

# BEMSEE:

# Life without the 'Hutch'



Research by  
Ian Burgess

ASK MOST British road race fans what they know about Bemsee and they will probably say: Didn't they use to run the "Hutchinson 100".

They would be right. But has the club declined in stature since the demise of the 'Hutch' and what were the real reasons behind the stopping of what a lot of racing fans would say was one of the most entertaining day's racing of the whole season?

The 'Hutch' was held at Brands Hatch and ran around the wrong way on the GP circuit. All the top stars were there.

But it disappeared without trace or much comment from the press. A short press release was issued by the club; "In 1977 with the change of dates for other international events the Hutchinson 100 became sandwiched between the Formula 750 and British Grand Prix world championship meetings. Consequently it was decided, for financial reasons, to abandon the event."

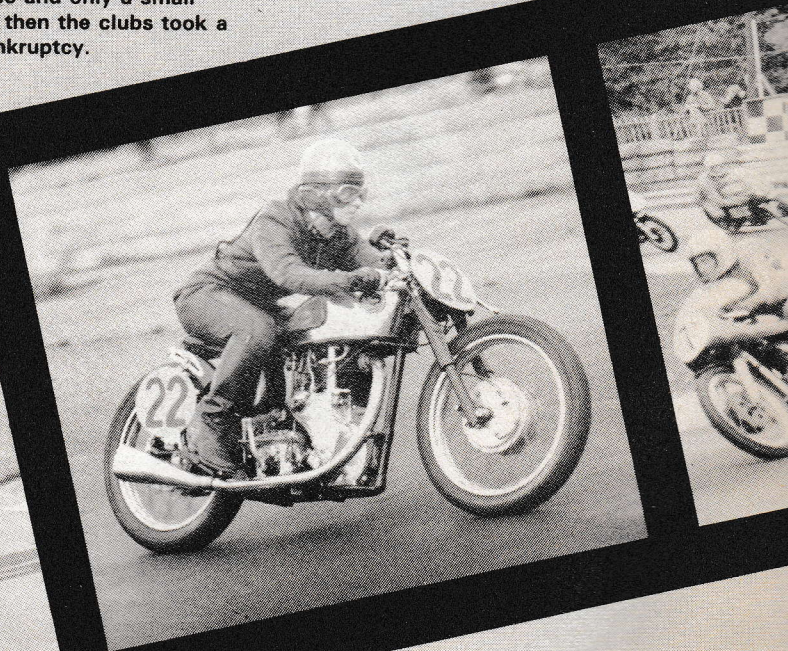
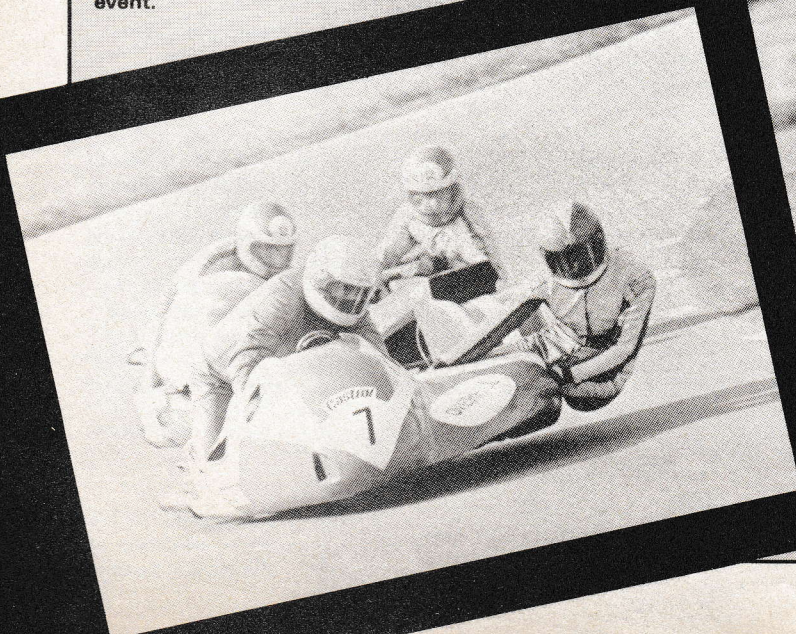
Bill Rose, a director of the club, told me recently, "As a club, we could not risk the cost of promoting such a meeting when only running one international per year.

"If a loss was incurred there was absolutely no way of re-couping any money." Basically as costs rise each year, such as ever-increasing start money and the like, if for instance it poured down with rain prior to and on the day of the race and only a small crowd turned up, then the clubs took a fair chance of bankruptcy.

*ABOVE RIGHT: Lady Ball presents the Sir Ben Ball Trophy in 1977 to Bemsee chairman R G Walker. The trophy was contested for after the demise of the 'Hutch'.*

*BELOW LEFT: 1981 Bemsee names to watch: Stu Farquhar and Chris McGahn (7) keep their noses in front.*

*BELOW: Ladies too! Mrs P G M Wise gets down to it on her 499cc Velocette in 1966.*





Klaus Enders, Peter Williams, Dave Potter and Barry Sheene who won it a record three times in 1973, 1975 and 1976.

