

Merseyside Circuits

Aintree and Oulton Park

THE north-western counties of England, especially Cheshire and Lancashire, are fortunate in being provided with two excellent road-race circuits flanking the Mersey Estuary. To the north, close to Liverpool, is the specially prepared Aintree track, on the site of the horse-racing course of that name, while to the south is the converted Oulton Park venue near Tarporley and the county town of Chester.

Both circuits are of very recent inception and possess rider and spectator facilities which are, in many respects, equal to the finest offered anywhere in the British Isles. Both are administered by specialist concerns employing full-time staff. Aintree falls within the jurisdiction of the Auto-Cycle Union's North-Western Centre, while Oulton Park lies in the Cheshire Centre.

May 29, 1954, was a red-letter day for northern racing enthusiasts, for it marked the official launching of the £100,000 Aintree motor race circuit, five miles north-east of Liverpool. The inaugural meeting, for cars, was organized by the B.A.R.C. and attracted the finest entry the world could provide. Within a twelvemonth, the N.W. Centre had obtained permission from the owners, the Aintree Automobile Racing Co., Ltd., to stage a motorcycle meeting and, on April 30, 1955, welcomed competitors to the Centre's first National race meeting. Since then the seal of success has been set on the circuit by other promotions, though one, unfortunately, did not enjoy the best of weather and earned the heading "Racing at (R)Aintree." However, the weather conditions that day at least proved the course to be safe in the wet and the covered stands gave excellent protection to the spectators within them.

The road-race circuit at Aintree started from scratch, but certainly not from obscurity. It basks in the reflected glory of more than a century of Grand National horse races on the turf, races which are famous all over the globe. The lap follows the steeplechase course to a considerable extent, with its bends and straights named after the celebrated jumps.

The amenities, it is claimed, are unsurpassed. There are covered grandstands for over 20,000 people, restaurants, private salons and



Fastest "charioteer" at both Aintree and Oulton Park is "Pip" Harris.



Cecil Sandford, 125 c.c. and 250 c.c. lap record holder at Oulton Park.

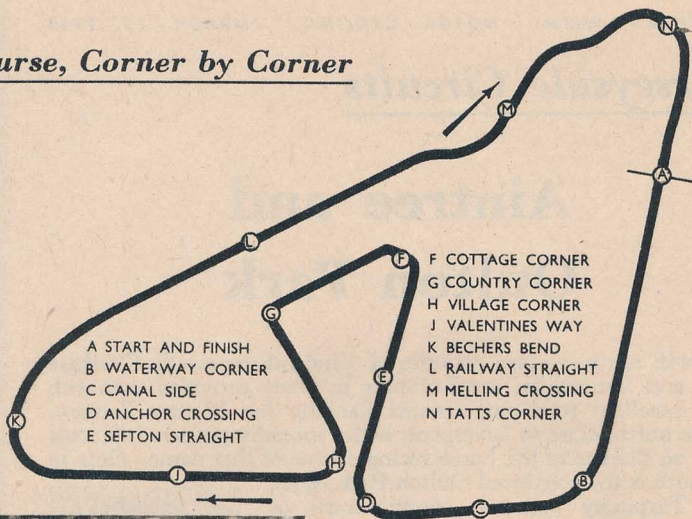
MOTOR CYCLING

CIRCUIT SOUVENIR

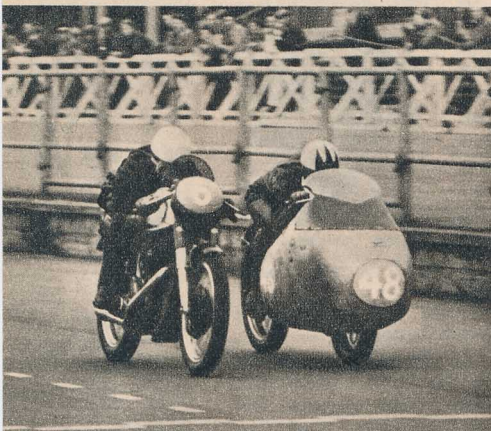
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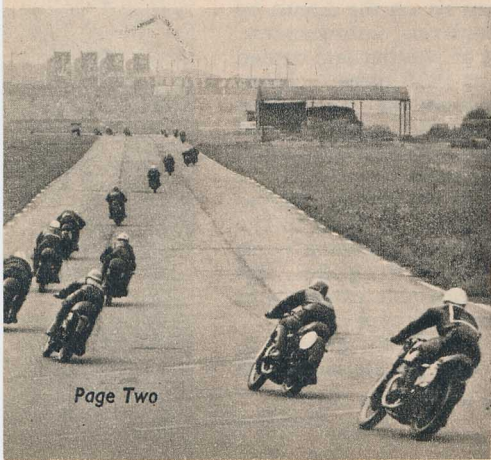
The Course, Corner by Corner



