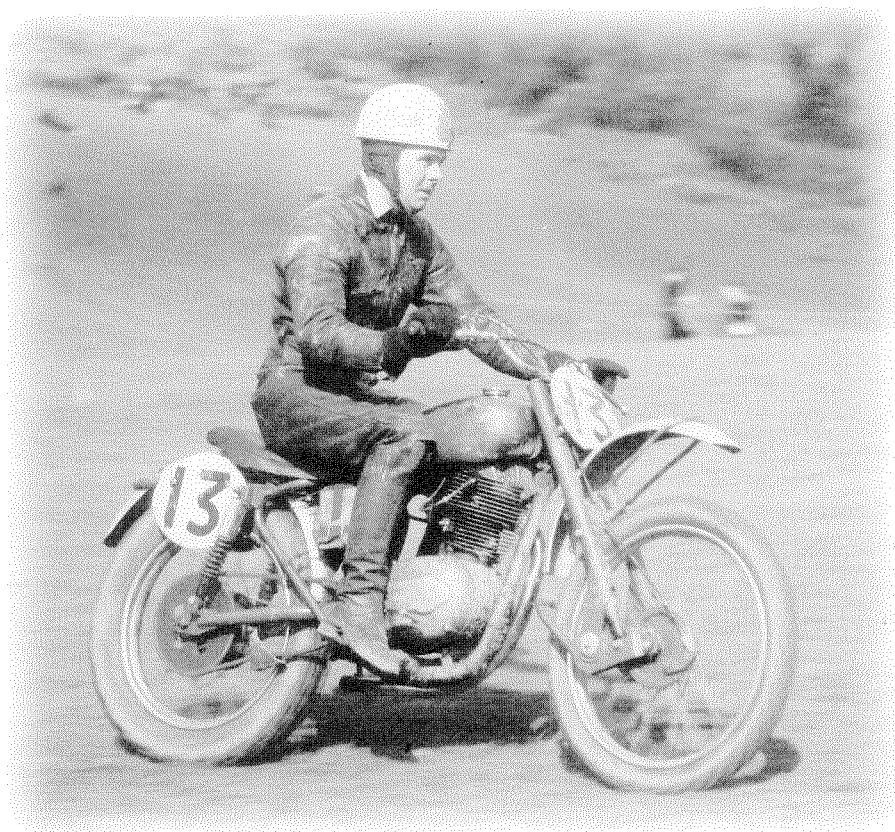


KNOCK MOTOR CYCLE CLUB

75th Anniversary



1922 - 1997

**CHARLES
HURST**

NISSAN



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11

VERY GOOD REASONS
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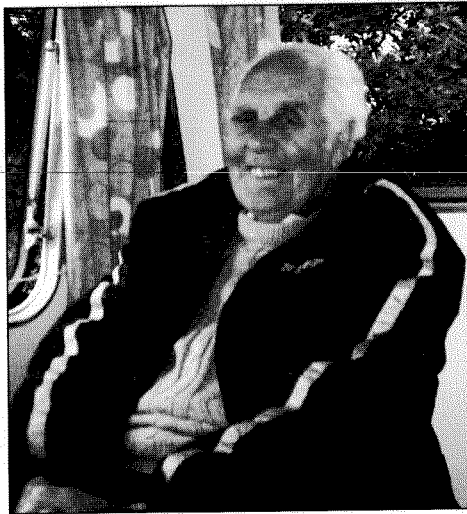
BALMORAL 62 Boucher Road
Tel: (01232) 381721

Seventy Five Years of Knock

**The continuing story of 75 Years of the
existence of Knock Motor Cycle and Car
Club Ltd.**

*Compiled by
David McBride*

Foreword from our President Donald Fleck



Few could argue that there is anywhere else in the world with a stronger following for Motorcycle Sport than Ireland and I feel very proud and privileged to have been part of motorcycling and the Knock MC & C Club since the early 1940's.

Since then I have seen World Class events run by the Club not least The Hurst Cup Trial and The Tommy Stewart Memorial Scramble. Friends have come and gone through the years people like Brian Stronge, Harold McKee, Charlie Duffin; Tommy Stewart and Victor Neill to name but a few.

I remember during the 2nd World War years. A lot of Club Members joined the Home Guard as despatch riders; anything to get riding a motorbike!!

The Club continues today with Stalwarts like Billy Hutton (Bells Hill), Billy Hutton (Jordanstown), Peter Cusack, Gordon Crabbe and Sidney Steele and thankfully "new blood" Andrew Huddleson, Malcolm McMillan and Stephen Murphy.

I wish the Club all the best with their future ventures and I hope they continue to flourish and promote motorcycling at its best!! (As to my mind the Knock Club does) for at least another 75 years.

DONALD FLECK

LIST OF OFFICERS

The appended list of the Chief Officers over the last twenty five years will give indication of the leadership which the Club has enjoyed.

Year	President	Captain	Hon. Secretary	Hon. Treasurer
1973	Capt. Henderson	E. Crabbe	P.M. Cusack	R. Lockie
1974	" "	D. McKee	"	J. Stronge
1975	" "	T. Briggs	"	"
1976	" "	D. Clegg	"	"
1977	" "	J. McMahon	"	"
1978	" "	S. Steel	"	"
1979	" "	S.W. Scott	"	"
1980	" "	S.W. Scott	"	"
1981	D. Fleck	W.J. Hutton (BH)	P.M. Cusack	"
1982	"	R. Ferguson	"	"
1983	"	B. Stronge	"	"
1984	"	G. Purce	"	"
1985	"	B. Boyd	"	"
1986	"	T. Briggs	"	"
1987	"	S. Steel	"	"
1988	"	M. Scott	"	"
1989	"	A. Huddleston	"	"
1990	"	J. Stronge	"	"
1991	"	P. Rice	"	"
1992	"	P. Rice	"	"
1993	"	R. Ferguson	"	"
1994	"	R. Ferguson	"	"
1995	"	R. Ferguson	"	E. Henderson
1996	"	S. Ferguson T. Briggs	} Jointly	E. Henderson
1997	"	G. Crabbe		E. Henderson

– Foreword –

When Sidney Steele first approached me to write this booklet for the Knock Club's 75th anniversary I was in two minds. Firstly how could I ever get enough material and secondly how could I refuse Sid?

Despite these misgivings I felt honestly honoured to be asked. I felt, and still do feel, that such a highly respected club with such distinguished members could easily produce any number of men far more worthy and capable of the job.

When I started my research the problem of enough material soon vanished, for with the help of Peter Cusack and Eddie Henderson in particular I soon had more than enough and my problem soon became one of what to omit rather than what to include.

For the Golden Jubilee of the Club in 1972 Billy McMaster produced an excellent booklet giving a detailed history of the Club up to that date. I could not in any way continue such a chronicle with such depth and eloquence as Billy, nor would I try to merely add on.

So in compiling this booklet I have instead endeavoured to give the reader a general flavour of the Knock Club, its main events and its great characters. In doing so I have included as much historical fact as possible.

