

BEMSEE 68



SEPTEMBER

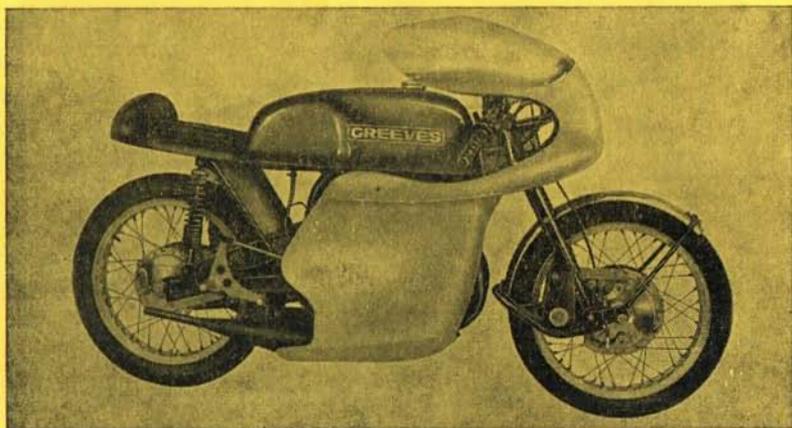


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**THE JOURNAL OF THE
BRITISH MOTOR CYCLE RACING CLUB**

Bemsee



SEPTEMBER 1968

THE HUTCH

Jim Swift

Phew! I doubt that such a meeting will ever again be seen this year on the British mainland. This may be a biased statement because I sincerely hope it isn't, but the fact remains that the Hutch produced such a spectacle of speed that I personally doubt that it can be matched—except next year when we have further cards up our sleeve for our own Diamond Jubilee meeting.

Renzo Pasolini produced added appeal although he was to suffer mechanical failure later in the meeting. Neither he nor his mechanics were able to speak a word of English but, through our interpreter, we ascertained that they found a ball bearing in the carburettor of the 350. How it got there is a mystery but one can recall nuts and bolts in petrol tanks so it would not be too far flung a suggestion that someone might, just possibly, have put it there. An unworthy thing to suggest? Perhaps so but I've no doubt you thought the same thing before I mentioned it. However, Pasolini and his mechanics enjoyed themselves immensely and apologised for their 'bad' showing and hoped that, should they be invited again, they would do much better now they knew how things were played at such short circuit meetings. As Count Nardi Dei of Benelli said, they were "unused to this type of meeting." Considering that Phil Read couldn't catch the Benelli in the first leg of the Senior Championship race, I don't think that he did too badly.

The impeccable Mike Hailwood triumphed again although he made it look hard work in the second leg of the Senior race for about six laps. Since he races very little these days it was surprising that he had lost none of his skill and determination. Mike was, of course, after the Mellano Trophy and was genuinely disappointed that Phil Read had got so much ahead of him by the time event 9 came around. As I pointed out, while Mike puts up such incredibly fast lap records, he would have a hard job indeed to get his average up to exceed them.

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By the time this magazine goes to print there will be little more left to say. The books will have covered the meeting pretty well. What should be said is that the measure of enthusiasm displayed by all marshals and race officials deserve some measure of praise. The meeting ran spotlessly throughout the two day period and we really didn't come up against a hitch at all other than to praise the effectiveness of our radio equipment. The internal course telephones "de-generated," probably due to the vast amount of water which fell during the week before and were therefore out of action for the meeting. Luckily, or should I say prophetically, we had the answer to the problem for much of the time.

Considering that no start money was paid to the vast majority of the riders at the Hutch the entry was particularly good in all but the sidecar class. It was a great shame that Klaus Enders broke a con-rod but this followed his run of bad luck this year. I doubt, that should it not have broken, he would have caught the flying Helmut Fath.