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(Above) Neck and neck at the Aintree finishing line. (Below) At Anchor Crossing, looking up Sefton Straight towards Cottage Corner; in the background, the giant score-boards.



AINTREE

THE race circuit at Aintree is sited both within and without the approximately triangular horse-race course and derives from it a number of tangible benefits as well as many of the names of its world-famous hazards. These benefits include truly excellent spectator facilities. The lap, of three miles precisely, is without gradients of any magnitude.

The start, A, is a little to the north of Tattersall's, immediately in front of the County stand, and is placed early on what is called, rather loosely, the finishing straight. Waterway Corner, B, at the end of this straight, is a very fast bend in front of a grandstand. Curving to the right, it can be taken in third on a "500" solo or in top on a lightweight. The Canal Side straight, C, is a quick sprint alongside the Liverpool and Leeds Canal to Anchor Crossing, where the brakes are used fairly hard—as they must be nearly everywhere else on the Aintree lap.

Anchor Crossing, D, a bottom-gear right-hander, is the place where the road-race circuit crosses to the inside of the horse track, and requires careful throttle work on the exit if a slide is to be avoided. This does not worry the sidecars, and the barrow-boys may be seen here delighting in tyre-torturing controlled drifts.

Sefton Straight, E, brings second cog home on the average Senior mount and forms part of the Picnic Loop, so popular with spectators because this compact section of the lap gives the watchers a bit of every-

thing. The left-hander of Cottage Corner, F, is rated as fairly-hard-to-tough; it calls for a careful approach and has an adverse camber demanding judicious power application on the exit.

The left-handed Country Corner, G, still part of the Picnic Loop, is a spot that leaves the rider in doubt as to which ratio to use. Neither first nor second is quite on the mark; a high bottom cog is an advantage.

After negotiating the sweeping, fast, second-gear Village Corner, H, the rider races along Valentines Way, just inside the turf course, and is approaching the double-radius right-handed Bechers Bend, K. This is in full view of the spectators in the Steeplechase enclosure on the outside of

the bend, a good spot from which to watch soloists and charioteers alike.

Railway Straight, L, is, as its name implies, a fast blind to the sweeping wiggle on the approach to Melling Crossing, M, all of which is in view of the Big Embankment. Melling Crossing, taken in third on a quick "500", places the rider once more on the outside of the turf course and on his way towards Tattersall's. Bottom gear is normally required to negotiate Tatts Corner, N, competitors being in full view of spectators in Tattersall's stand with its Lawn Paddock behind. Immediately opposite here, on the inside of the course, is the machine paddock with its attendant central enclosure.

LAP RECORDS

125 c.c. Solo: 2 min. 40.2 sec.=67.41 m.p.h. W. A. Lomas (M.V.), 25.9.1954.

250 c.c. Solo: 2 min. 31.6 sec.=71.24 m.p.h. J. Surtees (NSU), 28.9.1957.

350 c.c. Solo: 2 min. 18 sec.=78.15 m.p.h. T. Shepherd (Norton), 19.5.1956.

500 c.c. Solo: 2 min. 8.8 sec.=83.85 m.p.h. G. E. Duke (Giler), 24.9.1955.

500 c.c. Three wheelers: 2 min. 22 sec.=75.63 m.p.h. P. V. Harris (Norton s.c.), 19.5.1956.

Absolute Track Record: 1 min. 59.2 sec.=90.60 m.p.h. S. Moss (Formula I Vanwall car), 20.7.1957.

