

**Womens International  
Motorcycle Association**

**WIMA**

**1950 - 1980**



**Booklet written to commemorate our Pearl Jubilee**

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Researched, compiled and edited by Frances Popley with much thanks to the kind help and co-operation of members :-

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## INTRODUCTION: BEFORE W.I.M.A.

This booklet has been written to commemorate the Pearl (30 years) Jubilee of WIMA (Women's International Motorcycle Association). The Association was founded in America in 1960 by Louise Sherbyn. The aim of WIMA was to support and encourage the sport of motorcycling among women.

I don't want you to get the impression that WIMA sprang up out of the blue, or that there were no active women riders before it was formed. In this section I want to briefly go over the background to the Association and to introduce you to some female riders and women's motorcycle clubs that were active before WIMA.

## PIONEER WOMEN IN AMERICA

America, traditionally the land of pioneers, produced many brave and courageous women who were among the first to take to the road on two-wheels. It was reading about the achievements of these remarkable women that gave Louise the inspiration for WIMA. As only a few sketchy details are known of these women's exploits I shall simply cover them in chronological order here.

It was in 1902, in a little city in New York State, when a young lady began scooting about on one of those daring two-wheeled vehicles, amazing everyone with her ability. To Mrs G. N. Rogers of Schenectady, a motorcycle was an 'interesting' thing. In her girlhood she claimed no outstanding achievement and it was not until many years later that her name was drawn into history as the first known woman to conquer riding a motorcycle.

Among the first to show her ability and skill in the early endurance runs of 1910, was Mrs Frank Karslake of Oakland, California. Later, in 1913, with a tandem passenger on her Harley-Davidson, she rode the winding seven mile trail non-stop to the summit of Mount Hamilton.

With the advancing of years more women evinced a liking for motorcycle riding and many entertained a desire to venture across America on two-wheels. At the beginning of the twentieth century there were great stretches of undeveloped land. Roads were mainly stage coach and wagon trails. Choking dust and gluey mud made driving risky and strenuous. Road maps and road markers were rarely seen. There were few filling stations and dealers and shops were far between.

There was little comfort in riding as there were no springs in the forks, no rear springing or foam rubber in the saddle. There were no bright lights, merely a flickering oil lamp. Motorcyclists of the 1900's wore a picturesque lot with high laced leather boots, heavy wool knee-high stockings, knee breeches, blazers and outlandish looking caps and helmets. Even to the early 1930's this fashion predominated.

Time passed and news came that a woman

had started to ride her machine across the American continent. This was in 1913. She was later to become known as the first woman to cross the country by motorcycle. This was Miss Cy Goodman, a New York City newspaper reporter with only six riding lessons who had never before gone beyond sight of the big city. Cy's ambition was to reach the West Coast astride her Flanders '4'. However, after encountering many difficulties en route, she was suddenly whisked off to hospital for an appendix operation. Her trip unexpectedly ending somewhere in New Mexico.

The first woman rider to come to America from another country was a Dutch girl who had travelled extensively in other countries. Dora Rodriguez planned to ride from New York to California. It is not known whether or not she covered the distance, this too was in 1913.

In 1915 Faye Hildebrand (later Mrs McConnell) a young woman just out of her teens, accompanied by her mother, left their home in Washington for a tour to California. For a long time they had planned this trip which was made on their three-wheeler 'Gray Fellow', a Harley-Davidson with sidecar. They planned to stop in Dodge City and later to take part in a short grass tour at Grand Junction, Colorado. Their troubles started along the old Santa Fe Trail, to get to Chanute they had to ride in water that came over the footboards. Then there was deep sand which meant getting off and pushing. The Hildebrands made stops wherever they could find dealer shops and they were always royally received. It is generally believed that Faye was the first woman ever to take a motorcycle eastwards over the mountain on route 40. After much punishment from the roads they reached Tulsa. Sadly they did not manage to complete the trip as Faye was taken ill. However, they were able to enjoy many other interesting journeys later.

The first successful journey from coast to coast, made by women, was also in 1915. Effie Hotchkiss, of Brooklyn, left home on her Harley-Davidson, with her Mother in the sidecar. Eighty-seven days later, after a brief visit to Los Angeles, they reached San Francisco, California.

The first women to make the perilous climb up Pike's Peak were two sisters, Adeline and Augusta Van Buren. During this venture in 1916 they completed a transcontinental from New York to California, each riding an Indian Twin. Their route took them first to San Francisco, down through Los Angeles to San Diego. This trip of 4000 miles was then reported as the longest of all transcontinentals thus far made by women. It may be that this record still holds.

Travelling conditions improved, dirt roads became concrete highways. Road maps appeared and filling stations became more numerous. But it was still a remarkable achievement for women to travel afar on two-wheels.

In 1929 Mrs Dorothy Robinson from Detroit began her riding career which led to her fame as a champion enduro rider. In 1935 she and her husband set a non-stop transcontinental sidecar record from Los Angeles to New York, riding a

Harley-Davidson on which they took it in turns to drive. Since then Dorothy has travelled from Michigan to both coasts many times, and from border to border. In 1939 she also rode her machine to the summit of Pike's Peak.

Making her debut at the same time, and still holding her rank among the veterans is Mrs Genevieve Baker of Denver, Colorado. Her greatest victory came in 1938 when she won the tough 500 mile Denver Enduro. In the same year she helped set a record by getting her machine through deep snowdrifts in ten below zero temperatures to the summit of Pike's Peak on New Year's Eve.

In 1933 Mrs Marjorie Longshore of Malone, New York, learned to ride a 1924 single motor. She liked riding so much that about seven years later she rode 996 miles from West Brentwood, Long Island to Milwaukee in one and a half days. On the first day she covered 736 miles, thus establishing a one day record for solo riding.

One of the most dangerous trips of all was made by nineteen year old Miss Polly Forbes-Johnson in the summer of 1936. Courageous Polly left New York City and undertook the hazardous journey to Guatemala. Her ride of 6000 miles led through much uninhabited country, through swampland, desert and jungle, and just plain bad roads. President Ubico of Guatemala presented her with a German motorcycle in admiration of her bravery.

All this seems to make modern tours look rather tame, doesn't it?

## WOMEN'S MOTORCYCLE CLUBS IN ENGLAND.

In England in 1896, a law was passed raising the speed limit for horseless carriages from 4 to 12 mph. One leading newspaper of the day remarked in its editorial that perhaps one day women would be brave enough to control one of these noisy monsters. However, in the same article upon reflection it is stated that it would be more in keeping if ladies continued to use a coach and pair in order to effect their afternoon tea visits and shopping! Such complacency if you please!!!

With the first World War, women came more into their own driving ambulances and cars, and by the mid 1920's they had participated well in the motorcycling field. Taking part in various rallies, trials etc. Women had made their mark and were there to stay!

Here I want to concentrate on the women's motorcycle clubs that existed in this country before the development of WIMA.

In the past there were several all-women motorcycle clubs, the best known of which was undoubtedly the London Ladies' Motor Cycle Club. This was formed in 1926. But it was not the first. It was preceded by the Yorkshire Ladies' Motor Cycle Club, sadly this organisation only had a short life. Its Captain was fatally injured in a road accident and the membership was so distressed that they disbanded the Club.

The London Ladies' MCC lasted until 1961. Only women riders could become full member and their women passengers associate member. The Club was not anti-men, it just never occurred to anyone to invite men along, but they were free to do so if they wished. The London Ladies' (LLMCC) was affiliated to the South East Centre of the A.C.U. It ran 'closed to club' trials for its own members and an annual 'open to centre' trial, known as the Two Counties. The two counties were Surrey and Hampshire. The organisation of these trials was handled by the women, who acted as observers as well. Most members lived in the London area but some came from further afield to participate in the event. Marjorie Cottle was a member. She, with Edith Foley and Louie Maclean won the Silver Vase of the International Six Days Trial in 1927. Another member who distinguished herself was Theres Wallach who later left this country and took a residence in America. Racing was her greatest interest at that time. She won a Gold Star on the Brooklands track. In this she was joined by Florence Blinkiron and Beatrice Shilling, both members of LLMCC.

The Club used to compete in the AC National Rally. One year three of the members rode the maximum distance of 729 miles. The Club also had its own rallies of a rather different nature. Before the War the Club's President was Mrs Malcolm Campbell, whose son was killed while attempting the water speed record on Lake Windermere. During the War the Club activities ceased, but the members managed to keep in touch and reformed at the end of the War, but never again ran 'open to centre' trial. After the War the Club formed a small bit section, but they found it soon merged with the bigger bikes as the younger members joined together with the not so young. Another very keen member of the Club was Maureen Towle (Johnny). She won the Sunbeam Club's Pinhar Memorial Cup. This was awarded to a rider under twenty-one years old who was not only good rider but who also took an active part in the life of his/her club. Johnny was the first woman to receive the award and is probably the only one ever to have done so.

One thing that the Sunbeam Club took into consideration was that Johnny was Assistant Secretary of the LLMCC's RAC-ACU Training Scheme. The London Ladies' had undertaken this at the request of the Road Safety Officer at Hendon. The pupils were all girls. In 1931 before such a scheme started anywhere, the LLMCC had been given an old Coventry Eag and a farmer had lent them a field. They gave lessons to any girl who came along.

After the War one of the Club's main events was the Brandon Rally, the first of which took place about 1950. Women from all over the country were invited to Brandon Hall near Coventry. At one of these events Johnny met Nora Traynor, (Gerry), and they became the Club's second pair of Globe-Trotters. In 1981 they set off on two 350cc Nortons to Australia. It is known that Johnny and Gerry reached

Australia, but not whether they returned or settled there.

There were other ladies' clubs in England before the War too. In 1929 an organisation allied the Women's Automobile and Athletic Association (WAAA) was formed. Most of its members had cars, but a few also had bikes. This Organisation was responsible for holding a rally called the London to Exeter Trial. It was an event similar to the Motor Cycle Club's (MCC) Long Distance Trials. It started on the outskirts of London and observed hills etc. were included, but it did not take place in mid-winter. Usually about eleven women took part.

In the Birkenhead area Agnes Daburn formed the North Western Ladies' Motor Cycle Club. One of her friends, an expert engineer and motorcyclist, volunteered to give a series of lessons on maintenance to the members. This club ran for several years and was very successful.

Other countries too had their women's motorcycle clubs. In the U.S.A. there was the Motor Maids of America, and in Australia there was the Victorian Ladies' Motor Cycle Club. New Zealand also had its Club. The Captain of his later became a WIMA member.

In the 1950's there were several other women's clubs in this country such as the Midland Motor Maids, who took their name from the Americans; there was also a similar club in the North of England.

This feat doesn't sound at all remarkable these days so perhaps I should attempt to enlighten you a little. The motorcycle she rode seemed by almost any standards highly unsafe. The back quarter of the frame seems to have been filled with petrol tank, surface carburettor and 'hot tube' ignition casing. The engine was placed on the side of the machine, running in opposite direction to the road wheel. Thus the hapless rider was virtually sitting on top of a petrol tank arranged over a flaming burner! It sounds not dissimilar to riding a time bomb! Not only was the machine rather dangerous, so too were the roads. At that time the roads would have been little more than dirt or mud tracks and the distance was probably further than most people would have travelled in a lifetime. I think it will be agreed that Mrs De Veulle certainly earned her diamond ring. Incidentally her husband was not unconnected with motorcycles. He was responsible for the Amac Carburettor and the AV petrol engine, a successful proprietary engine of the early 1900's.

In the late 1890's many manufacturers produced ladies' models of their motorcycles, or they built their machines so as to allow for the cross-bar to be lowered so that women could ride them. Apart from Mrs De Veulle I can find no record of any who did so at this early date. It would appear that by marketing ladies' models the manufacturers wished to suggest that their bikes were so easy to manage - even a woman could cope with one. This was on the basis that if a woman could ride it, well then it would be easy for a man. What a nerve!

## FAY TAYLOUR, ONE OF THE WORLD'S TOP SPEEDWAY RIDERS

### MRS F. H. DE VEULLE (POSSIBLY BRITAIN'S FIRST WOMAN MOTORCYCLIST).

Gathering material for the booklet I was going to come across a lady that I could really call Britain's First Woman Motorcyclist. This proved impossible, so I had to compromise. The following is the earliest reference I can find of a woman achieving something on two wheels.

In 1896 a remarkable little lady with the name Mrs F. H. De Veulle rode a Ladies' Model Coventry Motette from Coventry to London. We didn't do this with a view to setting or making any records. It was simply a publicity stunt for the machine. The bike was made by J. J. Lawson and Company. Mr H. J. Lawson presented Mrs De Veulle with a diamond ring for her skill and courage.

Originally I had intended to include a fifth section in this booklet, entitled 'Famous Lady Riders' but I had underestimated the cost of printing etc and in the end something had to go. As this section was the least relevant to WIMA I decided to cut it. However nothing would bring me to consign Fay's life story to the cutting room floor.

Fay's professional riding career started in 1927 at the Camberly Scramble. At that time scrambling was a new sport in this country. Fay did remarkably well in this event, as her story will tell, and then went on to become a world famous speedway racer.

Fay was made an honorary member of WIMA in 1979 and at first I was inclined to include her in the WIMA personalities section, but as she was such a very special pioneer I thought it best to hear from her now. I shall now hand you over to Fay and let her get on with telling you about her life.

## SOME DETAILS IN ANSWER TO QUERIES ABOUT MY RACING RECORD AND HOW I CAME TO TAKE UP SUCH A SPORT.

I cannot answer the indignant queries as to why my pioneering and never-equalled efforts are not recorded in the Guinness Book of Records unless it be that this publication caters more for those interested in such statistics as the slimmest waist, the largest toe, the champion consumer of hot-dogs....., nor can I reply to an indignant letter just received from an old racing fan who watched me perform who asked me why my name is not mentioned at all in a recently published book called 'FIFTY GOLDEN YEARS OF SPEEDWAY'. It is very odd, writes another friend, and many such comments have come from young friends as well, especially those interested in motor sport.

I can add, also to the incomprehension of older racing fans, that many earlier key publications on speedway and car racing have soft-pedalled or ignored altogether the notable and exceptional part I played in both sports, though other women racers are featured who made no special mark, and newspapers recorded my efforts with streamer headlines and such titles as Wonder Girl!

A friend, watching a quiz programme with me on television recently, suggested she could stump the cleverest contestants on Mastermind and Sports Quiz programmes with the following questions:-

1. Who was the first speedway rider from the English tracks to go out to Australia just after the Australians had introduced the sport to England, and then defeat the Australian champions on their home ground, the only rider that season to do so; and who broke Australian records in spite of just four months experience of that seasoned Australian sport?
2. Did a woman ever break the lap record on the famous Wembley Speedway?
3. When women were permitted for the first time to race on the tricky 'Mountain Circuit' at Brooklands in the thirties, did a woman lap that track faster than any British racing driver including Sir Malcolm Campbell and Raymonds who held the records she would have broken?

And if so name her.

My name of course answers those questions, but it all refers to a long time ago so now I will give some detail as requested.

I was brought up in the sheltered atmosphere of nannies and governesses in the old Ireland. Then went to boarding school and college in Dublin. I had two sisters, one older who married while I was still at school, and a younger one who became a successful doctor. I was the tomboy of the three, and to my governesses' disapproval drove a soap-box on wheels down the garden hill. But at school and college, though good at sport and winning the tennis trophy, no thought of motor racing entered my head.

My father, an officer in the old R.I.C., was

a strict disciplinarian, my mother always delicate. I was brought up to the sounds of Ireland fighting for independence, and took charge when we were raided one school holiday, my father being at Dublin Castle at the time. He had been stationed in many country towns during my childhood. My greatest joy was riding the pony and horse, but when they were sold and my father became mechanised, I pleaded to steer the car. But tennis was my main interest.

I left college when still a teenager. My mother was very ill and I completed a course of Domestic Science before leaving college so that I could run the house for her. She and father were now living in England as Ireland had now won independence, and so I joined them there, in a big country house in Berkshire. I carried the tennis trophy and also a cash prize won for domestic science with me.

I'd said goodbye to all my schoolfriends in Dublin, and found England desperately dull. We had tennis parties and all the guests were father's age. I joined a hockey club in Reading, our nearest town, but it proved equally dull. I went by bus or drove my father's car. He was not a good driver though a great sport in other respects, possessing many cups for shooting, fishing, sailing, golf and other activities. No one in our families had been in the motor trade or interested in cars, but I became infatuated with a boy who had a country garage. I knew nothing of sex, but the urge to love cannot be governed by waiting for suitable introductions. None came my way, and Mother worried on her death bed saying 'you ought to be meeting men'. She had been presented at court, but the gay era of her youth had disappeared, and invitations to hunt balls mocked me as they stood on the mantelpiece with never a partner in sight.

The young man at the garage had a motor-bike; it didn't interest me especially, but after my third visit he suggested I might like a ride on it. He'd been repairing my father's car. I'd driven it to hockey when he was away and someone had backed into me. Now he had fixed it so that the damage was invisible, and at last the paint was dry. I wished it weren't, but I said yes, I'd love a ride on his bike which would mean seeing him again.

After many evening meetings at a cross-roads he told me we musn't meet any more. He had become too fond of me, he said, and there was a girl in his village he'd promised to marry. He kissed me for the first time and suggested I should buy a motor bike and get away from the lonely house. I rode my bicycle home in tears, but returned to the cross-roads the following Tuesday, the day we met. He didn't turn up, and after waiting what seemed like an eternity without hope I left for home, reluctantly. I did not want to leave, I belonged to that isolated cross-roads where, sitting on the wooden gate onto the heath, I'd found everything I'd missed, or so it seemed..... just talking to someone who respected the innocence I didn't understand. The prospect of home without these meetings was

unbearable. The ride back was desolate, and I cried myself to sleep.

Next day I bicycled into the town with the cash I'd won for domestic science. The motorcycle lessons at the cross-roads, the reason for going there, hadn't materialised. Sitting on the gate talking had been far more interesting, while my father believed I was at the village sewing evenings. Now I rode back from town on a motorcycle.

It was easy to ride, too easy, and three days later I took it back to the shop and changed it for a bigger model. It was a Levis, but that too was changed before very long, this time for a peppy "350-OHV-AJS".

Mother had already died of cancer, and the night and day nurse attending her had left. I had time to fiddle with the new bike but mostly all I did was to get dirtier than any mechanic would, and I went to Reading for adjustments and repairs. I hadn't been riding very long when the repair shop owner told me I rode the bike rather well and ought to compete in the 'Southern Scott Scramble', the most sporting event in the motorcycle calendar, he said. "You could easily beat the three top women trials riders who compete each year for a special cup", and he added that crack trials riders and TT racing men from Coventry also competed. It was a scramble course with stoney hills as steep as the side of a house, and other frightening looking surfaces, sand, mud and the lot. The course was near Camberley, not far from Reading, and I sneaked out to have a look, though Charles Harmon, the repair shop owner, was to take me there the next Sunday when the Reading club boys would be on the hills practising. Nearly half the riders didn't finish.

I found the course and sneaked home with my tail between my legs. It didn't seem possible that any motorcycle could climb 'Red Road', the first hill I saw. But on Sunday, there were the boys spread all over it and they seemed to be reaching the top! "We'll try you on a shorter hill first", Harmon said, and he took me to 'Kilimanjaro'. Shorter, yes, but even steeper. Take it flat out, I was told, keep revving and you'll reach the top, but shut off on the crest or you'll fall down the other side. I reached the top, forgot to shut off and landed in the heather part way down the back. Unhurt, I was shown the rest of the course, and I knew it would take skill as well as nerve to conquer it. 'Wild and Woolly' would be the biggest challenge, a down-and-up hill. You had to go down Wild and over the gully at the bottom at terrific speed to get up Woolly! The contest was still a month away, and, if I never knew it before, a challenge was mighty attractive. Even racing all out on the skiddy sandy stretch was frightening. But conquer the course I did, returning to it alone on week-days.

Then the great day arrived and it was raining. Never mind, Harmon said, there are pushers on the bad hills and it will be fine for the afternoon circuit. It was, the hills had dried and the second stage of the race allowed us to show our best.

It was my first race and I gloried in the course. I finished with two firsts, the Venus Cup for Ladies and the Class Cup for 350cc engines. I had defeated the top women trials rider, Marjorie Cottle, and won the class cup from the male entry. I was fired! (That means 'jacked' in America!).

I wrote to AJS in Coventry. Marjorie Cottle and the two other women contestants rode in trials for factories. Why couldn't I?

AJS agreed to tune my bike and enter me for trials. I won cups and medals at once though it was a different type of riding. After one trial, in the hotel at Buxton, our competition manager said to Ruben Harveyson, a reporter, "She went too fast, she started by racing". I had fallen off on a bad slimy rutted hill just before reaching the top. "Ah!", replied Harveyson, "but she got further up than your crack boys".

In a short time I was engaged to ride for Rudge Whitworth, and went to live in Coventry, the centre of the trials country. Father had sold his house and now lived in a river-side hotel, where a woman fell in love with him and ultimately married him. The Rudge motorcycle was bigger, a 500cc. Again I won many cups and medals for trials riding, but after a few months speedway racing came to England and I wanted to have a go. Australian promoters had come to England and were building tracks in many cities, principally London. They were loose-surfaced, oval tracks of about a quarter of a mile with two straights and a sweeping curve at each end. They brought many of their champion riders with them to race and demonstrate this new type of racing. It was called "Dirt Track Racing" or "Broadsiding". (Loose unmade roads in Australia and 'Dirt Roads'). But the racing wasn't new to Australia, and their expert riders drove into the bends on full throttle, taking the curves in one hair-raising powerslide or broadside, their rear wheel slanted to an alarming angle while their upright front wheel faced in the opposite direction, pointing at the outside fence, in order to 'hold' the slide. They rode to the left, anti-clockwise, and their left leg trailed stream-like to the rear. There was no room or need for a left footrest, and equipment such as mudguards was removed.

Rudge Whitworth were not interested for me to attempt this racing, if I could. So I sneaked up to London to have my first look at it. Earlier, a race meeting had been staged on a sandy area at Camberley, and was called the first Dirt Track racing in England, but it was not the real thing as we merely circled posts at each end of the straights. I had competed, and with Charles Harmon had won all the awards. Now, at Stamford Bridge, I saw the real thing, a rider, streamlined over his small tank, throwing his bike into the bend at full speed. It looked terrifying, but if I'd conquered those Camberley hills, here was another challenge!

All the London promoters, with the exception of the Crystal Palace promoter whom I hadn't asked, refused to give me a trial. No women would have the nerve or strength, they said.

I bought a helmet, decided to tuck my hair under it, the boys hair then being short for it was 1926, and I'd mingle with the English boys at the next Crystal Palace practise session. I was discovered buying the helmet by Lionel Wills, an ex-Cambridge University motorcyclist who had started racing on the new speedways, and expecting to be laughed at, I told him my plan. "The Crystal Palace is my home track", he said, "I'll drive you there".

The boys at the track were too busy falling off and trying to get the hang of the new racing to notice me, but when the promoter, Freddie Mockford, came along and yelled for "that lad" to be called in or the track would never be ready for the racing next day, he had a shock when I, the last rider left on the track, fell off and then removed my helmet for a moment. "Why don't you book her to race?", Lionel queried, adding that all the other promoters were booking me. Whether that fib helped or not I'll never know, but after first scorning me he ran after me as I was disappointedly descending the terrace, having washed the cinder dust off my face for the first and last time, as I thought. "Would you like to race here a week tomorrow", he said. "Would I! But I tried to sound casual as I agreed. "You can practise all next week", he told me, and, having taken a few days leave from Coventry after seeing the exciting racing at Stamford Bridge, I wrote at once to Geoffrey Butcher, the competitions manager, to say I wasn't returning.

I kept the compositions Rudge pro tem though it belonged to the factory, and all that next week in a heatwave I ploughed round that track till at last, after tumble after tumble, I'd

taught myself to powerslide, to keep the throttle open and stay on the machine. The night before racing I was going like an expert.

But alas! the track was very different the next day when in the middle of the meeting my race against two Australians was announced. It looked smooth as the big rake circled it before we lined up, but the deep ruts from former races were still there, and my heavy bike, unlike the special light machines that the Australians used, was hard to handle. The races were four laps and I hung on for three and three-quarters, then, way out in front and not far from the finish, I went head over heels on that last bend! I'd been given a start but my two ace opponents were still far behind. The following week I did the same thing. I was riding harder than I knew. Freddie Mockford booked me once more saying "if you fall off this time.....finish!"

But this time Lionel Wills lent me his light Dirt Track Special and I stayed on. I was booked for Hove, near Brighton, and there I defeated the Hove local champion, and from then never looked back. I went north and in Middlesbrough and Salford and Liverpool my press cuttings record many wins. I was called The Queen of the Speedways and often billed as the only girl dirt track rider. But in the North I was matched against another girl rider, Eva Asquith. Giving her a good start I was able to win. She did not powerslide the bends in streamlined fashion as was the method then. Instead of throwing the bike wide into the turn she rode round the inside with bent knee (today, with shorter wheelbase bikes, the speedway boys powerslide the inside with bent knees).

## Fay, Munich 1930





## Crystal Palace 1929

Three or four other women made some rides on the speedways in those early days but did not prove fast enough to be spectacular. It was so thrilling to new audiences that the tracks were packed just to see the Australians, and also a few Americans; do demonstration rides and match races. Even the red carpet went down for Royalty. Press cuttings record I draw record crowds, and still did when spectators lessened. Team racing had not yet started.

When that first season ended in England, the Australian riders returned to their country. Their summer and racing season was just starting. "I'd like to see Australia" was a thought that came into my head, and before long I found myself on a ship heading that way, complete with speedway bike, though I only hoped I might be permitted to do demonstration rides. I felt I needed a great deal more riding to go as fast as I'd like. Unlike the English boys who raced in every event more than once a week, I was confined to match racing mostly, and could not race at many tracks. I felt very much a beginner still and not too safe in spite of the many good performances I'd managed to make.



I landed in West Australia. The tall gum trees and wide open spaces were a dream land. Not so dreamy was the terrifying prospect laid before me of racing the West Australia Champion, Sig Schlamm, on his home track, the famous Claremont speedway. There was no-one else to provide an England versus Australia race. I was the only rider from the British tracks who had made the trip. It was January 1929, English riders came out the following season but now it was up to me.....and how ridiculous, I thought. The speedway paper had said that everyone was waiting to see who could beat the canny Sig Schlamm who appeared unbeatable. He held the record which had stood for over a year. It was a half-mile track, twice as large as I'd been riding on. And though I'd brought the latest fast speedway bike from England, he had exactly the same model, for he had been one of the racers in England.

Perhaps being scared is an advantage. I won that race although the official who drove me to the track said he didn't think I could win and that speedway fans would have their stop-watches to check it wasn't a fix. But that was proved when it turned out that I had equalled the long-standing record in spite of a heavy track, and had also made the fastest time of the meeting.

In Melbourne, I broke two records, defeated the champion, and won two races. In Adelaide, a fast third-mile track, I broke the season's four-lap record and defeated two top riders. But in Sydney I crashed in my first race and woke up in hospital!

I was beaten in Brisbane by Vic Huxley, such a great rider that even had I been able to put up my best showing I could have lost. It was the only irregular track. It had three turns instead of the regular oval and I was able to sort that out in a morning practise run. But during racing at night under flood lighting it wasn't so clear and I couldn't remember the bends. But the crowd seemed happy, and later I was dancing at Lennon's Hotel. I said to a partner that I'd heard the famous flyer Kingsford Smith watched the racing and I wished I could meet him. "I am Kingsford Smith", he said! He was staying at Lennon's too. In Sydney I'd been entertained at Government House.

I went on to New Zealand where a big welcome awaited me, a Civic reception, and the All Blacks. But I slipped away from it as fast as I could to view the racing track. Next night, after racing, a doctor was called in the middle of the night to stitch up a finger on my right hand. I'd won two races and crashed on the third. That was at Wellington. And then I went on to Auckland and other cities. General Motors had provided a white Chevrolet so I travelled by car. I was entertained with the Australian tennis team which seemed to be touring the same route so we watched each other perform, and sometimes two or three of the team would travel with me while we chased the train with their fellow members on board to the next city. I don't know if speedway racing had been established as long

in New Zealand as in Australia, but I managed to turn in fastest time of the night frequently and defeat their top riders. Admiral Byrd, who had just flown over the South Pole, was on a small ship taking me back to Wellington. The captain gave a party for us both, and I was pleasantly surprised to meet a handsome man in his thirties instead of the bearded old seafarer I'd expected!

Back in London, the astute promoter, Johnnie Hoskins, now running the Wembley speedway, entered me for the Cinders Trophy, a contest to break the lap record, representing Ireland. It was a stunt to draw the crowds I decided, as I still felt inadequate and inexperienced, and those lined up against me were the best from Australia, America, England, Scotland and New Zealand. And the track seemed strange and tricky. Nevertheless, next morning newspapers reported "Woman breaks Wembley Track Record". I think I was more surprised than pleased when I circled the track with the trophy.

I made another trip to Australia and New Zealand, a few more rides in England, and then promoters, finding their crowds dwindling and searching for ways to get extra publicity, decided to stage a women's race and then announce a ban on women riders. Apart from the northern girl, Eva Asquith, the few women whom some promoters had used occasionally were too slow to interest spectators, and it was a race between such riders that was now staged as a forerunner to the ban announcement. Conveniently, one rider fell on the approach ramp before reaching the track and broke a collar bone. Next morning came the big announcement: **WOMEN BANNED FROM SPEEDWAY RACING**. It gave the promoters headlines. They'd put women on the tracks to get publicity. Now they were banning them for the same purpose.

I was on my way back from Australia at the time (though a recent Press article referring back to that race put me on the starting line powdering my nose 'calmly')! I was never calm on the starting line and seldom if ever indulged in that old-fashioned custom of powdering one's nose. I know now why I wasn't calm on the starting line, though at the time I hadn't worked it out. Throwing the bike into an all-out power-slide was tricky. It took strength as well as skill to keep from over-sliding, and to "stay on" when one hit the bumps, I was racing as fast and even faster than many top grade men but I was only a woman. "Only" is no inferior admission. Women are prettier than men, and we are proud to have daintier muscles! But the task ahead of the starting line thus held more trepidation for me although one Englishman confided that he was "terrified" each time he hit the turns. Perhaps a woman's sensitivity and intuition helped me, together with the challenging doubt I could do it!.

In any case I would not have been permitted to run in that race. A similar race was staged the previous year with publicity gained in the Press through the same theme: "are women capable of racing on speedways?". I'd applied to enter but was refused, being told it was a special race. It was then organised by one of the promoters who had refused me a trial! No ban followed then. But now the ban got me out. "I'm sorry, Girlie", a friendly promoter said, "but it means you too". His offer of a free ticket to watch the racing was galling. He had been in on the ruse!

Till then it was personalities who drew the crowds, different styles of riding, different bikes, frequent crashes as newcomers drove into the bends faster than they knew, and the thrilling novelty. An old-time fan who caught up with me recently tells me that wherever I raced, he and his spectating friends were there. It was my style of riding they liked, he said, more than the fact that I was a woman! Then team racing was introduced and he never went to spectate again.

I was permitted a last race, this time at Southampton against the northern girl, Eva Asquith. The track was strange to me though she had raced on it before. Press cuttings record that I won easily in a faster time than that recorded by many of the men heat winners. And in establishing a record for women I'd come within a split second of the overall record. It was sad that I couldn't have a second ride there for I felt I could then reduce that split second. Second time on a track is easier than the first. I was ready, however, to change to four wheels but found that speedway and car racing were poles apart, and car racing was just a rich man's game. Factories, with rare exceptions, did not race though they built fast streamlined cars for those with the cash.

I then visited a school friend in India whose husband, a British Army officer, was stationed there. It served as a complete diversion after two tense years of speedway racing, and I went on to visit one of our governesses who had married and now lived in Calcutta. The racing urge emerged there, and with a dealer's Chevrolet I broke the Calcutta to Ranchi record. The previous holder, Captain Yates-Benyon, gave me an introduction to the famous car-racing track, Brooklands, and on my return to England in late 1931 I found a race for women scheduled there, and a motor dealer entered a 'Talbot 105' for me to drive.

