

JOHN DICKSON'S



DRAG RACING

As the drag season goes through its midpoint, a sudden spate of car buying and selling has brightened up the scene and filled up the top classes with some sorely needed cars.

Biggest news of all is that Roz Prior will now be driving in Top Fuel, using Dennis Priddle's famous 'Mister Six' chassis and engine, which this year has powered the STP funny car. As you read this, she should have run at the NDRC Wroughton meeting in the car, following an initial venture in Clive Skilton's second car at Blackbushe to get the feel of a fueller. No sooner had Roz and husband Dave formulated their plans and put their successful Top Dragster class car up for sale than it was bought by Lawrence Burn, owner of 'Ollie's Folly', the former 'Oblivion' altered now running a 350 Chev and Clutchflite transmission. He plans to run the two cars as they stand for the time being and swap the big 454 motor into the altered for next year, which should make it a formidable weapon in Top Competition. Lawrence's wife, Liz, will take over the driving of the rail, which retains some backing from Accles and Pollock, who will still be the major sponsors of 'Fast Lady', as Roz's car will be known. Castrol, Queensway Travel, Formula One and, of all things, Family Circle magazine, are among those who will also be

helping out with her expenses, whilst Gallington Motors in Sutton will continue preparation for the team. Priddle is to have a new Donovan for his Revell rail, following his Blackbushe failure, while the 'funny' will have another 392 iron block hemi.

Also new in the Fuel ranks at about this time will be a car for Pete Crane, imported from the States. This is an up to date rear-engined fueller, and the engine will be supplied and maintained by Santa Pod Raceway, which presumably means it will not run at NDRC meetings. Nobby Hill's new rear-engined car, also supplied with an engine by Santa Pod, will doubtless also be limited to the one track, which, with a shortage of Top Fuel cars, is an insane situation when there could be eight car fields running.

The 'Hounddog' funny car blew an engine shortly after the big Whitsun meeting was over at Santa Pod and, with numerous other failures to the 'Pod'-owned cars that weekend, it was an expensive meeting. The 'Stardust' funny car was fitted with an impressive Ed Pink engine that enabled Allan Herridge to run the country's first six for the class, with a blistering 6.8s run. Dennis Priddle replied with an almost as impressive 7.1 not twenty minutes later and, in one of the most exciting races of all time, went on to beat Herridge in the final with a split second 'hole-shot'; both drivers recorded identical 7.71 times, after doing 'wheelies' off the line and using every inch of the track without lifting for a moment. With exceptionally good traction all weekend, 'wheelies' came thick and fast in the Dragster classes: Herridge performed a fine one in the unmanageable 'Firefly' and Gerry Andrews a particularly well-controlled one in losing to Roz Prior in the Top Dragster final, with 8.28/171 to 8.4/160.

Moving back to the car shuffling, after running a 10.8s against Gary Goggin, his first complete run in competition, Crane sold his car to Mustapha Errol, who already owned the all-ally 427 that was in 'Maxine's Toy' last year. The

other 'missing' Pro Stock, Roy Osborne's ex-Bennett 'Nova', has also gone to a new owner as Roy has been quite seriously ill in hospital for some time and would not be able to run the car at all this year. Bill Marshall, recently returned from Australia after having raced a TVR a couple of seasons back at the drags, took an immediate fancy to some sort of competition and, after a brief spell with Ken Obbe's Lotus 7, took the plunge by buying the car, complete with all its many spares. With another big Mopar Pro Stock joining the 'London Heavy', these two and Goggin's leading Camaro will make a very fast field, but the Mopars definitely have the edge on power, just as they had in the States until weight breaks made them uncompetitive.

Also making news at the Whitsun meeting was Dave Lee Travis, who entered the Stones' Precision Tapes-sponsored Escort/Chev Street Altered in Super Street. Dave Stone practised the car with an 11.8s on the Sunday while the man was on the air, whilst on the Monday DLT got the car into the field with a respectable 12.5s. Running against Al O'Connor's Chev/Anglia he was left on the line and lost despite turning a better time, 12.2s to 12.43. A later match race was decided by a broken diff for O'Connor, but the two look like meeting many times.

A week after Whitsun, the NDRC moved to Long Marston, which had proven to be a fast but bumpy track in 1973. This year, however, despite the fact that the running of the event was smoother than previous NDRC events, the layout lending itself well to drag racing, damp track in the morning, persistent strong crosswinds and the bumps, particularly on the second half of the strip, kept times and speeds well down and 8 second runs were the order of the day. Due to the reputation of the track, one or two cars were left at home rather than risk breaking axles and diffs—the Stones team in particular had suffered in this way at Blackbushe with their altered.

A few others were taking the opportunity of preparing for Silverstone, so the entry was

smaller than expected. Roz Prior made her last competitive run in her Top Dragster, and after taking it easy all day with its new owner nervously watching his car, she opened it up in the final against Gerry Andrews; however, his brave 8.6s run was too much for her 9.26s, as she smoked off the line.