MEETING DATES (with times of first races)

Road Races

Saturday, May 10—1.30 p.m. (National permit.) N.-W. Centre, A.-C.U.

Saturday, September 27—1.30 p.m. (International permit.) N.-W. Centre, A.-C.U.

Circuit Admission Charges: From 2s. 6d. to 17s. 6d., according to enclosure.

Car Park Charges: From 5s. car and 2s. 6d. motorcycle, according to enclosure and facilities offered.

Proprietors: The Aintree Automobile Racing Co., Ltd., Liverpool, 9. (Aintree 3500.)

EXPLORING MERSEYSIDE

WHAT a wealth of worth-while exploration there is around Aintree, the circuit within a mere five miles of the heart of Liverpool. Lying on the north bank of the Mersey estuary, this great seaport covers an area rich in both commerce and culture and has a 700-year-old tradition spanning the years from King John's charter in 1207. A "must" for every visitor to this sailing-point for the Isle of Man is a jaunt through the Mersey Tunnel. Connecting Liverpool and Birkenhead, the tunnel is just over two miles long and ranks as the most important engineering achievement undertaken in this country during recent years.

Nor far from the South bank of the Mersey is Chester, an ancient city whose foundations were laid in the very dawn of England's history. Still retained is the two-mile circuit of medieval walls built either in the late 12th or early 13th century. Two miles from the city centre is Chester Zoo, at Upton-by-Chester, where a large collection of animals are maintained in conditions resembling their natural haunts. It has the largest lion enclosure in the British Isles.

Lying between the estuaries of the Mersey and the Dee is the Wirral Peninsula, an area of quiet lanes and attractive villages. The more boisterous visitor will like New Brighton, on the Mersey-side tip of the Peninsula; it is but thirty minutes' sail

from Liverpool landing stage and, with its parks, amusements and bathing pools, is a Utopia for the holiday-maker.

For those for whom ancient buildings have a lure, there is Speke Hall, on the bank of the River Mersey, some seven miles south of the Pier Head—a bright, handsome home which has endured since the 15th century. Across a protecting belt of woodland from the Hall is the city's airport, from which run regular services to the Isle of Man, Ireland and London.

To visit the Liverpool district is to be impressed by its raucous activity as a shipping and industrial centre. It serves as an admirable stepping-off point for the Lake District and Wales.

WHERE TO STAY

THE Sefton Arms Hotel (Tel. Aintree 3212), on the course; The Adelphi Hotel (Royal 7200), The Alexandra Court Hotel (Lark Lane 2551), The Exchange Hotel (Central 5678), and The Royal Hotel (Waterloo 3576), Liverpool, 5 miles distant; The Hayfield Hotel (3523), Ormskirk, 9 miles; The Fleecy Hotel (Bembridge 295), St. Helens, 9 miles; The Bold Hotel (56236), The Clifton Hotel (3131), The Prince of Wales Hotel (4131), The Royal Hotel (4101), and The Scarisbrick Hotel (4172), Southport, 16 miles.