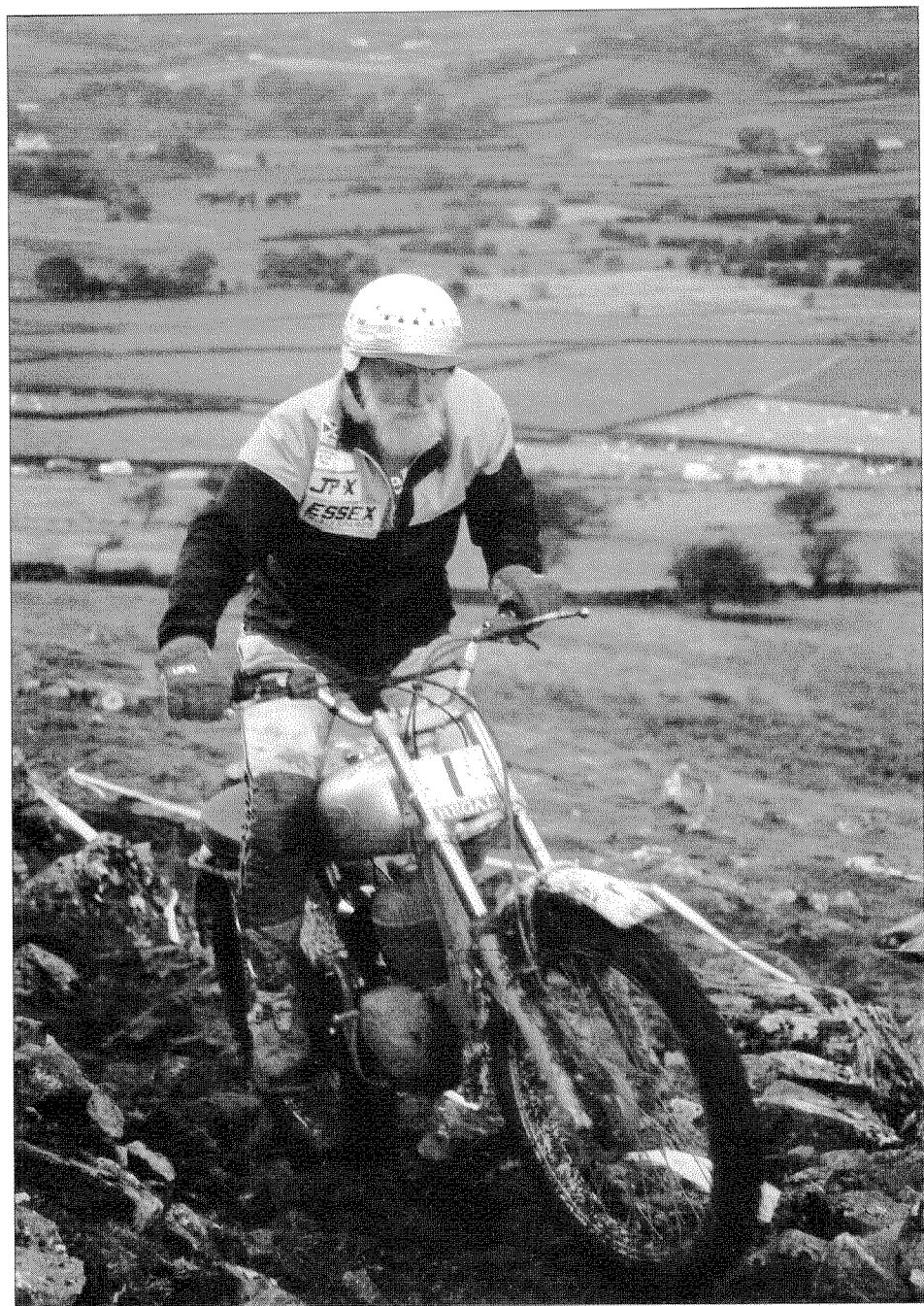
Having over the last 35 years competed in, broadcast from, and reported on literally hundreds of Knock Club events I have also been able to include personal observations on both events and characters.

Permit me to share some of these, to me precious, little memories of Knock events and people before you delve into the main text: - dancing all evening at a Hurst Cup Dinner because I was too sore to sit down - being dragged into the corner of a hospitality caravan by Joan Hutton and asked "Did you hear the one about?" - trying to pluck up courage to tell Sidney that he had added my score card wrongly - winning the Irish Experts with my pajamas still below the barbour suit - hardly able to see the Shaw Cup sections after celebrating Kathryn's birth the night before and then watching her finish the event on her own bike 15 years later - enjoying Frances Hutton's hospitality in her big kitchen on a cold day at Bells Hill - Sandra Ferguson's ever-smiling face in the steam from two soup pots after a trial - actually passing world motocross champion Jeff Smyth in a Hurst section - the list just goes on and on.

I have spent many happy and thoroughly absorbing hours in the research and writing of this booklet. It is meant, not as a history but as a celebration of the activities of a great sporting institution over 75 years.

I hope you enjoy it!

Davy McBride



The Author – Davy McBride

– Chapter 1 –

THE BEGINNINGS

On the evening of 14th February 1922 a group of enthusiastic young men met in the Working Men's Institute at Ballyhackamore in the district known as Knock on the outskirts of the city of Belfast.

The object of these young men's enthusiasm was the motorcycle. In particular they were keen to use their machines for competition against each other and to promote events where they could pit both themselves and their beloved bikes against others in Ireland.

Thus was born the Knock Motor Cycle Club which in this year, 1997, celebrates its 75th anniversary. Over those past 75 years the club has built up an enviable reputation for organising and promoting events of the very highest calibre, and it continues to do so in trials, motocross, and short-circuit racing.

Having competed in international events in the British Isles and in Europe I can testify without fear of contradiction that the organisation and promotion of Knock Club events is second-to-none.

But going back to 1922 it is very interesting to compare the motorcycling scene in Ireland then to that of today. In those heady days there were actually more motorcycles on the roads than motorcars. The two-wheelers accounted for almost six-and-a-half thousand out of a total of just over eleven thousand motorised vehicles. Take a seat on the bank at Juniper Hill the evening before the North-West 200 now and you can count that number go past in just about half-an-hour.

What of the machines themselves? Unlike today the one machine was used, not only as your day-to-day transport but as a trials bike one weekend, a road-racer the next, and a scrambler the next.

There were of course already the well-known names of motorcycling such as AJS, ARIEL, BSA, MATCHLESS, NORTON and the like, many in those early days, listing a "sports" model. But there were many others the names of which have long since gone into the annals of history. Names such as DUNELT, ZENITH, DOUGLAS, RALEIGH, PANDA and ABC, were all available making the choice of machinery a much wider one than is available to today's motorcyclist.

There was plenty of technical interest too. When today's generation think of the machines of that bygone era the sort of things which do not immediately spring to mind are upside-down telescopic forks, watercooled disc-valve twin two-

strokes, in-line four cylinder engines, four-valve heads, disc brakes and big v-twins but all those were available in one form or another on the wide choice of machinery.

Performance too was improving by the year and already speeds in excess of 90 MPH were being achieved in races. Indeed in that year of 1922 the Isle of Man Senior T.T. was won by Alex Bennett, himself an Ulsterman having been born at Craigantlet on the hill overlooking Knock. His fastest lap on the overhead-valve 500cc Norton was just a few seconds under 60 MPH at an average speed of 59.99 MPH. This was a fine achievement considering the poor state of the roads.

Back in 1922 the competitive side of motorcycling was very different to what it is today. The governing body, The Motorcycle Union of Ireland was already in existence but it was in a dormant state having held its last annual conference in Dundalk in 1915 when R.J. Lindsay was President. However things were on the move and later in the year a conference was held, again in Dundalk, and they have continued since then without a break, even being held throughout the Second World War.

The Ulster Centre of the M.C.U.I. had just six clubs affiliated to it in 1922. They were the Ulster M.C.C., Banbridge M.C.C., Ballymena M.C.C., South Derry M.C.C., Lisburn M.C.C., and Belfast and District M.C.C. The Belfast and District M.C.C. was actually the oldest club having been formed way back in 1904. However, like the M.C.U.I. itself, the club had ceased to be active during the First World War but meetings began again early in 1922. One other club was also in existence, The Temple Motor Cycle and Athletic Club. For them, the Athletic side was the more important with their chief event, a very large athletic and sports meeting, which was well established.