The cream of women drivers were competing, including Mrs Wisdom, wife of the Daily Herald motoring correspondent, and Mrs Kay Petre. I drove in a skirt and won, which pleased the owner of the car. Most if not all the other drivers were racing overalls. The Talbot belonged to Arthur Fox, a motor dealer. It had been used as a practice car at Le Mans and had not been returned, but it enabled me to win my first car race. It was a track race on the banked outer circuit.

Later, a race for women was scheduled on the famous "Mountain Circuit" at Brooklands, so called because we raced up the steep banking at one point. It was an exciting circuit, described by the London Times as hazardous, and this was the first time women were permitted to race on it. It had a very fast tricky turn and a fork turn requiring full braking. Penn Hughes, a Grand Prix driver, loaned me his 2.3 litre Alfa Romeo. Such a car with its straight-through gearbox and super-charger required some canny handling, and I felt sad that I could not get any practice at speed as it was being run in slowly the evening before the race, having been overhauled. I had to start the 5-lap race without the vital feel of the track or the car, and discover braking points as I went. I was back-marker, giving the field a start. At one point only did I lose precious time in braking but it cost me the first place by a whisker; nevertheless I had lapped the course faster than it had ever been lapped by any British driver, thus bettering the class record of Sir Malcolm Campbell and the over-all record of Raymond Mays.

At Shelsley Walsh, the English International Hill Climb contest, I was entered for the women's Cup in a factory MG 'Magnetite'. It was fast and supercharged, a car that had been raced by George Eyston and the Italian ace Count Lurani, and these two well-known racing driver shared the car with me, each competitor racing against the clock singly, and having two climbs each. It is a short twisty, tricky climb, but we had some morning practice. I won the women's trophy and made faster time than either George Eyston or Count Lurani.

At Craigantler in Northern Ireland, another hill climb, I was entered in the contest in a Frazer Nash owned by a Mr Verschoyle, and there I won the Class Cup from all comers.

My first road race was in Ireland, the Leinster Trophy Race, and I was the only woman competitor. I drove a German Adler and won. The car belonged to a Dublin dealer.

Aston Martin took me to Le Mans as spare driver, and though no-one fell out and I did not run in the race, my first practice on the course produced a lap which was faster than the fastest Aston had lapped the previous year. I drove the famous Freddie Dixon Riley in the South African Grand Prix in 1939. Being the only entrant without a super-charger I started last, but had passed several super-charged Maseratis when I had to retire with engine trouble about half-way through the race.

In Sweden as the first and only woman competitor in 1952 I clocked fastest lap in the International Car Race at Skarpnäck Air Port, driving a Cooper. I was then home temporarily from America where I'd gone to sell sports cars in 1949, and where I once again pioneered on speedways though this time on four wheels. After first winning a sports car race, I was clocked to make fastest time at Palm Springs in an MG. My car had been switched, a green MG, and I was forced to drive a red one. Both cars belonged to the dealer for whom I was selling cars, and some

of the mechanics had ganged up to deprive me at the last moment of driving the green car which had been allotted for me by the dealer. The red MG was liable to break down, and before that happened about halfway through the race I had twice overtaken and lapped the green car. And that car, the one I should have been driving, won the race with the slower driver aboard! It was acutely disappointing, but a man with several sports and racing cars who was watching me drive booked me to drive for him in coming races, and it seemed a glorious and longed-for wish which had at last materialised, for I loved road-racing, and now I would drive for a stable! For John Edgar.

Sports car racing was new to America, and the racing boys were organising the races themselves. The next race was at Santa Ana and entry forms arrived at the showroom where I was selling cars. I had been the only woman racing so far and had more than proved my ability, but the entry form stated 'No Women Drivers'.

There are some disappointments that are indescribable and this was one. "Everyone wants to drive a good car", a friendly mechanic said, how could I expect these proud enthusiastic young guys to let me get away with it. And that was true! Proud, yes! An MG was considered a man's car after the big floppy American automobiles. And I'd also been foiled at the other track after winning a match race. I'd defeated the man who later won the main race, but had been refused permission to run in that race. That was at Carroll Speedway, and my participation had given the organisers, who published a motor magazine, such big publicity that there was a huge crowd watching, and the magazine which had gone broke was saved, I had been a guest on every television and radio programme in Hollywood. But nowhere did I get a penny! Not that I wanted to be paid for racing.

All this was in California, and the showroom where I was selling cars was on the famous Sunset Strip in Hollywood. Our chief customers were film stars, Clark Gable being one of my first. And my fellow salesman was Pat Aherne, brother of Brian.

Within six months I was top salesman as far as car sales went. But the job itself was another "first", apart from racing. Women did not sell cars in America. It was a man's job. But in 1948, at the first Motor Show after World War 2, I was introduced to the vice-president of this Hollywood showroom by a prominent London dealer who was selling him new Jaguars, and the London dealer (Henry) for whom I'd once sold cars said "you should take her back with you, she's a terrific saleswoman". The US dealer offered me the contract on the spot (to make an impression, I think) but then tried to get out of it. However, I'd secured a passage and sailed, and they accepted me and low-keyed my role. It was up to me to introduce myself. If a customer who looked like a buyer came in I did not risk getting a 'no' if I, a woman, asked "can I help you?". Instead I would say "would you like to talk to a salesman?", and as soon as

they might say "Oh yes please", I'd say "that's me" and plunge into details of the engine they were looking at before they could decide that a woman couldn't assist them.

That job was full of fun and I got on with customers and everyone I met like a house on fire. I saw Hollywood from the inside. We had all the stars strolling into our showroom, Gary Cooper, Elizabeth Taylor, Tony Martin, Fonda, .....and I was an invited guest to all the big television shows. Even Universal International arranged to make a film about my racing, with Rosalind Russell acting Fay Tylour. I was to do the racing and the coast to coast publicity tour preceding the show, and also be technical advisor. But at the very last moment when the well-known agent who had negotiated the story was to take me to the studio to sign, it was called off. Even the Story Editor wasn't told why and he tried to save it. But some months later a racing story came out of that studio, and when I watched it I saw most of the cars in the movie came from my chief's showroom! I had jubilantly told them all about it when the negotiations were going on. And it so happened that my chief had made and was interested in making movies, especially to have a racing film made. What transpired was "Johnnie Dark" featuring Tony Curtis. Whether prejudice had stepped in to kill that wonderful opportunity, a priceless chance for it wasn't priceless and would have given me a financial security I needed, I'll never know.

But I had already left the showroom. Demonstrating the sports cars at speed, and also thoroughbred racing cars, was exhilarating but I wanted to race and these sports cars boys had banned me. Speedway racing was an altogether separate promotion as in England. And as it was now done on four wheels which would now suit me IF I could break into the game. England had tried cars on speedways and I had held the record for London tracks. But in America the cars were so big that throwing them into the loose-surfaced bends would require the same nerve and skill I'd needed for the 'bikes. They were called midget cars but that only applied to the small bodies. The engines were bigger than many sports cars, they were highly tuned Offenhausers, a smaller version of the big Indianapolis racing cars. And they went like a shot from a gun!

As with speedway in England I went to watch a meeting and it also looked as scary as thrilling. And as in England a trial run was refused over and over again. But at last a repair shop driver who had once raced motorbikes agreed to give me a trial. His 'midget' car was the fastest in California, and the trial took place during a race meeting. The speedway reporter there gave me a terrific write-up in "Speed Sport News", the speedway paper. He wrote that he thought "there goes one nice gal and a good car through the fence", "but when she threw the Offie into a powerslide lap after lap I said to myself THERE'S A RACE DRIVER". And with that recommendation I got busy and advertised in that national speedway paper.

"If you want that shot in the arm", I advertised, "here it is", and indicated I was available for any track.

"Crossing the wheels up" in a powerslide with four wheels was no less thrilling and spectacular than with two wheels, and I was the only woman doing it. I got four answers asking for my terms, and then typed out the best conditions I could invent and offer.

The promoter would have to supply the racing car while I would travel by rail or plane. I would race against any top driver in a best-of-three-rounds match race, and also make a qualifying round as all drivers did. A good car must be hired from one of the drivers who could have the car then for the other races. I would get a moderate appearance fee but would be paid a percentage of every extra thousand above average that I drew through the gate. I would arrive two or three days ahead of racing and make myself available for any radio, television or press interviews arranged by the promoter, thus giving the racing good publicity. In addition I would drive any town car made available by a dealer, with sign painting to advertise the racing, and make an appearance in his showroom if desired.

Seattle was the first city to book me. I was given a press reception and received by a Senator (Wayne Morse). A fast car was provided for racing, and a signpainted car for the street, and extra stands were up for the expected crowd. It all went according to plan, the stands were full, and, not really expected by myself, I managed to win against one of the best drivers! And before leaving the track I was booked to race at Portland where I clocked fastest lap of the meeting. I was going to see America now in novel style!

After beautiful Oregon I went East, racing at such famous stadiums as the large Olympic in Kansas City. There, the promoter, a fishing tackle salesman, meekly accepted that radio and TV were not interested in midget car racing, and he drew very small crowds. I had to ensure him I could enlarge his gate before he would book me. His eyes nearly popped out of his head when he timidly took me to the CBS Broadcasting station and the head broadcaster there who was about to broadcast the midday news rushed out of his studio, saying he would hurry up the news and put me on at the end of it! There wasn't a spare seat in that big stadium when I raced.

There was a story to every city I visited, mostly hilarious but sad in one place where the driver, whose car had been hired for me to race, shortened the throttle arm so that I could not get full throttle and disappointed everyone.

I finished the tour in New York where I was guest on many TV shows and beat the panel on their top show "What's My Line". From there I returned to England for my father's death, and before returning to America raced in Sweden with the result already mentioned. At a Midget Car Meeting in London I defeated

the American, Spike Rhlando, to his surprise, but I'd been racing on faster tracks in the US.

The former Australian racing ace, Frank Arthur, was now promoting speedway car racing in Australia. He flew me out there and I raced in all the big cities of both Australia and New Zealand where I surprised him by breaking records and defeating top male drivers as I'd done on a bike two decades earlier! There were record crowds each place I raced, and before returning to America I also raced in South Africa where an oil company sponsored a speedway race in Johannesburg. The car I had to race had carburation trouble, and the two top drivers who held the record for the course, and also knew that car, worked on it the night before the race. They cured the trouble, and next day I broke their records and won three or four races. Their assistance was indeed sportsmanship for they had seen my capability in practice.

But I paid for my wins in the next state where I was rained off the course. An indignant driver said it was deliberately planned and his indignation eased my disappointment a little for I'd beaten him in Johannesburg. It was sportsmanship again.

After racing for Freddie Dixon many years earlier in South Africa I'd fulfilled a contract selling cars in Bloemfontein in the Orange Free State. A race had been organised for stock cars at their Brandkop circuit and I'd won the main event establishing a record for the course. Now I was to race there again but the car I was to drive didn't turn up. However, one entrant was too drunk to drive his car, a Cadillac, and I was called to do so. "What!", said the owner, "a woman to drive my beauty?" But he wasn't too drunk to have one more drink out of the beautiful cup I'd captured with his car! I'd wondered what the wierd rattling noise was as I circled the loose twisty track. It was all his "empties" in the back!

These races were fun though unimportant in the auto racing calendar. I might better have mentioned other races in which I took part, such as the Monte Carlo Rally, the Coppa d'Oro del Duce (round Italy and Sicily road race in which I drove for Aston Martin, and we were lying first in our class when my co-driver fell asleep and we crashed, all but falling down a ravine). And in earlier pages I could have mentioned another 'first' on motorcycles when I climbed the rugged steep "Hepolite Scar" in Yorkshire, the first woman to do so. Also such events as the Scottish Six Days, the International Six Days, the Leeds 200, and many other well-known events in which I took part and won cups or medals.

But a race is a race as far as I am concerned, and I never turned down a chance to compete because its grade was unknown. A race is going as fast as possible under given conditions. That I was prevented through lack of money and also prejudice from competing in many events after taking up car racing, that I would have liked to have had a crack at, was frustrating, especially since I'd proved I could go straight out and win

and drive as fast or faster on any circuit than the next man. The notes of a journalist who died were sent to me last week. He had gathered past details of my racing to do a story, I had forgotten just how many times I'd turned in fastest lap in New Zealand on motorcycle speedways when still feeling such a novice! One cutting attached to his notes says that I took New Zealand by storm, and (I quote):- "At Monica Park Speedway on her first time out she knocked four-fifths off the lap record and made best speed of the night for four laps". And here are one or two other quotes he'd collected, and these through a light on what the motor papers were saying of me, small paragraphs in the speedway reports but of more importance racing-wise than the flashy head-lined articles which appeared in the daily Press and various magazines:-

"Fay has skill, judgement and guts which eighty per cent of her experienced males might envy".

"Fay Taylour was good. Always happy and confident, an exceptional woman, and popular with everybody, having well above the average ability of the men".

"Fay Taylour seems to be popular wherever she goes. She 'captured' the crowd at Liverpool last week by her fearless riding when she was beaten by inches in a match race with Keith McKay and ran home second to McKay in the final for the Silver Armlet. At Middlesbrough she won the Handicap and bagged second place in the Scratch Event".

This last quote is dated. It is from the "Motor Cycle" of September 13th 1928, at which time I had only been racing on the speedway for a few weeks with comparatively few races. The boys could race at all the tracks and in all the events. I was lucky to get one race a week and more often than not that would mean only one or two rides in a match race. Strange tracks, for I was riding here, there and everywhere, also seemed a handicap. I had no home base. Yet my success in Australia, against seasoned top riders, as the only rider to have gone out there that season immediately following their introduction of the sport to England, was perhaps more surprising to me than the spectators (apart from the fact that it could seem darn cheek that I happened to be a woman). Because always I felt that I could throw my bike still faster into the turns with more racing and experience.

**Fay Taylour**

**Adelaide, Australia**



These stretched-out pages deal only with racing, being an attempt to answer queries from interested people, especially concerning speedway, and for which reason I enlarged on how I became acquainted with a motor bike and came to take up the sport. Details of my personal life will not be by-passed in my full story which I'm working on. A publisher told me that readers will be as much interested to hear personal details such as why I didn't marry as to hear of my racing exploits. And to that particular item a quick answer is that Rolling Stones Gather no Husbands!

I have been a vagabond racer, seeing much of the world in such a completely novel way, globe-trotting from state to state and country to country, that it could indeed be another "first"..... (for a female anyway!) Only by racing could I have afforded such travel, and only by racing hard and pulling record crowds did I get the engagements, for the promoters had to provide me with a car everywhere.

Many places where I raced have not been recorded in these pages, such as the fantastic race in Portuguese East Africa which was organised to coincide with my stop en route on a cargo ship. There was a story to every race wherever it was.

Possibly I have not been the most versatile of all racing riders and drivers, not as a journalist might in order to say he's tried every track, but as having raced with success on the following:-

**MOTORCYCLES:** Scrambles, Grass Track, Dirt Track, Speedway, Road Racing, Hill Climbs, Trials.

**CARS:** Road Racing, Track, Sports Cars, Hill Climbs, Grand Prix, Time Trials, Speedway (Midget cars), Stock Cars, Jalopy Racing, and even Destruction Derby! Reliability Trials, Monte Carlo Rally, Coppa d'Oro del Duca (round Italy and Sicily Road Race).

Mostly I raced "thoroughbreds". The Jalopies in California were stripped and highly tuned, and I made their proud owners laugh when I called them "mongrels", which of course they were. But I couldn't resist having a go if there were no thoroughbreds around, and I won my first race in such a "heap" too, at Gardena near Los Angeles. In my second attempt at sliding these fast but slow-gearred monstrosities round a loose-surfaced speedway I went through the fence, and not being sufficiently bruised to pass out, the heap was put back on the track, all bruised too and hanging together in a fearsome way, and off I was flagged for a re-start! I finished second! Such races were frolics, but demanded strenuous driving skill.

## 1953 Sydney Speedway Royal



## SHOULD WOMEN BE BANNED FROM SPEEDWAY RACING?

This is a recurring question when women, like myself in the past, want to try this sort of racing. There appears to be more women's motorcycle clubs now and I cannot believe that the A.C.U. could ban women from organising their own speedway meetings. Their ban perhaps relates only to racing with men? How well I can understand a keen woman racer wanting to have a go? And a loose tennis court is no good for a trial as I found out! One must have access to a real speedway.

Continuation of the ban against racing with men is understandable since we are not in the same category muscle-wise, as also is the case with boxing, tennis, running etc. And today team racing draws the crowds for the promoters and fills their programme, while points and money are all that matter to the boys.

We are prettier than men, as I said earlier, we are more delicate, they have more muscle. And, as I also said, that that was no doubt the reason why I felt such trepidation each time I threw my bike into those bends! It would take all my strength to control the power-slide and rectify a nasty bump whereas a man might only be using half his muscle. But I had the art, the skill and the sensitivity that such loose-surfaced racing required, perhaps more sensitivity being a woman! But I won't say that I wasn't afraid to open the throttle because I was! But I opened it all the same because it was such a challenge and so fascinating. And I succeeded in looping many of the tracks where I raced as fast and even faster on occasions than the top men racers. And at Wembley Stadium Speedway in a contest against the clock and five top male representatives of their countries I broke the lap record.

It was because I was a woman that I was booked to race by some though not all promoters, and the crowds appreciated that I threw my bike into the bends like the men. In those days we took the bends in a streamlined slide, the left leg trailing in line with the bike to the back wheel, while our bodies lay forward over the longer wheel-based machines. It was pretty to watch, and some of us rode "wide", some in the middle of the track. Only

one or two dug their way around the inside with bent knee. Match racing between top riders was a draw-card feature. "Personalities not Pot Winners" (to quote a headline) was what the spectators wanted. They were happy with a mere solo demonstration by a favourite ace. Learning to dive into the bends in a streamlined slide was like learning to dive into a pool!

And, as I said, I can understand a keen girl rider wanting to try it, and why shouldn't one be as fast at the game as I was! And if so I should certainly want to book her for a match race if I were a promoter! But if I were a man rider I would not be happy with a girl alongside in a close-formation team race with her lesser physical strength. As a spectator I'd be the first to attend an all-woman's speedway even if I was a regular all-male watcher. So.....couldn't sponsorship be found to hire or build a track?

## ARE THEY AFRAID OF BELITTLING THE SPORT OR DEFAMING THE SKILL OF THE BOYS?

Several books have been written about Speedway by promoters and reporters who were very much part of the sport when I was racing. And old friends who watched me riding as well as young friends interested in my background ask me why (as indicated at the beginning) there is no mention at all in some of these books of the pioneering and unparalleled part I played, and in other books not more than a mere mention without detail or credit.

And most "odd" of all, as an old school friend puts it, is the fact that a recent book called "Fifty Golden Years of Speedway" which must surely serve as a reference book, does not mention my name at all. "One would expect that the first rider to go to Australia and represent British speedways in International match races just after Australia had introduced the sport to England would merit mention. And especially", she adds, "when that rider was a lone woman and returned wins against seasons Australian champions on their home tracks".



I did, yes, do exactly that, as mentioned in earlier pages, and I was the only rider that Australian season to go out there. It was sort of cheek compared with my limited experience against old-timers! But I did confess that I only hoped for exhibition rides. See page

Lack of mention in the books is something I cannot answer. I can only feel sad that, after putting so much effort into the sport, my cherished record was not deemed worthy of mention, especially in the case of one book written by a promoter for whom I raced and drew record crowds, all recorded in the daily papers of the time. He shouted my praise to the skies then and booked me many times because I was no stunt and thus a "gate draw". But no mention in his book! When the first crowds had thrilled to the seemingly suicidal method of circling the tracks diminished I was a blessing for I could introduce new spectators, and women's newspaper columns featured me as well as the sport pages.

It happened too that I was responsible for the first newspaper trophy being awarded to Speedway in those early days. I persuaded Lord Riddell (who was married to a cousin of my mother) to watch my first race which was at the Crystal Palace. Lord Riddell was given the starting flag and asked to start the race I was in. "What do I do?", he asked. "Just drop the flag", he was told. He literally dropped it and it floated to the ground! He was amazed at the crowd, being ignorant of the new sport. "I must send my reporters here", he said, and he donated the NEWS OF THE WORLD TROPHY.

I'd hoped he might buy me a speedway bike for that first ride had been aboard my heavy trials machine and I'd done a double somersault, having hit the fender of all bumps. But all he produced was lunch at the Savoy. Perhaps he thought it no game for women! Or he hadn't taken the hint when I joined him in the stands after crashing and explained the unsuitability of the bike. "Are you hurt", he'd asked, and seemed surprised when I said no. I was, a little, but the crowd loved an unhurt exit.

Books on car racing appear also to have ignored or soft-pedalled my best efforts.

When I was Speaker recently at a car club in Dorsetshire, the chairman, who had been a regular attendant at the old Brooklands track, drew my attention to a report in the book entitled "Brooklands" which is the influential history and reference book to all races and drivers on that track (damaged during World War 2 and never rebuilt).

The report concerned my drive on the "Mountain Circuit" when women were permitted for the first time to race on that particular course considered hazardous. On page 7777 I described that race, when I was unable to have a fast practice and get the feel of the car or course at speed, yet clocked a lap faster up to that moment than it had ever been lapped by any British driver - the record then having been held by the crack driver Raymond Mays and the Class

record by Sir Malcolm Campbell, I was driving a 2.8 Alfa Romeo, lined down to 2.3. It belonged to Penni Hughes, a Grand Prix driver who had entered me for the race in which I started last.

The report, which my friends describe as shockingly unfair in that it did not detail or mention my record lap, gave much emphasis to the fact that I made two or three extra laps after the finishing flag had been shown and pronounced that, incorrectly, as "joy-riding" and a "disgrace to women drivers".

The real fact was that my view of the finishing flag had been blocked by the last driver I was about to pass who was obliquely between me and the finishing flag which was shown low on the inside of the track while I was coming up fast on the outside.

Next lap round I received a white flag which on speedways indicates "last lap", one more lap to go, but at Brooklands it indicated "race over". And although I'd been careful to check the danger signals such as "stop", "go slow", "move over" etc., which were similar to speedway, I interpreted the white flag as in speedway from force of habit, not having yet seen the chequered flag. Thus I continued to look for the check flag till halted. (Once I'd stopped racing too soon, when incidentally I was out in front and would have won!).

But, unwittingly, I'd produced a perfect opportunity for condemnation by anyone who preferred to ignore the explanation. And that's exactly what the marshals preferred. "It was 'joie de vivre'!", spluttered Sir Algernon Guinness as I faced him in the club room. "Just joy riding", another marshal said, refusing to listen to my explanation. But when a male driver later on also missed the finishing flag, it received due credence, and, as the club chairman told me, a flag was then shown at both sides of the track. But, as another friend said, how could I dare to have the cheek to lap the circuit faster than Sir Malcolm Campbell and not be credited with *joie de vivre*!

The last thing I would have done was to give that beautiful car extra work intentionally. To have been loaned it for the race was delicious. To bring it back to its owner all-important, and not to break any Brooklands rules vital, especially as I was the "weaker" sex. And what did the owner of the car say when I came in? All he said was, and happily, "you've driven my car faster than I ever have on that circuit".

S E C T I O N   T W O

THE HISTORY OF W.I.M.A



## W.I.M.A. HISTORY

W.I.M.A. was formed in America in 1950 by Louise Sherbyn: the first members to the Association were Hope Jones, Grace Conrad and Elvira Eibling. (You can read more about Louise in the WIMA Personalities section). The idea of such an organisation came to Louise during the Second World War when she was corresponding with women all over the world. The original aims of WIMA were to promote international understanding and cooperation and to provide a platform for women to get together to share experiences, problems and ideas and to encourage their involvement in competitions.

When it was first formed WIMA had three divisions of membership in the States, one for riders, one for pillion passengers and one for interested women. By 1952 WIMA groups had become established in seven countries. Those members outside America were given associate status only; they paid no 'dues' and had no voting rights.

Here I'm afraid the 'facts' end and the speculation and conjecture start. A motorcycle association, of whatever sort, is, by its very nature, not a club much geared to the keeping of detailed records of dates, places numbers etc. Thus any attempt to compile a history of such an organisation is fraught with problems. The following account of the development of WIMA is doubtless slightly inaccurate as most of it is based on people's memories etc. However as it is intended as a souvenir booklet and not a legal document I'm sure no one will mind.

I originally started out on this project with a view to tracing the growth of WIMA divisions in all parts of the world. This however proved to be impossible and I have had to concentrate on the British Division and the way in which it has evolved from being merely a group of individuals having associate membership of the American Division to being one of the largest and most active WIMA divisions in the world.

WIMA was first heard of on this side of the Atlantic in 1951. Among the early members were Ida Crow and Theresa Wallach, neither of them can recall exactly how they heard of the Association, except that someone in America contacted them. In those days membership simply meant paying a nominal subscription and receiving an occasional news sheet from Louise, who for a long time seemed to hold all the offices of the club. This point can probably be seen more clearly by reading the constitution drawn up by Louise at WIMA's formation. It is said that no American can form any sort of Society without first sitting down and drawing up a formal written constitution. WIMA is no exception:-

## ARTICLE I - NAME

This association shall be known as the WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL MOTORCYCLE ASSOCIATION, for it links together members from many countries of the world in a common interest, its nucleus is the AMERICAN UNIT, representative of the UNITED STATES OF NORTH AMERICA. The location of the headquarters of the Association shall be that of the current International President, (Who was from then till now Louise).

## ARTICLE II - OBJECT

The object of the Association shall be in the interest of improving and promoting activities, goodwill and sportsmanship of women enthusiasts in the motorcycle world.

## ARTICLE III - MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. The membership shall be comprised of Units and their Divisions representing the various continents and countries. There shall be no discrimination of race, creed or colour. Section 2. There shall be a Driver's Class and a Passenger Rider's Class.

A. DRIVER'S CLASS. Membership shall consist of a woman who can safely operate a motorcycle. It will not be essential to own a motorcycle, candidates must of of legal age required by her own community driving laws. She must possess a driver's licence.

B. PASSENGER'S CLASS. Membership shall consist of women who ride as passengers or who are enthusiastically interested in some phase of motorcycling. She must be at least sixteen years of age.

Section 3. Candidates must be of good character. Section 4. Candidates must submit their request for membership on the provided official Membership Application form.

Section 5. Honorary Members. Members shall consist of women chosen for their noteworthy endeavours throughout the field of motorcycling.

Section 6. Scooter enthusiasts shall be accepted into membership.

## ARTICLE IV - OFFICERS

Section 1. Officers shall be the International and the Divisional classification.

A. The elected officers shall be the International President, International Vice President and the Divisional Captains.

B. The appointed officers shall be Divisional Assistant Captains and other officers deemed necessary.

C. The International Council of Officers shall consist of the Founder, International President, International Vice President and the Division Captains.

## ARTICLE V - DUTIES OF OFFICERS

Section 1 FOUNDER.

The Founder of the Association shall have the permanent official power to maintain all matters directly concerning the management of the Association.

## Section 2 INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT

The duties of the International President shall be to assume general supervision over all matters of the entire Association and she shall act in full co-operation with the Founder. She shall act on Public Relations. She shall perform negotiations among Captains of represented units and their Divisions. She shall have power to fulfill the duties of the Captain (Secretary, Treasurer) when necessary. She shall have power to appoint all special officers and special committees. She shall assume the duties of Chairman of Activity. She shall have the power when needed to sign membership cards. She shall preside over the meetings designed in purpose.

## Section 3 INTERNATIONAL VICE PRESIDENT

The duties of the International Vice President shall be to assist the International President and in her absence assume the duties of the International President.

## Section 4 CAPTAINS

The Captain shall be the main representative of her Division. All business, all legislature of her Division to be compiled by her and sent for approval to the International President. She shall preside at all Divisional meetings. She must communicate with other Division Captains and Assistant Captains and assist whenever the need arises. She shall keep the statements of all business transactions in a book provided for that purpose, report of which must be regularly reported to the International President. A Captain shall be the Chairman of her Division Rally. She shall appoint committees for Rally assistance and other Divisional committees. All dues in her Division are retained by her for use in her Division and special use (such as trophies contributed to other Divisions). All dues in her division are collected by her and promptly acknowledged with a membership card, and a copy of the Constitution. A record of dues received and expenditure must be recorded by her and a copy of the same forwarded to the International President. Captains shall send out official matters to members and receive payment for same through the Divisional Treasury unless voluntarily contributed.

She shall collect all money due to her Division and keep an itemised account of disbursements and club funds in a book provided for that purpose. At appropriate intervals she shall issue financial reports to the International President. She shall pay all bills and sign all cheques. She shall have charge of all fees belonging to her Division. All books shall be open to inspection to members and officers at all times. She shall have the power to perform other duties assigned or required of her from time to time by the International President and Council of Officers.

## Section 5 ASSISTANT CAPTAINS

The duties of the Assistant Captains shall be to assist the Captain and in her absence assume the duties of the Captain. She does not assume any executive power. She is recommended and appointed by the current Captain, being first approved by the International President.

## Section 6 COUNCIL OF OFFICERS

The Council of Officers shall have the power to make rules and regulations for the government of any Division as may seem proper. They have the power to choose Honorary Members.

## ARTICLE IV – ELECTION

### ARTICLE IV – ELECTION

Section 1. Election of officers, unless specifically appointed, shall take place every three years or December 1st and officers shall be installed January 1st.

Section 2. Election shall be by closed ballot.

Section 3. Terms of all officers shall be for a period of three years or until their successor is elected or appointed.

Section 4. Officers shall be eligible for re-election.

Section 5. In case of a vacancy in the Council of Officers, an affirmative vote of the remaining officers may approve a successor to hold office until the election of a successor.

Section 6. Active members only shall be permitted to hold office.

Section 7. Honorary Members shall not be eligible to vote in any way.

## ARTICLE VII – FINANCES

Section 1. Registration fee shall be one dollar or its equivalent.

Section 2. Annual dues shall be one dollar or its equivalent. The payment of dues shall be made in advance and reckoned as due January 1st. The first year's dues must be the confined fee and thereafter only the annual fee. On receipt of Registration fee and annual dues member become entitled to all rights and privileges of the International Association. She will receive a membership card, and a copy of the Constitution. Emblems and badges shall be furnished at a nominal charge and will become sole property of the member with the privilege of returning her badge if she leaves the Association and receiving a refund.

Section 3. Dues must be paid within two months of time specified or members shall be considered not in good standing. A notice shall be given at that month and if dues still remain unpaid shall be officially removed from the Membership Register. Re-instatement can be made by repaying the Registration Fee.

Section 4. There shall be no Honorary dues fee. On presentation of these special membership cards members shall be entitled to all rights and privileges (except dues and votes) in the Association.

## ARTICLE VIII – GOVERNMENT

Section 1. The Association is conducted independently of any personal interest and is essentially a members' club.

Section 2. All matters shall be decided by majority vote.

Section 3. Resignation of any member must be submitted in writing to the Division Captain.

Section 4; Expulsion of any member shall be decided by the membership as a whole. A member may be expelled for misconduct but charges must first be made in writing and the accused member be permitted a written interview before the Council of Officers. These Officers shall take this evidence and report its findings to the membership with a recommendation that the charges be considered proven. Each member shall be permitted to cast a vote whether or not the recommendation of the Officers be adopted.

## ARTICLE IX - AMENDMENTS

Section 1. This constitution may be amended or repealed by the Committee being submitted in writing to the Chairman of the Council of Officers. If approved by the Council, a majority vote will decide the matter.

## BYE LAWS

A. International Press Publicity Manager, Editor and Circulation Manager are optional posts and thus appointed.

B. Duties of the International Press Publicity Manager shall be to handle all publicity for press services to the various motorcycle publications throughout the world.

C. Duties of the Editor of the Official Club Journal (WIMA NEWS) shall be to collect, compile and edit all items of business interest pertaining to members (and other women enthusiasts) and forward finished copy to the publisher.