Lancaster

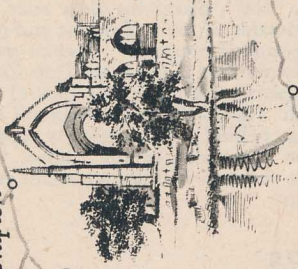
MOTOR CYCLING Circuit Souvenir No. 4

HOW TO GET THERE

Skipton

Bolton Abbey

HARROGATE



Blackpool



PRESTON

Burnley

Accrington

Blackburn

LEEDS

HALIFAX

A6

ROCHDALE

BURY

Wigan

BOLTON

A58

HÜDDERSFIELD

Ormskirk



A49

A58



MANCHESTER

A580

St. Helens

A608

Glossop

BARNSELEY

LIVERPOOL

A50

A57

BIRKENHEAD

Warrington

A624

Chapel en le Frith

SHEFFIELD

Rhyl

Knutsford

A6

Buxton

CROOKED SPIRE

St. Asaph

Macclesfield

A537

A515

Cheshire

A4

A49

A51

Denbigh

CHESTER

Middlewich

A54

Cheshire

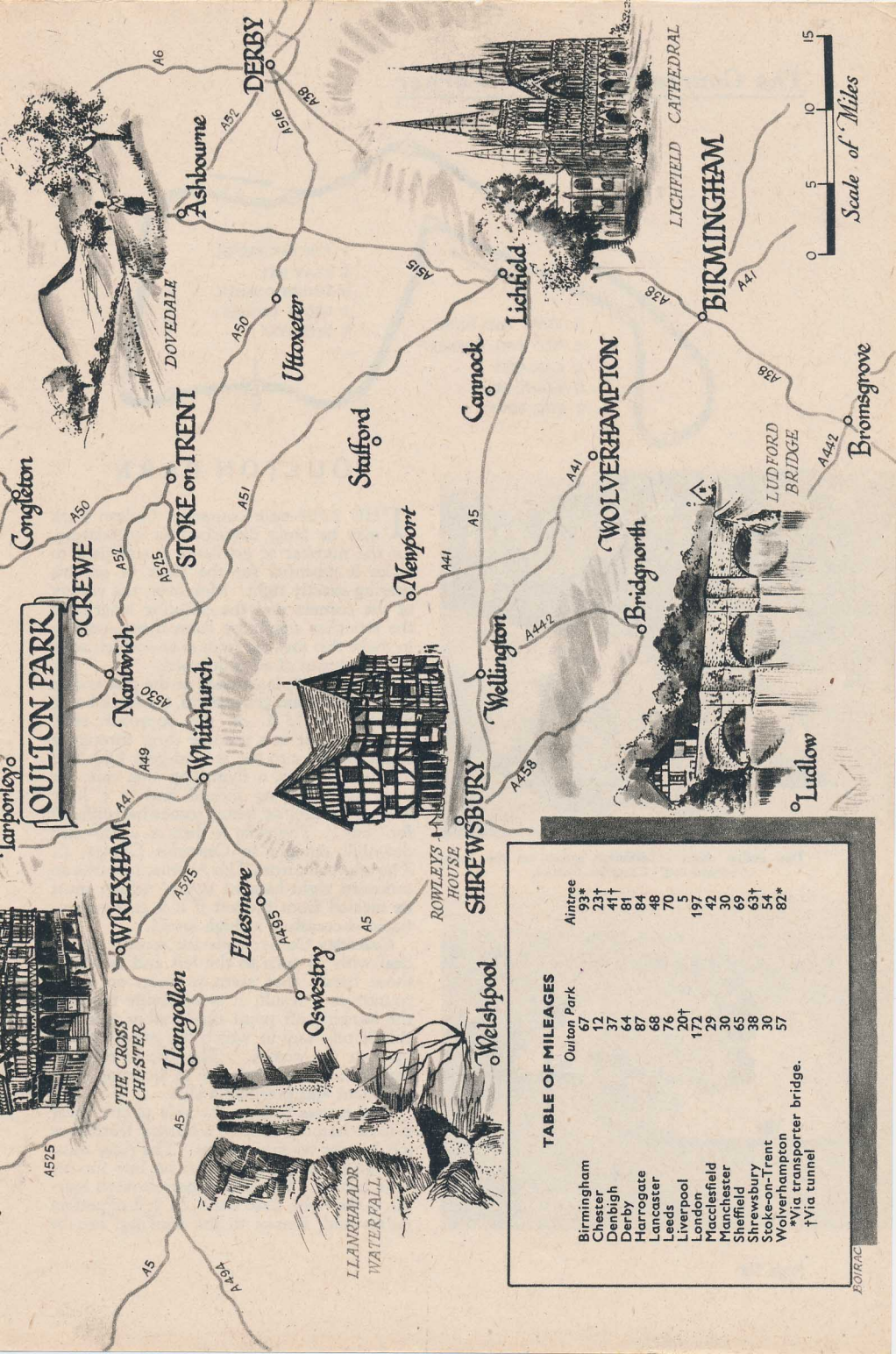


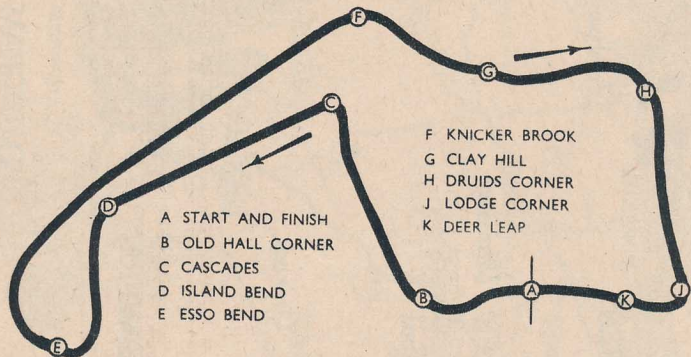
TABLE OF MILEAGES

	Oulton Park
Birmingham	67
Chester	12
Denbigh	37
Derby	64
Harrigate	87
Lancaster	68
Leeds	76
Liverpool	20†
London	172
Macclesfield	29
Manchester	30
Sheffield	65
Shrewsbury	38
Stoke-on-Trent	30
Wolverhampton	57

Aintree 93*
 23†
 41†
 81
 84
 48
 70
 5
 197
 42
 30
 69
 63†
 54
 82*

*Via transporter bridge.
 †Via tunnel

The Course, Corner by Corner



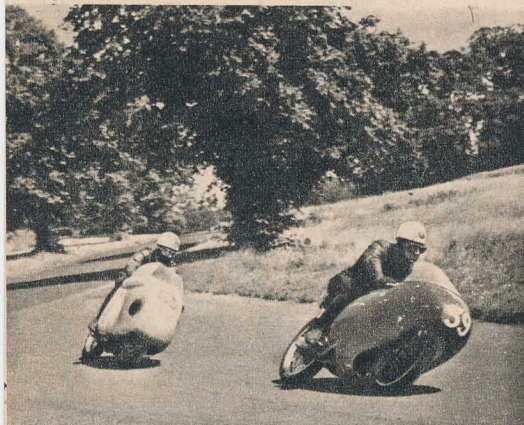
OULTON PARK

THE 2.761-mile course at Oulton Park may be truly described as undulating, for the number of gradients is sufficient to make it essential for the rider to get his gearing exactly right. Moreover, the variety of the corners and the differing lengths of the straights stemming from them contrive to make this task far from easy—which adds to the interest of all concerned.

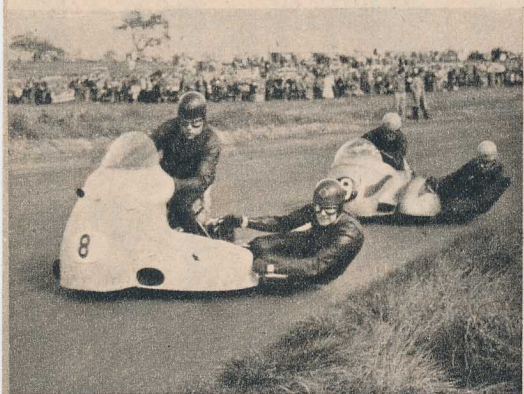
