

BEDS VMCC NEWS

KEEPING YOU INFORMED DURING LOCK-DOWN

Mary, Mary, quite contrary... (see page six)



EDITORIAL

On Tuesday I was close to finding the answer to the question I had posed to the AA about what happens to the rider in the event of a breakdown where the bike has to be recovered. Coming off the A2070 dual carriageway around Ashford in Kent on Monday on my modern bike (Triumph Tiger 800XC), I felt the steering become very heavy. I pulled into a business park and, sure enough, the rear tyre was almost flat – I’d picked up a nail. Had it been a tubeless tyre, a roadside repair would have been simple but, no, the Tiger has spoked wheels which dictate a tubed tyre. Audible panic from the AA person on the phone – “you can’t travel in the recovery vehicle”, “hire car?”, “taxi?”. But then they had a “Eureka” moment, and sent out a technician with a large can of instant tyre repair (Finilec type stuff). It took a little while to take hold and stop oozing out the hole but, with just a couple of pressure top-ups *en route*, it then held out for the next anxious seven hours and 175 miles until I got home. Indeed, it was still inflated when I took the wheel to get a new tube fitted today [Thursday]. First thing I did when I got it home was to put some puncture sealant in, ready for the next nail. I usually do this when I get a new tyre but, this time, I hadn’t got around to it – lesson learnt.

Many thanks to this week’s contributors: Don, Kerry, Neil, Martyn, Nige and Will – slightly smaller this week than usual; I hope we aren’t starting to run out of steam. Please keep the contributions coming.

Bryan

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CLUB NIGHTS

A few people have asked when we are going to restart club nights at Shefford - but I'm afraid we don't yet have an answer. As things stand, I don't think indoor meetings such as ours are permitted.

More news when we have it.

MIDWEEK DAYTIME RUNS



Face masks not required on the run

There is still some space on the next run: Thursday, 30th July. To sign up and get details of the start time and location, please contact Bryan either by email: bryan.marsh@btinternet.com, or by telephone on: 01525 877585 or 07309 731191.

This time we will probably head into the Northern part of the county, possibly beyond, finishing with an optional cuppa at a café in the Cardington area.

FLITWICK CAR & BIKE SHOW – 2ND AUGUST



It's not too late – a reminder of what Ellis Billington wrote last week:

This year's Flitwick Car & Bike show is going to be held - but in different locations. I have spoken to the Swan Public House in Flitwick, and they are willing to put on a Sunday lunch at a special price of £8.00 for bikers and friends. The choice is Pork, Turkey or Beef at the price of £8.00. They have asked could we **make the order by Wednesday 29th July**. Their telephone no. is 01525 754777, or send a text to 07944 044 003, ask for Steph or Chris.

The address of The Swan is Dunstable Road, Flitwick, MK45 1HP.

The date of the show is Sunday 2nd August, and there is NO entry charge. It would be good to meet up again for food and company.

When booking they'd like to know the time you would like your lunch [*I've booked for 12.30pm*], whether you'd like a table reserved indoors [*I've said outdoors*], and for how many.

BEDFORDSHIRE NAVIGATION EVENT



The navigation event is underway; you should have received a copy of the instructions by separate email last week. I've also sent it to the Ariel Owners' Club and our adjacent VMCC Sections, as well as posting it on the VMCC Forum (where it's been downloaded 15 times) – yes, I'm desperate that someone should do it!



Don reports that he's done half-a-dozen locations so far, and used it as an excuse for a test run on the Model S - just as far as Steppingley (see picture – with the answer to the question thoughtfully blanked out), from his home in Flitwick. He says it was just as well he didn't go further as the in-line fuel filter had cracked and was leaking, as well as being fairly clogged. In investigating the fuel system back home he mislaid the float chamber top but luckily managed to find a spare in the box of "things which might come in useful sometime".

MAINTAINING THE SECTION ARCHIVE

Nige makes the following appeal:

Send in your photos!

Now we have the midweek runs up and running and Bryan's navigation challenge to enjoy, it would be great to see some photos.

Due to being inconvenienced by work, I'm going to struggle to get to midweek events. I'd love to see what you're up to. Doesn't necessarily need to be runs. I know people have been working hard in sheds and garages in these strange times. Send in some pics of what you've been up to. For a social bunch, such as we are, it's been a strange year, but I'd like to see if we can record it in the archive.

