

Circuit at the Centre

Silverstone

SILVERSTONE, lying but a few miles from Towcester in Northamptonshire, can be said to be somewhere near that much-disputed geographical location, the centre of England. Although some thirty miles from the acknowledged title-holder, Meriden, Silverstone is certainly equidistant from the sea in at least four directions and is within reach of two highly populated areas, the Black Country and Greater London. One of Britain's premier trunk roads, A5, passes within five miles of the track, which is also served from the north and the south by A43, as well as by a multitude of other good approach routes.

There are two circuits currently in use. The main one is the Grand Prix track with a 2.9204-mile lap, while the Club course, for more mundane use, measures 1.608 miles. Both are tackled clockwise.

During the last war, Silverstone was used by the Royal Air Force as an aerodrome, there being three runways linked by a wide perimeter track. The general layout of the airfield can be likened to a rectangle with the north to south sides both kinked towards the east, the runways running diagonally. With the cessation of hostilities its immediate usefulness ceased and the Air Ministry, as owners, were approached by the Royal Automobile Club, who made an offer to lease the circuit. The R.A.C. entered into protracted negotiations which were not concluded until 1949.

The R.A.C.'s object in securing a lease on Silverstone was to stimulate post-war road racing by organizing meetings until the sport should be firmly re-established, and then to retire from the scene and revert solely to their role of governing body.

Their first aim was partly achieved when they promoted the initial meeting at Silverstone on October 2, 1948, over 100,000 people coming to watch the inaugural racing. Good weather favoured the occasion of this, the R.A.C. Grand Prix. It was a car race, though motorcyclists' interests were represented by Artie Bell, Maurice Cann and Freddie Frith acting as travelling marshals. A 3.8-mile course was used in those days and the start was situated on Abbey Straight.

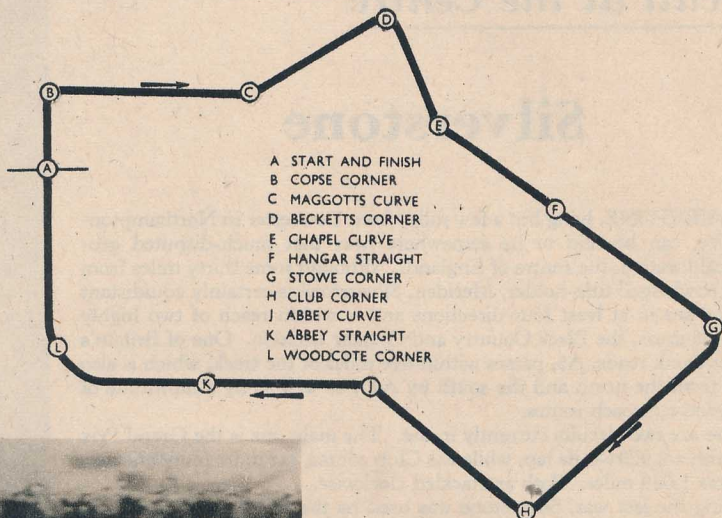
The current 3-mile lap was introduced on May 14, 1949, for the first titular G.P., again an R.A.C. meeting. Cars, for the first time, were raced over the perimeter track only, as is the custom today, the runways being

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Joint holders of Silverstone's senior lap record, John Surtees (left) and Geoff Duke, greet each other after a hard-fought tussle.



The Course, Corner by Corner



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THE GRAND PRIX CIRCUIT

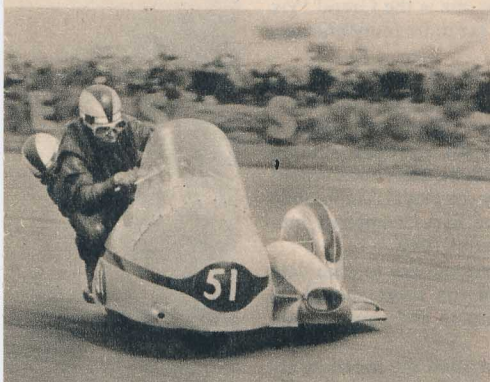
ALTHOUGH the Grand Prix circuit at Silverstone is laid out over the perimeter track of an aerodrome it is different from many other mainland circuits in that it has a longish lap of 2.9204 miles and there is a considerable amount of gradient to cope with. In fact, if the wind is against the rider on Chapel Curve, he is in doubt whether to gear for the climb from Club Corner or for the flat-out assault on Hangar Straight.