The start, A, is situated at the pits and in front of the main grandstand, the track being widened to 75 ft. on the approach side. From here, it is a gradual drop through a slight wiggle into the second-gear Old Hall Corner, B. On a flying lap this calls for very hard braking indeed and is a little bumpy as well as being somewhat difficult for "line." The rider is then on a 350-yard downhill straight to Cascades Corner, C. The approach from The Avenue involves an awkward right-handed sweep, which must be tackled from the left if it is to be negotiated successfully at high speed.

Cascades Corner calls for second cog to deal with its turn to the left and is one of those bends that seem to keep on going round; as a result, it is advisable to delay the banking-off point until rather late and this is one way in which the expert shows up over the novice. The grip is so good that there is a tendency to become over-confident and promote a slide.

The course follows the side of the lower lake to Island Bend, D, a bumpy third-gear left-hander taken very fast. The rider must change sides quickly to get on line for the next corner. This is a super-elevated hair-pin to the right, Esso Bend, E. It is of perfect radius and, thanks to the banking, can be



Two action shots at different points on the long, "second-cog" Cascades Corner.



taken a lot faster than many soloists and "chairmen" think. Bottom gear is required, and a full squirt of power on the exit for the sprint up the hill towards the upper lake. On a 500 c.c. solo, "top" goes home somewhere by the crest of the climb.