D. Duties of the Circulation Manager of WIMA NEWS shall be on receipt of copies from the publisher, to wrap, address and mail a copy to each paid member (including complimentary copies). She shall keep a record of the mailing list of each issue, including the cost of postage and mailing date, with a copy of same forwarded to the International President. She shall be paid for all involved expense.

New and potential members have no fear, this dreadful document fell into disuse (in Britain anyway) almost as soon as it appeared. The British Division Committee have now drawn up a much more simple and straightforward version which has yet to be ratified by the membership at the AGM in September 1980.

For about the first twenty years WIMA retained this heavy American domination, with Louise strictly at the helm. The tone of the constitution seems to be typical of the Association and the way in which it was run for the first fifteen years. In many ways WIMA had been modelled on the Motor Maids (see before WIMA section), and much emphasis was placed on the WIMA uniform (no one can recall exactly what this was) and the wearing of the 'decals' (badges) on the correct arm etc. I have gleaned this general impression from reading the Association's newspaper, the 'WIMA News', and not from the reports of any particular member, so if you disagree I take all the blame!

The Newsletter is in fact largely responsible for keeping the organisation together and going. The Newsletter was started in 1964 by a British

Division member, Brenda Alderson. At that time it took the form of a quarterly magazine. Brenda would prepare the drafts (from material sent to her by Louise) mail them to Louise, who would edit and approve them and would post them back to Brenda to type, duplicate, staple and send out! Later the latter process was taken over by an American member who had a printing business. In those days the entire WIMA membership amounted to some 200, but now the British Division alone exceeds that figure. As our Division grew, so the links with America weakened, but that is another story.

The best way to capture the 'full flavour' of the WIMA scene in American days seems to be to look through the earlier Newsletters. They seemed to be full of priceless little gems similar to those encountered in some of the low brow women's magazines or the 'Ovaltines Handbook' etc. In the Winter of 1967 the following mnemonic appeared:-

## WHAT WIMA (INTERNATIONAL) MEANS TO YOU

- I - INTEREST in motorcycling.
- N - NICETY of winning trophies from other countries.
- T - TOPS the motorcycling sport for ladies.
- E - EVERY member can share in the activities, competition and fun.
- R - REASONABLE fees for all.
- N - NEVER any discrimination of any sort.
- A - ACQUAINTANCE with lady enthusiasts throughout the world.
- T - TRIALS, Rallies, Road Runs, Motor-Cross, Field Events, Search Runs, Fox Hunts, Orientation Runs, Group Tours, Special Awards and Honors; a variety contests and many more events make fun activities.
- I - IS always ready to further the sport of motorcycling.
- Q - ONLY organisation of its kind in the world.
- N - NEWS and business and social matters of the organisation published quarterly in our own WIMA NEWS publication.
- A - ALL year round enjoyment, not just for a few months of the year.
- L - LADIES-membership only.

Louise seemed to have taken her inspiration from the Girl Guides, or a similar outfit and via the medium of the News Letter she frequently coaxed members to participate in her latest 'Project'. In the Winter '71/Spring '72 edition the following plea appears:-

## "BUTTONS NEEDED

HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN to send a button, a few or more, to help the American-Canadian Division along on their Button Project? It was hoped a picture could be made of buttons from all or many of the countries represented in WIMA. There is still time to help. Surely everyone must have some buttons to donate. Buttons must be flat and colored."

In a previous edition there was mention of a similar 'Apron Project'. For this members were encouraged to send in aprons from all over the world! I never could discover what happened to all of these buttons, aprons and other articles so frequently requested. The giving and receiving of various useless objects among members all over the world seems to be a recurrent theme in many of the News Letters. Again from the Winter 1967 edition:-

"In August 1967 a parcel reached me (Louise) from Lida Abrahamova, Czechoslovakia. It contained a beautiful glass vase. This vase is shaped like a tall goblet, a lovely shade of purple colour with a clear crystal stem and etched with gold lettering . . . the vase also has a design of a little motorcycle etched in gold. A very beautiful vase!

## MAGAZINES, ANYONE?

Captain, Audrey Henderson, New Zealand, has regularly been supplying me (Louise) with the 'New Zealand Women's Home Journal' and recently a copy of the N.Z. 'Road Safety', all so enjoyable reading. Anyone wishing the copies (after I've read them) may have them by writing to me."

It was also the custom to have a 'round up of the post cards received by the President:-

"Gloria Barnett (England). Gloria's postcard from the Isle of Man is a very interesting card displaying individual photos of TT winners and machines as well as relating the history of the TT. Her husband took her and their little daughter Natalie, to the races and they all had a grand time.

Helga Steudel (Germany). Helga sends her best wishes to all members. She had a busy summer of racing which she says hasn't been good. Six pretty scenes of the country-side appear on her card."

In each edition the post card summary seemed to occupy about two pages. The other regular features included a list of 'Clippings' sent to Louise, concerning the activities of various members. The customary hatch, match, despatch column was also very much in evidence. Contributions made to WIMA, in the form of Louise, were also carefully enumerated in each edition. These ranged from the mundane, typing paper, stamped addressed envelopes, money etc. to the exotic, such as:-

## CONTRIBUTIONS

Audrey Henderson (N.Z.) 2 scenic pillow tops  
1 scenic tablecloth.  
Fay McConn (U.S.A.) postage stamps for president's use.

One seems to form the impression that somewhere WIMA possesses a large collection of aprons, buttons, glasses, tablecloths and other items.

The main difference between WIMA now and then lies primarily in its organisation. In the early days, really up until the 1970's, it was run, organised and everything by one person, Louise. While in many ways this was admirable, it also had its drawbacks. Quite clearly there was too much work for one person and Louise seems to have spent a lot of time apologising for not getting things done in time etc.

By 1970 she was beginning to delegate a little more, but all assistants were carefully chosen and appointed by her and, in theory at least, everything had to be approved by her, as set down in the Constitution. In 1970 she reports:-

## "SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

To improve the progress and cooperation affecting the language situation between officers and members in some represented countries it has become necessary to appoint Assistant Captains. In the Continental Division Britt-Inger Petterson has accepted the post for in Sweden *only* and Alda Ciravegna as an Assistant Captain in Italy *only*. Assistant Captains are helpers to their Captains and what ever matters they have are brought to the attention of their Captain. They have no executive power."

In many ways this strict control by one person led to the break up of WIMA into its Divisions which now seem to have developed as autonomous units having, at times, little formal contact between them.

Louise was evidently very impressed by a smart turnout of rider and machine and a clear and healthy public image. In the late 1960's when the spate of 'Hells Angels' movies started to appear she adopts tones of horror and outrage not just against the films but more especially because some of them dared to include women riders! For some while she expressed concern least some of these brazen hussies should attempt to join the ranks of WIMA, fortunately none are recorded as having done so. The News Letters frequently carried photos of properly attired members:-

"Below (a photo is shown) Pattie Carpenter San Bernardino, California, captures first prize trophy for best appearing rider at the Silver Eagles Silver Cup Rally, Santa Maria. Patti's riding garment is a moss green and white color harmonising with the white mother of pearl color of her Kawasaki 350cc with its green and yellow four-leaf clove tank design."

Pattie is shown standing smartly to attention beside her machine.

The WIMA activities around this time in America consisted of the usual small house gatherings, camping weekends etc. and one even which caused me much puzzlement. Poker Runs

These were occasionally reported as having taken place, or announced to be about to take place but there was no mention of what they were! Finding the answer was not easy, but here it is:

**POKER RUN.** A scenic route is mapped out, each entrant has a route card, with check points at various stages. At each control the participants pick up a playing card. When the tour is completed the riders return to base, the competitor with the best poker hand wins a prize. Can anyone think of how to play 'Bike Bingo'? There are even some 'Double Poker Runs' mentioned. I'll leave you to work that out for yourself.

Competitions are always an important feature to any motorcycle club and WIMA is no exception. On joining, all new members would receive a list of activities for which points would be awarded, the member with the highest points would be eligible for the WIMA High Points Trophy (for many years this was won by British member Mary Dudgson, until she stopped entering it).

## WIMA ACTIVITIES

The following awards which members all over the world can enter and are highly treasured by WIMA members. If you don't keep a diary, then a small notebook will help.

- Trophies Awarded for:-
- WIMA HIGH POINT Driver Trophy All WIMA Drivers.
- WIMA HIGH POINT Passenger Trophy All WIMA Passengers
- WIMA HIGH POINT Officer Trophy All WIMA Officers
- WIMA HIGH POINT Newcomer Trophy WIMA Short Term Members
- WIMA HIGH POINT Enthusiast Trophy WIMA Ion-Riders

## WIMA POINTS REQUIREMENTS

ACTIVITY	Points Awarded
Paying Dues on Time	5
Obtaining New Members (each)	10
Obtaining WIMA News Adverts (Commercial)	10
Obtaining WIMA New Subscriptions (Non-Members)	10
Puzzle or Quiz in WIMA News (International Edition)	10
Clippings to the Editor	2
Articles to WIMA News (International) of over 600 words	5
Contribution to WIMA (Awards, Gifts, money etc. Over \$1.00)	10
Attending any Motorcycle Club Meeting (give place/date)	5
Participating in Motorcycle Event (WIMA or other)	5
Assisting a WIMA Officer (give date and purpose)	5
Accomplishing an Achievement (give date and place)	5
Doing a Good Deed to Arouse Interest (date and place)	2

Each letter, card or photo to a member or officer	2
Each photo to Editor acceptable to WIMA News	2
Pleasure Trip on Motorcycle, at least 200 miles and not counting to motorcycle events	5

Your activity report must be sent to the International President within 10 days after closing.

These points were for International Awards only and were in addition to any awards made by the various Divisions to their members. In 1971 another award, the Cinderella Trophy, was added to this impressive list. This Trophy was to be awarded annually to the "WIMA member for continued attempts and constant effort to the cause who never yet gained recognition. This trophy can be won only once by a member." This award was donated by Theresa Wallach.

Up until the early 1970's the awarding of these prizes was well recorded, then they started to tail off. This was not because people were not entering but because they were not being awarded. Clearly things had got too much for Louise. However before the decline set in the American Division managed to arrange the most amazing celebrations for WIMA's 20th Birthday in 1970. Here is a report of the event held in New York in September of that year:-

## THE BIG EVENT

W.I.M.A. 20th

### ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

September 11th-12th New York.

"Our President looked wonderful behind the birthday cake with as many as twenty national flags of the countries represented in the Womens International Motorcycle Association. Louise was dressed in her WIMA blue uniform with colourful insignia on her left sleeve. Seated at her right and left side respectively were Vice-President Theresa Wallach, who had ridden her BSA Royal Star 650 miles from Chicago and American-Canadian Division Captain Faye Rickart who had ridden as passenger with her husband, Martin, on their big Harley Davidson from Meadville. Pioneer rider Mrs. Fay McConn sat at one end of the top table, and pioneer Mrs. Mary James at the other end, she had come more than 3000 miles from Pale Alto. They made everyone feel proud of the spirit of WIMA.

"The tables joined like a 'T' and looked very pretty by candlelight. The interim moments before dinner at the colonial styled Seneca Manor were fun. Louise had arranged amusing contests with a prize for each winner. The first was a door prize contributed by Capt. Audrey Henderson of New Zealand. The winner was Mariam Meyer. The prize was an oval picture frame with scenic picture, from carved samples of local woods so polished that the texture and grain and colours showed clearly Nature's work of art. Next was a coin contest for the gentlemen guests. There were 347 cents in the jar donated

by Louise and the nearest guess was by Mr. Bill James, and he won the coins. Some coins were then removed from the jar by Bill and women were given the opportunity for a guess. Louise guessed the closest but she passed on the prize of a silver pin, donated by Wendy Hides, New Zealand, to Melody.

"Soon members got to know each other as if they had met before.

"Vice-President Theresa Wallach and Capt. Faye Rickert opened the pre-dinner announcements with a sincere appreciation message on behalf of all WIMA members for what Louise had done for WIMA over those 20 years. Louise then read the greetings and congratulations received from all over the world. Captain Maureen Willis of the British Division sent, from her many members, a very pretty card wishing many more years under the WIMA banner and a successful Anniversary meeting, with a lovely trophy arriving later. All the New Zealand members individually sent good wishes. Britt-Inger Pettersen of Sweden and many other members had written previously for the occasion.

"From Canada came greetings from Eve White and her husband Ron. On behalf of the Canadian Motorcycle Association, Ron and Eve extended to Louise Honorary Life Membership to this Association, in appreciation of her work for women motorcyclists through the years. Louise is well known everywhere for her many accomplishments, her devotion and her efforts to place the pleasures and privileges on a high level in the motorcycling sport for women enthusiasts.

"Now came the moment of predicament. Where was the leather album? First of all — what was the leather album? Captain Ellen Pfeiffer, Germany, suggested a long time ago a presentation to Louise and it should be a collection of personal contributions as a token of gratitude from all WIMA members. Captain Maureen and her Division in Great Britain joined the German project and with the help of Anke Eve Kimmell (International Press Correspondent) with her excellent knowledge of English, the word got round. At the time for the presentation this fabulous album had not arrived, but it was decided to tell Louise about it anyway.

"Surprise gifts placed on the table beside each plate kept us in suspense. As each little box was unwrapped there was great delight over the British made silver spoon bearing a gold coloured engraving of a motorcycle rider. The spoons were given by Louise in appreciation of each one's membership. (All members in the American-Canadian Division and other WIMA officers were included to receive a spoon on the occasion).

"Thus it was time and we were ready to enjoy our dinner. The menu consisted of a choice of baked chicken or broiled ham steak, tossed green salad, string beans, french fried potatoes, hot freshly baked bread, coffee, ice cream and cake. Little blue paper cups filled with mints and nuts, so kindly donated by Betty, also were

delicious.

"As Vice-President I (Theresa) had the honour to propose the toast to Louise. The cake cutting ceremony followed. The tiered cake, iced in white, red and blue looked so very beautiful it was a pity to eat it. Pioneer rider, Mary James, removed the first flag and picked Great Britain and Belgium, and thoughts went out to those members. Pioneer rider Fay McConn pulled out the flags of France, Canada and Spain and our hearts were with our members over there. Captain Faye removed the flags of Wales, Australia and Czechoslovakia and our thoughts went to those members likewise. Miriam picked out Germany, Switzerland and then Sweden with mutual blessings. Betty gently took the flag of New Zealand, Denmark and Scotland out of the red roses and icing sugar and expressed her hope that it was that way for our members in those countries. Melody took off flags of Finland, Holland and East Germany and held them in her hand and thoughts in her head. It was now my turn and I removed the flags of Austria and Italy. The American flag remained as a centre place over the insignia of our WIMA. Cheers went up as Louise removed the Stars and Stripes and pierced the cake. She then spoke of her gratefulness of everyone's cooperation in the success of the WIMA and a thank you to all.

"Next came another great surprise. Every member attending the festivities was presented with an award as follows:-

1915 Pioneer Rider Plaque to Fay McConn

1915 Pioneer Rider Plaque to Mary James (donated by Louise Sherbyn)

1928 Pioneer Rider Plaque to Theresa Wallach (donated by British Division)

Merit Trophy to Theresa Wallach

Merit Trophy to Faye Rickert

(donated by American-Canadian Division)

Service Trophy to Betty Seaman

(donated by American-Canadian Division)

Good Sportsmanship Trophy to Miriam Moyer (donated by American-Canadian Division)

The Canadian Trophy to Theresa Wallach (donated by Eve White Canada)

The American Trophy to Wilma Hasse (donated by American-Canadian Division)

Youngest Member Trophy to Melody Williams (donated by Louise Sherbyn)

Special Presentations to International

President Louise Sherbyn

Honorary Life Membership of Canadian

Motorcycle Association.

WIMA Album presented by the WIMA to Louise

"It has been a wonderful Saturday evening. But the big event actually started the previous day. Travel-weary members gathered on the riverside lawn in the beautiful garden at the home of Mr. and Mrs. George Sherbyn, in nice warm weather. Outdoor barbecued hot-dogs and a picnic table of good food on a nice summer evening for those who arrived in the day time. Some members arrived long after dark and the great distances were responsible for the late hour

"By ones and twos we had come. Now the process was reversed, each departed on the long track home, some left on Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday. None of us will ever be able to thank Louise enough for the memory of this 'whoopie' that is ours forever. As the man on the moon said, 'One small step, . . . one great step', and this is what the weekend of 11th - 12th September meant to WIMA."

In the same edition of the News Letter there is a long note of thanks from Louise; of the formal celebrations she says:-

"This memorable occasion was the highlight of my entire motorcycling life. There have been many happy times and they have been countless, but sometimes one can actually select the happiest moment of all and this was it - making other women motorcycling enthusiasts happy too with the success of joining together their interest in motorcycling into an international organisation and making it possible for a celebration in every Division of WIMA in different parts of the world to honour our 20 years together....."

"I am indeed very proud of the WIMA and of every member for upholding our principles into making WIMA the fine organisation it is today. May it always continue to be that way. Thank you everyone."

There then follows a long apology for the delay in getting the News Letter out etc. On a brighter note it is also reported that Theresa Wallach had published a book entitled 'Easy Motorcycle Riding' which is an excellent riding and routine maintenance manual still available today.

## THE GROWTH OF WIMA

No History of anything is ever complete without a list of facts and figures of some sort, this booklet is no exception. Fortunately I was unable to find too many lists of numbers, but just to show I tried here are some:-

## MEMBERSHIP OF WIMA.

### 1968

American-Canadian	15
Britain	60
Germany	20
Rest of Europe	18
Australia/New Zealand	4

COUNTRY	1969	1972
America	15	60
Canada	3	3
Britain	61	59
W. Germany	22	18
E. Germany	2	2
Denmark	1	1
Belgium	3	3
Holland	2	2
Switzerland	2	1
Austria	1	1
Czechoslovakia	2	2
France	2	8
Spain	1	1

Australia	3	2
New Zealand	3	3
Sweden		20
Italy		6
Finland		5

In no way can I vouch for the accuracy of these figures, they were merely collected from the News Letters that were available.

*News Letter Cover (American international Edition) 1976*



WINTER 1975



The WIMA NEWS is devoted to world news of motorcycling (male & female) by about 200 full women who promote and support the spirit of motorcycling amongst women.

## THE BRITISH DIVISION

At the start of this section I stated that WIMA was largely controlled and dominated from America up until the 1970's, although in many ways this was so it did not stop the British Division arranging its own activities, giving awards and having its own entity. In fact when the American Division started to decline and even the News Letter stopped from 1973-1975, the British Division managed to produce temporary editions in addition to its own regular bulletins.

There were British members of WIMA in the early 1950's, at which time membership consisted mostly of paying a fee and receiving a News Letter. The first WIMA Rally in England is recorded as having taken place in 1956 and was organised by the then Captain, Muriel Scott. About eight members attended. Muriel was not elected, she was appointed by Louise and the information about the rally had to go to members via Louise, so it is hardly surprising that little was done. In 1964 the American International News Letter was started so the communication problem lessened. By the late 1960's a simple News Sheet was being printed and sent out by Captain Maureen Willis (I believe she did it all in her lunch hour at work!) This simple innovation probably did more for the development of the British Division than anything else, as it meant that it was no longer necessary to rely on America and news and views could be passed quickly between members. It is evident that soon after this even the American News Letter showed strong signs of British Domination!

In 1968 several important events took place; first Maureen Willis made a 'WIMA Banner' which could be displayed at rallies and serve as an advert for WIMA, the Association also learned that it could attract some mighty funny members! In the News Letter of that year the following letter appeared:-

"It is good to be a member of an Association like WIMA. ....My other interests include judo so I can tangle with a man both on or off a motorcycle!" Elsie Swinfield.

There seemed something odd about this member, so the brave Connie Combrick decided to investigate; she followed 'Elsie' home one day and was not surprised to discover that 'Elsie' was a man!

Although this incident was rather trivial and 'Elsie' had never caused any bother to the Association or to any of its members, Maureen decided that from then on WIMA would keep a low profile. This policy of keeping WIMA events 'secret' and generally being highly cautious about publicity etc. has remained very much the rule until the past couple of years, but now the Association is larger and stronger and feels less under threat.

In 1969 the membership was sufficiently organised and committed to affiliate to the BMF. Jean Sutton was its delegate for a number of years until membership became too costly and members felt it was not worth it. Around this

time WIMA in England seemed to be very active and serious. The News Letter of that year carries a report of a Ladies' Race held at Cadwell Park, written by Irene McWeeney. This was the first race since the War with an entirely female entry. The press described it variously as "History Making", "Glamour Spectacle", and "Powder Puff Grand Prix". Three WIMA members, Hilary Musson, Stella Clark and Jean Sutton took part. This event prompted some discussion about women racing and Sheila Wynn investigated the reason behind the ban on women racing in the TT. She found out that:-

"The regulations for the TT races insist that drivers shall be male persons between 18 and 55 years old, but they go on to say that passengers must also be between 18 and 55 - no mention of sex. It is perfectly O.K. therefore for a charioteer to have a female passenger."

In fact there have been a number of women passengers in the TT (space does not permit me to list them here) and in 1962 Beryl Swain, described as a London housewife, raced on (com. After than women were banned altogether until 1978 when WIMA member Hilary Musson (see WIMA personalities) had a go.

The next main turning point for the British Division was the introduction, in 1973, of its own regular monthly News Letter. This was under Captain Sheila Whittingham. Although these news letters were longer than the bulletins put out by Maureen they still retained a personal quality with each member receiving a copy with her own name hand written on it. About this time many more events started to appear including a rather unusual one; a 'Knicker Flinging' contest held at the annual Rally. It can only be described as a good laugh. The idea was that each entrant stood at the top of a hill and attempted to throw the knickers (long knee-length bloomers) as far as possible down the hill! In practice they had tried it on the flat, but the result was not so good. It was also reported that the male competitors 'cheated' by screwing up the garment into a tight ball so that they travelled further! Not at all cricket!

In 1975 Sheila attempted to delegate some of the running of WIMA by setting up a system of Assistant Captains within the British Division. She appointed for the North West, North East, South West, the Midlands, the South and Scotland, but no one could be found for Wales. This idea, however didn't really work. WIMA was not large enough to be run on territorial grounds and the role of these Assistant Captains was unclear. The system was abandoned in 1977.

In 1976, when Anne Gale took over as Captain, she too decided to delegate some of the Association's work. She did it in terms of jobs and appointed Jean Cox as Badge Secretary and Clare Boyles as Assistant News Letter Editor/typist. This system of sharing the responsibility and the work load has now grown to form a full, democratically elected committee in 1977. This commitment to sharing and consultation seems

to be the key to the comparative success of the British Division. In 1980 the final link with the original WIMA seems to have been broken. The British Division Committee wrote its own rules and constitution which is to be voted on by the membership at the AGM in September 1980.

I shall now take you through some of the main events reported in the first few editions of the British Division News Letter.

## SILVER AND AWARDS

*WIMA Rally held in North Wales 1966 organised by Maureen Willis, who is about to have her cake and eat it!*



### 1973

May — The Annual Rally was held in Edale, 21 members attended.

June — Meetings were held during TT week.

July — 8 members attended a WIMA/NIMRA Rally Jane Cresswell and her boyfriend gained 630 points in the National Rally for a Gold Award.

August — Joyce Smith reports about her new job as a "Tourist Pilot" in Stratford on Avon. She had to ride around all day on a Vespa 90 showing visitors to places of interest. Her usual mount was a 350cc Honda.

An advert from a man!!! appeared. A certain Jim Storey placed an ad. to meet a lady motorcycle enthusiast. This letter produced no end of correspondence. I shall deal with that later.

October — It was the British Division's turn to supply the award for the WIMA High Points Trophy. The Devon Rally was well attended by members, Linda Bick won the Ladies Award.

December — Subscription set at 75p! Hilary Parker won a Silver Medal in the Round Britain Rally on a 200cc Yamaha. Jean Sutton was voted Member of the Year. This was the first time such an award was made. The trophy was donated by Jane Cresswell.

By 1974 the News Letter had grown from a two-page hand-out to something resembling a magazine. The British Division started to present its own awards in addition to those organised by American WIMA. There were two main reasons for this. Firstly there had been no American News Letter for 1973 and letters written to Louise went unanswered, so the British Division decided to carry on anyway. Secondly no American Awards had been given out that year, so to start with our own Awards were instead of the American ones. After that most Divisions took the presenting of Awards into their own hands, with America, nominally at least, awarding the High Points Trophy each year.

Around this time there seemed to be emerging a new emphasis and association identity. It was stated in the News Letter that all events organised in the name of WIMA must be open to ALL members and that they must be published in the News Letter. Prior to this anyone wishing to arrange a meeting had simply contacted her friends or other members in her area. Much of the emphasis continued to be on rally attendance, although it was also reported that Linda Bick was leaving on 15th February to ride to South Africa and that Phyllis Baker was racing a 250cc Ducati in club events at Shetterton,

In May 1974 still more ties with America were cut. Members decided to pay membership fees to the British Division as it had been so long since they had heard from the other side of the Atlantic. In many cases membership fees had been paid and nothing returned. In June the British Division included an International News Page in its monthly letter. This carried news of Agnes Acker, from France, racing at the Nurburgring, a note that the South African Division now had 11 members and that the membership in Sweden had increased to 20. This edition was circulated to members in America and Europe in an attempt to repair the break up of the international nature of the Association.

WIMA was changing in other ways too, it was coming out into the open. An article, a very patronising one, about the Association appeared in 'Motorcycle News' in June. This same publication also started a series of articles called 'Bike Birds' in which a number of WIMA members were featured. This move was applauded in our News Letter. Some members also managed to gain publicity for WIMA through interviews with their local paper, or women's magazines.

In June it was reported that Louise Sherbyn was no longer able to continue with the News Letter and that Brenda Alderson would take over temporarily. In the first such edition she published a copy of the WIMA Constitution for the benefit of new members.

At the end of 1975 Anne Gale took over as Captain of the British Division. By then the subs. had to go up to £2 a year. The number and variety of events increased rapidly and the 25th Anniversary was celebrated with a Rally at Wolsey Villa Farm near Coventry.

In 1976 an occasional edition of the American International News Letter started to appear, both the cover and style had changed. It was looking far more amateurish. The design of our cover has been the subject of both change and controversy. When times were hard it simply had no cover at all.

For the benefit of the newer members a sample of some of the covers is shown here. The 1977 'Lady Biker' one caused the most protest and was soon dropped. Others objected to the title page showing a Kawasaki and felt it should be a British motorcycle! However it has now gone full circle and the cover simply shows the WIMA emblem and has the non-controversial title of 'WIMA News'.

*Maureen Willis, Lily Room et al at WIMA Rally in Yorkshire 1967.*

*A Happy Group 1957 Yorkshire.*



## BRITISH DIVISION CAPTAINS

The role of Divisional Captain has always been a crucial one. Until the Committee was formed in 1977 the Captain had to take all the responsibility for all aspects of her Division. Her role would include making policy decisions, executing them, planning, organising and running the Annual Rally, writing, typing, duplicating and distributing the News Letter, address lists etc, keeping all club records, liaising with other Divisions and other clubs, the press etc. Even with the assistance of a committee the bulk of the responsibility, and of course blame, lies firmly with the Captain. In WIMA it has always been the Captain who had it within her power to make or break the Association. I have been unable to compile a complete list of the Captains of the Division, but so far as I know the list below is correct:-

CAPTAIN	DATES
Muriel Scott	Circa 1956
Linda Richardson	1964-1965 (she has since disappeared without trace).
Maureen Willis	1st April 1965 - March 1973
Sheila Whittingham	March 1973 - December 1975
Brenda Alderson	January/February 1976
Anne Gale	February 1976 - Current Captain

## MEMBERSHIP FIGURES

These are at best unreliable and based on the memory of the Captains as few formal records were ever kept.

1973	75
1974	84
1976	210
1977	215
1978	223
1979	200

If they reflect anything these figures show a sort of annual average because from time to time the membership would increase dramatically, for example after a membership drive, but few such members would rejoin or play an active part in the Association.

In 1975 a report on WIMA was carried in 'Bike' magazine and poor Maureen was inundated with over 200 letters of enquiry! Sadly few of the writers joined and only a very small percentage re-joined. It is probably for this reason that even today WIMA does not spend too much of its time on 'advertising'. However we are now fortunate enough to have a journalist member, Annie Briggs, who has a regular 'womens page' in 'Motor Cycle Weekly' and in any case the existence and activities of WIMA seem to be fairly widely known among the world of serious motorcyclists.

## RALLIES AND AWARDS

Each year all Division members are invited to enter for the Annual Awards. These are of the usual variety and are listed here:-

**Mileage Award** - For the rider with the highest annual mileage.

**Mileage Under 200cc** - As for above, but for smaller machines. It is proposed to alter the limit to 125cc.

**Passenger Mileage** - As above for pillion riders.

**Junior Passenger Mileage** - As above for Junior members.

**Members Met** - For the member who meets the most other members each year. The idea of this award was to encourage meetings. It is now proposed to change this title to 'WIMA Meetings Attended' for obvious reasons.

**Sports Award** - Donated by Gilly Bennett for the rider who does best in any branch of motorcycle sport.

**Member of the Year** - Donated by Jane Cresswell. This is for any member who in the opinion of her comrades has either done something outstanding in the field of motorcycle sport or something outstanding to further the cause of WIMA.

## MEMBERS OF THE YEAR

This Award was first made in 1973 to Jean Sutton for the great courage and determination in returning to motorcycle after a serious road accident in which she lost her leg. (See WIMA Personalities section).

- 1973 Jean Sutton
- 1974 Linda Bick
- 1975 Elaine Young
- 1976 Sheila Whittingham
- 1977 Anne Gale
- 1978 Heather McGregor

This award can only be made once to any member. The reasons why these members were chosen can be found by reading about them in the next section.



WIMA (British Division) Christmas Card 1978.

## RALLIES

In common with most motorcycle clubs WIMA quickly established a tradition of annual rallies, at which the usual silly and serious competitions were held and prizes awarded. Once again I am unable to furnish a complete list, but what I know I now pass on to you:-

- 1956 Amptill Park Bedfordshire
- 1954/55 Dovedale, Derbyshire
- 1966 North Wales
- 1967 Hackness, Yorkshire
- 1968/69 North Wales
- 1970 Wetton, Derbyshire
- 1971 Unknown
- 1972 Wolvey, Warwickshire
- 1973/74 Edale, Derbyshire
- 1975 Wolvey, Warwickshire
- 1976 North Wales
- 1977/78/79 Wolvey, Warwickshire

Usually these rallies take the form of a camping weekend with the use of a room, barn, hall or public house for a prize giving and social on Saturday evening. The main Award presented at the rally is always the Lily Room Long Distance Award, this is given to the member who has travelled the furthest to attend the rally.



Women's International Motor-Cycle Association

1980-1985

### DAFFODIL MEETING IN YORKSHIRE ORGANISED BY SHEILA WHITTINGHAM.

Left to Right: June Bailey (Bradford, Yorks) Dot Oulham (Accrington Lancs) Joan Fletcher (Bolton, Lancs) Sandra Bowden (Rochdale, Yorks) Sheila Whittingham (Rochdale, Lancs) Barbara Wyatt (Ulverston, Lake District) Margery Price (Kilghley, Yorks) Audrey Phacey (Bramhall, Cheshire).

The photograph is taken outside the grounds of Keswick Hall.



# WOMENS INTERNATIONAL MOTORCYCLE ASSOCIATION

FOUNDED IN 1950 "TO PROMOTE  
AND SUPPORT THE SPORT OF  
MOTORCYCLING AMONGST WOMEN"

BRITISH DIVISION OFFICIAL

## Newsletter



### OFFICERS

#### CAPTAIN

MRS. SHEILA WHITTINGHAM

#### ASSISTANT CAPTAIN

MRS. BRENDA  
ALDERSON

# **'LADY BIKER'**

**BRITISH DIVISION OFFICIAL**

## **NEWSLETTER**

**WRITTEN BY AND ABOUT  
THE GIRLS OF THE :-**



# **WOMENS INTERNATIONAL MOTORCYCLE ASSOCIATION**

*News Letter Cover (British Division) 1977*

## CONTROVERCY

I should hate anyone to think that all in WIMA is smooth and runs like clock-work. It does not. As with any group of people there has always been much difference of opinion on a wide range of seemingly unlikely topics. There has been much debate, via the News Letter, at gatherings, on telephones, in letters and in heads on subjects as diverse as the membership of WIMA and the role of the News Letter, to helmets, bike size and abortion! The nature and intensity of these debates seem to deepen and increase in almost direct relation to the increase in the number of members and the activities undertaken in the name of WIMA. I feel that these debates show a healthy development of the Association; others I know will disagree.

