

## WEEK 2

### 28-05-07 ~ RE-ENACTMENT OF THE 1907 TT:

The start of my Week Two is totally devoted to the 'Re-enactment of the 1907 TT', I understand one Geoff Duke will be officiating if not 'competing', this event actually occurring on the original 'quite short' St Johns TT Course, not the Mountain Course of today. Hope to meet one Geoff Duke, maybe.... Then again rain is a possibility!!



I consumed another famous breakfast, and I was off to St. Johns, programmes indicated a 10am start and I left Ballasalla at nominally 8.30am following my Irish friend. Crikey, after some miles I noticed a lot of motorcycles, yep, I was somewhat latish. Anyhow I was directed to a temporary Football Oval for off street parking and walked some 100 metres (oops metric), to a great possie in the crowd, directly opposite the start line, for the day this was created by closing the road and laying out a the race start line as a white line of Washing Machine powder, strange but effective.

Estimates had it that 5000+ people had turned up, lots of other people turned up, lets see. Geoff Duke, (Multi World Champion and TT Hero and maker of snazzy DVD's) and his very supportive Wife, Sammy Miller, (World Trials Champ and a Legend) and surprise, one John McGuinness, (current IOM TT Record Holder and winner of three TT's last year, and considered the man to beat this year).

A great effort was put in with a Town Crier, heaps of invited guests and officials in period costume and the Motorcycles were generally well presented with most Riders, male and female, dressed in appropriate 'race outfits' for the era, 1907ish...



The Event went off reasonably smoothly with each pair of Racers flagged off by Geoff Duke and 'sounded off' by the Town Crier's trumpet, bloody hell, keep in mind there were some sixtyish competitors...

I really had no idea about Geoff Duke, I thought he was participating, I was not aware of his now current condition which to say the least is poor, he certainly did not ride and had considerable trouble climbing the three odd steps onto a mini rostrum, but he did it and flagged off all competitors.

It is worth noting here that his wife assisted him greatly getting to the rostrum and a 'big guy' I believe from the crowd rounded up two plastic seats for them whilst early delays were sorted out, top marks. Some ACU types appeared unaware of Duke's frailty, offering no assistance.

All this was happening on the other side of the 'track' from me, so I couldn't get involved!!



**John McGuinness, with Geoff Duke and his very supportive Wife**

The chequered flag duties were performed by John McGuinness mostly with Geoff Duke clapping competitors home, great stuff. There was a Wall Plaque unveiled by Duke and some amount of Vintage Vehicles displayed and a mini Brass Band played, I took lots of photos and left before the masses...

## 29-05-07 ~ Laxey and that 'WHEEL':

Whilst TT Practice is on, it starts at 6pm nominally!, the IOM has extended daylight, twilight if you will, till nominally 9pm in summer, at least someone told me this is summer here, hmmm... I have decided to use my '4 Site Ticket', and will check out the Laxey Wheel and Laxey generally.



### *The Laxey Wheel:*

Once again fuelled up by the beautiful breakfast I headed off for Laxey, actually I became quite adept at IOM navigation, whizzing into Douglas up past the Electric Railway Terminus and on to Laxey, a very enjoyable morning drive, even during the TT fortnight.

I crossed the Electric Railway proliferation of tracks at Laxey and turned into a parking area. This being central offering a reasonably easy walk to the Laxey Wheel and a similar even shorter distance to the Mountain Railway Station which was next on the list.

As I approached the Laxey Wheel, well, the sheer size of the thing almost in the middle of nowhere surrounded by beautiful glens stunned me. I used my '4 Site Ticket' and in I went. My limited mechanical and hydraulic knowledge cannot describe or fully understand in detail the workings of this structure, suffice to say the Manx men and women that originally designed and built this were made of stern stuff and records show that to be circa 1854.

That's not to even comprehend day to day life in the mines themselves. I have never sighted anything in such full working order with such history behind it, top marks to those whose duty it now falls on to maintain this unique attraction.

I walked virtually all pathways taking record shots of Pump Houses etc. along the way and there were great views of the natural terrain enveloping the Laxey Wheel location.

### *The Mountain Railway:*

This Railway runs from Laxey to the Snaefell Summit. The Railcar was quite comfortable and the track zigs and zags its way constantly climbing to the Summit Restaurant and viewing platforms, there is an intermediate Station at Hailwood Rise, and then its full on to the top. This being late May and a beautiful clear day I expected good temperatures and viewing opportunities, however as the Railcar climbed so the temperature 'dropped' and at the summit whilst I was in beautiful sunshine the wind was 'devastatingly cold'.

