first offered to lend me a Vincent for road racing, I could not have been more overjoyed with an offer from M.V. Augusta! Not everyone could see why. For instance, trials rider Dave Rowland said it was like someone offering to sponsor him on a 500 Ariel! The difference was, of course, that Dave is a top class trials rider whereas I was very much a beginner at racing with less than a dozen short circuit meetings behind me, all on a very uncompetitive B.S.A. production racer which if I managed to stay on board, rarely got me into a final. So, armed with an ex-Bob Heath B.S.A. Lightning in an old Thames van, both purchased from Mel Cranmer, I set off for a practice session at Cadwell Park, Martin went in his van with two Vincents to be sorted out and for me to get used to. I got as far as Sheffield before crashing into the back of a lorry!

The Thames was considerably restyled and the radiator punctured. We limped on with "boil-ups" every few miles as I didn't want to disappoint Martin. Eventually the van gave up altogether and I unloaded the bike to ride the last 40 miles or so. I arrived with about half an hour of daylight left. The Hillgate mob had managed to seize one Vin, the other one refused to run on a Gardner carburettor. Martin persuaded me to have a few laps on the B.S.A. and I think managed three before I "lost it" at at the Gocseneck in a big way.

That disasterous day was a Thursday. The first meeting of 1972, a National at Culton Park was on the Saturday. I was more badly shaken than I realised and really did not want to ride; in fact I probably wouldn't have raced again if it had not been for the Vincent. I didn't want to disappoint Martin who had spent a lot of time and effort just getting the bike ready for this first meeting. The B.S.A. was too badly damaged to race so I was out on a strange, untried bike in my first National. The engine seized after one and half laps in the first practice and we jettied up for the second session. Pushing off past the pits, the clutch fell off much to our embarrassment right in front of several famous people including Tom Kirby and his team all in immaculate matching team anoraks. No one tried very hard to hide their sniggers at the sight of this ancient unfaired Vincent amongst the gleaming Seeleys, Yamahas and so on and we were all a little disheartened I think. Anyway, back to the paddock a quick clutch rebuild and we were set for my 500cc heat. I had to request special permission to start as I had not completed the required number of practice laps, but fortunately there was no trouble with this. By this time I had regained my confidence and despite feeling very stiff and painful from Thursday's episode, I was looking forward to the race, determined to impress "the boss". The grid positions were by ballot and I started in the second row. (Grid positions for my only meeting at Mallory were by "known ability" and I had position 24 out of 24 - but I suppose someone has to be last). I made a good start and stayed with the leading bunch until Esso bend and believe it or not there were still a few behind at the end of the first lap; though not many. Going down the Avenue for the second time, I thought "they may be faster on the straight but at least I can go round the corners as fast". I suppose the rest was inevitable from that moment. Chasing a Yam round Cascades, I ran out of road on the exit. The bike was just upright as I went off the track onto deep sand, after a couple of full lock slides I got back onto the track and mentally breathed a sigh of relief, then I hit the bump, the steering damper had worked loose and after a terrifying series of tank-slappers I went over the bars, bounced off my head and ended up against the Armco on the opposite side of the track the bike just missing me.

How do you tell someone you've just managed to write off his bike after riding it a few miles? I just didn't want to go back, I didn't know what sort of reaction to expect from Martin. After all he had only seen me on a bike twice, on both occasions I had fallen off and all within three days! Well, his reaction was to apologise for the handling of the bike and then wheel out another completely rebuilt machine for my next meeting. This is typical of Martin's enthusiasm and the time and effort put into the racing bikes over the last two seasons is really incredible for such a small concern as Hillgate Motors. For 1972 the bike was an ex-works Vincent Grey Flash fitted with a comet motor. This was of course not incredibly fast but the road holding and reliability made up for a lot and I usually got into finals. The best result was a 2nd place in the 750c.c. final at Mona, a very short twisty track on Anglesey. The main problems with this bike were rapid valve gear wear and lack of rider comfort with the standard Vincent frame set up. With several good placings at the Vincent owners meetings at Cadwell I won the George Breach Cup for best performance by a newcomer.

For 1973 an Egli frame kit was purchased from Roger Slater and completed just in time for the first National at Mallory. The bike seized solid half way around Gerrards and we later found that the oil feed pipe had been completely omitted from the tank, an integral part of the frame. We had connected the oil pipe to the only outlet provided which turned out to be the breather! Angry words were exchanged between Hillgate and Slater camps.

With this problem sorted the bike was raced at several club meetings and proved to be lighter, faster and to handle even better than the Flash, the difference in rider comfort was incredible and I find the bike very easy and enjoyable to ride. We rolled up at the first Vincent Owners meeting at Cadwell very conscious of the critical looks from the typically ultra-traditionalist crowd of bearded Vincenteers. The first event was a one hour race for Vincent solo's. Most of the opposition were on hairy looking 1,000c.c. Vincent twins and I decided to try and follow the leader to avoid over stretching my bike until the closing stages. However, after the initial sort out I found myself in the lead, and slowed up to allow someone to overtake. After a further lap, a series D. Shadow came past and I tucked in behind. Unfortunately I could barely keep up on the straights and he was cornering far too slowly. It was obvious he had more speed in hand and was perhaps taking it easy for the early stages. It was too risky to try and follow him in case he pulled out the stops later and I passed him and 'screwed it' for a dozen laps or so. My faithful assistants gave me signals every lap to show that I was pulling away steadily and so I mentally crossed my fingers and hoped everything held together. It never missed a beat and I won lapping all but the second rider on his D. Shadow.

Everyone was very pleased with the reliability of the bike and the first whispers of "shall we do the Manx" were heard. Well after much discussion, it was agreed, we would do the 1973 Manx G.P. The only thing that kept my excitement in check was the belief that it was too good to be true and something must go wrong.

To be continued.

MOSES