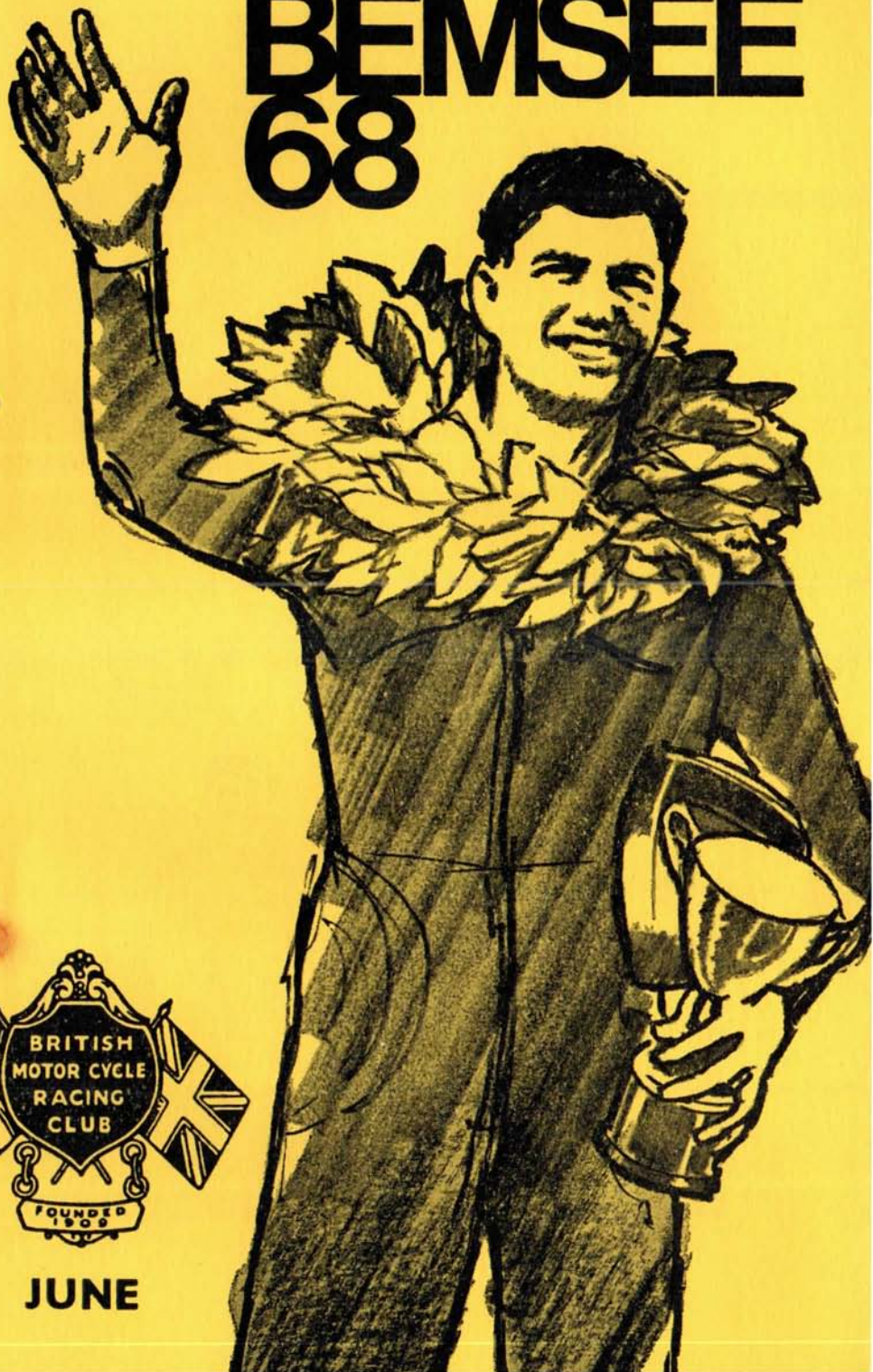
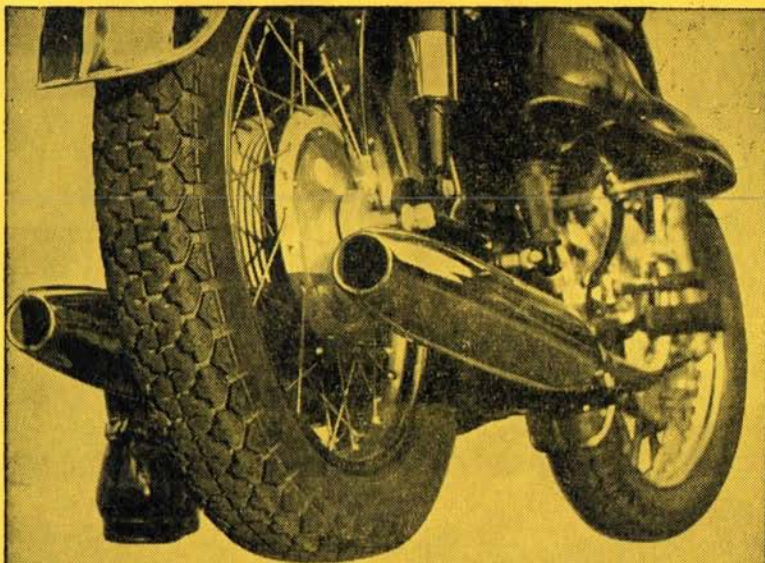