Looking at the racing scene into which the newly formed Knock Club entered, it was for those days a fairly healthy one with four road races having been promoted in 1921. "Healthy" is maybe a rather unfortunate word to choose to describe road-racing of the day, for these events were held on roads still open to the public to use, often with a loose surface, and liberally strewn with nails from horse shoes. Little was worn in the way of protective clothing.

The first race of 1921, indeed the first road race ever held in Ireland, was at The Temple on Saturday 3rd September. It started at 1pm and was really just a crowd-warmer for the big sports and athletics meeting which followed.

The race over 25 miles was run on a handicap basis with an entry of 10. L. McCandless was the limit man with a 4 1/2 minute start for his 2 3/4 H.P. Douglas Twin. Scratch men were Jimmy Shaw on his 3 1/2 H.P. Norton and Billy Chambers on his 3 1/2 H.P. B.S.A. The race was won by T.G. Lindsay on

an Imperial Jap with W.J. White on a Norton second and H. Chambers on an A.J.S. third.

For his win Colonel T.G. Lindsay was awarded a "Cup and Teapot" valued at £10-10-0 W.J. White received a "Horn Gong" valued at £6-6-0, while H. Chambers collected a "Salad Bowl" valued at £4-4-0. The names of entries and the prizes on offer were listed in a programme on sale to the public for the sum of 3 pence.

Other races that year were held at Ballynahinch, Loughbrickland and Desertmartin, and of those 10 entries at the Temple, Jimmy Shaw, Herbert Chambers and Tom Mallon had all actually taken part in the T.T. Races on the Isle of Man in June of that year.

The Knock Club did not run an actual road race although in 1923 they did begin with the organisation of such an event but did not carry it through due to opposition from the local authorities in the area of the proposed course.

They did however promote speed events with their first being a hillclimb at Clandeboye in their first year of existence, 1922. This was added to in 1924 with Speed Championships, held that year at Minerstown, and Knock Club Team entries in both the Junior and Senior T.T. Races.

The actual first event organised by the Knock Club was a Paper Chase held in the North Down area. The winner of that inaugural event was Ryder Boyd, a man who was elected Captain of the Club in 1923 and then filled the office of Treasurer from 1945 to 1958. He was then elected a Vice-President, an office he held until his death in 1964.

The year 1922 was certainly a memorable one in motorcycle sport in Ireland for, mainly due to the stubborn determination of the great Harry Ferguson, the first Ulster Grand Prix was staged. The event took place on Saturday 14th October over 7 laps of the old Clady Circuit, a distance of 143.5 miles.

An excellent entry of 75 riders set off in four classes. Giving a glimpse of things to come, the winner Hubert Hassall averaged 60.57 MPH on his Norton and the fastest lap was set by Harry Langman who took his twin-cylinder water-cooled Scott round the 20.5 mile notoriously bumpy course in just 18 minutes and 42 seconds, an average speed of 65.70 MPH. Both these speeds were the fastest ever recorded in any road race up to that date and the Ulster Grand Prix for many years held the title "The Fastest Road Race In The World." No doubt every single one of the 37 members of the newly-formed Knock Club were present at the Clady circuit that day.

It was not all pure speed and road racing in the competition arena however.

Reliability trials were, if anything, even more popular than the pure racing. In these events riders had to cover certain distances with no outside assistance and keep in a tight time schedule. Along the route the steeper and rougher climbs were observed and riders lost marks for putting their feet down. Modern trials and enduros are the direct descendants of these reliability trials.

Two of today's greatest events, the Scottish Six-Days trial and the International Six Days Enduro, were already well established by 1922. The Scottish Six-Days was first organised by the Edinburgh Club in 1909 with daily routes of almost 200 miles and some of the steepest, roughest hills in the Highlands to negotiate. In 1913 the ACU in Britain instigated the International Six-Day Trial for national teams on machines produced in their own country, over a very demanding course in the Lake District.

In Ireland the great event of this type was the End-To-End Trial. Riders faced the long trek from Kerry in the South-West to North Donegal. In these times of reliable machinery, good suspension, well-maintained roads, not to mention light warm and waterproof riding gear, it is difficult to imagine just what such an event entailed back in 1922. Suffice to say, anyone who won a Gold Medal in the End-To-End was a proud man, or woman, indeed. In fact the Knock Club won the Team Prize in 1929.

As well as these, grass-tracks and scrambles, the more social events such as treasure-hunts and paper chases were also popular.

So in 1922 the Knock Motor Cycle Club launched itself into this competitive motorcycle world. Geoffrey Fitchie was the first Club Captain (they did not have a Chairman and still do not have one). Billy Gunning was the Hon. Secretary and the finances were in the hands of Hon. Treasurer R.W. Bell. The local member of Parliament Mr R.J. Lynn agreed to be President of the Club. I am sure on that February evening few, if any, of that little band could have guessed at the stature and reputation their newly-formed Club would attain in future years not only in Ireland but in the United Kingdom, Europe and beyond.

How the Club progressed to reach that stature has been carefully and meticulously documented by the late Billy McMaster senior in his book compiled to commemorate the Golden Jubilee of the Knock Club in 1972.

In it he traces year by year the men and the events, the successes and the problems, the lows and the highs of the Knock Club during those first 50 glorious years. Suffice to say, I could not, nor would I even try, to better such a chronicle. I commend it to you, and I will move on.

– Chapter Two –

THE HURST

With such men as Charlie Duffin, Fred Duffin and Tommy Stewart all active members of committee, it was no great surprise that, despite running quite a few speed events in its early days, the Knock Club soon gravitated towards trials. These great off-road competitors were soon joined by another, Harold McKee who in 1928 won a gold medal in the I.S.D.T., the first Club member to do so.

That year, 1928, saw the demise of the Ballynahinch Club, and in so doing they donated their trophies to the Knock Club. Among them was the Hurst Cup. The seed had been sown. In the year 1930, the Knock Club ran their first Hurst Cup trial and it was won by Charles Duffin. The next few years were a lean time for all forms of motorcycle sport due to the depression but things began to pick up in the mid-1930s. By 1934 "The Hurst" was attracting a good number of entries from the Southern Centre but it was again Ulstermen Harold McKee and A.G. McFarlane who were getting their names on the trophy, after a double by Stanley Woods in '32 and '33.

With the trial now established at the Clandeboye Estate, the venue which was to remain its home right up to 1990, it was gaining in stature by the year. In his report to the Club A.G.M. for 1935 the Hon. Secretary Charles Duffin stated "this event has now become so established that no Irish trials rider of any repute can afford to miss it," a statement which I firmly believe has held true right throughout the history of this famous event and indeed still holds true in its format today as a team trial.

The very next year the Hurst had another non-Ulster winner when Graham Leask of Dublin won the event and this was followed up the next year with that famous Dublin trials exponent Charlie Manders taking the honours down south again on his Triumph.

The 1938 event was notable in that, for the first time ever the B.B.C. broadcast a radio commentary on a trial, recording the win by Ulsterman A.G. McFarlane. This was followed the next year by the first English entry G.E. Rowley, as the fame of the Hurst spread beyond the shores of Ireland.

But just as the Hurst was on the brink of spreading the recognition it deservedly enjoyed in Ireland to the mainland of Britain, the Second World War totally wiped out, not only trials, but all forms of motorcycle sport, for the next six years or so.

When the Club held its Fourteenth Annual General Meeting in January 1946 at

the end of the war to revive motorcycle sport, the very first item discussed after the election of officers was the Hurst Cup Trial. So it was that the Hurst was "back in business" with the minimum delay.