I must admit though, that the Hutch has rather made me think twice about the payment of start money to the average rider. An interesting guide to this is that Barry Edwards who finished last in both legs of the Senior Championship race ended up with

Starting the machine was simply accomplished by the introduction into the combustion chamber of a 2/5/3 mixture of ether, glycerine and molten boot polish. This by means of a pair of leather bellows fitted beneath the gearbox drain plug. Following this a lighted match was inserted in the spark plug hole, and the plug rapidly inserted and connected up while the rear wheel was held off the ground to prevent stalling. (This latter operation was necessitated by a sticky clutch, later fixed with $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. of graphite grease and a pickaxe.) The machine reached working temperature in ten seconds and was soon trundling merrily around the block, pursued by its irate tester.

Stopping power was described as excellent, and braking was accomplished by swiftly removing a clevis pin from the handlebar, which allowed a 2 cwt. block of reinforced concrete to fall from the rear carrier. A 3 ft. length of $\frac{5}{8}$ " by $\frac{1}{4}$ " Reynolds chain attached the block to the rear mudguard, and thus brought the Pherret to a speedy halt.

When visited in the casualty ward, tester Tripe said that handling could be improved. This should be accomplished on later models by the use of a sleeve pipe and two jubilee clips on the top main frame tube.

All in all the Pherret was found to be in a class of its own.

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After the first 50 miles the manufacturers carry out a free service on all machines and supply a roll of multicore solder for repairing cylinder head cracks. A soldering iron is deemed unnecessary as engine heat is sufficient to do the job.

Happy days to all of you who may own a Phobof. May you enjoy your life in the asylum.

IVAN HACKMAN.

Today it is a dumping ground for old aircraft jigs, fuselage sections and rusty pieces of metal, with silver birches growing through its surface. The old members' bridge still spans the track, standing in stark and rusty contrast against the trees in summer leaf. From the top of the test hill one sees the British Aircraft Corporation's Buildings greedily enveloping the track, and a dark stain running from the gap in the Byfleet Banking to the beginning of the railway straight marks the single central runway.

Behind the Clubhouse, now used for research and development by Dr. Barnes Wallis, reposes a sign above a timekeepers hut advertising BP Ethyl, then just over a bob a gallon . . . (wish it was today, with a Manx's insatiable thirst). Nearby is Francis Beart's old tuning den, the doors of which advertise E.R. Plugs for screwing into Norton motors; so that's his secret addition to make a motor go even more quickly!

Brooklands outer circuit is two and three quarters miles long and was constructed by 2,000 Irish labourers imported for the contract who lived on the site over the Winter of 1906/1907 in huts built of tree trunks, logs, branches and corrugated iron, in squalid conditions. It cost approximately a quarter of a million pounds to build.

The time taken to complete the work was 45 weeks. This was achieved by running a railway siding on to the site bringing in 80 tons of materials a day and employing a large amount of horse power (hay motor type), together with the imported labour, which included a further 200 carpenters employed later.

In its day the construction of Brooklands was considered a great achievement and taking into account the difficulties the contractors, Price & Reeves of Weybridge, had to overcome this is probably so.

At that time there was no technological data or understanding of the behaviour of Portland cement under stress, or appreciation of proper expansion joints in the large areas of mass concrete. This together with the lack of steel or wire reinforcing gave rise to the surface troubles which had the track under constant repair for 30 years.

There was the hazard of serious flooding on the Clubhouse site to be overcome, and the building of a ferro concrete bridge over the river Wey, which was constructed on 42 piles and was

considered a great feat of engineering in its day. But over the years it settled, and produced a large and famous—or infamous—bump.

Tales are recounted of Barry at full bore on his Brough high on the Wey Bridge Banking with 18 inches of daylight under his wheels. So consider when astride your featherbed Manx the speed of those rigid framed bikes over the rough and uneven surface, and imagine the hammering man and machine had to withstand without rear suspension and Girder forks by Ardride & Piles. It would seem that one of the attributes of a successful Brooklands rider was the diligent cultivation of a hide like a Rhino on his sit upon.

Brooklands is said to be endowed with a ghost, popularly surmised to be that of Percy Lambert who was killed when a tyre punctured on the Members' Banking during a record attempt in his Talbot, on 28th October, 1913. The car overturned and went over the top of the Banking at 110 m.p.h. trapping Percy beneath with a fractured skull. Percy's ghost is supposed to inhabit the V.C.10 assembly shop at the end of the Railway Straight.

