

36th VMCC MANX RALLY REPORT

A mixture of wet weather, mist on the mountain and postponed racing made for a challenging event for our fifth and for this team our final VMCC Manx Rally. However from the positive comments of our entrants we believe we still managed to deliver a seamless and enjoyable Rally on a par with previous years.

Starting at Port Erin on Saturday 23rd August, the Rally got underway with a competitive road run "The Footman James timed lap of the first TT course". The weather was fine and sunny which got the Rally off to a great start and we hoped it might last all week. This run was again very well supported and I hope that we have established another regular event in the Rally programme. As in previous years the run ended at the ARE Collection, Tony and Pat East's wonderfully restored vintage bikes based at their house in Kirk Michael.

Sunday again dawned fine and sunny for the start of our Road Safety Run from the Sea Terminal in Douglas and the sunshine continued all day. The run covered over 50 miles of stunning Isle of Man scenery and every credit to Harold Cardy, our Assistant Secretary, who comes up with these fantastic routes year after year. It culminated in a wonderful display of our machines in Castletown Square throughout Sunday afternoon. This event has a real party atmosphere, meeting old friends, making new ones and enjoying a pint whilst talking about old bikes. Well attended by spectators the square is closed to traffic making it safe for competitors and visitors to enjoy the impressive collection of bikes on display. Tea and biscuits are kindly provided by the Castletown Commissioners to all entrants adding to this festive occasion. This year we were delighted to be serenaded by the Castletown Metropolitan Silver Band who played for two hours and added yet another dimension to this festival of motorcycling. The Square was as busy as I've ever seen it and this has to be one of the best gatherings of vintage and classic bikes in the world on an annual basis. If you've never experienced this afternoon in Castletown then you have missed something very special in our movement.

Monday started dull, wet and misty with Manx Radio broadcasting from 8 am that there would be a delay in the racing. This was to be the day of our first very popular Closed Roads Parade and the longest we have ever been offered from Quarter Bridge to Ramsey. Although we went through the machine examination and signing on procedures, which are very exact for parades as they are run under an ACU Permit, delays to the racing continued to be announced. From past experience I knew, as did most of our regular entrants, that our parade was likely to be cancelled as the weather continued to be wet and overcast. At about 12 noon the call came from the Clerk of the Course that there would not be enough time for us to parade today and that he was very sorry. We were all disappointed but we understand that the racing always takes precedence and we cannot control the weather!

It was especially disappointing as everyone was looking forward to this longer parade and that only left the much shorter run from Ramsey to the Grandstand on Wednesday. Then I had an idea so I called the Clerk of the Course and asked if we could have the longer parade on Wednesday, he said he would consider my request and let me know! I only told the Manx Rally Team about this, so we could discuss how we might manage things, as I did not want to tell our entrants in case my request was turned down. Racing did take place eventually late on Monday afternoon and for me the day ended rather sadly. We watched the Senior Classic from Ballacraane and after admiring the ability of John Goodall for the last twenty five years I had the misfortune to witness his fatal accident here on the first lap. I had met John many times and the sport will miss this talented 67 year old veteran who was liked by everyone.

Tuesday is the day of our Main Event which again started dull, very wet and overcast and by 10 a.m. the TT Grandstand was still only half full of competitors as many had decided not to brave the run over the mountain. The motorcycles set off in pairs at 30 second intervals to compete in the Main Event and this is a timed lap of the famous TT circuit to match an average speed of either 20 or 24 m.p.h depending on the age of the machinery. The event was started by our guest Martin Quayle MHK the Minister for Tourism for the Isle of Man. Ian Young the "Murray Walker of the VMCC", who comes every year to help at our event, carried on commentating regardless of the weather with his microphone in a plastic bag! Conditions remained wet and overcast in Douglas but the sun was out in Ramsey by 11 am and the mist on the mountain, although thick, only covered about three miles of the "Windy Corner" section. On Tuesday afternoon there were the usual informal runs to the one make club gatherings taking place at pubs and hotels around the Island.

Wednesday was the second of our Closed Road Parades and I'm delighted to report that we were allowed to re-run our Monday parade and enjoy the 23 miles from Quarter Bridge to Ramsey. However the day was not without its problems still dull, overcast and with intermittent drizzle we were still uncertain if we would get a parade until about 1 pm. We assembled at Ramsey as it would have been impossible to let all of our competitors know of the switch back to the Monday venue. We completed the formalities of the parading procedures then packed everything up and set off for Quarter Bridge to re-assemble there ready to start the parade at about 6 pm. I pleased to say everything went off without a hitch and the look on the faces of our entrants at Ramsey, when we arrived to sign everyone off, was ample reward for what turned out to be a very long day for the team!

