

Centenary of the 37³/₄ miles Isle of Man TT Course

Home of the World's Greatest Road Races

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The Isle of Man Post Office is pleased to present a set of eight stamps to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the 37³/₄ mile Isle of Man TT Course. Providing a then and now look at the Course, we picture the vantage points where fans have gathered in their thousands to witness best in class road racing.

Adrian Earnshaw writes...

Sky-high emotions will have accompanied the spectators, competitors and teams who gathered for the 1920 TT Races; the first event following the return of peace in November 1918.

At last, the Island was again buzzing with excitement that the British motorcycle industry was back in business, making motorbikes instead of munitions and eager to showcase their latest products at the TT.

Six long years had elapsed since Cyril Pullen and his Rudge had crossed the winning line in 1914 and, sadly, some familiar faces had departed the scene forever. Happily, however, more than twenty new ones were stepping up to take their place, among them Graham Walker, George Dance, Bert le Vack, Gus Kuhn and Rueben Harveyson, all of whom would eventually feature highly in the motorcycle hall of fame.

To add to the anticipation of this first post-war event, a significant change in the TT Course was adopted to give spectators in the Island's capital the thrill of seeing machines travel at high speed along Glencrutchery Road.

This was achieved by adding Signpost Corner, Bedstead Corner and Governor's Bridge to the route, following the ascent from Hillberry and replacing the pre-war section which had involved competitors turning right at Cronk-ny-Mona and proceeding down Johnny Watterson's Lane to its junction with Ballanard Road where a left hand turn had been taken to join the top of Bray Hill.

The new arrangement now provided the machines exiting Governor's Bridge an opportunity to accelerate at full speed along Glencrutchery Road passing Noble's Park on the way; the area which had been chosen for the re-location of the competitors' paddock.

To add to the pleasure of the spectators, it was also decided to place the start and finish line in much the same position as it is today, and apart from a minor route deviation in Ramsey in the very early 1920s, the final piece of the TT jigsaw was in place.

The 37.73 mile TT Course was complete and although many highway improvements have been undertaken over the years to the road surface and to ease bends for everyday traffic, the route has remained unchanged since 1920.

As we know, the event has developed a history which continues to be enriched each year and it is fascinating to wonder if any of those present in 1920 ever imagined two-wheeled machinery would still be racing along the very same circuit one hundred years later.

Sadly, in 2020, all racing was cancelled due to COVID-19, but that only gave us more time to reflect on our Isle of Man road racing memories and look forward to 2021 and beyond and perhaps one day seek World Heritage status for our unique and fantastic race course? Long live the TT!

1st Class (1) - Signpost Corner: Superstar of the 1930s, Stanley Woods, rounds Signpost Corner in the 1932 Senior.

1st Class (2) - Signpost Corner: Heading for the podium in 2005, talented Irishman Martin Finnegan and his Supersport machine exit Signpost Corner.

£1.25 Value (1) - Cronk-ny-Mona: The imperious Geoff Duke and his Gilera at Cronk-ny-Mona during his 1955 Senior victory.

£1.25 Value (2) - Cronk-ny-Mona: With pinpoint accuracy, Kiwi, Bruce Anstey, leans his Suzuki into Signpost Corner in the Superstock Race of Centenary year.

EU Value (1) – Governor’s Bridge: DKW came “oh so close” to winning the 1936 Lightweight with Stanley Woods aboard.

EU Value (2) – Governor’s Bridge: The formidable pairing of John McGuinness and his Honda carefully navigate Governor’s Bridge in the 2008 Superbike TT.

Rest of the World Value (1) - Grandstand: Pride of Scotland, Jimmie Guthrie, brings his winning factory Norton home in the 1934 senior.

Rest of the World Value (2) - Grandstand: Dave Molyneux, the most successful sidecar competitor in TT history, sweeps across the finish line for win number nine in 2008. Eight more would follow.

Adrian Earnshaw

My personal TT memories began in 1958 when, sheltered inside my Dad’s overcoat, I remember watching a cold evening practice at Signpost Corner.

Suddenly, a fantastic sound arose from the direction of Hillberry and John Surtees, aboard his fabulous red and silver MV Agusta, shrieked into our view. Smoothly rounding the corner, he disappeared as quickly and as noisily as he’d arrived leaving an image I have never forgotten. Many of you will have shared a similar experience and I was bitten by “The TT bug”.

This year, along with all major sporting events, the TT became a victim of the Coronavirus pandemic, but to help lift our spirits, the IOM Post Office has produced this latest TT stamp issue commemorating some fine competitors.

I have been pleased to assist the project and, along with all TT fans, I'm hoping this year's disappointments will reach a speedy conclusion and we'll soon be racing again on our wonderful Mountain Circuit.

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