I chanced a walk up to the Engraved Map Guide at the very top of the Mountain, even 'colder' and stronger winds awaited, the fact that I now had the opportunity to view Ireland, Scotland, England etc. from one point was fairly overshadowed by the 'howling gale' that now had me immediately planning my descent to the Summit Restaurant.



**Snaefell Mountain Railcar**

The descent in the Railcar was uneventful, excepting I could now concentrate more on my views of the TT Course, watching Touring Riders ride around the course. Amazing, the way the road appears so open and flowing from afar and how much concentration must be applied by Professional Racers to get the most of their Race time through the mountain section.

### **30-05-07 ~ CASTLETOWN, Love the Place:**

Today its back to Castletown, once again utilising my '4 Site Ticket', a visit to the Castle Rushen, eek the last Norse King of Mann passed within its walls in 1265, then keeping with the theme of minimal travel per day there is a Motorcycle (of course) Concours d'Elegance in the Castletown Square from 2pm in the afternoon, so we will see how that all goes.....



### *Castle Rushen:*

Whoa, one does not want to conjure up to clearly what it would have been like to be an inmate of these premises. Generally a great exhibit offering the feeling of control and conversely beautiful views of Castletown and environs from the ramparts. It would not have been a happy life for someone jailed and/or interrogated within these walls. A great array of appropriate gifts were on display at Reception and the Staff within the Castle were very informative.

### *Concours d'Elegance:*



Well, this had to be the most disorganised event, I mean there was no one in control. This wasn't so much a Concours, as a ride up and gawk at other peoples machinery thing.

Notwithstanding this, there was official works going on of sorts, some bright spark had decided today was the day to repaint all the street bollards and light poles with a new coat of black paint whilst innumerable riders and their pillions were arriving at the gazetted venue, I tell yah.....

There were some very interesting machines, to me the pick of the bunch had to be the two BSA Gold Stars that arrived quite late and a well kitted out and fully registered Honda Z50J complete with Oil Cooler, good grief. Other notables were an early model (square headlight) MV750cc Road Bike, a Benelli 900cc complete with afterburners (rear radiator fans), a Hayabusa Sidecar Outfit and my favourite and in fact one of the most highly polished, presentable bikes there, a Honda 450cc Black Bomber, circa 1967ish.

The fact is there was no fenced off area arranged, no judging, no signs, no Announcer, just Motorcycles and fans and locals trying to get through the overflowing Castletown Square area.



**One very hot Honda Z50J, disc brake, oil cooler, pipe, wow!**

Hopefully the local Shopkeepers got some return, I know I did from some of the great bikes there, maybe better organising and planning the paintwork next time. Oh, there were two Manx Police Officers in attendance, presumably just as a precaution, again I must say the Police talked openly with everyone, posed for photos and the like, a low key presence but there if needed, top marks compared to certain other Countries, specifically Australia's 'over policing' of Motorcycle events.

### 31-05-07 ~ Peel:

Today its off to Peel for the first time, I will again use my '4 Site Ticket', exhausting the card by visiting both the House Of Manannan and Peel Castle. Further it will be a chance for me to become acquainted with Peel with the pending Honda Day on the 3<sup>rd</sup> June. So Peel here I come...

#### *House of Manannan:*



Very informative Displays, the Building is clearly one of, if not the newest attraction of its type on the Island and from an Engineering perspective it appears to have a high level of fit out with the regard to Lighting, EXIT Signage and Fire Protection, top marks.

I particularly appreciated the thought and trouble that was taken to display the Viking Boat, seemingly being dragged out through the plate glass window, well done.

The level of Audio Visual human interfacing was top notch, all very informative.

#### *Peel Castle:*

Certainly in ruins, but strangely it draws the eye, a very well located structure which would have been somewhat daunting for any would be attacker. Certainly worth the long walk to the top of the adjacent grassed hill top to allow an overview of the total Castle, I 'nearly' made it all the way to the top.

I was very impressed with the Audio Handset handed to all Visitors, allowing pre recorded descriptions of particular aspects of the ruins simply by coding in the number of the area one is currently in. One aspect of slight disappointment was the state of the fixed Signs describing the function and year dates of areas and battlements. All were very rusty and very badly faded, they certainly need replacing, probably the brown and white Tourist sign colours used elsewhere on the IOM would be the most appropriate.



**Peel Castle from afar with a BEACH!!**

## 01-06-07 ~ THE TT PITS, WOW, FREE DERESTRICTED ACCESS:

This day I dedicated to the TT Course Pit Area and environs, to get to know the best places to park etc. for the pending Race Days to come, getting there early was going to be a real advantage.

