

Motorcycling with John Savage

TT entries flood in

Recruitment of new talent has been one of the success stories in the Isle of Man TT's recent history, with numerous newcomers going on to take wins and rostrum finishes, and this year should be no exception.

2010 sees another batch of newcomers, all of whom have tremendous experience, particularly at British Championship level, and the majority of whom are under the age of 30 and keen to follow in the wheel tracks of some of the stars of today.

It's easy to forget that the likes of Lincolnshire duo Steve Plater and Guy Martin, together with Australian Cameron Donald and Manxman Conor Cummins, made their debuts in 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007, whilst that period has also seen Scotsman Keith Amor and Lincs man Gary Johnson tackle the famous 37.73 miles Snaefell Mountain Course for the first time, and all have taken podium finishes, with Plater and Donald already double winners and Plater and Cummins amongst only three riders to officially break the magical 130mph barrier for the daunting 37.73 mile Snaefell Mountain Course.

It doesn't end there, with James Hillier, William Dunlop, Mark Buckley and Ian Mackman

all having recorded top ten finishes, and Les Shand, Mark Miller and Jimmy Moore also impressing. Last year saw Steve Mercer and Ben Wylie both sure to improve further, whilst the same can be said of impressive European stars Luis Carreira, Michal Dokoupil and Rico Penzkofer.

South African Hudson Kennaugh is, arguably, the leading name on this year's newcomers' list, having finished runner-up to Cal Crutchlow in the 2008 British Supersport Championship and fifth in that year's World Championship round at Brands Hatch, whilst Crumlin's Stephen Thompson has been a leading contender at both the Macau Grand Prix and North West 200.

Stephen has also been a long time 'fixture' in the British Superstock 1000 Championship and that's where Daniel Hegarty, Kenny Gilbertson and James Hurrell have all started in recent years. The trio, all under the age of 25, have regularly featured in the top ten, with Gilbertson having a podium finish, and all three are exciting youngsters whose progress at the TT will be eagerly watched.

David Jones will be one of the youngest riders on the TT grid, the 21 old year having finished fifth overall in last year's British Supersport Cup, the privateers' series within the blue riband

British Superbike Championship. An interesting TT entrant is Gary May, one of Britain's leading 250cc riders at the end of the 1990's and MRO champion in 2006 — the Berkshire rider also excelled on four-stroke machinery in the last decade, whilst 2008 Irish Superbike Champion, Brian McCormack from Waterford, will make his TT debut.

There's further overseas representation, with Australian David Johnson, the Adelaide rider who commenced his UK career in 2002 against Cal Crutchlow, Tom Sykes, Craig Jones and Guy Martin in the Juniorstock Championship, whilst recent years have seen him frequently picking up points in the British Superbike Championship.

Swiss rider Herve Ganther, a former star of the European Superstock Championship, will bring his Honda Switzerland machines, whilst Clinton Pienaar is one of South Africa's most highly respected and successful riders.

Heading the entry is reigning 'King of the Mountain' John McGuinness, and with 15 wins to his name, the Morecambe star has deservedly earned his status as a TT legend.

The 37 year old outright lap record holder will line up at No 2 in all five solo races: both Superbike, both Supersport and

Superstock. Alongside McGuinness at HM Plant Honda will be last year's 'blue riband' Senior race winner, reigning British Supersport champion Steve Plater, and he continues with the same number as 2009, setting off at number 7. He will be in HM Plant colours for all bar the Supersport races, in which he will be on board a Padgett's machine.

Yorkshire motorcycle dealers Padgett's will again be supporting Bingley's Ian Hutchinson, a double winner last year and ten times podium finisher. 'Hutchy' heads into the event capable of winning any race from his No 4 starting position, as does the ebullient 28 year old Guy Martin, who continues at No 8, now riding for Ulster-based Wilson Craig Racing, on his Honda machinery.

Leading the field away at No 1 will be seven times TT victor, New Zealander Bruce Anstey, who will be kept to a disappointing 2009 season behind him, whilst the same can be said of his Relentless TAS Suzuki team-mate Cameron Donald — the Australian, who stays at No 6, lapped at more than 131mph during practice last year, but 24 hours later his TT was over after a practice crash, so there's plenty of unfinished business for the Cookstown-based ace.

Two other Suzuki riders with a great chance of glory are Gary

Johnson, who rides for Scotsman Alistair Flanagan's AIM Racing, and Ballymoney man Adrian Archibald, a triple TT winner, with the duo lining up at numbers 11 and 9 respectively.

