DRAG RACING
SANTA POD

No 1 in Europe where drag racing comes first

30th NOV. 1st DEC.
THE RACE OF THE CHAMPIONS
*COMPETITORS BY INVITATION ONLY

HOW TO GET THERE

THIS GREAT NEW SPECTACULAR WILL FEATURE THE WINNERS & RUNNERS-UP OF ALL THE 1974 MEETINGS

No1 FUNNY CAR DRIVER ALAN HERRIDGE WITH HIS RECORD BREAKING STARDUST WILL BE THERE

KEITH HARVIE'S 7 SECOND ALTERED

DRAGSTRIP

by KEITH LEE

UNBLOWN DOUBLE TRIDENT FOR HYDE?

TO supercharge or not — that's the question many riders are considering as they strive to knock those precious tenths of a second off their times.

A couple of months ago Ted Dunmow became the first British rider to clock less than 10 seconds for the standing quarter on an unsupercharged bike.

Dunmow, a lawnmower mechanic from Braintree, Essex, uses an 85 per cent nitro load to urge his 750 ARE Triumph to some very quick times, having recorded a best of 9.93 seconds with terminal speeds of over 140 mph.

The non-splayed head is fitted with a pair of 15/32 inch GP carbs to meter the fuel, and the bike has a very neat appearance.

Future plans call for a bigger 900 cc motor utilising a long stroke crank and a set of 804 cc barrels.

Not unnaturally, the quiet-spoken bespectacled rider has set his sights on the American record of 9.41 seconds/150 mph set by veteran drag racer Sonny Routt on a big-bore single engined Triumph. The Maryland based rider is currently the quickest in the world for that class, and the times bear interesting comparison against the quickest equivalent British times of 9.35-9.45 seconds in supercharged form.

Supercharging is the one area where British riders differ vastly from their American counterparts. At present none of the top bikes in the USA use blowers, while the reverse is true in England where some of the big twin-engined bikes use two blowers.

However, in complete contrast, Trident rider Norman Hyde is one of the top UK riders who is considering a switch from supercharging — using two engines.

Hyde sees it this way. "At the Triumph factory we were getting 80 bhp from the racing threes running on straight petrol, so with a motor like my present one, which is fitted with a custom built long stroke crank and a set of steel rods, I must put out something in the region of 100 bhp."

That certainly is something to think about — a total of 200 bhp from the two motors before adding any nitro! All this from a machine which the Triumph development engineer calculates will weigh approximately only one hundred pounds more than his present blown single-engine setup.

The plans are laid for the new bike; Hyde is working on getting sponsorship and is aiming to better his best of 9.45 seconds set this year on Roadrunner III.

Top American riders Tom Christenson, Joe Smith and Boris Murray are of the opinion they would try supercharging if and when they ran out of power, from their respective unblown machines.

Only one American has really experimented with a blower — Russ Collins who rides the incredible triple-engined Honda featured in our centre spread this week.

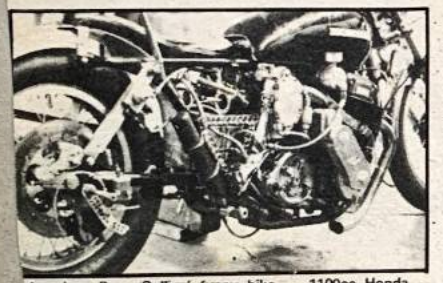
As well as this monster, which runs 170 mph in 8.3 seconds, Collins owns a "funny bike" — an 1100 cc Honda running in a standard frame, the motor using a small Repco blower and Hilborn injectors with the extra addition of nitrous oxide injection.

"The frame tries to screw itself into a knot coming off the line," commented Collins on the handling. But there is no shortage of power as was evidenced by early runs of 9.8 secs/158 mph.

The American clubs are unsure of blowers though, insisting that they be covered by either a ballistic blanket or an eighth-inch thick steel plate.

Blown or unblown, 1975 will see several British bikes in the "eights," with *Motor Cycle* sponsored John Hobbs leading the way, while in America we should see at least one rider covering the quarter-mile in less than seven seconds.

Norman Hyde on his blown Trident — Roadrunner III. Unblown twin-engined Trident next year?



American Russ Collins' funny bike — 1100cc Honda.

Dave reaps the bonus

I'M DELIGHTED to be able to tell you that the largest British bike manufacturer is taking notice of what happens in the world of drag racing.

Mike Jackson, sales director of Norton Triumph Europe, writes to tell me that they have not been ignoring the success of works tester Dave Rawlins, who so completely dominated the Street Class in the past season.

Dave and his spanner-man John Baker have both been paid bonuses by the factory for their successes. How good it is to see their abilities recognised in this way.

Someone else thinks Dave Rawlins is quite a rider. When Dave's withdrawal from regular drag racing competition was made known, the joint owners of the Bike-magazine sponsored "Pegasus Norton", Ian Messenger and Derek Chinn, got their heads together.

Ian and Derek have had a lot of help from Nortons with the preparation of the 1856cc double and to show their gratitude they are putting Dave Rawlins in the saddle of the biggie for a few meetings next year. The prospect of Dave Rawlins in action on a quick fuel bike is something to warm the hearts of bike fans through the coming cold winter.

THE OTHER English double Norton that has had a good season is Mick Butler's "Super Cyclops". The season started badly, but ended with Mick running his best ever time at the Santa Pod Winternationals in 9.23 seconds, in conditions that had many top runners wondering whether to run with a slick or a trials boot on the rear wheel!

Mick's Norton must be the most consistent and successful double-engined bike of 1974, with the exception of Tom Christenson's brief visit to these shores.

I was very pleased to learn that Champion Spark Plugs like the way Butler has been hitting the headlines and are helping out with sponsorship for 1975.

All Mick needs now is a couple of 850 Commando motors for Christmas and a few weeks in the garage to get it all stitched together for next year and the assault on those elusive "eights".