In the early days the mood was very much one of constant praise and congratulation which seemed to reflect a certain degree of complacency. Let me illustrate how this has changed:-

In 1973 when a man placed an advert for a woman motorcycle enthusiast in the News Letter, it was applauded, or not commented on. Just two years later when a similar letter appeared, the letters expressing disgust and outrage continued for many months. These were, of course, countered by those who felt that the News Letter was suitable for placing such ads.

The fact that criticisms and comments about the running of the club were being voiced in the News Letter would seem to indicate a greater degree of involvement and group identity among the members. Also in 1975, when the new title 'Ms' began to appear, another debate got under way. Some welcomed this new form of address, others felt it to be trivial and so on. On the whole WIMA seems to be rather conservative when it comes to moving with the times, most members are still addressed as 'Mrs' or 'Miss' when in fact 'Ms' would be a great deal simpler.

The theme, of men, and what, if anything, to do about them has become a regular stop-gap when there is nothing else to argue about. At present the situation is that men may not become members of WIMA, but that they are able to attend WIMA meetings, rallies, gatherings etc. and to enter the competitions at the discretion of the organiser who always has the right to refuse admission to anyone. If an event is to be closed to members only then it must be clearly stated when it is announced. A popular feature of the Annual Rally is always the Mens Obstacle Race and prizes are awarded each year to non-members in all of the events.

Basically all of the debates have one main theme: what is WIMA? or What should WIMA be? It would be impossible for everyone to agree to the answers to both of these questions. Despite these disagreements the list of events published in the News Letter gets longer every year and they all seem to be well attended. Of course, as with any organisation, there are those who are so critical that they leave. It is always

interesting to hear the views of those who left because they were dissatisfied. Here are the comments of one member who left in 1977:-

"I feel it (WIMA) really has nothing to do with me. Yet I am a woman, and I am a motorcyclist. I ride to work every day. I race a sidecar outfit, both road racing and grass track. I have a go at trials, I go touring abroad on a motorcycle. I have acted as an official at many trials. But as far as I can see WIMA has nothing to do with this."

In many ways her comments are not unreasonable, but they are a long way from the truth. There are a few active members who participate in motorcycle sport, but in the main WIMA seems to be a rally and touring club. This same criticism could, I'm sure also be levelled at many male motorcycle clubs.

Another recent arrival on the WIMA scene is the Charity Support Fun. This was started last year to raise money for the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association. The idea was that members would obtain sponsorship for the miles they travelled to the rally site. This year the charity is the Joan Seeley Pain Relief Memorial Trust. The Charity Support has also added another award to the WIMA list. The Charity Liaison Officer, Lesley Jarvis, donated a trophy for the member who collects the most money for the charity. Last year it was awarded to Audrey Phasey, usually famous for her ability to sell raffle tickets at the annual rally.

The story of WIMA began with a Constitution and this seems to be a good way to finish. The old Constitution had fallen into disuse such a long time ago that many of the members felt it was high time that WIMA in Britain put itself firmly on its feet and formalised its position. This was done last year, when, in October the Committee met for a working weekend to redraft an up to date and workable set of rules and policy. This Constitution has not yet been ratified and is to be discussed at the AGM in September 1980, where it might indeed be completely thrown out. In fact it only states the way in which WIMA is already being run.

Where WIMA will go from here is anybody's guess, but it certainly seems to be here to stay as an important element in the motorcycling scene.

The main ways in which WIMA has changed over the years are that it has grown, broadened its horizons, extended its sphere of interest, has become more democratic and representative of the average female motorcyclist. The emphasis on the international aspect is increasing, with the British Division seeming to emerge as the current International leaders. At present the membership of this division includes women living in West Africa, Holland, France and Germany. Recently letters have been received from members of the American section, which used to be known as the International Division, requesting the British Division to take up the role of International Liaison. This matter too will be discussed at the AGM. Whatever the outcome of either of these two issues turns out to be I feel certain that the motorcycling world will be hearing a lot more of WIMA in the future.

## WOMENS INTERNATIONAL MOTORCYCLE ASSOCIATION

### CONSTITUTION - BRITISH DIVISION

1. The Association shall be known as W.I.M.A. (GB).
2. **Aims of the Association**  
The purpose of the Association is to support and promote the sport of motorcycling among women.
3. **Membership**
  - i. Membership shall consist of women who ride, who are passengers, or who are in some aspect of motorcycling, with no restriction on age, nationality or domicile.
  - ii. Members under 16 years of age shall be known as Junior Members, who will pay reduced subscription and receive reduced benefit.
4. **Subscriptions**  
These shall be paid annually to the appropriate membership officer, and renewed annually at the AGM. In special cases, a reduced fee may be allowed and applications for same should be directed to the Captain. All such applications will be treated in strict confidence. Should the occasion arise when a member's circumstances change whereby she can afford the full fee, she should then pay accordingly. Should any information become available which contradicts the member's reasons for lower annual subscription, the facts will be laid before the Committee, with the said member present.

Members joining after mid-year pay 50% of the fee to the end of that year.

Failure to remit subscriptions by the end of January in any year incurs exclusion until payment is made.

Annual subscriptions due as at 1st January.

5. **W.I.M.A. Regalia**  
This shall remain the property of the members.
6. **W.I.M.A. Property**  
Office equipment, flag, albums etc., shall remain the property of the Association, and will be the responsibility of the Committee.
7. **Honorary Membership**  
This can be bestowed at the discretion of the Committee, and proposals for such membership shall be brought to the attention of the Committee. Such membership shall be retained for life and such members will be entitled to full membership rights.
8. **Events**  
Every event organised in the name of W.I.M.A. (GB) must be announced in the Newsletter.  
Events can be organised by any member, and members should be encouraged to organise events. The organising member of a W.I.M.A. meeting may decide for herself whether or not non-members of any description shall, or shall not, be allowed to take part in all, or any part of that meeting.  
Events shall not be publicised outside the Newsletter without the permission of the Committee.
9. **Annual Rally**  
Matters relating to the Annual Rally will be discussed at the AGM, but final decisions will rest with the Committee.  
The Rally will be organised by the Captain and Rally Committee.
10. **Annual Awards**  
These will be as follows:-  
Annual Mileage, Annual Mileage Under 200cc, Annual Passenger Mileage, W.I.M.A. Events Attended, Junior Mileage, Sports Trophy and Member of the Year.
11. **Club Organisation and Administration Committee**  
With the exception of the Captain and Newsletter Distributor, who shall serve for a minimum of three and two years respectively (this is to ensure the continuity of the Association), this shall be elected annually at the AGM and shall comprise the following officers:-  
Captain, Treasurer, Badge Secretary, Newsletter Distributor, 2 Assistant Newsletter Distributors, Charity Liaison Officer, 2 Sub-Editors, and a Substitute Officer, who will be called upon to serve if an elected committee member resigns.  
The Committee shall consist of ten members.  
**Function of the Committee.**  
General organisation and management of the Association shall be the responsibility of the Committee which shall meet at least twice a year.  
The Committee may invite professional advisors on specialist subjects to assist the Committee in a consultative capacity.  
The quorum shall consist of 60% of the Committee.

The main ways in which WIMA has changed over the years are that it has grown, broadened its horizons, extended its sphere of interest, has become more democratic and representative of the average female motorcyclist. The emphasis on the international aspect is increasing, with the British Division seeming to emerge as the current International leaders. At present the membership of this division includes women living in West Africa, Holland, France and Germany. Recently letters have been received from members of the American section, which used to be known as the International Division, requesting the British Division to take up the role of International Liaison. This matter too will be discussed at the AGM. Whatever the outcome of either of these two issues turns out to be I feel certain that the motorcycling world will be hearing a lot more of WIMA in the future.

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The Committee shall consist of ten members.  
**Function of the Committee.**  
General organisation and management of the Association shall be the responsibility of the Committee which shall meet at least twice a year.  
The Committee may invite professional advisors on specialist subjects to assist the Committee in a consultative capacity.  
The quorum shall consist of 60% of the Committee.

Committee members are obliged to attend meetings, and only the following specified reasons will be accepted for non-attendance:-

- a. Illness
- b. Bereavement
- c. Nursing Mother
- d. Accident.

#### **Agenda**

Any items for a Committee Meeting shall be submitted to any Committee member.

The Committee will make decisions for and on behalf of the Association.

All members are eligible for re-election.

Decisions at Committee Meetings shall be by simple majority, the Captain having a casting vote.

#### **12. Expulsions**

Any member who brings the Association into disrepute shall be liable to expulsion. Grounds for complaint shall be submitted to the Committee for discussion in the first instance. The member shall have the right of appeal in person or in writing to the AGM.

#### **13. Newsletter**

This shall be called the W.I.M.A. News, and shall be published monthly and distributed to members. The Editor and Sub-Editors reserve the right to reject material.

No liability can be accepted to supply back copies of newsletters to any member.

Members who incur expenses in the Association's interests may apply to the Committee for reimbursement. Receipts must be forwarded.

#### **14. Annual General Meeting**

The Chairman shall be elected at the AGM by the members, and shall not be a serving committee member.

Members unable to attend the AGM shall be given the opportunity to submit proposals in writing to the Captain at least one week prior to the AGM.

Copies of the Agenda shall be available to all members prior to the AGM.

The AGM shall be held at the Annual Rally on a date to be decided by the Committee.

The Annual Report for the previous year will be available at the AGM.

The purpose of the AGM is to determine the major policies of the Association.

Unless otherwise stated, proposals will be carried by a simple majority vote. A decision to vote by ballot must be formally proposed and seconded at the meeting.

The Captain shall have a second or casting vote.

Any changes to the Constitution must be proposed through the Newsletter and will be discussed and voted on at the AGM.

Arne Gale, Clare Boyles, Hilary Staniszeuski, Frances Poppley, Lesley Jarvis, Jane Cresswell, Hilary Clegg.

6th October, 1979

*November 1979 - Audrey Phasey (Lady Audrey) Receiving her trophy "Charity Champion" for collecting most money, in the WIMA sponsored run, for the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association.*



*Everyone's Favourite Granny!*  
*Lily Room at WIMA Rally 1979 Wolverhampton*



## SECTION THREE

### W.I.M.A. IN OTHER COUNTRIES

For simple reasons of geography and the communication problem this can cause much of the material in the booklet so far has been concerned with the story of WIMA in Britain and America. This was not my intention when I started the project, it is simply that information from other parts of the world was very hard to come by.

In an attempt to try to rectify this omission I have added this short section about the activities of WIMA in other countries. Just because you read little of the other divisions here don't get the impression that nothing else is going on. To all members of the Association the 'I' in WIMA is of the utmost importance and there are active groups in at least twenty-five countries. I only wish I could tell you all about them here.

#### **SOUTH AFRICA (Current Captain: Gill Boting).**

WIMA in South Africa was started in 1971 with Lil Collett being the first member and founder of the Association in South Africa. Lil managed to recruit nine members by 1973 and the figure remained unchanged until 1976.

In 1976 Claudie Hiles took over the task of Captain and WIMA went from strength to strength. Claudie and her husband Rodney have been keen motorcyclists since their university days and later in 1976 had the most beautiful bike wedding, with Claudie riding a white BMW. At the moment Rodney is building a sidecar for the BMW so that their two children can become motorcyclists from an early age. Claudie soon found that the role of motherhood took up rather a lot of time and in 1978 Gill Boting took over the job of Captain for the Division.

To date (June 1979) they have close on 100 members spread throughout the country. As South Africa is so large they have some difficulty in organising rides and outings etc, but all of the members do their best to attend the annual Buffalo Rally, which is by far the biggest in the country. Last year (1978) the rally attracted some 4,500 bikers from all over the country, three of WIMA's Rhodesian members travelled 2000 kms to attend the Rally. The South African Division always have their WIMA banner flying high at the Rally and they all try to get together for a chat. This year (1979) Gill plans to get all the girls together for a breakfast. It is also hoped to organise a proper WIMA Rally later in the year in a location fairly central for everyone to attend. If this goes ahead it will be the first ever WIMA Rally in South Africa.

The South African Division has four Newsletters each year and has annual competitions, the main one being the "Long Distance Award", the trophy for this award was donated by Lil Collett and is currently held by Claudie Hiles, the previous holder being Jenny Charlton of Rhodesia.

Gill says of the Division "although our membership is small, I can honestly say that our members are proud of belonging to WIMA. I recently received a silver plate with the words 'Gill, a token of appreciation from all the WIMA girls of South Africa'. This makes me proud to be Captain of our Division".

### WIMA CONTINENTAL DIVISION



Printed for annual Rally  
in Czechoslovakia 1979

The following account of the history and activities of the Continental Division has been written by Agnes Acker (Captain of the French Division).

## Women and Motorcycles (by Agnes Acker).

Young women with long hair, graceful young women, a few robust and tough women in their fifties - wearing well-fitting leathers or shiny 'Barbours' - they have a career, some have children; they are all totally unconcerned about differences of age, nationality or status. They all have one passion - motorcycling!

Women have had a place in motorcycling for only ten years or so, thanks to some social prejudices being abandoned and the introduction of lightweight and more reliable machines; but for many years before that, in the face of public opinion, and with difficult machinery, women have had motorcycles at the centre of their lives. Motorcyclists of bygone days and modern amazons, they all meet in WIMA, Women's International Motorcycle Association, founded in 1950 by Louise Sherbyn, an American. It was brought to Europe in 1958 by Ellen Pfeiffer (from Germany) and only grew slowly in France (see chart at the end of this article).

The general development of motorcycles led to an increase in the Association's membership around 1974. This was particularly noticeable in Germany; however, the increase seems to stop around 1975. At the moment the Continental WIMA is made up of 66% Germans, 12% French, 9% Swiss, 5% English, 4% Austrian, 2% Swedish and Finnish and 2% Czechs and East Germans. The bikes they ride are as follows: 32% Honda, 28% BMW, 18% Suzuki, 7% Ducati, 5% MZ, 3% Moto Guzzi. Only 5% of the machines are below 250cc, 55% are from 250cc to 550cc and 40% are from 550cc to 1000cc.

On the whole the French girls ride the smaller machines; for economic reasons? Or does it reflect a more honest and modest temperament, not wanting to show off or to impress? Or simply because the French girls are smaller than the average? The pillars of the French team: Agnes Acker (350 Yamaha), Ninie Stiegler (250 MZ), Maryvonne Rosso (400/4 Honda) have for some years now been reinforced by 'new blood': Agnes Waleza, always on the road with her 125cc Honda, Clare Faure (600 BMW), who has just returned from a lonely trek round Europe, including Hungary, Czechoslovakia, East Germany and Poland, much to the despair of her companion Christian, Marie-Christine Dodin and her charming MZ outfit, the Douffignies sisters and their imposing BMW, Yannick Marzin and 550cc Honda with fairing. And last, but not least, Yvette Gadrat de Chaillevette who was the first WIMA member in France, in 1959. She often comes to visit Agnes with her husband, Marc, and their two children.

**Women's Events:** headed by Germany but France is not afraid!

Every year the Continental Division meets for a week during the summer in a European country, ranging from around the polar circle to beyond the 'iron curtain', bringing anxiety amongst the populations curious, as well as wary, of these wild women on their motorbikes. They must surely be dirty and of doubtful morality! To help pass the time pleasantly motorcycle events are organised, covering four different areas:-

1) **Trial.** This is an event divided up into sections with observers and special tests. Particularly spectacular in the last three years: the Savoy (in the French Alps), in Wales and at Pisek in Czechoslovakia. Among the best was the French girl Maryvonne Rosso. Among the least enthusiastic, Agnes Acker! The *Gymkhana*, equally a test of dexterity and balance, brings together all the classics of the 'genre', slaloms between cones, on grass, under bars, in a brook, over tyres and a seesaw, etc.

2) **Tests of Orientation and Time Trials** of a hundred kilometres or so with official and secret controls. Particularly scenic in 1977 when it joined Meribel to the Col de l'Iséran, part of route being between walls of snow some five metres high. Having a greater experience of this kind of terrain the French girls are happy in these events, where they usually shine. Some variations on this type of trial are:- *The Mini Rally* where each girl makes up her own route through places whose name begins with the letter of a chosen word (ie the letters of the word WIMA), and has to collect the stamp of a garage or office in each place to show her passage there. The winner is the one with the shortest route. *The Chinese Rally* is a kind of game where, with the help of a simplified diagram of all road junctions on the route, one must find one's way over a couple of dozen miles across woods, through villages, farmyards etc.

3) **Speed Tests.** During the 1960's these used to take place on the Nurburgring, Hockenheim and Zandvoort circuits, and in 1970 a hill climb was organised at the Col des Croix. However, with the increasing number of women taking part, these road events have become too difficult to organise and have been replaced by hill climbs on dirt roads in Finland and England, or simply by acceleration tests over approximately 200 metres amidst the roar of engines and general excitement.

4) **Tests of Applied and Theoretical Mechanical Knowledge** where one needs to know the workings of the two-stroke and four-stroke engine, and the various technical characteristics of the different makes. Competitors came to a grinding halt when confronted by the Kreidler Korn-Westheim machine badge (logo) and the photographs of the Simplex, Ural and Vostok motorcycles. Another test is that of 'Mystery Bags' (*honi soit qui mal y pense!*), where one has to identify, by touching alone, the contents of twenty little sealed bags. They contain such items as splik links, brake pads, cam followers,

screws, piston rings etc. Particularly entertaining are the practical tests: in France the girls had to repair (amid much hilarity) the bikes which had been tampered with by their male friends. In Finland they had to remove and refit a tyre, take apart and rebuild a carburettor and check the brake shoes on a Panonia. This was all done against the clock.

The mechanical tests are much appreciated by the French girls who simply love theoretical questions where they always come amongst the top, in particular Agnes Woless in Wales in 1978. One must say that, professionally speaking, the French represent the intellectual element of WIMA since many of them hold the noble profession of teacher, which, as everyone knows, means a lot of holidays!

It is noticeable that most of these events ignore tarmac roads and the headiness of 45 degree bends. A good empty road is too difficult to find, a real circuit is too expensive to hire and the draconian safety rules make even the most fervent organiser withdraw. So they try to make up on sand, gravel, mud, in thunder storms and lashing rain, all these conditions being classified under 'virile' and which do not deter the WIMA girls, however far they have to go.

After all the events and tests, the best in all categories is crowned 'Madam WIMA' for the year. As the German girls have the greatest number in WIMA this title has gone to a German in 1975, 78 and 79. In 1976 and 77 the English won it (Irene Britannia) and in 1974 it was won by the French girl Maryvonne Rosso. However, the French girls regularly come between second and fifth place.

In the Spring of 1978 there was an exclusively French WIMA meeting in the Vosges, amidst snow and mud. A few local girls were there and Maryvonne and Clare who had travelled far. Another French WIMA meeting is planned for June 1980 in the Alps.

**A Fantastic Atmosphere**.....audible, when the engines are running or when the whole crowd is doubled up laughing at some joke (usually that of an Englishman), but also a psychological well-being, whatever evil tongues may say: no criticisms, no jealousies, no quarrels. Everyone knows that each of us practises her favourite sport to the maximum, time, money and temperament being taken into account. The lucky ones ride up and down the old and new continents clocking up over a hundred thousand kilometres; they take part in competitions (five of the members enter and do well in time trials). In Germany Ellen attempted the Liege-Cannes-Liege endurance test in 1978, just like the mainstays of WIMA in the fifties and sixties. Juliette Steiner won a Gold Medal in the Cannes-Geneva-Cannes endurance trial, Lida Abrahamova, test rider for JAWA/CZ won a gold medal in the International Six Days Trial. Helga Steuel, of East Germany, is a champion on her 125cc machine. Others use their bikes to go to work, take the kids to school, do the shopping, go across fields and woods. They would all defend to the last their motorcycles and the way of life they represent.

## WIMA FRANCE THE LEADERS



There are, of course, differences of opinion among the girls about whether or not men should be allowed to attend WIMA Rallies. These differences notwithstanding, the whole of WIMA in one accord lends a keen ear to the sound of a screaming two-stroke or the deep throaty roar of a four-stroke. Then any differences or misunderstandings are quickly relegated into oblivion. What will the future hold? In spite of new legislation, which seems to go against the further development of motorcycles, WIMA will stand firm, it has seen worse!

Thank you, Agnes, and Bonne Route and Bonne Chance to WIMA France for many more years to come.

The Continental Division of WIMA is less of an organised Association than its British counterpart, it has no regular Newsletters or small gatherings. However it has an annual rally to which members from all over Europe flock. This rally usually lasts a whole week and encompasses a wide variety of riding competitions and social activities. The first such rally was held in Holland in July 1958. The following is an account of the event reprinted from 'Das Motorrad'.

"It was the Dutch who hit upon the idea of organising a motorcycle rally for women - and what a suggestion it turned out to be!

Five trophies, donated by Louise Sherbyn, stood proudly in the boarding house in Scheveningen, where the nine girls who had come for the first European WIMA meeting, were staying. About fifteen girls had said they were coming, from Holland, France, Switzerland, Germany, England, Austria and Czechoslovakia. Unfortunately, the Czech girl was not given an exit visa, neither was the woman from East Germany!

The nine who did attend were:-

Mrs Jopy Drijs-van Dinter from Rijswijk on a Velocette Vancor 500;

Mrs Jenny Steenbakke-van Dinter from The Hague on a Jawa 350;

Mrs Willy Pabon-Liebers from Amsterdam on a Puch 150;

Mrs Han Claven-Seider from Scheveningen on a Jawa 250;

Miss Ellen Wetzig from Frankfurt on a Horex Resident 350;

Miss Anke-Eva Goldman from Wiesbaden on a BMW R69 600;

Miss Marleen Lutz from Mannheim on a BMW R51/2 500 with sidcar;

Mrs Juliette Steiner from Yverdon (Switzerland) on a BMW R50 500;

Miss Barbara Bait from Sellidge (England) on an AJS 16 MS 350.

Jopy was the initiator of the rally. She is trying to set up a European section of WIMA with regular meetings and competitions. Jenny is her younger sister. Their father (Piet van Dinter) used to race on sandtracks in the 1930's. The whole Dinter family, including the sons-in-law, is totally mad about motorcycles.

Han is in her forties and the mother of two teenage children and acted as hostess to the rallyists. All the participants stayed in her boarding house, which also acted as the Headquarters for some of the events. Juliette is a well-known motorcyclist and rallyist in Switzerland.

Barbara, who always had a cigarette in her mouth, had left home two years previously, to do a short tour on her AJS, from Canada to California, then on to Texas and Mexico, returning to Texas and finally to New York and back. About 27,000 in five months. At the end of her journey she had no money left and so approached an airline company for a free flight for herself and her AJS. Three days later she received a free ticket! She went to Holland for the Rally.

Anke-Eva, who had only been riding for a year, arrived a few days later. She is a teacher and could not get away any earlier. She was riding the heaviest machine but managed it very well. Marleen rode her father's cross-country sidcar. She is only sixteen years old.

The first competition was on July 15th - a trial at Arnhem on 125cc DKWs. This proved great fun and produced a clear win for Ellen from Frankfurt. Ellen has been riding for years both on and off road (remember her from the Horex rally where she did 400km in one week?). Barbara was second in her wonderful English trials style.

The next competition was an orienteering run. Because of confusion over languages the usual descriptive text was abandoned for a picture book approach devised by the Dutch. It was pouring with rain but an undaunted Barbara won the event ahead of the experienced Dutch girls, Jopy, Willy and Jenny.

On the 18th, two braking and acceleration tests were held on the race track at Zandvoort. Barbara won this too. Marleen managed the outfit very well here considering she had no front brake - her father did not believe in using one! After the tests a training session was held in preparation for the ladies race the following Sunday. The most exciting of these sessions was one for the 350's - Jenny, Ellen and Barbara. Jenny and Ellen tussled for the lead - first one ahead and then the other. In the end Ellen won by about 100 metres. They both finished and burst out laughing. Poor Barbara's AJS just wasn't in the running even though she had been lying flat on the tank so in the evening she rushed around looking for larger main jets. In five minutes she had stripped down the carburettor and had it back together again.

On the 19th no events took place. Instead, the girls were able to enjoy a sightseeing tour of Gouda. In the evening they went to a clubhouse where Juliette was awarded the long distance trophy for travelling the furthest to the rally.

The road race was to have been held on the 20th, but it was called off at the last minute. Nevertheless credit must certainly go to the Dutch who had the courage to organise a Ladies' Race on a public track. In the morning there

was more training. First the men's 125 and 250, and then the women's. They all looked rather pale and were getting nervous. As they pushed their machines onto the track it began to rain, by the time the engines were all running a steady downpour had set in. The organisers decided to call a halt to all racing for the day, not just the Ladies' Race. People had mixed feelings about this decision. Admittedly the Zandvoort track is tricky even under dry conditions. Probably the organisers were frightened to take the responsibility of allowing girls onto the treacherous track in a storm. In any case, it was a great shame. The cancellation of the race also caused mathematical problems. It was decided to count the times clocked on the 18th in practice. Obviously this was not ideal but seemed the best solution.

That evening the winner was announced as Barbara Bati on her AJS. She had now won three of the five competitions and was undoubtedly the best rider at the meeting. There was also the incredible achievement of Han on her Jawa. She had averaged over 80km/h! The sixteen year old Marleen on her outfit managed to beat a few others with an average speed of 71km/h. Apart from no front brake she didn't even have a licence!

The Rally ended on July 21st, Barbara packed her trophy carefully into a cardboard box and strapped it to her carrier. All of the girls looked forward to meeting up again the next year."

This tradition started by the Dutch is now a firmly established and very popular part of the WIMA scene. Each year the Rally is held in a different country and is usually well-reported in 'Das Motorrad' in Germany and 'Motorevue' in France. This is not the time or place to cover all of these rallies since 1958 but I have picked out some snippets about various WIMA members from some of them.

## JEAN COX (GB) FRANCE 1977



## FLOH PETIT (D)



In 1970 the Rally was held at Col de Croix in France, organiser Agnes Ackar, Four English girls, Maureen Willis, Jean Sutton, Anne Greenwood and Shirley Tarrent, attended. An account of the event in 'Motorevue' tells of the adventures of three Finnish girls who took part. The girls, aged between 17 and 18, had been travelling since the beginning of July on very recalcitrant bikes. So unreliable were the machines that on a camp site in Germany they had to completely dismantle one of the engines! They also amazed local riders by telling them of the time they had had to repair a puncture at a temperature of 20 degrees.

In 1972 the Rally was held in Czechoslovakia, organiser Lida Abrahamova. Among the participants was Helga from East Germany who was then the title holder for the 125cc class in her country. Also in evidence was Ellen, Captain of the Continental Division, who had managed to collect over a hundred cups and trophies won in all forms of motorcycle sport. Ellen first started riding on a Horex Regina and in her first year covered 85,000 kms. When this bike grew too old she replaced it with a Horex Resident on which she competed in many events and managed to beat the works riders at the Zelfahrt Horex in Vienna. The Horex was replaced by a Norton Dominator and then a Honda CB 450 and currently a BMW R75. On both of the latter machines she has won Reliability Trials and in four years has gained 8 gold, 16 silver and 8 bronze medals! Ellen was one of those shy ladies who didn't want to tell me anything about herself!

In 1973 the Rally was held in Finland and instead of being run by a WIMA member it was organised by an instructor from Pihtipudas who rejoined in the name of Matti Viro. Matti was no ordinary teacher, in addition to teaching the more traditional school subjects he also instructed his pupils in motorcycle riding. He has turned the rough part of his garden into a training track and bought 8 tons of Pannonias, complete and in bits which he sells very cheaply to his young disciples. All he asks of them is that they should ride at least 35,000 kms per year. Two of his star pupils, Tuula and Raila, have for some years now held the top places in the Pfadfinder Pokal (a competition rather like the Round Britain Rally organised by 'Das Motorrad'). In 1972 Raila won a zippy Zundapp 125; she promptly sold the machine and remained faithful to her Pannonia!

In 1976 the Rally was once again held in France. This time the organiser was Juliette Steiner who in 1958 had won a gold medal in the gruelling Cannes-Geneva-Cannes. Juliette is another remarkable WIMA member who has retained her love of bikes despite being confined to a wheelchair after a nasty accident in which she was injured by a car. Prior to the accident Juliette was a frequent competitor in trials, grasstrack and motocross.

No account of the activities of the Continental Division would be complete without at least a brief mention of the WIMA song. It was written by Agnes Ackar for the Annual Rally in France in 1976 and the first official hearing was on the last night of the Rally at the Prize-giving.

## WIMA SONG

La WIMA c'est une terrible association  
Rassemblant des filles de tous les horizons  
Demoiselles brunes sur Yamaha  
Demoiselles blondes sur Pannonia  
A moto pas de danger que je m'ennuie  
Peu de frein, mais beaucoup gaz et vas-y  
La griserie des virage  
La bagarre quand il pleut.

Ma Suzuki pleine de fougue et d'ardeur  
Rugissante etincelante ma Honda  
BMW d'acier et de douceur  
MZ Jawa de mon coeur  
Quand un homme contre lui serre fort  
Me disant comme Tarzan "Je suis tres fort"  
Moi je lui demande innocemment  
"Savais-tu changer un segment?"

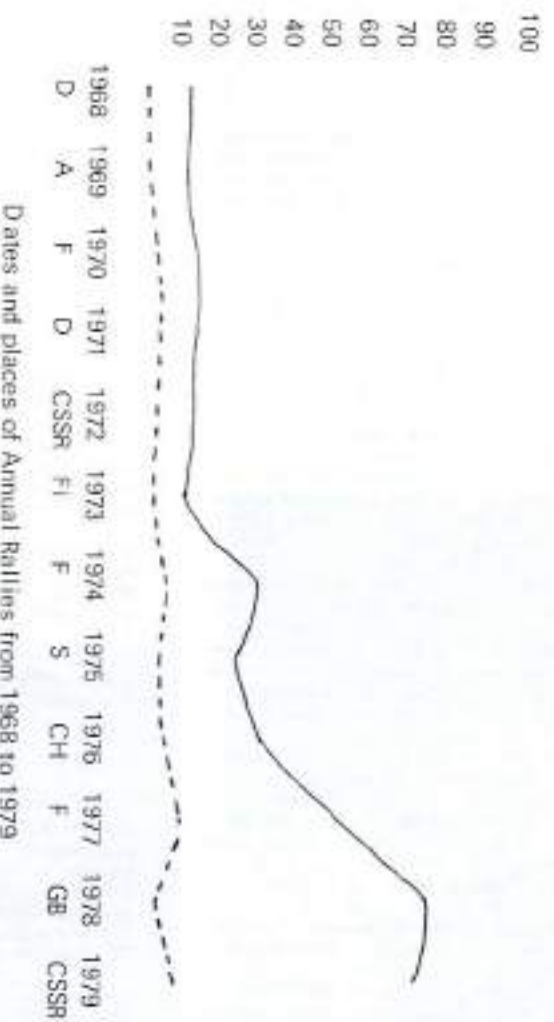
## A ROUGH TRANSLATION

WIMA is a terrific Association  
Gathering girls of different backgrounds  
Brunettes on Yamahas  
Blondes on Pannonias  
On a motorbike boredom is kept at bay  
A little braking, a lot of throttle and let's go  
The headiness of bends  
The fight when it rains.

My Suzuki full of vigour and passion  
Roaring and scintillating is my Honda  
BMW of steel and gentleness  
MZ and Jawa are my loves  
When a man holds me close against him  
Saying, like Tarzan "I am very strong",  
Innocently I ask him "Can you change a  
piston ring?"

The words of the song are often to be heard on the camp site at the Continental Rally. They are not intended to be taken seriously but simply as an adjunct to the happy carefree atmosphere that typifies the Rally scene.

