

BLINK or sneeze and you could miss seeing a record broken on the Santa Pod dragstrip! In the time it takes you to read this short paragraph, the average dragster would have blasted off the line, disappeared over the horizon and stopped the clocks around the 11 second mark or less for a standing start quarter mile!

Anything goes in the search for power to propel two- or four-wheel projectiles along the Santa Pod dragstrip and the acceleration of these masterpieces in the art of tuning has to be heard and seen to be believed.

As the "Christmas tree" blinks towards the green, motors roar and rev to incredible, super-charged limits. Clutches burn home on the "green for go" and the acrid smell of dope and castor oil is left on the line as the front wheels paw the air and rear wheels spin wildly fighting to regain lost adhesion.

The last one to the end of the strip's a sissy and it's a combination of brute power, mechanical reliability and riding ability which takes the best through to the drag race finals.

The Easter Spring nationals attracted a crowd approaching 20,000 people to Santa Pod for the two-day race meeting and with the sponsorship of Radio Luxembourg and *Record Mirror*, it is obvious that the sport is becoming more popular and receiving increased attention.

Admittedly there isn't the spectacle and excitement of road racing or scrambling, but the roar of the castor oil and smell of the crowds is enough to set the most insensitive person's mind a'bogglin' at the Pod.

By now you should be asking "Where is this Santa Pod this nut's on about? When's the action? How do I get there?"

Northants is the county and turn-off number 14 on the M1 will take you via the A50 onto the A509 to Wollaston and within smelling distance of the pigsties that now nestle among the wartime Nissen huts of ex-USAF Podington.

The echoing, throbbing sound of powerful internal combustion engines may seem like ghosts of "flying fortress B17s" from the past, but in fact it is more likely to be the competitors warming up in the paddock alongside the strip, once the main runway of USAF Podington.

Facilities at the Pod are rudimentary but improving each successive year. Access to the strip is via a narrow winding lane, past the pigsties, through

the main entrance and around a very rough perimeter track to the car park. There you can find the odd patch of grass to picnic before racing commences.

Then, to watch "le sport" you climb the mud banking which runs down either side of the strip and from this vantage point you can see virtually the entire length of the quarter mile between the timing lights.

Some covered spectating can be found behind the start line, but the occasional shower of dust and dirt ensures spectators don't venture too close to the fencing behind the start rollers.

Wherever there's a crowd you'll get the hot dog stalls and it's no exception at Santa Pod. There is also a bookshop where all the latest magazines, car and motorcycle stickers, photographs and goodies are available.

The British Drag Racing and Hot Rod Association organise and run the meetings at the Pod and as the title suggests, they cater for both bikes and cars. Consequently, if you decide to go drag racing, then you can expect to see not only the most powerful two-wheelers per cc on the tracks, but also the hottest of rods on the road!

Make a note of these dates: **May 28 & 29—Whitsun "Big Go"; July 8 & 9—International Meet; August 27 & 28—The Nationals; November 4 & 5—Fireworks Meet.**

Motorcycle Mechanics is taking an interest in the Santa Pod drag race meetings and at the end of the 1972 season will be presenting an award to the best time set throughout the season by a twin-engined motorcycle. It will be interesting to see whether John Hobbs will capture the MCM Trophy with his brand-new double-engined Triumph.

On your first visit to the Pod, you may well be puzzled by the commentary on the meeting. Drag racing has its own special vocabulary and when the guy on the loudspeakers is nattering about Christmas trees, red lights, burn outs and shutting down, it is more than a little puzzling to the uninitiated.

For a start there's the Christmas tree and it is literally for a start. It's the post in the centre of the strip on which the riders or drivers keep eyes glued while they await the "green for go" light.

If they beat the green, then the electronic timing eye registers the fact and the rider gets a "red light". In other words he is disqualified from the race.

The races are held on a knock-

out basis, with riders coming to the line in pairs. The first to reach the end of the strip wins and goes forward to the next round. If a rider comes to the line on his own, it is most likely that he has "a bye" to the next round. This is because his opponent has either dropped out because of mechanical trouble or has run out of dope!

