



THE main object of attempting this record was to raise money for Jimmy Savile's Stoke Mandeville Hospital Appeal Fund. Just exactly how much cash I will raise I'm not yet sure but I have the enormous task of collecting in all the sponsor sheets and cash. This could be more difficult than breaking the actual world record itself! By November I had over £110 in with more to come.

On the day itself I arrived at the circuit at about 11am in the morning, feeling a little apprehensive about any problems that might arise. I didn't know it then but they certainly did. As soon as I arrived I wanted to organise the officiating of the distance with the ACU secretary, John Green, and sort out a few things with the commentators. Then I had planned to check the bike over one more time before making the attempt, but things didn't go the way I planned. The first problem was how to fight my way past the newspaper reporters without being too rude or inconsiderate (all time consuming). Then I had a live interview over the telephone for the local radio station.

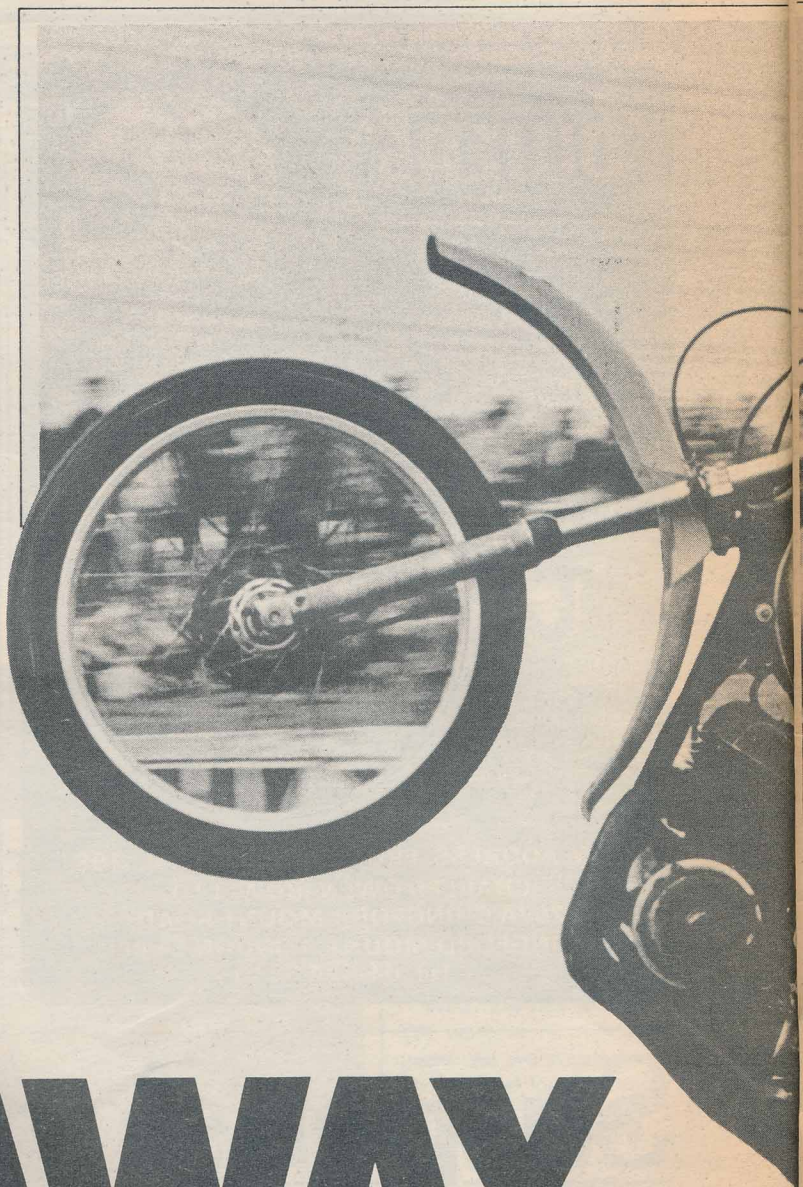
My greatest worry was the weather condition, not so much the rain, — I wasn't bothered about getting drenched — but cross winds. It only needs a slight breeze to send me off course and the weather the previous week had been

abominable. However, the worst of it had blown over and on the day it was not too bad.

I had also been having problems with the rear brake in practice. This is very important as it is the only thing which stops the bike going right over backwards. I have it adjusted fairly tight as it is only operated with a couple of fingers on a handlebar lever. As the brake gets hot with

friction the shoes expand then start binding, which makes it even hotter. If it binds too much there is a significant power loss and I can't keep the front wheel up. If I slacken off the adjustment it is not keen enough and there is a risk of my falling off the back.