You can send them directly to me at coote2050@btinternet.com

Likewise, if you see a picture you would like in the "from the archive" section drop me line and I will be happy to send it on.

The page 3 girl



Superstition...

WILL CURRY

This seemed to me to be a good idea for a topic for issue 13.

Triskaidekaphobia is the Greek expression for fear of the number 13. I worked for a number of years for Xerox and I found it quite amusing to watch and listen to the reaction of my transatlantic colleagues when they found out I had office 13 on floor 1 of Hampden House in Aylesbury. I managed to avoid being sent to headquarters which was in Rochester County in upstate New York. Horribly hot in summer, snowy in winter and, whatever you do, don't drive round with the doors unlocked. He flatly refused to come into my office. He was also a member of a fundamental Christian sect which created other challenges.

To me, superstition is doing something to ensure good luck or avoid bad luck. Luck is in part how you view things, like being an optimist or pessimist.

I don't think of myself as superstitious and it hadn't occurred to me that other motorcyclists might be.

I then remembered the speed fraternity. Some of the grass-trackers were 'wedded' to their number and went funny if they didn't get it. I put that down to not wanting to have to make up another numberplate - quite reasonably. In trials where they gave you a neat little card with a number printed on which you clipped into the holder on the front there was no such behaviour. I rode trials and so started from a different place.

Another superstition which I guess afflicts riders as well as drivers is having the number 666 in the registration number. This superstition aroused so much anguish that in the end DVLA agreed to change, free of charge, any registration which did contain 666. Just as the fear of thirteen has a long Greek name so does the fear of 666: hexakosioihexekontahexaphobia.

At this point I'd run out of topics. A quick search of the internet soon put that right. It's also made this article quite a bit longer than it might otherwise have been. [that's good - we're a bit short of "copy"]

I counted five superstitions [I counted six] which turned up most frequently although usually differing somewhat in detail:

1) Using gremlin bells keeps the gremlins away



Handy things gremlins. They are an easy explanation of a technical problem to the non-technical. I think (believe?) they were a product of early the aviation industry so in supernatural terms very modern, something like 'Bicycle Man' who arrives at midnight in a rented van and collects all the abandoned hire bikes.

The explanation of the bells is that their ringing annoys the gremlins so much that they cannot stay and cause their mischief. The bells are supposed to work better the lower they are fitted and those given work better than one you have to buy.

There are two origins of the word 'gremlin' offered. The first is that it comes from the Anglo-Saxon verb gremian which means to annoy and vex. This word is certainly in my copy of Bosworth - Toller, the definitive Anglo-Saxon dictionary. The other and to my mind much more likely origin is that gremlin is a contraction of Grimm - the brothers Grimm's fairy stories - and Fremlin's Beer.

2) Green motorcycles are bad luck

One origin for this is that the green of an army motorcycle made it an easy target for the enemy. I can't help feel a red or even blue motorcycle would stand out even more on a battlefield. Khaki, the usual colour of battledress comes from an Indian word for dust.



Another and more plausible origin is that post-war the army surplus bikes were in such poor condition that they were just plain hard work. The human eye is much better at green than red which is why matching green paint is such a pain. I'd heard tales long ago about green vehicles being more dangerous because they were hard to see against the green of the countryside. It can't be much of a problem now as there isn't anywhere near as much greenery about as 50 years ago. In the late 60s and early 70s we considered the most dangerous car on the road to be a connaught green Austin 1100.

3) Riding a dead man's motorcycle is bad luck

I've not heard of anything like this before. It doesn't seem to matter how the previous owner met their end. The idea is that their soul may object to you riding their pride and joy and pitch you off.

I'm always very cautious about using anything that's been involved in any kind of accident whether it's been repaired or not and that includes riding a bike. I've seen some horrifying repairs come to light over the years while fixing other problems.

4) Dropping your helmet is bad luck



I don't know about bad luck. Careless fits the bill better. There are two parts to this though. One is that the helmet is compromised, and I've seen some serious scratches and broken visors as a result of being dropped. The manufacturers make a big thing about 'hidden damage' resulting from drops but there again that's not surprising. The DVSA attitude is that, once dropped, a helmet should be scrapped by cutting the strap off. The second part is that what happens to your helmet will also happen to your head sooner or later. If you're clumsy enough to drop your helmet you're also capable of other folly which can be interpreted as bad luck.