The very next year 1947 was one of supreme importance in the history of the Hurst for it ushered the trial into the British National scene which in future years was to lead to firstly European and then World status.

In that year due in no small measure to the efforts of Jack Chambers and Messrs Smith, Savage and Perrigo of Norton and B.S.A., the Hurst was listed as a Trade Supported Trial in the British calendar. The B.S.A. factory sent a team of three and Norton and A.J.S. were also officially represented.

Things however were almost ruined when heavy snow fell the days before and deep drifts actually blocked parts of the course. Stirling work by Oliver Jackson and Stanley Russell using a tractor and a jeep saved the day and the Hurst ran as scheduled.

The works B.S.A. team was led by "The Middlesborough Maestro", the great Fred Rist and he proceeded to beat everyone including the local favourite Billy Nicholson who was also B.S.A. mounted.

Thus began the era of the Hurst as a trade supported trial which lasted for over a decade, right throughout the 50's, with only one break, the year 1957. It could, I suppose, be described as the first international era of the trial for in those times Britain was the home of world trials riding, producing both the best riders and the best machines in the world.

Among those riders was the 1946 winner Billy Nicholson, a Belfast man who rode for the B.S.A. factory. Following his team-mate Fred Rist's win in 1947 Nicholson took outright victory in 1948 and '49 and again in 1951. In that year he won the Victory and Kickham trials along with the Hurst in the early part of the season and followed them up with wins in the Red Rose, Scott and Pearce Simon to win the ACU Star, the equivalent of today's British Trials Champion title.

Another great B.S.A. rider who had considerable success in the Hurst at this time was John Draper. He won the 350cc Cup in 1949 following that up with overall wins in 1950 and 1955, the year in which he also won the European Motocross title. The following year he took the 500cc Cup back at the Hurst.

Johnny Brittain, who was noted for his many trials and ISDT successes for Royal Enfield, was the winner in both '54 and '56 while Gordon Jackson was the 1953 victor on a MATCHLESS.

Many of these great riders were also top scramblers and the Hurst was much to

►
*BRIAN
STRONGE,
under the
watchful eye
of observer,
and arch
enthusiast
Gilly Iveson*



◄
*ROBERT FERGUSON
ploughs through the
Lead Mines Mud.*



their liking for in those days, and indeed right up until European Championship rules excluded the format, the Hurst was a time-and-observation event where the fastest 6 finishers set standard time.

The 1950s saw the start of another great era in the history of the trial. In 1953 The Oliver Jackson Award was won by young Samuel Hamilton Miller from Belfast. By 1957, as a member of the ARIEL works team he won the Hurst Cup and began an unprecedented record run of 12 consecutive wins which was only terminated by a Gordon Farley victory in the blizzard conditions of 1969. He won once more in 1970 leaving his total at 13 victories. The first 8 were achieved on the legendary "GOV132" 500cc ARIEL while the remainder were on a series of BULTACO machines.

The Hurst finally lost its trade supported status in 1961 but such was the standing of the trial that many of the top British riders and indeed teams still considered the Hurst "a must" in the trials calendar and continued to compete throughout the 1960s.

Then in 1968 the F.I.M. instigated a European Trials Championship with events in Switzerland, Germany, Belgium, France, and Great Britain. Hurst supremo Sammy Miller won all 5 rounds to take the title. When the series was extended in 1970 Ireland's application was accepted and the Hurst entered its second international era as a European Championship trial for the next 5 years.

That first Irish round was held on 14th February in fine weather and was won by Sammy Miller. He dropped 91 marks to claim what was to be his final Hurst Cup victory. Making it a BULTACO 1-2 Malcolm Rathmell was runner-up on 106 marks. Benny Crawford was the best local rider in 7th place. Sammy went on to win the championship overall.

The next year it was Gordon Farley who took his MONTESA to victory with Rathmell again in second spot. Despite finishing in a lowly 10th position Mick Andrews went on to win the title that year, a year which saw the first ever continental riders at the Hurst.

Mick Andrews came back in '72 and made up for his poor showing the previous year taking his OSSA to victory on 83 marks lost. For the third year in succession Rathmell was runner-up and Benny Crawford was best Irishman, this time in 9th position. Andrews went on to clinch his second European title.

Victory in 1973 went to Martin Lampkin. The Hurst was the opening round of the championship that year and he went on to take the title away from Andrews who had switched from OSSA to YAMAHA.

The final European Championship was in 1974. The Hurst was round 2 of the

series and was won by Rob Edwards on his MONTESA who dropped 53.6 marks. This odd total was due to the fact that time penalties were given as 0.1 of a mark per minute. The best Irish rider was a certain D. McBride in 15th position dropping 135.4 marks.

So ended another era in the history of the Hurst. Continually growing in stature these 5 years had seen the trial gain true international status, its first European competitors, and entries well over the 100 mark, a big percentage of these visitors from outside Northern Ireland. Taking 1973 as an example 40% of the 110 entries were visitors and as well as Eire and England, Sweden, Spain, France and Switzerland were all represented.

For the year 1975 the European Trials Championship was given World Championship status by the F.I.M. and who better to be given the honour of staging the first ever World Championship Trial than the Knock Club with the Hurst Cup. So on 15th February the Hurst entered yet another era in its already illustrious history.

Dry frosty weather made the course easier than usual that year and for the first time ever the Hurst was won with a single-figure score when Dave Thorpe, out on a new BULTALO dropped a superb 9 marks leaving him well clear of Sweden's Benny Sellman in second spot. Also in the points that day were Martin Lampkin the 1975 World Champion, Ulf Karlson the 1980 World Champion, and the great Finn Yrjo Vesterinen who took the title in 1976, '77 and '78. Showing the new quality of the opposition Benny Crawford was best Irishman down in 20th place.

1976 saw another "first" when the trial was won by Yrjo Vesterinen on his BULTACO, the first continental rider to get his name on the trophy.

The next year was notable on a number of counts. The Charles Hurst Group sponsored the event for the first time and began a long association between themselves and the trial which lasts right to this present day. The Hurst also had its first entry from the USA, that of Bernie Schreiber who went on to win the World Title in 1979. That year too was the closest recorded finish ever in the Hurst when Malcolm Rathmell beat John Reynolds by just 0.1 of a mark.

Right up to 1981 the Hurst continued to attract the best in the world and while the deep mud, tree-roots and slippery rocks so expertly laid out by Billy Hutton were not always to the continentals' liking the trial itself was always a first-class event. Colin Bell was usually best Irishman but never quite making it into the points.

The Knock Club were bitterly disappointed in 1982 when the F.I.M. did not allocate a World Championship trial to Ireland. This in no way reflected on the

status or the organisation of the Hurst, rather it showed the popularity trials riding was gaining in the world with more and more countries applying to run a round in the series. Canada was given that round instead.

Not ones to lie down the Knock Club ran the Hurst as a big money international trial that year and the entry was almost as good as a full world championship with 5 previous winners, 4 world champions and a host of top British and Irish names.

The previous year's winner Eddie Lejeune of Belgium took his Honda to victory winning £500 and he went on to win the world title that year.

For 1983 it was back to business as a world championship round for the Hurst (or the Charles Hurst Cup as it was now called to recognise the main sponsors) and it continued as such right up to the end of the decade. A phenomenon which marked this era was that from 1983 to '88 the rider who won the Hurst went on to take the World Title. Eddie Lejeune did it in '83 and '84, Thierry Michaud in '85 and '86, Jordi Tarres in '87, and Michaud again in '88. Each year too Harold Crawford was best Irishman actually gaining world points from 1985 onwards. In 1988 young Robert Crawford became the youngest world points scorer ever when he finished in 15th place just 2 weeks after his 16th birthday.