Kawasaki has strong representation at TT2010, with Manxman Conor Cummins at No 10, arguably their best chance of success on the McAdoo Racing machines, although Dromara-based Weshman Ian Lougher (No 3) can never be ruled out.

Michael Rutter (No 15) will be there with his British Superbike Championship Ducati, and although he recently split from the Ballymoney-based JMF/Millsport Yamaha team, Falkirk's Keith Amor is scheduled to go off at No 5 in all five races and is another rider who could return to the podium.

The Dunlop brothers from Ballymoney, Michael and William, enjoyed a highly successful TT last year, with Michael claiming a superb victory in the second Supersport race, and with strong machinery in all classes, Michael should be there or thereabouts in all of them — he will line up at No 9 in the Supersport division and No 14 in the larger capacity races, while William starts at 14 in the Superbike and Superstock races.



Three promising TT newcomers, from left: South African Hudson Kennaugh, Gary May and Crumlin's Stephen Thompson.

'Local' support for Kirk

Ardsman Kirk Jamison in Greyabney, where Kirk's Supporters' Club hosts its monthly meetings.

After its formation in October 2007, the Kirk Jamison Racing Supporters' Club set up base in The Wildfowler; however, the club temporarily had to meet elsewhere for a time, following the closure of the bar/restaurant, but Kirk and the club were delighted to return, after the premises were bought over and completely refurbished.

Kirk explained: "James could not have been my self, and to the Supporters' Club and myself, and we now have the ideal location and facilities from which to run our club, events, and also to bring other riders and teams to."

Jamison's season begins in earnest at Bishopscourt tomorrow (Friday) and on Saturday and at Kirkistown on Monday, and Kirk smiled: "Easter Monday is a perfect example of when I can bring a lot of top racers back for a beer and something to eat, after a full weekend of racing, and, depending on how the results go, maybe even a bit of a party!"

Kirk continued: "I have always received tremendous support from the local community, and since we based the club in Greyabney that support has simply increased. I cannot thank everyone enough. The Wildfowler used to be the first port of call for all racers after an event at Kirkistown and now with James at the helm, I foresee that trend returning.

"I would like to thank James, firstly

for his hospitality over the past year and secondly for extending further support by moving into direct sponsorship for 2010. We have struck a deal which will see The Wildfowler logo carried on my Superbike throughout the season, reminiscent of fellow Greyabney man Alan Caughey's racing days and the support he received from the same venue."

Martin's pre-Train Yamaha R6 in Spain, followed by two third places in his first races of the season at Bishopscourt a couple of weeks ago, and a wet test at Kirkistown on Monday, where he managed to find good wet settings for both his bikes, Kirk can't wait to get going in the Irish Superbike Championship this weekend, aboard the Jim Angus Contracts Honda Fireblade CBR1000RR, and in the Irish Supersport Championship, astride the Mar-Train Yamaha.

He grinned: "Things are looking pretty good now. I have managed to retain all my sponsors from last year, as well as bringing The Wildfowler on board."

In addition to Jim Angus Contracts, Mar-Train Racing, his Supporters' Club and The Wildfowler Inn, Kirk's backers are: Feckin Whiskey, Nice Bike Paintshop, Abacus Print House, H&J Martin, CAC Group, J. D. McGeown Ltd, Irish Racer Magazine, AGV, RST and Alpinestars.

Jamaican youngsters to benefit from bike show

Deprived children in Jamaica will benefit from the proceeds of a Bike Show, to be staged in Cookstown next Saturday, April 10.

With the assistance of Cookstown motorcycling correspondent Jimmy Atkinson, Donaghmore community midwife Deirdre Patterson has organised the show, which will be held in First Cookstown Presbyterian Church Hall, Fair Hill Road, on Saturday, from 11am until 5pm.

Money-raise-based Relentless TAS Suzuki's Australian road race ace, Cameron Donald, who resides in Cookstown during the UK racing season, will officially open the show.

During a family holiday to Jamaica in July 2004, Deirdre was invited to visit a children's camp run by a missionary from Cookstown, and it proved to be a life changing experience.

Deirdre explained: "We came away saddened by what we had experienced and how we take so much for granted in life. Most of the kids we met were orphans, with few ambitions in life, other than having a roof over their heads.

"We felt led to try to help improve their standard of living in some small way, so we organised a team from our church to go to Jamaica in 2006 and again in 2008, to do some practical work, which involved building, painting and refurbishing work, and working with the children within many of the schools which were in very isolated and deprived areas."