The start, A, is situated just past the upper extremity of the pits and prior to the footbridge and, because of the gradient at this point, calls for an uphill push. One result of this is that an engine must start easily or the jockey will speedily exhaust himself running with his mount.

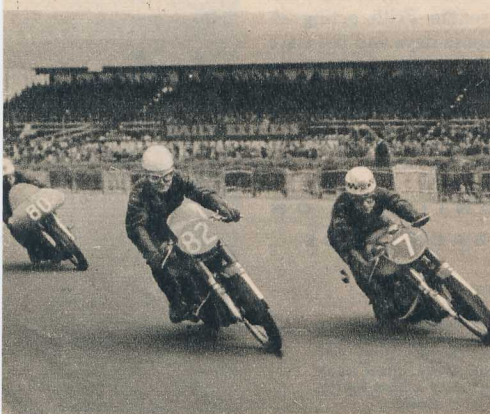
Riders have no sooner settled themselves in their saddles and got out of bottom gear (the only time that cog is used) than they have to align themselves for Copse Corner, B. Copse is rather bumpy and is taken in second gear, the rider changing sides quickly to get on line for Maggotts. There are excellent spectator facilities at this tricky corner.

The fastest men have to watch out for the bumps at Maggotts Curve, C, and also must be careful not to drift too far out to the right or they find themselves wrong for the next bend as they sweep through the curve at full bore in third.

This gear is held with a "500" solo for the



(Above) A little opposite lock holds a drifting sidecar round Copse Corner. (Below) Formation flying around Stowe Corner.



descent to the right-handed Becketts Corner, *D*, the actual bend being taken in second. Sidecars are quick here as they drift over a surface that changes from tarmacadam to concrete, braking hard on the approach.

It is full bore from Becketts to Chapel Curve's left-handed sweep at *E*, the solo rider keeping well over to the right on the exit from Becketts for fear of being wrongly placed for Chapel. Third cog goes home at the curve and then it is "the lot" en route for Stowe via Hangar Straight. This is the quickest part of the whole course and a "four" probably reaches 130 m.p.h.

Stowe Corner, *G*, requires a double change down and heavy braking; it is rather bumpy on the exit and very tricky in the wet. It makes a popular vantage point, spectators being catered for with a grandstand. They see machines well cranked over on a bend of perfect radius—or the "chairs" tearing rubber off their tyres to the accompaniment of shrieking wheels and bellowing exhausts.

The good soloist then keeps over to the left all the way down to Club Corner, *H*, so that he can be on line to turn to the right. It is a deceptive bend, leading the novice to bank over too soon. Experienced riders leave the turn until rather late, engage second, and find themselves spot-on for the exit and a spurt towards Abbey Curve, *J*.

On the approach to Abbey it is necessary to change sides to get on the right. If this is done correctly, and the very apex of the curve is kissed, it is possible for a "works" rider to get a senior machine through flat in third. If the bank is not made at exactly the

right point it is necessary to roll the grip back to keep away from the grass.

Leaving Abbey Curve, top gear comes up on both solos and sidecars and competitors move over to the left to negotiate the right handed Woodcote Corner, after passing along Abbey Straight, *K*.

Woodcote, *L*, is a straightforward bend in front of the main grandstand, calling for third cog, and a rather delayed turning point, to keep off the grass on the exit. A fast solo can get round Woodcote at 95 + m.p.h. provided the corner is not wet; puddles lie a long time here.