Knicker Brook, *F*, is on a very fast part of the course, a quick Senior machine arriving there in third gear at about 110 m.p.h., and it is essential to judge the braking to a nicety. The surface is smooth.

There is a sharp incline next up Clay Hill, *G*, which calls for third ratio and full bore, solos and sidecars aligning themselves after wiggles for the swinging left-hander that marks the approach to Druids Corner, *H*, made through wooded country.

Druids Corner is not the hardest part of the lap but, as a double right-hand bend, is extremely difficult to sum up accurately.

The two bends, joined by a short straight, must be treated as one; they are bumpy and are negotiated in second. Druids is a good place to watch the chairs as they go into splendid three-wheeled drifts.

All capacities then indulge in a full-bore blind to the tricky right-hander at Lodge Corner, *J*, really hard braking being essential for the exact line to be achieved on this adverse-cambered hazard. Too much speed on the exit will bring a soloist over to the left of the road, where the camber is against him, and a very delicate hand on the throttle is needed from then on to avoid losing the back wheel, especially in the wet.

By moving over to the right-hand side of the road, the rider aligns himself for the full-bore downhill onslaught on Deer Leap, *K*, and the rise for the flat-in-three tramp past the starting area.

LAP RECORDS

125 c.c. Solo: 2 min. 11.6 sec.=75.53 m.p.h. C. C. Sandford (Mondial), 3.8.1957.

250 c.c. Solo: 2 min. 2.6 sec.=81.07 m.p.h. C. C. Sandford (Mondial), 3.8.1957.

350 c.c. Solo: 1 min. 58.6 sec.=83.81 m.p.h. J. Surtees (M.V.), 5.10.1957.

500 c.c. Solo: 1 min. 54.4 sec.=86.88 m.p.h. J. Surtees (M.V.), 5.10.1957.

1,200 c.c. Three wheelers: 2 min. 5.6 sec.=79.14 m.p.h. P. V. Harris (Norton s.c.), 5.10.1957.

Absolute Track Record: 1 min. 53.2 sec.=87.81 m.p.h. G. Hill (Formula 2 Lotus car), 5.10.1957.

MEETING DATES (with times of first races)

Moto-cross

Easter Saturday, April 5—3 p.m. (National permit.) Nantwich and D. M.C.

Road Races

Easter Monday, April 7—12.15 p.m. (National permit.) Wirrel 100 M.C.

Whit-Monday, May 26—10.30 a.m. (Clubmans T.T. meeting.) Cheshire Centre, A.-C.U.

Bank Holiday Monday, August 4—1 p.m. (National permit.) Cheshire Centre, A.-C.U.

Circuit Admission Charges: Adults, 4s.; grandstand and paddock transfers, 7s. 6d. each.

Car Park Charges: Motorcycles and three-wheelers, 2s. 6d.; cars, 4s.; coaches free. Proprietors: Cheshire Car Circuit Ltd., 29 Eastgate Row North, Chester. (Chester 21141.)

IN THE OULTON AREA

CHESHIRE, a county steeped in tradition, consists, in the main, of rather flattish land to the south of the Mersey. Within this area lies the lovely, undulating parkland of Oulton. From the course, the nearest town of any size is Tarporley, four miles distant. Chester is 12 miles away and Manchester about 30 miles. Liverpool is about the same distance away as the "Cottonopolis," and many of the Aintree-area places-to-visit are equally convenient for Oulton Park spectators.

Once out of the maze of country lanes around the course exits, there are fine, fast roads to Manchester. Within a fifty-mile radius of this great commercial centre, one-fourth of England's population live and work—and the visitor would be hard pressed not to find ample interest and entertainment. Much nearer Oulton is Jodrell Bank, six miles north-east of Middlewich; this is the site of the huge radio telescope, recently erected, with which the tracks of the "sputniks" were plotted.