BEMSEE 68



JUNE



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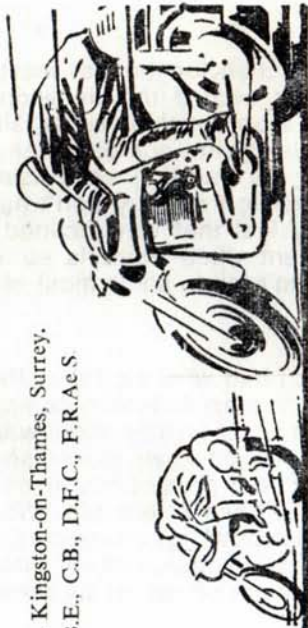
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THE JOURNAL OF THE
BRITISH MOTOR CYCLE RACING CLUB

Bemsee



EDITORIAL

JUNE, 1968

When one thinks of the amount of advertising around the British racing circuit it makes one wonder why the argument rages as to whether it is permissible or not for a Television company to televise a meeting where cars carry advertising. It was carried to the ridiculous conclusion during the International Trophy meeting at Silverstone where the meeting was dropped from the screens because the organisers, B.R.D.C., wouldn't budge.

Personally, I applaud B.R.D.C's action for they, at least, had the courage of their own convictions even if the decision was made easier for them by the R.A.C's approval of advertising at International events. Why should a television company refuse to televise a meeting where the cars are carrying advertising. It doesn't take much imagination to realise that they don't have to focus in on the advertisement if they feel that way inclined. But why pick out such a stupid argument when there is so much other advertising around that they can't fail to show most of it on the screen.

I can well remember a long talk I had with the Sales Promotion Manager of one of the big cigarette manufacturing companies who reported that a legitimate part of the promotion was the bribery of the camera crews to focus on their advertisement. From any business angle this is good promotions especially where television advertising costs £600 per 7 seconds. Whether it be the local cricket match or ten pin bowling, advertising costs money. Perhaps the Television company concerned felt that they were loosing a not inconsiderable amount of money by providing free advertising.



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It's a great pity in a way that they take this attitude; an attitude which doesn't give them much credit, certainly not from the would-be viewer point of view. I was disappointed, along with many others that read that morning that the race wouldn't be televised. No amount of persuasion could make me agree that, perhaps, the Television company was right. I am more convinced than ever that this petty squabbling makes a mockery of the sport no matter who's right or wrong.



A SWIFT REPLY

Being ever vigilant for material to fill the pages of this rather heavy cross (not that I would wish to be compared in any way Him who carried it in the first place) I would like to thank Allan Robinson most sincerely for his contribution last month even if it was written tongue in cheek and prompted by my own inadequacies. I am for ever grateful for articles, impressions and comments providing they are not vulgar—even those that are can be suitably edited—because then I don't have to shove so much space between the lines in an endeavour to fill sixteen lugubrious pages of personal monotony.

