

Burnham, Highbridge & District MC&LCC

Brean Sands Speed Trials
1922 - 1923

Within a few years of the end of the First World War, with many cheaper small, or light, cars and particularly motor-cycles available, there was a huge increase in people taking up motoring. With a corresponding desire to use their vehicles for social activities, there was also an upsurge in the formation of local motor-cycle and car clubs. In February 1922 enthusiasts in the area around Burnham-on-Sea, on the Somerset coast five miles south of Weston-super-Mare, formed the Burnham, Highbridge and District Motor-Cycle & Light Car Club.

At low tide the shore adjacent to Burnham-on-Sea, south of the Brean Down promontory, similar to that of Weston Bay to the north, benefited from a wide expanse of firm sand. After their 1921 speed trials on Weston sands the Bristol Motor Cycle Club had decided to call a halt to their event, but in 1922 the new Burnham and Highbridge club thought that the sands at Brean would be an ideal venue for their first major competition. So, on Whit Monday 5th June, they organised speed trials for motor-cycles and light cars.

5th June 1922

In addition to classes for their own members, additional classes were included open to members of the Bristol, Weston-super-Mare, Taunton and Yeovil motor-cycle clubs. For each class races were run on a knockout basis as a series of heats and finals, and hence had no need for individual time scoring and timekeepers.

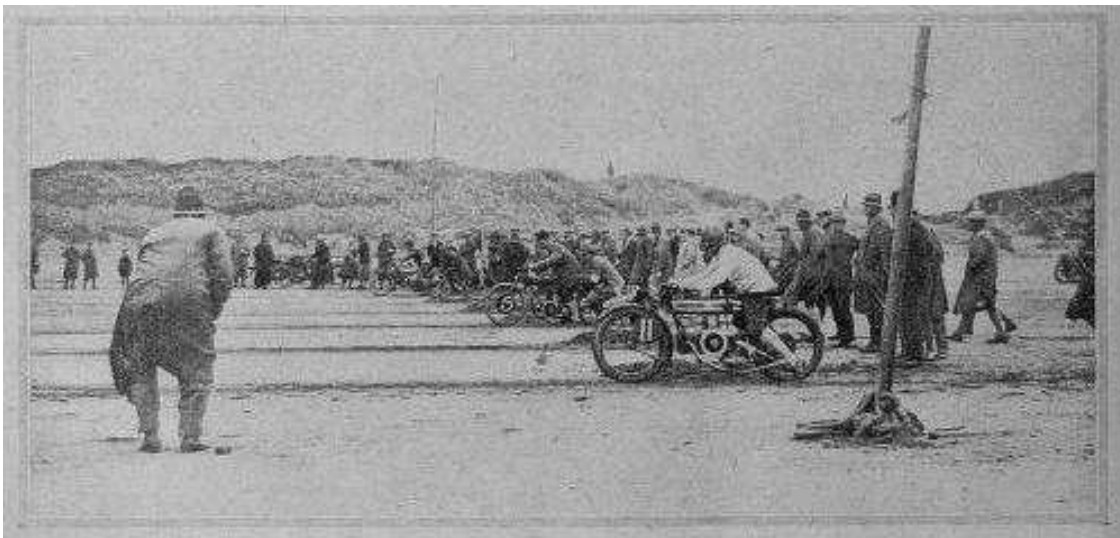
The event, in "*the glorious weather of Whitsuntide*", attracted a crowd of several thousand, and the outstanding performances in the motor-cycle classes were by local rider V. Tucker on a Norton.

In the 'Open' Light Car section, AR Passey (GN) won the under 1100cc class, and also won his heat in the under 1500cc class. However, owing to engine trouble, he was unable to run in the final. Sources differ to the winner of the 1500 final – either WH Gibson or the GN of S Syamina (*sic*) – presumably AJ Sgonina (or his brother CS).

With the event deemed to have been highly successful, a further event was arranged for that September.

16th September 1922

VG Tucker on his 3½ hp Norton was again the star motor-cyclist at the September meeting. No reliable information has yet been obtained relating to Light Car classes, however it is possible that the best performance was by a Horstman car.



