

North Birmingham News

NEWSLETTER

The Late Run

The Late Run/Willies Wondering

With mixed weather forecasts erring towards snow heavy rain and cold winds, the run was looking iffy and sure enough a light covering of the white stuff greeted us on the morning of 23rd November.

Should we ride, would anyone turn out, was there black ice? Better get out there and find out. Full choke on the BM and some reluctance to fire proved that even she was questioning the decision to go. This was to be a 2 start run, Bill Danks organising the south start and route from Hagley and me from the north near Cannock.

At Cannock the entry grew to 5 machines and a call to Bill confirmed 2 from Hagley. So with the sky showing signs of turning blue and the sun breaking through, "The Late Run" and "Willies Wondering" was on!

Plenty of water mud and leaves on the side roads made for interesting going, but the clear air and great visibility made the best of the early winter colours giving superb views of the Shropshire hills and countryside.

Riding was very enjoyable and with 44 miles down we retired to Tony's Dinner at Quatford for the usual banter, lunch and a brew.

Stars of the day were the tiddlers. Ian Harris on his BSA Beagle (75cc) back on the road again after an estimated 40 year rest and tiddler king himself John Aston on his Honda Cub (49cc). The performance of these machines was amazing, both consistently travelling at 35mph+ with petrol consumption of approximately half a gallon between them. Is this a new way to beat the credit crunch?

Not to forget Brian and Pat Empsall who made a round trip of 86 miles from Lichfield on their 1928 Triumph Combo. Proving once more that whatever others can do Vintage can do just as well!

Special thanks to Bill Danks Honda (400cc) who at short notice produced his route. Others were Bill Harley TRIBSA (500cc), Roger Greening 1938 Velocette (500cc) Josie Stanley Honda (1198cc).

Paul Harris BMW (750cc)





From the Archives

Can you imagine any of today's racers being willing to travel with his machine, tools and kit by train and then pushing the machine three miles between railway stations?

But that is what one of the all time great riders, Ireland's Stanley Woods did in 1935. After winning the Isle of Man Senior TT on a 500cc Moto Guzzi, he promised his Irish fans that he would race the machine in Ireland at the end of that season and Stanley kept his promise.

"But in those days " he once said "We did not have vans to take us around, and the only way I could get the bike from Milan to Belfast was by train and boat".

"Getting to Calais was no trouble. The problem came with getting from Victoria Station to Paddington. The only way was to push it" said Stanley.

He then confirmed the story I was researching—that he was towed up Park Lane, via Marble Arch to Paddington by a GPO telegram boy on a bicycle.

The stories to be told of Stanley's racing career from 1922 until 1939 are legendary. Of how he wrote to every manufacturer, telling them of how he could win the TT for them: Cotton were convinced by the 17-year-old and although he did not succeed in 1922, he did in 1923, scoring the first of 10 TT wins. Stanley was an ace for Norton from 1926 until 1933 and scored IoM TT doubles (350 & 500cc) in 1932 and 1933. He was responsible for introducing signalling stations around the TT course—and when Norton wanted to share his 'secret', Stan said no and went 'foreign', first with Husqvarna and then Moto Guzzi, winning the 250 and 500cc TTs in 1935.

He joined Velocette in 1936 and was directly responsible for pioneering swinging arm rear suspension. He split Norton's domination with second places in the 1937 and 1938 Senior TTs and he won the Junior TT in both 1938 and 1939.

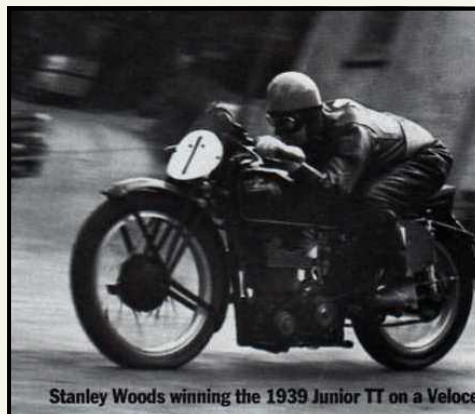
When TT racing resumed after the war, illness prevented him from racing and, in 1949 when he felt sufficiently fit, he decided at 45 that he was too old.

Trials riding, sand, ice and even speedway were also among Stanley's sporting activities—especially the Scott Trial—which finally ended his competitive days with a broken leg in 1953.

It was a great honour for me to have known Stanley Woods. He was one of the few really great racing riders—but most of all, he always had time for the lads.



Woods in 1939



Stanley Woods winning the 1939 Junior TT on a Velocette

January AGM

At this year's meeting we will be discussing the "50th Anniversary Concours" which is being held on the 16th August 2009 at Himley Hall.

In order for us to move forward we need your help at the meeting to join in the discussion on what you would like to happen on the day, so the agreed preparations can be made.

As a guide you may wish to consider the following:-

The timetable for the day

What refreshments are required

Old pictures / stories / anecdotes from the early years of the club to go on DVD to play during the day through a LCD/Plasma television set.

Seating arrangements inside / outside

Number of Tickets Required/price

Guests— Old committee / club members / family

Speakers—

Publicity for the event

Decorations/posters/flowers

Presentations

Coat / helmet storage area