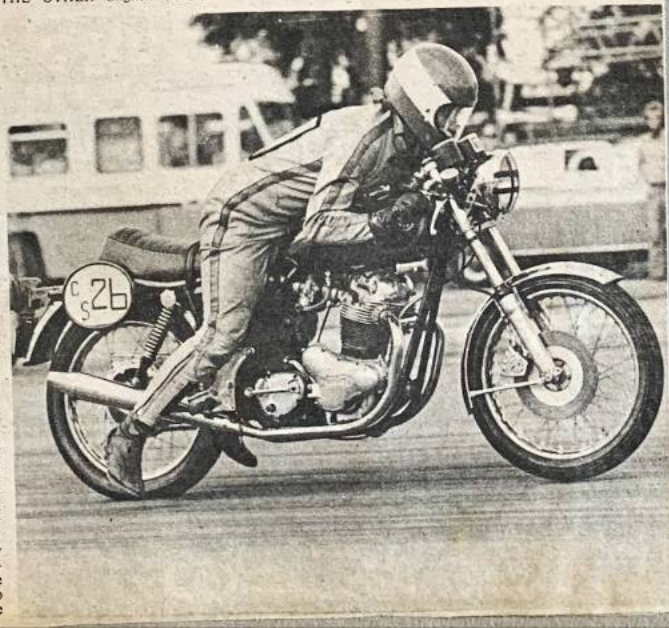
Ginger's racer

IN NEW ZEALAND, road racer Ginger Molloy is converting his 750cc H2R Kawasaki road racer to use it on the local drag strip at Meremere, near Auckland.

Ginger has already clocked 11.00 seconds with a terminal speed of 134.7 mph with the bike in road race trim. But there are big traction problems blasting the three off the line so a slick rear tyre and a frame designed for the job are in the workshop and waiting for their debut.

Local ace Mike Peterson holds the bike strip record at Meremere with a best of 10.4 seconds, but Ginger hopes to take this down into the nine-second bracket with the Kwacker. It's a long way from 11 seconds down to the nines, but there are plans to run on dope and even to add a blower if necessary in the search for enough power.

Ginger rides a works 350 Harley Davidson in road races down under. Maybe he should look to the same factory for an engine or two if he wants to go really fast . . . like a couple of V-twins . . . ?



Who Rides Hogslayer?

The answer is Tom Christenson who recently visited this country with his twin-engine machine and set the drag bike racing scene alight by posting the quickest times ever seen outside of the United States.

"CHRISTENSON CRACKS EIGHT!"—"T.C. slays our best"—"T.C. reigns over England!" These were some of the headlines that screamed out of the pages of British motorcycling newspapers when Tom Christenson, the American drag-bike rider, recently visited this country.

Riding his monster bike "Hogslayer", powered by a pair of 750cc Norton engines T.C., as he is known to his fans, competed in meetings at Silverstone and Snetterton and consistently smashed the nine-second barrier, the first time it has been done outside of America.

Only 5'6" tall, slightly built T.C. has to lay at full stretch across the top of his fearsome machine which accelerates to over 170mph in 8½ seconds. He holds the outright two-wheel record with a time for the ¼-mile of 8.45 seconds.

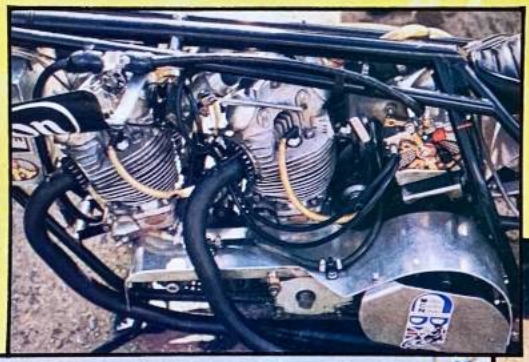
Just to prove how fast his bike really does accelerate, the American rider beat all of the top English riders at the meetings he attended with a full half second in hand. Yet incredibly the Norton motors remain unsupercharged, unlike the British machines, most of which use "blowers"

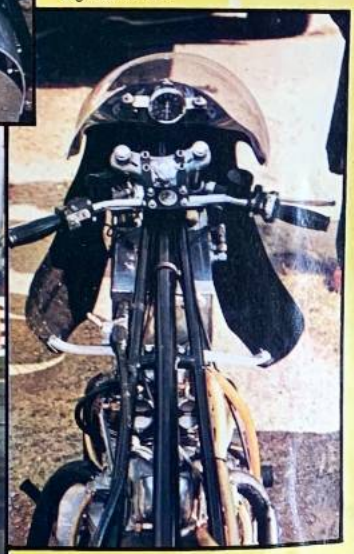
Before heading for home after his two week-stay, T.C. and his flying Norton set new European records of 8.8 seconds/160mph. Race fans who came from all parts of the country were left amazed at the ease with which the little American dominated the racing with a machine that seemed to rumble effortlessly through the ¼-mile—except for T.C. having to keep a strong grip on the handlebars!

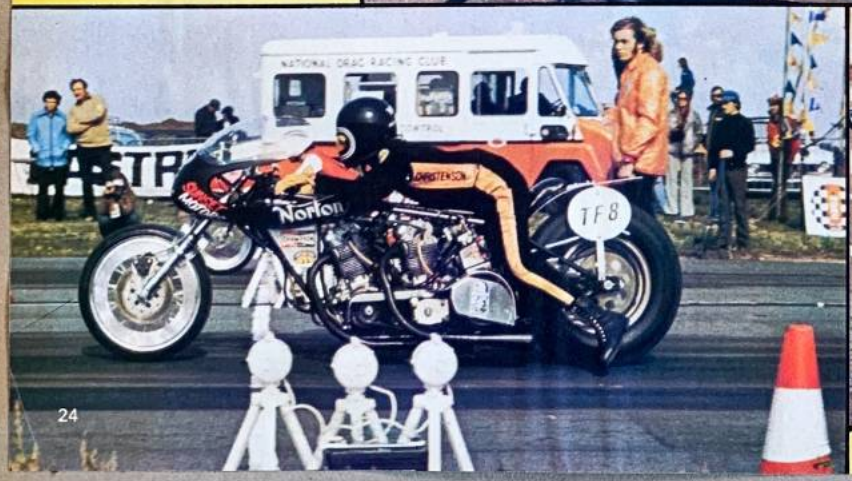
The fantastic Norton was built by T.C. and his partner John Gregory in their home town of Kenosha in the state of Wisconsin where T.C. owns a Norton dealership.

