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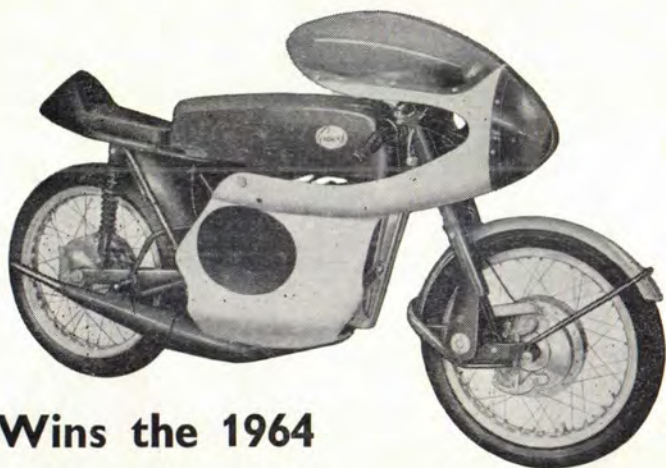
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THE JOURNAL OF THE
BRITISH MOTOR CYCLE RACING CLUB

Bemsee



EDITORIAL

Already this season we have seen a few surprise wins by those who we might not have considered serious opposition for the accepted stars. Mick Boddice has set one or two minds whirling in the sidcar sphere for the once menace of the paddocks has now turned into a mirror of his father in his earlier days. Shorey, Blanchard and Chandler have rocketed to the front but will they be able to stay there ?

Like most previous seasons, a lot is written and said at the commencement because, after a winter's lay-off, there is much to occupy the journalistic pens. The fact that John Hartle's comeback to racing has so far met with dismal failure has met with little reproach but they, like myself, are awaiting the time when he will wipe the knowledgeable smiles off of one or two people's faces. I may be wrong, but I am willing to bet that that time isn't so very far off.

The World Championship Riders Association, having met, move on. It would now appear that it is to become a more professional body than we at first thought. A permanent secretary is to be appointed when they can find one suitable at a salary in the region of £750. Will this be the start of unionistic tendencies I wonder ?

GEORGE TOTTEY REPLIES

At 67, George Tottey is, perhaps, the most fitting person to reply to the letter, printed in the February issue, on the Speedway and Grasstrack J.A.P. Throughout his life he has been associated with the Prestwich 'family' and holds many engineering degrees which, to list, would sound pretentious.

I was amazed to read the article "Right or Wrong" which apparently is an abstract from something published in an American magazine by someone called Bragg.

I must say that I read this article at least twenty times and I cannot quite get exactly what Mr. Bragg intends to convey. However, the gist of it seems to be that if it had not been for him there would not have been a Speedway Jap engine which, of course, is quite ridiculous.

I do not know whether Bragg is his proper surname or whether it is just a nickname but in either case it seems an eminently suitable name to belong to whoever had this article published.

As regards J.A.P. engines my first active connection with them was in 1920 when I went to work in the Zenith Works at Hampton Court as an assembler and tester and occasionally had the joy of being a passenger in the late Fred Barnes' sidecar on Brooklands and also did occasional rides on my own 90 bore Twin which was, of course, the famous engine produced by J.A.P.'s about 1912; 90 m.m. bore and $77\frac{1}{2}$ m.m. stroke. Incidentally four of these engines bolted to a common crank case produced one of the earlier aero engines, air cooled, which flew sometime before the First World War. However, this was my introduction to Brooklands and that was the year in which I joined Bemsee.

The article re. Bragg, seems to deal mostly with dirt track and I might say I am not altogether wholly inexperienced, having ridden on a cinder track, because on July 15th, 1922, the Salford Harriers held a cycle meeting at which I was asked to appear on a motor cycle and have a go at the cinder track records at Fallowfield, Manchester.

