

Pete Crane was the star of the show at Santa Pod - despite spinning.

Crane lifts fever

Highlight of the Easter meeting at Santa Pod was undoubtedly Peter Crane's electrifying run of 6.37s, faster by more than a tenth of a second than the existing record held by Dennis Priddle. Like many meetings over the weekend, the weather spoilt much of the racing, with only a few runs taking place on Sunday. Among those that did was a good 7.3s from Allan Herridge in 'Firefly', and a 7.2s from Priddle, but this was at the expense of a short block as two rods let fly some way before the finish. Roz Prior broke a rocker in the Miss Revell car. Liz Burn suffered a brake failure with the ex-Skilton car in the pits and Pete Crane failed to get a time on his run. Last of the six entrants was Mike Hutcherson, who recorded an 8.8s between snow flurries.

With four cars eventually making the elimination, Allan Herridge had an easy 7.55s run when Mike Hutcherson's reverse gear lever broke off, leaving him stranded on the line.

Then Crane faced Roz Prior, who lost fire on the line as Crane rocketed

to the quickest time ever at 204mph, his chute failing to open for the second time that day as he crossed the finish. A later run-off between Prior and Hutcherson ended in a good win for the Fast Lady as she got a hole-shot victory 8.37s to 8.21s.

Equally outstanding in Funny Car was the performance of Roland Pratt, who almost pulled off a big upset against Herridge in 'Stardust'. Running a high percentage for the first time, the car sounded very serious as it staged after a short burn-out, but few gave it much chance against the 480 cubic inch motor barking and spitting alongside. But Pratt made a beautiful start and made every one of his 392 cubes work for him as he sped to a 7.7s at 198mph. But Herridge had responded to the threat and got past in time to record a 7.2s at 192mph, just quicker than Owen Haywards earlier 7.33s bye run.

Some exciting finals were promised, but true to form, the rain returned and stopped any further meaningful runs.

Among the rumours and gossip circulating are Liam Churchill's redoubled efforts to take on the Funny Car class with a really serious effort this year. After first running his Capri bodied car in '73 with some success, he sold the car to Peter Bennet, and bought it back late last year when the bug bit again. Now he has a 3/8 stroker 392 for the car and a new body, both lighter and lower, and hopes to be chasing hard on the heels of Priddle, Herridge, Haywood and others.



ROZ PRIOR

Roz Prior, petite 28-year-old mother of three, is the darling of the drag racing world. Totally unawed by the 1000-plus horsepower unleashed from the fire-breathing supercharged engine of her "Miss Revell" dragster she has won British drag meets outright, crossing the finishing line at speeds of over 200 mph. She sees no reason why other girls shouldn't succeed in this electrifying sport.

Drag for Europe

The drag racing promotional group of Clive Lanson Enterprises is to go name of European Dragways, promoting drag racing in the UK as well as in Europe. The new body's major object is to extend the sphere and influence of drag racing at Club, National and International level, developing new and improved facilities for competitors and spectators alike. Promotions by European Dragways this year will include events in both Sweden and Germany. They also intend to act as watchdogs on the sport, keeping an eye on legislation in case this should have an adverse effect on racing in both the UK and Europe.

It is also proposed to form a European Dragways Supporters Club to look after the interests of fans throughout Europe and the UK. Equally, the club will help to improve the standards and image of the sport in the public's eyes. The Supporters Club is not seeking RAC recognition, preferring to leave organisation to the organising clubs.

The Snetterton drag meeting was another to be virtually abandoned, as only a third of the entry turned up to do some practice runs after the early morning snow had cleared. Nevertheless, over 3,000 spectators turned up to watch in atrocious weather, while the Pod saw over 5,000 way down on usual Easter figures, but encouraging all the same.

PETE REVEALS

SANTA POD'S tarmac will be the Mecca for drag racing fans on Sunday and Monday.

Dennis Norman's double-Commando is expected to do battle with Mick Butler's 1000cc job and Pete Miller hopes to give his latest creation its baptism by fire on his local track.

Speedy but so simple!

MECHANICAL simplicity ruled the Top Bike at Santa Pod on Sunday and Monday. Fastest qualifiers were Brian Chapman's single cylinder 500cc Vincent, equal with Tony Weedon's 500cc Triumph on 9.84s, with Keith Parnell's 750cc Triumph close behind on 9.97s.

