Harley Owners Group (HOG) – New South Wales Chapter

HOGS – The Official riding club of Harley-Davidson

A biker article for your enjoyment – May, 2018

Today our feature story is on the annual Isle of Man TT motorcycle race (TT for Tourist Trophy). Also included are some fun facts about this island.

Image 1 – The Isle of Man TT was established in the year 1907.

I did not attend the Isle of Man TT so this presentation is based on research, mainly through Google and Google Images. I first became interested in the TT after watching the Doco-movie “Closer to the Edge” back in 2011.

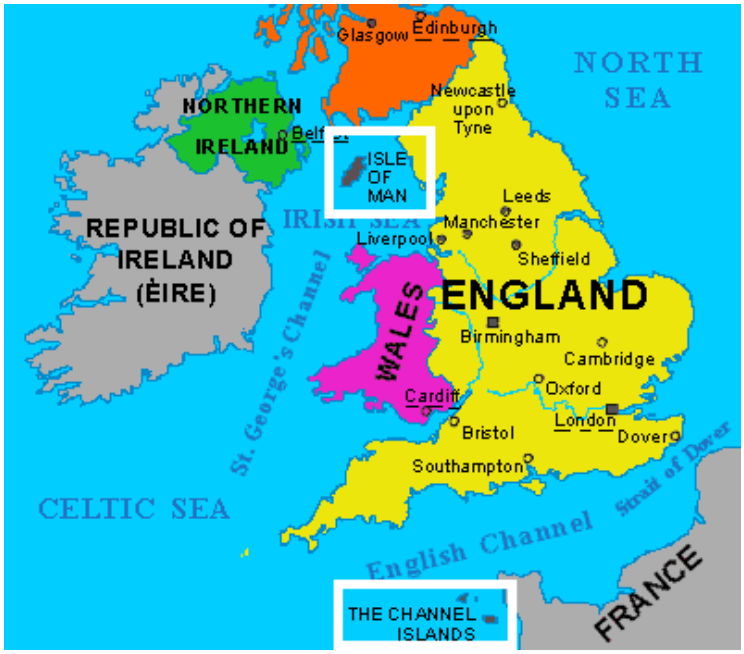

Image 2 – The Isle of Man is located between the islands of Great Britain and Ireland in the middle of the Northern Irish Sea. It is almost equidistant from England, Northern Island, Scotland and Wales. It is not part of the U.K. but is an internally self-governing Crown Dependency. The head of state is the Lord of Man, a role currently held by Queen Elizabeth II.

The Isle of Man is also known simply as Mann.

Image 3 – A map of the Isle of Man also showing Douglas as the capital. It is only 52 kms long and at its widest only 22 kms wide. Its population is around 83,000 people. Regular ferries run from Douglas to Liverpool (England) and Heysham (near Lancaster, Lancashire, England).

There are two official languages on the island, these being Manx, the original language, and English. The Manx language is closely related to Irish and Scottish Gaelic but is not widely practiced and is considered to be critically endangered.

Image 4 – A map showing the motorcycle race circuit known as the Snaefell Mountain Course which is run in a clockwise direction. One lap of the circuit is 37.7 miles long and includes over 200 corners, and all on public roads which are used as a road-racing circuit. Obviously the roads are closed to the public when the riders take to the circuit.

The Isle of Man TT is the main international event associated with this island, colloquially known just as “The TT”. It is the oldest race of them all, dating back to 1907. The circuit is also the oldest motorcycle racing circuit still in use.

The start/finish line is located at the capital city of Douglas.

Image 5 – An aerial view of the Snaefell Mountain Course highlighted with the white outline. The course climbs from sea level to an altitude of over 396 m.

Image 6 – The Manx Pound is the official currency on the Isle of Man and it is tied to the Pound Sterling.

The Isle of Man is a low tax economy with no capital gains tax, wealth tax, stamp duty or inheritance tax, and with a top rate of income tax of only 20%.

Image 7 – The first TT was held in 1907 and takes place in late May and early June. It has long been considered to be one of the greatest motorcycle sporting events of the world and has become a festival for motorcycling culture. For many it is simply the “road racing capital of the world” and it’s most prestigious.