Although the speeds look ridiculous compared to present day speeds, I would mention that this track was $3\frac{1}{2}$ laps to the mile and the machine I rode was a side valve 250 c.c. J.A.P. 64.5 m.m. by 76 m.m. and was the bike I had ridden in the Lightweight T.T. the previous month. The mile was done in 1 min. 21 $\frac{3}{5}$ sec., 2 miles in 2 mins. 44 $\frac{1}{5}$ secs. and 3 miles in 4 mins. 17 $\frac{2}{5}$ secs.

The mile record is not far off 48 miles an hour which I think was not bad going for those days, particularly in view of the fact that this machine was a standard sports machine taken out of stock in my show-room and was merely taken to pieces and put together again carefully and raced in the T.T.

The bike itself was good for 70 m.p.h., but I did not finish in the T.T. as the petrol tank burst and naturally I came to a stop.

Incidentally this side valve engine was identical with the engine on which the late D. G. Prentice won the 250 c.c. T.T. in 1921 on a New Imperial at an average speed of 44.61 m.p.h. and on a similar machine Bert Kershaw did the fastest lap at a speed of 46.11.

A similar engine was used by Mrs. Janson in July, 1922, when she averaged 44.65 on a Trump J.A.P. on Brooklands for the double 12 hour record covering over 1,071 miles in the two 12 hour periods.

Later my same side valve machine performed on New Brighton track which was a small 3 lap banked, concrete track, but the banking was convex and if one got more than 2 feet from the bottom edge of the banking it was good-night and over the top! At one time I held every record on this track at 60 m.p.h. or just over, but that kind of sport came to an end when the A.C.U. were very annoyed that, although I had an open competition licence, I was riding on unlicensed tracks.

As regards the speeds I mentioned on the cinder track these could be verified as the Salford Harriers produced for me a very beautiful gold medal to commemorate the occasion and these details are engraved on the back. This medal, along with two Brooklands Gold Medals, are amongst my most satisfying souvenirs of track racing.

Referring to the very unpleasant paragraph regarding Mr. Vivian Prestwich and Stanley Greening; this I think is pretty rotten because both men are dead and cannot possibly reply. Also the statement that Mr. Greening was quite devoid of the sort of knowledge that the Bragg had in mind is, I think, a really stupid thing to say.

I grew up with J.A.P. engines from 1920 to 1929 and spent a very considerable time at the Works at various times both modifying engines and building up engines for the T.T. and so on, and incidentally had the great pleasure and privilege of staying on certain occasions at the Prestwich home in Muswell Hill and which were some of the most memorable occasions of my life, particularly when after dinner one would sit down and old man Prestwich himself would talk right back to the time when he produced and patented the Prestwich fluid gauge round about 1907-8 which would measure differences in size down to one millionth of an inch. Also his versatile brain, as no doubt many people know, produced the machinery for Pencils Ltd. which was never patented so no-one could ever see the specifications and copy them.

However, in those days and in subsequent years there were a great number of very eminent men at the J.A.P. Works who worked sometimes as a team and sometimes individually.

Also, as I would say more than half the bikes raced or built in those days had J.A.P. engines there was, of course, a happy band of men outside the Works who worked independently on their engines but very often went to the Works for assistance or advice or for putting their engines on the test bed, and thus there grew up a large family all connected with J.A.P. engines both in and out of the Works.

No doubt many of us will remember the lifelong association of our late E. C. E. Baragawaneth (Barry) with J.A.P. engines and the great help he gave to many people who asked him for advice. He certainly helped me on many occasions.

Also in the early 1920's the late Bert LeVack came to J.A.P's and was eminently successful at Brooklands on the overhead camshaft job which I think was a brainwave of Val Page. Also associated with LeVack were Sid Moram and the famous Bill whose surname I cannot recall. These and many other men including Stan Greening were the men who gradually developed the racing engines for J.A.P's.

As regards the 500 c.c. engine itself, this started off about late 1923 or early 1924 as an 85.5 m.m. by 85 m.m. engine.

It had a single port head and in 1926 the twin port head was introduced but actually this was slower than the single port head, probably because the exhaust gas expanded so suddenly after leaving the port the gas speed was lost and thus the extracting effect was also lost.

This first engine had a 4 stud fixing of the head with a copper gasket between the head and barrel.