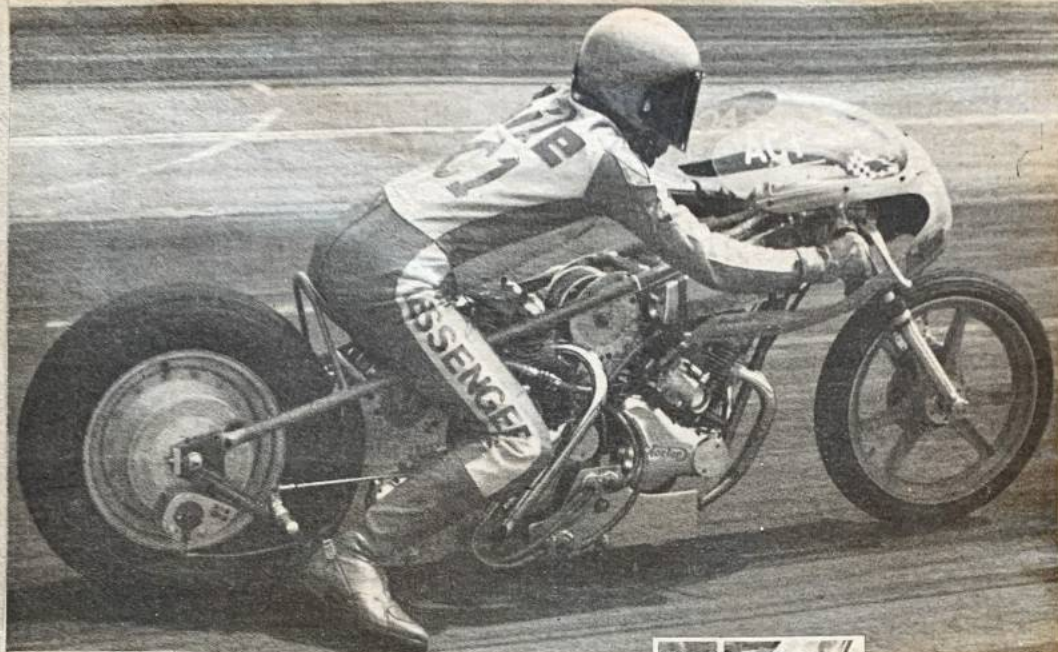
Dennis Priddle was similarly cautious with the STP funny car, as its engine was to be removed after the event to go into the rail for Roz Prior. The bumpy track caused the body to vibrate and short out the mag on the aluminium panelling on two runs against Colin Mullen in the 'London Heavy' Pro Stock, which started with a two second handicap (it was the only Pro car in attendance). To close the show down, the mag was insulated and Dennis laid down a good smokey half pass in 9.3s.

Two leading cars were involved in accidents in May: first, the Castrol 'funny', normally driven by Ed Shaver, was flipped by Clive Skilton at Silverstone when he was trying to put his finger on its elusive handling problems. Luckily, the body was not fitted at the time and Mark Stratton set about rebuilding it in time for the Silverstone meeting. A few days later at Santa Pod Dave Page lost the back end of 'Panic' and slid into the guardrail backwards, rolling over once and writing off the car. He was thankfully unhurt, like Skilton, and work on a new, lower, but essentially similar car should be well advanced by now.



As we go to press, a very exciting Silverstone meeting has just taken place and a couple of particularly interesting achievements just have to be mentioned. Dave Lee Travis justified his place in the Stones team with a win in the Super Street elimination in 'Tender Trap' and, better still, Dave Stone made history in 'Tee Rat' with not one, but two, seven second runs in Top Competition.

FAST CAR



Look out Hobbs!

TWO of the most exciting machines to hit the strips this season are the 'Pegasus' dragster of Ian Messenger and Derek Chinn, and the new bike of Dennis Norman, both given their debut at Santa Pod in the past few weeks.

A couple of seasons ago the team of Messenger, Chinn and Mick Butler campaigned the smartest Vincent, also called Pegasus, ever to grace the strips. Since that time Butler has been running his own machine with a reasonable degree of success while on July 6, Ian and Derek launched their new mount powered by two 850 cc Nortons.

Finish of the big beast is absolutely superb and everything one would expect from the creators of the original Pegasus machine, right down to details such as the colour and anodised oil and fuel unions.

Twin blowers feed the motors with straight methanol at the moment, and on only its third run Ian Messenger recorded 10.68 sec with a terminal of 134 mph.

The 850 barrels, heads and 7:1 pistons are in fact on loan from the Norton factory. Commando cranks run in the older 750 crankcases however, which is something that the team would like to replace when finance allows, the 850 cases offering additional strength. Cams are SS with American Norris valve gear, with a change to Norris cams to be made in the near future. The magnum 70 units will be the same grind that top U.S. drag racer T. C. Christenson uses. Ignition is currently handled by twin magnetos, although that too is scheduled to be discarded in favour of a transistorised unit.

Feeding the straight methanol to the twin Shorrock blowers are a pair of two-inch injectors made by Derek Chinn. Primary transmission is handled by an encased triple gear arrangement to link the two engines and via chain drive to a beefed-up Norton clutch and gearbox. Putting the power to the ground is an M & M Racemaster slied ground down to a width of five inches. This is mounted on a Cragar mag wheel, both items being imported from the U.S.A. by Ian's employers and sponsors — Wolf race. At the opposite end of the machine sits a Tony Foale-built Offensadt spoked mag wheel fitted with a racing tyre.

Braking power has not been overlooked, with hydraulic discs having been fitted to both front and rear wheels. Completing the

reborn Pegasus is a home-built frame adorned with an RGM half fairing to which have been applied a superb paint job. If performance in any way matches looks, then John Hobbs had better look out!

Challenging Pegasus for a place at the top will be Dennis Norman on his new machine which is also powered by twin 850 Norton motors. 'Storming Norman' is well known for his exploits on his 1300 cc Triumph over the past few seasons.

In appreciation of his past efforts the Santa Pod promoters bought two brand new motors for him, and Dennis set to work building a new bike which contains some very inter-

DRAGSTRIP

by KEITH LEE

esting features, and none more so than the transmission. No clutch and box on this machine but a special ten-inch Borg Warner torque converter.

A hydraulic transmission brake is fitted, the lever mounted in the clutch lever position and on the start line the engines are wound up to the converter's 5,500



Above: Ian Messenger recorded 10.68 seconds with a terminal speed of 134 mph on only the third quarter-mile run of the new "Pegasus". That was on straight methanol — no nitro added.

