

Bristol Motor Cycle & Light Car Club**NAISH HILLCLIMB****CLAPTON-IN-GORDANO, BRISTOL****18 AUGUST 1945**

“Blowers whining, ‘specials’ crackling ear-splittingly, multi cylindered racing engines being warmed up in short air-tearing bursts, cars of all sorts and sizes dotted about the parking areas, old acquaintances of all kinds and shapes rushing up to greet one another again, a starting line for eight hundred yards of as near flat-out hustle as the drivers dared and a record time of 56 seconds waiting to be broken, such was the setting last Saturday for the first event under an R.A.C. permit for car competitions for nearly six long years, and the start of the post-war era.”

So Autocar magazine described the scene at Naish Hill on 18th August 1945. It's impossible to imagine today just how everyone felt after the traumas and uncertainty of World War 2, finally ended just three days earlier on VJ Day, but the Bristol Motor Cycle & Light Car Club, galvanised by the enthusiastic Dick Caesar, quickly ushered in a new era of British motorsport with a hillclimb at one of its pre-war venues.

Naish hill, about 10 miles west of Bristol at Clapton-in-Gordano, near Portishead, had first been brought into use by the club in 1937, and the 56.0 second course record stood to RA Macdermid (MG), set in 1938. The course was as used pre-war:

“Naish House hill is a grass-grown road winding up the southern slopes of the Gordano valley in two sweeps along the hillside to the ruins of Naish House, and spectators have excellent views of all but a few yards of the course, which overlooks Portishead and the Bristol Channel. From the start, just above the paddock gate, the drive runs comparatively straight for some 200 yds. to a swinging right-hander: thence it winds slightly among a few fir trees for another 150 yds. to the left-handed corner. This, like the others, is of about three-quarters of a full half-circle and gives drivers a good opportunity to tail-slide if so inclined. The latter half has banks on each side, a fact of which a few people made voluntary or involuntary use, employing a sort of Karussel technique. For here a fast right-hand curve leads to 300yds. of almost straight, ending in a bumpy right-hander of bare earth and then a straight run up to the finishing line. The whole length is some 800 yds., and the gradient is very consistent, averaging about 1 in 10.”

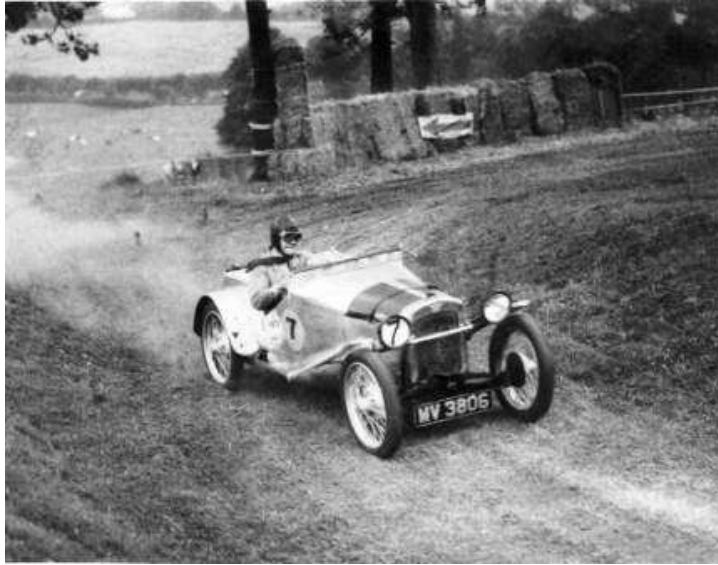
Preparations in the summer of 1945 involved liberally placing straw bales at various danger points, and removing some molehills on the final bend.

Entry, for both spectators and competitors, was restricted to the organising club's members and to members of the two invited clubs, West Bristol Motor Cycle & Car Club and the recently formed Bristol Aeroplane Company Motor Sports Club. This didn't prevent a crowd of six or seven hundred onlookers lining the hill, or there being competitors from as far afield as Leicester and Sussex among the 25 motor-cycle and 35 car entrants. The weather was fine, although it became overcast and dim before the end of the day, and all vehicles were run singly up the hill, with car and motorcycle classes alternating.

First up the hill – with the distinction of being the first post-war competitive run - was John King in a 1021cc Standard saloon, in a time of 78 seconds. Familiar names appearing in the car classes included Dick Caesar in an Alvis, Gerry Millington's AC Special, Dennis Poore (R-type Midget) and Bob Gerard (Riley Sprite). Len Parker decided to use snow-grips on the rear wheels of his 3.5-litre SS, and was the first sports car to dip under 60 seconds. In the racing car classes Walter Watkins broke the existing record with a 52.0 sec. first run time in his 996cc Watkins Nash Special. Bob Gerard then came to the line in his 1.5-litre supercharged ERA R4A, but stopped at the first corner with a loose carburettor needle.