During race week, the TT races create a carnival atmosphere with picnicking spectators flanking vantage points on the circuit similar to what happens at other community festivals such as at the bicycle race “Le Tour de France”.

Image 8 – Along the course are more than 500 race marshals, everyone a volunteer. Here a Marshall at the start point counts down the 10 second interval between riders as they start their race.

Image 9 – The TT is a series of motorcycle races in 9 categories, these being:

- Superbike TT – 6 laps
- Supersport TT – 4 laps
- Lightweight TT – 4 laps
- Lightweight TT – 3 laps
- Senior TT – 6 laps
- Senior TT – 4 laps
- Superstock TT – 4 laps
- Zero TT (electric bikes) – 1 lap
- Sidecar TT – 3 laps

The Senior TT is the most prestigious of all and is the last race of the meet. It's the race that makes the headlines.

The races are run in a time trial format, with the No.1 qualifier leaving the line 10 seconds before the No.2 qualifier who leaves 10 seconds before the No.3 qualifier and so on.

Just as an example, the specifications for the Superbike TT motorcycles are as follows:

- Over 750 cc up to 1,000 cc 4 cylinders 4-stroke
- Over 750 cc up to 1,000 cc 3 cylinders 4-stroke
- Over 850 cc up to 1,200 cc 2 cylinders 4-stroke
- Minimum weight of 165 kgs.

Total overall race winners

Rider	Wins
Joey Dunlop	26
John McGuinness	23
Dave Molyneux	17
Ian Hutchinson, Michael Dunlop	16
Mike Hailwood	14
Bruce Anstey	12
Steve Hislop, Phillip McCallen	11
Giacomo Agostini, Robert Fisher, Ian Lougher, Stanley Woods	10
Mick Boddice, David Jefferies, Siegfried Schauzu	9
Jim Moodie, Chas Mortimer, Phil Read, Charlie Williams	8
Mick Grant, Tony Rutter	7
Geoff Duke, Jimmie Guthrie, Jim Redman, John Surtees	6
Alec Bennett, Nick Crowe, Robert Dunlop, Brian Reid, Michael Rutter, Carlo Ubbiali	5
Ben Birchall, Klaus Enders, Freddie Frith, Wal Handley, Trevor Ireson, Dave Leach, Ray Pickrell, Tarquinio Provini, Bill Smith, Jock Taylor, John Williams	4
Adrian Archibald, Ray Amm, Simon Beck, Graeme Crosby, Max Deubel, Harold Daniell, Carl Fogarty, Alex George, Tom Herron, Alan Jackson, Ryan Farquhar, Tony Jefferies, Klaus Klaffenböck, Dave Leech, Rob McElnea, Bob McIntyre, Phil Mellor, Dave Morris, Chris Palmer, Walter Schneider, Ian Simpson, Darren Carguillo, Rolf Steinhausen, Luigi Taveri, Barry Woodland	3
Fergus Anderson, Hugh Anderson, Manliff Barrington	

Those winning 2 or less TT's are not shown here for brevity.

On this list are Joey Dunlop (26 wins), Michael Dunlop (16 wins) and Robert Dunlop (5 wins) who form part of a motorcycle racing dynasty. Joey and Robert are brothers and Michael is the son of Robert. Joey and Robert both died in motorcycle accidents while racing, Joey in 2000 (aged 48) and Robert in 2008 (also aged 48).

Image 10 – The national flag of the Isle of Man with its symbol, the so-called “three legs of mann”, a triskelion of three legs conjoined at the thigh.

Image 11 – The Isle of Man coat of arms also includes the triskelion and the motto translates to “whichever way you throw it, it will stand”.

