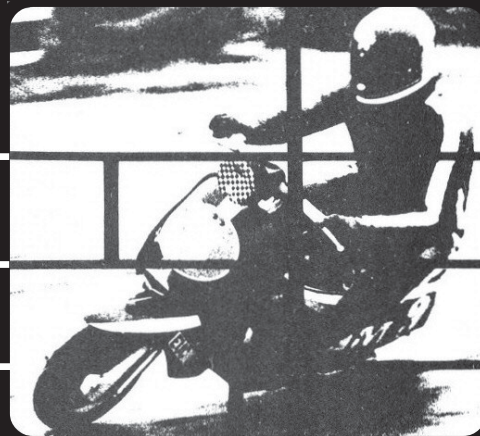


# NEV FROST AND HIS STORY BEHIND HIS FANTASTIC

## Druidale National Record on a Scooter

Take the very quick Comerfords 200 with Nev in control to Druidale - we show you how to set such a record.



This year, FoBSC successfully forced all riders who wanted to do well in the Road Race Championship to go to the Isle of Man, with the best 6 events of 8 rounds counting and two of these on the Island, it was obvious that one had to go there. So once I'd decided to go, I then had to decide which events to enter and on what machines. The Druidale has always been my favourite Isle of Man event and I have wanted to use my combination for it ever since the special combinations have been allowed to enter. The main problem here was "how to persuade my brilliant passenger, Bev, that it wasn't really that dangerous"? She knew first hand, having competed on a solo scooter in 1968 and 1970, that the course was quite hairy. She also knew that I had crashed twice before on a solo machine, once on a SX 125 in 1966 and again on a 125 Vega in 1970, but I had also won the event on a 125 Vega in 1969 and 1970 and put up the fastest 200cc class time on my first visit in 1967. Eventually, Bev said that she would do it. So I entered both Ballaugh Road Race events and Druidale on Paul Marshall's Comerfords sponsored 200 cc and on my combination. I didn't enter the other events hoping that I could then also have a holiday. Preparation of machines was the next problem, mainly - 'what gears to use?'. The 200cc solo was left, as always, in the very capable hands of Paul Marshall and Dave Jupp. Most of the combination drivers I spoke to who had done the loM races the previous year in 1972 said that the surface was very rough and of course I knew that the Druidale surface was exceedingly bumpy. So I decided to experiment with a shortened rear suspension unit for the combo but despite having built such a unit, the seals weren't available and it spewed fluid out over the rear wheel (not a good idea) so eventually I was forced to use the solid unit.

As soon as possible after arriving in the loM I wanted to go and see the Ballaugh Circuit and also to have a practice run over the Druidale. We went for a ride by van around the Ballaugh route on the Friday evening and on Saturday morning I took the 200 to the Druidale circuit. I drove down from Brandywell Cottage trying to refresh my memory with the route that I had not seen since 1970. I also wanted to check on the water level at the ford. Last time I had seen the ford, the base had been made of separate concrete slabs with twenty gaps between them, but now it was one beautiful piece of concrete with only about 1" of water. It would look spectacular enough when passing through it at speed but would not be too dangerous. I was worried about the ford only in as much as I thought

that water would go into the carb on the combination, it being so low and exposed. The solo machine would be alright though, because Paul had extended the left footboard inwards, right under the carb, with a piece of rigid plastic sheeting, thus cutting off any flow of water. The lap record for Druidale as far as I know, was held by Alan Flack set in 1972 at 6mins 10secs. So on that first practice run on the Saturday morning I timed myself. Starting my wrist stop watch five seconds before leaving the start line and stopping it as I crossed the finish line and then deducting the five seconds. Obviously it is dangerous to go around blind bends on a single track road open to traffic at speeds over 30mph so I had to go fairly carefully and also had to slow down for some cows standing in my path - nevertheless I did that first run in 6m 20secs. From then on, I knew that I could do it under 6 minutes and smash the record. When I told Paul that, he admitted to me later that he had been sceptical. My main worry now was that the bike would break up under the strain. The bumps are so bad that a large percentage of the journey is spent airborne. As the bumpstop had been removed, every severe bump was taken by the damper, bottoming with a crash. I went through the ford a couple of more times to ease my qualms and decided that the new base, higher by about six inches, was a great improvement, then took the bike home to base.

What I had to do, I decided, was to learn every single bend and brow and know exactly what was on the blind side as I approached, whether I could go flat out over a brow or if that would put me off the road. In the past I had only remembered the course vaguely; getting to a bend or brow and thinking 'Oh yes; I know this one!' This wasn't good enough - I had to learn the whole route. I went over that course many times during the week on Dave Jupp's Li 150 not wanting to break the 200. Then in Jeff Epps mini-Cooper; this time I made notes about the speeds attainable and the conditions at each bend, on the programme map of Druidale. Then, finally, the night before the event, I checked this rough map against the Ordnance Survey map, relating my speed chart to the course on the map, until I was certain of every inch. The 200 had mysteriously seized the day before Druidale so Dave stripped it replaced the rings and rebuilt it in readiness.

The weather on the day of the event was ideal; hot and sunny with no mist on the course. The organisers were very good to me, allowing me to go either first or with a long gap ahead of me. Overtaking is a problem on a solo machine and

virtually impossible on a combo and both of my previous spills had been abortive attempts at overtaking. My first run on the 200 started well with the machine really flying up the first long straightish ascent. Then I noticed that the right-hand side panel was hanging off. It was still attached by the catch at the rear but was sticking out at near right-angles. Obviously I had to remove it somehow. I grabbed it with my right hand, allowing the throttle to close pulled it clear of the catch and (not wanting to scratch it more than necessary) I threw it as gently as I could onto the grass verge. By this time I needed to engage first gear to pull away again at a point where I should have been doing about 60 mph. The rest of the run went according to plan and I recorded a time of 5mins 49.2secs. That was the 6 minute barrier smashed, but obviously I was thinking of my next run when I hoped to get a clear run all the way. My next run was on the combination and it went very well clocking a time of 6mins 50.2secs with Bev actually enjoying the ride. While I was doing this run, Dave was checking the 200 over and to his dismay whilst running the engine up, it broke the piston rings. He stripped it down in ultra-fast time and discovered that the top two rings had gone but the piston was OK. We had no more spares so all that he could do was to rebuild the machine with just the bottom ring intact. To save the bike as much as possible we transported it in the van down to the bottom of the hill for the second run. At the start I oiled it up by letting the clutch out too fast and, despite it four-stroking for the first mile or so, I managed to clear it - although it was down on power - to clock 6mins 02.6secs. My next combo run went very well, despite the fact I tried to take the ford a little too fast and took some water in the carb - it cleared quickly and we clocked 6mins 42 secs. This time was only bettered by eight solo machines and as driver, passenger and machine were all noticing the strain, we called it a day on the combo. My last 200 run went well considering the handicap. I slipped the clutch for a long time to prevent oiling up but the machine was noticeably slower through the LCGB speed trap on the lumpy, bumpy straight where it's difficult to keep the throttle open - it recorded the fastest time of the day at 70.60 mph.

I'm sure that my last run was the best driving performance but with the bike that much slower on the up-hill section I was only able to get 5mins 54.8secs. So although I had won both classes I had mixed feelings at the finish.

*Nev Frost*