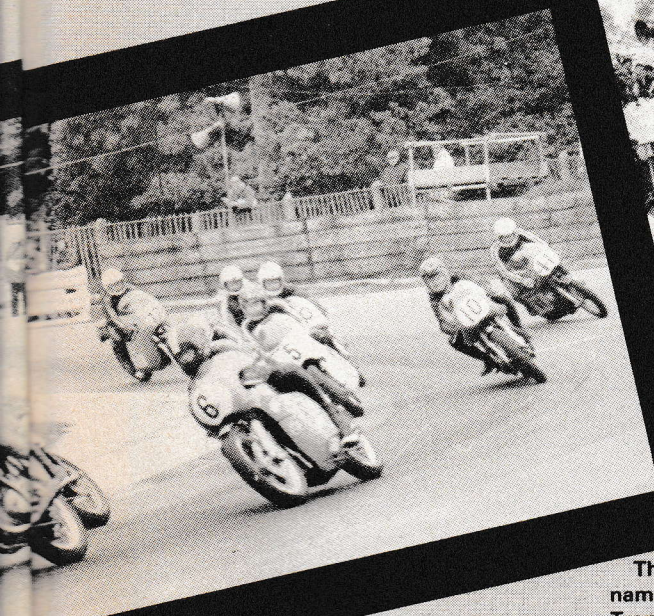
So even though the club may have lost some identity from the race fans by dropping the "Hutch", it did, in the long run, help the club to its present day position as possibly the strongest club in the UK.

The history of the club is quite amazing. It was founded in March 1909 and presented its first race a month later at Brooklands on, strangely enough, a Thursday afternoon on April 18.

'Bemsee' continued to use the Brooklands circuit until it was disbanded after World War Two.

The classic races of the 'twenties and 'thirties were the 200 Rule races and the Hutchinson 100 which was first held in 1925. But then with the evolution of race-bred machines the most popular race became the shorter races which were held over three, five or ten laps.

After World War Two, when the



**ABOVE:** 1973 battle for Philip Jackson (7) of Eaton Socon, Ron Mellor (6) of London, Barry Needle (5) of Port Talbot, and Mike Shoesmith (10) of Worthing.

**ABOVE RIGHT:** You can tell who the sprinters are . . . quick getaway for some at a 1962 Bemsee clash.



The following year the race was renamed "The Sir Ben Ball Memorial Trophy" and has been run most successfully each year for club members only.

However as testament to its popularity among top international riders, a look at the winners list shows a veritable feast of top-line racers, for example in the last decade of the event between 1966-1976 it was won by such people as John Hartle, Phil Read,

Brooklands circuit was not restored, the club suddenly found itself without a permanent home and the club arranged race meetings at various circuits including Crystal Palace, Oulton Park, Haddenham, Snetterton and of course Brands Hatch, where the latter two circuits have over the last few years become the permanent tracks, alternating meetings throughout the season.

'Bemsee' this season has promoted 16 meetings with the aim of tight close-knit races.

Most races are over six laps which

# BEMSEE:

'Bemsee' feels is a good distance to be fair to both ends of rider ability.

If a rider has a bad start six laps is felt as adequate to still make up some impression on the race results sheets: also six laps is enough to prove to possible future or present sponsors how good they are.

They must have their shows right because with over 1,200 members most of who join with the sole purpose of racing, whether for a career or simply have some fun on a Saturday afternoon, it is not uncommon to have between 15 and 21 races packed into a day's racing.

Unfortunately however the average race fan does not seem to realise what entertainment racing he is missing. Spectator attendances, while not falling, could do with a boost.

Most people probably give club events a miss because no star names are racing, which is a shame, because the racing is never boring and quite often is incident-packed. Plus of course the bars are open all day and grandstands are open, free of charge.

Let's face it, everyone has to start somewhere and 'Bemsee' boasts a whole load of ex-members who are now either well on their way to becoming

## Life without the 'Hutch'

level, is cheap and sponsors are never easy to find, but with everything to win and nothing to lose everyone in racing seems to owe 110% and looking around a paddock at a recent 'Bemsee' meeting there didn't seem to be a shortage of sponsors, although tracking possible sponsors down in the close season is difficult to say the least.

