

## VMCC North Birmingham Section

### The Levis Cup Trial and Marjorie Cottle Trophy – 29<sup>th</sup> September 2013

The sun shone, the trophies glittered, the Severn sparkled in the background, the scent of new-mown hay pervaded the paddock and a galaxy of modern machines delivered the spectators. The scene was set for a truly memorable Levis Cup Trial, on the Centenary of the event. There was even a 1913 machine present – Bill Leach's Triumph Roadster. That machine could find its own way round any Levis course we could devise, it's competed so often. All Bill has to do is fill it with petrol and start it!

As an experiment this year, Bill Danks lengthened the morning route and shortened the afternoon one, eating into the lunch break but enabling competitors to get back to the start with plenty of daylight left. We thought he might have overdone it with 65 miles to Ludlow, but it did enable him to incorporate some new



hills! We even had a fuel dump at Check Point 4 for those flat tankers with very limited capacity. Fortunately, it was not required. As it happened, the only unscheduled top-up required was by a certain ex-WD Ariel-riding PhD laureate and author who forgot to fill up at the garage just before Ludlow! The extended morning also required some last-minute revision of the afternoon running order to give those on 18 and 20mph schedules time for a cup of tea and a comfort break.

53 pre-1946 Levis Cup machines (including four Levises) and seven, pre-1965, under 200cc, Marjorie Cottle Trophy entrants set off on a morning ideal for riding old motorcycles. Sadly, we had some early mechanical disasters, including one of the two back-up vehicles (now there's a luxury) but Les Hobbs in the second van completed a fault-free circuit! Our sincere thanks go to both him and to Hazel for their willingness to spend a long day navigating around roads that are scarcely wide enough for BSA Three-wheeler, let alone a Transit. An early casualty was Mike Stephenson, whose Ariel broke its gearlever not long after the start. Fortunately, he was able to find second gear and limp home the few miles to Stourport where he collected his Norton to be present at the finish. Cathryn Barton also hit transmission trouble with a failed clutch on her little BSA. Les enjoyed her company the rest of the way in the van.



Meanwhile, out on the course, Mike Walker on his immaculate 1934 500cc Moto Guzzi Model V was proceeding effortlessly and accurately, so accurately in fact that he won the Levis Cup. It is, I believe, the first time that a “foreign” machine has won the event. Keith Sams on a 1929 350cc H29 OK Supreme was runner-up on the tie-break (the Whitbatch Flexibility test) from Stephen Nutt on a 1935 350cc Levis A2. Three fewer penalties, and a Levis would have won the Centenary Levis Cup Trial – that would have been nice! Mary Roberts won the LeVack Trophy for best Vintage performance, despite kipping the Starter and the Secretary of the Meeting at the Lenchford start. It’s a good job we don’t have penalty points for emissions.

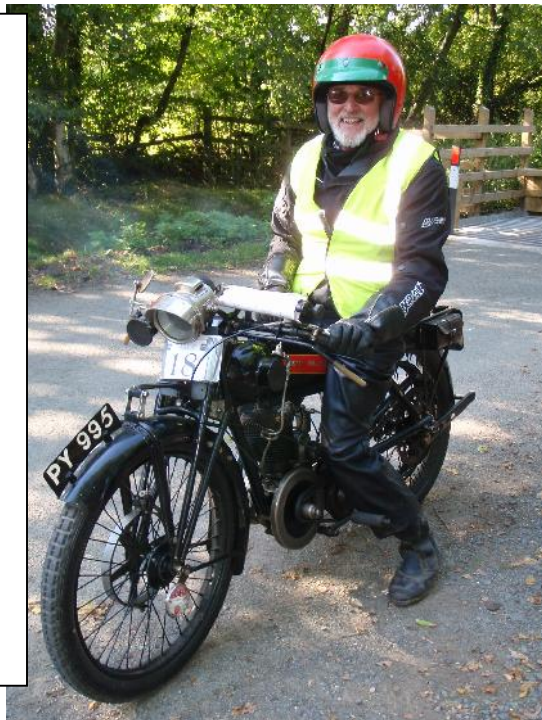
Jenny Hart and Francis Arrow in their 1930 BSA Tricar won the Alice Round Cup for best Opposite Class. The much under-rated BSA stormed up Whitbatch Hill on the Flexibility test, in one of the best performances of the day. Brian and Pat Empsall won the Rolley Newton Cup for best outfit once again. Pat opted for a little light exercise, walking up Flagstaff Hill, leaving Brian and the Triumph to their own devices. Flagstaff and Farlow Hills, as in the very first Levis Cup Trial in 1913, caught out several riders, including the owner of a very recently acquired Hinckley Triumph Thruxton. Insufficient revs led to insufficient go-forward, a bent clutch lever, scratched silencer and a pulled hamstring!