Left: The immaculate twin-Norton 850 engine Pegasus with part-owner and rider Ian Messenger.

rpm stall speed, against the brake. On the green light it's peak power all the way up the quarter.

A feather-bed-type frame contains the twin motors and the single rear mounted two-litre Wade blower which spins at engine speed. The motors are at present absolutely standard apart from lowering the compres-

sion ratio of 8:1.

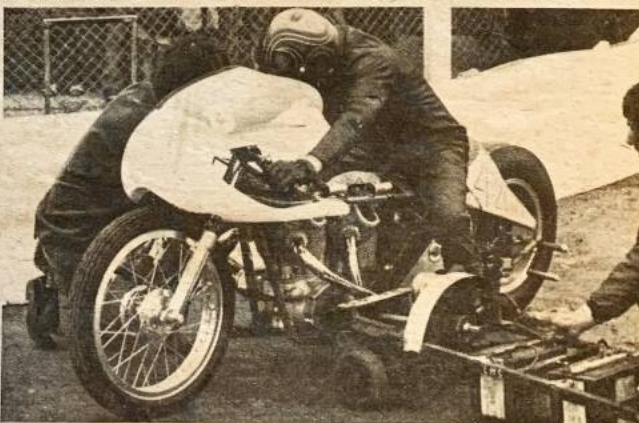
Like Pegasus, Dennis is using straight methanol and is hoping to run under 10 seconds before loading up with nitro. An engine driven pump forces the fuel through a Hillborn pattern injector.

Ignition is handled by a Lucas-Rita transistorised unit running off the front engine, and firing on every engine revolution. Norton-Villiers have given Dennis a dealership which enables him to get parts at trade price, and accordingly the front end is from a Commando production racer — Dennis also ensuring no lack of braking power with discs both at front and rear where a Minilite wheel is fitted with a five-inch M & H slick.

Major problem at the moment is the weight — a total of 488 lb ready to race.

Storming Norman's machine is started by a 24v battery and starter motor, fitted on a portable trolley, being plugged into the front motor. This is because the torque converter rules out conventional starting.

So, having looked at the two newest machines to assault the standing quarter it only remains to be seen whether they can turn Nortons into a dominating force in England as Christenson did in



Dennis "Storming" Norman about to have his new twin Norton-engined beast started up. Because transmission is through a torque-converter rather than a conventional gearbox, the 1700 cc bike cannot be started on the usual rollers but uses a starter motor to the front engine.

'MOTOR CYCLE' TO HELP TOP DRAG RACER JOHN HOBBS IN 1975

THE HEIGHTS OF OLYMPUS

JOHN HOBBS, the blond-haired 27-year-old project engineer from Luton, Bedfordshire, is riding on the crest of a tidal wave of success with his mighty 1,500 cc blown Olympus II. This year he has hit the headlines time and time again with the 100 bhp double-engined missile, and his current best standing quarter time is 9.16 seconds with a terminal speed of 155 mph.

But his success has not come easily. It is the result of a dogged determination and an absolute refusal to give up when things have gone wrong.

Now he is looking to 1975, and when he completes the range of white and black 'Motor Cycle' record breaker, he will be looking for times in the region of 8.5s.

Only two months ago I was thinking that next year's bike would be a single-engined one, because I'd had so much trouble with Olympus," he said.

But then, suddenly, everything clicked into place and he went on his fantastic record breaking spree. By hard slog and inventive genius John had mastered one problem at a time — and suddenly all the bugs were gone.

"The trouble is that all these modifications made to beef up Olympus II have added a lot of weight. I believe I have solved just about all the problems now and next year, when I build my

"Motor Cycle" machine, weight paring will be one of the prime objectives.

"The frame could lose a lot for a start. At the moment it's just mild steel and I've used 16 and 14 gauge. Next year I'm hoping to build a new one from chrome-moly tubing and we'll probably get away with 18 gauge.

There is a lot of tidying up to do as well. At present my gear-change linkage is slightly

bent to get round a rear frame member and I've missed a few gears because of flexing. Things like that can be eliminated right from the start when you've got a clean sheet.

"I've got the fastest bike. Now I want reliability. That's the key factor in drag racing, and that's the basis on which I'm going to build the 1975 bike. It's no use having a couple of qualifying runs if the bike isn't going to be at its best at the end."

After a terrific season in 1972 on his double-engined 1,000 cc machine, John decided to up the capacity to 1,500 cc. But things didn't work out as easily as he'd hoped and last year was one disaster after another.

"There was so much torque, and even with the enormous

rear tyres I was using it would smoke out badly if I revved it enough. On the other hand, if it hooked up, something would break or the clutch would go. I knocked the layshaft out of the gearbox twice."

Chains were a big problem too. There was so much strain on the engine linking chain that the crankshafts were flexing in towards each other and pulling the sprockets out of line. There was just one problem after another.

"I got round the chain problems comparatively easily," he said. "I used the big plate as a stiffener behind the linking chain and fitted a chain tensioner to stop thrash. I also brought in drip feed lubrication fed from the rocker supply. The primary chain also has a runner beneath

it now and also has drip feed lubrication. It's a bit messy, but ever so important."

But the clutch is probably the secret of the whole thing. John utilises a Norton AMC clutch centre but the rest, of necessity, is completely hand built. "The development has progressed in stages instead of being a fully thought out thing right from the beginning," said John.

"The clutch sprocket is at the rear instead of round the outside, so it's running at just under the engine speed. This gives both clutch and gearbox an easier time. The sprocket runs on a bearing on the high gear sleeve rather than the main shaft. The hefty iron clutch plates come from earth moving machinery and there are six friction plates.