I have been told that no one wants to see pages of results, hence the reason for cutting them out—so far, but if I can't think of anything to write you may well see them back again or a very much shortened magazine. One has little or no time for writing reports on our own meetings because other things take up one's time and riders keep walking off with the 'official' writing instruments. Not that I'm unduly worried on that score because we probably came by them the same way!

It must be relatively easy to provide one article in a lifetime of membership and how I envy those that don't have to worry how to fill up fourteen more pages. When the ideas are gone

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one's originality suffers hence the reason for writing on subjects which are, perhaps, completely alien to the world of motor cycle racing. But at least I have the knowledge that eight of my close friends will read the article with pleasure which is more than I can say for the rest of the contents! My command of words—I can't spell grammar—doesn't permit me access to a National Union of Journalists card and this magazine would hardly recommend me for one, abounding as it does with such unrivalled originality.

If the foregoing gives you the impression that I'm not a little narked you would be quite wrong. Allan said a lot of nice things about the Bemsee organisation and I take the rest of his comments as an excuse for another article. At least I can leave you with one thought to mull over. If I hadn't written an article on shooting I would have been two pages short last month!

Thou art more lovely than a summer's day
Thy form is fine and purely tempered.

I seem to recall that I heard those lines from a Television series the other night but, funnily enough, they reminded me of something long since passed. Well, perhaps it wasn't that long ago after all.

DUR 99 was, and perhaps it still is as far as I know, a splendid piece of engineering, bred in a shed in Hertfordshire where it was registered. The brute—I even called it that—arrived on a nice hot summers afternoon, the burble of its exhaust note being the only thing which could break through the noise of a Saturday afternoon in White Hart Lane. In those days I could tell an engineering masterpiece because it looked difficult and I could but exude over the complexity of its mechanics. That was about all I could do because, although I had a basic knowledge of bikes, this was enough to send me straight back into the archives to find out how it worked. I think my father was more pleased than I was although it was later to baffle even him. I had broken my teeth so to speak on a 500 and had progressed to a 750 and this lumbering great brute was enough to set me thinking that my then 12½ stone wasn't all that I was going to need in order to tame it. It weighed all of 475 lbs. and I soon discovered that I didn't have to leave the ground first in order to start it. That had a habit of making me over balance and after picking up the pieces

(me not the bike) I soon found the knack. Of course my enthusiasm wasn't helped when one day I tried to start it in my bedroom slippers but thereby hangs another story.

The oil system was a dead loss, not just a total one, and kept pace very well with the fuel consumption. The trouble lay in the external oil pipes which I could never quite get to seat properly. It spewed oil everywhere and was a constant source of frustration. I spent a lot of enthusiasm over replacing worn fork bushes and the like and I'm afraid that my pocket never felt quite the same afterwards. The valve 'caps' or locking plates needed constant attention for I was forever afraid of the two coming apart and the valve obeying the law of gravity. The hair-pins were almost wafer thin and these had to be replaced before I would try a fast run. It was road tested by Motor Cycling in 1939 at 110 m.p.h. Of course it didn't reach this figure but gave a very creditable performance. But the oilways being what they were I thought I might as well check the oil. After the blue haze had disappeared along with three pints of colloidal graphite I took things much steadier. Vibration had shaken the soldered tank free in a few places and only a G.P.O. chap with some cable seeler enabled me to continue my journey. As fast as oil reached the upper valve guides it was washed off by a constant deluge of petrol.

It also had a peculiarity of condensation setting in on the contact breaker over night and very often I had to crawl underneath the front of the engine in the morning, clean it out and lightly oil the cam ring to stop it rusting. I couldn't get another cam ring made at the time so I had to look after the well worn specimen that I had. On one occasion, after having stripped the magneto and dynamo and came to refitting I managed to cross the plug leads. This wasn't as difficult as might be imagined because both magneto and dynamo were mounted at the front of the engine with plug leads about a yard long. Being a little green the last thing I thought of was having the leads crossed and the fact that it wouldn't fire to me meant that I hadn't retimed the engine correctly. All the time I was kicking the gasses were building up inside the head until they ignited somewhere along the line with such devastation that the pipe was blown clean out of the barrel. The cat never would come near that machine again!