Amazing, I found a derestricted street, (no blue disc requirement) adjacent a Children's Playground, behind the Pit Paddock area, so of course I continued to use this street for parking throughout Race Week.



Had a tremendous time during my walk through of the Pit Area, lots of immediate visual access to all the Top Teams Mechanics rebuilding and rechecking everything for the evenings practice sessions, curiously only the Sidecar boys were inside their motors, all motors for Solos were either in the frames or if out of the frames, intact. I met the Clerk of the Course, very approachable and he gave his time for a photo opportunity. Lots of motorcycle memorabilia on display and for sale from most of the Teams and Vendors.



**Neil Hanson, Clerk of Course**

I particularly visited the Mike Hailwood Riders Centre. Also associated with the Joey Dunlop Foundation and rightly so. I made it my business to purchase a few token items from the Joey Dunlop Foundation collection.

## 02-06-07 ~ OFFICIAL PADDOCK WALK DAY:

Today was the official Paddock Walk Day where the Teams Riders were supposed to make some time in their schedules to talk to the fans and sign whatever. Two races were also set down for later in the day, going to be hectic.



**Robert Dunlop, working hard.**

Well, the best laid plans, there was certainly success with the parking again, but not too many top Riders were doing much signing and quite frankly I don't blame them, given the preparation, (mental, physical and machine), for this the greatest and most dangerous Road Race in the world.

But wait, I spotted a wee man huddled under a Motorcycle, literally on the grass and dirt, fettling a motorcycle front brake assembly with parts support from a somewhat average Van, the Van was labelled 'Michael Dunlop' and the man was NO wee man at all, it was ROBERT DUNLOP. Typical of my hero Joey, Robert also appears not to seek the high life or notoriety, he gave me his time willingly however to sign my 'Signatures T Shirt'. This seemed to start an avalanche of requests and people interrupted him for photo and signing duties, no problem or anxiety in the man was noted.

I had to recover, purchased a drink and a hot dog, whilst feeding my face, who walks straight at and past me, one JIM REDMAN, I couldn't speak too clearly, just uttered a garbled 'JIM' with gazing eyes. He smiled, and nodded acknowledgement, damn I never saw him again today to grab that signature, but I will soon. Just that one eye to eye contact gave me the same impression as when I met SMBH so long ago, very easy going and in control of himself. Got to have a quick chat with the man and get that signature!!

I spoke to the gentlemen that controlled Honda's VTR1000SP1 and SP2 efforts in the WSBK with Colin Edwards, told me the reason for ceasing the SP2 at the end of 2002 was totally an administrative one by Honda, they wanted to campaign a big multi cylinder in WSBK, namely the FireBlade.

Clearly the Fireblade is a big seller and placed in a very competitive part of the Motorcycle Marketplace. I think Honda made a poor decision in hindsight, I believe Colin Edwards could have gone on to win maybe two or more consecutive WSBK Championships with that sorted SP2 motorcycle.

Racing, what racing, all preparations were made with all Gravity Feed overhead drums filled, 11.00am went, National Anthems played, then 12.00 midday, soon after a decision was made to move today's scheduled races to Monday, whilst the weather was only slightly overcast at the Grandstand area it was apparently raining on the Mountain.

There's plenty of slippage built into the program so it made a lot of sense to reduce unnecessary risks, hoping for better weather and safer riding conditions.



Manual filling of fuel, strange really.

### 03-06-07 ~ PEEL it was PEEING RAIN so to the MONKS ARCH:

PEEL is the heart of today's proceedings, declared as Honda Day....

Well, for me quite disappointing, Honda certainly had their Big Transporter there and some of their latest motorcycles, problem was they were simply relocated for the day from their display behind the Grandstand, basically the 'same' machinery, nothing new.

Asimo had undercover protection but I wasn't staying around to get wet and possibly catch a cold to ruin Race Day attendances to come.



Peel Promenade with the Honda Tent.

I went for a drive around other parts of the IOM and visited the Monks Bridge and Rushen Abbey, which were very near my lodgings.



To stand on the bridge was quite awe inspiring given the date of construction and the state of the stonework.

The Monks Bridge, (Pack Horse Bridge), whilst not of large proportions certainly was very attractive and steeped in history. The bridge plaque indicated a build date circa 1134AD.



The bridge leads from the public footpath to the Rushen Abbey and some lovely walking tracks following fresh water streams. Rushen Abbey continues to be a 'work in progress' with various ruins being unearthed and placed on display with annual digs in the summer months.