During Monday's racing Parnell put down Chapman before a 12,000 crowd with a superb 9.81/131.6 mph run to face Brian Smith in the Top Bike final. Smith having clocked 9.97/130.7 mph to overtake fast starting Pete Smith (750 Hadleigh Triumph) in the semi-final.

The Senior Bike final should have brought together Ivan Wileman (830 Norton) and Clive Bailey (660 Triumph) and things looked hopeful for Wileman's very neat Norton, but the cold wind brought a long shower of rain that left the strip too slippery to be used safely. No racing bike finals were run, prize money being divided equally between the finalists.

Only in the Street Class was there a definite result. Four big Honda-4's had contested the semi-finals with Chris Russell's 1000cc Hadleigh-Honda facing newcomer Alec Heal's 900cc Piper Honda in final.

Showing a really neat style Heal flattened himself along the tank and flew to the finish leaving Russell's misfiring Honda to limp home in his

Story: Jim Reynolds
Picture: Keith Simmons

wake.

Unperturbed by his success at taking on the best in the business and beating them at their own game, Heal said later of his drag racing debut: "It's quite enjoyable really," as he loaded up for the long journey home to Brighton.

PROVISIONAL RESULTS

Top bike: Shared by K Parnell (750 Triumph "Rouge et Noir") and B Smith (750 Triumph "Cheltenham Fire").

Senior bike: Shared by I Wileman (830 Norton "Polaris") and C Bailey (660 Triumph "Revelation 75").

Middle bike: Shared by B Belson (750 Triumph "Black Mamba") and B Forsythe (500 Triumph "Alter Ego").

Street bike: A Heal (900 Piper-Honda) 12.37/115.24 mph, beat C Russell (1000 Hadleigh-Honda) 12.14/104.06 mph.



Keith Parnell spreads his weight across the frame of his supercharged Triumph single "Rouge et Noir". He qualified for Top Bike final after beating Brian Chapman at 9.81s.

DRAG BIKE CHAMPIONSHIP AT BLACKBUSHE BY JIM REYNOLDS

'Mighty Mouse' takes Chapman to victory

THE FIRST event in the Motor Cycle News Top Bike Drag Racing Championship series proved to be a clash between an established star and a man with ambitions to join him.

Brian Chapman, a carpenter from Waltham Abbey in Essex, was on brilliant form, heading the list of qualifiers with a time of 9.78 secs at 142 mph and getting into the nines on every run with his incredible 500 single cylinder Vincent.

But the slowest qualifier for the Top Eight bracket, young Derek Penfold, kept his cool throughout the day. As bigger names and bigger bikes failed Derek's 650 Triumph ran steadily through to the big final.

Chapman's first round was to have been against Mick Hand's incredible 250 Honda but rider of the little Japanese flier refused to join in the game and sulked on the starting rollers leaving Chapman with a solo run.

Keith Parnell also had a one man show when Norman Hyde's Trident blew a gasket on the starting rollers.

Despite the lack of competition Parnell showed that he meant business with a time of 9.48 secs at 128 mph.

Mick Butler found himself with no opposition when Dave Johnson's double-Triumph was not ready in time, so it was left to Penfold and Tony Weedon to put on the only race in the whole first round.

Weedon, suffering transmission bothers in practice, was no match for the consistent Penfold who roared to a place in the semi-final with 10.80 secs and a terminal speed of 92 mph.

In the first semi, Chapman gave Parnell's slightly sick Triumph no

Pictures by Mike Kilby

chance. Clocking an amazing 9.55 secs/146 mph he led all the way, with Parnell trailing in 9.99 secs/147 mph.

Then Penfold met Butler. No one thought Penfold had a chance, but as the starting lights flicked to green, Butler's super-charger drive belt snapped and the bike moved only a few feet.

Penfold rode to victory in an easy time of 12.55/84 mph, wondering where the opposition had got to.

Could the combination of smooth riding and good luck hold together for Penfold in the Top Bike final?

With a super quick start he left Chapman behind, but a muffed gear change saw Chapman's 500cc Vincent past and away recording 9.87/144 mph to Penfold's limping 13.52/61 mph.