Like most machines of its times it was made of a toughness that I haven't seen repeated on later machines although the toughness was indicative of the marque of machine. I remember coming an almighty purler one evening on the way home from work when some idiotic driver jumped the lights. For some reason better known to themselves the brakes worked a dream and I was shot straight over the handlebars to be deposited in a heap in a most ungainly fashion in, of all places, the gutter. Of course it was tipping down with rain at the time and I suppose that the cast iron brake drums had gone a little rusty standing out in it. You live and learn of course and I afterwards fitted water excluders and made a habit of running with the brakes lightly applied for a short while under similar conditions. I had to anyway to evaporate the water! But the point of this example was simply that I only bent one handlebar and the footrest whereas any other machine must have crumpled the front wheel and forks plus writing off most of the nearside of the machine. A copper mallet and we were back in business again.

I had to sell it in the end because money was scarce at the time I got married but it was £50 well spent. But I could never understand why it would do 6,000 r.p.m. in bottom and only 5,400 in top. Married I wanted to be so the brute had to go. There wasn't room for both of us. The Plumbers Nightmare was a dream of a bike but I had many a battle with it in my sleep. For those who don't know even now what the machine was let me assure them that it did exist and that they would instantly recognise one again if they saw it. If it happens to be DUR 99 . . .

Jim Swift



A MATTER OF SAFETY

Jim Swift

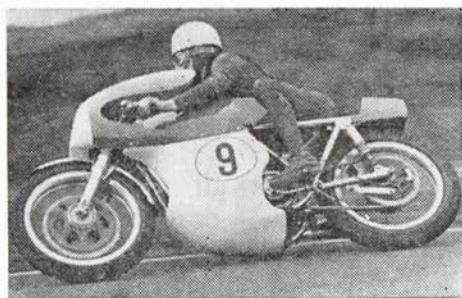
There's a lot that can be said on the subject of safety at race circuits. That motor cycle racing is dangerous is not something that I am inclined to agree with altogether but, as is often the case, speed is the determining factor in whether an accident is serious or not. For the most part that is, but more often the most trivial of incident is the one which causes the discomfort. Discomfort that is to the organiser who realises that, given the same circumstances and a different day, the outcome might have had more repercussions. Very often there comes a kink in the armour

You may remember that we endeavoured to help out riders who failed to start their machines. As an experiment it was a success but you might not guess what happened, or should I say nearly happened. Marshals were at hand to help push and this they did willingly but it is sad to relate that a couple of them almost got run over. It is a great pity that the riders who were behind didn't pay more attention to what was in front rather than to the amount of throttle they could screw round. In some respects this is easy to say because when you are actually in the saddle it comes a little difficult to contain your anger—or enthusiasm—whichever has taken control. But it only needs one rider to hit one marshal and the whole risk isn't worth it. With all the goodwill in the world it's just not on.

So we're now going to try something different again but it must be emphasised that it can only succeed if every rider uses his brains. I suppose it might be easier if we utilised Snetterton as the place but if we are ever to break this non-starting problem

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we might just as well go the whole way and start at Brands. The next step will be clutch starts for all machines. Now we realise that there will be not a few riders who will hit trouble with dragging clutches. There will also be a number of riders who will prefer to be well out of the way and start from the back of the grid. Only by trying it will we be able to find out the best and fairest method which is also the safest. Two meetings will be run using a clutch start—August 3rd and September 14th. If successful—and by this I mean obviously successful from a safety point of view—we shall consider continuing the system. But it may prove what some of us know already, that a push start is the safest.

Just as the organisers have a duty to the riders, the riders have a duty to each other to ensure that they are safe riders. You must not take chances with other people's lives remembering that, in a true sport, it doesn't matter who wins or loses but it is the race that is important. If you take too many chances one of them will not pay off and, whereas we're not desperately worried if it's you that is inconvenienced, if it's someone else it's a different matter altogether. This applies throughout the sport—and the organisation.

