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TIME TRIAL

GREAT SCOTT

by Frank Melling

As we disembarked from our car, it was interesting to note that the rain was not so much falling, as being squirted at the gathering mass of motorcyclists from a very large hosepipe. The squalls blew across the Yorkshire moors like giant science fiction monsters, gobbling up whole hills in an impenetrable murk and then suddenly spitting them out again, to attack another spur, farther up the valley, with renewed vigour.

As the raindrops self-destructed against my riding suit an ancient, wizened marshal, carefully attending to the needs of the 201 brave souls who had expressed a desire to compete in these conditions, turned to me and said, with a deeply satisfied smile, "Lovely weather! It'll be a grand trial — really sort out the men from the boys."

The 1976 Scott Trial was about to begin.

The Scott is a round of the British Trials Championships. There were 70 sections in this year's 65-mile route and marks lost on observation ranged from winner Malcolm Rathmell's 64, to a rather more hefty total of 208 for the last official finisher. From a spectator's viewpoint, some of the sections look absolutely horrific — the kind of place you would wish your bank manager to be when he won't come up with the cash for next year's bike.

What makes the Scott Trial different is the fact it is run against the clock. The course snakes to and fro across the moors using sheep tracks and open heather to link the punishing sections. The fastest man sets standard time and receives zero penalties for his efforts; the rest of the field lose one mark for each minute over that time. Thus, as well as a tough feet-up trial, the Scott demands enduro speed and stamina.

This is why the Scott is one of the finest tests of the trials rider's skills — not only must he be able to ride the sections making almost instantaneous judgments, but he must race against the clock on a bike not designed for racing.



Fun, fun, fun 'til Oregate took the T-bike away



Rastus bulls his Cota through the Orgate Falls section. Riders often don't wait for the section to be cleared because it is a time trial. Rathmell led on time and observation and beat Martin Lampkin by one mark on observation.

The saga of the Scott began in 1914. Alfred Scott, the ingenious designer and driving force behind the twin-cylinder, water-cooled two-strokes which were produced by his company, overheard a conversation

ENGLISH STYLE



additional hazards of sections. Perhaps things are not too different today if one looks at the 139 retirements out of an entry of 201.

The Scott had a wide-reaching effect on the whole of motorcycle sport. Not only did it spawn observed trials, but also motocross. Alfred Scott's trial was copied in the Southern Scott, and this event has survived today as one of Britain's classic motocross events.

As an interested observer, but not an ardent admirer, I have always found the Scott a difficult event with which to come to terms. The first problem is that the terrain is positively inhospitable. I once talked to an American engineer who was working on the six-lane highway which traverses another section of these moors. He had travelled all over the world working in difficult



Rob Shepherd, on a factory Cota, cleaned the falls.

conditions, but never, he confided, had he met weather as malevolent and unpredictable as may be found on these hills. On the worst parts, it is possible to have thick fog and a hundred mile an hour wind — simultaneously!

Conditions were relatively mild for this year's Scott. Driving rain, a 40 mile an hour wind and a temperature just a few degrees above freezing — ideal weather for a trail ride.

Moorland is difficult to describe, but it consists largely of mud, rocks and bogs which will swallow you alive. In between are rivers — idyllic picture book scenes in summer and raging, foaming torrents in winter. On the day of the 1976 Scott, they raged and foamed in the very best tradition.

In view of the fact that the Scott is one of the major trials in the sporting calendar, the atmosphere is very

relaxed. The riders must suffer cheerfully and members of the Darlington club must help them. If the riders don't suffer, or worse still, if they suffer and don't enjoy it, then the spirit of the Scott which everyone holds paramount won't be maintained, and the Scott will degenerate into just "another" trial — a horrendous thought to all concerned.

Although there are some mud and bog sections, the predominant feature in the Scott is a mixture of rocks and water. Nowhere on the course was this combination at its violent worst than at the 12-foot drop which comprises Oregate Falls. The torrent tumbles and foams over the drop with all the energy and destructive power of a mountain stream in flood. And destroy it does, for one of the Scott's 70 sections is



Nigel Birkett, on a factory Suzuki, thought he had found a route to the New World, kept asking where the gold and spices were. He finished third.

through the rocks at the base of Oregate. Most riders struggle through, one or two make the exercise look deceptively easy and many find the job too much for them.