Brian Chapman was delighted. "I'm very happy. All nine second runs and my best terminal speed ever with 146 mph in the semi-final."

Still slightly dazed at earning 15 points towards the MCN Top Bike championship Penfold explained

his mechanical mishap. "I broke a blower belt and bent an engine bolt in the final — I also missed a gear and bent two valves, so I just rolled it off."

In Senior Bike Mike Butters found himself in the final when a troubled Pete Miller could not run. Butters took his opportunity and narrowly beat Ken Gee's D and B Motors Triumph for the win, 11.67/118 mph to 11.87/118 mph.

Street Bike produced some of the closest racing with Terry Revill's Dixon Racing Honda getting back on winning form beating new man Alex Heal in a very close final.

PROVISIONAL RESULTS

Top Bike (MCN Championship): B Chapman (500 Vincent "Mighty Mouse") 9.87/144 mph beat D Penfold (650 Triumph "Patience") 13.52/61 mph.

Senior Bikes: M Butters (750 Morgo Triumph "Artemis") 11.67/118 mph beat K Gee (750 Morgo Triumph "Flying Cornishman") 11.87/118 mph.

Middle Bikes: B Eastman (500 Triumph "Nitro Function") 12.24/106 mph beat A Thompson (1177 NSU "Lone Wolf") 13.08/112 mph.

Junior Bikes: M O'Hara (500 Triumph "Delta Lady") 14.01/99 mph beat R Read (500 Triumph "The Mutant") 15.32/85 mph.

Street Bikes: T Revill (812 Dixon Racing Honda) 12.07/118 mph beat A Heal (900 Honda) 12.28/114 mph.

Motor Cycle News Top Bike championship leaders: B Chapman 20 points, K Parnell 20, D Penfold 15, M Butler 10, A Weedon 5.

Other awards: Fastest time of day — K Parnell 9.48 secs (£5 cash bonus). Fastest terminal speed — M Butler 153 mph (£5 cash bonus). Best appearing bike — M O'Hara (200 Gitanes cigarettes).

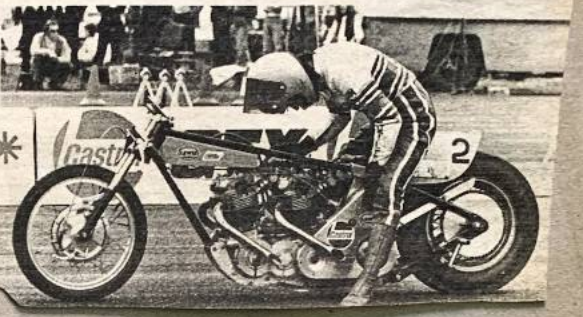
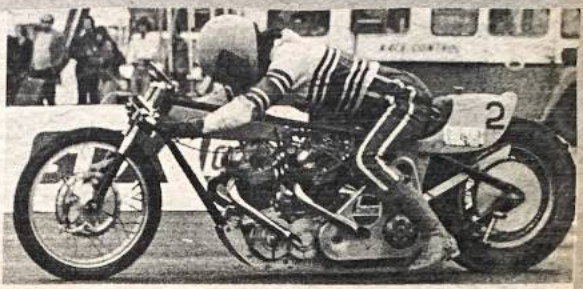
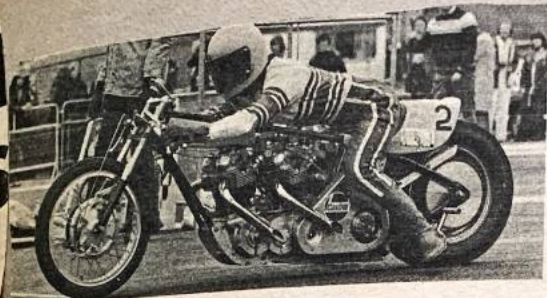


John Clift aims for the horizon on 'The Co-respondent.'



Top bike final and Brian Chapman (nearest camera) is slowest away — but Derek Reynold's bat gear change gave the Vincent rider victory.

1975



Bad belt blow

WHEN Mick Butler saw his MCN championship points fly out of the window. He lined up against 'no hopper' Derek Penfold confident of qualifying for the Top Bike final, but his super-charger drive belt snapped and Mick was left to stand and stare at the damage while Penfold roared to an unopposed victory and a place in the final.