I'm not sure I agree with the DVSA attitude to dropping but if you have any kind of an 'off' I think it really is time to retire the helmet even if there is no obvious damage to the outside. The most important part of the helmet is the shock-absorbing material, like polystyrene packaging, which takes up some of the impact. Once compressed, this stuff doesn't recover. It's strictly one-use only.

5) Riding with your pillion footrests down and no passenger is bad luck



This is another one I'd not encountered before and another one which comes in two forms. The other form is that riding to a funeral with them up is bad luck.

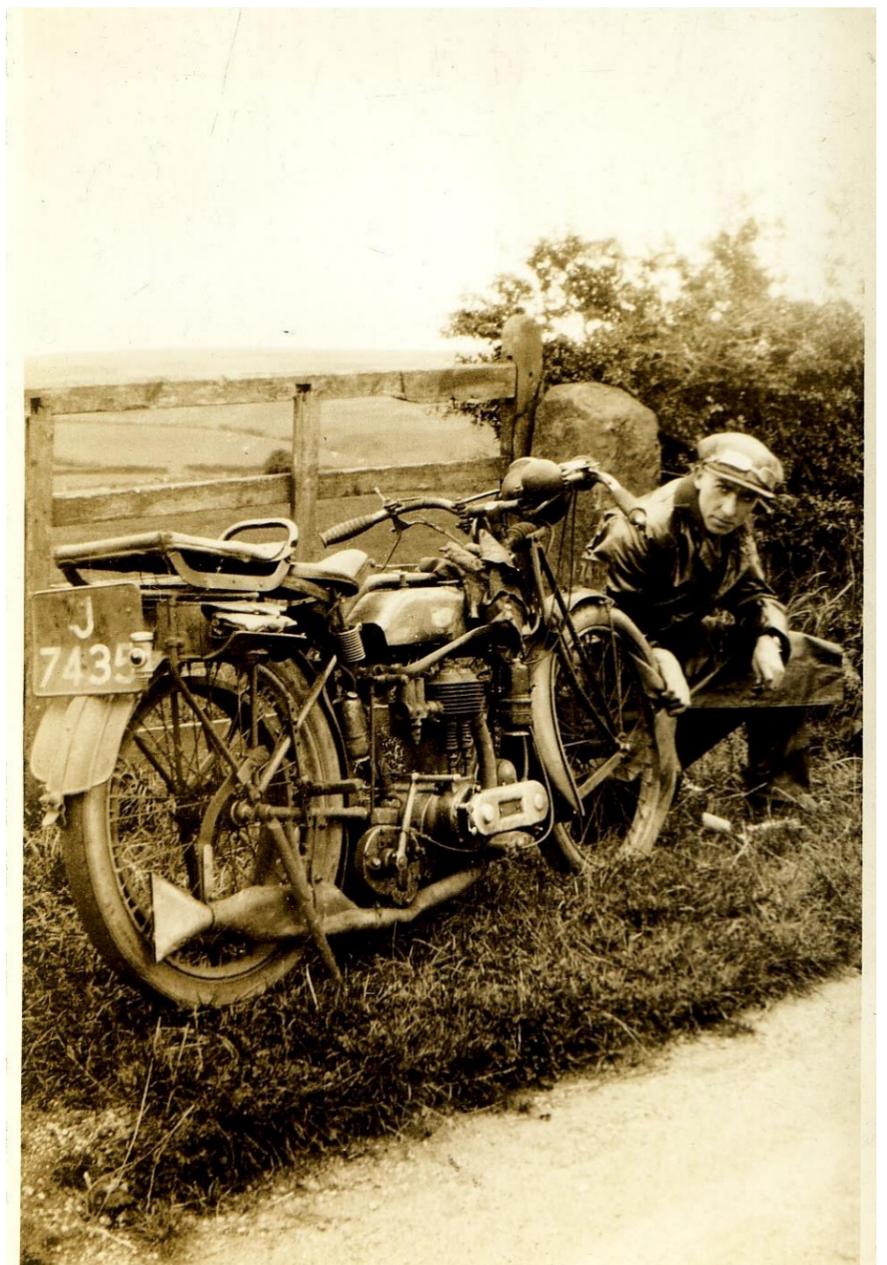
The idea with the latter is that it gives the deceased a chance of one

more ride and that to stop them by having the footrests up will annoy them and that will in turn bring you bad luck.