One of the biggest problems confronting organisers these days is to be fair and to be seen to be fair. I would almost go so far as to say that it is impossible to do either or both. One of the reasons why we are taking so much trouble over sorting out the start problem is that a rider who doesn't start naturally wants the chance again, particularly where there may be other races for his particular capacity class. He comes and asks and the answer is 'no'. He feels put out and Bemsee is again a dirty word. But consider the aspects. The races are spread out over the day and are run at a fast speed. Whether one likes it or not the races are controlled by the timekeepers who have a set and detailed number of riders who they clock religiously on each and every lap. The time interval between races is as short as they can make it and one cannot start a race until their 'green' light comes on. Very often they have problems with riders who keep stopping and starting and the logs of the lapscorers and timekeepers may disagree. Now if we threw in some different numbers (and here it doesn't really matter when we do this because at no time are they free to alter their schedule except at the inconvenience of the riders) they become confused and when confusion sets in, even

if they are capable of solving it, time delays start and when one starts losing time it is impossible to catch it up again. That's the first consideration. The second is that the object in fairness is to ensure that all riders are treated equally. If you let one person swop races then, theoretically, you must let others do the same. It can't be done, particularly not with the schedule which we run and the number of riders catered for.

Now I know all too well that 'other organisers' do it. I have been told this on countless occasions but, in the first place, some people haven't the personal courage to stand up for themselves and give way far too easily: in the second their action has brought great confusion and, in the third place it has inconvenienced far more people than the person who was at fault at first. It's a great feeling to believe that you've helped someone out but when you realise the chaos you've caused, somehow it doesn't quite seem the same particularly when you've got irate timekeepers and, believe it or not, equally irate riders breathing down your neck.

Practice problems cause considerable embarrassment and provide a certain amount of safety risk, to bring us back to the theme. We have a limit set by the A-C.U. on the number on the course at any one time and this we have to stick to come hell or high water. Normally high water because we break this rule more often than not. Mixed up capacity classes have caused far more headaches than might at first be appreciated. The lap-scorers never know in time who or what is coming out and this, more than any other factor prescribes our course of action.

Letting reserves out in a race if there are not enough non-starters to legally permit them to be there is not something we can do much about although on the odd occasion it has been done. It rather depends on who is in the timekeepers' box at the time. Of course we all know that there are too many on the grid and we all know who they are but, whether they are permitted to take part rests an awful lot with the timekeepers. I would like a pound for every call I have had on this subject. Normally it is overcome but on other occasions circumstances demand that we are very strict as a rule.

On the whole we endeavour to do our best but some things just cannot be done no matter how many 'other organisers' have done it before. Safety is foremost in our minds and, let's face it, the majority of the rules have been framed to exclude the element of risk as far as possible. Next time think about this before you complain.

POSTBAG

Dear Sir—From time to time I have read with interest letters and comments on merits and demerits of how to start a racing motor cycle. To push or not to push is the vexed question and it seems, as I see it, the problem of machine preparation is still the crux of the problem. The same model that is not prepared right won't start, if a push start; if a clutch start, the clutch binds and the model creeps or stalls while waiting on the line. On balance I feel that the push start has the most to recommend it.

Now, a few tips if they are worth it. My past mechanical experience was mainly on one of the models supposed not to start easily, but how and why then did they manage to win races? Mainly because the runner arrived at the first corner first. It may not have been the fastest but it does make a difference to be in front at the first bend.

Have a good spark to start off with, correct mixture setting at the bottom end. Use your ear when setting carburetors. Don't have too much oil in the wrong places. On many occasions I drained the oil out of the sump and into a pot just prior to the start. A lot runs down from the top of the engine and round all moving parts, flywheels timing, etc. Have a clutch that does free. Watch the starter and go off at full gallop before you drop the clutch and don't wind the twist grip. Keep it on maximum depression at bottom end. If you follow the above you may even be surprised at the results. You may not win but at least you are on a clear track for a bit. Naturally, the above concerns itself with four strokes. If some two stroke owners started with the petrol turned off they might do better off the line. That is if they can remember to turn it on again!

Yours, etc., ARTHUR TAYLOR, M.I.M.I.
Shipston on Stour, Warks.

Dear Sir—I have been interested in the recent letters about assistance to riders who fail to start. Dennis Bates is quite right about bad machine preparation. If you can't set the 'bike up correctly then why expect help when it won't start. I agree with C. P. McDonnell about small riders being under a handicap as I am also short in the leg, but I have found that, by practising starting, more than makes up for the deficit in inches. I disagree with him about starting with engines running. At some circuits with a tight corner directly after the start this method of start could be downright dangerous.