"The pressure plate is made of quarter-inch thick steel so it doesn't flex." John also fitted a thrust race in the pressure plate a couple of months ago and that takes a massive loading.

"The centrifugal weights caused a lot of headaches. Getting the correct geometry for the arms and weights has been quite a problem," said John.

The four exhaust pipes on Olympus are slightly megaphoned to get rid of a little of that monstrous low down torque and give a bit more power at the top end. John is a keen believer in meticulous preparation and likes the idea of a bit of customising as well. Indeed, he keeps his custom-painted top fairing, by Mike Webb of Walton Cross, more for cosmetic reasons than anything else. "The crowds love it and you wouldn't think of depriving them," he said, "it's all part of the drag racing scene."

Even his race transporter, which he tows behind his Triumph 1500 cc saloon, is a work of art. He calls it the "Coffin" — but I'd rather not comment on that for I fell over backwards breaking my right thumb when I was helping him to unload the heavy double-engined machine on my visit last week.

We inspected Olympus in his small garage. At the

last Santa Pod meeting the left-hand piston crown burned away. "I think there must have been some fuel surge and then starvation," said John.

"It's the first time I've seen the whole of the piston crown blown off. I think it's going to need a new barrel, piston, valves and guides, and a pretty thorough clean out down below. I'll have to reposition the fuel tank even further forward than at present, probably in front of the handlebars somewhere."

One of the biggest headaches with double-engined jobs is the expense involved. "Until I built my first 1,000 cc double engine bike in 1972 I'd never been one for seeking sponsors," said John. "Sprinting is a very personal thing and I wanted to prove that I could break records by my own efforts, but as soon as you fit two engines your costs almost double.

"Rear tyres cost £50 a time, and if I use 50 per cent nitro it's about £3.50 a gallon. The two-inch SU carbs are fed by three-quarter inch fuel lines and the jets have quarter-inch holes. I can use a gallon in a single quarter-mile run, allowing for starting up and a burn out. It's expensive. You can go through a set of chains every meeting too. I use 1 x 1/4 in throughout."

"Even now I couldn't afford to do it professionally like some of the riders in the States do. So I just have to keep my job, which I enjoy thoroughly, as a project engineer with Eastern Gas. My hours can be fairly flexible and that helps a lot. It's funny, though, as soon as people know I work for the gas board, they ask where my push bike is."

But John's drag bikes have not been his only big expense. His pet mongrel Bruno is probably the only dog in Britain with £100 left ear. It was cut off when a car door slammed on it and was stitched back on by a vet. But when the stitches came out the ear came off again... and again. By the time the ear was well and truly on again, the vet bill had topped the "ton."

John's drag racing days started back in 1966 when George Brown, Alf Hagon and Arthur Breese ruled the roost. "My friend and I decided we'd build an unsupercharged 500 cc bike," said John. "We got all the bits from a breaker's yard. We made our own frame — it must have been the longest wheelbase bike to appear on any sprint strip. There were blow-ups galore and little success. Then my friend got married and packed it in and I carried on alone."

"I built an all-alloy 500 cc bike with TT carbs and ran it on methanol. It was the first unsupercharged bike to turn in an under-12 second quarter at Santa Pod."

"I supercharged it in 1968, and had class wins at Santa Pod, Duxford and Ramsgate and took the

Pod track record. Then I took the kilo record from Glera and Fred Cooper's quarter-mile record. One of the things I remember most was taking that record from Glera. All the aces, such as Fred Cooper, had been trying to get it for about 12 years. I felt terrific.

"I also took the standing mile record at Elvington that year, but they didn't put a confirmation on it so I lost it. I continued with the five-hundred until 1971 and in the end got the standing quarter down to 9.68 seconds. But by now I was developing two-engine units and built my 1,000 cc double the following year. Even this bike didn't have enough power to give transmission problems and I had a very successful season. Within two months I'd done a 9.61s quarter."

One of his most memorable achievements was taking the absolute standing kilo record at Fairford in 1972, including a one-way run at a fantastic 17.74s.

"When I got to about 150 mph and still accelerating, I suddenly knew I was travelling really quickly," he recalled. "This time I had geared Olympus to do 205 mph and she was peaking, so I knew my true speed was 195 mph and I was scared — scared stiff! I just realised that I was no longer really in control, that Olympus had taken over completely. I was just sitting there holding on. The power just kept coming and coming and I knew that a sudden gust of wind could bring disaster. You just can't describe the feeling — it's frightening."

"When I decided to go to 1500 cc I didn't know what I was letting myself in for."

Still, having ironed out most of the problems, John has now decided to stick to this capacity for next year. We hope that his sparkling silver will bring even more honours to Britain, and ultimately get the time down to that 8.5 seconds.

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MOTOR CYCLE, WEEK ENDING 3 AUGUST 1974



STATESIDE DRAG TRIP DETAILS

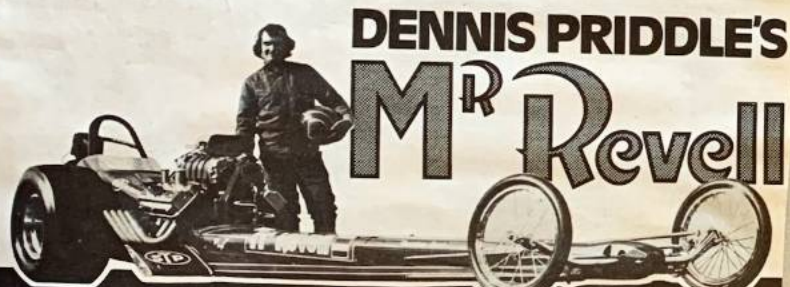
Revised itinerary details have been issued by the National Drag Racing Club and Queensway Travel for their joint trip to California later this year for the Supernationals/World Finals meet. The changes come about as a result of the American organizing club (NHRA) bringing forward the Supernationals to take place at the same time as the World Finals, a move made in view of fuel shortages in the US.