INTO THE "SEVENS"!

The secret of the Hogslayer's success is its tremendous traction. To achieve this T.C. uses a rear tyre which is a full 8½ inches wide, and uses only 10 p.s.i. air pressure. Yet incredibly this tyre is not enough, for he plans to incorporate a huge 10½ in. wide sticky slick on his next bike which, using even bigger 850cc engines, should enable him to become the first rider to cover the quarter mile in under eight seconds!







Above: The smart black fairing of the Hogslayer with Tom's initials neatly signwritten. Right: Fuel injectors from an Offenhauser racing car engine squirt 1½ gallons of "nitro" into the cylinders during each ¼-mile dash up the strip. Below: T.C. leaves the line. Far right: No home comforts for T.C. as he rests full length along the top tubes of the frame!

GOOD DRAG BUT...

Thought we'd write and let you know what a wonderful drag meet it was at Snetterton on 29 September, especially for those who were fortunate enough to see it.

We like many others tried all day from all angles but were unable to catch a glimpse of any activity in the bleach box or strip areas. It sounded good but oh, how we wished we could have seen it. The situation was aggravated by the use of only one overworked and overfull Portapotty!

If further meetings at Snetterton are to be of any satisfaction to drag fans we feel that a great deal more thought will have to be put into the organisation of spectators facilities.

Five Drag Fans,
Huntingdon.

Hmm, sounds like another strip which has run rather more than one event! We're watching with interest to see how far and fast Snetters improves—Ed.

So what has spurred on Tom Christenson to be the fastest racer in the world? We asked him. "Quite a few of the other guys back home are using two big Harley Davidson engines which have a capacity of 3,500cc between them—and that makes even bikes look small by comparison! So our aim was simply to prove that you don't have to build the biggest possible bike to win. And it's real satisfying to 'blow-off' a bigger bike."

That is the reason why the bike is called "Hogslayer"—a Hog being the nickname of a Harley Davidson bike—and T.C. has certainly slayed his full quota of Hogs!

A lot of preparation and many special parts are needed to make the Norton accelerate at such a fantastic rate. Two of the most important items are a home-built "slipper" clutch to help control the take-off from the start line, and a quick-action two-speed gearbox—both items having been built in John's own workshop.

These two items played a major role in T.C. winning all but one of the major race meetings in America in the last year.

LIQUID DYNAMITE

Also very important is the "liquid dynamite" fuel which Hogslayer consumes. A mixture of 95 per cent nitromethane is consumed at the rate of 1½ gallons per ¼-mile dash. The big fuel injectors on the engine were originally designed for an Offenhauser racing car engine. Fuel is fed to the injectors by a pump driven by the camshaft on the leading engine. Between them, the two engines have a power output of 300 brake horsepower!

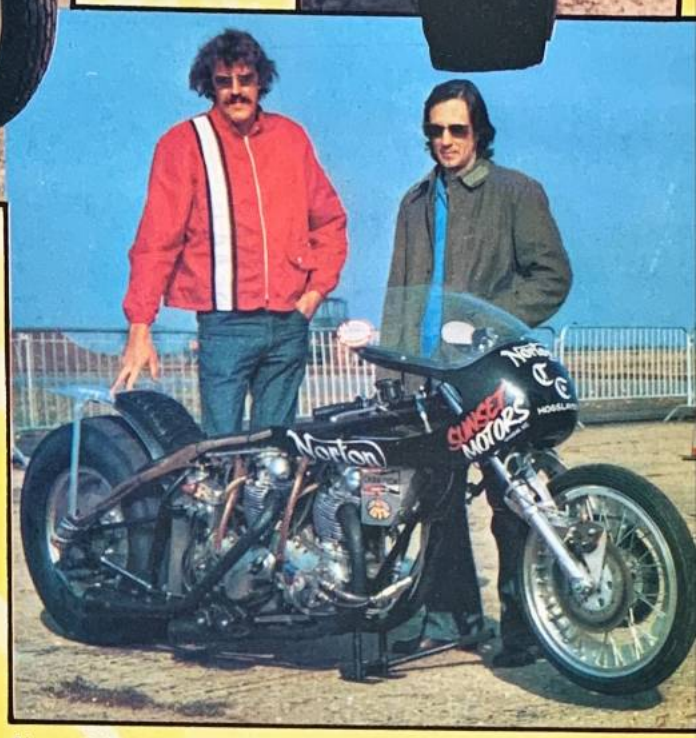
Now you might think, even after hearing the performance figures, that riding in a straight line is easy and pretty safe, but it does have its dangers, as T.C. recalls.

"Earlier in the year I was racing on one of the local strips when, after shifting into high gear and heading for the traps (finish line), the bike just dropped on its side and there was me skidding through the traps on my rear-end at over 150mph! It was so quick—one second the bike was upright and heading straight with the front wheel just hovering over the tarmac, and the next second there I was off it!" Luckily, T.C. walked away virtually unscathed, even if a trifle sore!

The bike was not so lucky, though, having been extensively damaged, but the new machine, complete with exciting innovations, has already recorded 8.39 seconds, so the spill certainly hasn't deterred the plucky American rider who gained a lot more fans on his trip to this country—and provided plenty of inspiration to the top British riders.