Most machines will just about pull top gear past the pits. The inexperienced who take Woodcote slowly, discover that they have so much accelerating to do in front of the stands that they do not get into fourth gear until they are almost on top of Copse.

WHERE TO STAY

THE Saracen's Head Hotel (Tel. 14), Towcester, 6 miles distant; The White Hart Hotel (2131), Buckingham, 8 miles; The Bull Hotel (2104) and The Cock Hotel (2109), Stony Stratford, 9 miles; The Cornhill Hotel (93), Pottishall, 11 miles.

THIS Circuit Souvenir is the third in a series of eight. Save them all after detaching and folding as directed and you will have a 64-page guide to most race courses in England and Wales.

Circuit Souvenir No. 1, published on February 20, concerned Brands Hatch and Crystal Palace; No. 2 dealt with Castle Combe and Thruxton on February 27.

LAP RECORDS

- 125 c.c. Solo:** 2 min. 8 secs. = 82.14 m.p.h. C. C. Sandford (Mondial), 21.9.1957.
250 c.c. Solo: 1 min. 56 sec. = 90.63 m.p.h. J. Surtees (M.V.), 21.9.1957.
350 c.c. Solo: 1 min. 53.2 sec. = 92.87 m.p.h. J. Surtees (Norton) 21.9.1957.
500 c.c. Solo: 1 min. 49 sec. = 96.28 m.p.h. G. E. Duke (Gilera) and J. Surtees (Norton), 1.10.1955.
1,200 c.c. Three wheelers: 1 min. 56.6 sec. = 87.91 m.p.h. C. Smith (Norton), 1.10.1955.
Absolute Track Record: 1 min. 43 sec. = 102.3 m.p.h. M. Hawthorn (B.R.M.) and S. Moss (Vanwall), 5.5.1956.

MEETING DATES (with times of first races)

Road Races

- Saturday, April 19—10.45 a.m. (*Motor Cycling's* Silverstone Saturday; International permit). B.M.C.R.C.
Saturday, September 13—10.30 a.m. (Hutchinson 100 Meeting; National permit.) B.M.C.R.C.

Circuit Admission Charges: Adults, 5s.; children under 15, 2s. 6d. Grandstand transfers, 7s. 6d. each; Paddock transfers, 25s. each; reduced prices if seats pre-booked for Silverstone Saturday only (write to *Motor Cycling*, Bowling Green Lane, London, E.C.1.).

Car Park Charges: Motorcycles and three-wheelers, 3s.; cars, 7s. 6d.; coaches, £1.

Organizers: *The British Motor Cycle Racing Club, Ltd.*, 34 Paradise Road, Richmond, Surrey, (Richmond 6326).

How to get there



GUILDHALL LEICESTER



TABLE OF MILEAGES

	Silverstone
Andover	72
Birmingham	55
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Nottingham	70
Oxford	28
Reading	59
Spalding	60
Worcester	62