New dates for the event are 11-13 October and the trip has now been rescheduled to run from October 4 to 22. Although, due to rising costs in air travel, the all-in prices for the trip have had to be increased slightly, the new arrangements mean that those taking advantage of the flights and excursions can now enjoy a couple of days in the San Francisco area. In addition to a visit to an AHRA Grand AM meet in nearby Fremont (3-4 October), plans have been made for a free day spent enjoying the sights of Prisco.

Following the Supernats at Ontario there is a Funny Car bash at Irwindale on 19 and 20 October, plus a number of evening meets at the same track.

There is a choice of hotels for the stay in Los Angeles and dependent on the accommodation selected the inclusive price ranges from £250 to £285. A brochure and additional information is available from Queensway Travel, sponsors of Dennis Priddle's Top Fuel dragster and Brian Car, at 12 Russell Parade, Russell Hill Road, Purley, Surrey.

Mike Lintern



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Wheeeelie!

driver something of a fright, says Mr R. On the strip the plan was to get the car to stand on the line and worry about how far it would go later. This has worked pretty well—longest run is around 250 yards to date—and Brian just winds it up to 3000rpm, pops the clutch, kicks it into overdrive and jams his foot to the floor. Steering is a little bit of a problem at present.

Second Invention features a box-tube spaceframe chassis and rollage wearing a Victor body which hides a rebuilt stock 3.8 Jag motor way out back. Front suspension is a special 'simple' independent setup which did tend to kangaroo a bit on landing, but that's been sorted on the damper side. The drive is taken off via transfer box and chain and the clutch is a standard Jag item that seems to be coping very well.

Brian's main problem initially was a lack of space to practice, but he did manage to stand and go on some tarmac where locals learn to drive. Gave a lady L



the strip, like oil surge on landing, when the motor is still churning over at 6000rpm. Current hassles are steering once the car's up and fuel supply to the carbs when Brian is thrust hard back into the single bucket seat.

We'd sure like to see more demonstration vehicles on the strip and Brian Richards deserves some support for his death-defying efforts, yes? So c'mon all you rich sponsors, the number to ring is 021 357 4664. You can see the wheelee car at NDRC meets and Brian is also taking in the Pennine Drag Racing Club's strip. PW

SUMMER DRAGS

In the four years that the Swedish competitors have been coming over for first the Santa Pod Internationals and then the Silverstone Internationals, they have gathered a well deserved reputation of being very hard to beat in any class. The first time they came they took all classes they entered, and it has only been in the last couple of years that they have been up against really equal or superior opposition.

This year they faced their stiffest test yet at Silverstone, and for the first time ever went home without a single trophy, but put on their usual professional show and provided the extra colour and excitement that is sometimes missing when politics keeps half a dozen cars from racing anywhere but at Santa Pod.

Traditionally the leader of any team is the Top Fuel entry, and once again John Andersson brought over his 'Valkyrian' which first appeared last year at the same event. Powered by an iron block 392 Chrysler it was perhaps down on power when compared with Skilton's Donovan or Priddle's immaculate 392 that just happens to be one of those good engines that go together just 'right' and produce a little more power than an apparently identical motor. Nonetheless the car has run consistent low sevens in Sweden but was slower than usual in qualifying with an 8.34 second time. In the elimination, Andersson had to shut off with engine trouble to a disappointing 12 seconds, so the Swedes' first challenger had fallen.

Their entry in the Funny Car class consisted of two cars, Leif Darbach's fearsome looking Volvo and Bjorn Andersson's well-known Opel Manta, both of which were also seen last year at Blackbushe. Andersson's car is a conventional Funny with a 392 Hemi for power, and has a stock dimension body covering its well-designed frame. Last year the car was running mid-eights at 170mph plus, and this time Bjorn came over with a seven under his belt. But like his namesake John in the Fuel car, he was not right on form and could not find the traction to get him down to really competitive times. Meanwhile, Priddle's STP

Funny was clicking off sevens to order. On Bjorn's two competitive runs he shut down with undisclosed problems and times in the nines at 150-plus mph. Darbach's car was something else,



for instead of the usual Chrysler he has chosen a 427 Chevy to power his 'Saint' Volvo, a design that really lends itself to the Funny Car class with its slightly dated rounded body design and small spoiler on the boot.

Very few Funnies have used this engine in America, and certainly none have ever done well with it compared with the giant stroked late-model Hemis, although its light weight in the alloy block version has proved a strong point in a handful of Fuelers.

Darbach too suffered from a lack of traction, or perhaps insufficient bottom-end torque, because in losing to Priddle in the first round of a 'Round-Robin' eliminator with the three Funnies each running one another, he lost with an 8.8sec to 8.07, although his 180mph top end charge was every bit as strong as Priddle's 187, and with a better start could have won him the race. Against team-mate Andersson in the Opel he ran an identical 8.8sec at 177 to win easily, but once again, the title stayed at home. That the Chevrolet engine can do the job was amply demonstrated by Dave Stone, whose Altered turned in higher mph than any of the Funnies at 198mph, and was only fractions slower than Priddle's best of 7.7 with his 7.9sec.

Balancing the Altered's lighter weight are its inherent short wheel-base handling problems and inferior aerodynamics to that of the smooth Volvo shape, so what Darbach learnt as he looked over Stone's motor could spell trouble at future International events for Priddle and other potential Funny Car pilots.