In 1989 Thierry Michaud broke the mould when he won the Hurst but failed to take the championship which reverted to Jordi Tarres. Jordi only managed 4th on the day.

Another mould was broken that day, for the clerk of the course was Tom Briggs. Tom took over from Billy Hutton who had been at the helm right from 1965 and had seen the Hurst grow through both European and World Championships. It would be well-nigh impossible for anyone to record on paper the work put in by Billy Hutton. He knew where every single section-marker was placed and although he never rode a trials bike himself his events were almost all beyond criticism. The Hurst owes not a little of its greatness to the quietly-spoken big gentleman from Bells Hill. I had the privilege of competing in 16 of his Hursts and enjoyed every one.

For 1990 a consortium of Clubs in the Southern Centre organised the Irish World Championship round and the Hurst was run as a national. It was won by British Champion Steve Saunders with Robert Crawford second.

With World Championship status again for 1991 and more and more red tape and facilities needed, Tom Briggs and his Knock Club band took the Hurst to Kilbroney Park and the Batt Estate in the Mourne thus ending an association with Clandeboyne Estate which had begun in the early 1930s. Jordi Tarres won

that day with Robert Crawford a fine 10th.

With the Irish World Trial again in the Southern Centre in 1992 the Knock Club decided to run the Hurst as an Inter Centre Team Trial at Bells Hill where the Southern Centre were the winners.

In 1993 the Hurst reached the pinnacle of trials competition when it hosted the Trial Des Nations on 2nd October at Kilbroney. Teams from Spain, Great Britain, Italy, France, Finland, Germany, Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, Austria and of course Ireland fought for the trophy.

Spain, Great Britain and Italy were all in with a chance of winning right up to the very last lap when Spain squeezed ahead to win by just 3 marks from Great Britain with Italy another 1 mark behind in third. Ireland had their best result ever with an excellent eighth place.

The next year, 1994 saw the swan-song of the Hurst in the international trials arena. In typical fashion however it was yet another "first". The F.I.M. that year changed the world trials to a two-day format and the Hurst was the pioneer.

Beautiful spring weather blessed Kilbroney and the Batt Estate for the two days as a superbly on-form Jordi Tarres broke Dave Thorpe's 1975 record, winning on just 8 marks lost. Robert Crawford was again best Irish competitor on his YAMAHA in tenth place.

With a two-day format, a mass of red tape and regulations, a mountain of equipment to be put in place, and a turnover in the region of £30,000, the Knock Club felt that it was time for them to withdraw from organising a World Championship trial as they felt that a single club, even the Knock, could not keep up the standard set. So the Irish World Championship trial in Ulster in 1996 was organised by the Ulster Centre Trials Committee and thus ended another Hurst era.

For the last two years the Hurst has gone into a sort of semi-retirement as an Inter-Club team trial held at Bells Hill. The Clerk of the course, would you believe it, is once again the man who steered the Hurst through some of its greatest times, Billy Hutton.

Such however is the charisma attached to this most historic of Irish trials that in 1997 there were no fewer than 16 club teams from all over Ireland taking part.

The history of the Hurst is far from ended yet.

– Chapter 3 –

THE MEN

Few, if any, would dispute the fact that the Knock Club ranks with the greatest among motorcycle clubs, not only in the Ulster Centre but in the Motor Cycle Union of Ireland. The high standing is due entirely to the dedication, expertise and pure hard work of men who, throughout the years have graced the membership of the Knock Club.

Right from its inception back in 1922 The Knock Club has attracted men of the highest calibre. Some have been great administrators, some have been great competitors, a few have even excelled in both fields. Behind them has been a small army of dedicated workers who, while shunning the limelight, have made possible all the achievements of the Club.

Recognising that motorcycle sport could not exist, let alone expand or grow, if confined to club level many of these Knock Club officials and administrators have served the sport, always with dedication and distinction, at both Ulster Centre and Motor Cycle Union of Ireland level. Some have even progressed beyond to the international scene.

In this chapter the names and achievements of some of these “Great” Knock Club members will be recorded. In doing so I am well aware of the two-fold danger which lies in the path of anyone attempting such a record, spanning a very full 75 years. Firstly it would be impossible for me to name everyone who should, by their right deserve a place in this Knock story and secondly when writing of such people no author could ever include every aspect and achievement worthy of mention.

So it is with full knowledge of my shortcomings that I begin this look at the Club and sporting careers of some of the men who over the 75 years have made the Knock Club the great sporting institution that it is today.

As even the most humble committee member who has ever driven in a stake, tied a rope, or observed a section has played his part, so the “greats” have all, each in their own fashion, played their part none deserving to be placed above the other in importance. So in this chapter the names will be in chronological order as far as possible, and for the first I go right back to 1922.

Charles W. Duffin was one of the founder members of the Knock Club. Charles, with his brother Fred, helped guide the Club through its early years and continued to play a great part in the evolution of the Club in the post-war years. He was made a Vice-President in his later years and continued to show that keen interest.

Charles Duffin was one of that small band who excel at the sport, and play their full part in the administration. Trials riding was the arena in which he excelled and when the Knock Club ran their first Hurst Cup trial in 1930 it is befitting that the winner was Charles W. Duffin.

Despite being a top-class competitor he was also deeply involved in the running of the Club. An early committee member, he was elected to the post of Club Captain in 1925 following in the footsteps of Geoffrey Fitchie and Ryder Boyd.

In 1934 he was elected Hon. Secretary, a post which he held right up to the beginning of the Second World War in 1939. As anyone who has ever held this post can testify, it is a busy and demanding one, yet it was during this period that Charles Duffin had his greatest sporting successes. In 1936, and again in 1937, he represented Ireland in the International Six-Days Trial and on both occasions he won a gold medal.

During this period too the Hurst Cup trial foundations were laid and it was due in no small way to the efforts of Charles Duffin that the Clandeboye Estate was secured as a venue. The Clandeboye-Hurst link continued right through the trade supported days, the European Championships and the World Championships until, due to modern demands, the trial was forced to leave what had been its home for so long.

During those trade supported days of the 1950s Charles Duffin, now retired from top-class trials riding, took up the reins of Clerk of the Course, once again giving the benefit of his experience for the good of others. In 1951 he was elected Club Captain for a second time.

At the 28th Annual General Meeting of the Club in January 1960 Major Michael proposed "that the name of C.W. Duffin be added to the list of Vice-Presidents in view of his long record of service to the Club." Sidney Steele seconded the proposal.

Charles Duffin held the post of Vice President up to his death in 1981, continuing to take an interest in the Club and its activities. Despite his successes he was always self-effacing and shunned the glare of publicity. His memory is perpetuated in the Charles Duffin Trophy.

If Charles Duffin was a great competitor who also served his club then by contrast his contemporary **Robert H. Wright** was no competitor yet served his club and the sport at Ulster, Irish, and International level for nigh on 40 years. He served, not only motor-cycle sport but motor-car sport as well and was often right there "at the cutting edge" and in the glare of publicity.

Robert Wright became interested in motor-cycle sport in the years immediately after the First World War. With his background as a civil-servant he quickly gravitated towards administration and legislation rather than out-and-out competition. He joined the Knock Club and very soon became involved with the Ulster Centre and The Motorcycle Union of Ireland. Indeed by the year 1924 he was elected Secretary of the M.C.U.I. at their conference in Dublin.

The Chairmanship of the Ulster Centre was soon bestowed on him and he served the sport in that capacity for many years. In the meanwhile he was a loyal and industrious committee member of the Knock Club and was elected Captain in the year 1930, and held the post of Treasurer in 1940.