They drop down a narrow rutted track onto the section, and, by a pile of smashed trees and other flotsam washed down by heavy rains, prepare to enter the torrent. Experienced eyes glance up and down the section trying to find the critical traps amidst the mass of brown and foam. On either bank, riders are draining out flooded motors — a warning that the penalties are severe for those who fail.

Some riders scrape through with furious footing off the tangle of underwater rocks. Others escape with a perilous dab and exit to the cheers of the crowds, and a number

between three of his employees in which they were discussing their exploits in exploring the Yorkshire moors aboard their Scott bikes. Mr. Scott was a noted walker and something of an expert on the wild moorland which lay to the north of the Scott plant. In response he mockingly said that if HE plotted a course, no one would ever be able to ride it.

Invitations were sent out to all Scott employees and on March 15th, 1914, 14 hardy souls turned up to face a 90-mile course designed by Scott. Included were freak hill-climbs, river crossings and mile after mile of wild moorland. Frank Philipp won the event and by the end of it, the Scott Trial had already begun to earn its reputation as the toughest of trials.

This first event did not have observed sections, being a reliability trial. In the early days of motorcycling, merely to keep a bike running in the Scott was considered to be an achievement, without the



Seventy different sections kept things interesting while racing 65 miles through the moors.

come to a dead stop; a wet stop, which often proves to be the end of the trial for them.

Martin Lampkin, two-time world champion, edges his Bultaco cautiously into the maelstrom. Despite some frantic aquabatics, he forfeits one mark for a steadying dab against a massive boulder. Leading on time at one stage, a puncture and a heavy fall whilst trying to make up time reduce Lampkin to second place overall, 27 minutes behind Malcolm Rathmell on time and one mark more on observation.

And what an incredible ride Rathmell had. His form at Oregate was typical. Urging back markers out of the way, Rathmell plunged into the foam with only a second's hesitation and then proceeded to weave his way along the river bed as if it were a supermarket car park. Not only did he make the section



Stephen Richardson having himself a real fun time.

look extremely easy, but he also negotiated a fallen rider in the process and went through at a gallop. At the end of 40 yards of breathtaking riding, he flicked the Montesa up a steep clay bank and wheeled over the crest to a standing ovation from the packed crowd. The whole exercise looked so totally simple and boringly easy that one wondered just how Rathmell managed to lose any marks on observation at all.

Two hours from the start, "Roy's

Rocks," as this nasty marine assault course is called, show the other side of the Scott — the rocky side. The weather has improved, for the pouring rain has abated to merely storm force.

As the light grew dim and anxious supporters began to fret about the fate of their riders, Malcolm Rathmell eased his 310cc Montesa across the finishing line to the cheers of the stalwarts who gathered in the damp, cold gloom to give vociferous tribute to a remarkable piece of motorcycling.

Rathmell was all smiles, confident before the results had been officially announced that he had not only won the event outright, but had totally annihilated the opposition in the process, setting both the fastest time and the best score on observation — a truly remarkable feat which is rare in the Scott.

Peeling off his riding suit, Malcolm noted what a pleasant day's fun it had been and then,



A Yorkshire sergeant is either observing one of the more easy sections or directing traffic.

checking his watch, excused himself so that he could get back to his hotel in time to see his friend, Kawasaki road racing star Mick Grant, compete in a televised race. With a relaxed smile and casual wave, Rathmell headed for his hotel, the television and a beer.

Meanwhile, somewhere out on the wild moors of North Yorkshire, nearly 200 riders were trying to make it back to civilisation. For some, the Scott had lived up to its tradition.

RESULTS

	Sections	Time	Total
1. Malcolm Rathmell (Mon)	64	0	64
2. Martin Lampkin (Bul)	65	27	92
3. Nigel Birkett (Suz)	95	18	113
4. Alan Lampkin (Bul)	102	21	123
5. Dave Thorpe (Bul)	85	39	124
6. Ron Shepherd (Mon)	101	32	133
7. Richie Sunter (Mon)	118	19	137
8. Rob Edwards (Mon)	97	44	141
9. Norman Sheperd (Bul)	88	55	143
10. Nick Jeffries (Hon)	112	47	159
Best Time: Malcolm Rathmell		4:13.40	