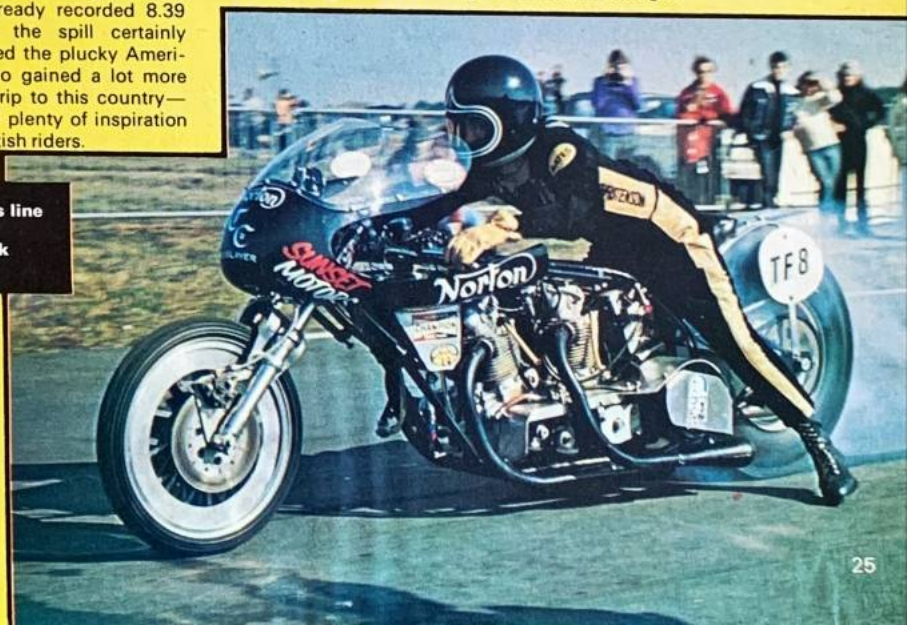
Photos: Keith Lee

Above: Twin discs at the front pull the bike down from its 170mph plus speed through the traps. The overall finish on the bike is extremely professional. Right: The 8½ inch wide rear slick looks huge, but wait until next year when T.C. plans to run a 10½ inch wide "hide" on a bike with twin 850cc engines!



Above: John Gregory and Tom Christenson with the Hogslayer at Silverstone. The bike runs consistently in the middle "eights" beating the best we have by a comfortable margin.

Partner John Gregory helps line T.C. up on the strip. Right: Warming up the slick with a burn-out.



DRAG

Not exactly the greatest

The last drag race of the season under the prestigious title of the WinterNationals can hardly be described as one of the year's best meetings as might befit such a name, but it did have its moments, even if few and far between.

The entry was limited to winners and runners-up over the year, which meant about 80 cars and bikes instead of the usual 150 plus. The idea of this was to ensure that a meeting could be run in the shortened daylight available, which on paper seemed like a good idea, but in fact it meant that hardly any class had more than three entries, and the meeting was interrupted by long gaps with nothing happening at all whilst either cars were being readied for the next round, or the meeting was being stretched out to fill the day. With many entries invited already in the throes of rebuilding for next year or just plain unable to make it through breakage, the field was further depleted by the usual percentage of retirements following Saturday's racing, the end result being a confusing mixture of cars in various handicapped eliminations. Only a handful of people seemed to know what was going on at all, and taken with the fact that the track was like an ice-rink throughout most of the weekend, the event could not really be considered in the usual terms as a drag race meeting.

On Saturday, the weather was bitterly cold and damp, and there cannot have been more than a couple of hundred spectators to watch some runs which took place late in the afternoon and into the evening. Dave Lee Travis fooled around (after having made a couple of runs in "Tender Trap" against Dave Wolfman's Lotus with a two second handicap, winning one and losing one) racing his monkey bike against a refugee from the commentary box who appeared dressed in a monkey suit to race against him on race director Syd McDonald's Honda 50. Money was seen to pass hands on the start line before the epic battle, but the noble DLT set light to the bribe pressed into his hands by Mike Upstart, and after much lane crossing and changing of direction, the ape won cuts down.

In more serious vein, Gary Goggin made one good run at 10.5s in his Pro-Stock Camaro considering the conditions, but shut off on the burn-out second run with smoke pouring from the car. What was first thought to be a clutch failure turned out to be engine trouble and although nothing had come out of the block, a cylinder filled with oil spelt the end of the '74 season for the lone campaigner following his year-long rearguard action against the "Heavy" brigade.

There followed several spectacular burn-outs by the bigger fuel burning cars in the dark, but no more runs took place.

On Sunday it was a little warmer, but the track was still damp right in the asphalt, and grip was once again almost non-existent. An attempt was made to improve on this by pouring some 20 gallons of methanol down on to the track and setting light to it, and it did warm the start area to the extent that some of the dampness was drawn out of the ground and grip improved—particularly in the pit side lane.

Easily the most impressive run of the day came from Owen Hayward in the Houndog funny car. He made the customary two burn-outs with the big Ed Pink powered car, and from half way up the strip it looked as if he was trying a third, but it was in fact his timed run, and the big car charged towards the finish with smoke boiling off the tyres. Instead of fishtailing wildly as might have been expected, the car went in a long slide from one lock to the other, the tail hung well out each time. But the engine kept pulling all the time as Owen kept hard on it in a brilliant display of driving. The et of 8.3 s was as good as could be expected, but the 202 mph top end was a really tremendous achievement.

Shortly before, Dennis Priddle had unleashed his STP Avenger, which had the Donovan motor from the Revell rail in it, to a storming 8.2 s at 186 mph, and had an anxious moment in the braking area when the parachute got tangled and flapped uselessly behind the bucking car as Priddle braked as hard as he dared with the wheels bouncing off the track every few yards. But he was all right and managed to bring the car to a stop before going off the end.

Dennis and Owen were slated to run each other for the funny car title, but in fact never did as darkness came too soon, whilst Alan Herridge in Stardust was in with Pete Crane and Mike Hutcherson in Top Fuel. He had originally entered in "Firefly," out for the first time in many meetings, but after having a "moment" that was alarming even for that infamous car, found that the bearings were beginning to look suspect so substituted the funny car. He had come off the line well, but at about the 100 yard mark the car got out of shape and headed for the barrier, and only his long practice at handling the monster got him out of the situation.

Pete Crane had lost one qualifying race against Mike Hutcherson when his blower belt broke on the burn-out, leaving Hutcherson with an 8.2 s in the Houndog rail, but avenged this defeat later by storming to a 207 mph run in 7.4 s, a run that knocked a hole in the sump as the car hit the breaking area. Hutcherson had felt his car breaking loose in the midrange and shut off rather than risk crossing lanes.