Gunne Back remains the most widely known Swede, and probably



the most popular as well, for he has been here four years in succession, first with his Corvette that won Top Street honours at Santa Pod in 1971 and 1972 with its wild front suspension setup tucking the wheels in under the body to an alarming degree, then last year he was back with his new weapon, an injected Pro-Stock Camaro with the same basic 454 motor that powered the Corvette. Last year he ran a 10.99 at Silverstone, but just lost to Kevin Pilling's hot-shot, whilst later in the season at Blackbushe he had an easy win over Mike Aitken's Capri-Chev, when the Capri ran out of fuel.

He was partnered this year by Bo Hollstrom in his 'Trollits Toy II' Camaro, which like Gunne has run high tens before leaving. Hollstrom's effort didn't come to much in another Round-Robin series with Back and Colin Mullen, for on both of his runs he shut down with engine trouble, though against Mullen he made a terrific start with his front wheels well in the air before shutting off. Back was running carburation this year with a proper Pro-Stock scoop, but otherwise the car was much the same as last year. In qualifying on Saturday he broke a valve, the head of which got into every combustion chamber of the aluminium heads before coming to rest, destroying one head completely and badly damaging the other. After buying a spare head from Kevin Pilling, he worked all night getting the car back together but was understandably reluctant to let rip on what was still a suspect motor and ran a best of 10.99 against Hollstrom. Neither driver was really aware of the staggering performance of the 'London Heavy' Plymouth beforehand, and it could be that the whole team have been a little complacent about their chances, and were not really ready to face a vastly improved British field. Having been thus beaten, what they will come up with next year will make interesting drag racing.

The last Swedish car entered was



Morgan Aronson's Top Street Camaro with 331 small block, which like all the cars was immaculately prepared, but also unsuccessful against Sylvia Read's big 440 Dodge Charger, who got her nose in front for a narrow win.

John Dickson

...come and see 208's Bob Stewart compere the

NATIONAL DRAGS '74

Radio Luxembourg / Hot Car Grand Nationals

Sunday 18th August, Blackbushe Airport (on A30)

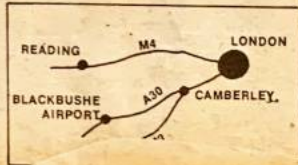
Nr. Camberley, Surrey. Gates open at 9 a.m. Racing till 6 p.m.

Admission includes Pit entrance, Parking and VAT

Children under 12 ADMITTED FREE!

Refreshments - Bar - Foodstalls - Hot Rod Show

The organisers reserve the right to alter or cancel whole or any part of the meeting without notice



"This is the Nation's established event"

Sports extra



Ake Ryman (454 Toyota) lines up against Dennis Priddle's Avenger Funny at Mantorp Park. Priddle ran an 8.4 s to Ryman's 9.4 s.

DRAG

British successes in Sweden

Following the recent visits by the Swedish teams to Silverstone and Santa Pod, over the weekend of August 3 and 4, several British cars and drivers went over for the Swedish championships. Clive Skilton, who with his current car on show at the Castrol Extravaganza took his older car, and Roz Prior in the "Fast Lady" represented the Top Fuel class, while Dennis Priddle, with the STP Avenger and the two Santa Pod funnies for Haywood and Herridge and the "Brooklyn Heavy" Pro Stock completed the team.

The Top Fuel elimination started with a staging mix-up when Roz ran John Anderson's "Valkyrian" and on the re-run Roz went well only to suffer engine problems at the finish and just got beaten by the Swedish car, which subsequently retired with troubles of its own to leave Clive a clear win and best time of the day at 7.02 s/201 mph, the best the car has run for some time. Roz had run an impressive 7.5 s in qualifying to further prove

her skill.

The two Santa Pod funnies were drawn in the first round, and when Herridge had the reverser unit break in the Stardust car, Haywood red-lit in the Houndog team car, leaving just Priddle to face the Swedes. This he did with an easy 8.4 s to 9.4 s win over Ake Ryman's 454 Toyota funny, and then a strong 7.8 s/175 mph run against Bjorn Anderson's Opel Manta.

The Swedes seemed more interested in Pro Stock and the various street classes, with literally dozens of immaculately turned out "stockers" but it was the "London Heavy" Dodge of Colin Mullen that easily dominated Pro Stock again, with a 9.8 s win over "Trollits Toy," the Camaro driven by Bo Hollstrom, so the home team could hardly have done better this year, which after some years of Swedish predominance, is good for the future of European drag racing.

This weekend at Blackbushe

This weekend at Blackbushe is the tenth anniversary of the first major drag event in this country, for it was in 1964 that Garlits, Nancy, Ongais and Cortines first showed the British public what the sport was all about, and sparked the interest in the competitors racing today.

Leading the entry as usual is Clive Skilton with the Castrol rail, and he will be aiming at the 225 mph mark. Dennis Priddle will run his Mr Revell fueller again, with both Roland Pratt and Roz Prior in Skilton's second car and the "Fast Lady" Accles and Pollock rail respectively making a good foursome.

Priddle will again have his STP funny out to face Ed Shaver in the Castrol Vauxhall, with the two big altereds of Stone and Hall well placed to take on and beat them, with a 200 mph run from Stone an exciting possibility. As well as driving the Revolution Three dragster, Roland Pratt also hopes to be running in the funny car class with his own long awaited Scimitar funny car.

In Senior Competition, the Page Brothers have entered their new altered after writing off their Fiat a mere two months ago, and if it makes it in time, it will be the car to beat for Sharpe, Preston, Deichen and Dickson. The two Heavy Pro Stocks will almost certainly dominate the Pro action, but Gary Goggin will be making yet another attempt to get to grips with them with his Camaro after a troubled season to date.

The Hot Car/208 Grandnationals starts at around 10 am, and other attractions include DJ Bob Stewart and motorcycle stunt rider Dave Taylor, who will be running the quarter mile on one wheel.