It is also rumoured that there is a racing motor cyclist's ghost, but if this is based on the lurid exploits at dusk of a certain mischievous gentleman, who shall remain nameless, together with his 1912 Baby Triumph and appropriate riding gear, putting the fear of the supernatural into the Aircraft workers, then the rumour is untrue.

Many highly qualified persons have written detailed accounts of the history of Brooklands relating to cars and motor cycles, the successes and failures of days past, the legendary feats of Baragwanath, Pope, Le Vack, Marchant, etc.; the persistence of L. W. E. Hartley to push the humble side valve lap record nearer the Ton, and A. L. Loweth whose ambition was to win a Gold Star on a side valve Norton, which he nearly achieved by lapping at 98 m.p.h. and holding the side valve record in perpetuity. One could continue indefinitely dwelling on the highlights of a golden age.

The history of Brooklands racing closed in 1939, but what of the track today. It is owned by the British Aircraft Corporation which produces V.C.10's at the rate of one a month. This is a low production output due to work being slowed down by cancellation of the TSR2 project, of which half the work was done at Brooklands, and also the reduction of BOAC's order.

The track is still there, but in places great chunks have been removed from the banking especially the Byfleet Banking, where it was cleared to make way for landing modern aircraft. Also in the Members' Banking there are two sections carved out but not right across the track.

Flaking slogans proclaiming 'Bring Back Brooklands' have been painted outside and inside the track and many suggestions have been forthcoming on how this can be achieved.

To restore the track to its original form would be out of the question as the expense would be prohibitive, but the suggestion of making it a National Transport Museum would seem logical. With the increasing interest in vintage and veteran vehicles of all types, including flying machines and maritime antiquities, of sail, steam and man power a vast number of conveyances of all types are being unearthed and restored; but to find places of adequate size to store and keep them in good condition is becoming a growing problem.

Most people who run vintage and veteran vehicles take them out of a shed or garage, compete in runs and return them, the interested members of the public only getting a quick view as they chug or puff past with no time to appreciate points of technical interest.

There are a vast amount of vehicles which are not represented at museums that have a high interest value, and it is a pity that the public cannot view these machines. Therefore, with the ground available at Brooklands many of these machines could be exhibited by their owners when not competing in runs or races, similar to the Montague Motor Museum arrangement.

Static exhibits draw a constant stream of visitors but people want to see vehicles in motion, so why not use part of the Mountain Circuit and Members' Banking, where the Members' Banking is connected to the Paddock Straight by a straight unbanked road still in good condition with a gradient similar to the drop from Druids at Brands, but having another bend like it off the banking and a tighter lefthander at the bottom. This could then return past the old Paddock, sweep left around the building adjacent to the Paddock out to the end of the runway, and sweeping to the right, on to the Members' Banking at the beginning of the Railway Straight giving a fast run around a restored Members' Banking to the turn down to the Mountain Circuit again.

This would give a circuit which machines manufactured up to 1939 could dice over. These machines, silenced to the

Brooklands' regulations, would not create offence outside the track and numbers of visitors would soon repay expenses involved; i.e. last year 15,000 people turned up and overwhelmed the organisation of the 60th Anniversary Meeting.

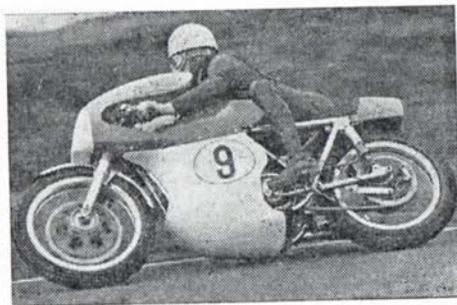
What is needed is another H. F. Locke King with resources, enthusiasm and imagination to clear the track of tree and weed growth and preserve it for future generations to wonder at, and see for themselves where modern history was created, and not let it decline to just a name in a book, but to create a National Transport Museum and make it a paying proposition with additional interest stimulated by staging events on part of the track.

"Bring Back Brooklands." Certainly!

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OH! MR. BEAVIS

What shall we do ?

Dennis Bates

It was this way. My wife had toothache and stayed awake, I did not and slept. But it was a warmish night on Easter Sunday, although the day had been cold and sunny, so that when a 'psst' sounded in my ear I awoke immediately.