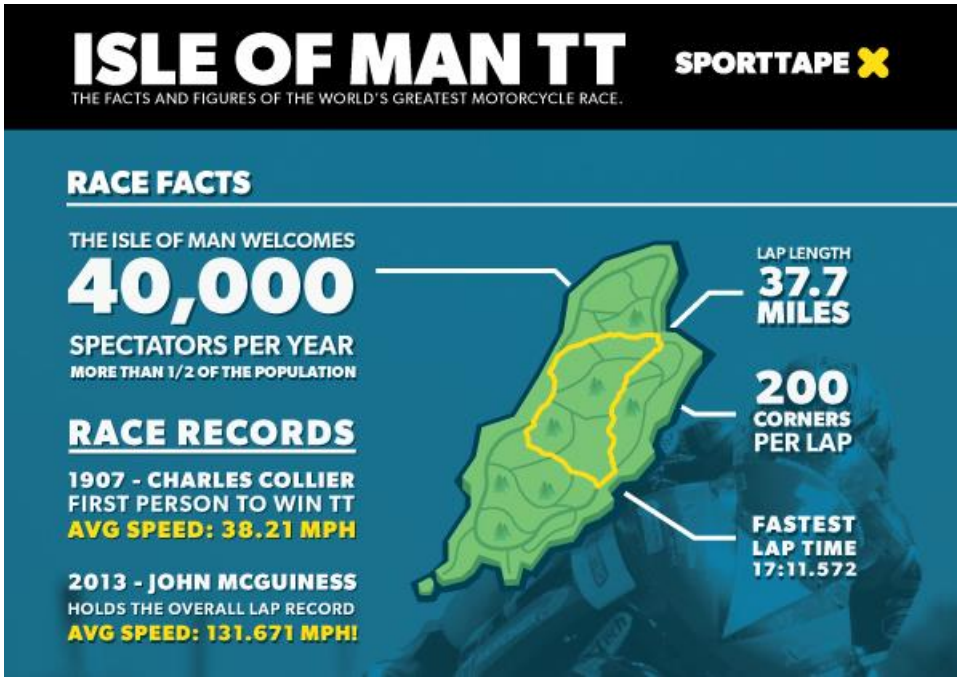

Image 12 – Some interesting fun facts for you. The average speed back in 1907 was a mere 38.21 mph. I wonder what it will be in 2107 if the event is still running then.

Image 13 – As the lap length is so long at 37.7 miles, races vary from only 1 lap to 6 laps depending on the category. Presently the lap record is 17 minutes 11.572 seconds so to complete a 6 lap race would only take around 1 hour and 45 minutes.

Image 14 – Legal high! These riders don’t have a death wish but are simply addicted to speed. Their craving for speed is likened to an addiction which can only be satisfied on the track!