Riding with the footrest down and no passenger looks untidy to me, especially on older bikes where the pillion footrests are more sensibly positioned. Anyone using the pillion on my Yamaha who is over 4 feet tall will have their knees in my armpits. On our older bikes the lowered pillion footrests are much better placed to entangle our legs as we paddle along at slow speed. Those footrests which are so badly maintained that they won't stay up are another symptom of that carelessness which drops helmets. In the same vein but worse still are pillion footrests which point downwards. The poor pillionist will struggle to keep their feet in place and there isn't much more awkward to control, especially at slow speed, than a motorcycle with a wiggly pillionist.

6) Not stopping for a stranded rider is bad luck

Over the years I've had my share of unexpected roadside stops and most of the time motorcyclists didn't ride on by, even if they couldn't help. Sometimes all that was necessary was to get a message to George who would turn out with the Brough outfit for the rescue. It worked both ways. I spent one Saturday towing in the Matchless that George had gone to fetch and then towing in the Brough when it got too dark to fix its burned-out clutch by the side of the road. If you didn't stop to help, then word would soon get round and the most you could expect when stranded would be a cheerful wave with part of a hand. I make a point of stopping even now but with mobile phones and recovery as part of your insurance there usually isn't much I can offer.



Just to finish off with something to think about. Somewhere I have a steering damper knob from an Ariel 350. What makes it noteworthy is the St. Christopher medallion stuck to it. It came from a bike whose remains I bought after its then owner overdid it one afternoon and went 'gardening' via a stone wall. As seems to be usual in these cases he survived with only a mild shouting-at by the wall's owner. The bike however suffered bent forks and a severely dented tank amongst other injuries. Did the St. Christopher medallion work or not?

Classified ad

NEIL CAIRNS

I am posting this with a heavy heart.

As much as I love my motorcycling, it takes up too much of my time and I am struggling to keep up with the everyday basics such as gardening and maintaining our home, so something has to give. I will be getting rid of my collection.

Below is a list of what's available. Serious enquiries only please, and please don't insult me with your offers.

Thanks for reading and understanding.

1. Paint brushes
2. Lawn mower
3. Spade and fork
4. Sponge and bucket
5. Window cleaner
6. Wire brushes
7. Car polish
8. Weed killer
9. Garden shears
10. Bucket and shovel
12. Cleaning sprays
13. Scrubbing brushes

SMIDSY (Sorry Mate, I didn't see you)

KERRY DOLLAR

[summarised from an article by John Naish in "Bike" magazine, January 2020, at the request of Kerry Dollar who feels very strongly about the need to "see and be seen"]

Psychological tests consistently show that, most often, drivers causing "sorry mate, I didn't see you" accidents *did* actually see the rider - but their brains failed to register it.



Researchers from Nottingham University put 100 drivers through simulations of road junctions. They showed that in an alarming one-in-six occasions, the drivers had no recollection of seeing an oncoming bike even though their eye-tracking equipment clearly showed they *had* seen it.

To make matters worse there are two further glitches that affect drivers:

- Our brains get puzzled by visual perspective. [*This is the classic Father Ted lesson to learn the difference between "small" and "far away"*.] Perspective often means that things that look big are close by, and things that look small are farther away. Drivers habitually misjudge the distance of approaching motorcyclists because they appear smaller head-on compared to cars or lorries.
- Our brains also assume that smaller objects are travelling slower than large objects; possibly an instinct to get away from large angry things charging at us. Drivers think the bike, which appears small, is travelling slower than it actually is, and that there is time to pull out safely.

Common sense says the best way for motorcyclists to avoid these problems is to make ourselves more visible – and hence appear bigger in driver's minds.

Daytime use of headlights is an obvious answer but that's not always possible or practical on an old bike. Moreover, modern life means daytime headlight use on motorcycles is becoming less effective because of the multitude of other visibility aids bombarding the senses – daytime running lights on cars; hi-vis safety jackets on kids, dog-walkers and workmen; blinding or flashing lights from cyclists, etc. Motorcycle headlights stand out less and less.