I should explain that we were staying at the Bell at Thetford, an ancient coaching inn with an enormous courtyard where, no doubt, the coaches from London and Newmarket used to change mounts before heading out on the road to Norwich.

Back to the psst! Some people were up to no good in the courtyard, my wife told me. I peered out into the gloom and saw shadowy figures around a car and mysterious movements.

Now the funny thing is that when you actually see something you wish to record, only certain items remain in the imagination, some of which are completely irrelevant. If there was a nefarious activity, I thought, I must observe every detail. But from where I was detail was just the thing which was unobservable. And there was no light to show up the people.

Now The Bell is built around three sides of the courtyard. I was on one side, furthest from the reception and the switchboard. To reach this I had to descend from the first floor and walk the length of a glass verandah or walkway. With light coloured pyjamas and almost complete exposure to the people in the courtyard the element of surprise (even to observe) was non-existent. But as I arrived at ground level and squinted around the corner of the stairway, activity in the courtyard reached fever pitch. I was just in time to see a can and funnel put into the boot of a car, the users pile aboard, engine start, lights on and away. The lights on bit was exciting because there presented to me was a beautifully illuminated number plate.

Without more ado I found a 'phone which was working and dialled 999. Then began the comedy, for whilst talking to the police a noise behind me revealed the night porter. Breaking off my conversation to the police I enquired whether he had see anything. He had, he said. It appeared that some people had asked the Manager for help as they had run out of petrol and a resident had offered them some. OK says I. Sorry to bother you and I bid the police farewell. Then and only then did I think to look at my watch. It was 2.55 a.m. Now I am sure you do not wake up the Manager of a hotel at three in the morning and beg petrol. Oh no, says the night porter, this was when the bar was open.

" You keep the bar here open late, don't you?"

" No, it shuts at the normal time."

" Then they can't still be filling up with petrol begged from a resident, can they? The bar shut over four hours ago."

I could see we were going to run out of subjects to discuss at this rate, but there was still the car which had been the subject of attention. Out we went into the courtyard with petrol fumes rising from a pool of petrol right below the filler cap of some luckless person's vehicle.

So back we go on the 999 business. Then to bed, and of course sleep was the last thing that occurred, till just before getting up time.

But the morning revealed, what the night had concealed. It was the Club car!

So the Secretary and I repair to the 'nick', where we learn there's no such thing as what you saw. What you have to do is listen whilst a constable who cannot write treats one as an imbecile whilst 'creating' a document purporting to show what has happened, who lost what, when and in what circumstances. The offer to write a statement was rejected on these grounds—

Norfolk Constable " You wouldn't know what we wanted!"

And that took 90 minutes. It took 17 minutes to write these notes.

The owner/driver of the car admits to being in Thetford. He denies being at the Bell Hotel, he denies taking, borrowing or buying petrol in Thetford that night.

The question to Mr. Beavis is, can there be a prosecution.

MANX GRAND PRIX

Any member interested in riding in the Club's teams for the Manx Grand Prix are asked to contact Jack Bridson at the George Hotel, Castletown, Isle of Man.

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ODDS AND ENDS

Jim Swift

We have had mention of a number of subjects within the last two issues of the magazine which I haven't had even time to think about until recently. One of the first points covers the question of long distance races at Club meetings. If I may go back into history (only six years of it) I would like to give some explanation on why we run races as we do and the financial implications of running them differently as have been suggested.

The policy of the Club is to provide the members with as much as it can for as little as it can, commensurate with a firm policy as to the future of road racing and of the Club. I don't need to dwell on the question of crowds at Club meetings and the interest shown by the public by and large. What I would say is that it is our firm intention to provide as many members with as many rides as possible and, in this, I believe we are successful. Gone are the days when you were rejected for fifty per cent of the meetings you entered and, nowadays, even if you are unlucky enough to get turned down you can turn up on the day and take pot luck. You couldn't do this seven years ago, and at what other meetings can you do it even today. (Having said that the Newmarket Club are seriously thinking of following our lead.)