# ATTENDANCE AT CONTINENTAL RALLIES.



## Legend

FI = Finland

GB = Great Britain

D = Germany

CSSR = Czechoslovakia

A = Austria

CH = Switzerland

F = France

All nationalities

—

French members

- - - - -

**DETAILS OF CONTINENTAL RALLIES**  
**1958 to 1980**

Year	Country	Place	Organiser
1958	Holland	Scheveningen	Jopy Deijs van Dinter
1959			
1960			
1961			
1962			
1963	Holland		
1964			
1965	Germany	Obereifenberg	Ellen Pfiefer
1966	Holland	Aalst	Rennée Janson
1967	Czechoslovakia	Milevsko	Lida Abrahamova
1968	Germany	Nurburgring	Ellen Pfiefer
1969	Austria	Amplfwang	
1970	France	Col de Croix	Agnes Acker
1971	Germany		
1972	Czechoslovakia		
1973	Finland		
1974	France	La Petite Pierre	Agnes Acker
1975	Sweden	Omberg	Britt Inger Patterson
1976	Switzerland	Yverdon	Juliette Steiner
1977	France	Meribel	Maryvonne Rosso
1978	Britain	Wales	Mary Stevens
1979	Czechoslovakia	Milevsko	Lida Abrahamova
1980	Switzerland		Regula Ruttiman

## W.I.M.A. PERSONALITIES

In this section I should like to introduce you to some of the 'personalities' in the Association. The women included have been selected by myself, and if you feel that a notable rider or WIMA worker has been left out, I apologise. The women I have chosen are those who have either made a remarkable contribution to the spirit of motorcycling or to WIMA and in some cases to both. I know that there are many omissions but some ladies were unwilling to be included and some others I was unable to contact.

Lida Abrahamova (C.S.S.R.)  
Agnès Acker (France)  
Brenda Alderson  
Rose Arnold  
Phyllis Baker (Reid)  
Linda Bick  
Annie Briggs  
Molly Briggs  
Aida Ciravegna (Italy)  
Lil Collett (South Africa)  
Barbara Coombes  
Ida Crow  
Mary Dudgeon  
Diane Foote (New Zealand)  
Anne Gale  
Mary Grinham  
Mary James (U.S.A.)  
Anne Jelbert  
Olga Kevelos  
Heather MacGregor  
Gill Matthews  
Hazel Mayes (Australia)  
Hilary Musson  
Lily Room  
Louise Sherbyn (U.S.A.)  
Muriel Scott  
Jean Sutton  
Theresa Wallach  
Celia Walton  
Sheila Whittingham  
Rosemary Wilkinson  
Maureen Willis  
Trisha Yeager (U.S.A.)  
Elsie Young (Isle of Man)

Not all these women are currently members of WIMA, but all of them have belonged to the Association at some time. Having briefly explained the criteria I used to select the ladies I have included in this section perhaps I'd better tell you what I tried to find out about them. What I wanted to know was:-

How they became interested in motorcycling;  
When, where and how they learned to ride;  
What sort of motorcycling they did;  
How they heard of, and became involved in WIMA.

I was lucky enough to be able to visit and 'interview' many of the ladies, others very kindly wrote me short articles about themselves, and for others I had to rely simply on hearsay and legend. If you feel I have been unkind to anyone, or have left out something vital, I do apologise. But please bear in mind that I wrote something in the region of seventy letters to more than ten countries, made numerous telephone calls to all parts of the country and clocked up many happy miles in search of material. All errors and omissions are entirely my own and any praise must of course go to those who so rightly deserve it - the women who I have chosen to call The WIMA Personalities.

### LIDA ABRAHAMOVA (CZECHOSLOVAKIA)

Lida is probably best known to you as the organiser of many continental rallies in Czechoslovakia and as a rider in the International Six Days Trial. She was one of the early WIMA members and has been a keen and enthusiastic member since she joined in the 1950's. Lida first heard of WIMA through Olga Kevelos, who also rode in the Six Days with another WIMA member, Molly Briggs. I asked Lida how she first became interested in motorcycles and she told me it all started with canoes!

In 1944 Lida was the Czech junior champion, in the following year she failed her medical examination and was advised to take a short rest from canoeing, thus she was unable to compete in the championships that year. Sadly she sat at the club and watched as her companions and their canoes were being loaded up to travel to the first event of the season. On observing her distress, one of her friends suggested that she spend the summer learning to ride his motorcycle. The idea appealed to Lida and that evening she enjoyed her first experience on two wheels, in the form of a DKW. Needless to say she took to it like a canoeist to water and one week after her eighteenth birthday she passed both her motorcycle and car tests!

It was in the winter of 1948 that Lida competed in her first motorcycle trial, still riding the same DKW. The weather was typical trials weather, cold and wet, and Lida suffered two breakdowns. Not long after setting off, her clutch cable broke and after the others had passed, the marshal's van pulled up and was quite insistent that Lida should load her bike into the van, but Lida was not one to give in easily and she managed to fix the cable and she kept on going till the throttle cable stuck! Again the marshal's van pulled up and was this time a little more sympathetic. "Oh, if only I had some oil, a small drop is all I need", said Lida. The marshal obligingly opened the bonnet of his van, pointed to the dipstick and walked off behind the hedge! In no time at all an overjoyed Lida managed to get some drops of oil to have the desired effect on the stuck cable, and would you believe it, she made the

finish and won the Bronze Award in her first event!

Since then Lida has competed in many trials and in Moto Cross in Hungary, Poland and the USSR, but her real claim to fame comes from her participation in the International Six Days Trial in 1953. The weather that year was particularly wet and nasty and many competitors were forced to drop out, not so our Lida, despite the weather she managed to gain a Gold Award! At this time Lida was working for the Jawa/CZ motorcycle company and was one of their works riders as well as being a worker in their export department in Prague.

Motorcycles have always played an important part in Lida's life. In 1954 she married Ivá, a fellow Jawa/CZ employee and ISDT rider, and their eldest son David is now a well known Moto Cross rider in Czechoslovakia.

Lida now works as an export secretary for a machine company in South Bohemia. Like most Czechs she is warm, friendly and hospitable and motorcyclists from all over the world are always made welcome in her home. For Lida WIMA stands for friendship and solidarity among women of all nations. In a letter in the WIMA news (Summer 1969) Lida speaks of the isolation she feels. "You must never forget I am here, I live here and I need to see you, to clasp your hands, you are invited and welcome guests of mine and my country - the brave, small Czechoslovakia."

## LIDA ABRAHAMOVA



## LIDA IN MILEVSKO



## AGNES ACKER (FRANCE)

A school teacher and motorcycle enthusiast, Agnes joined WIMA in the 1960's. Races a 350cc Yamaha. Organised a continental division rally at La Petite Pierre in 1975.

Agnes is a warm, friendly and utterly charming French woman who I always picture with her long dark hair cascading over her 'Barbour' jacket and a cheerful grin on her face. She is captain of WIMA France, a very energetic lady and a totally committed motorcyclist.

Agnes first discovered motorcycling in 1961 with her husband Roby, she passed her test in 1963 since when she has completed over 200,000 kms 'at the handlebars' and somehow found time to have four children. In her spare time she is a school teacher! She joined WIMA in 1968 and has attended all the annual rallies of the Continental Division except in 1978 when she was in hospital having her fourth child. She has taken part in many rallies, high speed trials and road trials. Her rallying includes six Elephant rallies, two of which were in heavy snow, all of which she attended on a solo. One of her main loves is long distance tours, the most notable of which were a trip from 'Coast to Coast' from San Francisco to Montreal on a 350cc Kawasaki in 13 days and a journey from Sicily to the North Cape which she did as a passenger to Roby.

Agnes has also taken an active part in competitive motorcycling, between 1971 and 1975 she took part in twenty high speed trials at the circuits of Hockenheim, Schotten and Nurburgring and achieved ten medals on her 350cc Suzuki. Her best effort was to finish in fifth place at Hockenheim. In a contemporary report of the event 'Das Motorrad' comments as follows:-

"The elegant French woman, with a German competition licence, entered the realm of men and became prominent by her 'high flying'. Currently the quickest Amazon on two wheels, Agnes Acker on her Suzuki lapped in 2m 59.2s and finished fifth."

Somehow, despite her busy life, Agnes has also found time to sort out material for this booklet and it is to her that I am indebted for the section on the Continental Division of the WIMA.

The photographs below show Agnes at the Nurburgring with her much loved Suzuki, and Agnes with another French Suzuki fan and keen WIMA member, Maryvonne Rossi.



## BRENDA ALDERSON

Brenda is one of those quiet and hard-working women whose hard work and effort has helped to make WIMA the large and thriving organisation it is today. She is quiet and bashful and assured me that she would be of no interest as a 'WIMA Personality'. I chose to disagree, because I feel that it's people like Brenda whose behind-the-scenes work often goes unacknowledged.

Brenda joined WIMA in 1960 and in 1964 she started the Newsletter, which now forms one of the most valuable links between the members. In those days the Newsletter was an international edition that came out quarterly. Brenda was the first editor and later the circulation and advertising manager. When the Newsletter began, Brenda's job was to write it, send it to Louise, the International President, for approval, and on its return to type, duplicate, collate, staple and mail it! No small task. Later the latter part of the job was handed over to a printing company in America.

Brenda has also served WIMA as both Assistant Captain and as Captain for two months in January and February 1978 when no-one else was able to undertake it.

## ROSETTA ARNOLD

Rosetta Arnold was a WIMA member in the 1960's and achieved what she described as her life's ambition, of racing, as a sidecar passenger in the Diamond Jubilee T.T. in the Isle of Man in 1967. She was passenger to Norman Hanks on a 500cc British engine outfit. I'll let Rosa tell you more about the event.

"In practice I found the best thing to do was to try to remember the names of places and certain bends. A lot of bends you needn't get out for, they look very sharp as you go in, but there's nothing on the other side, so when I didn't need to move Norman just tapped me to stay flat. Wednesday came and we did one lap in practice. The bike was going 'Great Guns!' We did the other two practice laps the next day. The bike was going great, we stuck to three laps and qualified easily. All ready now for the big day!

The next day I went to Bob's Cafe where everyone seemed to know instantly who I was - children, autograph hunters everywhere, was my face red!

It was Monday morning (the day of the race) and I couldn't eat anything so I walked to the paper shop and bought papers. I opened the 'Daily Mirror' and right in the middle was a full page photo of me in a swimsuit and another, on the other side, of me racing. I turned crimson, I didn't know where to put my face.

The start was in pairs at ten second intervals. We were Number 20 away. Down Bray's Hill it's fantastic and not like a smooth racing circuit; you feel every bump on the island. You lie flat all the way down Bray Hill and you can feel your body hit the sidecar floor now and again.

You seem to be suspended in mid-air all the way down and then hang on for your life. It was at Glenvine or Union Mills when we started running on one cylinder. I thought we had oiled the plugs but Norman kept going, misfiring all the way. I never expected that we'd do 37½ miles on one cylinder, but we did.

We pulled into the pits at the end of the first lap and found that petrol starvation was our problem, yet it had been perfect in practice. The fuel pump was rewired onto the sidcar floor, I had time to wipe my goggles and we were off again. In the pits we had lost 10-12 minutes and in the end we finished 29th out of 82 outfits."

Despite the problems Rose still describes the race as the greatest thrill of her life.

In 1966 Rose and partner did much better. They came second in the 750cc sidcar race. In the 71 year history of the TT Races, Rose is the first woman ever to appear on the Victory rostrum among the winners.

## PHYLLIS BAKER (Now REID)

Phyllis is one of the few WIMA girls in England to have done any road racing. When I talked to her about it she claimed that it was so insignificant as to be not worth a mention, but I have decided to include her in any case, as I feel that some of her other feats are certainly worth a mention.

In March 1973 the International Newsletter reported that Phyl had been sponsored by Mick Walker Motorcycles to race a 250cc Ducati in club events at Snetterton in 1974. However Phyl only raced once and says that she did not do terribly well. This, though, is only one facet of her motorcycling career.

Phyl is probably best known as a rally goer and continental tourist. In 1973 and 74 she toured Europe on her own. In 1974 she went to Czechoslovakia to attend the Four Stroke Rally, to Austria to attend the F.I.M. Rally in Vienna and to Italy for the Stella Alpina. During this trip on her way to the Four Stroke Rally she was arrested in Prague for a minor traffic offence, and placed in jail! It took all her money to get herself out, so sadly she was unable to make the Rally. Needless to say she left the country as soon as possible.

Phyl is another WIMA lady who does not see pregnancy and motherhood as a ban on riding. Last year (1978) she rode to the Annual Rally on a Honda XL 125 trail bike, being only 8½ months pregnant at the time! Her son was born within days of the Rally.

## LINDA BICK (BOOTHERSOMES)

Linda is probably best known to most of you for her epic solo and singlehanded ride from England to South Africa, which was well reported in both 'Motorcycle' and the WIMA Newsletter. This though was only one of her many interesting and notable motorcycling exploits. Before telling you about some of these let me tell you more about Linda: in fact I am going to cheat and let Linda tell you about herself.

"It was at the tender age of 14, when I fell in love with my big sister's spotty faced boy friend that I first became interested in motorbikes. He had an AJS and long spindly leg growing out of an enormous pair of motorcyclist boots and a high voice which never seemed to have broken, even till the day he died 12 years later racing in the TT.

It was unrequited love but two years later it inspired me to join the Saltbox Motorcyclist Club, then situated at Biggin Hill in Kent. I thought that there I might find some more of that strange breed.

What I did find was a very friendly, helpful bunch of lads who were really interested in all aspects of motorcycling, scrambling, road racing trials and touring.

I had at that time a Bond Minicar which was a three-wheeler on which I had taken my driving test and the licence I obtained also permitted me to ride a motorcycle. Thus together with another girl, Lynn, I acquired an old BSA C101 which was a 250cc sidevalve.

We learnt in a very wobbly fashion; to keep our parents happy we both claimed that the machine belonged to the other. However, the bike didn't last long - Lynn had an argument with a drunken driver one night and landed on his bonnet. After the untimely end of the BSA, reverted to four wheels for a while, but the bug had bitten and very soon a lovely little Tiger Cub appeared on the scene. Lynn no longer 'courting strong' with a Dacia Triton own I was left alone to my motorcycling experiment and started taking off on adventure weekends on my own.

A few bigs ends later I graduated to a Triumph T21 (350) on which I first went abroad taking a daring trip to Germany with some other Saltbox members in November 1965.

It was in 1966, en route to the Chamois Rally, that I met Maureen Willis who immediately recruited me into the ranks of the WIMA. At the Chamois I also met Mar Dudgeon, who was looking for someone to weld up her false leg. What an amazing lady!

By 1967 I had gone up one notch further to a T100 (500) which seemed difficult to kill over at first. This took me to the F.I.M. Rally in Moscow that year and to the Troll Rally in Norway and the Rainbow in Luxembourg. 1968, plus a few others in Europe.

I had the travel bug so bad by 1969 that I emigrated to Australia, having just invested a beautiful BMW R60, only eight years of When I got it it was in perfect condition.

shipped it to Australia and attended the last Kangaroo Rally, and later on the Southern Cross Rally. As rallies weren't so frequent over there and the distances so enormous for just a weekend gathering, I became interested in road racing, especially as I had a sponsor through winning a Road Safety award in Sydney.

I raced a 250cc Suzuki Savage in Sydney in the Powder Puff races and when I moved to Perth, I raced a 250 Desmo Ducati and then an RD 250 Yamaha. More laughs than places, especially when the circuits were closed-off country roads.

In 1971 I did a three-month trip around Australia on my new R50/5. I was accompanied by my two flatmates, Angie and Jackie Griffin, who were riding a 350 Honda and a 250 Dream respectively. We visited Brisbane, Townsville, Darwin, Alice Springs and other outback places. We had our first taste of dirt roads in the desert.

Returning to the UK in April 1972 because of family problems, I took up rallying again. I acquired a 1956 BSA A7 which had to be bump started all the time because of the amount of engine oil gushing onto the kickstarter everywhere made it impossible to gain any traction between boot and kickstart!

Then I bought my present 1957 R50 in September 1972. It was the worst of the three BMs I had owned and a few trips to Ireland and the Continent did little to inspire my confidence in it for what lay ahead.

Come 1974 and the dreaded itchy wheels started again and I longed for the warmth of the Southern Hemisphere. So, always looking for adventure, I decided to tackle Africa!

A very interesting trip! Many of you will have read about it already. To briefly recap: Broken suspension in the Sahara; sheared gearbox connecting bolts in Niger; then a good patch through Central Africa with only a couple of punctures, until main bearings gave out in Kenya, a dropped valve and consequent bent crankshaft in Rhodesia. Also a sheared gearbox cotter pin and clapped out electricies. Finally, just over the border into South Africa - a broken piston ring. A top end rebuild by a shop in Pretoria and she's still going. I attended the Trout Rally in Rhodesia in October 1974 but didn't get the long distance award because I hadn't sent my entry form from England! I met some of the Rhodesian and South African WIMA girls there, and what a nice crowd they are.

I went back to the UK in 1975 for the TT races because they were rumoured to be the last. I also did a couple of rallies in Ireland, the best being the Riders Rally in August 1975.

Longing for the sun again I returned to South Africa the next year, this time by ship. The poor bike didn't know if it was coming or going. I went to the Buffalo Rally which is South Africa's biggest, but hardly the best. About 6,000 motorcyclists with a very large rough element amongst them, and the combination of drink and guns I found rather nerve-racking. There were a couple of

accidental shootings that year. From the Rally I travelled the 1,000 miles up to Windhoek in South West Africa, where I spent a very happy year. With it being in the Namib desert area, most trips were done by Landrover. On the one trip I did start out on, I disgraced myself by dropping it at approximately 60mph on a dirt road, bending the frame and therefore misaligning the drive shaft which resulted in a wrecked U-joint. Bush mechanics with a car-jack 'straightened' (?) the frame and we put in a new (second hand) drive shaft assembly railed up from Cape Town. Back on the road to Durban via Cape Town and then, due to ship cancellation, I flew to Sydney and waited two months for my bike to arrive.

Apart from visiting Interstate and two World's End Rallies which were local to Adelaide I did a ten day tour of Tasmania just before Christmas. It is beautiful bike country, green scenery and windy roads. I had no trouble with the BM and was very lucky with the weather as Tasmania can be rather like Ireland with its climate.

The bike is really slow now, still going but getting very tired, I couldn't bear to get anything else though, but it's frustrating to ride it in this country where you need speed to cover the huge distances.

The future of myself and the bike lies in the hands of the Aussie Immigration who have been trying to chuck me out for eighteen months now. If they succeed, I shall try to get to the States. If I manage to stay, I will remain in Adelaide for a while as I want to do some studying. However, I shall still do a few trips.

My other main interest, as some of you may know, is folk singing and I have been involved in that for the past year here. I try to combine a folk festival with a bike trip which isn't always possible, but I managed it last Easter in Melbourne. I sing in a Traditional Group called 'Green Gilbert'. I have only ever met one other WIMA member and that was one of the founder members, Mrs Hazel Mayes from Sydney. When I met her ten years ago she was in her fifties and taking flying lessons, most apologetic that she didn't still ride a bike!

Other achievements which Linda doesn't mention are that in 1973 she won the Lady Rider award at the Devon Rally and in 1974 she was acclaimed WIMA's Member of the Year for her trip to South Africa.

## ANNIE BRIGGS

Annie is probably best known to you as the writer of a fortnightly page in 'Motorcycle Weekly'. She is WIMA's only motorcycling journalist and, I believe, the only woman to write in the motorcycling press. Through her column she has done much to publicise and promote the activities of the Association. Annie has covered many pages with the exploits of women riders and I feel it is high time we learned more of her activities.

Annie comes from an 'anti-biking' family of four daughters and no sons and can't really remember when she first got the bug, but by the time she was eighteen she was convinced that she just had to have a motorcycle. She was at college so finance was going to be a problem. She took a holiday job as a shorthand typist and at the end of the holiday became the proud owner of a Suzuki A100. Of course, once she started riding there was no stopping her. As her parents put it, "things got worse!" She has recently taken delivery of a Suzuki GS1000! Her fifth bike. She also has a TL125 Honda for off-road use and a tatty (her description, not mine!) old BSA A10 in cafe racer trim which she is always talking of rebuilding. To date all it has managed to do is leak oil all over the hallway!

Annie's first long ride was on her Suzuki GT125 from England to Berlin, where she had a job for three weeks. She was not allowed to ride through East Germany so they loaded Annie plus machine and luggage into the guard's van of a train. On her return to England she discovered the Suzuki's swinging arm was bent, so Annie learnt her first lesson about the correct and incorrect way to load a bike! This trip to Germany gave Annie the taste for travel and since then she has been a keen rallist and loves touring. She has twice been to the Elephant Rally, once at the Nurburgring and last year in Salzburg. On this last occasion she cheated slightly by flying to Munich and collecting a BMW R100RS for the remaining short journey. She had various press deadlines to meet at the time.

Her main love is touring, the highlight of which was her tour last year when she rode East to West across the USA, on a Kawasaki KZ1300, a really tremendous experience. Annie has written some very interesting accounts of this in 'Motorcycle Weekly' so I shall not repeat them here.

When finding out about Annie I was especially interested to find out about her job. She tells me that getting the job on 'Motorcycling Weekly' was a matter of luck and good timing. She happened to ask the editor, Mick Woollett, about the chance of a job within a week of someone handing in their notice. Annie is employed as a sub-editor but also has her own column and manages to get the occasional test ride. She was, and still is, the only woman working on the paper. It's rumoured that the editor once said he would never have a woman on his staff! The work has not been all plain sailing; Annie hasn't exactly met any real hostility but many doubted that she would be able to do the job. As in almost any aspect of motorcycling men are often reluctant to accept women unless they can prove they are better - not just equal - to the majority of men doing the same thing. Annie feels that any mistakes she makes are merely put down to the fact that she is a woman! In fact, on the whole, the men in the office are a pretty nice bunch and, although they enjoy pulling Annie's leg, she feels she is accepted as one of the staff.

Which is not bad after only 17 months!

Never mind what the men think, Annie, we all think you are doing a grand job and would greatly miss what we feel is 'our page' in the paper. Keep up the good work.

## MOLLY BRIGGS

Molly was one of the earliest WIMA members in Britain and photos of her appeared frequently in the early editions of the Newsletter. Sadly I was unable to contact Molly so cannot give a full account of her many achievements here. All I do know is that Molly competed very successfully in Road Races, Hill Climbs and Trials including taking part in the International Six Days in 1963 in Czechoslovakia where she met Lida and introduced her to the WIMA.

Molly took part in almost all types of motorcycle sport and according to Titch Allen she was certainly one of the best women riders at the time. She was also extremely modest and just would not believe that her many achievements were anything out of the ordinary. Titch is able to tell a delightful story about Molly after she had married and become a mother. She was competing in a Grass Track race while her husband minded the baby. After the finish of one race Molly flew back to the paddock, unbuttoned her leathers (zip fasteners were not common then), placed the infant to her breast, and when the feed was over leapt back onto her machine to take part in her next event!

## ALDA CIRAVEGNA (ITALY)

Alda is the Captain of the Italian Division of WIMA. She started riding a motorcycle when she was only ten years old! Foolishly her father promised her some driving lessons on his 300cc Mosquito if she worked hard at school. Later, when her father bought a 48cc Alpino the whole family went out on Sundays on two wheels: Mum and Dad on the Alpino and Alda and her younger sister on the Mosquito. Later, her father graduated onto a 125cc Lambretta, and handed the Alpino onto Alda. When she was fourteen he passed on the Lambretta to her and she started to venture off on her own at weekends.

At about this time she acquired a boyfriend, a boy named Bruno, who had been her childhood friend. Bruno was a mechanic and the owner of a second-hand 125cc Lambretta. They spent much of their time together riding or talking about their bikes. A few years later they were able to afford a second-hand MV Flying Saucer 175cc. But this was not a happy purchase, as almost every weekend it had to be pushed to the nearest workshop so, about a year later, it was replaced by a 200cc Ducati. Alas Alda's Lambretta had been sold and she was confined to the pillion seat.

In 1964 they bought a BMW R 69 and took up touring and rallying. Three years later, after an accident, the BM was replaced by an R 69 S on which they both went on honeymoon in 1968, much of which was spent at the BMW rally in Yugoslavia. On their return to Italy,

Bruno bought her a 175cc Honda on which she took part in many rallies.

In 1969 they made a tour, on the BM, of France, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, England, Germany, Yugoslavia, Switzerland, Monaco and Liechtenstein. It was on this trip that Alda met Mary Dugden and was introduced to the WIMA. After the holiday she went back to school to learn English in order to be able to write to other WIMA members.

Sadly, little has been heard from Alda or any of the other Italian WIMA ladies since early in the seventies.

## LIL COLLETT (SOUTH AFRICA)

Lil Collett, who lives in Port Elizabeth, took up motorcycling in England in 1939. It was during the War and a bike was a good way of avoiding the chaotic public transport situation caused by the blackouts. After this Lil became a very keen motorcyclist: soon after the end of the Second World War she and her husband, Ted, emigrated to South Africa and both played active parts in the Retreads and Rover Motorcycle Clubs.

Lil joined WIMA in 1971. She had read about it and began corresponding with Jean Sutton and Mary Dugden. Commenting in the current issue of the WIMA Newsletter, Lil says "Women riders are few and far between here. I am the only one in Port Elizabeth. We went to the Bathurst Rally recently: over 850 bikes and only four women riders. I have heard so much about WIMA but have never been able to meet any of the members. I'm so pleased that at last I have been able to join".

Soon after joining WIMA Lil managed to recruit three new members, Andre Wilson, Jean Wray and Elaine Daniels; in the 1973 edition of the Newsletter Lil is proudly able to announce that membership is at last into double figures - they had 10 members!

Lil was then riding a Honda 500/4 and all her family were keen motorcyclists, both her sons take part in road racing and scrambling and her husband makes excellent films of many motorcycling events which are sent abroad for viewing by other Motorcycle clubs. Lil and Ted have interested many youngsters in motorcycling and any rider is welcome at the Collett's house.

## BARBARA COOMBS

Barbara is probably, and quite rightly, best known to you as a very brave lady who drives a sidecar outfit at Vintage Club races. This, however, is only the tip of the iceberg.

Barbara, who works as a secretary near Oxford, started riding at the age of 16 on a Caballero (a small Italian motorcycle). Sadly she very soon threw it up the road and for the time being abandoned two wheels. Her second experience of wheels came in the form of a 350cc Triumph outfit, her boyfriend's. This time she managed to remain upright and this prompted her to have another go. Later she acquired

another set of two wheels, an MZ, but this too met the same fate as the Caballero and she decided to leave bikes alone. Then, seven years later she started racing them!

Barbara's husband, Mike, had already been racing a 1938 350cc Triumph solo for several years and a couple of girl friends of hers had also recently taken up sidecar racing and were doing quite well. It was not in the least bit odd when one day Mike suggested that Barbara too had a go. The bike was a standard 1939 500cc Triumph twin and the sidecar was a bare chassis with a simple wooden platform. I'll let Barbara herself tell you about her first experience of racing:-

".....I then had to get myself a racing licence (much to the amazement at the doctor's when I went for my medical) and a set of leathers and a nice new helmet, and I'd originally thought it wouldn't cost much. Then came the real crunch - Vintage Race Meeting of the Year at Mallory Park. There I was sitting on this bike, waiting to go out for practice, scared wholly to death. All I could think of was - can I still do it? I had not even ridden on the road for about 7 years, and had had no time to go to a practice day to get used to the bike. Then the worst bit was over and we were off. It wasn't as bad as I thought it would be - then people started to go past me as if I were standing still. My passenger was no help at all and all I could hear was 'Go faster', 'Turn it on'. Practice was over without mishap. Then it was a nerve-grinding wait to the first race. I was very worried about the start and Mike advised me to pretend I was having a race away from the lights. When it came to the start I was so nervous and rigid that I 'kangerooed' away like a learner. After a couple of laps I felt much better and I could see someone in front of me - perhaps I can catch them? I thought. As I picked myself up after hitting the armco I realised that I could not. In shame I leapt back onto the bike and carried on just as I heard a marshal call out "Are you alright, son?".

I only had one other meeting that year, at Brands Hatch, which was slightly more successful, but the bike was definitely not competitive. Mike said he would put a 650cc motor in it for next season but in the end I had to do it myself. The bike was still standard but managed to give me a good season's racing and taught me a lot. My most embarrassing moment was, once again, at Mallory Park when I overheard a woman behind me say to her friend 'I think I'll go to the hairpin to watch the sidecars - I wonder if that girl will fall off again there?'. However, she was disappointed.

I have had one other rather frightening experience, which was last season at Brands Hatch. Going into the hairpin at Druids the throttle stuck wide open and we left the track rather rapidly. Luckily I managed to retain control and stopped about an inch

from the straw bales. My mother, who was making her one and only attempt at watching, said "I'm glad you pulled out of that race, it saved me having to worry and more" - it's a good job she didn't know what was really happening.

After that season we did a complete rebuild and the bike became quite a mean machine. Since then it has been very successful and I have usually been in the first five and sometimes even higher. Once Mike borrowed the bike and put me to shame by winning one race and coming second in the next. Still, it was nice to see the bike being ridden so well. Racing gives me a great deal of pleasure and it is also a good way of getting to know lots of people from all over the country."

For Barbara Vintage Racing is only one aspect of her motorcycling. She rides a 650 Kawasaki road bike for going to work, rallies and on holiday, and has a 125 Honda as a fun bike and also does some trail riding on it. She is a very active member of the Oxford section of the Vintage Motorcycle club, she is on the committee and each year is responsible for organising a Grass Track Race meeting and a Vintage Trial, both of which are highly successful events.

The other main love of Barbara's motorcycling life is long distance road trials. For several years she went as a passenger to her husband in the London - Land's End and the Allan Millington trial. Last year (1979) she decided to tackle the events on a solo. She entered the Allan Millington with her husband and two friends. Of the four she was the only one to finish; Mike blew up his engine while trying to make up time after a puncture. Barbara achieved a finisher's award and reports that she met four other girl entrants. The Ladies' Award was won by Jackie Oakley. Later on in the same year Barbara braved the Land's End Trial with Merril Bolton of "Motorcycle Monthly". This event has 12 observed sections and Barbara managed to clean half of them. Since then she has successfully completed the Derbyshire Trial. For all of these events she used a 175cc Kawasaki enduro machine.

Meeting Barbara was a wonderful experience. She is warm, witty and utterly devoted to motorcycles. Just listening to her tell of her exploits really puts one to shame for having achieved so little. I asked Barbara how the other (male) racers took to her appearance on the track. "Oh, they didn't mind at all", she replied, "in fact everyone is always very friendly and helpful". With Barbara it would be impossible to be otherwise.

Not surprisingly, Barbara won the WIMA Sports Trophy for 1978.

## IDA CROW

When I first approached Ida with a view to including her in 'The WIMA Book' she was quite adamant that there was no point in doing so as she claimed she had never done much with WIMA and really had very little to offer. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact I have amassed enough material to write a short book on Ida and her exploits alone.

I have only once had the great honour of meeting this wonderful lady when she paid a visit to the Earls Court Motorcycle Show this year (1979). I had made numerous attempts to visit her at her home in Woodford Green but Ida was always busy with various motorcycle committees or something.

Despite Ida's protestations I have to include her here for the following reasons:- She has raced at Brooklands; taken part in trials (including the Scottish and the International Six Days); made numerous and adventurous motorcycle tours to unlikely places; is on the RAC Motorcycle Committee; was an organiser in the London Ladies' Motorcycle Club; a Founder member of the International Motorcyclist's Tour Club; a despatch rider in the National Fire Service during the War; and last, but by no means least, one of the founder members of WIMA in England.

Ida was introduced to WIMA by her friend Theresa Wallach, who was also an active member of the London Ladies'. In those days WIMA had not really got off the ground in this country and Ida was heavily involved with so many other associations that for a long time membership of WIMA simply meant receiving the quarterly Newsletter. She was however able to attend the first Rally in England which was held in Ampthill Park, Bedfordshire, and was organised by Muriel Scott.