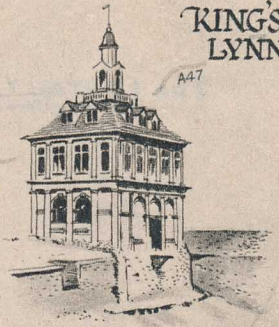
Wallingford

Reac



Oakham

BUTTER CROSS



KING'S LYNN

KING'S LYNN

STAMFORD

PETERBOROUGH

Oundle

Kettering

HUNTINGDON

WELLINGBOROUGH

Newmarket

MARKET
BOROUGH

entry
THAMPTON

St. Neots

CAMBRIDGE



NORTHAMPTON CROSS

BEDFORD

Biggleswade



CAMBRIDGE

ester
ERSTONE

Stony Stratford

BUCKINGHAM

Bletchley

Baldock

Royston

Salfron
Walden

Winslow

Hitchin

Luton

Bishop's
Stortford

Aylesbury



HATFIELD HOUSE

Tring

St. Albans

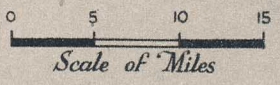
Hatfield



OXFORD

High Wycombe

Beaconsfield



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Maidenhead

Slough

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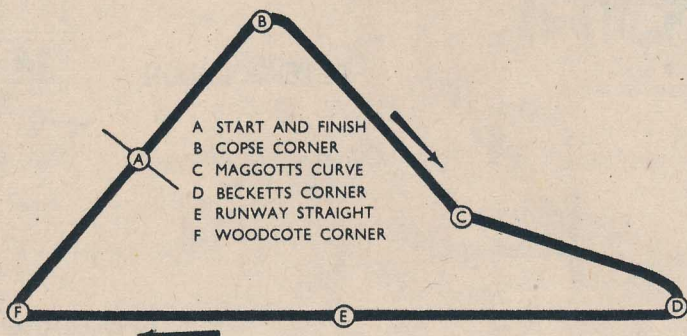
Staines

MOTORCYCLING

Circuit Souvenir No. 3

R THAMES

The Course, Corner by Corner



THE CLUB CIRCUIT

TWO types of event take place on the Club circuit. One is the orthodox sort with conventional racing machines and is organized by the B.M.C.R.C. into their Trophy Day meeting. The other is the High Speed Trials put on by the Motor Cycling Club specially for standard road-going machines; in these, riders of both solos and three-wheelers are required to put in a set number of laps within the hour to qualify for an award—and the target is quite high; there are also supporting races.

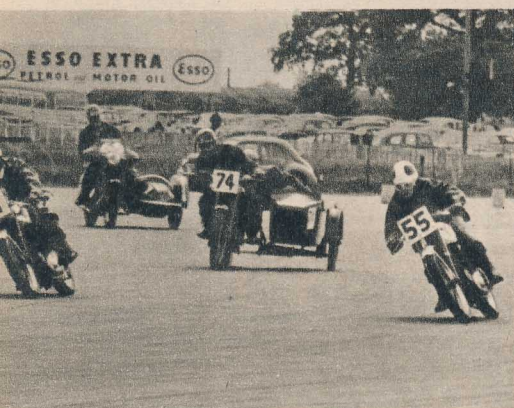
In both these, the problems facing the competitor are similar, for an identical circuit is used, tackled clockwise, and in each case the object is the same, namely to get round as quickly as possible.

On this 1.608 mile course, for both B.M.C.R.C. and M.C.C. events, the starting line, A, is at the upper end of the pits, machines having to be accelerated from rest, uphill, under the footbridge towards Cope Corner, B. Riders on a flying lap, are naturally passing the grid very much quicker, changing up into third as they do so, and finally hitting top just after passing under the footbridge and almost immediately prior to the first braking point of the lap. Smaller and slower machines change up earlier than this and also find the gradient up to Cope quite a handicap. From the spectators' point of view it is good, for all capacities come by on full noise, the exhausts echoing exhilaratingly between the pits and the stand.

Cope Corner, B, shows the skilful rider to advantage, his measure being demonstrated by how much he delays his shutting off point to bring his speed down to 60+



(Above) Vee-twin v. vertical-twin past the pits. (Below) A mixed bag tackle Woodcote Corner during an M.C.C. High-Speed Trial.



m.p.h. for this very bumpy bend. Many riders like to keep well in all the way round and a very quick man can be seen overtaking slower ones by the half-dozen as he accelerates uphill towards Maggotts Curve, C. This left-handed curve marks the crest of the climb which can just be taken flat by a potent 500 c.c. touring sidecar outfit, the throttle being held wide open on the drop towards Becketts Corner.

At Becketts, D, the Club circuit leaves the perimeter track and takes to one of the three runways; it is the slowest corner of all, calling for bottom cog.