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On his second run Watkins, using the bank on the outside of the left-hander, lowered the record still further, to 51.6 sec, while Gerard, his ERA now fixed, recorded 52.6 sec. on his only successful climb. Ken Baillie-Hill (1.5-litre HRG) was fastest sports car (53.0 sec) and third fastest car overall, and Parker next best sports car. Other car class winners were Ken Burgess (Morgan), Raymond Way (Frazer-Nash BMW) and David Allen (Austin 7 Special).



David Allen in his class-winning Austin 7 (photo courtesy of Nick Allen)

There were no untoward incidents among the cars, but in the motorcycles George Naris parted company from his machine - a last burst of throttle towards the finish line coinciding with a steering wobble - although both rider and his touring Velocette crossed the line together. Frank Evans on a 350 Velocette almost reached the top of the four-foot banking in the middle corner, electrifying the onlookers, not to mention an uncomfortably close photographer. Evans and Ray Moore (350 racing Velocette) were class winners, but it was Peter Falconer, making smooth and clean climbs, using just a foot or so of the banking, who was fastest of the bikes, and also overall fastest time of day, with 48.6 sec. on his 500 Triumph Speed Twin.

After the meeting was over, Leicester garage owner Bob Gerard was allowed an unofficial third run* in the powerful ERA, which couldn't be given more than a moderate amount of throttle anywhere or for any length of time, and improved to 49.0 sec to show what might have been – quicker than Watkins, but not Falconer.

(Note: Motor Sport magazine in their September 1945 edition wrongly reported Gerard's extra unofficial run as being BTD for the event. Although they printed a correction in the October edition, their original error has unfortunately been reproduced in various later books and magazines and on some websites.)*

Results and Awards

Fastest time of the Day (Antony Cup) – PS Falconer (498cc Triumph motorcycle)
Fastest Car Time of the Day – WO Watkins (996cc Watkins Nash)
Fastest Sports Car Time of the Day – KV Baillie-Hill (1496cc HRG)
War-time Hacks (i.e. cars running on non-basic fuel prior to 1945)
Class 1 Upto 1100cc – 1 st K Burgess (1122cc Morgan) 68.8 sec; 2 nd DF Allen (747cc Austin) 69.0 sec; 3 rd DC Bishop (847cc MG) 69.2 sec.
Class 2 Over 1100cc – 1 st R Way (1971cc Frazer Nash-BMW) 62.8 sec; 2 nd GH Millington (1991cc AC Special) 65.4 sec; 3 rd DS Maunsell (1911cc Frazer Nash) 65.8 sec.
Sports Cars
Class 3 Upto 1100cc – 1 st DF Allen (747cc Austin) 69.0 sec & K Burgess (1122cc Morgan) 69.0 sec; 3 rd DC Bishop (847cc MG) 70.0 sec.
Class 4 1101 to 2000cc – 1 st KV Baillie-Hill (1496cc HRG) 56.2 sec; 2 nd R Bickerton (1660cc Frazer Nash) 61.2 sec & DS Maunsell (1911cc Frazer Nash) 61.2 sec.
Class 5 2001 to 4000cc – 1 st KV Baillie-Hill (1496cc HRG) 53.0 sec; 2 nd LH Parker (3485cc SS) 56.0 sec; 3 rd FR Gerard (1496cc Riley) 60.0 sec.
Racing Cars
Class 6 Upto 1100cc – 1 st WO Watkins (996cc Watkins Nash) 51.6 sec; 2 nd RD Poore (746cc s MG) 58.8 sec.
Class 7 1101 to 3000cc – 1 st WO Watkins (996cc Watkins Nash) 51.6 sec; 2 nd FR Gerard (1488cc s ERA) 52.4 sec.
Sports Motorcycles
Upto 350cc – 1 st F Evans (348cc Velocette) 58.4 sec; 2 nd Webb (349cc Triumph); 3 rd EG Hurley (248cc O.K.-Supreme)
Over 350cc – 1 st PS Falconer (498cc Triumph) 50.2 sec; 2 nd CA Dickins (348cc Norton); 3 rd F Evans (348cc Velocette)
Racing Motorcycles
Upto 350cc – 1 st R Moore (348cc Velocette) 51.4 sec; 2 nd DA Cox (349cc Triumph); 3 rd CA Dickins (346cc Excelsior-JAP) & DW Hughes (349cc AJS)
Over 350cc – 1 st PS Falconer (498cc Triumph) 48.6 sec; 2 nd R Moore (348cc Velocette); 3 rd CA Dickins (346cc Excelsior-JAP)

Cars: 34 entries

Motorcycles: 24 entries, 2 did not arrive, 33 class entries.