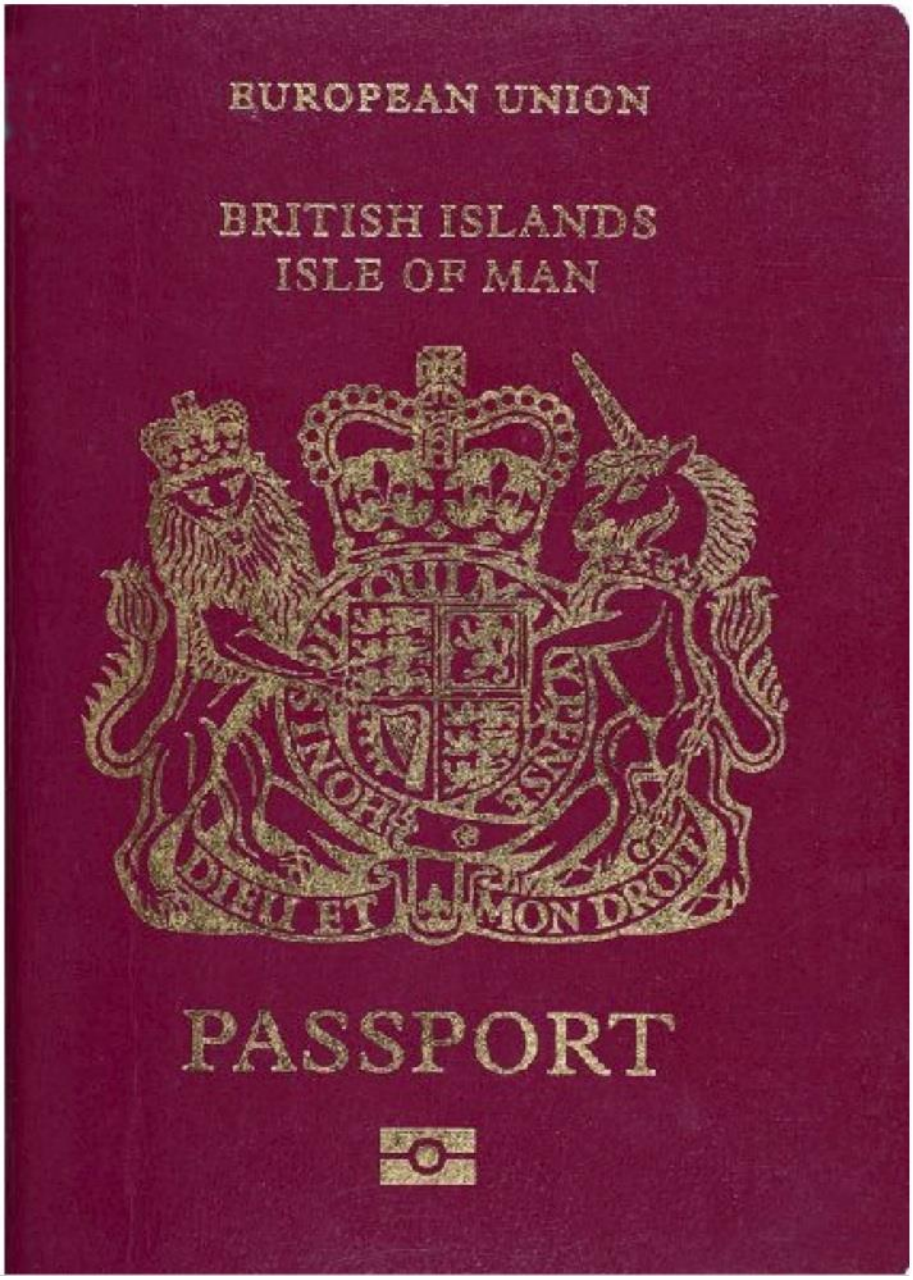

Image 15 – Passports issued to Isle of Man citizens say “British Islands – Isle of Man” on the cover but the nationality status stated in the passport is simply “British Citizen”.

Locals are called Manxman or Manxwoman or simply Manx.

Image 16 – Over 40,000 motorcycle racing enthusiasts from around the world will converge onto the Isle of Man and take to their favourite spot along the hedgerows to secure a best vantage point to watch history being made before their eyes. They've come to see the most dangerous motorcycle race in the world!

Image 17 – Newcomers to the TT familiarise themselves with the circuit prior to the race by having done hundreds of laps in a car and/or bike, watch DVD's on the race and get the computer game of the TT to practice on. They pretty much know where they're going when they race for the first time.

Image 18 – The course goes straight through towns and villages. The relative safety of the sand trap is replaced by stone walls, trees and steep mountainside drops. The riders, however, still reach speeds of more than 200 mph!

Image 19 – The Manx cat is a breed of domestic cat famous the world over originating from the Isle of Man. It has a naturally occurring mutation that shortens its tail. Many Manx cats have a small stub of a tail, but Manx cats are best known as being entirely tailless which is the most distinguishing characteristic of the breed.

Manx cats come in all coat colours and patterns and are prized as skilled hunters and have thus become sought after by farmers with rodent problems and are a preferred ship's cat breed. They are also said to be social, tame and active.

Image 20 – These sidecars are not attached to the motorcycle like they were in the old days but are purpose built motorcycles.

Image 21 – No part of the circuit is the same, everywhere has got something different and it's a combination of all aspects including high speed straights and really technical twisty bits. Added to this, grip levels vary due to a combination of factors such as wet/dry areas and leaves falling from trees as parts of the circuit are under tree canopies. Variable weather conditions also play a part.

Image 22 – Riders constantly tread the fine line between triumph and tragedy. They ride as hard as they can and need to know their limits without going over them.

Image 23 – The Isle of Man uses the Manx cat as one of the symbols of the island nation. It also figures on numerous postage stamps as well as currency.

Image 24 – You need both balls and skill and an intense desire to win to get on the podium at the TT. You also need the whole package of a good team, good preparation and a lot of experience from the rider.

Image 25 – Great skill is needed to keep these powerful bikes under control.

Image 26 – Many fans stand and sit just feet away from the track where in some parts the motorcycles blast by at 200 mph!

Image 27 – Though they moved to Manchester at a young age prior to settling in Redcliffe (a suburb of Brisbane) in 1958, the Bee Gees were in fact born on the Isle of Man. Here we see from left Maurice, Robin and Barry.