Yours, etc., C. WRAY,
Grimsby, Lincs.

Dear Sir—With reference to Ivan Hackman's article on machine preparation, he is, of course, basically right. However a few points occurred to me on reading the article. In the first place I thought everyone had given up polishing the inlet ports a long time ago—did not Moto Guzzi prove it to be a waste of time, if not harmful. If a mild cam and 1,1/16" carbs. were used on his '99', why did he need to rev it to 7,800 r.p.m. The power and torque must fast be evaporating at such revs not to mention the problem of keeping the Norton engine together at such high revs.

Yours, etc., R. PRIOR,
Sevenoaks, Kent.

Dear Sir—I would like to make a complaint about the number of Saturday meetings that Bemsee are running this year. I have to work on a Saturday and therefore cannot race. I am sure that there are a lot of other members who are in the same position as I am in. More Sunday meetings next year would be greatly appreciated.

Yours, etc., A. V. BUTLER,
Enfield, Middx.

Dear Sir—Well done Allan Robinson. Not many people would admit to stealing even a Cyclade.

As far as Jim Swift's article on guns goes I thought it was great. It's surprising the number of riders that are interested in the sports of fishing and shooting—Ralph Bryans for one!

Yours, etc., J. K. WATERMAN,
Rainham, Essex.

Dear Sir—The A-C.U. altered the points system for qualifying for an International licence. They doubled the amount needed so as you gained more experience before qualifying. But what I would like to know is why don't club meetings count. Isn't this gaining experience? As National meetings are the only ones which count and getting a national ride is very difficult it will take me, and I am sure many other riders, a long time if they are ever to get an International licence. So why can't they give points for Club meetings again. Even these will take some getting, especially at Bemsee meetings.

Yours, etc., P. J. BURTON,
Ashford, Kent.

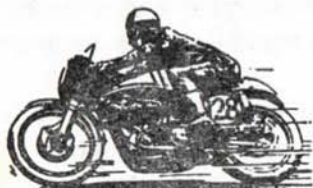
STARTING

Jim Swift

I write on this subject not because I want to but because somehow I have the onerous task of filling another ten pages of this month's magazine.

I will openly state that the problem of starting rests with the individual rider. If he cannot get his machine to start then he didn't ought to be racing. Now, having made that bold statement, I ought to qualify it because I know all too well that mechanical knowledge is needed and so is a degree of time and enthusiasm and, not the least of all, cash.

Let us go right back to square one and, if we may use this term, Mr. Average. As we have seen, out of the 337 members who joined since January 1st, the average age was 21.80. All but a mere handful were intent upon racing so, for this reason alone, it would be correct to assume that the vast majority of them only had a maximum road going experience of not quite six years. You know and I know that this is nothing. Far greater men have had scores of years of experience, many of them with vast factories behind them, and still their machines have given them trouble. But how many have been stuck on the line? Point two: in days gone past the machines being raced were usually and generally over-the-counter racers. It is sad to note that most of the machines stuck on the line are either home built machines or, more commonly, two strokes. How many people therefore



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build machines with little or no mechanical knowledge. We have observed at race meetings machines which have only been fit for the scrap heap. One machine we didn't even permit to be removed from the trailer. I felt sorry for the chap who admitted that he had been up all night and had only finished the machine about an hour ago. Dennis Glover, who was Chief Scrutineer at the time and an ex-road racer, gave him a list of what needed replacing which almost brought tears to his eyes. On a lesser scale many of the machines presented are potentially dangerous. Often there is so much oil around that you can't even see what you need to see. Fortunately, this is now on the decrease and the standard of machine preparation is vastly improving. It is notable however, that the riders who used to produce bad machinery no longer do so at a Bemsee meeting.

It doesn't take much effort to keep a machine clean and oil-tight. If you have read my other article in this magazine you will immediately note that I couldn't keep the oil in my Series 'A' Vincent. As I was only about twenty at the time my learning hadn't even begun. It nothing else I should have known to use some of the proprietary brands of 'sealer'! A good workman can be instantly recognised from the quality of work he produces. Nobody minds mistakes if the job is clean and tidy. A lot of the machines around these days, notably home built ones, give a complete disregard to engineering techniques and equations. Little wonder therefore that it doesn't handle or falls to pieces after a few miles.

