

...FROM HUMB

THE Unaffiliated Motor Cycle Group may be a name that has been lost in the mists of time but as the forerunner of the Amateur Motorcycle Association (AMCA) it has guaranteed itself a place in motor cycle history.

Moseley MCC, the oldest club in the association had been co-operating with two other unaffiliated clubs - Coventry Post Office MCC and Berkswell MCC - for some time when they decided to form the Unaffiliated Motor Cycle Group. This small but nevertheless enthusiastic body recorded slow growth in the early years and by mid 1935 totalled seven clubs.

These seven member clubs were as

follows; Moseley, Rilery, Berkswell, Drome, Bats (Leicester), Bats (Hinkley), and Kings Norton (which later affiliated to the Auto Cycle Union). During this period the delightfully named Alfred Herbert Club joined and left the association.

Events of the mid-thirties were grasstracks mostly organised by the Moseley and Kings Norton Clubs and trials which were promoted on a group basis with night trials and gymkhanas from the Bats Clubs. Founder members Coventry Post Office disbanded due to being a restricted club, who did not have any young members coming into their ranks.

Social outings played a big part in the

activities of the association in the early days and one of earliest documented events was a trip to the Riley Car works on July 14th 1935.

Trials in the 'thirties were usually organised for machines with standard tyres and at one such event, organised jointly by the Drome and Berkswell clubs, a rider could enter for the princely sum of 2/6d with a further 6d going to the Benevolent Fund. In modern money an entry fee of 15 pence, incidentally a fee which according to AMCA records remained unchanged for almost 20 years!

As ever the association always tried to find generous outside parties to provide



Eck Hyland of Moseley leads Albert Glassbrook of the Midland Social Club. (Picture reproduced by kind permission of the AMCA).

THE BEGINNINGS

This year the AMCA celebrates its Golden Jubilee. In the first of a two part feature Bev Bridges looks back at the pre-war years.



AMCA Honorary secretary Eck Hyland (left) pictured with AMCA Chairman Frank Green (pictures reproduced by kind permission of the AMCA).

trophies for events and in 1935 the result of just such a request to the John Bull Rubber Co. Ltd., by the then Honorary General Secretary resulted in a gold medal being donated. One of the AMCA's most famous trophies was also donated at this time. Ned Potter, of the Plough Inn, Coventry, a well-known motorcyclist's haunt, (which was later destroyed in a wartime bombing raid) donated the Potter Team Trophy for trials which is still competed for today.

By September 1935 the group had decided to take positive action over encouraging the use of standard tyres in trials as opposed to recently introduced competition covers. Any rider on standard

tyres was given 15 bonus marks, but another rule introduced at the same time stated that 'A rider refusing a section is deemed to have retired'. No asking for a five and hurrying onto the next section in those days!

January 1936 again saw more rules concerning trials added to the book when it was decided that a rider could not be towed to the finish. Moans have always been quite well to the fore in any discussion within the Association and it seems as if the past has been no exception. A.J. Wright of Moseley complained about 'the ridiculous nature of the Hinckley Bats course' - very deep water was the Moseley member's moan. 1936 also marked Midland Socials entry to the group.

Phantom MCC of Coventry was talked into joining the Unaffiliated Motor Cycle Group in March 1937 to increase the total membership to eight, but a bitter blow came as Kings Norton switched to the ACU and the Riley Club disbanded.

March 10, 1937 saw the Unaffiliated Motor Cycle Group change its name to the Midland Amateur Motorcycle Association, with E.C. Hyland again being re-elected as Honorary Secretary. Frank Green, (the AMCA's current President) took on the role of chairman while A.W. Johns volunteered to become the association's first Press secretary.

Although Kings Norton and Riley left in 1937, before the end of that year Birmingham City Transport and Kinver Auto were elected to the association, along with Smethwick. Birmingham City Transport or the Tramways as they were more popularly known boasted a membership of over 200 members and promoted scrambling at the excellent Illey Brook venue. Moseley who had proved to be the prime movers behind the standard tyre trials, went one better in '37 and promoted a standard machine trial.

In May 1937 it was discovered that a Southern Unaffiliated group existed in the London Area. Press secretary A.W. Johns met the group and after some discussion it was decided to join forces. This necessitated the second change of name in a year, they now became the Amateur Motor Cycle Association, (Midland Group) and (Southern Group).

June 1937 saw the first-ever trial to decide a home for the recently acquired Potter Team Trophy. Ned himself had the honor of presenting the trophy to Moseley.

Leamington MCC joined the AMCA in August 1937 with their enthusiastic secretary W.S. Willis. The club distinguished themselves by promoting the association's first ever speed hill climb. Leamington members also suffered the first losses of World War Two when members aboard the battleship Royal Oak died after it was torpedoed in Scapa Flow. Another notable war casualty was Midland Social member Bob Godwin, he had been a founder member of the club and tireless worker for the association.

Membership of the association had now reached ten, and concern was expressed over accommodating all the fixtures. (With ten times as many clubs today it still is the AMCA's biggest problem). A record entry for a trial was also reached in 1937 with 93 riders turning out to a Smethwick event.

During the course of 1938, the Honorary Secretary Mr Hyland travelled to the south for a meeting. It was suggested that the secretary should be reimbursed for the journey. A balance sheet was duly drawn up which stated the following: Income £2 10s 0d; Expenditure £1 17s 6d; balance for the corresponding twelve month period, 12s 6d! (that's 62½p). Conclusive evidence that the Honorary Secretary's position should stay honorary!

Nineteen-thirty-eight saw Rugby MCC, Central Birmingham MCC, and Crown MCC join the AMCA's ranks while East Birmingham and Wolverhampton Tigers were allowed entry later in the year. AMCA-ACU rivalry had reached the pages of the national motorcycle press via an article by Peter Chamberlain. The subject of works machinery reared its head for the first time in the association as L Perks of Kinver Auto was suspended for using a works New Imperial.

The increasing activity of the AMCA in the Midlands area prompted ACU Competition Secretary Mr Ball to invite A.W. Johns and Eck Hyland of the AMCA to a meeting at the ACU's headquarters in the Isle of Man during the 1939 TT. At first the ACU tried to get the amateurs to affiliate but it was finally decided that both should go their own way.

With the outbreak of war in 1939 the bulk of AMCA members joined HM Forces. Most of those who did not, all joined the Midland Region Despatch Riders Service which was organised by the AMCA on behalf of the Earl of Dudley, who was in charge of the Midlands Region Defence Organisation.