

## *Old Codgers Ramblings*

**By Ian Ager**

Whilst watching the 125cc G P from Italy on British Euro sport television a couple of months ago, the commentator remarked as the winner, second and third place men parked there bikes in "parc ferma" that they were off to be weighed before going onto the rostrum for the prize giving. He stated that the machine and rider must weigh a minimum of 147 kg to comply with the regulations. On saying that it reminded me of an incident that took place many years ago.

Towards the end of the race season in 1962 there was a meeting at the Snetterton circuit organised by BMCRC with a class for 50cc's.

To share the transport costs (with petrol at 5/- 25p a gallon) we all agreed to go up in my 15 cwt Ford Thames van, that was Ray "jasper" Smith, Bill Ivy, Brian Cockell and yours truly. Just getting 4 bikes, tool boxes, petrol cans and two bodies into the back of the van was an exercise in its self, but after much heaving and shoving the back doors slammed closed. (the likes of Steve Bedford, Ron Ponti and John "Jeep" Elton Payne know what I mean after seeing them unload Steve's Transit van when we arrived in the Isle of Man for the 2000 T.T. Parade,)

We set off in the early hours of Sunday morning from Bexley Heath in Kent, going though the old Blackwell tunnel, weaving our way though North London at a leisurely pace and up on to the A11 heading towards Norfolk.. These were the pre motorway days, only the M1 had been built by then and that only went as far as Rugby, and it was a case of filling the vans petrol tank to the brim at the start of the trip as "all night "petrol stations were to be a thing of the future in those days.

The journey took about four hours and we arrived about five in the morning, just long enough to catch a few hours sleep before being awoken by the sound of un-silenced motorcycles being started up in the paddock.

On goes the Primus stove for a brew up of nice hot tea, and a couple of pieces of charcoal black toast cooked over the open flame of the Primus. It was during this breakfast that Bill told us this little story.

For those of you who ever had the pleasure of knowing "Little Bill Ivy" would know of his ability of being the greatest of practical jokers, and storyteller whilst keeping a straight face, leaving you not knowing if you had been taken for a ride or had been told the truth.

Bill was talking about his trip over to the island for the 50cc T.T. and said when he went with the bike for scrutineering he was asked to jump on the weighing scales to be weighed and then told that he was under the official weight limit for the class and would have to carry some ballast to make up the weight. So of he trots to the local builders merchant and buys some lead sheet that they use for flashing on house roofs. this was then cut to shape and fitted as insoles in his boots, and at the second attempt passed scrutineering.

This story I have lived with for the last 40 years not knowing if there was a grain of truth in it, or was it just another one of "Bills" famous stories.

With a chance meeting with Mick Duckworth of Classic Bike fame, I retold the story of little Bill and his lead lined boots. To my amazement he told me the complete story of the weight limits imposed to all the 5 classes in the T.T.

In the late 1950's Geoff Duke had been on a visit to Japan as an ambassador for motorcycling, whilst there he had been some motor cycle races and noticed how small and light in weight the riders were.

On his return Geoff relayed his concern to the A.C.U. saying if they ever come over Europe to race because of there light weight they would win everything in sight and the 10/11 stone and heavier Europeans would not get a look in. With that, in association with the F.I.M. the A.C.U. formulated a minimum weight limit for each class. And this was even before the land of the rising sun's motorcycle industries made there presents felt on the island and other G.P. Events.

So there after all that time I now know that for once "Little Bill" was not just spinning us a line, but for a one off occasion, he was telling the truth and the only unanswered question is now how much did Bill weigh? In the spring of 1988 the "Classic Racer" magazine gave his weight as barely nine stone but I would think he was a few pounds under that weight.