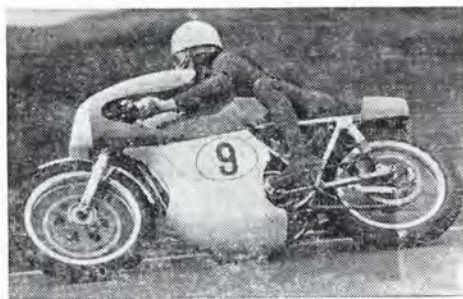
However, the annular space which was left between the head and the spigot of the barrel tended to produce pre-ignition and it was found more satisfactory to take a slight skim off the spigot and grind the head face and the spigot down together to make a solid metal to metal joint.

Also this overcame the tendency for blowing between the head and valve on fierce acceleration.

Later the 5 stud engine was introduced because the 4 stud engine began to strip the studs out of the crank case and also one stud was practically under the exhaust port and the pull down of this stud caused deflection of the head and blowing at the joint.

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The 85.5 x 85 was of course superceded later by the 80 m.m. by 99 m.m. engine and this, of course, lent itself more easily to producing an engine with a higher compression ratio than formerly, because of the bore stroke ratio being more favourable than the previous square engine.

The only change which took place for some little time was the fact that the push rods were enclosed where previously they had been open. The rocker gear itself was still open.

As far as I can recall the modifications made to the standard 5 stud motor as raced at Brooklands consisted of raising the compression ratio to the highest possible limit and shaving most of the fins off the barrel to help keep the engine warm for a 2 or 3 minute blind on full power.

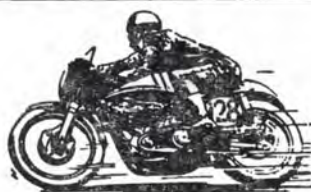
Bragg brags that it is "sufficient to add that after my visit and several subsequent ones I was able to contrive an engine which was constructed out of existing parts with only minor alteration."

This, of course, is the most true statement of any truth there may be in this article from America.

If he was able to construct an engine out of existing parts with only minor alterations, who had had the brains and who had done the development to the engine previously to produce the existing parts which could be made into a dirt-track engine with only minor modifications?

I think the answer is obvious and also one can judge how much actual design was put into the engine by Bragg.

There were many others who developed J.A.P. engines at this time and I would particularly mention C. W. G. Lacey (Bill) who no doubt was eminently successful particularly with the 500 c.c. J.A.P. engine.



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As a spectacle, of course, I myself enjoyed watching dirt tracking in the early days but purely, of course, as a spectacle and not with any idea that any tangible results for improving the breed would come from it.

I could, of course, fill this reply in with pages and pages of reminiscences and, of course, details of dozens of other men who have helped to develop J.A.P. engines.

I knew Stan Greening very well and was a great friend of his. I am very sorry to see that his name has been brought in, in such a scathing manner.

He generally used to race 350 and sidecar and I know personally that he spent many many hours for which he got no reward financially but purely through his interest in engines and bikes and J.A.P. engines in particular.

Therefore, if Br. Bragg wants to brag any more, I think it would look far better if he would write a proper article telling exactly how he did so much to improve the J.A.P. dirt track engine and exactly what the modifications were which were only slight, according to himself, to the standard parts he put together.

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There was one of his old record breaking machines on the stand at the last motor cycle Show with the name of Grindlay Peerless. However, the engine in this machine was not the actual engine on which Bill Lacey broke all the records. This engine is now in the possession of Hector Dugdale at Alvanley in Cheshire and I have several photographs of it taken from all angles, but unfortunately these are not suitable for reproduction.

However, when this engine was finished as developed by Lacey it had a twin spark magneto and a twin plug head, with one plug in the normal position and one on the other side of the head between the push rods. It was, of course, a single port engine, and had the standard coil valve springs and not hair pins.

There is no doubt whatever that Mr. Vivian Prestwich and all others were fully agreed that Brooklands was the place where real testing could take place.

I am sure that no-one would think that an all-out blind with three laps round a dirt track is going to do much to improve the breed or make engines any more reliable.