This left Allan Herridge with a bye run in the funny, which turned out to be the quickest run of the day at 7.26 s/198 mph as the big car somehow managed to find grip as it snaked and slithered up the strip.

The final run-off was to follow the appearance of Priddle and Hayward on the start line, who although they couldn't actually race in the dark, put on a tremendous show with repeated burn-outs, finally swapping lanes and coming back to the start to a standing ovation.

With the crowd, which on Sunday had reached impressive levels, yelling for more, Herridge's funny was towed down to the start and readied, and some time later the bark of Crane's fueller was heard, a new sump having been fitted for this final appearance.

More burn-outs, including a flame-out from Crane followed, and the year closed on the thunder of the two huge Ed Pink motors as the two cars did a final burn-out, Crane's taking him over the finish line as he cut the motor. There were no winners here, but it was what the crowd wanted, and proper night's racing must be a winner when better lighting is available.

MOTORING NEWS, TH

Santa P

THE LAST meeting of th
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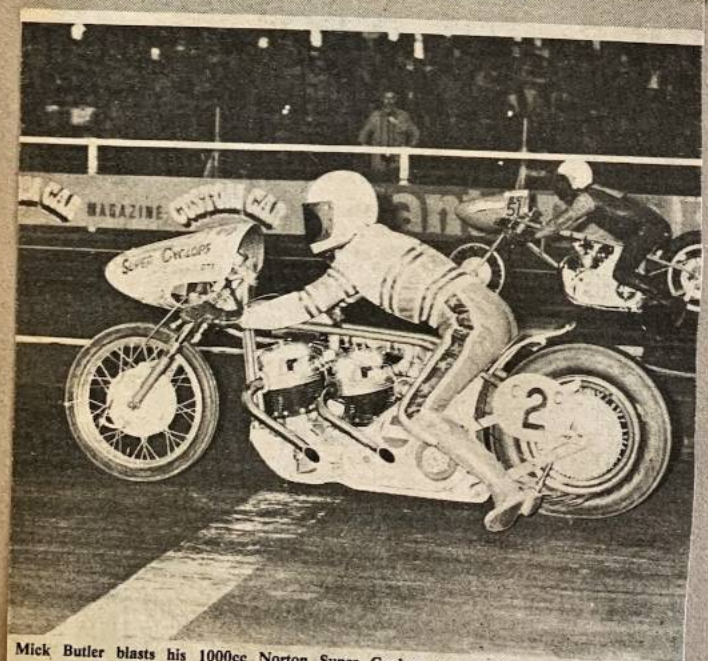
Report: JIM REYNOLDS



Mick Butler blasts his 1000cc Norton Super Cyclops to a 9.23 second run at Santa Pod's Winternational on Sunday.

Santa Pod final round

THE LAST meeting of the 1974 drag racing season, held at Santa Pod over the weekend of November 30/December 1, was the latest in the year that a meeting has been held in this country. As might have been expected, the gamble on the weather being good did not really pay off. Although it did not rain for very long, the air was damp and the track refused to dry out completely all weekend, although it did improve after a novel use of methanol on the Sunday. Some 20 gallons were poured over the start area and ignited; as the invisible flames swept over the ground, the odd dry patch appeared as the moisture was drawn out of the asphalt.

But back to the entry, which was limited to 80 cars and 'bikes, being open by invitation only to those who had either won or been runner up during the year. Some of those invited had already started work on their cars for next year, and so the end result was a rather sorry entry list that had its work cut out to fill the programme.

On top of this, Saturday saw the demise of one or two more cars, the most notable being the Pro Stock Camaro of Gary Goggin, who after a good 10.5s run came out to improve on this later on. But during the burn out, the machine was suddenly enveloped in smoke, and the car was towed away for inspection of what looked like fairly serious internal damage. John Ledster was another unlucky one, as his newly fitted Doug Nash Muncie gearbox let him down in his Top Street Mustang 289.

Most of the action on the Saturday was centred on the evening demonstration runs of the fuel burning cars, whose pyrotechnic displays were witnessed by only a handful of fans braving the bitter winds.

Sunday was little better, although an enthusiastic crowd turned up to watch and were rewarded with some great runs from the Funny Cars and the Top Fuel entry.

The first driver to lay down an all out run was Dennis Priddle, who had brought along just his STP Avenger, but had fitted it with the Donovan engine from his dragster. Considering the lack of grip at the start, he did well to hit 8.2s at 186 mph, the blue and red car getting turned on at the top end as the tyres found some bite. But when he dropped the parachute, it became tangled up, and he was left to rely solely on the overworked discs as the car bounced down the braking area. Fortunately he stopped in time, and was back to watch Owen Hayward qualify in the Houndog Funny.

Without a doubt this was the run of the weekend. The car boiled off the line in a vast plume of smoke, the tail hung out first one way and then the other in a continuous power slide. Despite being slower than Priddle at 8.3s, Hayward was very, very fast at 202 mph, the bigger Ed Pink motor's top end superiority being evident.

Allan Herridge was entered in two cars again, the Stardust funny and the Firefly in Top Fuel. But after one very hairy run in the dragster, it was found to have broken up a couple of bearings, so he withdrew Stardust from the planned match against Hayward and Priddle and, instead, elected to take on Crane and Hutcherson with it among the Top Fuellers. First he had to qualify to make this switch official, and his resulting run turned out to be the quickest of the weekend as the big 7.7-litre car shot to a 7.2s at 198 mph.

Mike Hutcherson qualified the Houndog rail with an 8.2s, leaving Pete Crane just after the start line with a blower belt broken on the burnt-out. Crane, however, had already qualified technically with a slow warm up run, so he was ready to face Hutcherson again later in the day for the race proper. This time it was Hutcherson who was out of luck, for his car started to break loose in the mid range, forcing him to shut off, whilst Crane went on to his highest terminal speed yet at 207 mph. Although his e.t. was "only" 7.4s, he continued his record of improving either his best e.t. or his highest ever speed at every meeting so far – and with traction being so bad at the last two meetings, times could hardly have been expected to improve. But this last run cost him a sump as the car bottomed in a shower of sparks in the shut off area, and a new sump had to be fitted for the final against Herridge's funny car.

