

Karting gets a flying start at Banbury — 6,000 turn up

KARTING in the Banbury, Oxfordshire, area got away to a flying start in mid-February when a crowd of 6,000 turned up to see the first open meeting promoted by an Oxfordshire club — the newly-formed Banbury Go-Kart Racing Club.

Everything conspired to give karting a first-class send-off. The weather was perfect; there was plenty of real excitement in the races; and, to add glamour to the occasion, Miss Wendy Collins of Lincoln, in her 98 c.c. Comet, won two of the three main events, and came second in the final event for the six fastest drivers of the day.

A total of sixty entries meant a full programme of heats and finals, giving karts a first-class opportunity to show what could be done in both the 98 and 197 c.c. classes.

The course — a third of a mile — was laid out on part of the runway of a disused aerodrome at Shenington, five miles from Banbury; an adaptation by the club promoter, Mr. John Cooper, of the "ideal" track published in the *Néws Chronicle*.

It provided several tricky bends at which drivers time and again involuntarily demonstrated that karts suffer little or no damage from head-on collisions with straw bales.

However, the local police decided that the crowd was pressing in too closely to the course. In fact, they were standing and sitting on the bales and crowding on to the track in their excitement.

A loudspeaker appeal persuaded the crowd to draw back six feet from the bales — and incidentally, improved the view of the track.

Afterwards Mr. Cooper said that future meetings would have a rope and stake safety fence six feet behind the bales.

A St. John Ambulance with a full complement of nurses and attendants stood by in the centre of the course — but their only job for the whole meeting was to brew tea for the marshals and other officials.

The 60 competitors came from Nottingham, Leicester, Lincoln, Grantham, Melton Mowbray, Billborough, Biaby, Bewdley — and of course Banbury.

The Banbury Club can claim to have been the first to be formed in the county.

B. Greaves, Leicester (Aero 197); and R. Stretton, Bewdley.

Miss Wendy Collins won the ladies' event against stiff opposition from Banbury member Miss E. Worthington (Trokat 98), and another Banbury member, Mrs. E. Nichols, in another Trokat.

All three of these events were for trophies provided by Mr. Cooper.

A special race for non-winners under 100 c.c. was won by A. Knowles, Nottingham (Speedex 95 c.c.), with R. Tognola, Banbury (Trokat 98) second, and M. J. Lovell, Banbury (Trokat 98) third.

100 to 200 c.c. non-winners' event was won by R. Tennant in a Tennant Special 197, with B. Pook, Leicester (Aero 197), second.

The last event of the day, to decide the three fastest drivers of the meeting, was won by R. Preston, Nottingham, with Wendy Collins second and P. Collins, Nottingham (Comet 98), third.

Five of the Banbury club members own their own karts, and another eleven who have recently joined from Leicester have their own 197's.

Several other Banbury karters are busy building their own machines, but meanwhile, the club provides seven 98 c.c. Trokarts which it hires to members for an

inclusive fee of 1s. a lap.

The club also has its own six-ton van, fitted up as a mobile workshop and racing tender.

Karting has caught on around Banbury very quickly. Mr. Cooper said: "The demand to join the club is great. More and more people are becoming interested, particularly when they find that they can become a member and do ten laps in a kart as a trial for only 30s."

The Banbury club has big plans for the future. For the rest of the year, until September, the circuit will be in use almost every Sunday.

There is an impressive programme of open meetings, interspersed with club races and trial days. It is hoped to promote contests between teams representing such local organisations as the Rugby Football Club and the Conservative Club, and between teams from other clubs throughout the country.

With its position almost at the geographical centre of England, the Banbury circuit could form an ideal rendezvous for karters and clubs throughout the country. Perhaps even for a British Grand Prix of Karting?

— R. Albans

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John Cooper

Days before Oxford Car Club took their decision to form a karting section, Mr. Cooper gathered a half-dozen enthusiasts and formed the Banbury club as a proprietary concern.

From the original six, the membership rocketed to 60 in less than a fortnight, and since the open meeting another 25 members have joined.

Only one snag marred an otherwise successful day — someone dropped the timekeeper's stop-watch just before the semi-finals of the first event, and no time could be taken for the rest of the meeting, so there was no announcement of the fastest lap of the day!

The under 100 c.c. event was run in six heats, won by P. Collins, Nottingham (Comet 98 c.c.), Miss Wendy Collins, Lincoln (Comet 98 c.c.), J. Taylor, Billborough (Trokat 98 c.c.), R. Potton, Nottingham (Speedex 95 c.c.), F. Green-smith, Nottingham (Speedex 95 c.c.), and B. Greaves, Leicester (Special 98 c.c.).

The final was won by Wendy Collins; R. Preston, Nottingham (Speedex 95 c.c.) who was second in his heat, came second; and third, A. Pear Nottingham (Speedex 95 c.c.) who was also second in his heat.

Winners of the 100—200 c.c. final were P. Watkin, Lincoln (Comet 197); B.