Runway Straight, E, is then a full-bore sprint from the slow-speed Becketts, up a slight gradient to the crest by the intersection with the other runways by which time machines are in top and falling down towards Woodcote Corner, F; this brings them into the view of the spectators in the stand and in the pits and the paddock, both the latter being on the inside of the course.

Woodcote normally calls for second gear and a really spectacular crank over to get round through its 140° at a good speed so as not to lose too much headway for the onslaught on the climb past the main stand.

LAP RECORDS

- 50 c.c. Solo:** 1 min. 55.4 sec.=50.16 m.p.h. F. W. J. Launchbury (Itom), 6.7.1957.
125 c.c. Solo: 1 min. 25.2 sec.=67.93 m.p.h. D. H. Edlin (M.V.), 6.7.1957.
250 c.c. Solo: 1 min. 20 sec.=72.36 m.p.h. J. Baughn (Guzzi), 6.7.1957.
350 c.c. Solo: 1 min. 16 sec.=76.17 m.p.h. E. J. Washer (A.J.S.), 16.7.1955.
1,000 c.c. Solo: 1 min. 13.4 sec.=87.86 m.p.h. E. Pantlin (Norton), 16.7.1955.
1,200 c.c. Three wheelers: 1 min. 19.4 sec.=72.91 m.p.h. F. Hanks (Norton), 6.7.1957.
Absolute Track Record: 1 min. 10.3 sec.=82.46 m.p.h. J. T. Stewart (E.R.A.), 6.4.1957.

MEETING DATES

(with times of first races)

Road Races

Saturday, June 28—10.30 a.m. (High-Speed Trials; restricted invitation.) M.C.C.

Saturday, July 5—1.15 p.m. (Trophy Day; closed to club.) B.M.C.R.C.

Circuit Admission Charges: Free.

Car Park Charges: Cars, 7s. 6d. on June 28 and 5s. on July 5; motorcycles and three-wheelers, 2s. 6d. on both dates.

Organizers: *The British Motor Cycle Racing Club, Ltd.*, 34 Paradise Road, Richmond, Surrey (Richmond 6326) and *The Motor Cycling Club, Ltd.*, 76 Kinnerton Street, London, S.W.1 (SLOane 9087).

FORTY MILES AROUND SILVERSTONE

THE race circuit, in Northampton, is almost on the northern borders of Buckinghamshire and lies in country steeped in the history of England. The track includes the site of Luffield Abbey, established on the edge of the once-heavily wooded Whittlebury Forest, of which the nearby copses are remaining fragments. Around the Abbey was a sizeable community of which little trace exists, having been erased by the Black Death and the neglect that followed the pestilence. So the visitor starts off in the very middle of historic associations.

Around him are the beauties of the rural Midlands. To the south are the Chiltern Hills with their steep country lanes and commanding views from the ridges. The Chilterns constitute some very fine hills indeed; they are worth exploring, perhaps by following, wherever possible, the Icknield Way as it winds along the southern wall of the Midland plain. South-west are the more extensive Cotswolds dotted with mellow stone villages whose names, such as Chipping Norton, Lower Slaughter and Shipston-under-Wychwood are no less romantic than their honey coloured walls.

It is but 35 westerly miles to the home of William Shakespeare, Stratford-on-Avon. Although the town's economy is partly founded on this tourist attraction it is beautiful and in character, standing quietly on the river from which it takes its name. Nearby is the Vale of Evesham which, in spring-

time, must surely be one of the natural marvels of Britain, the fruit orchards heavy with blossom. Warwick, but eight miles from Stratford, is a fortified Midland town with roots deep in history.

The rider who ventures to the north, towards Blisworth and beyond, will be blessed by the sight of well-wooded, undulating countryside, given over almost entirely to agriculture until he reaches Rockingham Forest and Corby, the smoke and flames from iron ore smelting plants underling the horizon as he nears the far fringe of Northamptonshire. Rutland and Leicestershire lie hard by and in them, too, the ore is won from the rich, agricultural earth by open-cast mining methods. One quarry uses an example of the world's largest excavator, an all-electric walking dragline that takes bites of earth rivalling the legendary giants of the fables.