Before she retired, Ida was a school teacher in Essex and one of her former pupils (Eric Hardy), recently secretary to the Rover Club, recalled how she used to arrive at school on her bike and what a stir it caused.

Ida is not only a much better motorcyclist than I am, but also a much better writer, so I am going to be extremely lazy and simply edit some of Ida's own accounts of her many wonderful adventures.

Ida's motorcycling really started with her joining the London Ladies' (a competitive motorcycle club for women in the London area which was formed in 1926) and taking part in the "Ladies' Race" at Brooklands. The event had been organised by Mrs Malcolm Campbell who was then president of the Club. Ida recalls these amazing days thus:-

"Brooklands - alas no more - was to motorcyclists what Lords is to cricketers; so I suppose I should regard it as a privilege to have ridden there. It was like riding in an immense pudding basin. The faster you went, the higher you got. I was terrified of flying over the rim.

About ten of us competed, mostly riding our own machines in touring trim. The race was won by May Ruffel riding her fiancé's racing Grindley Peerless at 77.81 mph. Today this does not seem very fast but bearing in mind the bikes we rode and the lack of any racing experience, it was a very creditable performance. I rode the Long Stroke Sunbeam. After the race, I and another girl went straight to the start of an All Night Trial. These Trials usually took us to Somerset or Devon. We had to ride at a given average speed, losing marks for being early or late at the checks. When daylight came we did the observed sections and special tests. They would finish about midday some 200 miles away from home. Once, somewhere near Oxford we had to cross a water splash which was deeper than I'd expected. I heard an ominous crack and when I reached the other side there was a nasty hole in the cylinder.

After the Long Stroke I got a 350cc ohv Sunbeam with a saddle tank - quite an innovation. I cannot remember whether it had electric lighting. When this was introduced some riders had acetylene as well, in case the electrics failed. After the Sunbeams I had a series of Levises 350 - 500, all four strokes. I rode these right up to and including the War. I don't think I had a foot gear change until my third Levis.

In 1932 I rode in the Scottish Six Days. I found it pretty gruelling. 'Motorcycle' described the Trial as the 'most arduous Scottish in history'. So perhaps I did not do too badly to finish.

Then in 1934 I competed in the ISDT in Germany. I borrowed a 250cc Levis from the works. On the second day, in spite of using a puncture preventive, I had a flat tyre. A small crowd of spectators gathered as I got out my tyre levers and a man immediately stepped forward to help. I tried to stop him. Fortunately he could speak English. I explained that if a marshal saw him so much as touch my bike I'd be disqualified. He turned to the crowd and spoke to them and they replied. He turned back to me and said, "They say they won't tell". He wheeled the bike out of sight, mended the puncture and I clocked in on time. But on the fourth day my chain broke. I managed to fix this myself but took too long over the job so I was out!

Marjorie Cottle and Edith Foley, who were also riding in the trial, were very helpful to me."

The activities of the London Ladies' Club were for a while curtailed by the outbreak of War, so too were most non-essential riding, and it soon became impossible to obtain petrol. Ida, however, managed to continue on two wheels, not for fun this time though. Soon after hostilities started she volunteered to be a part-time despatch rider in the National Fire Service,

In this role she went off once or twice a week to Loughton to pick up a bike, ride it to Ilford, spend the night there and in the morning ride the bike back to Loughton and then went back to work. She used to make the journey to Loughton by train and sleep on the top bunk, until one night when she stepped off it when the siren sounded!

As I said in the introduction, Ida was a founder member of the International Motorcyclists Tour Club. The idea for such an association came to her after a touring holiday in Switzerland in 1932.

Ida was always ready for adventure and when she saw an advert in 'The Motorcycle' for a travelling companion for a girl called Eve, who lived in the North of England, she eagerly answered it. The girls only managed to meet about two or three times before setting off on the trip, neither knew too much about motorcycling and still less about camping and foreign touring, but this didn't worry them and they had a marvellous time.

Some friends of Ida's were on holiday at Klosters in Switzerland and the girls decided to join them. Eve rode a 250cc Matchless and Ida was on a Long Stroke 500cc Sunbeam. Both machines were side valves with rigid frames, hand gear changes and acetylene lighting.

Then, as now, it was easy to cross the Channel with a motor vehicle. Except that you needed a passport, a carnet, an International Driving Permit, and an International Vehicle Licence. The latter was obtained from the AA or RAC offices at which you had to present yourself and an official would inspect the bike for roadworthiness, and as there was no driving test in this country at the time he would also examine your riding prowess. He did this by looking out of a window while you rode up and down. There were no Green Cards as most countries did not have compulsory insurance. If you wanted insurance you simply notified your company and cover for abroad was granted at no extra cost! Also a 'GB' plate had to be fitted. These were fairly rare abroad and when you did see one it was common to stop to exchange a greeting.

On the Cross Channel ferry there would be about two or three cars and about a dozen bikes. The latter were swung onto the deck by crane. It always seemed to be motorcycles last on and last off! They crossed to Ostende where they bought some fish which they cooked on their meths stove. Ida says that they were terribly disorganised and had no sense of time or distance. At least twice they sent telegrams to their friends to say that they would arrive a day late! Most of the French and Belgian roads were surfaced with stone setts or 'pave' at the time and Ida found that she was unable to make full use of her mount's top speed of 80 mph. Bouncing over these roads on a rigid frame battered both rider and machine.

On this trip Ida admits that their camping gear was totally inadequate. They had only a small tent and the ground sheet and no airbeds or sleeping bags - just a thin blanket.

In those days there were no established camping sites as camping was not a popular pastime in Western Europe. Only the 'mad English' and a few tough Germans indulged in the lunatic pastime. One evening in the Black Forest in Germany they asked at a house if they could pitch their tent in the garden. The householder thought they were nuts and invited them to sleep indoors, which they did. The family were very pleasant but there was a communication problem. This however was solved when Eve and the son of the family discovered that they had both learnt Anglo Saxon at university, so they spent a happy evening discussing motorcycles and TT in an ancient language!

Both women had an enjoyable stay in Switzerland, which, like all good holidays, soon came to an end. The trip home was marred by one unpleasant incident. About sixty miles from Calais a farm cart pulled out in front of Eve and she was forced onto the rough grass at the side. She was unhurt but the bike was very difficult to ride. A lorry driver who had witnessed the scene kindly volunteered to take the machine to Calais and Eve continued the journey on Ida's pillion.

Sometime after this trip Ida and Eve were in a cafe in London where they struck up a conversation with a man who was a keen motorcyclist and foreign tourist. This meeting led to the formation of the International Motorcyclists Tour Club. It still survives and welcomes motorcyclists from all over the world.

Since that date Ida has made many journeys into Europe, of these the two most notable include a trip, with two other girls, Pam and Phil, to Yugoslavia in 1953 and a holiday in Iceland in 1957.

I think that I have now covered most of Ida's motorcycling career which extends over thirty years from riding a Sunbeam in the 1930's to a Triumph Trophy in the 1960's. Ida has now retired from her job as a school teacher but has not quite given up two wheels. She is still Chairman of the IMTC and only recently (1978) resigned from her position on the RAC's Motorcycle Committee, a post to which she was elected in 1936. Her current two wheels take the form of a Honda 70. Each year Ida tells me will be her last on two wheels, but that day has yet to come. For many reasons which by now should be only too obvious Ida is now an Honorary Member of WIMA British Division.

## MARY DUDGEN

Mary is one of the many ladies included in this section who have made a very notable contribution to both WIMA and to the true spirit of motorcycling. She is probably best known to most of you as a remarkable lady who continued to ride despite losing a leg and severely injuring an arm in a road accident some 19 years ago. I shall always think of Mary as someone whose name crops up in almost every edition on the International Newsletter. Without doubt she has introduced more overseas members to the organisation than anyone else. When I ask people "How did you hear of WIMA?", so often the answer comes back "Through Mary Dudgen". She seems to have appeared at almost every conceivable rally at one time or another.

I have never had the honour of meeting Mary personally but I kept hearing so much about her that it would have been impossible to leave her out and she very kindly, and with considerable difficulty as the action of her left arm is impaired as a result of the accident, written me a short account of herself.

Mary tells me that motorcycling has always been in her blood, although it lay dormant for a number of years. Her father had a Triumph outfit, which stood for years in a corner of one of the cartsheds on their farm, while the car occupied the garage. Mary used to sit on it from time to time and fiddle with the controls, then someone came along and bought it! But Mary wasn't too bothered as her main love was horses. Then one day a local motorcycle club arrived at the farm to ask if they could use the woods and rock holes for a trial, and a field for a gymkhana. They seemed a really nice crowd and Mary was invited to attend their dinner and dance as a guest. Later the family was invited to join the Club!

Much later Mary's husband, Roy, bought himself a 125cc Royal Enfield and invited Mary to start it, knowing that she was interested in anything mechanical. Later on at one of the club's gymkhanas a past member of WIMA, Vera Bethell, persuaded Mary to try out her Triumph Cub and she was finally hooked.

Soon the Enfield was exchanged for a new 125cc Bantam and as this proved to be rather slow for two-up work a 350cc Ariel also joined the household. Mary really loved this Red Hunter and Roy was soon confined to the pillion seat so he bought a 175cc BSA Bantam for himself. At about the same time Mary took up riding a 350 BSA Gold Star trials model on trails and in trials.

In April 1961 the Ariel was changed for a new BSA 650 Golden Flash and the Bantam for a 197 James. This year was to be one of Mary's busiest, best and worst as far as motorcycling was concerned. Most of the year was taken up attending scrambles, grass track, trials, trail riding etc. Then on 5th September 1961 Mary was involved in an accident with another motorcycle. Although she was the innocent party she lost her right leg and her left arm was badly damaged.

Mary, however, is an utterly dedicated motorcyclist, and a little thing like the loss of a limb certainly wasn't going to stop her. After fourteen weeks in hospital she returned home and demanded to be taken for a ride on the Golden Flash. Roy reluctantly agreed and Mary says it was lovely to feel the wind on her face again. Soon after this she started passengering in a trials outfit and it was on this machine that she learnt to handle a three-wheeler. In 1963 she ordered a BMW R 60 outfit with a Steib sidecar. This was finally on the road in 1964. But it was back to 'L' plates for Mary for a while because she had passed her test on the Ariel before the 250cc law came in and now she had to take the disabled drivers' test. Obviously she passed with flying colours and not long afterwards we read in a local paper the headline 'Safe Driving Badge for Plucky Mary'. This badge was awarded by Shell-Mex BP Ltd to British motorcyclists who have, by their safe driving, fostered safety. Well done, Mary.

By 1965 Mary was really confident on her BMW and went on it to the Dragon Rally and then toured abroad to France, Germany, Austria and Italy, where she seemed to recruit WIMA members everywhere she went. In 1966 she was off again, this time to the Chamois Rally in Val d'Isere, France, where she met a number of the continental WIMA members and the Rally organiser asked her to represent Great Britain, with Ellen Pfeiffer representing Germany and Yvette Gadrass France, to lead a run up the Col de l'Isaran and to draw the raffle at the top. First prize was a brand new BMW. As all three of these girls were WIMA members and all BMW mounted, the French magazine 'Moto Revue' did a four page article on the event and Mary was pictured on the front cover,

From then on Mary's spare time was fully occupied with tours, in Britain and overseas, rallies, trail riding and marshalling at trials, grass track and scrambles. From 1966 to the early 1970's she won the WIMA High Points Trophy every year and in 1968 the Sidecar Award at a WIMA Rally. In 1972 Mary took over the job of photo editor for the WIMA News and in 1968 she organised a 'mini' rally for Czechoslovakian member Lida Abrahamova while she was staying in this country. Mary does not confine her motorcycling interests to WIMA. In 1968 she was elected Treasurer, Dinner Dance, Trophy and Catering Organiser for the Wrekin Motorcycle and Car Club. She holds this position at the present.

In 1974 Mary and Roy set up their own business making glass fibre luggage equipment and sidecars. For a while this seemed to seriously curtail much of her riding but she still finds time to act as Grass Track secretary for the Wrekin club and every summer manages to cover a few thousand miles on a European tour.

Mary is one of the members who has done a great deal to try to keep WIMA truly international and by her sheer courage and determination has made an inestimable contribution to the cause of women motorcyclists.

## MARY DUDGEN BMW OUTFIT DECEMBER 1977



## DIANE FOOTE (New Zealand)

Diane keeps the sporting traditions alive in New Zealand. Unfortunately I have very little information about her, only a newspaper cutting which was reported in an earlier edition of the International Newsletter. The headline reads as follows:-

**'FEMALE RACER - ENTRY FOR 500cc'**, and then goes on to tell us that Miss Diane Foote of Dunedin N.Z. is New Zealand's only woman road racer, she was a definite starter for the National 500cc and Open Airfield Championship which was held on January 22nd 1966. This was Diane's second appearance in Canterbury on her 500cc B.S.A. In the previous year Diane competed in New Zealand's Senior Grand Prix. I only wish I could tell you more.

## ANNE GALE

To most of you Annie will need no introduction, her most obvious claim to fame being Captain of the British Division, a post she has held since February 1976. It is probably as a direct result of Annie's unceasing and devoted work to WIMA that the Association has grown from around fifty members to nearly three hundred during the three years that Annie has been holding the handlebars. In 1977 she was voted 'Member of the Year' for both for her work for the club and by showing her true dedication to motorcycling by riding all through her pregnancy! 1977 was not the first time she won the 'Member of the Year' award. In 1976 she received the most votes but refused to accept the title, but as the Association's confidence in her did not alter she finally demurred and gracefully accepted the nomination.

In the short space available it would be impossible to do justice to all the many and wonderful things that Annie has done for WIMA, both as an ordinary member and as its Captain. You can read more about the changes she has made in the History section. Here I merely want to concentrate on Annie's personal history for I was interested to find out how she became involved in riding and how she became to be so active in WIMA, an organisation to which she has devoted so much time and energy.

In common with many members Annie was introduced to motorcycles by her father: for years the family's only transport was a series of sidecar outfits which were finally replaced by a four-wheeler when Annie was eleven years old. This, however, was not Annie's scene and when, at the age of fifteen she acquired a boyfriend, it was his bike that attracted her! From then on motorcyclists became her regular companions and when she was nineteen she and her friends formed the Knightriders Motor Cycle Club Caterham and Annie became the secretary, a position which she held for nine years.

Annie's first experience of actually riding a motorcycle did not come until she was twenty-five. It was at a club camping weekend when she and two other girls started riding the outfits around the field. From then on it escalated and twelve months later a quarter of the members in the club were girls! Annie soon bought a 175cc Bantam and six weeks later passed her test and inevitably wanted a bigger bike! She finally settled on a unique 350cc Triumph - unique inasmuch as the bike had a Bonnie front wheel with a twin leading shoe front brake, the mechanism of which was hidden within the drum. The beast could stop on a sixpence and with a smaller diameter rear wheel had comparable acceleration. Annie recalls numerous 'burn-ups' with other club members. In her two years of ownership, Annie covered 30,000 miles on this machine which she then sold and replaced with a Bantam in racing trim, which was to be her mount until she had a 'special' built.

The 'special' was a Triumph engine in a Cotton Telstar Racer frame, which, when completed was registered as a 500cc Tri-Star. This creation stayed with Annie for about a year and in 1964 she purchased a friend's 305cc Honda Dream. At about the same time she met Dave, a man whose interest in motorcycles seemed to match her own, and they decided to move to the West Country where they later set up home and got married.

Annie has now been riding for just over ten years and in that time she has had ten different motorcycles. Although this sounds like one bike per year she has recently owned more than one at a time. At present she runs a 500cc BMW outfit and a 150 MZ. In between these and the Honda she has owned a 350 Triumph, 250 MZ outfit, 50cc Iom and a 380 Suzuki as both a solo and as an outfit with a Bambi chair.

The MZ outfit was acquired for riding while Annie was pregnant, as she thought she would be less vulnerable than on two wheels and the combo would provide adequate accommodation for the baby. Trouble was she found the bike rather hard to start as the kick starter was on the left, the same side as the chair, so it was replaced by the Suzuki. Before turning this machine into a three-wheeler, Annie practised for, and passed, the IAM Test.

Annie wants to make sure her family is brought up properly, so when her baby, Jody, was only twelve days old he was taken for his first ride in the sidecar - he loved it, and is now a hardened rallyist. His woolly hat inscribed with the immortal words 'Take the Bike is back' is a familiar sight at many camping weekends.

Since Annie was so highly praised by the other members of the Association for continuing to ride through pregnancy I think the least I can do is to let you hear it from the horse's mouth (not literally Annie):-

"All lady riders will know of the strange looks one gets on two wheels, but believe me these looks are nothing compared with those you get when you have a great lump out front or when you lift a carrycot onto a transporter from the sidecar!

I must admit that the one type of motorcyclist I can't stand is the one who will not accommodate the family into this enjoyable pastime. If both husband and wife ride then the odds are that one of them will like riding an outfit. However, time and again I hear of those who won't even consider it as family transport and who emphatically say they don't like it, which seems stupid not having given it a fair chance. My motorcycling attitude has been influenced by those I admire, such as Mary Dugden, Jean Sutton and Heather MacGregor who managed to stick with motorcycling despite bad injuries and the ties of children. I despise the woman rider who insists that to enjoy her motorcycling she has to 'dump' (a term which I dislike) her kids with whoever is willing to have them".

Now to the second question I asked all the WIMA Personalities who appear in this section, 'How did you hear of WIMA?' Annie was introduced to the Association through Jean Sutton in 1970. At that time Maureen Willie was Captain and Annie admits at first she was not a very active member. Then some years later she and Dave attended a camping weekend organised by Maureen at Llanarmon in North Wales. It was then that she realised she was only half a member, but after meeting the other women and their families she began to appreciate what the Association was all about. From then on she attended as many WIMA events as she could, never imagining that one day she would be Captain.

## CAPTAIN ANNE GALE

That turn of events took place around Christmas 1975. In that year Sheila Whittingham had resigned as Captain and the then Assistant Captain, Brenda Alderson, took over. Sadly domestic problems got the better of Brenda and it was necessary to find another to take on the work. Annie heard about this state of affairs when she telephoned Sheila one evening and by the end of the conversation she heard herself offering her services! A couple of weekends later Sheila appeared on the doorstep with the WIMA paraphernalia and Annie was ready to issue her first Newsletter.

Annie realised that with the membership being so spread out around the country the Newsletter was often the only link between them. So she resolved to make it a much larger journal than it had been up to then. She started to include articles about various aspects of motorcycling from as many members as possible. Annie has certainly achieved her objective so far as the Newsletter is concerned: one has only to look at any of the recent editions and compare it to one of the 'old style' ones to notice the difference. Annie now seems to be in the enviable position of having a huge backlog of material to fall back on and the monthly edition is eagerly awaited by all members, for many of whom the Newsletter is often the only link they have with the club.

During the three years that Annie has held the post of Captain many members have helped and encouraged her and at the Annual Rally in 1978 Annie decided that the British Division should be run along the lines of any other club with a working committee which would encourage all members to take a more active part in the Association through having a voice at an Annual General Meeting. This experiment has proved very successful and the Committee has now firmly established itself and has written a new Constitution for the British Division. More events than ever before are being organised and WIMA is now well known and respected among the motorcycling fraternity.



So far as WIMA is concerned, Annie says she has only two regrets: one, that she didn't become an active member from the outset, and two, that there is not more liaison between the Divisions.

## MARY GRINHAM

Mary is probably best known to you as the driver of a racing Kawasaki outfit. I had always assumed that it had taken years of practice for Mary to achieve her current standing and reputation, but I gather this was not so. It was through one of Mary's most ardent fans, Tom Partington, that I first got the idea for this book.

Mary's riding career began in 1967 when she started driving a 500cc Matchless outfit on the road. A few years later, after a visit to the races, she developed a burning ambition to become a racing driver. There then followed a period of machine hunting and penny saving and at last she heard of a suitable outfit. In January 1972 she set off on her faithful Matchless and sidecar to go and investigate the machine of her dreams, only to have them shattered before they had really begun. En route she was hit by a drunken driver. This accident kept her in plaster until April and it was not until April that she was well enough to face the race track.

Her first race was at Brands Hatch, in the pouring rain, and Mary was still in pain and had little confidence left. The machine was a 724cc Triumph outfit and her passenger was her good friend Dave, who is still the other half of the team. This was their only race that year.

By the 1973 season Mary was really raring to go, this time with a 750cc Fiddaman Triumph outfit. She and Dave raced at Brands Hatch, Snetterton where they came in 7th place, and at Lydden where they came 6th and 7th. The Triumph was sold at the end of the season and much of the following year was spent waiting for a new frame to be built to take a Westlake engine.

The new machine was ready in March 1975 for a meeting at Brands Hatch, where Mary and Dave formed part of 'Team Unicorn' with two other outfits. They continued to race this outfit for two years, but Mary has given me no results.

In 1977 the Westlake engine was replaced by a 900cc Kawasaki, but there were many teething troubles and much 'sorting out' had to be done. In spite of this they managed to finish in places ranging from 4th to 11th at several meetings at Brands and Lydden, Mary's favourite and local circuit. With the teething troubles sorted out Mary describes 1978 as a 'hotting up year' in which the Kwacker motor was given some 'go-faster' goodies and went "a hell of a lot better!" This becomes obvious when one looks at their list of results for that year:- fifteen finishes ranging from 12th to 4th place in twenty races!

To fully appreciate the significance of these figures one has to look behind the scenes to see the real dedication of a true racer. Mary had to face up to many trials and tribulations that would easily have put off a lesser mortal: oil inspection glass blowing out resulting in a complete loss of oil; gear lever linkage coming adrift and then petrol pumps, a loose and holed fuel tank, broken piston rings, and to cap it all a broken crankshaft (£180 worth). This is actually a shortened list: a full-blown list of the disasters would only make you cry!

A successful racer requires ingenuity as well as courage. Mary was able to demonstrate this at one meeting when the ignition coils peaked up and were speedily replaced by two coils borrowed from a couple of vans! Please don't get the idea that Mary's outfit is a scruffy lash-up. At Brands Hatch she was presented with a beautiful trophy for the 'Best Prepared Outfit of the Year'.

Mary hopes for even better things in 1979 as the engine has now been 'breathed on' to produce more power and the wheels fitted with wider slick tyres.

Mary heard of WIMA through an article in *Motorcycle News* and thought it sounded like her sort of club. For reasons which will now be obvious, Mary has had little time to attend WIMA gatherings, but we often read of her achievements in the Newsletter. She is an excellent ambassador of the Association and a true upholder of its sporting traditions.

## MARY JAMES (U.S.A.)

Mary James was WIMA's first Honorary Member. No one seems able to recall exactly when this honour was bestowed, I first saw her name mentioned in a Newsletter of 1966.

Mary (nee Miller) was born in 1882 at Myrtle Point, Oregon. She started riding in 1915 on her father's Thor, which was the family's only form of transport. She and her father spent much of their time hunting deer, they carried the hunting equipment and their bedding rolls on the bike. Mary was no longer a young woman when WIMA was formed, but she was able to attend the Twentieth Anniversary celebrations in America where she endeared herself to everyone.

Sadly Mary is no longer with us, she died on September 7th 1972 while she was on a visit to her daughter's in Ohio. She was always a faithful and devoted member of the Association. Her name, however, lives on in WIMA. Her daughter, Meriam Moyer and two of her grand-daughters, Margery Moyer and Nancy Soult are still keen and active members in the American Division.

## ANN JELBERT

Ann is another lady who keeps the sporting traditions of WIMA alive, this time as a passenger in a racing sidecar outfit. She races mostly at Lydden and is a friend of Mary Grinham's who introduced her to WIMA in 1975. When off the track Ann is a dental nurse.



MARY GRINHAM  
JULY 1978

## OLGA KEVELOS

Olga was a member of WIMA in the 1950's and pictures of her appeared often in the earlier editions of the Newsletter. It would really be easier to list what Olga has not taken part in rather than saying what she has done. She has been an active trials rider, including the Scottish and International Six Days, from the 1940's until recently when she and her husband took a pub near Oxford and she can no longer find the time to ride. I shall now let Olga speak for herself:-

"It all started in 1947 when I learned to ride a bike. I was, almost within a week, a Works Trials Rider". The impressionable young Arthur Kimberley, Assistant Managing Director of James Motorcycles Ltd. was introduced to me as a "lady rider". He at once offered me a works bike and my first National event was the Scottish Six Days in May 1948! From then I have competed in no less than twenty Scottish Six Days Trials with variable success on a motley assortment of machines. I also rode in all the National, Centre and Closed events I possibly could for the next twenty years — in fact, until we took the Pub, which alas demands all.

"During the 1950's and early 1960's I rode for almost every British manufacturer of sporting machines — Norton, Ariel, Matchless, A.J.S., B.S.A., Greeves, Francis Barnett, Sun, Vale Onslow and Cotton. I rode in scrambles as well as trials.

"My favourite event was, I suppose, the International Six Days and I have ridden in this event annually since 1948. The trial has taken me to many countries in Europe and beyond. I have gained two Gold Medals, two Silver Medals and a good deal of bad luck in this event. It was during my twenty years of ISDT riding that I turned to foreign manufacturers. A move much deplored by the British Industries Association. I rode for Jawa/CZ, Moto Parilla, Moto Guzzi, K.T.M., MZ and Maico.

Nowadays everyone rides 'foreign' and no one says anything about it at all!

"I did some road racing with Nortons and Ariel and rode at BMCC meetings and in the Thruxton 500 mile race. Also during the 1950's I entered the field of car racing and drove for Cyril Kieft for a couple of seasons. Team mates on the "Continental Circus" were Stirling Moss and Ken Gregory. There were quite a few car ventures, but I always liked bikes and bike people best. They were all so genuine.

"It was Eve White who first approached me about WIMA, she was the poor girl who was later lost in a flying accident, with her husband, in bad weather over Canada.

"I also did quite a bit of trials organising for my club, the Birmingham Motorcycle Clubs, and ran the British Experts and the Victory Trial for about nine years.

"It never ceases to amaze me just how few women there are in motorcycle sport today. After all this 'equal rights' thing should permit them to ride in just any event, provided they qualify for a license. Yet how many do we hear of?

"I always wanted to road race, but the events that I could compete in were very few, mind you I expect it is the expense today that prevents women riding, also lack of support from accessory manufacturers.

"During my long and highly delightful motorcycle career I can honestly say it never cost me a penny!"

Makes me exhausted just to listen to Olga's activity. Why not rejoin WIMA Olga and give all would-be competitors the benefit of your experience?

## HEATHER MACGREGOR

I don't believe that there is anyone in WIMA British Division who does not know and admire Heather MacGregor. She is an utterly devoted motorcyclist and her name crops up regularly in both the WIMA News and the weekly motorcycle press. Heather does most of her riding attending rallies and continental touring. She has twice won the Ladies Long Distance Award at the BMF Rally. I include her story about this later on in the section, and was voted WIMA Member of the Year in 1978. She was nominated for this latter title for her brave and courageous effort at returning to two wheels after being injured in a very nasty road accident in Yugoslavia the previous summer. In 1969 she won the Miss Federation title at the BMF Rally, she was riding a beautifully restored Vincent Comet.

Heather describes herself as coming from a non-motorcycling background, except that her Grandfather won a 250cc AJS at the 1930 Motorcycle Show. He rode it until 1956 and in 1962 Heather's mother was given the remains, she had ridden it as a girl. When Heather was eight her mother bought a scooter and tried to teach Heather how it worked, it was then that Heather made herself the promise that when she was sixteen she would get herself a bike. To her the idea of a pillion ride on the Lambretta was heaven. For her twelfth birthday Heather was given a crash helmet, and at thirteen she learnt how to ride the scooter. She then progressed to riding pillion with various local lads. When her sixteenth birthday came round Heather seemed to have forgotten her youthful resolve and turned to four wheels, first in a Ford Popular and then a Mini. However this state of affairs did not last long.

One Sunday evening at the local cinema the resident beauty announced to the astonished crowd "I've bought an Ariel Leader." Heather was consumed with envy and resolved there and then to do something about it. By the following Sunday Heather's Dad had been persuaded to buy her a 250cc BSA for £5 for her eighteenth birthday. Heather never actually saw Anna's Leader, but it had played a critical part in her motorcycling history.

Soon after the BSA she acquired a boyfriend, Adrian, who was also a motorcycle enthusiast. He had a large stone-built barn into which they would both sling the bikes and other bits and pieces they had worn out. It actually proved to be quite a profitable business as people would come to buy parts and sell them more. Most of the bikes they owned came to them very cheaply, but were usually on their last legs. Heather says she can't remember them all but in the eight years she was in the area she reckons they must have had about 200 machines! In this time she had learnt a great deal about and had been taught to believe that the world's best bike was a Vincent. So in 1969 she bought one in Walmer, where she had swapped it for a BSA Gold Star, which she had earlier exchanged for a Sunbeam outfit. This was the Vincent on which she won the Miss Federation contest. Heather was overjoyed, she felt that at last she had really arrived.

In June of the same year she and Adrian went to the Isle of Man thus commencing an annual custom that has yet to be broken. She rode to The Island on her infamous Matchless scrambler, a machine that she kept until 1974. It appeared in many guises and Heather remembers it as being great fun.

In 1970 Heather got married, but happily her associations with motorcycles did not end. Soon she was carrying her two children around in a sidecar outfit. She ran an Ariel Square Four and, her only ever non-British machine, an Indian. Heather's married bliss did not however last long and by 1974 she was feeling pretty low and felt she needed something she could really throw herself into. She did not have to wait long for something to turn up. At this time a rally called the Round Britain Rally was being organised by Tim Stevens. Taking part in this rally meant locating over 80 landmarks in Great Britain, one in each county in England, Scotland and Wales. Heather describes it as a six months course! This was just what Heather needed. She took the two children with her and the three of them had a great time seeking out the various places. At each place a photograph had to be taken of one's bike and the relevant landmark. In September when the rally was over Heather found it left a real gap in her life so started filling her weekends with attending rallies. In February she went to the Elephant Rally with two petrol paying passengers. After that nothing was planned.

The trip to the Elephant just about finished her outfit so on her return home she bought a solo, a 500cc Royal Enfield Bullet, for £62. To this she attached some home made panniers, packed them and left home.

Heather then moved to the Midlands and formed a friendship with Paul, a BMW owner who was not at all impressed with her bike, so Heather returned to the pillion seat for a while. But not for long. A year later she put the Enfield up for sale at £175; "If you can get anything like that" said Paul "I'll eat my hat." One hat later Heather had to choose a replacement. She found the mount she wanted, a Norton Mercury, in a shop not far from home. To test it out she

took it along to a Brough Superior Club green lanes run the day after she bought it. She fell off a few times but soon sorted out what they could and could not do together.

During her first summer with Paul they went to Finland together on the BMW which behaved very badly and kept breaking down. Heather put her foot down, the next year they were going to the WIMA Continental Division Rally in the French Alps, and she was going to ride the Norton. She did and it behaved perfectly and after the rally Heather carried on to Holland to visit a close friend Peggy who is also a WIMA member.

In 1978 Heather set off, on the back of Paul's BMW, to go to Istanbul with some friends. Unfortunately they never reached Turkey. On their way through Yugoslavia Heather and Paul were involved in an unpleasant accident while trying to overtake a coach. There is no ambulance service in this country, although they do have a rudimentary National Health service, and their friends had to enlist the help of a passing motorist. The hospital was little better than the ambulance service. Heather was left unattended and unwashed for several days, all they did was to plaster her broken leg in a rather primitive fashion. The ward that she was in was supposed to be the intensive care ward but Heather says 'intensive neglect' would have been a better description. She had to remain for several weeks in this place until arrangements could be made for her to be flown home by the Red Cross. Things were not much better for Paul. Although he was not much injured he had to cope with the Eastern bureaucracy. He had his passport taken away as he had to face charges with a possibility of going to jail. To make matters worse for both of them Paul was not allowed to visit Heather for four days. Perhaps the least said about this nasty experience the better.

