

Manston 14/15 June

Well, that was an eventful weekend!

In the future, when the NSA clan are huddled around the paddock campfire, warmed by the smouldering embers of Noah Harrison's Rudge, the elders will talk in hushed tones about the great Manston storm of '25!

Joking aside, all of us agreed we have never experienced anything quite as violent as Friday's storm, it didn't last very long but it was scary while it lasted!

Everyone had seen the forecast and was ready for some thunder etc, the Met Office had predicted 8 to 10 mm of rain with some moderate winds and folk were watching the lightning out over the sea during the early evening before we all retreated to our vans, or in some cases, tents, and battened down the hatches in preparation.

The intensity of the rain gradually increased and the lightning/thunder became more continuous but it was still 'fun' listening to it going on outside.

Then around 10.30 or 11 pm the wind suddenly whipped up and the rain went into torrential mode. I guess it was one of those micro storm cells as the wind just kept on getting stronger until it was absolutely howling. The van began to rock violently and I was just beginning to think I don't like this when there was a big bang as our pop up awning disappeared. Peering through the window I could see the bike, which luckily I had parked nose on to the wind, and Carol's wheelchair, both now sitting exposed to the full fury of the wind and rain.

I tried to open the side door but was like having a pressure hose forcing its way in and it was clearly far too dangerous to go outside so there was nothing for it but to wait and hope for the best. After maybe half an hour the wind had dropped somewhat so I risked opening the back door, which was in the lee of the wind, and stepped out into an ankle deep river flowing down the tarmac with all manner of things being washed down with it.

I managed to move the bike around to the back of the van into some slight shelter, rescued Carol's chair and found my generator, which had been holding down one leg of the awning, thrown about 10 feet away, on its side with an interesting wave flowing over it. I also found my front wheel paddock chock, not a light chunk of metal, which had been holding down another leg, flung another 10 feet in the opposite direction.

I didn't need a torch as the lightning was virtually constant. I spotted Pete Smith's bike on its side by his van and stood it back up and went to see if I could help Amanda Taylor as their awning had snapped a leg but they had managed to furl it back in so I retreated back into the van to dry off and try to get some sleep.

Up early to survey the damage, Stuart Buchanan's awning had destroyed itself and scattered all their camping equipment into the flood as well as tipping his bike over, further up the paddock Bledyn Ireland had an awning wrapped around his trailer and Allen Randles' Ducati 350 had also blown over, luckily only bending one of the clips on handlebars.

All our spectator fencing had blown over, the starting tree had also gone over and smashed several of the big bulbs and the timing cables had washed from the centre to the right hand edge for pretty much the full ¼ mile.

A big shout out to the brave folk who ventured out in the early hours to retrieve all the Portaloos that had been blown every which way!

I found the remnants of my awning about 100 yards away against the back hedge and my 'guaranteed to withstand hurricane winds' flag pole snapped in two places.

Later the Met Office reported some 50mm of rain and storm force 10 gusts, which is 90 to 100 mph, the storm made the main news with flooding in Manston itself and some surrounding areas.

All in all I think we got away pretty lightly, some of us lost our awnings and quite a few people found their vans not quite as waterproof as they previously thought but the bikes that got blown over were all ok with just minor damage and we were able to get everything cleared up, fencing stood up and even all the bulbs in the tree replaced ready to go by around midday, a great effort by everyone.

So, after all that, let's get to the racing!

The weather was generally warm but with a brisk and unpredictable head/side wind that caught a few people out finding themselves drifting towards the edge of the track.

I have to say that after the night before I wasn't really feeling it and after a few runs with a best of 11.4s I decided to stop and spent the afternoon mooching around the start on back up photo duty.

So, Max Curtis was our only junior, taking his Honda cbf250 to 17.19s@73.2 mph.

In 250cc Racing, Stuart Buchanan had his 250 V twin Honda going well despite its earlier unceremonial dumping into the flood with a best of 13.93s@94.1 mph, until after only 3 runs a suspected head gasket failure meant an early end to his weekend sadly.

In 500cc Racing Kerry Phillips was making the most of the available time, getting his KH to 11.32s@113.9 mph to establish the class record. Also running was Adrian Licence on a nice Suzuki T500 with a best of 14.61s@85.8 mph.