Another possible answer is to look different. Human brains instinctively scan for the odd, the incongruent, that might be a predator or prey. A French study looked at whether colours on motorcycles may help motorists to notice them and found that the bigger the contrast between the colour of the bike (and rider) and its surroundings, the better it gets noticed. The best thing to wear is a white helmet and white outfit [*and, presumably a white fairing for the bike*]. The traditional black favoured by many motorcyclists [*and motorcycle clothing manufacturers*] is certainly not going to help.



Perhaps the most practical step is to ride like you own the road, occupying the centre ground of the carriageway. Here, you are not only the most visible, but you also appear in a dominant position rather than apologetically hogging the gutter. This doesn't mean riding aggressively, just assertively – and hopefully alerting the inattentive driver.

Moving out a little to the right when approaching a junction on the nearside will make you more visible and increases your chances of catching the driver's eye. Brain-scan tests show that even fleeting eye-contact alerts parts of the brain associated with paying social attention. And, of course, being farther out in the road offers a slightly better chance of avoiding a collision.

Another reason for gazing at the driver is to assess their risk level – the biggest risks are from young, inexperienced drivers and older drivers with slower reactions [*and possibly poorer eyesight*].

TRIUMPH'S TR5 TROPHY KEEPS ON WINNING

BRYAN MARSH



Kazuyuki Ishihara's Gold Award winning "Green Switch" garden

Triumph's splendid TR5 Trophy, all-rounder originally took its name from the team success of three modified Speed Twins in the 1948 International Six Days Trial. Little did Triumph know, when it was launched in 1949, that it would still be winning awards in 2019, albeit a gold medal at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show, thanks to legendary Japanese garden designer Kazuyuki Ishihara.



This is how it was reported in Old Bike Mart in July 2019:

The concept for Mr Ishihara's 2019 garden was to provide a place of beauty and calm to take a shower in the garden, relax in a tea room, enjoy the pond, the sound of water, nature and surround yourself with the things you love most – which, in Mr Ishihara's case, included a vintage motorcycle.

The Trophy that was seen by thousands of people at horticulture's greatest show of the year was supplied by Simon Elliot, the owner of Ideal Motorcycles in Washington, West Sussex.

It's not every day that a team of Japanese gardeners, complete with a personal assistant and translator, walk into your classic motorcycle showroom, but that was how the collaboration started.



Ideal Motorcycles' Simon Elliot with Mr Ishihara and the Gold Award

When preparing for this year's [2019] Chelsea Flower Show, Mr Ishihara asked one of his regular plant suppliers if he knew of someone with a passion for motorcycles, and he was pointed in the direction of Simon and Ideal Motorcycles. Simon spends a great deal of time seeking out the very best, most original and correct examples of historically-interesting motorcycles, with Mr Ishihara eventually choosing the '53 Triumph as the perfect accompaniment to his garden.



Mr Ishihara rides the 1953 Triumph TR5 into his garden creation

Old Bike Mart then went on to say that, at the time of writing, the Trophy was for sale at the Ideal showroom. It might have been then, but it isn't now – I bought it on Tuesday!

Madeira Drive – update

In Issue 11, Gerry Gibbins informed us about the threatened permanent closure of Madeira Drive on Brighton Seafront, and urged us all to sign the petition against it.

Well, the force of VMCC Beds members must have had the desired effect because, according to this week's Motor Cycle News, there has been a dramatic [*their word, not mine*] change of heart from Labour members of the city council.

In a statement, Gary Wilkinson, Deputy Chair of the Environment, Transport and Sustainability Committee said "At the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, we temporarily closed the road to motor vehicles to provide a safe space for our residents to walk and cycle.

"While the temporary road closure remains in place, Madeira Drive will be open and available when necessary to host these events in both the short and long term.

"We will continue to work with event organisers to ensure a full programme can return to Madeira Drive in a healthier, stronger and safer city."