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But to do this one has to bear in mind the economics. An average Club event might cost something in the region of £800 — £900 to put on. Entry fees cover this cost by and large for Snetterton events but certainly don't for Brands Hatch meetings where there is a liability of something like £300 or more before we take a penny on the gate. The average crowd at a Club meeting this year at Brands is about 600, at Snetterton even less. An average Club event at Snetterton could provide 400 competitors; one at Brands Hatch 250. The disparity between the two is obvious. To provide the required amount of entry fees one has to provide sufficient opportunity to recoup your liability by the number of races that you run—hence the reason for the 'open' events at Brands Hatch this year. To do this you must restrict everyone to one ride per capacity class so that you induce the greatest number of people to enter, or should I say that you can accept more entries. If you

accept more entries you take more money. It is for this reason alone that we do not run heats because while you are running heats you could be providing forty more riders with a ride, and this also applies to long distance races as well.

The second point upon a Club Championship is, indeed, a thought. I might add that the reason why yearly trophies and championships were dropped—yes, they did exist not so long ago—was for the very reason that I have enumerated above. It was impossible to offer everyone a ride at all meetings and with Championships and trophies won on a points basis it was not a very fair way of going about it. Trouble we had-a-plenty. We'll obviously consider the matter for the future but, to a limited extent the same problem exists.

If I may dwell upon a point raised by Mrs. Tufts in this month's Postbag concerning clutch starts. Whereas I can readily appreciate some of the remarks made I feel I should add that some of her statements are not factual. We all realise that a proper clutch start for sidecars utilises the 'dummy grid' which it has done ever since the system was invented. What we have endeavoured to do is to obviate the necessity of cold engines when unfortunate delays cause more havoc than we might wish, and also to obviate the non-starting problem. Nobody in this country has ever tried clutch starts for solos before. We have, and from our first attempt, I can honestly say that it appeared to be an enormous success. We shall try it again for the next Club meeting at Brands and, afterwards, all competitors will be circulated with a form and it will be for them to decide what form of starts we use for the majority of next year.

In fairness to Mrs. Tufts, I should point out that one did not ought to have to remind competitors that the meeting was to be started by Clutch Start. We have already put out enough publicity about it and it was contained in the Final Instructions. Furthermore we also stated that the grid ballot would be dispensed with. This was an honest attempt to give those riders who were not too keen on the idea with the opportunity to go to the back of the grid. Some took advantage of this and so enjoyed the meeting which they might otherwise not have done. The starting problem, if it really existed, was in a large way caused by the fact that neither our usual starter, Paul Corbett, nor his assistant attended the meeting. My Deputy, Frank Gillings, stepped rather bravely into the breach and did his best. If there were any complaints then I must add that I have no doubt that he was aware of his faults and it is only this awareness that will ensure they don't happen again. We all learn by our mistakes.

It is impractical to use a dummy grid. I don't consider it necessary and who ever heard of anyone holding a clutch out for eight minutes. The simplest thing would be to put the box into neutral! I am glad to say that it wasn't one of our meetings where there was an eight minute delay but you would have noticed, I feel sure, that riders were not brought to the line until it was reasonable to assume that the timekeepers were almost ready. The longest delay was for a little over a minute. Of course I should add that we are all motor cyclists and certainly I, as an organiser, am fully aware of the intricacies of modern racing. I would hardly be doing it if I didn't. All officials know full well of the problems so, although it may appear from time to time that we don't appear to know what we are doing, I might make so bold as to say that few riders know what organisation and its many problems is all about.

Dear Sir,—Now we have actually experienced the dreaded clutch start, I should like to make one or two comments.

First of all I assume that it was considered at least fairly successful at Brands Hatch. However, if considering circuits like Snetterton, please spare a thought for the poor chap who pulls out grid position 40. He will still be number 40 into the first bend and really doesn't stand much of a chance of catching the lucky fellow who drew number 1.