Farther south is Nantwich, one of the principal salt-mining centres in Britain. Here are two properties well worth a visit. In the town itself is Church's Mansion, a 1577 Elizabethan merchant's half-timbered house, open all the year round. One

mile north of Nantwich on the Chester road is Dorford Hall, a Jacobean house, remarkable for its plaster-work and panelling, which is open from May to September.

Deva, as the Romans called it—Chester, as we know it today—is the county capital on the north bank of the river Dee. The centuries-old raised arcades, which line several of the principal streets of the city, make shopping a pleasure and may well supply a memento of a visit to this lovely part of England.

WHERE TO STAY

THE Vale Royal Abbey Arms Hotel (Tel. Sandiway 3089), Delamere, 4 miles distant; The Rising Sun Hotel (23) and The Swan Hotel (11), Tarporley, 4 miles; The Crown and Anchor Hotel (226611), Northwich, 11 miles; The Blossoms Hotel (23186), The Grosvenor Hotel (24024), The Mollington Banastre Hotel (Great Mollington 313), The Old Nag's Head Hotel (25569), The Queen Hotel (23471), The Rowton Hall Country Club, The Westminster Hotel (25811), Chester, 12 miles; The Lamb Hotel (528611), Nantwich, 16 miles.

Merseyside Circuits

CONTINUED

cloakrooms and vast public enclosures that can accommodate a quarter of a million spectators. And there are multiple car parks staffed by traffic experts practised in handling the multitudes who attend the Grand Nationals. For the competitor, too, there is much to appreciate—drying rooms with racks for saturated clothing, showers, bars and refreshment rooms, good pits and parking in clean, prepared enclosures.

OULTON PARK is somewhat different in character, the track, which has a minimum width of 30 ft., being situated in typical English country-house grounds some three miles north-west of Tarporley in Cheshire. In fact, in the 12th century the site was a manor which became the ancestral home of the Egerton family. In 1718, Sir John Vanbrugh completed the Hall, a fine example of his work which contained many magnificent rooms. Unfortunately, much of the mansion was destroyed by fire in 1926 and the remains were bombed in 1940.

During the last war, the park was requisitioned and housed thousands of soldiers of many nationalities. A stretch of road was laid for the military camp and this, with the remains of the back drive to the old Hall, formed the basis of the original circuit. This was a shade over 1½ miles to the lap and was first used for racing on August 8, 1953. The occasion was a "private" meeting organized by the Mid-Cheshire M.C. and attended by some 3,000 persons; the inauguration may



Aintree personalities: (Left) Jack Greene, organizing secretary and secretary of the N.-W. Centre, A.-C.U. (Right) C. Clegg, clerk of the course.

be said to have been a quiet one, hardly presaging the present popularity of Oulton Park. The first motorcycle racing took place on October 3, 1953.

Since then two extensions have been made. In 1954, the lap was increased to 2.23 miles and for the 1955 season was further lengthened to the existing 2.761 miles. In doing this, care has been taken to retain as much as possible of the original beauty of the parkland, at the same time creating excellent viewing facilities for 150,000 spectators, both inside and outside the track.

Oulton Park, today, is one of England's most interesting circuits from the riders' point of view, for the course has the air of "natural" roads. Considerable variations in terrain occur, with pronounced gradients. The bends have radically differing characters, from the gentle Knicker Brook to the super-elevated hairpin of Esso Bend. The track winds its way through open parkland, past two lakes and under the trees of the wooded area around Druids Corner.

Ample spectator and competitor facilities are provided. Two footbridges and one Bailey bridge give access to the inside of the course. The paddock is situated on the inside immediately behind the pits, at the start and directly opposite the main grandstand—three attractions in a small area for the spectator fortunate enough to be at this point.

Also included within the park grounds is a scrambles course, over which important moto-cross meetings are run.

This was opened on Boxing Day, 1957, with a ¾ mile lap, now being lengthened for the Easter meeting by means of a loop extension. The course runs through sandy, pine-wood park land and embraces hollows, holes and small hills.



Oulton officials: (Left) Cliff Abbott, clerk of the course and chairman of the Wirral Hundred M.C. (Right) B. A. Weir, chief marshal.