I think it could be assumed that a 200 mile race on Brooklands would be a far greater test of an engine and give more tangible results for improving the breed than any dirt track ever could do. Incidentally, I think that dirt track racing did more harm to the motor cycle movement from a sales point of view than anything else that has ever happened. I could quote literally dozens of cases where parents saw a dirt track spectacle and not being very knowledgeable have thought that all motorbikes were the same and they have remarked to me "My son is not going to have one of those things."



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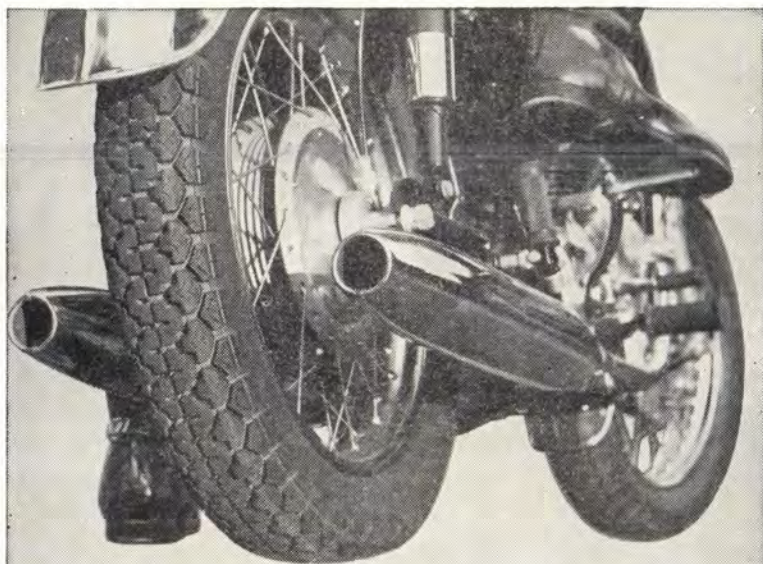
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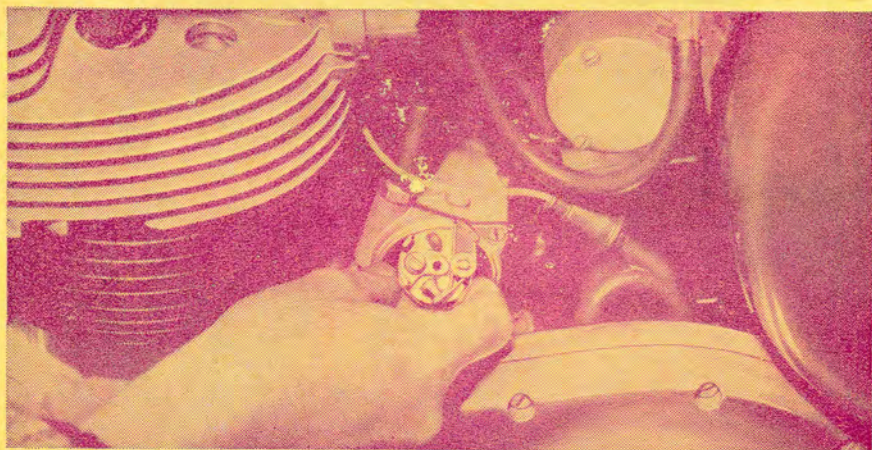
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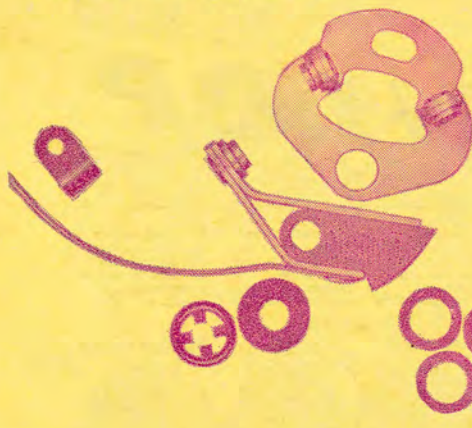
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