But it is in the annals of the Motor Cycle Union of Ireland where the name of Robert H. Wright is unsurpassed even to this day. After his year as Secretary in 1924 Robert Wright was elected President in 1928, the highest office in Motorcycle administration in Ireland.

This began a remarkable series of Presidencies stretching right up to 1952. With the top post alternating between the Ulster Centre and the Southern Centre Robert Wright was President every other year for 25 years with the one exception of the year 1942 when another Knock Club official and top competitor **TOMMY STEWART**, held the post.

In total Robert Wright was President of the Motor Cycle Union of Ireland for 12 years. This is a record which I doubt will ever be broken for the nearest rival to this is the current holder of the post Sean Bissett who is only in his fifth term of office.

Despite being so deeply involved in administration Robert Wright's special interest was in time-keeping. He brought to this facet of organisation a professionalism and accuracy which soon led to his services being in great demand not only in motorcycle sport but in motor car sport as well. Such too was his reputation that his services were sought beyond Ulster and Ireland in the international arena.

He, more than any other, laid the seeds of the very professional time-keeping system used in today's motorsport. Were he alive I am sure he would be at the forefront of the computer technology which is ably handled today by yet another Knock Clubman Patrick Rice.

Commander OSCAR HENDERSON C.V.O., C.B.E., D.S.O., R.N. was another of the great names who served the club over a very long period of time, a period which stretches from the very early years right up to the end of the 1960s.

Just 2 years after the formation of the Knock Club Oscar Henderson, a very

prominent member of the Northern Ireland Business and Political scenes, was elected a Vice-President. In 1931 he succeeded Herbert Dixon M.P. as President and he held the office right up to his death in 1969.

Despite the fact that he was not only a very busy man in the business arena but also "aide-di-camp" to the governors of Northern Ireland, Oscar Henderson took a deep interest and indeed a great pride in the affairs of the Knock Club.

He was a regular, and very popular, figure at the various social functions of the Club including the annual prize-giving dinners and the Hurst Cup dinners. His popularity at these functions was only "out-done" by his elegant and charming lady wife, who always supported her husband, or in his unavoidable absence, would deputise on his behalf.

Mrs Henderson was a gracious and charming lady and I can well recall how, as a young and very unimportant competitor in the Hurst Cup Trial in the early 1960s she still made time to speak to me at the prize-giving dinner afterwards and congratulate me on my achievement.

It was this deep personal interest and pride which the Hendersons took in the affairs of the Knock Club and the gracious manner in which they carried out the Presidential duties with dignity and warmth which ensured the success of any social evening that they attended.

Right from his election to the office of President in 1931 until his death in 1969 there is no record of anyone even suggesting any other name for the post.

After his death Mrs Henderson was elected a Vice-President of the Club and the office of President was accepted by his son Captain O.W.J. Henderson. While her health permitted Mrs Henderson continued to grace Knock social functions. Captain Henderson remained President until 1981.

In the year 1938 **T.J.B. Stronge** joined the committee of the Knock Club. He was following in the footsteps of his father W.J. Stronge who had been elected a Vice-President of the Club and donated the Stronge Trophy as an encouragement to young riders.

Young Brian Stronge, who was just beginning his competition career, was a keen motorcyclist and when war broke out the following year it was no great surprise that he joined the forces as a dispatch rider in the army, where he served right throughout the war.

Immediately after his return he again joined the Knock Club and was elected a member of the committee in 1946. In 1948 he was elected to the office of Vice-Captain and the following year he became Captain of the Club.

During his term of office as Captain, Brian Stronge had his greatest sporting achievement when he was selected as a member of the Irish team for the International Six-Days Trial. In the event he won a gold medal, following in the footsteps of those other great Knock Club competitors Charles Duffin, Tommy Stewart, and Harold McKee.

Not content with his distinguished competition career and his work within the Knock Club, Brian Stronge joined the Ulster Centre where he contributed greatly to the organisation, rising to the office of Chairman. It was during this time too that he was instrumental in saving the International North-West 200 road races when, in 1959, they were on the point of extinction. When a similar fate befell the Ulster Grand Prix Brian Stronge was there too among the band who set up Ulster Centre Promotions to run the race in 1963.

Progressing on within the ranks of the Motor Cycle Union of Ireland he was elected President at Dublin in 1964 and served his year of office with distinction. Just 3 years later he was elected to what is without doubt the most difficult and time-consuming task in motorcycle administration in Ireland, the office of Secretary of the M.C.U.I..

For 18 years Brian Stronge held this post right up to 1984, a record which is only bettered by Athol Harrison. All during this time he continued serving the Knock Club and the Ulster Centre. He even had time in the early years to compete in trials being one of the first men in local events to ride a BULTACO. He was also team manager of the Irish Team in several of the International Six-Day Trials during the period.

At the Club Annual General Meeting in November 1986 Brian Stronge was presented with a barometer "a token of the club's appreciation of his long service rendered to the Club". He was also elected yet again as a member of committee for 1987. Sadly before that year was over he had died.

"Wee Brian" as he was known by all his friends and associates had been a true "great" of the Knock Club. His son John continued his work in the Club as Secretary of the Hurst Cup and Club Treasurer for many years.

Sadly all the great names that I have recalled so far are no longer with us. The next, although in declining health and almost 80 years of age is still very much with us and still serving the Club which he joined well over 50 years ago. I refer to **D.D.H. Fleck**.

"Big Donald" is one of those larger than life characters who demands to be respected and listened to merely by his presence.

Donald Fleck was elected to the committee of The Knock Club immediately

after the Second World War in 1945 and just two years later he was elected to the post of Honorary Secretary, a post he held for two more years.

In 1954 he was elected Captain of the Club a post which he was to hold again in 1965. Between these he was once again Hon. Secretary of the Club in 1963. He only held the Secretaryship for a year having to step down due to his business commitments. He concluded his report for that year 1963 thus:- "with this gentlemen I would wish to take leave of this office as Secretary of the Club. Due to increasing business commitments I find it impossible to devote the time one should to the many details of Club work. My interest in the Club is still as keen as ever and I will be pleased to serve the Club in the future in any small way I can."

That paragraph sums up Donald Fleck's whole attitude to the Knock Club, and indeed to all he did and still does in motorcycling. He is a man who wants to do the job right, to the best of his ability and even to this day his "interest in the Club is still as keen as ever."

Donald moved on to the Ulster Centre where he served with dedication and distinction, just as he had done in the Knock Club. He was made Chairman of the Centre and then in 1972 the Motor Cycle Union of Ireland elected him President.

In 1981, when it became apparent that Captain Henderson, the President of the Club, could not devote the time to his office due to business commitments, Donald Fleck was proposed by Stanley Scott and seconded by Brian Stronge to take the post. Donald accepted and has held the post ever since.

A very hospitable gentleman, Donald rarely misses a Knock Club event such as the Tommy Stewart Scramble or the Hurst Cup Trial. He is always to be seen "in the thick" of the socialising. Visitors, especially foreign or cross-channel, are rarely short of something to eat or a little liquid refreshment, while Donald is at hand to dispense them. In his own inimitable style they are never short of a bit of advice either!

For more than 50 years now D.D.H. Fleck has served the Knock Club and motorcycling. He has earned both the friendship and respect of all who have known him.

As you can see, the Knock Club, right throughout its 75 year history has had more than its share of the "great" names of Irish motorcycling. I would like to complete this chapter with a short look at some of the men on today's Knock Club committee.

Yet again, of necessity, I cannot mention them all though all deserve their place

in this history. Those whom I do not mention will no doubt accept my omission for the Knock Club has always worked together as a true team for the general good.