Seven months after the accident Heather was back on the road. This time on Paul's 500cc BMW sidecar outfit as she was not yet strong enough to cope with a solo. Although it was grand to be mobile again Heather never really got on with this machine and she was delighted to take to the road on her Mercury again a month later. Any other rider would have been content to stop here, but not so Heather.

In May 1979 10 months after the accident she decided to prove to the critics that she was back to her old self again. She chose to do this by making an attempt at the Ladies Long Distance Award at the BMF Rally in Peterborough. I shall now let Heather take over to tell you about her ride:-

"Paul wasn't very encouraging as he thought I was not yet 'well enough' and I was concerned about the Norton which was overdue for a refit and about finances. One raided froggy bank later I had £12. I then sorted out the route — not too much motorway, a Featherbed doesn't shine in a straight line,

"Saturday May 12 arrived, it was a clear spring day, birds singing and lots of blue sky. We were off at 10.00am, hoping to meet up with Paul at the camping field in the late evening. We got up onto the Fosse and galloped south. There was not a lot of traffic about, it was a joy to ride. To look at signposts and to know that there was no real reason to go anywhere and no real obstacle to prevent us going just where we liked. Later we approached the M5 and turned south. Wound the Norton up a bit. Now the air was a bit foggy and the temperature dropped. Just what the weather men had promised. Filled up with petrol at Exeter and made a 'phone call to Paul. "What's gone wrong?" was his first reaction. I reassured him, then set off along the 303.

"Now we had bends to play with and the roads were more familiar. The rolling hills of the plain looked so fresh under the slight mist with the sunshine breaking onto them. The Mercury was still going effortlessly, never missing a beat, swooping round corners as she was built to do.

"I was a bit weary now, my wrists and my neck feeling very stiff. My knee was stiff but not painful so long as I kept it still. My eye only troubled me in that I had to look straight at the road, I couldn't lower my head or relax my neck at all. A screen would be a sensible thing, then so would an electric starter, or a car. . . . .

"We finally arrived at the showground with 406 miles behind us, 406 miles along clean, dry roads with only light traffic and excellent weather. Such rides are what we're all in the game for. The Award was only an excuse."

Heather describes herself as lucky to be able to choose to ride in the snow or the rain. While she was conversing she found that there were other pastimes in life besides bikes, one of them was knitting, and Heather found that she was quite good at it. But as she so rightly says "This is not a serious alternative."

## GILL MATHEWS

Gill is a fairly recent recruit to the Association, she joined at the Continental Rally held in Wales in 1978. Since then she has been a very active member attending numerous runs, meetings and camping weekends. Gill is currently trying extremely hard to keep the WIMA flag flying in the field of trials. A tradition which has been dying out in recent years.

Gill is a warm, friendly, bouncy and very cheerful lady who seems to have limitless reserves of energy.

Gill's motorcycling career started about nine years ago on her father's modest Honda C50. On this machine she passed her test. Although Gill's family could not be described as dedicated riders, a photograph in her living room shows each member of the family on their two-wheels, including Mum and her two sisters. After passing her test Gill did not have a bike of her own so when she went to college she started saving money out of her grant. She did this by saving on non-essentials like text books and managed to buy her first real machine. This was a 125cc Puch. A typical two-stroke, it either started first kick or refused to start at all. Her next purchase was an ex-police Triumph, 3TA, a 350cc Twin. The bike was fitted with a recess in the top of the tank from which the Devon Constabulary had removed the radio telephone. When it rained this filled up with water which slopped out all over the rider!

On starting work Gill changed this much loved, but rather clapped out, Triumph for a brand new Honda CB360. Later, when she got married she and her husband, 'Matt' decided to take up off road riding. So the 360 had to go. It was replaced by two trail bikes, Honda XL 250's. Gill now uses hers for road riding, green laning, trials and enduros.

In addition to partaking in WIMA Gill is also an active member of two other motorcycle clubs, the Croydon and Streatham and District. Both of these two clubs organise and compete in off-road events.

Before long Gill found that the 250 Honda, being something of a compromise bike, was not really suitable for serious trials work. It was rather heavy and clumsy. So Gill has recently become the proud owner of a second machine, a 250cc Bultaco Sherpa T, a proper trials bike. Martin Lampkin had better look out!

As well as being an extremely competent motorcyclist Gill is also a very humorous writer and I have decided to include an account of her first trial written by Gill.

"The day dawned at an appallingly early 7 o'clock. I think most people would agree this is a very uncivilized hour on a Sunday. The reason for this regrettable state of affairs was that my husband, Matt, and myself were about to enter a South Eastern Centre Trial.

"For the uninitiated, a trial is a test of skill (or lack of it!) on the rough through certain marked out sections. Each section is cunningly designed so as to place seemingly insurmountable obstacles in the path of the competitor. Surprisingly enough some people manage to ride motorcycles over terrain that seems singularly unsuitable for anything except as a training ground for climbers planning an assault on Everest.

"Observers are posted at each section to keep their eyes peeled, waiting to pounce on each competitor's mistake and record it. Putting a foot down once is called a 'dab' for which one mark is forfeited. Two dabs leads to

the loss of two marks. If things are getting really desperate one resorts to pushing with both feet and 'walking' through the section astride the bike and aided by the engine, this leads to the loss of three marks. These desperate measures are employed to avoid the ultimate indignity of grinding to an ignominious halt, moving in a reverse instead of forward direction (on a hill for example) or even, dare I mention it, falling off. The penalty for these errors of judgement is the loss of five valuable marks. This is to be avoided if at all possible. A Trial is not a race (unless the observers are waiting to go to lunch and they are closing the sections as you get to them).

"On the rough my bike is rather high to dab effectively (by the time I have got some oomph with my foot the bike often seems to be nearer the horizontal than the vertical position). I find my bike rather heavy to pick up, especially half way up (or down) a hill. The moral is, of course, don't drop it in the first place. Trail bikes are higher geared than trials bikes. This is a blessing on the road. On the rough it means that you can't go as slowly as you'd like to, nor can you lift the front wheel as easily. Both trail and trial bikes have wide bars to aid balance and steering and are fitted with special trials tyres to aid grip.

"On the morning in question we loaded our bikes into a friend's trailer and headed for the wilds of Hampshire where the trial was being run on some Ministry of Defence land. M.O.D. land is ideal for this type of event, but you must be prepared to see soldiers crawling around with bushes on their heads, and to hear occasional loud bangs.

"When we arrived it was pouring with rain and I was beginning to feel rather nervous, not to mention cold and wet. We were given our numbers on cardboard, which promptly turned to papier mache in the prevailing monsoon. Then at 30 second intervals competitors set off; sidecars, pre-1965 four strokes, solo trials bikes and finally trail bikes.

"The first section wasn't too bad although I did fall off half way up a slope where the top soil was rather loose and having just turned round a tree the bike continued to turn despite my efforts to change direction. I was consoled by the fact that Matt fell off in the same spot. There were 36 sections altogether and I wasn't too sickened by any of them. One of the advantages of a trail bike over a trials bike is that the sections are slightly less horrendous.

"At the end of the day I was tired and wet but pleased that I'd taken part in my first proper trial, having enjoyed myself and met lots of friendly people. As to the results, I lost 119 marks out of a possible 180. The best rider out of a 200 strong entry lost an

incredible 11 marks and the worst score was the loss of 158 marks. I didn't win any prizes."

This as I said at the beginning is an account of Gill's first trial and since then she has participated in many more plus a few enduros. Her results continue to improve, but as this is only Gill's first year in trials it is early days. All very best wishes Gill and may all your falls be little ones.

### HAZEL MAYES (Australia).

Hazel was Australia's first WIMA member, joining in 1960 and I'm afraid I know very little else about her. In her riding days she was a keen rallyist and undertook many long journeys by motorcycle. I use the past tense for a reason for Hazel is no longer an active motorcyclist. When her husband died she decided to take up flying planes! and this hobby has now taken over the place of riding.

### HILARY MUSSON

Hilary, "not the Hilary Musson" I hear you say. Yes I know that to most of you the name will be familiar because Hilary was only the second woman to race in the Isle of Man T.T. Races. What you probably do not know is that Hilary is also a keen WIMA member and that it takes a long time to qualify to race in the T.T. In this section I will concentrate on the years leading up to this historical event.

Hilary was a member of WIMA in the 1950's but dropped out because she felt that at that time not many of the girls were interested in the sporting side of motorcycling. Mainly the membership seemed to consist of rally enthusiasts and as Hilary could not afford to race, ride and rally she decided to drop out of the Association. She re-joined in 1979 after reading an article by Annie Briggs in *Motorcycle Weekly* and seeing that several other girls like Mary Grinham and Barbara Coombes were also members. She realised that it was silly to drop out as the object of WIMA must be for all women riders to stick together and to support each other. As Hilary says, the sporting interest in WIMA definitely seems to be increasing.

Hilary's riding is by no means confined to racing. In 1969 she won the Ladies Long Distance Award at the BMF Rally and has won a couple of Special Awards in the ACU National Rally. Hilary's motorcycling began just before she was sixteen, when her husband, then her boyfriend, John, bought a 250cc Royal Enfield. Hilary used to ride on the pillion and enjoyed it so much that she decided she wanted a bike of her own. She knew just what she wanted, a Triumph Tiger Cub, not scooters or mopeds for Hilary. The day she left school she arrived home and a large van from a local motorcycle dealer's drew up outside her house and unloaded — a Tiger Cub! Her father had bought it for her.

Hilary had great fun on that bike and about a year later she and John were married. Soon after that daughter Gail arrived on the scene so the bikes gave way to a car. But the enthusiasm was still there and, with Cadwell Park near by, they decided to pay a visit to the races. After that there was no stopping them. At Easter and at Bank holidays they went to as many races as they could at Brands Hatch, Mallory Park and Oulton Park.

In 1969 Hilary read that the Batley Motorcycle Club were going to organise a Ladies Race at Cadwell Park. Of course she had to have a go and entered on their 500cc Triumph Daytona. The big day came and the 8 women lined up with engines running for a clutch start. Hilary finished fourth behind Eunice Evans and Andrea Williams.

Sadly it was this event which caused Hilary to leave WIMA, commenting on it in a contemporary edition of the Newsletter Hilary says:-

"Although the race was mentioned a couple of times in the motorcycling press, including a letter from WIMA member Stella Clark begging for entries, only eight girls took part. I thought we were all supposed to be keen, and after all our WIMA is supposed to be fighting for the right for women to race. Most of us had never raced before so it wasn't as though the opposition was too great. Perhaps it was because some girls may have had difficulty in obtaining leather clothing. I would love to take part in a race such as the Thruxton 500 miler where machine reliability counts for as much as rider ability, but we are not going to be allowed to compete unless there is more support. After all we are all girls, surely an opportunity too good to miss?

"Anyway let us hope that the Batley club race will be the first of many because most of us who did take part thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. One girl who really deserves praise is the ever willing Jean Sutton who took third place ahead of me on her Triumph Trophy complete with trials tyres and handlebars. My Daytona Triumph was fitted with racing tyres but Jean literally blew me off down the straight. Stella Clark, a grandmother I believe, and fresh from a maximum points run in the National Rally, also took part on her Tiger 100, but she was having trouble with the oil pump. I think the men were quite surprised to see just how fast we did go. I've done my bit so let's have a bit more support next time."

After that day Hilary ceased to be a spectator at races and she and John shared the Triumph in many club races. That is to say they shared it until it blew up while Hilary was riding it. They started to rebuild it, a job which was never finished and finally given up when they sold it last year (1978).

The Triumph was replaced by a 1973 500cc Honda and a 250cc Suzuki. Hilary rode both of these machines at Vincent Owners Club meetings and other club races. It wasn't until 1974 that she had a serious go at winning anything and that was after the purchase of her first 250cc Yamaha from Padgett's of Batley. This proved to be a very reliable machine, it never failed to finish a race and took Hilary to third place in the British Formula Racing Club's 250cc Production Championship in 1975. In the following year she won the same Championship.

In 1977 a new model Yamaha took pride of place, but, although it gave no trouble, it was slow. The competition in her class was becoming much more fierce and by missing a couple of meetings Hilary was out of the contest altogether. However she decided to enter a few National Meetings, mostly at Snetterton, in order to try for an International Licence, with the sole intention of entering the T.T.

So it was that early in 1978 her International Licence came through the letterbox and Hilary entered and rode in the T.T. in 1978. In that year she raced a 247cc Yamaha in the Formula 3 Production Race. Hilary raced again in 1979, this time on a 369cc Suzuki. You cannot miss Hilary's bike in the paddock; it's the only one covered with WIMA stickers!

WIMA is indeed both pleased and proud that Hilary has rejoined, perhaps she will be able to encourage others to follow her lead. I wonder what the response would be like if a club decided to organise a Ladies Race now?

*HILARY MUSSON June 28th 1975 Silverstone won a 2nd class award in 1/2 hour Trial.*



## LILY ROOM

To all regular WIMA Rally goers Lily will need no introduction, for in her fifteen years of membership of the Association she hasn't missed one! Lily is always happy and smiling and full of fun. Although she is a grandmother she has the energy and enthusiasm of a sixteen year old and thinks nothing of dashing off to gatherings all over the countryside on her 125cc Honda. I went to visit Lily, to find out more about this remarkable woman, one cold and stormy day last 'Spring'. I was rather late in arriving as the weather was worse than I'd expected and I'd underestimated the distance by about fifty miles! As soon as I pulled up outside the house Lily rushed out to greet me with the words "You're late, I've put your dinner in the oven, I've eaten mine!" She behaved as if I ate there regularly, whereas in fact I'd only ever met Lil once before. She's the sort of person who is a mother to everyone. Anyway I went to see her to learn her story so now I'd better tell it to you.

Lily's introduction to motorcycles came in 1953 when her husband was killed in the Korean war. Lil was left a widow with three children, the eldest girl was 16, her son 15 and her youngest daughter, Julie, only 6. Lily's only transport was an old push bike on which she used to carry Julie to school and herself to work. At this age Julie was growing rapidly and Lil was finding the pedalling rather hard work. So she announced one day at work, "I'm going to buy a motorbike." Everyone thought she was joking. She was not. Some weeks later she bought a second hand Bantam. For a few days it sat in the back yard as Lily had no idea how to ride it. Then a kindly neighbour intervened and offered to give her riding lessons. Her first was not a resounding success.

Lil started the bike up easily and pulled away quite smoothly and all went well until she came to the end of the road. Then the trouble started. She decided she couldn't turn around and had by this time forgotten how to stop! As luck would have it the road was on an unfinished estate and Lil was heading for an orchard. But, in between her and it some thoughtless workman had left a large pile of drain pipes! This was no problem, Lil rode over them skillfully and gracefully, like Sammy Miller himself and into the orchard. So that put paid to the first problem, no need to turn round now. But the second one of how to stop remained. Lil, however, had already learnt a few things about this new conveyance so she headed for the best patch of mud she could find and duly stopped, right in it. During this little escapade her kindly neighbour was getting rather worried and was not a little surprised when he found Lil and Bantam plastered in mud with our heroine convulsed in an uncontrollable fit of laughter! As neither Lil nor her neighbour wanted to repeat this performance Lil looked around for another way of learning to handle the monster. Luckily an R.A.C./A.C.U. course was starting up some five miles from her home and Lil very wisely enrolled.

For the first two lessons Lil rode there on her push bike, and on the third Sunday on her Bantam, in bottom gear all the way! At the end of the course she passed the test and not long after the Ministry of Transport test. She was now able to carry a pillion passenger. Julie enjoyed this role immensely and took to it like a duck to water. But she did not stop growing, so soon Lily was looking around for a larger machine.

*Lily Room and Anne Gale Llanormon Yu Lal May 1976.*



With the acquisition of a bigger bike Lil became more adventurous and started to wander further afield. She started going to rallies. In 1964 she went to the Dragon Rally, in North Wales, met Maureen Willis and joined WIMA. In 1965 she won the Esso Safety Award in a riding competition. At the same time she decided to add to the Annual awards presented at the WIMA Rally, she donated a trophy for the member who had travelled the furthest to attend the Rally. It is called, not surprisingly, the Lily Room Long Distance Trophy.

In the twenty-six years that Lily has been a motorcyclist she has owned thirteen bikes. Her favourite was a Golden Arrow Super Sports 250cc, the only fault with it was the 'smoke screen' it used to make, Lil was always having her leg pulled about this. Lil has many amusing stories to tell about her various exploits and a pile of large folders containing newspaper reports about them. In one local paper there even appeared a cartoon about her with the caption "Petrol and old lace." In the clippings there are frequent references to 'Ton-up Grannies' etc. In fact Lily now has six grandchildren and five great-grandchildren! Some of them have already shown signs of following in Lil's tyre marks.

Lil always describes her motorcycling as full of fun and laughs, but she has some not so amusing tales to tell as well. On one occasion she pulled in at a filling station only to be told by the proprietor "I don't approve of women riding bikes, and I'm not going to serve you!" (I cannot print Lil's reply). On another day Lil stopped in a handy lay-by to nip over the hedge, when she climbed back she found her steed lying on its side, it was loaded with camping gear and she couldn't lift it. Much to her surprise a motorist soon saw her plight and stopped. When he saw that the rider was a female he changed and refused to assist on the grounds that if women wanted to show their independence by riding motorcycles they could "....." well pick them up themselves! Lil was utterly astounded.

Happily these are isolated incidents and apart from being called "long haired yob" by the occasional passer by, Lil says that through riding she has had lots of laughs and made loads of friends. Long may this continue.

*Lily Room with Vivian Batherstock. Holding Lily Room Long Distance Trophy Llanermon Yn Lal May 1976.*



## LOUISE SHERBYN (U.S.A.)

I feel that in many ways these few pages about Louise should stand out from all the others, or at least be in the front of the section. But then I decided that it was useless to try to grade members according to their services to WIMA so Louise has had to take her place in alphabetical order along with everyone else.

Louise, as almost all members must by now know, is the Founder of The Womens International Motorcycle Association, without her this book would never have been written and many of the events in it would never have taken place. Unfortunately I have never met this remarkable and inexhaustable lady, but I do have a detailed account, written by her, of how the Association began.

The Association was officially founded in 1950, although the groundwork started before that. Louise's interest in motorcycling appeared in the early 1920's when she sat on a 1921 Indian, which was owned by a lad who came to visit her elder sister. A few years later her brother bought an old Indian. In 1924 Louise had her first ride in a sidecar, at first she was scared, but then found it great fun. Years passed, Louise grew up and got married. Her husband started yearning for two wheels again as he had owned several machines before they met. So Louise became a pillion rider on a Harley Davidson. This was soon replaced by an Indian Chief and Louise once again had the pleasure of riding in a sidecar. In 1932 Louise's husband decided that she was so keen on bikes that he would get her one of her own. The idea frightened Louise as women drivers were almost unheard of and she was a little worried about the effect riding would have on her reputation as she was supposed to be 'ladylike' and 'dignified'. She held a good position in the Kodak company and wondered what the rest of the office would think of her 'putting about' in the city on a motorcycle!

Louise need not have worried, it was soon known that she had taken to two wheels and every Monday morning her colleagues would ask "Where did you go this weekend?" She kept her good reputation and she and her husband joined the Kodak City Motorcycle Club and later the Wayne County Club. Soon Louise found she was active in many motoring clubs including the A.M.A., the Canadian Motorcycle Association and the British Pathfinders Club.

It was then that she started to interest herself in women motorcyclists in particular. She joined, and helped to revive the Motor Maids. This was an organisation set up in the 1940's. It had various branches throughout America. It was not so much a motorcycle club, more of a display team. The girls in it used to do a formation ride around the track at the start of a race meeting. They wore smart blue uniforms and their bikes were always beautifully turned out. Louise so much enjoyed the experience of getting The Maids together again that when she moved back to Waterloo she enlisted the assistance of another girl and formed the Waterloo Twilight Roamers Motorcycle Club. During the WIMA twentieth

Anniversary celebrations Louise was presented with an Honorary Life Membership of this club.

Louise's interest in motorcycle publications began with her riding, with first her attempts as a reporter of club news, then as a contributor of articles which appeared in several publications. She then became the Associate Editor of one of America's leading motorcycle publications and for the past fifteen years Louise has, of course, been the Editor of the International edition of the WIMA Newsletter which members may receive each quarter.

Let's get back to Louise's riding. Louise's first machine was a 1932 Indian Scout. Her training ground was a gravel road, three lessons later she was riding through city traffic. Since then she has been riding continuously on various models of Indian. In her many miles she has never had an accident! Her trips have taken her to many parts of the U.S.A. and Canada. She undertook her first long journey (a mere 1200 miles) to Chicago in 1937. Louise believes that she can lay claim to the distinction of being the first American woman to reach the far North - the Timagami Forest of Canada. This was in fact rather more of a feat than it sounds. This trip was in 1937 when many main roads in Canada were still made of dirt and gravel and were very rutted and rough. Louise also feels that she may have been the first American woman to compete in a foreign competition. In 1948 she rode in a 720 mile enduro in Canada. During this period Louise took part in many events but her main love was touring.

During the 1940's the number of women riders increased and they began to take a real interest in motorcycles. Louise believed that there should be more activities for them. Her belief in this grew stronger and stronger and she started thinking about a world-wide organisation of all women motorcyclists. It was during the second World War while Louise was exchanging correspondence with many women in various parts of the world that she became imbued with this new idea. Why not unite as a body, exchanging ideas, problems and advice? It would add considerably towards bettering the atmosphere, the good companionship, and marvellous fun of competition and touring and all that is characteristic of the sport. She felt sure that others would agree with her. At this time women abroad were competing in a wider range of events than in America and were doing well. Why? Mainly, Louise felt, the light weight motorcycle had proved its safety and easy handling among women riders. With the influx of light-weight machines from abroad - here was an encouraging outlook. Why couldn't American women look forward to uniting and increasing their opportunities in competitions as riders? Why couldn't women unite their interests into one big Association? With this thought came the initial step of founding The Womens International Motorcycle Association.

Someone said to Louise at the time that this endeavour would be impossible! But Louise's love of the sport and her determination kept her going and she made it a possibility and then a

successful reality. Once she had completed the ground work she enlisted the help of two of her friends, Mrs. Hope Jones and Miss Grace Conrad. So I suppose they could be called the first two WIMA members! I'll let Louise have the last words:-

"With the help of every member and some wonderful friends the WIMA has now grown today to be the largest women's motorcycle organisation in the world."

You can read more about the early days of WIMA in the first chapter of the book.

Here, with only limited space available and only ordinary words at my disposal I cannot think of a suitable tribute to pay to a woman, who was not only our founder but who has also devoted a life-time to the Association. Louise, a Big Thank You from all of us.

## MURIEL SCOTT

I know very little about Muriel but felt that she deserved a mention here as she was once Captain of the British Division, and I believe that she organised the first WIMA Rally in Britain in Amphil Park in Bedfordshire.

Muriel was Captain Circa 1956

## JEAN SUTTON

Jean deserves mention in this section both for her remarkable courage and determination in returning to two wheels after losing a leg in an accident, for being a successful competitor in trials and for representing the British Division so ardently at the rallies of the Continental Division.

Jean has been a dedicated motorcyclist through much adversity. As a child she contracted polio and later on in adult life muscular dystrophy. Despite these obvious difficulties she was a very active rider, attending rallies at home and abroad and riding in many trials. She has even made one attempt at road racing on a Triumph Trophy in trials trim! This latter feat was in the 'Powder Puff Derby', a ladies race organised by the Batley Motorcycle Club at Cadwell Park in 1969. Hilary Musson, also taking part in the race, recalls how Jean "really blew her off on the straights". Hilary was riding a Triumph Daytona in racing trim and was utterly amazed by the sight of Jean roaring past on a trials machine! Jean came third in the race!

Jean, along with her friend Shirley Gilbert, was one of the first British Division members to attend the Continental Rallies. They went on their own on two very smart 500cc Triumphs with black frames and red petrol tanks. Jean has many happy memories of the fun and kindness they received across the Channel.

In 1972, on Easter Monday Jean was involved in a nasty road accident with a car and, as a result, she lost her leg. Her courage never failed her; only a year later she was riding again, on a solo! For this remarkable achievement Jean was chosen WIMA Member of the Year by the British Division. Here Jean made WIMA history by being the first person to gain this accolade.

Jean, keen as ever, still manages to do some trail riding in Wales where she and her husband, Dick, run farmhouse holidays for trail riding motorcyclists.

I called on Jean one very wet and cold day last Christmas to find out more about her.

It was in 1960 that Jean first tasted 'the magic world of motor-cycles'; it came in the form of the realisation that a bike could not only be used on the road, as a means of transport but also had the ability to 'take to the hills' like a pony. She was watching the famous Scottish Six Days Trial. That was in May, in June Jean was mounted on her first bike, a little 150cc special trials BSA Bantam, in British racing green with alloy tank and mudguards. She became acquainted with the machine in a field and thus received her first dose of 'the drug'.

The days soon stretched to weeks and soon Jean was using her bike to travel to work. At that time she was a nurse in Kings Langley. The bike was not perfect, when you revved the engine too much all the lights blew! Six months later Jean took her test and happily threw away her 'L' plates. Dick was a keen trials rider and most Sundays found Dick riding and Jean following. Soon Jean started to ride in 'Closed to Club' events. In the first of these she won the Ladies Award.

In 1961 Jean acquired her first new machine, a Trials Tiger Cub, with rather questionable Lucas electrics called 'energy transfer'. As Jean says "I was the energy and I did the transferring." The bike never started on the kick start and she was soon an expert 'runner and bumper'. She rode the Cub to Scotland where she was to marshal in the Six Days. Jean describes it as 'a hike on a bike.' 1,400 miles in ten days, 'it was a terrific week'!

The bug had now bitten Jean hard. She turned her attentions to the MCC long distance trials. In 1972 she rode in her first London - Lands End and back on her little BSA Bantam. Her brakes failed going down Countisbury Hill, she panicked, kicked the bike into a lower gear and knocked all the teeth off the bottom gear. She recalls riding up Beggars Roost in the dark, 'a glow of lighted cigarettes either side of the track. It was eerie and exciting, the adrenaline started to flow'. She finished, got up all the hills, on some she footed, on some she stopped, but some she also cleaned.

In the same year she rode the Derbyshire, very much the same, but this time she gained a Third Class Award! Jean felt very proud. In the Exeter she and Dick rode a BMW with a sports Steib sidecar, they had a great deal of fun and would have achieved more but the gearing was too high for the chair. Nevertheless they managed a Third.

The following year Jean had another go at the Lands End, this time on her Tiger Cub with improved ignition. The night was wet and cold, a typical Easter. The first hill, raining and in the dark was Beggars Roost. The glow of cigarettes were still there. The flag dropped and she was off, bobbing up and down over rocks like huge

marbles. She hung on, her feet still on the foot rests. Then the lights had gone. She was clean. Her first hill in the dark and clean! The night drew on, hot coffee in some cafes, wet and sodden scarves, Mars bars in a wet Barbour pocket. Dense fog, sometimes riding two abreast peering into what seemed nothing. At last day break came. More hills and still Jean rode clean. At last came Blue Hills Mines. As Jean arrived at this hill she was becoming neurotic. The Easter holiday makers were out to enjoy the fun. It was Jean's turn, the flag dropped and she was away. First a wiggle around the bottom, then a stop, and finally the long spectacular climb winding high into the heavens near the edge of a cliff. Jean's great moment came when she passed the End Card. She was so elated she came out of the section on the back wheel. This was her first First Class Award.

Jean's next goal was the Welsh Three Days Trial, as it then was. The day before the trial found Dick on his ISDT type BMW and Jean on her Tiger Cub heading towards Llandrindod Wells. The following morning Jean found herself among many other Cubs and small machines commencing on their marathon. Off they went into the wild unknown hills with mysterious unpronounceable names, tramping on as hard as they could. Despite arriving late at many of the check points Jean finished and won a Bronze Award. She was utterly exhausted. For the prize giving the next evening Jean decided to dress up a bit, and put on some high-heeled shoes, but her leg muscles were so painful that she spent the evening in her stockings feet! Undaunted she rode in another two of these events and many more MCC classic trials.

Sadly Jean's trial riding career was not to continue. In 1966 the great blow came. She became ill with muscular dystrophy and ended up in the Royal Hospital for nervous diseases. Her physician was the famous Roger Bannister. The result of this illness was that Jean had to stop all forms of competition, but she was still able to ride a bike so long as she took life easily.

Jean's idea of an easy life is obviously rather different from most peoples. In the same year Dick finished preparing her a special bike, a Trigreeves. Building specials is not easy as Jean found while she impatiently awaited the arrival of the Trigreeves. True to fashion she was in British racing green, with alloy mudguards. But this time the power unit was a 500cc Triumph engine. Soon they were inseparable, where Jean went so did Trigreeves!

About the same time Dick had started riding in the International Six Days Trial, in 1966 in Sweden and 1967 in Poland. Jean was able to accompany him on both occasions. In 1967, after always riding both to and from events, they decided that to ride to Poland could be a bit risky, so they put the bikes into a Morris 1000 Pick-Up, the only place left for the spare wheel was on the bonnet. On their way through Czechoslovakia they met Lida, with whom Jean had corresponded for a number of years. It was a cold and wet night and after many complications

they arrived in the dark by the side of the Orlick Dam, this was preceded by a rather nerve-racking drive with Ludvic, Lida's brother. Later they learned that the car had had no brakes! They were welcomed into a warm log cabin in the centre of which was a large pot-bellied stove nearly dancing on the floor with the heat. The next morning they carried on to Poland, Dick to ride in the ISDT and Jean to be a tourist.

At the trial Jean found that she was the only British person on a bike who was not riding in the event! So she took to wandering about on her own. On Sunday while she was quietly pottering through the woods she became a trifle apprehensive when she saw a crowd of motorcyclists riding straight towards her. Suddenly they stopped and a voice from among them said "I am Peter, from Vienna, and Dick has asked me to look after you." From then on Jean was to meet Peter from Vienna at every ISDT.

To Jean all of these events seem long ago now. Since the accident she is no longer able to be so adventurous on two wheels, although she is still able to enjoy trail riding in the beautiful countryside around Llandrindod Wells, where she and Dick now live. She laughs to be reminded on the days when she couldn't even pronounce the name!

Jean remains lively and cheerful, come what may and all keen motorcyclists are always sure of a warm and friendly reception at her farm. I feel that if ever a member deserves to be voted Member of the Year Jean does, every year.

## **THERESA WALLACH (U.S.A. & BRITAIN)**

The following introduction to Theresa first appeared in the American Weekly on 30th October 1949.

"The sun-browned woman on a motorcycle waved down the cowboy who was riding fast in the opposite direction. 'I say there,' she called out as he pulled up his horse short in a cloud of dust. 'How far is it to the nearest town?'"

"He gazed at her in amazement. 'Holy mackerel, Ma'm,' he said. 'Are you alone, way out here in this desert?' She nodded laughing. 'But I'm alright, I've been all over the world alone — Africa, Europe and most of your United States.' 'Are you crazy, or rich?' He wanted to know. 'Maybe I'm crazy, but I'm not rich. I'm almost stone broke, but I'll pick up a bit of money some place, this is my transport.' She patted her bike. 'And I don't need much else.'"

"What Theresa Wallach didn't mention was that for such travel you need courage and ingenuity and a lively spirit of adventure. She has done what most of us only dream of doing — she's gone where and when she wanted to. A motorcycle champion, Miss Wallach has been travelling for years with all her worries left behind her and all her earthly

possessions boiled down to what she can carry on her trusty motorcycle. First she toured Europe. Then made the hazardous 10,000 mile trip from Algiers to Cape Town, South Africa. In recent weeks she has travelled more than 25,000 miles in the United States. Expenses are almost nil. She can go a long way on her motorcycle on a gallon of gas. She doesn't have to worry about hotel reservations or paying hotel bills. When she's tired, or sees an attractive spot, she pitches her tent and sets up house keeping for the night. Food is her greatest expense and when she runs low on money she stops and gets herself a job. Sometimes she picks fruit or works on a farm or in a garage, or gives lectures about her adventures on the road. She went to a motor and aircraft maintenance schools in London and is a licensed mechanic both in England and in the United States. She can always pick up a job as a mechanic and with a few dollars she takes off again."