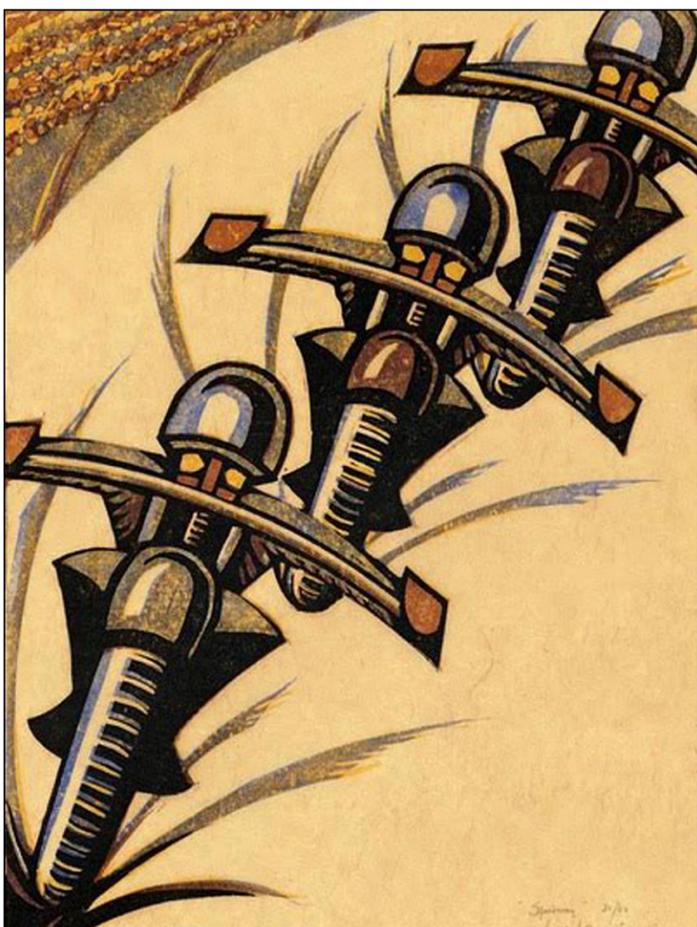
Third VMCC Bedfordshire Run - 16 July 2020

The new-style, Covid-aware motorcycle runs are gradually picking up more followers. For this third outing on 16th July it was Don, Bryan, Eddie, Gerry, Gerald, Will, Tim and Norm. A good collection of motorcycles with two Ariels, a Triumph, a Velocette and a BSA, and a couple of slightly more up-to-date, but still properly eligible bikes, being a BMW K series and a Norton Commando; there was a question whether either of the latter two got out of first gear.



The photograph shows us assembling in an access road behind the Shell garage and MacDonalds on the A505 roundabout to the south of Leighton Buzzard. Aply led by Don, we followed an excellent route that skirted Whipsnade, Little Gaddesden, Aldbury, Cholesbury, Aston Clinton and Cheddington, and took us on a circuit around Tring. It was a proper Chilterns explore of some 38 miles!

We finished at a Farm Shop, just a mile south of that same Leighton Buzzard A505 roundabout, and just north of Billington Village Hall [Navigation Event location 2], that had a very tidy cafe/restaurant. It is called 'Nobby's Farm Shop and The Baa T Room' and is to be recommended for passing visitors [e.g. when doing the Navigation Event]. There was a large courtyard where we sat [suitable distanced from one another, of course] at tables and had drinks and various lunches, the sun came out and it was all very pleasant.



The cost of trials entry

MARTYN BROOKMAN

[Martyn sent this cutting from the South Midland Review of December 1971]

John Parker was secretary of Bedford Eagles, way back in the day, and sometimes comes to our Quiz night.

Dear Sir,

N.E. London Club members will know how my heart bleeds for poor old Don Beane who, wanting to enjoy what is perhaps the finest trial promoted in this Centre, has to somehow scrape up 75p for the entry fee.

To use words like "extortion" to describe this amount seems to show a somewhat odd sense of proportion, considering that there were 100 'Montaco's' entered at around £300 apiece and that most of them would have arrived at the start either in or behind some equally expensive motor cars!

That it should cost a little extra to raise the level of organisation, to provide a proper printed programme containing a wealth of information including much detail and a map of the course is, surely, quite understandable and the fact that there were 147 entries (including Don Beane) shows that many competitors find the fee acceptable.

I present this view, as a satisfied customer, just to balance the picture a little and would add that I am in no way connected with the organising club or any member of it

So far as awards are concerned I am pleased to see that it appears that from the 1st January next year we are to have three classes, Novice, Intermediate and Expert with equal awards for each class. All those connected with bringing about this change should be congratulated for I am sure that it will add much interest to this great sport.

Yours faithfully,
J. Parker.

146a High St.,
Cranford,
Bedford.

—*—*—

From the archive

NIGEL COOTE

A selection of familiar faces, some sadly no longer with us, from section runs in recent years.