In the Marjorie Cottle Trophy competition, Paul Raybould took his little gem of a 1964 Honda CB160 to a well deserved win. His performance on Whitbatch was quite remarkable considering he only had 166cc at his disposal. His performance was bettered only by the winner of the John Greenwood Trophy, Roland Robinson, on his 1934 600cc OHC Ariel Square Four. A few attempts on the hill were disallowed when the riders threw in a cheeky gear change!

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Mary Roberts (left) on the 1929 250cc two stroke Rex Acme that had kippered Officials at the start, and the appropriately bearded Alan Dignan on the 1923 350cc Beardmore Precision



Back at the Lenchford in time for tea, there were a lot of big grins around the place, and one rider thought it was the best Levis he had ever done. As a relatively small section, however, North Birmingham is facing increasing difficulties in putting on the Trial. With eight time checks, two observed hills and the flexibility test to man, and the need for very active marshalling of the riders and spectators in Ludlow Market Square, it is a highly labour intensive undertaking. Add in the growing bureaucracy and cost of the ACU and MSA permits required for a competitive event, and the growth of traffic on formerly very quiet country roads, and the problems begin to multiply. It is only by drafting in non-VMCC family and friends (even members of Bill Danks' jazz club were pressed into service) and members of the Worcester Section, that we were able to man all the posts this year. If the event is to continue, then we must have more volunteers to take on roles as officials, observers and marshals.

Bill Danks did a brilliant job as Clerk of the Course, preparing a marvellous route and flawless route instructions, as well as twisting numerous arms to get enough bodies to man the posts. My thanks go to him and all those, too many to name, who gave up their Sunday to help run this unique event. My thanks also go to the riders, particularly those who have supported the Levis for many years, and we look forward to seeing you all next year.

In 1923, Geoff Davison won the Levis Cup outright. In 1954 he presented it to the VMCC, so next year is the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the revival of the Levis Cup Trial. The 2014 Trial will be held on 28<sup>th</sup> September, once again at the Lenchford Hotel.

## Summary of results



The Levis Cup - Best performance – Mike Walker, 1934 Moto Guzzi Model V

The Alec Ross Cup – Runner-up – Keith Sams, 1929 OK Supreme H29

The Alice Round Cup – Best opposite class – Jenny Hart, 1930 BSA Tricar

The LeVack Trophy – Best performance on a vintage m/c – Mary Roberts, Rex Acme 250

The Albert Mattox Trophy – Team Award – Reg Eyre, Mary Roberts, Jaqueline Bickerstaff

The Rolley Newton Cup – Best performance on a Sidecar – Brian Empsall, 1928 Triumph Model N De Luxe combo

The Omyga Trophy – Best performance on a post-vintage m/c – Stephen Nutt, 1935 Levis A2

The Sgt H J Colley Trophy – Best performance on an ex-WD m/c – Bob Ashwin, 1943 Royal Enfield CO

The John Greenwood Trophy – Best Performance on the Flexibility Test – Roland Robinson, 1934 Ariel 4F

The Timekeeper's Trophy – Best performance on time – Ian Cole, 1929 BSA Model H

The Peter Ashen Cup – Best performance by a female rider – Jacqueline Bickerstaff, 1926 HRD 70/S

The Levis Tankard – Best performance on a Levis m/c – Gordon Smith, 1937 Levis Model A

The Marjorie Cottle Cup – Paul Raybould, 1964 Honda CB160

Paul Hutton