Like the Priddle-Hayward match that preceded it, this was to be no more than a start-line display, for the light had long gone by the time the cars were ready. Nevertheless, the drivers received long and loud ovations as they performed – first, it was Priddle and Hayward, with three or four burn-outs each before turning round and coasting back into the floodlit starting area to take a bow. Then after a long wait, Crane's machine was repaired and went through the same routine alongside Herridge, throwing in a fire burn-out for good measure.

Other notable runs during the day came from Tony Anderson, who took his blown Daimler rail to a 9.3s/147 mph against Dave Page's Panic, which did a 10.3s/134 mph. These two ran, like so many others, in amalgamated classes because of the small entry. Rob Messent managed to keep the Jag-Minivan "Stripteaser" runnning very close to its usual time to win his group with an 11.57s, compared to the 11.90s of John Williamson's Sachs Motors Jag-Falcon.

J.D.

SANTA POD WINTERNATIONAL —

Butler blasts a 147 mph finale

WITH a personal best ever time of 9.23 seconds at 147.3 mph, Mick Butler dominated Sunday's Top Bike event at Santa Pod's Winternational — a thrilling finale to the year's racing.

Watched by a big crowd, Butler (1,000 Norton 'Super Cyclops') was due to race John Hobbs in the final, having put out Brian Chapman and John Clift.

Hobbs suffered mechanical bothers and could not get to the line, so 50cc world record holder Tony Weedon took on Butler. Butler gave him no chance despite the big Norton — performing two wheelies — storming down the strip to a time of 9.60/143.3 mph with Weedon screaming in pursuit with 9.82/147.8 mph.

Chris Russell met Terry Revill in the final of the depleted Senior Bike. Showing that his 900cc Hadleigh Honda was on form, Russell put in his best time of the meeting to take the honours with a superb 11.64/115.6 mph to Revill's 12.06/114.6 mph.

Saturday's Senior Bike final was run in the pitch dark. Winner Mick Warne carried a cycle rear light on his back to show loser Ted Dunmow how far ahead the Accles and Pollock Triumph was. Terry Revill won a mixed Street and Middle Competition bike class, despite sliding and slithering on his way up the damp track.

Top Bike saw John Clift find a little grip when John Hobbs could find none. The 1500cc double Triumph of Hobbs spun its rear wheel as Clift got on with the racing. Hobbs top end speed of over 155 mph was not enough to catch the flying Clift.

Picture: Keith Simmons

PROVISIONAL RESULTS

Saturday

Top Bike: J Clift (750 Triumph 'The Co-respondent') 10.46/130.6 beat J Hobbs (1300 Triumph 'Olympus Two') 10.78/155.5.

Senior Bike: M Warne (650 Accles and Pollock Triumph) 10.37/132.3 mph beat E J Dunmow (750 Triumph 'Paper Tiger') 18.26/No speed.

Middle Bike: T Revill (812 Dresda Honda) 12.61/110.5 beat B Sewell (500 Honda 'Fourunner') 14.61/91.3.

Sunday

Top Bike: M Butler (1000 Norton 'Super Cyclops') 9.60/143.3 mph beat T Weedon (500 America Triumph) 9.82/147.8 mph.

Middle Bike: C Russell (900 Hadleigh Honda) 11.64/115.6 mph beat T Revill (812 Dresda Honda) 12.06/114.6 mph.

THE TWELVE CYLINDER EXPRESS

by COOK NEILSON

Courtesy of 'Cycle Magazine', California, USA.

A HIGH-PITCHED whirring, a clatter of chains, the intermittent cough of combustion. Squirt cans feeding injector bellmouths.

Reluctantly, lazily, three cylinders come to life, then five or six, then eight, then all twelve, and Russ Collins' outrageous, silky, triple-engined, fuel-injected, two-speed, slipper-clutched, bored and stroked, high-compressioned, aircraft-tanked, adjustable-framed, copper-plated, polished, anodised, Gilmer-belted, chromed disc-braked, magneto-fired and nitro-powered great walloping Redwood log of a dragster, the result of more than 3,000 hours of labour, two years of planning and countless sweating, sleepless nights, faces the starting line with a mellow snarl and is ready to do business.

Russ jerks the butterflies open and rich white thickening smoke cascades off the wrinkling six-inch-wide M & H rear tyre. Crew members push the bike into position; one last wrenching leap up to the electric beam starting line to clean the crud off the tyre; a green light and the nine-foot long Collins colossus shudders and snake-hips off into the middle distance.

A voice over the loudspeaker: " Nine-point-oh-one, one hundred and sixty-four." Not half bad for a shakedown run. Not half bad at all.

This then was the debut of Russ Collins' triple Honda CB750 engined drag racing bike. At its latest outing at the National Hot Rod Association Super-nationals and World Finals meeting recently, the Honda was second top of the qualifying lists with an 8.31 second run up the quarter-mile, terminating at 169.81 mph. In the Eliminations though, the monster broke down.

A week after the debut run, at the opening meet of the Top Fuel drag racing season, the big triple packed the strip.

Superfluous

Those who had seen the bike smoke and howl on television spots wanted to see the monster first-hand. Spectators got more than rubber-seeded clouds and mechanical din. When it came time to race, the triple proved that all the anodizing and nickel plating wasn't superfluous glitter.

During qualifying the bike became the first Honda to crack the eights; it obliterated the old strip record of 8.71 set by T. C. Christenson's double Norton; it ended up on the pole with the day's fastest time — a cool 8.55 seconds coupled with 166.95 mph.

All the other drag guys who had sniggered at the Honda's 718 pounds during weigh-in suddenly realised that Top Fuel as practiced for five years would be bowled over by Collins' creation. But a quirk gave the big Harleys and British doubles a reprieve.

On the line with the electric starter groaning, one of the 12 cylinders back-bit as injected nitro-burners are wont to do occasionally, and a primary chain fell to the ground. Collins and his triple were out and T. C. Christenson became Top Fuel eliminator with an 8:61.