In 750cc Racing, Pete Smith did just a couple of runs on his CBR600 before deciding that after the night before and work in the morning and a long drive back to Wales it was a good time to stop, with a best of 12.65s@111.6 mph.

There were four entries in 1000cc Racing, Paul Houghton took top spot with a fine 9.92s@139.1 mph to beat Rob Warehams previous record(10.14s).

Next was Richard Ward on his GSXR1000, 10.68s@132.7 mph, then Kerry Herrington on her GSXR1000, 11.27s@129.4 mph before deciding the cross wind was making things just a bit uncomfortable and sitting out the afternoon. Then it was Libby Curtis, making a fine job of stepping from a junior onto the big GPZ1000 drag style bike, working on her launch technique she got a best of 12.36s@108.8 mph but with much more to come I'm sure!

Just two entries in Unlimited Racing. Steve Everett getting his 1300 'Busa down to 9.89s@139.5 mph, a bit away from his class record. Pete Herrington was having a great time on his stretched 1340 'Busa, occasionally drifting to the right and sending a fine spray of edge cones into the distance, his best was 10.3s@138.1 mph.

In the Vintage classes, four entries in the up to 350cc, Allen Randle was on his Ducati 250, trying sprinting after being a classic circuit racer but finding the pushing and shoving, especially into the first corner, was taking the shine off things, his best was 16.47s@76.3 mph. Then it was Richard Morgan on his 350 Rudge, 16.74s@70.0 mph, Ken Thorn on his 250 Enfield, 17.03s@74.4 mph

and Noah Harrison on his rather more dependable BSA/JAP 350, 18.04s@71.7 mph.

Also four entries in Unlimited Vintage, although both Ken Thorn and Richard Morgan were leaping onto their other machines.

Quickest was Richard on his bigger 500 Rudge, 14.89s@81.8 mph, then it was Ken who was somewhat mystified by the apparent lack of performance of his big Enfield Meteor 700 with a best of 16.1s@82.7 mph. It was nice to catch up with Sheelagh Neal who was crewing for Ken. Seems she has been persuaded to passenger for him in a trials sidecar outfit, well it's one way to spend a weekend?!

Next up was John Daly on a Triumph 500, 16.54s@75.8 mph and Mark Richards whos only run on his Triumph T110 came to an abrupt stop when the rear drum brake steady bar snapped allowing the whole drum assembly to turn and jam the brake on. Despite this he managed to run 18.25s and crossed the line at 57.7 mph! Again sadly nothing that could be fixed on site so he joined Pete Smith on the journey back to Wales.

The Scooteristas were having a fine old time, in the Classic class, Stuart McVicker got his Lambretta 240 down to 14.89s@88.4 mph to establish the class record, from Jamie Lawn on his Vespa 180, just behind with a 15.0s@80.4 mph.

In the Open class, Eric Cope on his Lambretta 249 wasn't far away from Mike Pacey's record of 12.80s, running 12.83s@102.0 mph! Then it was Paul Gurney on his Lambretta 265, 13.35s@95.9 mph and Mike himself on his Rotax 335 powered Lambretta, still not quite happy with clutch and gear setup, getting to 13.85s@91.0 mph.

Mark Taylor was by himself in Classic Open on his big 1229 GSX Suzuki with a best of 10.02s@138.1 mph, just a bit outside his class record (9.98s).

The 750 Road Bike class had gone from me often being the sole entry to no less than six entries! Ben London took top spot on his ZX6R with a 10.74s@129.0 mph. He also took the next spot on a ZX7R which he had converted into a sort of 'supermoto' type machine for beach racing and suchlike, he had just put a set of road wheels/tyres on it for Manston and ran 11.0s@121.9 mph. Next it was Matthew Braine, on another ZX6R, 11.38s@121.6 mph, then it was me, Neil Jenkinson, on my Street Triple 675, running a somewhat lacklustre best of 11.41s@116.4 mph, then it was Gill Pacey on her smart CBR 500, 14.61s@87.6 mph and Amanda Taylor on her Ducati 750ss, 14.84s@93.0 mph.

In Unlimited Road Bike, Zac Holt was quickest on his 1216cc Suzuki, 10.41s@133.9 mph then it was Dunk Rose on his Panigale, 10.86s@141.2 mph.

With some 11 day entries to bolster the numbers, racing continued late into the afternoon until it all went quiet and an early night beckoned!