To the east of Silverstone are the watermeadows along the softly flowing Ouse as it meanders around Newport Pagnell, a town of great strategic importance in the Civil War and today a good base for a touring weekend. Just 30 miles away is Bedford, a prosperous market town with spacious boulevards—also on the banks of the gentle Ouse, now making its way through the very heart of the John Bunyan country. Beyond lies Cambridge, with its venerable colleges and the surrounding villages full of charm and thatched cottages and, at Linton, timbered houses.

Circuit at the Centre

CONTINUED

used for the shorter Club circuit, on which riders turn off at Becketts Corner and regain the outer track at Woodcote.

During 1949 the then lessees of the track were subject to considerable criticism for a policy which paid too little attention to motorcycling interests, and it was not until the autumn of that year that interested parties were able to agree to the B.M.C.R.C. staging a motorcycle meeting on October 8, which included the "Hutchinson 100" Handicap. "Bemsee" had to spend £2,000 in making the course safe for two-wheelers, but this was fully justified by the event's immediate success, riders turning in laps as high as 90 m.p.h. A.J.S. scored a 1-2-3 in the fastest race of the day.

Motor Cycling realized the possibilities of this new mainland circuit and revived its pre-war "Donington Day" meeting in the form of the first post-war "Silverstone Saturday," held on April 22, 1950. This, under "Bemsee" organization, was acclaimed an overwhelming success, attracting some 45,000 spectators. The bends had been resurfaced for the occasion. The big race was won by Geoff Duke (Norton); the leading sidecarman was Jackie Beeton. A highlight of the day's entertainment was a "race" between 24 T.T. winners mounted on Corgis, the "winner" being Tyrell Smith.

The British Motor Cycle Racing Club's first post-war solo-and-sidecar "Hutchinson 100" at Silverstone on September 30, 1950, was almost rained off, but it marked the conclusion of the club's first complete year there. Nowadays, the year's calendar includes their



"Bemsee" officials, (left) Paddock marshal Alwyn Pritchard, (Right) Secretary of the meeting and clerk of the course, Guy Tremlett.

triple promotions of spring and autumn meetings and the summer Trophy Day. Also held during the summer months are the M.C.C.'s annual High-Speed Trials and club racing. Both the Trials and Trophy Day races are run over the Club circuit.

The circuit's history took another turn in May, 1951, when the R.A.C. indicated that they would not be applying for their lease to be renewed in 1952—a move foreshadowed by Les Archer, the commentator at the previous October meeting, who said that the 1951 "Hutch" might be the last to be held at that venue. However, in 1952 the British Racing Drivers Club took over the lease and the course, their members rallying round to meet the expense of moving the pits to a permanent site between Woodcote and Cose corners and making a hardstanding.

The first motorcycle meeting under the new regime was *Motor Cycling's* "Silverstone Saturday," in which "Bemsee" had included a 125 c.c. class, then very much of a novelty.

By 1954, the course's popularity had risen by leaps and bounds, over 80,000 turning out to watch sun-drenched racing on April 10 and to see the late Ray Amm raise the lap record to 94 m.p.h.

This period saw the beginning of the steady improvement of spectator and rider facilities which has continued through the following years, protective banks and ditches being prepared and grandstands erected. Organizers, in conjunction with local police, have evolved a system of coloured route-marking to the various vantage points which takes the scores of thousands of spectators to the circuit and away again speedily.

And once he is there the spectator—and the participant—will find staged for him some of the finest racing that the British mainland can offer, whether it be the smaller closed-to-club meeting over the Club circuit or an International affair, such as "Silverstone Saturday," which features star riders and their "works" machines performing over one of the fastest courses in the country.



(Left) Cyril Smith, fastest charioteer at Silverstone. (Right) Chief travelling marshal Bill Mason.