I would have thought that the mechanical knowledge necessary to start a machine was quite elementary: correct jets, clean carburettor and petrol pipes, clear petrol tap, clean and properly adjusted points, efficient magneto/coil and good contacts at h.t. leads. Clear combustion chamber is an added advantage and a float chamber which hasn't flooded. Pull back upon compression, an energetic heave, drop the clutch and away. Obviously, if you feel like picking me up on a few points we can go back a lot further to correct timing, etc., but I am sure you will all realise that the machine has to be correctly prepared. I don't think it matters a hoot to starting what plugs are in providing they are

correctly gapped and are reasonably the right ones for the job. Horses for courses is an adage that has an awful lot of truth. The average motor cycle racer—we have seen that he is immature as far as experience is concerned and probably running on a slender pocket—wants a machine which is much quicker than the average road machine and sets to work on a basic cooking engine with the hope that it will be a fast one. You may well remember that Paul Dunstall started off in a very minor way in the fifties on Dominators and only endless experience has lead him to where he is now, at the peak of 'cooking' motor tuning. The average beginner cannot hope to aspire to such heights and must be content with what he knows and what he can afford. Although I cannot hope to compete even with Ivan Hackman, I will agree with him when he said that reliability is the first endeavour. Your machine must finish a race before you can have any success from racing.

We have a comment in Postbag this edition about the polishing of inlet ports. I may be wrong about this but I would have thought that by 'polishing' one meant contouring and the latter cannot be done efficiently by a beginner in his garden shed. Talking to Arthur Wheeler about the Guzzi angle of which I was ignorant, he agreed that if he had the choice between 'polishing' and picking some other method he would far sooner ignore the polishing angle. He had no knowledge of Guzzi taking such a line but this is not to say our correspondent is wrong. Remember that a properly flowed out head has a definite advantage, particularly in the car engine world, but in order to avoid making the obvious pits, proper dials and guages are necessary to ensure the success of the venture. As far as I know I cannot see what harmful effects it would have, except if the job was done badly. The average car owner who wants to make his car go quicker probably starts off by going to a speed conversion firm and buying their over the counter goodies. Although we haven't yet reached this position in motor cycling we're not far off it because there are quite a number of people marketing conversions to a larger or lesser extent. Perhaps this isn't good enough for racing and perhaps it is costly but you are paying for knowledge. This outlines my next point that for speed and reliability you cannot do better than to have your machine professionally tuned. Of course it costs money but I fail to see why anyone who fails to start in a race should expect the organiser to give him another chance. There is one thing an organiser cannot do and that is to

use his own standards of preparation for the rider's machine. Sometimes it's a great pity that he can't.

No, racing is racing after all and the whole purpose of racing is to go faster than everyone else. A racing machine should be fast and reliable amongst other things and if reliability has suffered due to some known factor then surely the answer is to look at the problem again, not out of ignorance but with professional knowledge. Not all such knowledge costs money. Around the paddock you will find plenty of people who are prepared to offer advice, some of it good, some of it bad. If you don't know which is which then a few pounds with a professional might save you many wasted entry fees and wasted time.

Naturally, there are factors which arise which can only be termed as sheer bad luck. Wet weather plays havoc with most machines but even here a certain amount of preparation is the only answer. We know that it rains at half the meetings during the year at some time or another so water proofing is surely part of the agenda.

To conclude let me say that I fully commiserate with riders whose machines fail to start. I have had enough of them in my time but, in retrospect, a little more knowledge would have solved the problem quite easily. I wouldn't like to be stuck on the start line when everyone else has disappeared but the answer rests in your hands. Don't complain to the organiser when he won't let you into another race.