Anyway, the expression "shut down" means simply to beat to the end of the strip.

A "bleach burn out" is one of the latest tricks to improve starting techniques. Adhesion of the large slick tyres used in sprinting or drag racing is improved when they are hot. The rubber compound becomes more "sticky" and gives better grip for the crucial start.

By braking the bike with the front wheel against a wall or post, the rear wheel is spun in first gear and the friction created heats up the tyre. The surface rubber melts and combines with the bleach to make the tyre sticky.

It is only when the opposition is really strong or records are in the offing that the riders do this as a "burn out" costs them at least a pound a time due to the wear on the very expensive drag

"slick" tyres. However, the clouds of smoke produced are dramatic to say the least and add to the atmosphere of the meeting.

The incredible thing about sprint machinery is that very few of the bikes look alike. The ingenuity of the builders of these very special specials is quite remarkable. In the paddock you will see double-engined super-charged monsters, simple little two-stroke lightweights, motorcycle-engined scooters and karts, plus a sprinkling of bog standard street bikes.

Many classes of machine are catered for and providing you have the necessary protective leather riding gear, even YOU can race your own roadster on the Santa Pod dragstrip. Obviously you have to be a member of the BDR & HRA but you can join that at the Pod simply by filling in the necessary forms and paying the annual subscription.

With the increasing interest in Drag Racing now making itself apparent, before very long the Pod will really be a poppin'! See you there!

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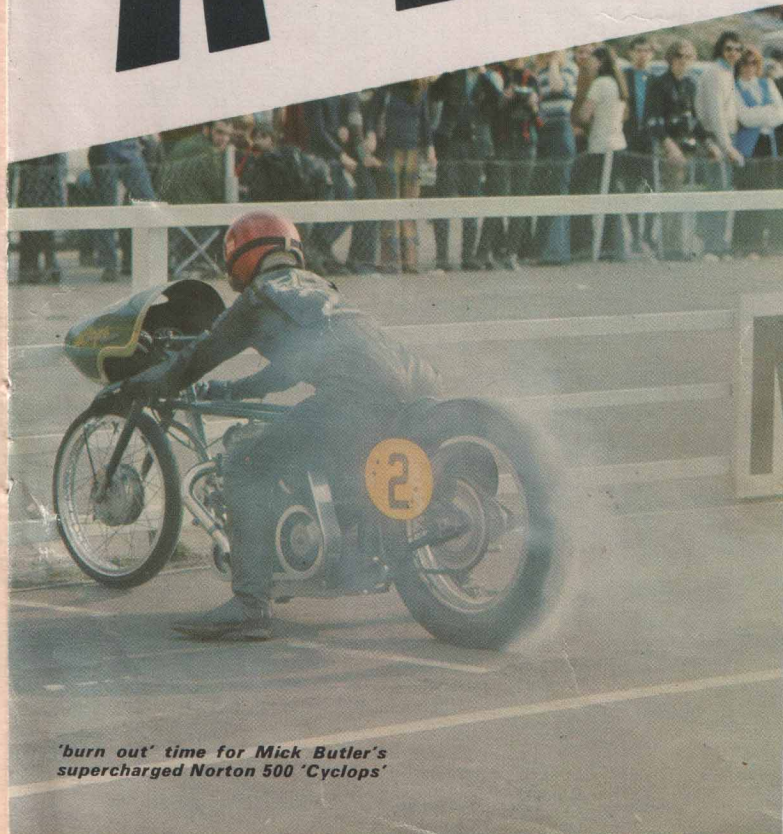
POD'S

**Engines revving . . .
clutches screaming . . .
tyres a burning . . .
Santa Pod's the strip
where it all happens
for the dragsters!**



Blast off for Ray Feltell on his Triumph-engined 650 cc 'Penetration'

A POPPIN'



'burn out' time for Mick Butler's supercharged Norton 500 'Cyclops'



Contact... then start-up on rollers!