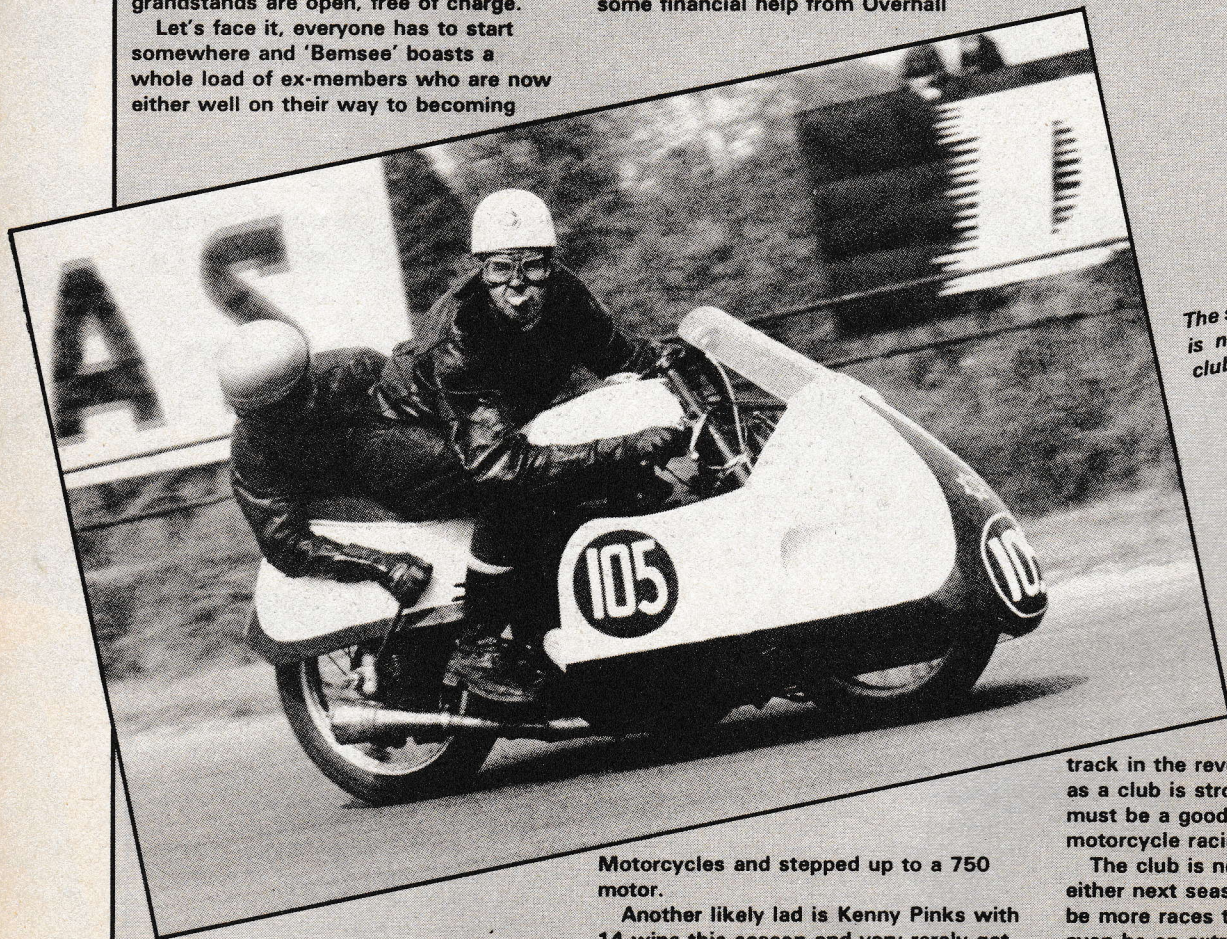
Chris McGahn used to be a promising solo rider, but had a couple of shunts and decided to turn his hand to sidecar passengering and teamed up with Stu Farquhar. In the earlier part of this year they were running a 700 Yamaha engine with a Trevor Ireson chassis and doing very well. But they managed to get some financial help from Overall

Even though 'Bemsee' only uses Snetterton and Brands Hatch, members come from all over the UK to race: as far apart as Bristol and Scotland and Liverpool to Jersey. In fact one member of a few seasons ago was working in the Middle East and flew home especially to race.

The decision to scrap the Hutchinson 100 was made mainly on financial grounds and this is reflected throughout the running of the club. Seven years ago Mr Rose took over the day-to-day running of the club and found that financially the club was not in such a good position.

He instigated new measures and the club is now on a very secure setting owning its own offices in Croydon with full-time staff to run the administration side of the club. It is in fact a limited company run as a profit-making organisation with a board of directors.

So maybe even if the 'Hutch' is no more with all its good racing, top stars and hilarious spills where top racers got it all wrong trying to go around the



*The serious side of racing is not so apparent at a club meeting!*

top-line racers, or those who have gone there and are currently reaping the benefits, such as Mike Hailwood, Read, Potter, Steve Parrish, Keith Huewen and Sheene.

Of course no racing, no matter what

Motorcycles and stepped up to a 750 motor.

Another likely lad is Kenny Pinks with 14 wins this season and very rarely got off the top five all season on his 350 Yamaha. He feels he would like to make the jump from club racing to national and international races next season, but once again needs sponsorship.

track in the reverse direction, 'Bemsee' as a club is stronger than ever and that must be a good thing for British motorcycle racing in general.

The club is not resting on its laurels either next season there will probably be more races than ever. And there may even be an extra surprise event before the season starts . . .

Coming soon . . . a new regular feature on the club scene. Watch out for details.