Priddle's at 225mph

At last the weather was kind at the weekend, and although the early sunshine faded away, there was some good action in the afternoon at the Blackbushe drag meeting.

Fastest qualifier in Top Fuel was Roz Prior, who took the Revell dragster to a good 7.62s 174 mph run, smoking the tyres nearly all the way. Dennis Priddle was second with a 7.9s blast, his rail using the Donovan as expected. New man Trevor Young failed to qualify the Revolution Three car after suffering a chronic misfire, while Liz Burn, making only her second full run in the ex-GTX car ran a nine.

This she repeated later against Dennis Priddle, who notched up a strong 7.14s at 198 mph to win. Then Liz was out again to face Roz Prior in the second round of a round-robin between the three cars. In what was almost certainly the first ever all female Top Fuel race, including the States, Roz showed her greater experience by leaving Liz on the line with another smokey 7.8s at 200 mph, but Liz improved substantially when she got going clocking an 8.7s at 174 mph. But this run had

shattered a wheel bearing in Roz's car, so for the final and last run of the day, Dennis Priddle was by himself, and he really turned it on with a 7.08s run, the car boiling the tyres for two hundred yards but still clocking a phenomenal 225 mph, the fastest ever in Europe.

With Priddle's funny still not quite ready, the funny car class was further depleted when the Hillbillies car seized its blower on the warming up. But there were still three cars left, Mark Stratton's rear engine Vauxhall with new driver Peter Barnet, Liam Churchill in his Capri and C.S. himself in the new Vauxhall bodied American car.

Liam had trouble with his engine that prevented him getting a good run, whilst both Barnet and Skilton were taking it easy as a new driver and new car respectively, though Skilton's Donovan powered device started to look very serious during the burn-out for its second run — which was only a mid-nine half pass.

In all it was a bit early in the year for the best racing to take place, but the meeting was arguably the best run at Blackbushe for some time.

Peter Barnet debated Mark Stratton's new rear-engined Vauxhall with care.



Priddle runs 225 mph

DENNIS PRIDDLE provided the highlight to the weekend's drag meet at Blackbushe by setting a new terminal speed record of 225 mph on the last run of the day. Having replaced his iron motor with the Donovan, he started the day as favourite, but in fact qualified behind Roz Prior with a 7.9s run to her impressive 7.6s at 174 mph. The other lady driver, Liz Burn, was still getting used to her new mount, also Donovan powered, whilst Trevor Young, also new to the sport, had a bad misfire in Revolution Three and didn't run.

Dennis took his first run against Liz with a 7.14s at 198 mph to a 9.57s at 104 mph, but any doubts about her abilities were dispelled in the next race against Roz Prior. Roz was away first to a very strong 200 mph run in 7.8s, but as Liz was obviously settling into the car on her third full run, she responded with an 8.8s at 174 mph, the car running straight and true. Roz Prior found that this run had broken a wheel bearing, so Dennis's final 225 mph run was unchallenged.

In the funny car class, four cars turned up, but none actually made a full pass for various reasons. The Hillbillies Scimitar lost a blower in practice and didn't have a spare available, whilst Liam Churchill was not too happy about the engine in his Capri-bodied car. Taking over the seat vacated by Ed Shaver, Peter Barnet was having his first outing in the Castrol Vauxhall, and understandably was getting used to the car that had a reputation of being a handful at best. Lastly, Clive Skilton was driving his new car, which uses an American chassis, his own Donovan and a new Vauxhall body from Pat Cuss of Fibre Glass Applications. He made two shake-down runs in the nines, and was to have had one full-power run at the end of the meeting, but lack of time ultimately prevented this.

In the 208-sponsored Pro Comp class, Gerry Andrews started as favourite in the Stone Racing "HemifHunter", with Mike Hall, running one of the Hemis that he was hunting looking very strong with his new "Shutdown" altered. Also in the class was the ex-Prior and Burn Chevy rail, now running a 427 instead of a 454 motor, but John Sutton's car lost oil pressure and retired, whilst not long after, after having run his usual consistent low 8s times, Gerry Andrews lost the 440 Chev in his

car when a piston broke, totalling the venerable alloy motor after it had given untold numbers of reliable runs in three different cars — the old Opus altered, the original Tee-Rat and the dragster. So Hall went on to take the first round of the promising new class with two 160 mph runs in the nines.