Sunday was a fantastic day! It was warm, the wind dropped away to a slight breeze, conditions were pretty much perfect although, unfortunately, our numbers had dwindled somewhat.

Max Curtis improved to a 17.18s but with a slightly slower terminal at 71.8 mph to set the trend for a lot of other riders.

Kerry Phillips was now all alone in 500cc Racing and beat his own class record with a 11.19s@114.9 mph.

In 1000cc Racing, Paul Houghton beat his own class record with a 9.80s@141.8 mph, from Richard Ward who took a bit off his previous best with a 10.64s@136.1 mph. Then it was Kerry Herrington,

who couldn't improve on her Saturday time, and Libby Curtis who dipped into the 11s with an 11.85s@115.3 mph.

In Unlimited Racing, Steve Everett improved slightly to 9.82s@141.0 mph but still a bit away from his class record. Pete Herrington couldn't improve on his Saturday best but was still having lots of fun!

In Vintage up to 350cc, Alan Randle was really getting the Ducati working well, four of his runs were under Ken Thorns previous record (16.35s) and ended up with an excellent 15.93s@80.2 mph. Richard Morgan improved on his Rudge to a 16.42s@74.2 mph until, just into his third run, the cylinder barrel cracked. It didn't look like the rod had made a bid for freedom, just a big crack and a bit now missing. Richard decided to retire both bikes while he had at least one still working! Noah Harrison took nearly a second and a half off his previous best, 16.68s@74.8 mph.

In Unlimited Vintage, Richard Morgan shaved a little off his Saturday time on his bigger Rudge with a 14.83s@83.0 mph before retiring.

Jamie Lawn was now on his own in Classic Scooter. Sadly, after his first run, very slightly slower than Saturday, he discovered a cracked exhaust header. Annoyingly it had cracked previously and been beautifully brazed back together, this time it had cracked just before the brazed section! With no chance of 'on site' repair that was the end of his day.

Mike Pacey was also on his own in Open Scooter, improving slightly to 13.6s@90.8 mph.

In Classic Open, Mark Taylor had spent yesterday evening slightly shortening the swing arm extension in an effort to improve traction, it clearly worked as he beat his own class record (9.98s) with a 9.87s@133.8 mph.

Bizarrely, my class, 750 Road Bike is now the most populated! Ben London improved on both his bikes, with a 10.61s@130.6 mph on the ZX6 and a 10.86s@126.2 mph on the ZX7.

Matthew Braine was nearly into the 10s with a 11.01s@126.2 mph, I got a new PB with 11.284s@117.8 mph, Steve Walton came to join in the fun, running his 'ride to work' Daytona 660 to 11.51s@113.7 mph, Amanda Taylor improved to 14.1s@95.7 mph and Gill Pacey also improved to 14.72s@88.4 mph.

In Unlimited Road Bike, Steve Walton was running his GSXR1000 and took Zac Holts previous days class record with a 10.23s@139.1 mph before a rapid rise in revs but no increase in speed signalled the clutch had cried enough. Zac couldn't improve on his Saturday time, Dunk Rose did improve to 10.71s@144.7 mph.

As if all this wasn't enough excitement, we decided to run a round of the Elimination Challenge. Ah, so that'll be me out in the first round then as usual, but not this time!

My first opponent should have been Jamie Lawn but he had retired, so I had a BYE. In the next round I was against Kerry Phillips. Our times were very close, the tree ran down virtually together and I was away, Kerry uncharacteristically fluffed his start and couldn't catch me. After that I found myself in the final against Steve Everett, well there was only going to be one outcome there! Indeed Steve was past me by $\frac{3}{4}$ track and even had time to sit up before the line. Still, very happy to have made it to the final!

Later, Kerry challenged me to a rerun, a straight race on the greens as our times were so close. What a race! It was, as Wayne informed me, a 'hole shot' win, to me! I did have to run to within 1/1000 of my new pb to do it mind you. My reaction was 0.49 to Kerrys 0.61, he was quicker to 60', 1.70 to

my 1.88 and quicker at the mid, 7.13 to my 7.26, across the line Kerrys time was 11.247s, mine was 11.285s, we were side by side all the way but I just crossed the line first, the winning margin, 0.085s!

We were both buzzing as we got back and parked up, what a way to end the weekend!