The Bee Gees were one of the most commercially successful and critically acclaimed groups in the history of popular music.

Maurice and Robin are in fact twins born on December 22, 1949 whilst Barry was born on September 1, 1946.

Maurice died unexpectedly on January 12, 2003 at the age of only 53. His death was due to complications of a twisted intestine with his bowel and small intestine becoming so twisted they restricted his blood flow. It is said the singer was born with a malformed intestine which potentially led to this life-threatening kink.

Robin died on May 20, 2012 at the age of 62. His death was due to liver and kidney failure brought on after a long battle with colorectal cancer.

Barry is still performing doing solo tours and guest appearances with other acclaimed bands. He also does numerous TV guest appearances and performances.

Current race records

Category	Rider(s)	Machine	Tyres	Year	Race time	Average speed	
						mph	km/h
Superbike TT (6 laps)	Michael Dunlop	BMW S1000RR	Dunlop	2016	01:44:14.259	130.306	209.707[52][53]
Supersport TT (4 laps)	Ian Hutchinson	Yamaha YZF-R6	Metzeler	2016	01:11:36.808	126.445	203.494[58][59]
Lightweight TT (4 laps)	Ivan Lintin	Kawasaki ER650	Metzeler	2016	01:16:26.681	118.454	190.633[60]
Lightweight TT (3 laps)	Ivan Lintin	Kawasaki ER650	Metzeler	2015	57:06.070	118.936	191.409[61]
Senior TT (6 laps)	Michael Dunlop	BMW S1000RR	Dunlop	2016	01:43:56.129	130.685	210.317[1][2]
Senior TT (4 laps)	John McGuinness	Honda CBR1000RR	Dunlop	2015	01:09:23.903	130.481	209.989
Superstock TT (4 laps)	Ian Hutchinson	BMW S1000RR	Metzeler	2016	01:09:47.543	129.745	208.804[54][55]
TT Zero (1 lap)	John McGuinness	Mugen Shinden	Dunlop	2015	18:58.743	119.279	191.961
Sidecar TT (3 laps)	Ben Birchall and Tom Birchall	LCR Sidecar	Avon	2015	58:24.971	116.259	187.101

Times seem to be improving year after year, however 2017 was a particularly wet year so times were not improved upon then. The average speed record is a staggering 209.70 km/hr!!!

Image 28 – Spectators position themselves precariously close to the action.

Image 29 – Riders start at ten second intervals but this gap is quickly closed during the contest.

Race awards

Race winner trophies for 2016

Race	Trophy	Rider(s)	Machine	Tyres	Year	Average speed mph	Average speed km/h
Senior TT	Senior Tourist Trophy[1]	Michael Dunlop	BMW S1000RR	Dunlop	2016	130.685	210.317[1][2]
TT Superbike	TT Superbike Trophy	Michael Dunlop	BMW S1000RR	Dunlop	2016	130.306	209.707[52][53]
TT Superstock	John Hartle Trophy	Ian Hutchinson	BMW S1000RR	Metzeler	2016	129.745	208.804[54][55]
TT Supersport Race 1	Junior Tourist Trophy	Ian Hutchinson	Yamaha YZF-R6	Metzeler	2016	126.445	203.494[58][59]
TT Supersport Race 2	Classic TT Trophy	Ian Hutchinson	Yamaha YZF-R6	Metzeler	2016	125.905	202.624[62]
TT Lightweight	Lightweight TT Trophy	Ivan Lintin	Kawasaki ER650	Metzeler	2016	118.454	190.633[60]
TT Sidecar Race 1	Fred W. Dixon Trophy	John Holden and Andrew Winkle	LCR Suzuki 600 cc	Avon	2016	114.282	183.919[63][64]
TT Sidecar Race 2	Sidecar TT Trophy	Ben Birchall and Tom Birchall	LCR Honda 600 cc	Avon	2016	115.658	186.134[65]

As you can see from this table of results just for the year 2016 it is possible for an individual rider to win in more than one category in the one year. And in fact two individual riders took out 5 of the 6 solo race trophies between them for this one year (sidecar events require 2 riders).