All sounds wonderful doesn't it? I feel that Theresa needs no introduction at all, in many ways she is responsible for my sitting down at the typewriter now. For ages every time I opened a book or talked to anyone about women motorcyclists the name Theresa Wallach kept coming to me. I shall list a few of her incredible achievements here; awarded a Brooklands Gold Star, made two unaccompanied crossings of the Sahara Desert, rode alone across America, started her own Norton importing business in America, wrote a book about learning to ride, started her own riding school, appeared on television, was one of the first women despatch riders in the Second World War and to cap it all from 1962 to 1977 she was International Vice-Captain of WIMA.

On one occasion I was idly glancing through our local paper (the 'Kingsbury News') when my eye was caught by a headline which read 'Triumph for Theresa'. The article went on to say that the Wembley Historical Society was compiling a list of 'Wembley Worthies' and that Theresa would feature in the book as she was the last person to win a Brooklands Gold Star and after the War she assisted W.O. Bentley in designing and testing Aston Martin cars. I simply had to know more, so I wrote to the author of the story. In his reply I was able to learn a great deal more about this wonderful lady.

The writer in the paper (John Peppit) remembers Theresa quite clearly when in 1928 she gained a scholarship in engineering to the National Engineering College, now 'City University'. He continues thus:-

"My own recollections of Theresa are confined to a happy weekend on my cousin's farm, when I was about 10 years old. She taught me to drive a tractor, and took me hither and thither on the back of her bike. Most of the roads on the farm were untarred and full of flints, so she rode on the grass at the side. Father followed on his bike with a 'spare my child' expression on his face!

"Father had known Theresa for many years, before he met mother in fact, and he was most surprised to find her on one of mothers' family farms.

"Theresa was awfully good with machinery. Her cross country riding ability was high and she smithed out the bent frames, inseparable from such activity, herself."

I have also heard from other local sources that Theresa was capable of straightening a bent frame out on her knee! I doubt the truth of such a statement.

Theresa grew up in London. She used to watch the grown up girls crowd out of the factories and rush off to queue for the cinemas and dance halls and Theresa used to shudder at the sight. "That's not going to be the life for me," she said to herself, she also said it to her parents who thought she was a bit odd. To them the only way to live respectably was to stay at home, find a husband and settle down to a life of cooking and needlework. Theresa knew that she couldn't do this. She told everyone that she was going to travel - to see Africa and the Sahara Desert, Hollywood, the Grand Canyon, New York and Paris.

She started doing something about this aim first by sneaking out on her brother's pedal cycle and teaching herself to ride. Later she stood staring wide-eyed at motorcycles instead of at boys. She had to fight quite a bit at home to get her way. Soon her parents found out that she was actually riding. When she was seventeen they told her that unless she settled down she would end up as nobody's bride! An argument followed and Theresa left home in tears. She went to a friend's house where she found her friend equally upset. Some of her family had moved to Capetown, South Africa and she missed them very much. "Cheer-up," said Theresa. "Suppose we use my bike and go and see them." From this day onwards Theresa's address was just as likely to be Post Restante, Desert Edge Petrol Pump, Algiers or Albuquerque.

During the previous years Theresa had been studying engineering at the University of London and was an active member of a motorcycle club. She had competed in many types of sport, namely trials, scrambles and road racing. She felt she had the experience and confidence to look after a motorcycle in any circumstances.

Soon the girls were ready. They set off from Africa House in the Aldwych with about a thousand Londoners watching them! They crossed Europe in a very cold December, took a boat across the Mediterranean, arrived in Algiers and set off to cross the Sahara. They were to meet with natives who had never seen a motorcycle. As a discouragement to lions they carried a powerful flashlight and two businesslike revolvers. For almost a year they endured some exasperating experiences, such as 'running a big-end' in the desert. Running out of petrol in the jungle, and eating bread so hard they had to chip the loaf with a hammer and screwdriver! They soon forgot the unpleasantness of these times

the sights and splendours of Africa and Table Mountain which was their goal.

Although both girls missed their home and family nothing could deter Theresa from wanting to see more of the world. Unfortunately her ambitious intentions, as well as those of many others, took a setback at the outbreak of World War II. However, even Hitler didn't stop Theresa doing. She joined the Transport Corps as soon as the Women's Auxilliary Territorial service was mobilised. Thousands of miles of convoy work in air raids and black-outs meant special means of transport. Orders were released to issue Theresa with a motorcycle and she thus became the first woman despatch rider. For the first time women motorcycle troops were able to compete against their army regiments in motorcycle competitions. Theresa spent seven years in active service using the War.

Towards the end of the War the Transport Corps was absorbed into base workshops. Two years before she was demobilised Theresa was transferred to a unit of the Royal Electrical and Technical Engineers. She was very disappointed that women did not rally to the workshops quicker. Here Theresa claimed another first. She was the first woman to pass the mechanics fitters exam, for this she was made the A.T.S. 'trial horse'.

For Theresa the return to 'Civvy Street' simply meant transfer to a white ration book and a controlled labour. In under a year she was on her move again. She wanted to see America, landing in New York with a new motorcycle she wasn't too bothered with reservations, finances, luggage or any of the other things most travellers are to concern themselves with. Equipped with a sleeping bag and a pair of saddle-bags, which seemed more full of spanners and maps than clothes, she managed some interesting tours. Theresa stayed in America for two and a half years, in that time she covered 32,000 miles and did one time or another had 18 jobs!

At the end of her tours Theresa's bike was put on display on the Norton stand at a motorcycle show in New York and it was there that Louise Herbyn met her and introduced her to WIMA, (after this Theresa returned to England, rode her 'jammy' Norton to the factory in Birmingham and was presented with a new machine by the company).

Theresa, however, did not stay in England long. In less than a year she returned to America, his time to start up a motorcycle business. After the War years export was vital to British industry and their bikes were in great demand in the States but few people knew very much about them. So Theresa dealt especially in British bikes, mainly Norton and Triumph. At this time she was the only woman to own and run her own motorcycle business. Her shop not only sold, serviced and repaired bikes, Theresa also decided to start giving riding lessons as well. The business thrived for many years but finally started to decline in the 1970's with the influx of Japanese machines on to the American market. So in 1973 Theresa packed up the shop in Chicago and


moved to Phoenix, Arizona where she started her own motorcycle riding school.

Teaching riding was not a new venture for Theresa, she was already something of an expert. In 1970 she published a book 'Easy Motorcycle Riding' and in the following year she made several television appearances on the 'Gary Moore Show' in which she talked about the need for young riders to take a course of proper instruction two wheels. The book is a very comprehensive introduction to riding and is especially to be praised as most of the illustrations in it show women riders, which is rather unusual. Her book has been a great success and is now reprinted for the fourth time. When Theresa's Riding Academy opened nothing like it had been seen before in the States. Students come from all over the country. The students' riding record is Theresa's gratification, many of them write to tell of their 5 figure mileage records, and still no problems. They are the ones who prove her work.

Before closing this piece on Theresa I want to repeat the very well known story of how she achieved her Brooklands Gold Star in 1939. (For the unenlightened let me first explain what this is. A Gold Star was awarded to any rider who managed to lap the Brooklands track at over 100mph). In his biography Francis Beart, the ace Norton tuner, recalls how one day Theresa walked into his workshop at Brooklands and asked if she could borrow his 348cc International Norton for the next weekend's British Motorcycle Racing Club (BEMSEE) meeting. Francis told her it would cost a fiver! She hadn't one, but returned later, having borrowed the money. When the day came it was pouring with rain but her lap was timed at 101.64mph! This greatly annoyed Johnny Lockett (Beart's top rider) who had never managed to get the machine into a three figure lap! Theresa's infant was one of the last Gold Stars to be awarded before Brooklands was closed down by the War. Around this time Theresa was a regular attendee at Brooklands along with her friends in the London Ladies Motorcycle Club in which she was a keen and active member.

Today Theresa is fully occupied with her riding school and has had to drop the position of WIMA's International Vice Captain, a post which Louise has yet to fill. However Theresa has by no means hung up her helmet she still makes occasional tours on her Honda 500/4 or uses one of her 100cc Kawasaki 'trainer' bikes for local trips. She lives in beautiful Arizona, on the doorstep of the Grand Canyon. She tells me the only way to penetrate into the ramparts of the Grand Canyon is by mule! So one fine day Theresa hired such a beast, called 'Daisy' and rode the vertical mile down a 3 foot ledge to the Colorado river! At the moment (when not working in her riding school) Theresa is writing a book about her many adventures. Hurry up Theresa we can't wait.

6735 North Black Canyon Hwy. • Phoenix, Arizona 85015  
 (602) 242-6347



**THERESA WALLACH**  
 Author of "EASY MOTORCYCLE RIDING"  
 President

**EASY MOTORCYCLE  
 RIDING SCHOOLS, Inc.**

## CELIA WALTON

Celia joined WIMA in 1974, sadly she only remained a member for three years but I still feel that she should be included in this section as she was then, and is still, such a keen and active motorcyclist. I also hoped that perhaps a mention in here would persuade Celia to rejoin. Celia's main interest in this field is as the driver of a vintage racing outfit in both road races and grass track racing. She has also taken part in trials and long distance club trials as both a rider and a pillion passenger. She is also active in the organisation side of competitions. Every year she and her husband act as officials and route markers in the Welsh Two Day Trial and she is on the committee of the Oxford Section of the Vintage Motor Cycle Club. In 1979, because she was unable to take part, Celia acted as assistant secretary for the Banbury Run.

Celia blames her husband, Simon, for introducing her to motorcycling. Very early in their relationship Simon gave Celia to understand that he was not giving up riding or Vintage racing on her account. Meekly Celia gave in. Soon she was riding in the sidecar of a trials outfit in long distance trials and on holidays. This state of affairs lasted about eighteen months until Celia put her foot down and demanded that Simon teach her how to ride. Before her riding lessons started Simon very patiently explained to her how an engine worked, how to start it and what the advance/retard lever was all about etc. From this you will gather that Celia's first bike was not new. It was a 1951 Norton 500T trials with sidecar. To aid stability they put a hundred-weight of cast iron in the chair and Celia set off. Four months later she passed her test, still with the cast iron in the sidecar.

Celia was concerned that Vintage road racing and grass track were rather low on outfits so she decided to enter just to fill out the class. Unfortunately an operation early in the year prevented her starting at the beginning of the season and it was not until July 1974 that she rode in her first grass track race. Much to her astonishment she came second in the handicap! Only one year after passing her test. She enjoyed the experience enormously and ever since then grass track has been her first love. But as there are only a limited number of events it seemed silly not to have a go at road racing too.

Early in 1975 Celia borrowed a pre-war 500cc Triumph and sidecar from Mike and Barbara Coombes and entered her first Vintage road race. Her passenger was Roger Parker, who had done some passengering in modern racing outfits and even has a couple of T.T. Replicas at home. An ideal passenger to start out with. In practice he was able to give Celia a great deal of advice. Her debut on tarmac did not go as well as on the grass. They had a 'little bother' with the gearbox. Roger was fascinated by the gearbox moving back and forth and at one point they came flying up to a hairpin in top! Celia changed down to third, nothing, down to second, still nothing and finally into bottom. Here she found something. They zigzagged widely in and out of the bend, Roger in tears of laughter at her frightened antics. Luckily nothing else was in the way and she returned to the paddock rather chastened.

Simon was also racing a Vintage outfit and soon after this they found that carting two machines around the country with a Morris van and trailer was too much, so Simon retired for a while, at least from road racing. For most of her racing Celia uses a 1935 Ariel, she merely changes the tyres for grass track events. But one day she had a special treat and rode Simon's special grass track outfit. In that year she was runner up in the Vintage Motorcycle Club Championships.

When not taking part in competitions Celia also enjoys foreign touring. In 1974 she and Simon had a rather memorable trip to Italy to watch the International Six Days Trial. Their transport was a 1966 Triumph/BSA trials outfit. Two hours off the boat they were suddenly without compression! Luckily a French rider stopped and was able to take Celia to a Triumph dealer who had the necessary spares! He came and collected the bike, gave it a top-and-overhaul and found the couple somewhere to stay for the night. Celia says she will never forget crossing the Alps in a trials outfit. In Italy they had a great time. The bike attracted a great deal of attention, even the police waved them through road junctions whenever they saw them. The trip was made easier by the fact that they could both drive. This meant that they could take it in turns to have a doze in the chair.

Back in England racing continued, Celia still used her Ariel. By now there were three lady sidecar drivers racing in the Vintage Club and two lady passengers. By 1977 Celia felt that she was really starting to ride well. Then one June afternoon at Cadwell Park she went fast around Park

Corner only to find another outfit sideways across the track. She says she doesn't remember a thing about the accident which followed as the outfit landed on her head. Her passenger, Peter Alcock, suddenly found he could fly. This incident put Celia in hospital for a while. But she was back on the track in 1978.

The Ariel, though not much damaged, was retired in favour of a 1932 Rudge which Celia had had for a couple of years. Both machines needed about the same amount of work doing on them but they thought that the Rudge would be quicker as it runs on methanol. Alas she had a lot of trouble with the Rudge but managed one or two really good races.

Celia's riding is not confined to racing she has also taken part in several long distance trials. In 1976 she rode her 1954 500cc Gold Star Scrambler in the Edinburgh Trial. This trial starts at Coventry and ends at Buxton. In 1979 she intended to enter the Exeter Trial with Barbara Coombes and Merrill Bolton. They had formed a team and called themselves 'Roses Among Thorns'. Sadly the event was 'snowed off'. The team was also entered for the Lands End Trial but by then the doctors had advised Celia that off road riding was out, so she had to content herself with watching the other two in action.

Although happiest in the driver's seat, Celia has done her share of passengering too. In 1978 she and Mike Coombes decided to have a go at the Welsh Two Day Trial. Celia and Simon had been helpers at this event for a number of years and Celia had long been yearning to have a go. Unfortunately Simon's back was not strong enough so Celia tried to convert Mike to the idea.

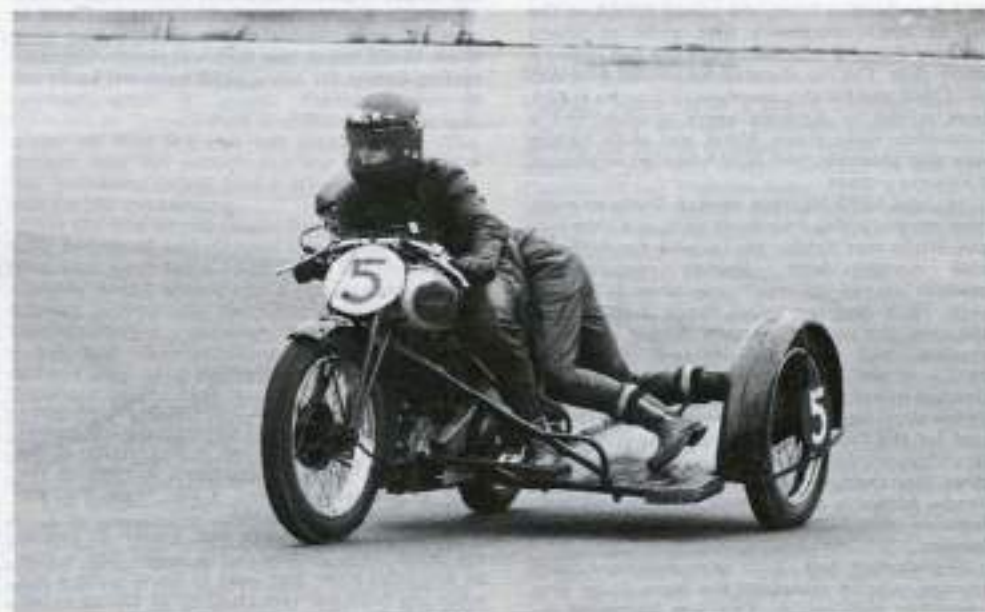
They acquired a 400cc Kawasaki Moto Cross machine with a Wasp sidecar. It was so light that Celia and Mike could easily pick it up between them. As a tryout they entered an enduro event near Ludlow, the Burrington Grovel. It was very tough, and narrow for chairs but slowly they got the knack of it and were astonished to find they had won the under 650cc Sidecar class! I wish I could report the same about the Welsh. Sadly they did not manage to finish. They had to retire late on the second day with a cracked clutch casing. Celia was also rather battered and bruised as the chair had overturned at speed.

Celia feels that this sort of event is really not for her as her eyes are very weak and wearing glasses or contact lenses is extremely uncomfortable in pouring rain and constant mud.

Celia is now in temporary retirement as in 1979 she decided to become a mother and the doctors advised her to give up racing for a while. She still rides a bike on the road though and caused a few eyebrows to be raised when she turned up at the ante-natal clinic on her 500 Gold Star Scrambler! The Rudge, however, is still working hard as Simon has decided to come out of retirement to keep Celia's passenger, now Peter John, fit and happy.

Still, as Celia says, there will be other years. She hopes to be back racing again in 1980 as well as entering some more long distance events. We all hope so too Celia.

*Celia Walton, Passenger Peter John 1935 500 Ariel Red Hunter Mallory Park (The Hairpin) 1977.*



## SHEILA WHITTINGHAM

To most of you Sheila will need no introduction as she was once Captain of the British Division from March 1973 to December 1975. During those few years she served the Association well, in fact the membership thought so much of her that in 1976 she was voted Member of The Year for all her hard work and effort on the Club's behalf.

Sheila is a keen rally goer, likes continental touring, has entered some trials and hill climbs as both passenger and rider, but at the moment her main love is trail riding.

For Sheila motorcycling started when she was a baby bundled up in a blanket in her Father's sidecar. She was carried off to local scrambles with her long suffering mother. When she was about five years old the family regularly attended the Belle Vue Speedway on Saturday nights and scrambles etc. on Sunday. This was the pattern for many years.

When she was eleven her Father started teaching in the newly formed Rochdale Training Scheme and he taught Sheila to ride on a Bantam belonging to the Scheme. His idea was to give the new trainees confidence by showing them that even a child could learn to ride! It followed that when Sheila was sixteen she took a course on the Training Scheme and got her first road bike. This was a plunger Bantam and cost the vast sum of £2.10s.

One morning during 1967 a workmate brought Sheila a copy of 'She' magazine containing a letter from, the then Captain, Maureen Willis. Sheila had never before heard of WIMA and was so impressed with the letter that she immediately wrote off to Maureen for a membership form, she joined WIMA at the end of 1967. Maureen's first letter to Sheila was very friendly and Sheila felt she had joined a happy club. The membership fee at that time was 14/- (70p) and for this members received a WIMA News edited in America every quarter, and a bi-monthly news sheet. Metal and cloth badges were also available, and WIMA headed notepaper at a penny a sheet.

In June 1970 Maureen invited Sheila to meet some motorcycling friends of hers, and that was how Sheila met Eddie. He became her husband some months later. Sheila's motorcycling activities carried on much the same as before.

In 1973 Maureen asked Sheila if she would take over the post of Captain. Sheila was both surprised and flattered. Maureen had been Captain of the Division for over nine years and latterly had not been in good health. She felt that someone younger with different ideas might be good for the Association. At this time WIMA had only fifty members and no Committee, so Sheila rather hesitatingly agreed to give it a try with Brenda Alderson as Assistant Captain and U.S. Magazine distributor, as she had been under Maureen.

Sheila's first task, with encouragement from Maureen, was to transform the News Sheet into a monthly publication. This was becoming in-

creasingly necessary as the American News wasn't coming through so regularly at this time. Eddie's father found an old spirit duplicator at work and so the WIMA News was born. At that time the Captain did everything, badges, membership, rallies, magazine, the lot. While there were only fifty members this was fine. But things did not stay that way for long. 'Bike' magazine published a publicity article on WIMA and as a result of this Sheila received over a hundred letters in one week! and ended up with 250 members. Many of these, however, did not rejoin.

Another aspect of the job soon became clear to Sheila. As well as being Captain she had to be a Marjorie Proops as well! She well remembers a distraught mum ringing her because her daughter had left home. Did Sheila know where she was? Later an equally distraught husband crying down the telephone because his wife had left him. Sheila says she'll never forget these episodes.

In 1975 it became apparent to Sheila that she could no longer continue as Captain. Eddie had started his own business restoring Vintage bikes and Sheila had to contend with the paper work for this, running WIMA and looking after an increasingly lively toddler. Clearly something had to go. So the position of Captain went to Brenda who carried on bravely for three months. The day was finally saved by Ann Gale who took over, with Jean Cox acting as Badge Secretary. Sheila continued to print the monthly News-letter. From this WIMA rapidly developed in to the thriving Association that it is today.

In the sixteen years that Sheila has been riding she's had various interests. Touring, rallies, at home and abroad, passengering in a trials outfit, hill climbs and what Sheila describes as an on/off relationship with trials. Sheila's son, Doug, is now six years old and enjoys riding pillion with Mum. Sheila hopes that they will remain a motorcycling family for many years to come. So do we all.

## ROSEMARY WILKINSON

Rosemary is no longer a member of WIMA and I have been unable to find out why she left us and have decided to include her in this section as she has done so much to represent women in the field of motorcycle sport. I also hope that she might want to rejoin WIMA.

Rosemary is probably best known to you as the driver of a Vintage racing outfit. She is also an everyday rider and used to cause quite a stir when she took her two children to school in her 1000cc Brough Superior sidecar outfit!

Rosemary started riding when she got married: her husband, Pete, had several bikes and taught her to ride. She passed her test on a Norton with a sidecar and since then she has always preferred outfits. In the eighteen years she's been riding she has used her machines for shopping, travelling to work and for holidays. For the latter she usually drives the outfit with the luggage and at least one of her children. Pete accompanies them on a solo with the other child. Both children are girls and are keen passengers. Rosemary's other machines have included a 1939 500cc BSA, 1946 600cc Norton, 1952 Vincent, 1966 Triumph, 1966 Velocette and, her only new machine, a Ural 650cc.

Her favourite bike is the 1935 Brough Superior on which she had done thousands of miles both on and off the track. It has plenty of power at all times, is very reliable, easy to drive and, at 50mpg, economical to run. The only problem that Rosemary admits to is the brakes! They don't seem to be adequate for the power. But, as she says, this makes for better driving skill as one has to think further ahead! Rather you than me Rosemary!

Rosemary was also introduced to racing by her husband. Pete had been racing for some time and they needed a van to carry his outfit to the courses. So he sold Rosemary's Ural and bought her a van, which she had to learn to drive. Having nothing to ride Rosemary got rather bored and thought she'd like to have a go on the track herself. The cheapest way to do this was to use the Brough. They borrowed a racing platform from Titch Allen (Founder of the Vintage Motor Cycle Club), and she was ready.

Rosemary's passenger for that season was an experienced driver who was having a year's rest and he was able to help and advise Rosemary a great deal. Rosemary's first race was at Mallory Park and all went fairly well until she broke a valve and the poor Brough did three laps on one cylinder until it seized. Further meetings followed at Cadwell Park and Rosemary was surprised to find she was not finishing last. The Brough was fast enough but the brakes were a real problem, fading badly after two laps and making life too exciting.

At the end of the season Rosemary had a real taste for racing and decided she wanted a better bike. Pete built her a 1939 500cc Velocette with a highly tuned engine and a proper light weight sidecar, exactly like his own. Next she had to look around for a passenger as the previous one, Roger, had taken to riding again. This vacancy was not easy to fill and Rosemary was in despair. Then she heard that Wendy Machin, the girl friend of a Vintage racer was keen to have a go at passengering, but she had only ever ridden as a pillion on a solo motorcycle. The two girls met, got on well together and decided to team up.

The season started with a practice at Silverstone in bitter cold and all sorts of advice and insults were offered by the others in the Vintage sidecar gang. Wendy took to sidecars straight away and they managed to pass a 1939 BMW outfit, driven by an experienced rider, he was not

amused! Racing started again at Mallory and the girls finished 11th in both races. Various events followed, mainly at Cadwell, the best they managed was fourth place. All this time Pete was blowing up engines and gearboxes and most of the time Rosemary was beating him.

Rosemary too had her share of mishaps. At one Vintage Club meeting at Cadwell the weather was very wet and conditions very slippery. For once Pete was winning and Rosemary was in fourth place, with a good chance of being third. She tried to outbrake a Morgan three wheeler into the hairpin — disaster. The bike aquaplaned and they went straight into a ditch! Damage included a broken wrist, ribs and a cut chin for Rosemary, bruising for Wendy and broken forks on the bike. The two girls healed well, but the forks were impossible to replace and they had to use some from a 1925 Brough.

Many meetings were missed while they healed, but eventually they were fit for Brands Hatch. Rosemary was unable to go very fast as her wrist was still aching but she enjoyed the race. Again beating Pete, he blew up again! Cadwell Park finished the season. Again the girls had a steady ride and collected 11th and 12th place on Saturday and 4th and 5th on Sunday.

Rosemary continues to enjoy her racing and keeps fit in the Winter by playing squash. The Brough is still on the road and is used for touring and holidays.

## MAUREEN WILLIS

Maureen needs rather a special mention here as she is really the lady who was responsible for getting the British Division of WIMA on its feet. Many of you will know Maureen as she was Captain of our Division from April 1st 1965 to March 1973. She is still a keen and active member of the Association, her bike 'Ladybird' (a beautifully disguised 400/4 Honda) is a familiar sight on the WIMA Rally field.

Maureen's interest in motorcycles started many moons ago when the boy next door purchased a 1931 KTT Velocette. It was love at first sight. The bike, not the boy. Maureen spent much of her free time hanging around his garage where the boy was often busy taking the machine apart or putting it back together again. Soon Maureen was handing spanners to him and learning a little about how a motorcycle worked. Later when it was on the road she was allowed to ride pillion. Soon she found herself going around with a group of riders.

Her first attempts at riding came as a surprise to everyone. One day, when she and her friends were out in the country, the boys made the mistake of leaving Maureen to 'guard' the bikes.

A 250cc BSA took her fancy, she looked at it, next she sat on it. In only a matter of minutes she had started it, put it in gear and let out the clutch. She had no idea how to stop the beast so she just chugged along slowly, very pleased with herself. It wasn't long before the boys returned and roared after her. They pulled alongside her and told her how to stop the bike. Finally she was dragged off it by the rather furious owner. However this incident made the boys change their attitude towards Maureen and before long she was allowed to ride the BSA along quiet country roads. After this her family left the area and Maureen had no more contact with motor-cycles.

Years later, after she was married, she and her husband, Ron, who had owned bikes before, decided to go back to two wheels. They bought a Triumph Tiger Cub. This was the start of many happy motorcycling years. Maureen learnt to ride, properly this time, on an R.A.C./A.C.U. course. After this she passed her test easily.

Her first bike was a BSA Bantam. Somehow Maureen never really got on with that bike. She feels that she never really liked two-strokes. She then got a Triumph Tiger Cub. On this bike she covered many happy miles attending the first Dragon Rally and going on camping holidays. Then Ron decided to trade the Cub in for a Norton Dominator and Maureen took on his Triumph 21, called Heather. It was on this bike that Maureen had some brushes with The Law. On the first occasion a policeman stopped her and asked her why she didn't settle down and raise a family like 'normal' women! On the second occasion Maureen was astounded when the officer said to her, "I just wanted to tell you what a good rider you are, better than most of the local lads." From that day to this Maureen has taken a keen interest in road safety and has been most successful in Road Safety Rallies.

It was after the acquisition of the Triumph that Maureen first heard of WIMA. Female motorcyclists were unusual around 1960 and Maureen found her name appearing in several papers. This produced a letter from Brenda Alderson telling her about the Association. Maureen joined and started writing to both Brenda and Louise. Not long after she was asked to become Captain of the British Division. Her first task was to get the books and funds from the previous Captain. This was no easy task. In fact Maureen had to resort to solicitors' letters before the information arrived.

Maureen realised that none of the members would be very keen to keep up membership, having paid their money and heard nothing. So the first thing she did was to write individually to all the names in the book and offer them each a free membership for one year. A few years later she got hold of a spirit duplicator and produced a small newsletter each month, adding a personal note to each member before she sent them off. One October she took over her parents' small guest house and organised her first WIMA meeting. About twelve members and friends turned up. This led to the Annual WIMA Rally.

Gradually more members joined and started to pay fees. In this way WIMA started to become well known and to grow.

From Maureen's point of view running WIMA became increasingly difficult.

Maureen also made great efforts to keep WIMA International, she corresponds with German Captain Ellen Pfeiffer and Swedish Captain Britt-Inger Petersen and became a regular attendee at the Continental Division Rallies. About this time Maureen slipped a disc and found the Triumph rather a handful. She needed a machine with an electric start so bought a 450cc Honda Dragon Mark I. This she called 'Puff' (the magic dragon). On Puff she toured much of this country and Europe, attending many rallies abroad including the Lion, Chamois, and the Shamrock in Ireland. One year, in an old sidecar outfit with Ron, she managed to attend a very cold snowy Elephant Rally in Germany.

Maureen's health declined and with WIMA's membership growing she was finding it increasingly hard to cope with running the Association. The job was passed on to Ann Gale, under whose leadership WIMA has gone to even greater strength.

Maureen has by no means lost touch with the Association. She remains a keen and active member. She usually organises at least one event a year and at the A.G.M. in 1978 found herself elected onto the Committee as Assistant Captain.

Thank you Maureen for putting WIMA on the map in England. We hope you have many more happy years with us.

## TRISHA YEAGER (U.S.A.)

Those of you who regularly read 'Motorcycle Weekly' will have heard of Trisha. Her claim to motorcycling fame came through writing a book aimed at women motorcyclists and having the unusual title "How To Look Sexy With Bugs In Your Teeth. (A Motorcycling Manual for Women)". The book contains much useful information on such topics as choosing your first bike, motorcycle clothing, hints and tips for off road riding and even an account of desert racing, a sport in which Trisha has taken part.

Trisha is a member of the American Division of WIMA, but not content with this she decided to form her own women's motorcycle club, IAWIM, the International Association of Women In Motorcycling. All the very best of luck Trisha.

## ELAINE YOUNG (ISLE OF MAN)

Elaine's name probably rings a bell as being the organiser of WIMA meetings in the Isle of Man during T.T. week. My attention was drawn to Elaine when I read that she was voted 'Member of the Year' in 1976. This title was awarded to Elaine for the work she had done for WIMA in the Island. For many years she was the Island's only member, but eventually she managed to build up a small group of enthusiasts who hold regular meetings apart from the annual gatherings at T.T. Week.

Elaine learnt to ride a motorcycle when she was sixteen, on her birthday in fact, on an Alpine Puch Scooter. Later, in the same year, she was given a 125cc Tandon by her boyfriend, who later became her husband. Soon Elaine became an active member of the Vintage Motor Cycle Club and wanted to be able to compete in events with them so when she was seventeen she bought a 1936 350cc Mac Velocette. She became very attached to this machine and when she finally had to part with it she replaced it with another, exactly the same model, but in much better condition. On this machine she won a fuel consumption test by achieving 83.7 miles per gallon! Her interest in Vintage bikes continued and the Velo was later sold to buy a 1933 500cc Sunbeam. This was the 'Lion' model with hand gear change. Although Elaine had great fun with the bike she felt she needed something more comfortable that would accommodate her long legs better, on the Sunbeam she always felt that her knees were touching the ground! So the Sunbeam went and a 350cc BSA joined the household. Elaine's confidence on this bike was so great that she took to riding it on the rough!

A few years ago (in 1976) Elaine developed the urge to own a modern motorcycle and decided on a Triumph. To get the bike of her dreams she sold her 1938 Austin 7, a lovely model with a sunshine roof, and put the money towards a brand new 750cc Triumph Bonneville. This beast is still her pride and joy.

Elaine cannot remember when she first joined WIMA, only that she has been a member for 'a number of years'. She was introduced to the Association by Rosemary Wilkinson and Christine Gagg who were at the Vintage Motor Cycle Club's Rally one T.T. Week when Elaine was competing on her Velocette.

Through WIMA Elaine has made many friends both on the Island, on the mainland and on the Continent, although she is only able to meet most of them once a year she is able to keep in touch with all the activities through the Newsletter.



The Isle of Man

**MOTORCYCLIST'S MECCA**