Thursday morning found us all in Old Laxey, with damp roads after another night of rain, but in warm sunshine for the start of the Ramsey Road Run. This is a timed reliability run incorporated many lovely roads in the north of the island and this year even a ford! The event finished at Mooragh Park in Ramsey where competitors enjoyed a light lunch in warm sunshine whilst exhibiting their motorcycles in the Concours Competition judged by their peers. The setting at Ramsey is idyllic, we display our bikes on a large grass area near the lake with the sight and sound of the Ramsey Classic Sprint happening just behind us on the Promenade. The numbers of spectators at Ramsey were greater than I've seen in recent years and we sold out of Rally Programmes, which is a first!

On Thursday evening we assembled in Douglas for our Awards Presentation Evening. Once again the Isle of Man Department of Tourism kindly provided the Royal Hall at the Villa Marina for our use. This prestigious venue is also used at other times during the week by the Manx Motor Cycle Club for the presentation of the MGP racing awards. Geoff Corkish MHK joined us on behalf of the Department of Tourism to present the awards. An excellent Manx hotpot supper and a few beers to wash it down followed the presentations. After a montage of images from previous Manx Rallies, a DVD on loan from Duke Marketing was shown during the meal. The Villa Marina is a superb venue and I'm sure the Department of Tourism will support the Rally by providing it again next year.

Friday again dawned dull and overcast with reports of mist on the mountain and sadly the day's racing was delayed by the bad weather yet again. We assembled in the harbour area at Port St Mary for a social run over to Peel with coffee and biscuits on the promenade. The run was only a morning event to allow our entrants to enjoy the Senior Race in the afternoon followed by the Classic Racing Parade to celebrate 25 years of Classic Racing on the Isle of Man. The weather sadly never improved and racing was cancelled for the day along with the Classic Parade.

The racing was re-scheduled for Saturday's which meant, of course, that our social run for that day had to be cancelled. I did go to watch the Classic Parade, which ran as the last event of the day, and I can assure those of you that wanted to see this that you did not miss anything. The delayed racing, bad weather and uncertainty of the week had depleted an already small field to just a few machines outnumbered by the MMCC Travelling Marshals.

On behalf of the Manx Rally Team Lin, Norma, Stuart, Wayne, Jonathan, Alex, Dave, Harold, Colin L, Bob, Mick, Colin T, Ian, Keith and Richard, I would like to thank all of the competitors for their help, support and understanding at this year's event. For the major help and support we receive from our sponsors a big thank you goes to Footman James Insurance and The Isle of Man Department of Tourism Special Events Team who are the main sponsors of the Rally. Our thanks also to Old Bike Mart, Total (I.O.M) Ltd, Keigs Photographic, Duke Marketing and many more too numerous to mention. Special thanks to the Manx Motorcycle Club for their kind permission to use the TT circuit for the Closed Road Parades, which makes the VMCC Manx Rally such a spectacular event.

A bonus for this year is that Martin Warr has covered the rally activity pretty thoroughly on video film and has produced a double-DVD set for sale. The first film covers the Saturday run from Port Erin to Tony East's museum, also the Castletown gathering on Sunday and the parade jumping Ballaugh Bridge on Wednesday. The second film covers the run from Laxey harbour to Ramsey and the activity there, followed by the Villa Marina presentation evening, in full. The concluding element covers the Social Run to Peel on Friday lunchtime. The price of the complete film, plus packaging and postage will be £7.50p and this will enable a contribution to be made to next year's Rally Fund. Orders should be sent to Martin's home address (NOT to the club offices):- J. Martin Warr, 56, The Park, Yeovil, Somerset. BA20 1DF, together with cheques or postal orders made payable to J Martin Warr, not to the club. Martin can accept orders via e-mail warmj@hotmail.co.uk and he can accept payments by Paypal but entrants using this facility must ensure that he can tie up names with orders and cash. When Martin has orders for 50 sets he will be in a position to order the first batch of DVDs for distribution, if this minimum is not met all cash will be returned!

2008 was the final year that "Team Cooper" will run the VMCC Manx Rally after five very enjoyable years at the helm of this fabulous event. I believe the Rally is unique, in that it offers so much fun and variety in one place. That place is not just a great venue but the Isle of Man "The Road Racing Capital of the World" with over 100 years of motorcycling history. I will be back next year to ride in the event to continue my 30 year association with it. I'm delighted to be handing the Rally over to the Isle of Man Section of the VMCC with my role as Rally Secretary going to Tony East. I'm sure Tony will be publishing details of next year's event in due course. However you will not be getting rid of me or my team that easily, as we're taking over the running of the Banbury Run for next year!

If you've never attended a Manx Rally I urge you to do so, as in my view, it's the finest event of its type in the world.

Terry Cooper.
VMCC Manx Rally Secretary.