J.T.D.

● With Priddle's electrifying run at Blackbushe, and Pete Crane's equally impressive Easter performance, the two must be odds on to meet in the final at this weekend's Santa Pod meeting — which should be one race not to miss. Crane's car would appear to be quicker on paper in that rear engine cars generally are, but Priddle has a lot of potential in his Donovan still to come, and of course ranks as the most experienced driver of all.

● One of the most regular competitors of all who will not be out this weekend at Santa Pod is Gerry Andrews in the Stones Hemi-Hunter Top Dragster. After countless runs on their rare alloy blocked 440 Chev. a piston broke at the weekend and one of the most consistent engines of all was reduced to scrap. This left Mike Hall with an unchallenged win in the 208 Pro Com Championship class in "Shutdown," which was running strongly again to several 160 mph plus passes.

AUTOSPORT, APRIL 17, 1975

● Responding to the challenge laid down by Allan Sharoe in the V12 Jag, Roger Bishop took Strip-teaser into the tens at Blackbushe for the first time with a 10.98s at 123 mph, but no sooner had he asserted his dominant position in the large Middle Comp class than Sue Coles, who last year ran a Jag in her "T" bodied car, came out for her first run with its new Chevy motor to record an 11.1s at 129 mph, and although Bishop went on to win yet again with an 11.3s, it would seem as if his strongest challenge of all is in the making.

FAST FEAST

SUN AND santa Pod — if that is the combination at the popular Bedford drag strip on Sunday the meeting will be a feast of speed.

Despite poor weather affecting time, several riders have already shown signs of strong form in 1975. Top riders like Keith Parnell (750 Triumph), Tony Weedon (500 Triumph) and Brian Chapman (500 Vincent) will be anxious to show Mick Butler's mighty double engine Norton the way to the winning line.

Qualifying starts at 10 am and eliminations at 1 pm.

Pennine drag races off

SUNDAY'S drag race meeting at Pennine Raceway, Croxland Moor, near Huddersfield, Yorkshire, has been cancelled.

The Kirk Lees metropolitan council has refused planning permission for racing at the strip. But the promoters, Pennine Drag Racing Club, are to appeal and are having talks with a planning consultant to make clear their position.

Director of Pennine Drag Racing Club, Steve Murty, said: "We intend to carry on all the other meetings."

● Latest news to seep out from the Santa Pod camp is that two new Top Fuel cars are under construction — presumably with a Whitsun debut in mind. Power will doubtless come from Ed Pink motors, though who will drive them is not clear at present, but it will raise the total number of Top Fuel cars to nine. Could we see an eight car field at Whitsun at long last?

MICK'S EIGHT

WHILE Terry Revill is planning his attack on the ten second street bike barrier Motor Cycle Mechanics' drag race team leader Mick Butler is burning the midnight oil building a bike to attack the magic eight second barrier for competition bikes.

Unlike John Hobbs, who is building a complex new machine with Weslake engines and lots of expensive imported American goodies, Mick has been forced by financial cramp to stick to British components.

His new frame is four inches longer to try and cut down on those heart-stopping wheelies and the transmission will be through a two-speed gearbox. Instead of spending about three hundred pounds on an American Crowglide slider clutch Mick is building his own.

Considering all the publicity Mick has won for Norton it would be nice to see them help him out either with spares or a couple of bigger engines.



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- ★ Children under 12 admitted free!
- ★ First 75 Snetterton meeting!
- ★ Big bikes — an 8 second run!



Dennis Priddle, Roz Prior, The Stones, Roland Pratt, Liam Churchill, The Lizard, and Revolution Three all entered Snetterton on the A11 Thetford/Norwich road Organized by THE NATIONAL DRAG RACING CLUB GATES OPEN 9 am

The promoters and organisers reserve the right to cancel the whole or part of the meeting without notice.



long monster weighs 718 pounds and cost 21,000 dollars — about £8,400. Rear tyre is a six-inch wide M & H slick though Collins wants an eight-inch one as soon as possible. At present the bike lays a thick black skid from start to finish — all 1,320 feet. The bike has also got a neat name: The Atchison, Topeka Santa Fe.

