

## PEMBREY, PAIN AND PLEASURE

(A letter from John Lee to the Open Mega)

What is it about Pembrey? Now, don't get me wrong. I love the place. I rode in my first CRMC parade and my first race there. I enjoy most of the two hundred-mile journey to get there and it is an interesting and rewarding circuit to ride on. I even like the approach road, now, and the people who run it are friendly and helpful but I can't help wondering if I have offended Idris the dragon or failed to propitiate some ancient and vengeful Celtic deity.

It seems that every time I visit the place I end up breaking something, either a part of the bicycle or a part of me. My first attempt to parade the Ducati almost ended before it began. I thought that I had charged up both batteries before I set out. My recalcitrant battery charger obviously knew otherwise. However, "the friendly club" proved itself to be so right from the start and thanks to the generosity of Ross Dyson I managed to get out there for my first parade. Even that turned out to be quicker than I'd expected (I'd been away a long time).

Next year's effort on the Tiger Cub involved a valve gear disaster and this time it was Richard Thirkell and family who kept me supplied with cups of tea and huge slices of cake as I set about replacing push-rods and rockers ready for Sunday. The following year saw my first ever race. This time that little god must have set his sights on someone else. I came away with a soaking and a third place but only because everyone else seemed to have either slid off or spluttered to a halt in the downpour, although I didn't get off scot-free. The charging circuit had gone down on my towing vehicle.

Once again the paddock rallied round and after a quick boost charge and a tow start I drove the full two hundred miles without daring to stop the engine once. I did stall it while trying to reverse onto the drive though and had to get my sons out of bed to help push. Later in the year I returned to Pembrey to play with the New Era Club. During practice the rider of a modern machine gave me a little brake test at Hatchett's Hairpin.

Discs versus my little drum. No contest! All I could do was sit and watch the accident happen. Result, one broken collar bone. Serves me right for pushing my luck, going to Pembrey twice in one year! Luckily for me Richard Grinley, who happens to be a friend of my son's friend, had just clinched the 250 championship and was more than willing to give me a lift home. The circuit staff were brilliant, collecting me from hospital in Swansea and putting 'bike, trailer and car into storage. The accident happened on September the fourteenth and because of complications with the collarbone I didn't manage to collect the car until Christmas Eve. When I arrived the car was outside the workshop, battery charged and engine running. Thanks once again chaps.

The collar bone injury meant that the shed didn't get re-roofed and consequently the Cub missed out on its promised winter rebuild. "Oh it'll be alright for a couple of meetings more." Does that sound familiar? My first meeting of the following season was, you've guessed it, Pembrey. Two laps into our first race and the little Triumph seemed to be rattling even more than Cubs usually do. Time for a visit to that nice Martyn Adams for a new big end bearing and rod kit.

This year I decided to give my little Suzuki a few outings. By the second race at Pembrey I was really having fun. What I didn't find out until the fairies opened a mining company in the piston crown was that the

ignition had advanced itself on one side. End of fun for the week end. Or so I thought.

Seven-o'clock on Sunday morning saw Steve Bedford and Cliff Figes Putting Cliff's spare Minarelli engine into Steve's spare Minarelli rolling chassis and suddenly I had "honorary one day membership" of the Racing Fifty Enthusiasts Club. Having been told off in the warm up area for not revving it enough I went out for Sunday practice.

I've never had a bike instill so much confidence in such a short time. It felt as though I could trust it to do anything I asked of it. If you are less than twenty stones and you've not raced a fifty, have a go. It is such FUN. Sunday afternoon's race involved a four lap tussle with Steve Nugent, also mounted on a Minarelli. What if we finished 23rd. and 24th. overall, it was the most enjoyable day's racing I've ever had, even though my ears didn't stop ringing until mid-day on Monday!

And Pembrey? Oh yes. That's the place where you find out who your friends are.