



Joint champion in 1978 and runner-up in 1979 Robin Cownie.



Fourth place went to John Moodie seen here at the Aberdeen championship round in November.



Billy Matthews, from Oban, finished in fifth spot in the championship chase.



Keith Johnston in determined mood on his 320 Yamaha at Aberdeen.

TRIALS — SCOTTISH CHAMPIONSHIP

IN reviewing the 1979 trials season in Scotland two names consistently appear at the top of the ratings, those of Robin Cownie and Alistair MacGillivray.

For Robin, sponsored by Vic Allan Motorcycles, it was to be a determined effort to lift the title that had eluded him by one point the year before.

Alistair, the Scottish champion in 1974, takes his sport on a trial-by-trial basis, but this attitude suits the likeable electrician from Fort William.

The first round, held in glorious weather at Oban in Argyll, saw Robin head the field by a 16 point margin to claim maximum championship points. Second place went to Keith Johnson riding a 320 Yamaha for Les Shirlaw's Yamscot team, Keith being six marks clear of Alistair in third place.

Joint champion in 1978, John Winthrop was out for the first time on a 310 Montesa, forming one half of the Lloyd Brothers team. He and Billy McMaster, also on a 310 Montesa, forming what was hoped to be a very strong two-pronged attack on the Scottish championship.

The next round, the Valente, turned out to be dominated by visiting English riders and with names like John Reynolds and Rob Edwards, nobody was really surprised when John took the premier award with Rob runner-up.

Billy McMaster took his 310 Montesa to maximum points with Alistair next up with another valuable nine points. Third championship place went to Jim Cunningham on his 325 Bultaco, just ahead of Robin who gained seven championship points, a placing which was to prove decisive in the final standings.

On to the Bank Holiday weekend in May, and the Loch Lomond club's classic Dan Stewart two-day event, where Alistair had a very good first day when he dropped 23 marks, exactly half Robin's first day score. Despite trebling this score on the Sunday run, Alistair held off a strong challenge from a superbly consistent Robin to finish seven marks clear.

The next round, the Lochaber trial at Fort William, was thought to be a home benefit for Alistair, though Robin had other ideas and forced his Bultaco to ten championship points to turn the advantage his way. Billy Matthews separated these two riders, Billy adding nine points to his total with Alistair gaining eight. John Moodie (310 Montesa) took the next championship spot to add to his five gained at the Dan Stewart.

At this, the half-way point, only one mark separated Robin and Alistair with a gap now appearing between Alistair and the next man, Keith Johnston, who was 12 points behind Alistair on 23 points.

Rain and sleet greeted riders when they arrived at Achallader Farm on Rannoch Moor in September for the fifth round, the Scottish Experts, where it was Alistair's turn to come out on top in the battle for championship points. Robin finished nine marks behind to gain nine points, and so tie with Alistair on 45 points. Eighteen championship points now separated these two and Keith Johnston, who only gain-

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Cownie challenges to the bitter end

ed four points from this round, a trial more to be endured than enjoyed.

Dalmellington in October saw Keith Johnston wheel out for the first time one of John Shirt's Majesty Yamahas, and one of the closest battles of the season was witnessed with only two marks separating the top three riders. The order was Alistair, Robin and John Moodie on 6, 7 and 8 marks respectively. Keith took his new mount to fourth place on 12 marks.

The next round, the Colonial, broke the long run of the Alistair and Robin show, when Keith Johnston emerged five marks clear of Alistair to take his first championship win, proving how quickly he had adapted to the new bike.

Robin dropped to seventh place in this event, his lowest placing of the year on what is practically a home event for him, proving as did Alistair at Fort William that local knowledge does not always reap a great benefit.

With Robin now five marks behind Alistair

in the points table and with only seven of the eight rounds to count, Robin could now only tie for first place even if he won the final round at Aberdeen, and Alistair finished out of the top ten, but as events turned out, these mathematical acrobatics were not required.

Robin said before the final round near Aboyne, Aberdeen, that, win, lose or draw he would retire at the end of the season because of business pressure. Once more it was the Post Office engineer from Edinburgh, Keith Johnston, who emerged winner from Robin by a one-mark margin. As it turned out, Alistair slumped to eleventh place and no points — his worst ride of the year, but he still had a one mark advantage over Robin after the season-long battle.

Scottish Trials Championship 1979 — final placings: 1 Alistair MacGillivray 64 points, 2 Robin Cownie 63, 3 Keith Johnston 52, 4 John Moodie 42, 5 Billy Matthews 41, 6 Jim Cunningham 32, 7 Billy McMaster 30, 8 John Winthrop 26, 9 Michael Tye and Raymond Leitch 12.



Alistair MacGillivray — champion in 1974 and again in 1979 — just one point ahead of Robin Cownie.