A rising future star is Peter Hickman who does not appear on this list. In 2014 he became the fastest newcomer ever to have lapped the Mountain Course and in 2017 he went on the podium in all five of the solo races, the only rider to achieve such a feat. He will definitely be one to watch in 2018.

Image 30 – This is Ian Hutchinson “Hutchy” at the 2010 TT. He has to date attended 12 TT’s and has won 16 TT trophies and has finished on the podium (top 3) 27 times! The race marshal is doing the 10 second countdown with him.

Image 31 – An image of Ian Hutchinson, born in England on August 12, 1979 and now 38 years old.

Hutchinson is no stranger to mishap and has suffered many a race crash resulting in broken bones. An injury to his left leg saw him endure 30 operations between 2010 and 2014.

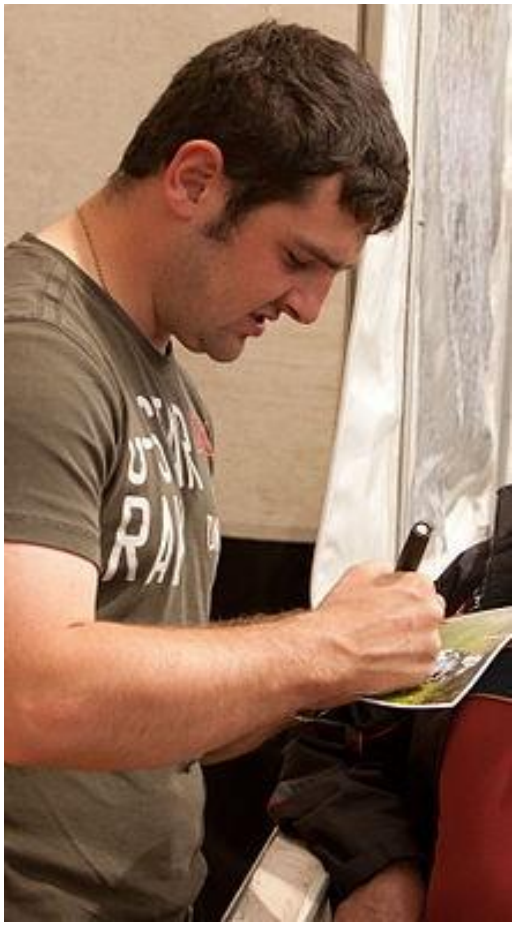

Image 32 – An image of Michael Dunlop signing autographs at the 2012 TT. Born on April 10, 1989 (now 29 years old) in Northern Ireland he has attended 11 TT's for 16 wins and 19 podium finishes. In both 2013 and 2014 he had 4 individual trophy wins.

There is fierce rivalry between these two riders, Ian Hutchinson and Michael Dunlop, the event's fastest and most successful riders in its history.

Image 33 – The Manx Loaghtan is a striking breed of sheep from the Iron Age that is only found on the Isle of Man. It is characterized by having 4 and sometimes 6 horns. It is now considered critically endangered with just 1,500 breeding females remaining.

Image 34 – Like the Manx cat, the Loaghtan sheep is also featured on Isle of Man currency.

Image 35 – A rider exhibiting excellent skills aboard his powerful machine.

Image 36 – British born Guy Martin is well known as a motorcycle racer and television personality. Born on November 4, 1981 (now 36 years old) he is seen as something of a cult hero and is considered one of the greatest TT riders not to have won at the Isle of Man TT. Guy has competed in 14 TT's for zero wins but with 17 podiums.

In his television career he has presented programmes on various engineering topics and has done a series on "speed" where he sets speed records in a variety of human and engine powered vehicles. He has also authored 3 books and competed in mountain bicycle races. He was also the focus of a documentary on the TT race entitled "Closer to the Edge" from 2011.

Guy has had his share of misfortune on the race track having broken his back twice in separate racing accidents. On July 26, 2017 he officially announced his retirement from motorcycle racing without achieving his greatest ambition of a TT win.

Image 37 – Don’t let the hedgerow get in the way of your preferred cornering line!