Nevertheless, the big hero was the Honda. At one point the crowd mobbed police to watch a burnout right up close. When the chain broke many fans went home. The Honda's visual impact, Collins' showmanship and those fast, fast numbers have taken over drag racing.

Russ Collins is 34. At 14 he started building motorcycles. At 16 he was working in a body shop, and at 21 he owned his own body shop. He worked for 19 different film studios and studied to be a stunt cameraman. He started his own business, in his own garage, with 100 dollars, a lathe and a toolbox on April Fools Day, 1971.

By February of 1973 his space had already doubled twice and he had bagged a slew of motor cycle drag strip records, all on Hondas.

He was mass-producing Honda CB-750 exhaust systems; Weber manifolds (he was the first to adapt the complex Weber carburettors to a Honda 750); ARD magnetos, racing camshafts, extra-strong cylinder studs, custom-finished connecting rods, light-weight crankshafts, double-row counter-shaft bearings, and his own valve springs and collars and keepers.

" We first thought about building a Triple in September 1972," Russ remembers. " We looked around at Top Fuel and saw what everybody was running, and realized that, for the most part, most concepts hadn't really changed for ten years. Either the bikes were single-engined Harleys or double-engined 'Triumphs.'

Then Danny Johnson's double Harley came on the scene, and T. C. Christenson's double-Norton got itself together and started to dominate the sport. "We wanted to build a shocker —and something that would be competitive for more than one season. There were a lot of doubles: there were a lot of double Hondas. We figured that with a triple we could use mild, pussycat engines, run a low percentage of nitro and be competitive without breaking a lot of parts."

Russ started on the triple in the spring of 1973, was delayed while his engineering firm moved to a larger location, then launched into the project for real in July.

"Well, the first thing we did was cut the transmissions off three motors," Russ says. "We knew we were going to need some kind of transmission, and an automotive-type slipper clutch, so we contacted Leonard Abbott for one of his Lenco two-speeds and then we picked up a Crower Glide clutch.

"After that we built a pair of aluminium rails with a lot of holes drilled in them and dummied all three engines into them to set the right spacing. From the rails we were able to get the measurements we needed for the engine plates. We wanted the three engines and the transmission system in a single pod, because we were a little worried about flex.

Collins felt from the beginning that fuel injection was the only way to accurately meter nitro into three engines. The fuel tank, to the right and rear of the back engine, was formerly an aircraft accumulator tank.

The brains

The barrel valve is the brains of the injector system. The twist-grip opens the injector butterflies and also controls the barrel valve, which meters the amount of fuel allowed to pass to the injector nozzles. At idle, most of the fuel pumped to the barrel valve returns to the tank; but at full throttle and 9000 rpm, fuel pressure is 30 pounds at the nozzles and 90 pounds at the pump, and the high-speed lean-out system has taken over.

"Wet-sumping was one of our biggest problems," Collins says. "We couldn't get the oil away from the crankshafts properly. So we worked up this common sump. The oil pump and the fuel pump are both driven by Gilmer belt turned by a pulley on the back of the clutch hub, with one idler. The oil pump is a dual function rotary vane aircraft pump.

Each of the three engines has a bore of 2.755 inch and a stroke of 2.730 inch for a displacement of 1069cc each, or 3207cc total. Litton/Radial chains (⅜ x ½) couple the engines and pull against commercial sprockets on steel crank-snouts.

With the middle engine's number one piston at top dead centre, the corresponding front engine piston is at 60 degrees after top dead center and the rear piston is at 60 degrees before top dead centre. With the engines so timed power impulses are smoothed; there is one power impulse every 60 degrees of common crank rotation and about eight impulses for every rear wheel rotation.

Gear ratios are 5.52 in low and 4.15 in high, giving a top speed of 180 mph at 9000 rpm.

The engines, overbored .275 inch and stroked .250 inch, have compression ratios of 11 to 1 and use Venolia pistons and standard Honda CB-450 rings. Piston clearance is set at .006 inch. The camshafts are Russ's own with .378 inch lift and 320 degrees duration.

Everything else RC sells, he uses himself: springs and retainers, hard-chromed stainless valves, his own cam chain, his own alloy billet connecting rods (with stock bearings), hard-chromed cranks, steel wrist-pins and Nylatron pin retainers, oxided steel valve guides, his own porting, his own chrome moly cylinder studs and main bearing bolts, special aluminium head gaskets and adjustable cam drive sprockets.

The clutch, made by Crower, was originally designed for a small-block Chevy. As clutch speed builds, five arms, weighted with selections of bolts,

Honda-8 sets petrol record

TERRY VANCE, riding a 2000cc double Honda-4 made the first ever eight second run on pump petrol at the recent Hot Bike Nationals at Irwindale Raceway, California.

Vance had previously held the USA record for a petrol burning bike with 9.25s at 155 mph. But at Irwindale, came the big breakthrough, with the un-supercharged eight cylinder Honda dipping into the eight second bracket on no less than three runs.

Built by Russ Collins, pilot of the fabulous 12 cylinder Honda that is becoming such a threat in American drag racing, Vance's Honda put in a best time of 8.93s, with a terminal speed of 158 mph.

nuts and washers, react to centrifugal force and pivot against the pressure plate.

At 4000 rpm centrifugal force is sufficient to allow the pivoting arms to overcome the separating force of the springs, and the clutch plates come in contact, delivering rotational force to the final drive chain.

The faster the clutch spins the tighter the plates are pressed together, until at 8000 rpm slippage disappears and the clutch locks up solid.

Much has happened since the Race Car Dynamics electric starter first twisted the engines to life. The Gilmer belts that originally coupled the engines have been discarded for lack of strength; the dual front discs were shucked in favour of a single disc and caliper; an 18-inch front wheel gave way to a 19 for a little more weight transfer; and the two-piece Kosman rear wheel was replaced by a one-piece Ansen Automotive wheel, which should be able to accommodate an eight inch rear tyre as soon as Russ can pry one loose from M&H.

Decent traction remains the 718-pound triple's biggest problem. With the six-incher the bike lays down a black track extending from the starting lights to the finish line, exactly 1,320 feet away. As well as it handles, the larger tyre should present no problems.