She continued: "We are currently supporting a small church to rebuild basic facilities: a combined health clinic and after-school club, which was destroyed by a hurricane in 2007."

Deirdre decided to combine her passion for the work in Jamaica with her love of motorcycling by organising next month's show, with advice and counsel from Jimmy Atkinson.

The show will have something for all the family and will include a large display of racing and road bikes, from 250cc to Superbikes, plus moto cross, mini motos and classic bikes — some of which have never been on public display before — plus some rare rally cars.

Additionally, there will be trade stands, stalls, photos, memorabilia, clothing, helmets and much more.

In addition to Cam Donald, guest riders will include Dunganon duo Ryan Farquhar and John Burrows, plus Dromara legend

Ballygowan RRSC

The monthly meeting of Ballygowan and District Road Racing Supporters' Club takes place tonight (Thursday).

As usual the meeting takes place at La Mon House Hotel, Granshaw, with an 8pm start.

This year the club is backing Ballygowan's Michael Pearson, and new members will be made most welcome at tonight's meeting.

Refreshments will be available throughout the day, admission will be £5 for adults and £2 for senior citizens and under-14s, and all proceeds will go to the Jamaica project.

Further information is available from Deirdre on 077877 35488 or Jimmy on 07980 563578.

Superb line-up for Easter 'Eggstravaganza'



Looking forward to the opening round of the Irish Superbike Championship, the Enkalon Trophy meeting at Bishopscourt tomorrow (Friday) and on Saturday, are, from left: Gary McCormack from the PSNI Road Policing Department (Bike Safe); Uel Carson and Robert Fulton, Enkalon Motorcycle Club; Councillor William Dick, Chair of Down District Council; and riders Andrew and Glenn Irwin; Kirk Jamison; Gerard Kingham; Alastair Kirk and (kneeling) Nigel Percy.

There is a superb line-up of riders for the Easter 'Eggstravaganza', which witnesses the opening round of the Irish Superbike Championship at Bishopscourt tomorrow (Friday) and on Saturday, before the 'circus' moves to Kirkistown on Monday.

Relentless TAS Suzuki's Antipodean duo, New Zealander Bruce Anstey and Australian Cameron Donald, headline the entry for both meetings, and are scheduled to race in both the Superbike and Supersport classes, and although reigning Irish Superbike champion Alastair Seeley won't be commencing a defence of his title, as the Carrickfergus man will be at Brands Hatch for the start of the British Superbike Championship, alongside his team-mate, Toomebridge man Michael Laverty, the Easter weekend entry reads like a 'Who's Who' of Ireland's leading ISB regulars.

The line-up includes: 2008 ISB champion Brian McCormack from Waterford; his predecessor, Ballygowan man Michael Pearson, provided he is not hampered by a hand injury he picked up in a spill in a non-championship race at Bishopscourt a couple of weeks ago; last season's ISB runner-up,

Mark Johnson from Coleraine; former British National Superstock 1000 front-runner, Marshall Neill from Portadown, and his Kingsbury Racing team-mate, Ballymoney's Gerard Kingham; another former British Superstock regular, Crumlin Thompson from Stephen; Ballymena's Denver Robb; Ardsman Kirk Jamison on the Jim Angus Contracts Honda; James Dickson from Coleraine on the Mar-Train Suzuki; Ballymoney's triple Isle of Man TT winner, Adrian Archibald; Dunganon road race ace Ryan Farquhar; and Michael Dunlop from Dunloy, amongst others.

The Bishopscourt fixture, which boasts a prize fund of £22,000, hosts the 34th staging of the prestigious Enkalon Trophy race, although last year's winner, Scotsman Keith Amor, is unlikely to be on the grid, after the Falkirk man parted with the Ballymoney-based JMF Millsport Yamaha team.

There will be three races for

each Irish Short Circuit Championship class at Bishopscourt — ISB, Supersport, Supertwins, 250GP/Supersport 400, 125cc and Sidecar — with one race per class tomorrow, followed by two races for each class on Saturday, with the Enkalon Trophy race doubling as an ISB race.

The ISB races are sponsored by Walter Bell & Son Oil Fired Central Heating Services, of Carrickfergus, while the Supersport races are backed by Irish Racer Magazine, and the meeting — jointly promoted by Killinchy and District Motor Cycle Club and the Motor Cycle Road Racing Club of Ireland — is also supported by Down District Council.