Image 38 – Part of the allure that comes with the TT is the great spectacle and danger that comes from road racing. There is a very fine line between success and failure and triumph and tragedy. Tragedy lurks behind all TT races mixed with the highs of victory. On average, the TT claims the lives of 2 riders each year and the casualty list isn't contained to just the racers as it is very easy for spectators and race officials to be collected in an incident on the track. There are calls from various quarters for the TT to be ended and it seems just a matter of time before this race is banned for health and safety reasons. The competitors reply is that they are fully aware of the risks and that they compete because they love the TT. The TT is billed in popular culture as "the most dangerous motorsport event in the world".

With death an almost certainty each year I don't think this race would be permitted to continue if it were held in Australia unless drastic safety improvements were made.

Image 39 – The TT riders flirt with disaster at really high speeds at every turn. 255 competitors have died in accidents during official practices or races since its inception. It is clearly one of the most dangerous sports in the world, if not the most dangerous. Three lives were claimed in 2017. The highest death count was in 1970 with 6 racers losing their lives.

Image 40 – The Isle of Man is considered one of the most dangerous circuits in the world but is considered to be a rewarding experience by most racers. There are no catch fences, runoff zones or soft landings at the TT! Accidents don't deter these riders and it's not uncommon to see competitors wobble onto their bikes at the start of their race due to them having sustaining temporary and/or permanent injuries.

Image 41 – Low levels of light pollution give the island dazzling night skies. It has 26 officially recognized “Dark Sky Discovery Sites”, the largest cluster in the British Isles and possibly Europe. The Milky Way, the Great Andromeda Galaxy and occasionally the Northern Lights can be seen with the naked eye from this island.

Image 42 – Again we see spectators enjoying their close proximity to the action.

Image 43 – Electric superbikes are now a part of the TT in the “TT Zero” event. In 2017 the winner achieved an average speed of 189.4 km/hr. Compare this to the average speed record of petrol bikes at 209.7 km/hr.

The Isle of Man TT Zero Class was founded in 2010 and is credited with being one of the most important venues for the development and exposure of electric race bikes (and as a result, the development of electric motorcycles in general).

Fastest lap awards

Race	Trophy	Rider(s)	Machine	Year	Average speed		Time
					mph	km/h	
Overall	Jimmy Simpson Trophy	Michael Dunlop	BMW S1000RR	2016	133.962	215.591	16:53.929[1][2]
Senior TT	Norman Brown Trophy	Michael Dunlop	BMW S1000RR	2016	133.962	215.591	16:53.929[1][2]
TT Superbike	John Williams Trophy	Michael Dunlop	BMW S1000RR	2016	133.393	214.675	16:58.254[52][53]
TT Superstock	Don Ryder Trophy	Ian Hutchinson	BMW S1000RR	2016	133.098	214.200	17:00.510[54][55]
TT Supersport Race	Formula 2 TT Trophy	Ian Hutchinson	Yamaha YZF-R6	2016	128.259	206.413	17:39.013[66]
TT Sidecar Race	Jock Taylor Trophy	Ben Birchall and Tom Birchall	LCR Honda 600 Sidecar	2016	116.798	187.968	19:22.928[63][64]

The biggest names in the TT presently are Michael Dunlop and Ian Hutchinson.

Image 44 – Historically the national dish on the Isle of Man is spuds & herring which consist of boiled potatoes with herring. This dish was popular due to its role in supporting the subsistence farmers and fishermen of the island.

Image 45 – In recent times if you ask a local to name the national dish you would probably be told “chips, cheese & beef gravy”.

The TT schedule for 2018 is as follows:

- Qualifying – Saturday May 26 – Friday 1 June
- Race Programme – Saturday June 2 – Friday 8 June

You have one week of practice sessions followed by one week of racing. It has also been a tradition for spectators to tour the course on motorcycles during the TT on “Mad Sunday”, an informal and unofficial event held on the Sunday between “Practice Week” and “Race Week”.

Image 46 – Wouldn’t it be marvellous to tour the course on your own motorcycle during the TT?

Image 47 – Riders enjoying Mad Sunday! You won't be doing any lap records during this event! I think you'll be lucky to get out of first gear!!

Image 48 – Mad Sunday bikers enjoying their lap of the Snaefell Mountain Course!

Image 49 – Of course there are souvenirs to prove you were there on Mad Sunday.

You can get live highlights during the race from the official Isle of Man TT website at https://www.iomtt.com/

Ride Safe!

Sergio
Editor/Historian