Apart from this aspect, I was rather shocked at the apparent lack of organisation at the start. We were not reminded that it was a clutch start and one chap stopped his motor. He realised in time and, when he had run about ten yards up the track, the starter was given the green light. Without further ado he ran up the rostrum and was all but ready to drop the flag when a couple of marshals stopped him. Anyway, we finally got started—but without any prior warning to put on goggles or to put the machine into gear. The reason I mention this is that on the previous week-end we were kept waiting on the grid for no less than eight minutes. To keep the engine revving and the clutch in whilst in gear for that long could have been disastrous. In my opinion it would be better to arrange things as follows.

1. Line up machines on a dummy grid and stop engines until circuit declared clear.
2. Start machines and drive up to grid proper leaving in gear.
3. As soon as all machines in position, starter mounts rostrum and drops flag.

Sorry if all this seems a lot of trouble but I can assure you it is agony waiting or wondering if there is time to stop the engine before the all clear is given. Maybe others do not find it so.

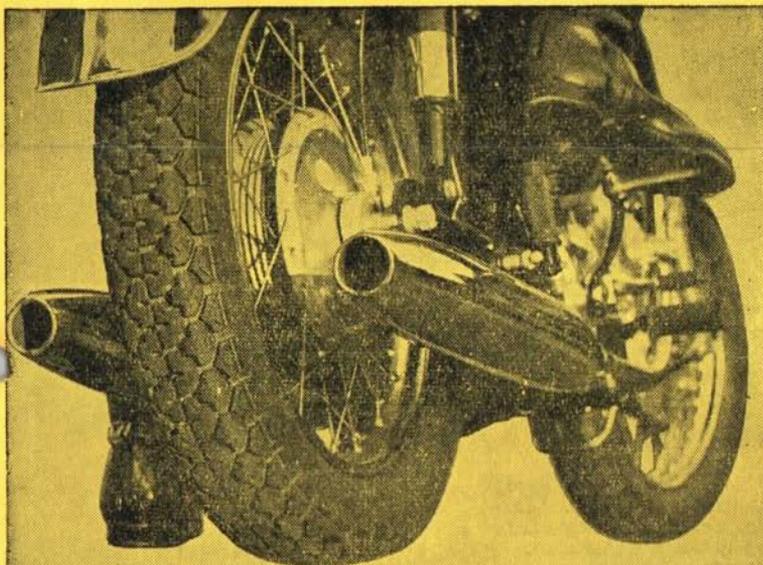
Yours, etc., Mrs. H. TUFFS, London, W.12.

Dear Ed.,—What about 'modernising' the races as K. G. Hampton suggested last month? I would love the opportunity of racing for forty laps of Snetterton. We all know that long races are not crowd pullers but then none of the Club's meetings are with the exception of the Hutchinson 100.

A compulsory pit stop as well would all give useful experience for the Manx Grand Prix. A Club championship would really be a natural for a large Club like Bemsee. Twelve meetings a year would be ample to decide worthy Bemsee champions. The only snag being can we afford the really worthwhile prizes that would be necessary? This is obviously the same snag as using the Brands G.P. Circuit at least once a year. Can we afford it? Would members pay even higher entry fees? I doubt it. M.C.D. are considering holding National events on the Club circuit so the experience would not probably warrant it.

Lastly, it all helps to fill the magazine up—further to Mr. Hampton's suggested articles by certain Club members, how about one by himself on 'how to drop Tritons on Hairpins'.

Yours, etc., L. W. SCANNELL, London, N.2.



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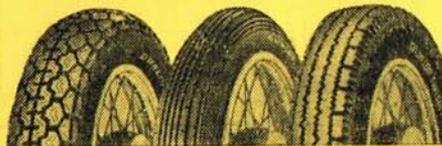
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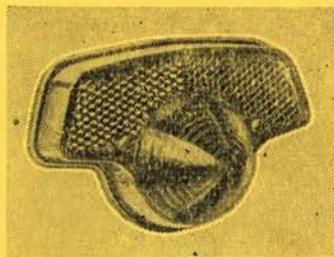
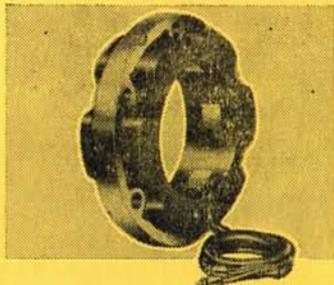
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