AUTOSPORT, AUGUST 15, 1974

STONE THROW

How the Stone Racing team threw out a professional challenge—and won against the odds. John Dickson looks at the three-car equipe that will be competing at Blackbushe next Sunday

Drag racing in this country is still very much an amateur sport, with only a handful of people occupied in one way and another full time. This means that most entries are one-car owner-driver combinations. One exception that stands out as unique is the Stone Racing team. From their little Ford workshop in Dagenham, Dennis and David Stone (father and son), Gerry Andrews, plus a team of helpers run a three-car team that most people in the sport said would be their downfall this year.

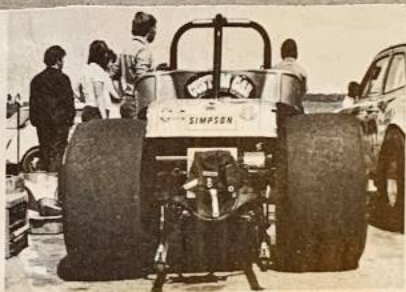
Having run one car for four or five years and for a couple of seasons competed with two, they felt differently, and proved the point at the Silverstone International in June by winning all three classes they entered.

Their famous car is "Tee Rat," which the bought as a rolling chassis from another racer in 1971. For two years the car was more or less unbeatable with an injected aluminium CanAm Chevrolet engine, but this year the car has a supercharge iron block version of the same engine designed to take on and beat the new breed of funny cars that are

now running regularly on the strips.

The chassis of the car is a simple tube affair on a 102 in wheelbase, with VW torsion bar front suspension supporting a new straight tube axle. The thin magnesium front wheels are by American Racing Equipment shod with Avon moped tyres, and the steering box is from a Standard Ten box, a very popular unit for other builders. There's no suspension at the back, where there's a massive 1957 Oldsmobile axle narrowed and fitted with Jaguar disc brakes. But even this unit wilted under the strain of the engine earlier this year, so some very expensive and beautifully made parts were imported to strengthen it. These consist of a Summers Brothers (holders of Record) spool, which replaces the differential with a solid set-up, and half-shafts, all of which are made of some incredibly high grade alloy steel, and are virtually unbreakable. The gear ratio is 4.56:1 and the wheels are 16 in diameter, 12 in wide American Mags with 15.00 Goodyear slicks with inner safety liners.

The origin of the engine is



Left: small wheels at the back are to prevent backward flips

linked with the dragster, which was built by Allan Herridge for Peter Bennet as a Fuel Dragster, who when he lost interest in the project sold the car to Stone. Rather than run against the dominant Skilton and Priddle the team switched engines to have two competitive cars in different and slightly less expensive classes.

The supercharged engine in "Tee Rat" which runs in the Competition Altered class at present is a regular iron high performance 427 Chevrolet. The crankshaft is a stock item, but has aluminium Howards rods to absorb the shock loads of the blower and nitro fuel, with 7.1 Venolia forged pistons. The camshaft is geardriven by a Keith Black unit and is made by Crower. Owing to the almost instant engine acceleration with the blower this is a flag tappet item unlike the other engines, but has a massive 0.66 in lift and over 340 deg. duration. The heads have been ported by Donovan, the same man who now produces complete engines as used by Skilton and Priddle, and feature stainless steel valves and O-

ringed combustion chambers for better sealing with the gaskets. A Mallory Magneto fires Champion plugs, while the blower itself is a GMC truck item reworked by Allan Herridge (who apart from driving, does much of the specialised work in the sport) and sits on a Weiland manifold. The injection is from Crower and feeds not only into the top of the blower but into the ports as well.

Handling the power, estimated at 1300 bhp, is a triple plate Scheiffer clutch inside a steel safety bell-housing. Direct drive is then used to the back axle.

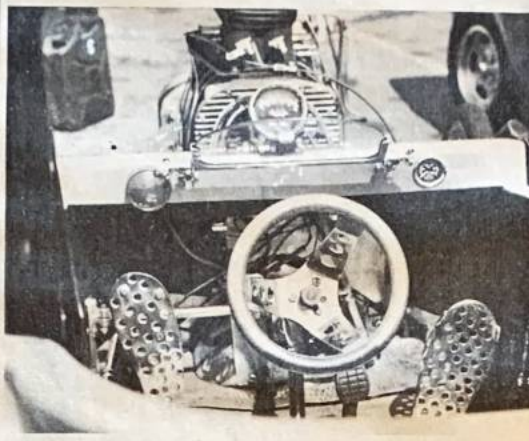
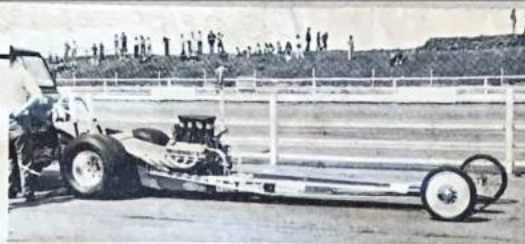
After some few meetings getting used to the new dimension of power, driver Dave Stone really got to grips with the beast at Silverstone and astonished everyone by reaching 198 mph in the car, a speed that would be competitive in America. His time was 7.9 s for the quarter, which has since been improved on to 7.7, and will doubtless fall to the low sevenths as the year progresses. Economics have so far prevented the team from upping the nitro and tackling the six-second funny cars; even so, only the big fuel dragsters and the two American

funny cars have beaten the speed mark, and no other "altered" is within 20 mph in a class where the cars are generally reckoned to be too unpredictable to do such times more than once in a while.

The second car in the team is the aforementioned dragster, which runs in the Top Dragster class, a step down from the six-second class. Most cars in this division are either injected nitro or supercharged petrol, both methods producing similar results.