"Of all the things I'm proud of with this bike, I guess the way it handles pleases me the most," says Russ, "It's steady as a rock on the top end, and even when its spinning the tyre right off the line it swings back and forth so smoothly and so slowly that it's a cinch to control."

There's so much more about the triple that should delight Russ Collins. The way it starts. The way the clutch works. The power it makes. Its reliability. Its uniqueness. Most of all, that he, and Byron Hines, and Slim, and the rest of the RC crew were able to execute an idea that must have been at the farthest reaches of non-factory capability.

The bike is a racer, a business card, a design and engineering exercise and a monument to perseverance, ingenuity and imagination. It's also got a neat name: The Atchison, Topeka and Sante Fe!

Powerhouse of the Honda drag bike. It took two years to design, build and sweat out all the problems.

It's monster Weslake power for John Hobbs in 1975

DRAG racer John Hobbs, who is being backed by "Motor Cycle" next year, is to get two 850 cc Weslake eight-valve motors for his all-new 1975 machine. And he'll be supported by the Rye factory's research and development team.

John, a special projects engineer from Luton, Beds, is hoping to get at least 400 bhp from the blown 1,700 cc monster, and a standing quarter in the mid-eights will be the immediate objective. It is hoped terminal speeds will approach 170 mph.

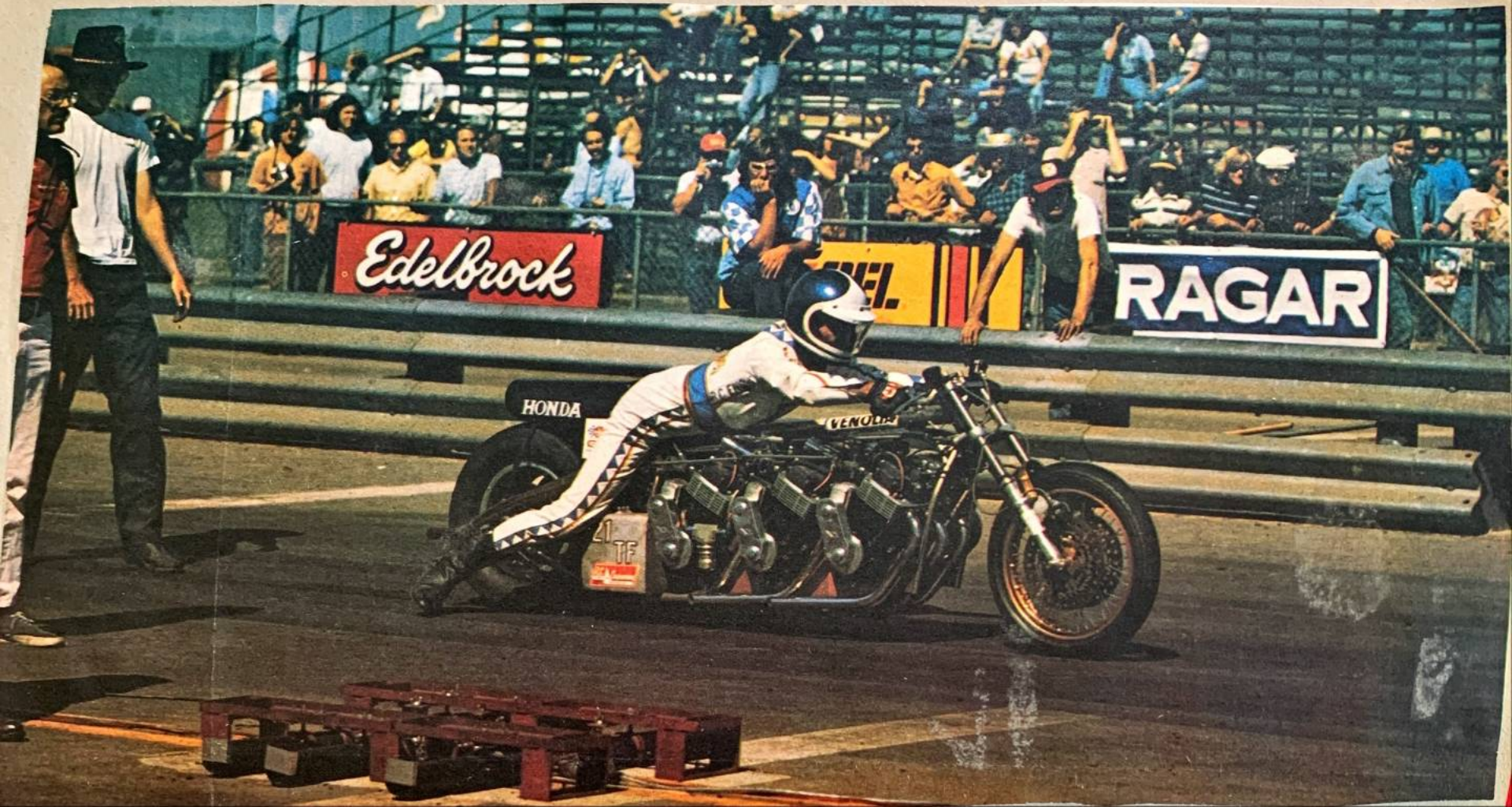
Hobbs, who visited the Weslake factory with "Motor Cycle's" editor, Peter Kelly, last Thursday, was deeply impressed by the enthusiasm and the practical approach of the factory to his problems. Among those he met was Harry Weslake himself.

"We all realised that we were on the verge of putting Britain right on top in drag racing," said John. "For too long the Americans have been just ahead of us. Weslakes were the obvious step up from Triumphs, which are getting long in the tooth now.

"But the twin-engined Harleys need to be challenged and beaten, and I believe an all-British team with the knowledge and enthusiasm I have seen can do just that."

So completely new will the 1965 bike be that John cannot bring himself to call it yet another Olympus.

So readers of "Motor Cycle" are being given the chance to offer suggestions. John will look at them all and choose his favourite, and there will be prizes for the top three. Any ideas?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