Tomorrow, Bishopscourt will also host the first nuttravel.com 'Sail to Pole' to determine grid positions for the Superbike races, based on the format used in the World and British Superbike Championships: the fastest 20 riders from first

qualifying will go through to second qualifying, after which the fastest 10 go into 'Sail to Pole', with the pole qualifier receiving a trophy, plus £250.

Untimed practice gets underway for all classes at 9.30am tomorrow, with timed practice from 11.45am, including the final two 'Sail to Pole' sessions, followed by one race for each class. Warm-up commences on Saturday at 9am, with racing due to get underway at 10.30am and the Enkalon Trophy race is due to start at around 2pm.

Admission for both days is £15 for adults, with accompanied children free.

The feature race at Belfast & District Motor Club's second round of the ISB Championship at Kirkistown on Easter Monday is 'The Mayor's Trophy', as the event is supported by Ards Borough Council. Practice commences at 9am, with racing due to start at 1pm, with two races for each Irish Short Circuit Championship class.



Staff member Amanda McAwoy, from The Wildfowler Inn, Greyabney, tries Kirk Jamison's Honda superbike for size. J2S-1/4/10

Vodka Team MCC to back four riders



The Vodka Team Motorcycle Club at their official launch at Lisbarnett House, Lisbane, near Comber, last Saturday. Included are three of the riders the club will back this season: Killyleagh's Steven Beers, who is contesting this year's Irish Supersport Clubmans' Championship (on bike 25); Samatha Scott from Saintfield (69), who is racing in the Irish 125 Production Clubmans' Championship; and Ballygowan man Michael Pearson (36), who is expected to be a front-runner in this year's Irish Senior and Supersport Road Race Championships.

The Vodka Team Motorcycle Club will throw its support behind four riders this year, with backing for a trio of local competitors, plus assistance for Englishman James McBride.

McBride, from Kettering, will have support from the club for his efforts at the North West 200, Isle of Man TT, Ulster Grand Prix and Southern 100 in the Isle of Man, for which he will have a BMW Superbike, plus Yamaha Superstock and Supersport machines at his disposal.

The Vodka Team will also be backing Ballygowan's Michael Pearson's efforts in this year's Irish Superbike and Irish Supersport Road Race Championships, plus the Ulster Grand Prix and Southern 100.

The club is also supporting two of this season's Irish Clubmans' Championship competitors, with assistance for Killyleagh man Steven Beers, who opened his campaign in the Supersport Clubmans' Championship with a brace of fourth places in the opening round at Kirkistown, and Saintfield teenager Samatha Scott, who competes in the 125 Production Clubmans' Championship.

held a successful launch day at Lisbarnett House, Lisbane, near Comber, last Saturday afternoon, attended by all three Ulster riders they are assisting this year.

The club was launched by the three founding members last June, and membership has grown to 26, and new members will be made most welcome at the next club meeting, which takes place at the club's usual venue, Lisbarnett House, on April 15 at 8pm.

The club thanks everyone who support last Saturday's launch and also extends appreciation to the club sponsors: Nicky of Lisbarnett House, Robert Bunting Heating and Plumbing, The Lawnmower Man, WPB Contracts, Monoflik Racing and Tip Top Plastering.

Incidentally, the Vodka Team MCC will be running a bus to the North West 200 on May 15, with a return fare of £15. Anyone requiring further information should contact Gordon Jackson on 07753 468263.

Classic Road Racing Show

Ronnie Donnan has a new venue for his annual Classic Road Racing Show, having moved the event from Ballynahinch to Crossgar.

The popular show, staged under the auspices of the Fottengen Era Motor Cycle Racing Club of Ireland, will be held at Hill House Guest House Bar and Restaurant, Killyleagh Road, about a mile from Crossgar.

The event commences on Easter Tuesday, April 6, from 1pm, and there will be an auction of motorcycling memorabilia at 3pm.

A wide variety of classic motorcycles and classic cars will be on display, including Ronnie's recently acquired ex-Tony Rutter Ducati, on which the Midlands rider scored one of his Formula Two World Championship triumphs back in the 1980s.

Other particularly interesting bikes on display will include Larne man Esler Burke's Hugh Anderson 1962 Suzuki and Honda 4 replicas, plus Abe Alexander's 351 Yamaha, while Ballynahinch man William Carlisle will display his steam car, which was built around 1899.

Admission will be £3 and proceeds are in aid of 'Kids with Cancer'. All enquiries to Ronnie on 07597 927700.