As mentioned, the engine in this car was originally in the "altered," which ran 8.5 s, 170 mph times in that trim. Built on a 173 in. wheelbase over three years ago, and thus a little short by current standards for the supercharged engine, they had to lengthen the cockpit by nine inches to accommodate the tail Andrews, which makes the rear of the car look a little odd. Lurking under the seat is a single wheel to stop the front of the car coming too far off the ground when the traction is very good, as it has done several times.

The aluminium engine is bored out to 440 cubic inches (7.3 litre) again with a stock crank and Howards con rods. The pistons without the blower to cope with are 12:1 TRW, which limits the



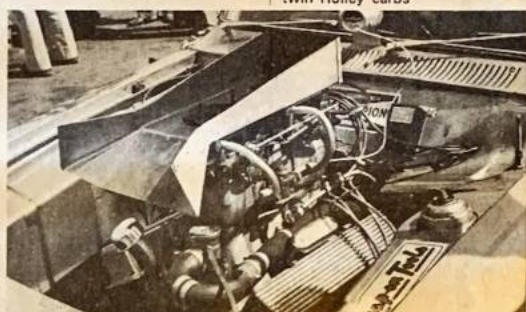
with twin Holley 660 cfm carbs on Edelbrock TRX2 tunnel-ram manifold.

A Bendix electric pump supplies five-star petrol from the tank in the boot, and another Mallory is used for ignition.

Originally fitted with a four speed gearbox that broke on numerous and frustrating occasions, the car now has a B&M Clutch-Turbo transmission. This is basically a GM Turbo-Hydro 400 box extensively modified and strengthened, and has a clutch in it grafted on instead of the usual torque converter—an increasingly popular transmission set-up.

Dennis's main problem had been adapting from the brutal power-shifting manual technique to fingertip control of the "ratchet" shifter, but the changes themselves are so violent that the first time he drove it he thought someone had driven into the back of the car!

Top: the Top Dragster with 44 cu in, 7.3-litre engine, has done 178 mph. Left: footrests are more important for bracing than the steering wheel is for cornering. Below left: disc jockey Dave Lee Travis in the team's Formula 5000-engined Escort. Below: The Chevy unit breathes through twin Holley carbs



nitro to a maximum of around 50 per cent before things start to break. In fact the engine is usually run on 40 per cent for reliability.

The camshaft in this engine is another Crower, but has roller lifters instead of the ordinary lifters in the other engine. These reduce friction and wear on the cam and allow more radical cam space and stronger springs, but the greater weight of the roller followers means that they tend to "flea" on the cam with subsequent damage. The injection is also Crower with giant three inch butterflies and a pump driven off the front of the cam, whilst the ignition is once again handled by a Mallory magneto.

The clutch on this car is a twin plate Hays inside a safety housing, but instead of direct drive a Leno two-speed transmission is used. This is in fact a simple epicyclic overdrive unit with a clutch pack from an automatic transmission actually changing very low 5.57:1 gearing that is changed to 4.3:1 on the change to give high terminal speeds without over-revving the engine. The axle is another Olds

unit narrowed even more by Heridge and fitted with his heavy duty halfshafts and fully floating hubs. Huge spun aluminium wheels mount 13 in. Goodyear slicks, while at the front VW torsion bars are again used, with moped wheels controlled by another Standard Ten box. Custom sprayer Eddie Wimble did the paint on the car, which like the altered carries no massive sponsorship, but had help from Castrol and Dick's Place, the Beckenham T-shirt and drag-racing book centre. Although Gerry has had a hard time coping with Roz Prior's similar car all year, he has set the class record at 8.1 s and 178 mph with the car, and now that Roz has moved up to Top Fuel is currently without close competition.

The last car in the team started life as a humble Escort, first with a V6 transplanted by another team before the Stones bought it, in which form it was quite successful, with high 13-second times in 1972. Last year a 350 Chevrolet was fitted, but the car was plagued all year with problems and never really showed it's promise in the Pro

Stock class. A demon engine was built for this year that unfortunately blew up before the car ever raced, and it now has a Formula 5000 block. With the smaller engine, the car now runs on the Super Street class, where although not totally dominant, it is one of the two of three likely winners. Although "Daddy" Stone, as Dennis is known, drives the car most of the time Dave Lee Travis as honorary team leader races when he can, and it was he who made the hat trick at Silverstone on his second outing with an 11.9 win.

With a stock Z28 bottom end at present, the engine cannot be safely revved above 7500 unlike the other two which go up and beyond 10,000 on occasion, but the car has steadily got faster this year, particularly after a pair of Donovan-worked angle plug heads were fitted which suited the 12.5:1 TRW pistons. When Donovan was over here last year, the Stones helped him in a number of ways to which he replied by sending them one of his expensive gear drive units for the usual Crower roller cam, which works in conjunction

The clutch used is a Weber single plate, and the back axle is a narrowed Oldsmobile with 5.38:1 gearing and Wolftrace wheels with 1150 M&H slicks. Wolftrace wheels are also used at the front with Dunlop tyres. Apart from traction bars and bigger leaf springs at the back the rest of the suspension is more or less stock, and overall the car appears very much like any Escort apart from the big wheels and the lump on the bonnet. A recent tie-up with Precision Tapes was announced for the car, which to date has run a best of 11.3 s at 124 mph "with everything right." But it would seem likely that with the new transmission 10 second times will come eventually.

All three of these cars will be in action this weekend at the Hot Car Grandnationals at Blackbushe in Surrey on Sunday, with David in particular likely to try for the 200 mph mark with the "altered" at which speed he says the vibrations are so bad that he can only see a blurred view of what is ahead—and that is rarely another car. Why not come and watch?