My third problem was that of physical endurance. Hanging on to the bike in a vertical position



UP UP & AWAY

On October 11 1980, Dave Smith from Royton in Lancashire set a new world wheelie record by riding his Kawasaki for almost 15 miles around the Aintree race circuit on its back wheel. Civil engineer Dave has only

been a stunt rider for a little over a year but is already becoming a star attraction at stunt shows up and down the country. This is the story of the day that Dave Smith took on the world and won — as told by Dave himself

puts a lot of strain on my arms; as you can imagine it's just like doing pull-ups on a bar for 24 minutes. I had been weight-training like mad for weeks before the event just to get myself superfit for the attempt. What it boils down to is the World Wheelie Record is as much a physical endurance record as anything else and I knew that if everything else went okay, this

could be the final defeat.

I wanted to just get out there on the circuit and set straight off into the record attempt, but the commentator, Tony Dellahunty, insisted that I have a practice/warm-up lap first and then an interview on the start line to make it more dramatic for the spectators. Eventually I got under way, coping the best I could with the notorious corners on the

open circuit and dealing with the cross winds. After about 1.5 miles coming out of the hairpin before the start/finish straight I changed into third gear too soon — a critical mistake. This meant the engine was not quite in the power band: hence I didn't have enough to keep the front wheel up. As it touched down I was furious and even more determined so I dropped into second gear and instantly pulled another wheelie. The officials travelling behind me immediately zeroed the tripmeter and I was under way, starting from scratch again.

Things were going great now, I had made one mistake and learnt my lesson from it and I was damned sure I wasn't going to make it again. The crowd were cheering me on with every lap of the 1.64 mile circuit and the photographers were merrily clicking away, things seemed to be running too smoothly in fact, but bad luck was awaiting me on the next bend. Just as I was coming out of the turn onto the start/finish straight the bike started to slide sideways. Instantly I put the front wheel down but I was already off course and the bike went into a front-end wobble. I just managed to hang onto the bars to get the bike straight and bring it under control. By this time I realised I had a puncture in the rear wheel. I've not had a flat in over two years and it would have to happen today of all days, it's not something you could allow for or put down to lack of maintenance, it was just hard luck. The tyre wall had a small pin-hole in it, so I reckon it was just rubber fatigue through running the tyre at a low pressure. It was at this point that I thought the day was going to be a flop but I knew I must still try my best so off to the pits I went to fit in my spare inner tube.

About half an hour later the bike was ready again. I felt dirty, oily and generally uncomfortable but I knew this was my last chance so I was more determined than ever.

There was a car race meeting being held on the track later that afternoon and I was to make my record attempt during the interval. By this time there were already racing cars warming up, revving their engines in the background and generally ignoring me. After four laps in a continuous wheelie I had the World Record in the bag but I was not going to stop, not for anything. I wanted to continue and beat my own personal



record of 18 miles which I set unofficially in practice the week previously. However, after the ninth lap the travelling marshal flagged me in and I stopped in front of the chequered flag on the finish line. The trip-meter in the official ACU car recorded 15.2 miles but the RAC chap reckoned the lap distance was more accurate so I was officially credited with 14.76 miles at an average speed of 36½mph. I probably reached about 50mph on the straights and slowed down to about 15mph for some corners.

People rushed to congratulate me and shake my hand. Photographers and reporters all wanted to get the first word in. I was near exhaustion but I felt on top of the world.

Later that afternoon there was a short interval between the car races and I had regained enough strength to perform a routine of stunts. My unique speciality is a sustained wheelie carrying a passenger (the commentator in this case) then a few variations on a wheelie, eg doing a wheelie while standing on the seat on one leg. I also ride over my partner Mark (the human ramp) without the aid of a ramp and hopefully without touching him!

Quite obviously I am very pleased to have beaten the previous record of 6¼ miles. I would have liked to have carried on and beaten my own personal best, but perhaps it's just as well I ran out of time and had to stop. Maybe if I had carried on I would have reached my absolute limit and probably ended up falling off. I think the puncture probably added a bit of drama to the event and made things a little more exciting.

People have been asking me what my ambition is now — well I would like to have a go at the Isle of Man TT course one day. Dave Taylor has wheelied round it a few times but I would like to be the first person to do a continuous wheelie for a complete lap of the course.

