

35th ANNIVERSARY VMCC MANX RALLY REPORT

What a fantastic event the 35th Manx Rally turned out to be with over 400 entrants, including 88 from overseas, enjoying the Manx sunshine and a very different programme from previous years. The one off format of incorporating the five main historic racing circuits used on the Isle of Man in the last 100 years was an outstanding success. So much so that for the future Rallies we will keep "The Footman James timed lap of the first TT course" as an integral part of the event giving entrants a fourth competitive ride. The overall competition for the best performance on all of the five major events was fierce and added much interest. The eventually winner was Ralph Boreham, on his very smart 1933 Triumph XO 150, one of the smallest capacity machines in the field.

The two tier entry system again attracted more entrants and we will continue to promote this system allowing the cheaper entry fee if entrants do not wish to parade.

Starting at St Johns on Saturday 25th August, the Rally got underway with "The Footman James timed lap of the first TT course". This was very well supported for our first event and ending at the ARE Collection, Tony East's wonderfully restored vintage bikes based at his house in Kirkmichael.

Sunday 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 the route of the Gordon Bennett Racing Circuit, first used by cars in 1904 and included special tests for the riders. 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 wonderful 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 the Square was the busiest we'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.

Monday saw the first of our very popular Closed Roads Parades from Ballacraigne to Ramsey. What a wonderful sight over 300 entrants lined up in pairs at Ballacraigne with our riding marshals between every 30 bikes. The sun was shining, everyone was in high spirits and the "snake" stretched almost back to the crossroad at St Johns.

Everyone loves this particular parade and I will admit to a moment of envy watching everyone leave and not having the time to ride a bike on the Island this year. This section of the TT course, especially for the older bikes, is the most interesting and varied. Apart from a steep climb at Glen Helen the remainder is relatively flat with many famous and challenging landmarks , Laurel Bank, Douglas Corner Kirkmichael , Ballaugh Bridge , Quarry Bends , Sulby Bridge and of course Ginger Hall , all those wonderful names with so much history.

Tuesday started bright and sunny and by 10 a.m the TT Grandstand reverberated with the sound of over 400 vintage and classic motorcycles setting off in pairs at 30 second intervals to compete in the Main Event. 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, Adrian Earnshaw MHK the Minister for Tourism for the Isle of Man. Adrian arrived on his classic bike and after starting most of the field joined the entrants for a lap of the course. Conditions remained ideal and some very close times were recorded by the winners. On Tuesday afternoon there were many informal runs to the one make club gatherings taking place at pubs and hotels around the Island.

On Wednesday we incorporated another new event and this started from the seafront at Port Erin, again in bright sunshine. This run included a lap of the famous Billown Circuit used for the Southern 100 Road Races, which are held in July each year near to Castletown. The run ended on the seafront at Peel for tea and biscuits with everyone enjoying the lovely warm and sunny conditions.

Thursday morning found us all in Old Laxey in warm drizzle, which fortunately did not last long, for the start of the Ramsey Road Run. This is a timed reliability trial incorporated the last of our famous circuits the Clypse Course, used in the 1950's for the sidecar and lightweight races. This event finishing at Mooragh Park in Ramsey and many commented on how interesting and challenging this course must have been for the sidecar riders. On arrival in the park the 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 sprint happening just behind us on the Promenade.

On Thursday evening we assembled in Douglas for our Awards Presentation Evening. This year the Isle of Man Department of Tourism kindly provided the Royal Hall at the Villa Marina for our use. This wonderful venue has been recently updated and is the most elegant on the Island. It's also used by the Manx Motor Cycle Club for the presentation of the MGP racing awards at other times during the week. Adrian Earnshaw MHK again joined us and together with Harry Wiles, our very own Club President who had been riding in the event all week, presented the awards. An excellent Manx hotpot supper and a few beers to wash it down followed the presentations. Duke Marketing loaned an advanced copy of their new DVD "TT Centennial Classic Magic" which we premiered at the event. Everyone agreed the Villa Marina was a superb venue and we have already asked the Department of Tourism if they would support the Rally by providing it again next year.

Friday dawned dull and overcast with reports of mist on the mountain but we still set off to Ramsey for the final closed road parade over the mountain after the Senior MGP. Sadly the day's racing was delayed by the bad weather and although the lightweight race finally got away in the early afternoon the Senior MGP was cancelled due to worsening conditions along with our parade. I would like to thank everyone for their patience on Friday, as always the weather on the Isle of Man is the key factor and sometimes it goes against us.

Saturday by contrast dawned fine and bright and we started a record number, of 63 riders, for the Saturday Social Run from the TT Grandstand. Another interesting and challenging route finished in Onchan for lunch. This final event closed one of the most successful and enjoyable Manx Rally's over the history of the event.

On behalf of the Manx Rally Team Lin, Norma, Stuart, Wayne, Jonathan, Alex, Dave, Harold, Colin L, Bob, Mick, Colin T and Richard, I would like to thank all of the competitors for their help and support 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, Weedon Motors, 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, that makes the VMCC Manx Rally such a spectacular event.

If you are new to the Rally and want to ride in next years event call me now on 01275 341464 and leave your name and address for an entry form (posted in January 2007) or email me on secretary@vmccmanxrally.co.uk. The Rally also has a website www.vmccmanxrally.co.uk which currently gives details of this year's event. However it will be updated for next year in December and

you will be able to download a Rally Information Pack and Entry Form from February 2008.

Mention of 2008 reminds me that this will be the last year our team will run the Rally as our five year commitment comes to an end after next year's event. The Rally is great fun to organise and has a traditional format of which much is in place from year to year. We hope we have further developed the event and certainly the majority is now on computer, or clearly documented, which will help whoever takes over. We intend to be on hand to help and advise, as we will be returning as entrants in 2009. So if you fancy running one of the premier events in the VMCC calendar then please give me a call.

Finally our Club Chairman, Colin Bell, visited the offices of the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company this year. Colin secured the promise of some discounted ferry rates, for off peak travel, to next years Manx Rally and MGP races. The details are yet to be confirmed but will be retrospective if you have already made an advanced booking. We will announce the details in the Club Magazine and on the Rally website as soon as we have confirmation.

Looking forward to next years event already, see you there!

Terry Cooper.
VMCC Manx Rally Secretary.