The most onerous task in any club is that of Secretary. The Secretary of the Knock Club is **Peter Cusack**. Peter must surely be the most long-serving Secretary in the sport for he took up the task in 1965, 32 years ago. His great interest is in Trials events. He supports just about every Knock trial, from the Hurst Cup down to the evening summer trials, acting as an observer or assisting in some way.

He is a true motorcyclist and although he never competed he still rides his KAWASAKI to all the events. In May this year the familiar figure of Peter Cusack on his KAWASAKI passed me at Glencoe heading towards Fort William for the Scottish Six-Days Trial.

A quiet self-effacing, hard-working, reliable Knock clubman, his record of service as Secretary will be one which I am certain will never be equalled, let alone bettered.

The Club Captain is **Gordon Crabbe**, a man who has given over 40 years faithful service to the Knock Club. Gordon Crabbe joined the Club in the early 1950s and was elected to the committee in 1956.

He served his first term as Captain in 1961 and this was followed up by another year of service in 1973. Between times he was a faithful member of committee.

After being elected a Vice-President he continued his interest in the Club and this year, for the third time he holds the high office of Club Captain.

The name **W.J. Hutton** is synonymous with the Knock Club. Indeed it refers to not one, but two, members of the same name, cousins, each in their own right deserving of a place in this chapter.

Again in chronological order I refer firstly to W.J. Hutton of Jordantown. Billy, as he is always known, joined the Knock Club and way back in 1952 the year that he won the 350cc and 500cc Irish Grass-Track Championships, he was elected on to the Club committee.

Since then Billy has served the sport at club level, Ulster Centre level, and at M.C.U.I. level. He was twice Club Captain, rose to Chairman of the Ulster Centre, and was elected President of the Motor Cycle Union of Ireland in 1990. This year Billy celebrates 45 years on the Knock Club committee.

During the 1950s and 60s he excelled in trials and scrambles winning the Irish title in both. He represented Ireland and he virtually "owned" the Tommy

Stewart Trophy with 10 wins, 5 of them consecutive from 1959 to 1962. He still is convenor of the road race travelling Marshalls Panel and can often be seen having “to sit up and roll off” to avoid overtaking a competitor on a sweeping lap.

The other **W.J. Hutton** is also Billy and he has served the Club since 1964. After just one year on the committee, despite never being a competitor, he took over the Clerk of Course duties for the Hurst Cup trial. He has held that post, with the exception of just a couple of years, right up to the present.

Despite being now past retirement age Billy still acts as Clerk of the Course not only for the Hurst Cup but for most of the Knock Club's off-road events including the Tommy Stewart scramble.

Nowadays in particular, land for events is very difficult to find. In this sphere Billy's contribution to the Club has been invaluable. He gives his land at Bells Hill for the Tommy Stewart, Hurst Cup, McMaster Cup and Kelly Cup events and the summer trials series.

As often as not he helps mark out the course, officiates at the event, and helps to clear up after it is over. When just about everyone else has left Billy is usually to be seen on his little Ferguson tractor doing the final clear-up of equipment.

Billy is the sort of man who shuns publicity and the limelight yet has a deep knowledge and love of his sport working unstintingly at every event. He is of the type who make up the “back-bone” of the sport.

I have ridden in literally hundreds of Billy Hutton's events and I can truly say that I have enjoyed just about every one.

I will wrap up this chapter with the man whom I hold to be the daddy of them all, **Sidney Steele**.

S.A. Steele was elected to the committee of the Club in 1952 and has served faithfully on it ever since. He held the Club Captaincy on three occasions, 1962, 1978 and 1987.

Soon after joining the Knock Club he entered The Ulster Centre as a council member and his work there has been unparalleled over the last 40 years.

Just as in the Knock Club minutes, so in the Ulster Centre minutes, hardly ever a meeting goes by without the name of Sidney Steele appearing asking a question, making a point, or offering advice.

Sidney specialised in time-keeping, and few events go by yet without the Steele finger on the button still, despite the fact that he is long past retirement age.

He was elected Chairman of the Centre and followed that with a year's Presidency of the Motorcycle Union of Ireland, elected in Dublin in 1984. He is today an Honorary Life Member of the Ulster Centre in recognition of his work for the sport.

The one member of the sport's governing body that every competitor over the past 40 years or so has got to know is Sidney Steele. This is because Sidney has held the post of Licence Registrar right throughout that time. Shunning the ubiquitous computer he still does the mammoth yearly task by hand.

He is a member of the management committee and a job which typifies his work for the sport, he is Convenor of the General Purposes Committee. Probably the least glamorous of them all, this is the body which organises the mundane running of such events as dinners, prize-givings and the like. Sidney Steele is the sort of man who can be depended on to get things done, often behind the scenes and without reward.

In outlining the work of just some of the Knock "names" in this chapter I hope I have given some insight into the calibre of the Clubmen who have made the Knock Club great and have brought it to its 75th Anniversary.

I would remind you finally that behind and alongside these men was the small army of workers who actually made it all possible.

– Chapter *four* –

THE ROUND-UP

And so we come to 1997, the 75th anniversary of the Knock Club. The Club still promotes trials, short-circuit races and scrambles.

Looking at the events by the calendar year they always start with the **McMaster Cup Trial** and the **Kelly Cup Trial** early in the year.

These events are now held at Bells Hill with one counting for the Regal Ulster Championship. All classes are catered for and they also include a round of the Ulster Youth Trials Championships.

The next event is the **Short Circuit Races** held in March in Nutts Corner. For those who associate the Knock Club with off-road sport, trials and scrambles, it may seem out of character. This however is far from the truth for the Club has a long history of promoting speed events.

In their very first year back in 1922 a hillclimb was staged a Clandeboye on roads and in 1924 Speed Championships were staged at Minerstown. In the early 1930s the Knock Club ran the Ballydrain Road Races and later a “Flying Kilometre” sprint was held at Toomebridge.

After the War in 1949 Short Circuit races were held at Ards Airfield. These continued up to 1953 and then moved to Kirkstown which was a new venue for racing at the time. Spiraling costs and low attendances killed off the venture.

Then in 1991 the Club joined with the MCRRCI Club to promote a round of the new Clubmans Championship short-circuit races at Aghadowey. In 1993 the Club moved to Nutts Corner where they remain until now still promoting a round of the Clubmans Championship.

April sees the Hurst Cup, now a team trial at Bells Hill. This has been well documented in a previous chapter.

The **Tommy Stewart Scramble** is the next big event and it has a long and distinguished history dating back to 1949.

The trophy is in memory of Tommy Stewart, a great competitor and committee member of the Knock Club in the pre-war years. As a member of the Irish team in the 1936 I.S.D.T. he won a gold medal and followed that up with a bronze the next year.

Terry Hill was the winner of that first Tommy Stewart Scramble, held at Ballyalton outside Newtownards in 1951.

In 1953 Billy Hutton had his first win at the Tank Testing Grounds near

Woodburn. He went on to win the trophy ten times, a record which still stands today.

In 1955 the event moved to its present "home" at Bells Hill Crossgar and it was granted Irish Championship status the following year, a status which it has retained ever since.

For many years it was Ireland's premier scramble attracting top works-supported riders from England and Scotland until overtaken for that title by the International John Donnelly organised by the Killinchy Club.

The Tommy Stewart scramble still remains one of Ireland's top off-road events. It retains a unique atmosphere and the Club continue to bring over top-class riders from across the water to take on our own championship contenders on the wonderful Bells Hill track. This year the trophy was won by Brian Steele.

During the summer months a series of four evening trials is held from May through to August. They don't usually attract a big entry but there is always a relaxed atmosphere coupled with close competition in the various classes.