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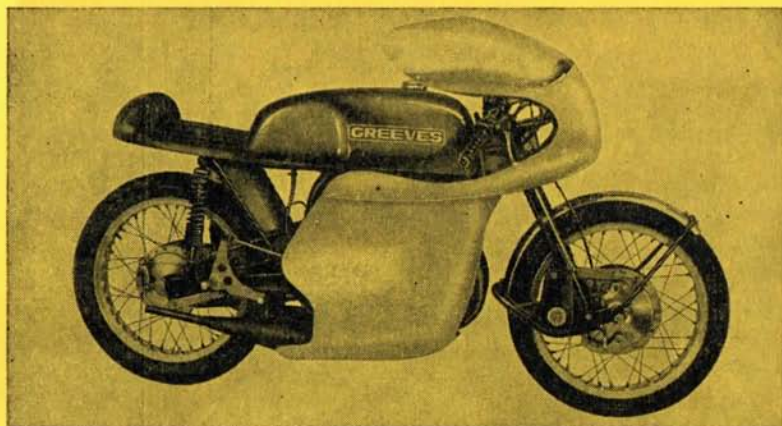


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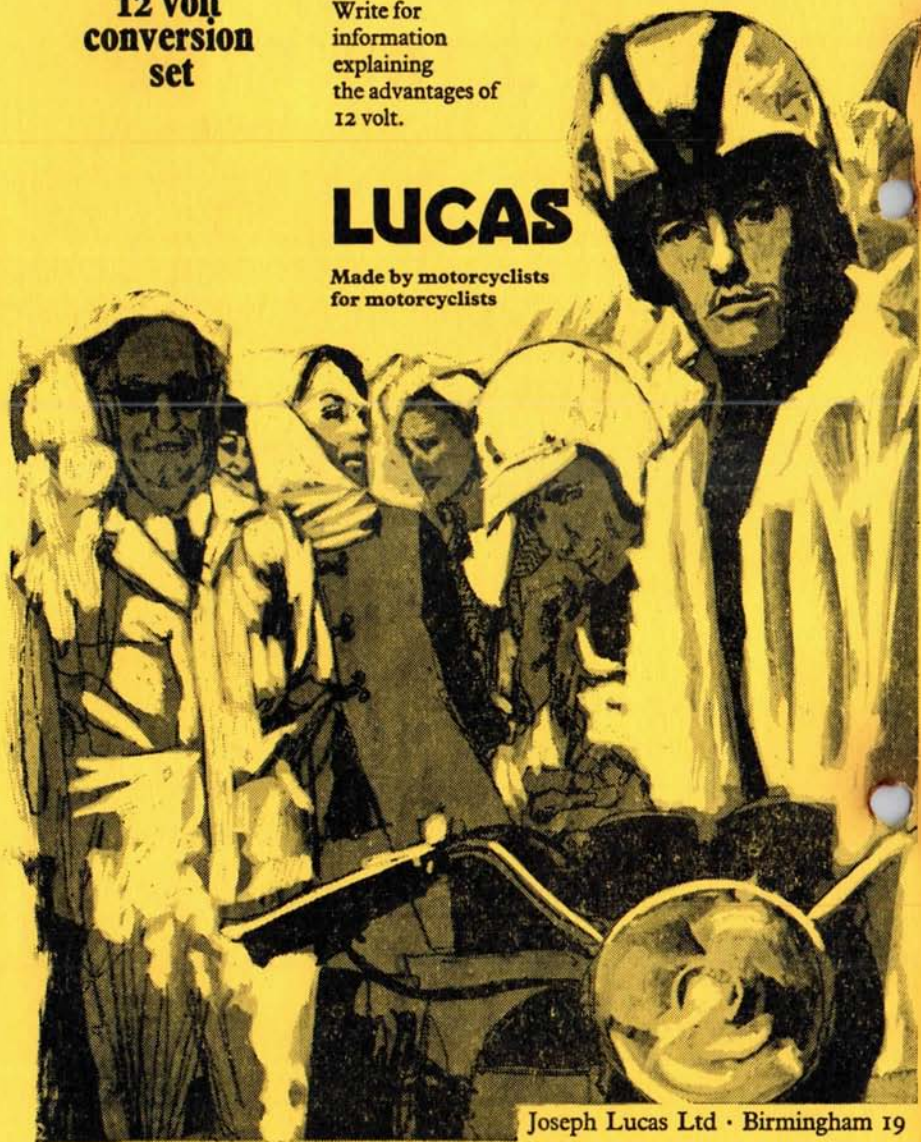
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