Results and other event details obtained from Motor, Autocar, Motor Sport, Motor Cycling and Motor Cycle magazine reports.

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Known Entries and Times - Cars

No.	Driver	Car	Reg. No.	cc	1st Run	2nd Run	Best time	Class pos.
Class 1 War-time Hacks Upto 1100cc								
	K Burgess	Morgan		1122	69.0	68.8	68.8	1
7	DF Allen	Austin	MV 3806	747	69.4	69.0	69.0	2
	DC Bishop	MG P-type		847	69.2		69.2	3
	JB King	Standard		1021	78.0			
	FJ Brymer	Riley			Fail			
Class 2 War-time Hacks Over 1100cc								
	R Way	Frazer Nash-BMW 329	DYN 201	1971	63.4	62.8	62.8	1
	GH Millington	AC Special		1991	66.6	65.4	65.4	2
	DS Maunsell	Frazer Nash		1911	65.8		65.8	3
	EH Goodenough	MG T-Type			67.0			
	WM Marshall	MG Six			77.4			
	AW Morrish	Austin Ten saloon			77.4			
	RD Caesar	Alvis		1645	73.8			
Class 3 Sports Cars Upto 1100cc								
7	DF Allen	Austin 7 Special	MV 3806	747	69.0		69.0	=1
	K Burgess	Morgan		1122	69.0		69.0	=1
	DC Bishop	MG		847			70.0	3
	AW Morrish	MG PA Midget		847s				
Class 4 Sports Cars 1101 to 2000cc								
18	KV Baillie-Hill	HRG		1496	56.2	53.0	53.0	1
	R Bickerton	Frazer Nash		1660	61.2		61.2	=2
	DS Maunsell	Frazer Nash		1911	61.6	61.2	61.2	=2
	TCG Butler	Wolseley Hornet 'Ophelia'			fail			
	E Dennis	BMW Type 55						
Class 5 Sports Cars 2001 to 4000cc								
18	KV Baillie-Hill	HRG		1496	55.8	53.0	53.0	1
	LH Parker	Jaguar SS 100		3485	58.8	56.0	56.0	2
	FR Gerard	Riley		1496	60.0		60.0	3
Class 6 Racing Cars Upto 1100cc								
24	WO Watkins	Watkins Nash		996	52.0	51.6	51.6	1
26	RD Poore	MG R-Type		746s	58.8		58.8	2
	DJ Bendle	GN-JAP 'Salome'		976		60.8		
Class 7 Racing Cars 1101 to 3000cc								
24	WO Watkins	Watkins Nash		996	52.4	51.6	51.6	1
	FR Gerard	ERA R4A		1488s	Fail	52.4	52.4	2
	LAC Northway	Anzani-Nash 'Spook'		1497s	57.0	57.0	57.0	
	P McCormick	Morgan-AC 'Stromboli'		1296	62.0	60.0	60.0	
	ES Taylor	AMAC Special		2000s				

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Known Entries and Times – Motor Cycles

No.	Rider	Motor Cycle	Reg. No.	cc	1st Run	2nd Run	Best time	Class pos.
Sports Motorcycles Upto 350cc								
	EB Bate	Velocette		348	64.2			
	F Evans	Velocette		348	58.4		58.4	1
	Webb	Triumph		349	60.6			2
	EG Hurley	OK-Supreme		248			62.0	3
	CA Dickens	Norton		348				
Sports Motorcycles Over 350cc								
31	PS Falconer	Triumph		498	50.2		50.2	1
	CA Dickens	Norton		348	55.4			2
	F Evans	Velocette		348			56.0	3
	G Naris	MSS Velocette			68.0			
	JE Breyer	Douglas		596	64.8			
	Webb	Triumph		349	60.0			
Racing Motorcycles Upto 350cc								
	R Moore	Velocette		348	51.4		51.4	1
	DA Cox	Triumph		349	55.0			2
	CA Dickens	Excelsior-JAP		346	53.4			=3
	DW Hughes	AJS		349	52.2			=3
	HA Naris	New Imperial		346	60.0			
Racing Motorcycles Over 350cc								
31	PS Falconer	Triumph		498	48.6	48.6	48.6	1
	R Moore	Velocette		348	54.0			2
	CA Dickens	Excelsior-JAP		346	52.0			3
	DA Cox	Triumph		349	53.4			
	HL Cox	Triumph		498			52.8	
	WA Taylor	Douglas		494				
Motorcycles Class unknown								
	T Wood						52.4	

Pete Stowe 2021

Westcountry Motorsport History

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

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