16th June 1923

The following year the Burnham club returned to Brean sands for speed trials over a ¾ mile course, on the afternoon of Saturday 16th June, starting at 2 pm. Half of the 22 classes were open to members of Wessex Centre ACU affiliated clubs, and the remainder to Club members only. In addition to the usual motor-cycle and light car classes, a special match race between the fastest sidecar outfit and the fastest light car was also scheduled.

No further information or results of this event have yet been found.

18th August 1923

The meeting on Saturday 18th August was run under the auspices of the ACU Wessex Centre, although the secretarial arrangements were in the hands of GF Morris of the Burnham & District club as usual.

On this occasion the weather wasn't at all helpful, with "a half gale" of wind from the north-west. With the higher tide receding more slowly marking out of the course (1 Km or ½ mile depending on source) and thus the start of the event was delayed. Nor were sand conditions in the early afternoon ideal. Despite the weather a large crowd, estimated at several thousand, was on hand, and a collection was made in aid of the Burnham War Memorial Hospital. A total of 43 competitors entered, and star of the motor-cycle events was ace Bath rider Vic Anstice on a 746cc Douglas who, in addition to winning eight classes, recorded best time of the day of 24 seconds.

In the light cars classes AJ Sgonina in a GN and EA Cannock (GP Morgan) both scored a trio of wins, although Cannock was later disqualified from the Touring class for "stripping his machine". Cannock, from Keynsham, also ran his Morgan in sidecar classes, gaining second and third places. Gaston Fery was handicapped by a flat front tyre on his GN (reg. no. CD704), and Sgonina, over from Newport, South Wales, recorded the best light car time of 31.6 sec.

In addition to the light car classes a special class for Ford cars only attracted three entries.



Off together! E. A. Cannock (Morgan Grand Prix), E. G. Fery (G.N.), and W. H. Gibson (Rhode).

No evidence of any further events on the sands at Brean after August 1923 has been found.

Pete Stowe 2021

Results 18 August 1923

Light cars
B.T.D. Light cars: AJ Sgonina (GN 1098cc), 31 ³ / ₅ sec
Touring Light Cars, up to 1100cc. 1 EA Cannock, Keynsham, (Morgan Grand Prix 998cc), 52 sec. 2 R Avery, Bristol (GN 1087cc). Cannock was afterwards disqualified for stripping his machine, and first prize awarded to Avery.
Touring Light Cars, up to 1500cc. 1 FR Cater, Bristol (Albatross 1247cc) 43 ² / ₅ sec. 2 EB Eyre, Bristol (Albatross 1247cc)
Touring Light Cars, unlimited. 1 FR Cater (Albatross 1247cc) 49 sec. 2 EB Eyre (Albatross 1247cc).
Sports Model Cars, up to 1100cc. 1 EA Cannock, (Morgan GP 998cc) 39 ¹ / ₅ sec. 2 EG Fery, Bath (GN 1096cc) 3 WH Gibson, Bristol (Rhode 1087cc).
Sports Model Cars up to 1500cc. 1 EA Cannock (Morgan GP 998cc) 38 ¹ / ₅ sec. 2 EG Fery (GN 1096cc) 3 FR Cater (Albatross 1247cc). Cater was afterwards disqualified.
Sports Model Cars unlimited. 1 FW Cox, Wells (Ansaldo 1987cc) 32 ³ / ₅ sec. 2 EG Fery (GN 1096cc).
Any Model Cars, up to 1100cc 1 AJ Sgonina, Newport (GN 1098cc) 31 ³ / ₅ sec. 2 EG Fery (GN 1096cc) 3 WH Gibson (Rhode 1087cc).
Any model car, unlimited 1 AJ Sgonina (GN 1098cc) 31 ³ / ₅ sec. 2 FW Cox (Ansaldo 1987cc) 3 EG Fery (GN 1096cc)
Ford cars (3 entries) 1 Burbidge, Weare (Ford), 58 ⁴ / ₅ sec.

Sources:

Western Daily Press, Taunton Courier, Wells Journal, Bristol Times & Mirror, Motor-Cycle.

SPRINT - Speed Hillclimbs and Speed Trials in Britain: 1899-1925. T. R. Nicholson, David & Charles 1969.

Westcountry Motorsport History

Website <https://bpmc.org.uk/petestowe/wmh.htm>

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