These events began as training trials to encourage new riders way back in 1962 when they were held at McQuillan's Quarry near Dundrod. After a few years they moved to the lead mines and then they settled at Bells Hill where they remained ever since.

The final event of the sporting year is the **Shaw Cup Trial**, run in early October, high up in the Dromara Hills above Finnis on Mr Herron's land.

This trial is another of those events which have been promoted by the Club for many many years. Back in the 1930s it was a closed-to-club trial but soon graduated to "open" status. In 1960 it was made a counting round of the Irish Trials Championship and has remained one ever since.

After the Second World War it was held at the tank testing grounds at Woodburn in County Antrim for many years. It moved to Lyle Hill for 1964 and '65 and then to Edendarrif for a few years before settling at Finnis, its present venue, in 1970.

The ground is excellent for trials and although today's course is much shorter than the original ones it still uses a lot of the original natural rocky sections. I had the privilege of winning that first Shaw Cup at Finnis in 1970 and some of the "more mature" riders were remarking last year just how little some of the sections have changed over more than 25 years. Those sections were still costing marks to the top men yet needed none of the new trick-riding skills to record a clean, just pure riding ability.



◀
TERRY HILL, B.S.A. mounted
as always



▶
BILLY HUTTON, taking his
Matchless to one of his many
Tommy Stewart wins at Bells
Hill.

On the subject of trials, the Knock Club was the obvious choice of the Ulster Centre, when the **Irish Experts** was to be promoted in Ulster for the first time in 1956.

This event, for expert trials riders only, was a mirror of the British Experts. The Donat Gill Trophy was presented to the M.C.U.I. for the competition by the Gill brothers of Dublin and the trial was first run in the Southern Centre in 1955. Then it was to alternate between centres on an annual basis.

The Knock Club, in their usual meticulous manner, set to work plotting a suitable course in the Mourne Mountains based on Hilltown. However their work, at least for that year, was in vain for the M.C.U.I. were forced to suspend all events due to government fuel restrictions. However the event was run the following year on that course. There were 17 entries and the winner was Brian Martin on the works BSA.

The Knock Club continued to run the Irish Experts for the Ulster Centre for the next 20 years. The next year 1959 saw Sammy Miller take his first victory in atrocious conditions, in the Mournes around Hilltown.

Sammy took another couple of wins and then in 1965 a new venue was used based on the big quarry at Edendariff. I quote from the Secretary's annual report for that year "the event was won by young D. McBride and this gave the more fancied runners a bit of a surprise." I think it gave him a surprise too!

The event was again cancelled in 1967. This time it was due to movement restrictions on land because of an outbreak of foot and mouth disease in Northern Ireland.

In 1968 then, another new venue was used at Slieve Croob and for the first time in Ulster the Donat Gill Trophy went to a Southern Centre rider, Brian Lambe who took his BULTACO to victory.

For 1970 the Club moved the venue once again, this time to the superb trials terrain at the Batt Estate just above Rostrevor. Englishman Peter Gaunt riding the unbelievable little "Clock-work Mouse" 80cc JAWA was the winner on that occasion. That was to be the second of 4 consecutive victories, and the 1972 experts was a repeat performance, only this time Gaunt's bike was a 125cc Dalesman.

In 1974 Ray Pyper had his only Irish Experts victory, again at the Batt Estate. By this time other Clubs, such as the Ards and Lightweight who had already been assisting the Knock with the event, were showing interest in organising it themselves.

So, with the Hurst Cup now a full World Championship event, and a busy

programme of other trials and scrambles, the Knock Club organised their final Irish Experts in 1976. The venue was again the Batt Estate. It was a bitterly cold day with snow on the ground and thick ice on the sections in the rivers. I had the pleasure of winning the event, for the second time that day.

So far all I have referred to in this booklet has been motorcycling. It would be remiss of me not to pay tribute to the Knock Club's contribution to **Motor-Car Competition**.

From 1925 right up to 1965 the Knock Club organised events for cars and motorcycles. Indeed many of their events, especially in the earlier years, catered for both bikes and cars together.

The biggest of the car events was without doubt the "Twelve-Hour Night Trial". Up until 1955 bikes were included, but due to lack of interest they were dropped from then on. As its name suggests this event, held usually in May or June started in the evening and went through to the following morning.

The event was usually run in County Antrim often with a supper stop in some town or village. Cushendall was one of the more popular "watering holes". By the 1950s the full entry of 60 cars was being received, and when bikes were dropped this number was increased.

It was a unique event "a blend of social evening and sporting trial, not too difficult or dangerous." It certainly attracted the top car sportsmen with names like Paddy Hopkirk, Cecil Molyneaux, Sidney Pentland, Billy Reid and Robert McBurney all featuring in the results in the 1950s and the likes of Ian and Robert Woodside and Adrian Boyd class winners in the final years.

Right throughout the 1950s and up to 1965 the Knock Club had not only organised the night trial but had also promoted up to four or five car events during the year. There was even an internal club championship for the different classes counted over these events.

Sadly no car events were run in 1966. The reason for this is clear from the Secretary's report:- "the committee were reluctant to take this step but really had no choice due to the lack of interest or support for our car events." An era in Knock Club history had closed.

Right throughout its history the Knock Club have laid great emphasis on **Team Competition**. In only its third year of existence the Club fielded teams in both the Junior and Senior T.T. races in the Isle of Man. The senior team of J.W. Shaw, J.F. Dinsmore and J. Craig were actually leading for the team award right up to the last lap when sadly all retired with mechanical problems. In 1929 however the Knock Club team won the team award in the Lightweight T.T. The Knock Club continued to enter teams in road races while they had road-racing members.

However the Knock Club will always be remembered for producing what was, without doubt, the greatest Irish team ever assembled for the International Six-Days Trial. The team of Harold McKee, Charlie Duffin, and Tommy Stewart represented the M.C.U.I. McKee and Duffin gained gold medals while Stewart collected a bronze. In the previous years Tommy Stewart and Charlie Duffin both won gold medals.

Showing just how important the Knock Club placed its team activities I will quote you an extract from the Secretary's report for 1936. It speaks for itself!

"The fact that the Knock team finished at the bottom of the M.C.U.I. team championship is **not** satisfactory.....It is hoped that those who in the past have proved that team spirit is the backbone of the Club will not rest on their laurels."

The Club has continued to enter teams where possible, in trials competitions especially. In the early 50s the team of Billy Hutton, Eamon Rice, and Denis Campbell won many awards including the team award in the Scottish Six-Day Trial in 1953.

The trio of Alfie Kirk, Johnny Kirk and Dick Chamberlain took many a team trophy including the traders trophy in the early 50s while Billy McMaster, Derek Russell and Billy Hutton were a formidable force in the 60s.

It is little wonder then that when the Hurst Cup ceased to be a World Championship International event that the club gave it a new lease of life as a team event. Already it is receiving 16 club teams entered, an amazing achievement in such a short space of time.

So 1997 sees the Knock Club celebrate its 75th anniversary. It has been 75 years of true dedication to the great sport of motorcycling. For 40 years motor-car sport was served in a like manner. Great men, great teams and great events have come and gone. Many still remain.

While the Club, by necessity, no longer promote World Championship or International Events they have a calendar of Ulster Championship and Irish Championship meetings in trials, scrambles, and short-circuit racing.

Club members still play an active part in the governing body of the sport and assist with official duties at many events organised by other clubs right up to international level.

I have absolutely no doubt that with the excellent foundations laid, come the year 2022 AD Sidney will roll up to me in his bath-chair, tap my zimmer with his white stick and say "would you write a wee book for us on the centenary of the Club? If you don't you will not get your comp. licence next year!"

Good luck to you all. Keep her lit!

DAVY McBRIDE

Signatures



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