



**GLEN ENGLISH'S RACING CAREER HAS SPANNED 11 YEARS - ON CONTEMPORARY PRODUCTION-BASED SUPERSPORT BIKES - AND, MORE RECENTLY, ON CLASSICS BUT HIS RECENT SENIOR CLASSIC MANX GRAND PRIX WIN RIDING ANDY MOLNAR'S MANX NORTON IS THE MOST PRESTIGIOUS RESULT IN HIS CAREER. HERE'S GLEN'S MGP-WINNING DIARY.**

**SATURDAY, AUGUST 19**

*EVENING PRACTICE - FIRST LAP*

The plan was to do one lap on each bike, starting with the 500CC Molnar Manx Norton, and then Ian Bennett's 250cc Benelli. A ten-minute delay, for an accident at Laurel Bank, turns into a half-hour hold-up but finally I'm away and I give the Fred Walmsley-tuned Molnar Manx full throttle going down Bray Hill. It certainly feels more powerful than I remember last year!

I start catching newcomers and give them a wide berth remembering this is their very first lap of the TT circuit. The sun is very low and I can hardly see at Glen Vine, which is usually flat-out. As the sun is blinding me, and this is my first lap, I change down two gears. Along past the Highlander the bike feels really good, but we're overgeared and I can't get it into top.

Going through the Glen Helen section my vision deteriorates, thanks to my dark visor. One minute the sun is blinding me, the next its darkness through the trees as dusk approaches. Nevertheless, I enjoy the lap. I've not taken any chances, but I'm pleased I was fastest at 97mph. The late start time means there's not enough time to take out the Benelli so I'll have to wait until Monday morning.

**MONDAY, AUGUST 21**

*MORNING PRACTICE*

I'm up at 5am for a 5.55am start. I arrive to find Ian Bennett, owner and builder of a lovely Benelli, already in the scrutineering bay. It's going to attract a lot of attention, especially when I start it up. It's so loud I am afraid I'm going to wake up the whole island so I pass the bike back to Ian while I get ready - that way he can get the blame if angry local residents fail to appreciate the glorious sound at this time of day.

I set off at 6.05 and rev it up to 14,000rpm. It pulls away beautifully and I'm impressed going down Bray Hill. I can't help but smile as I remember a picture of Kel Carruthers in the 1969 TT at this spot. It evokes a strange feeling of nostalgia mixed with excitement. The bike is sounding lovely, although I am glad I remembered my earplugs. Everything is going fine until I get to Ramsey hairpin and the clutch refuses to disengage. I need to slip the clutch to get going but it won't rev. I have to retire, and watch the rest of the session. We get the bike back and the problem deepens. The clutch centre nut





# Mississippi

## the Fairies

has come loose, causing clutch failure but we also notice the primary gear has been damaged. We have another one, but it is back at home, and needs machining. Ian's brother will get it done and send it over, but it will take a few days. *2/3*

### **MONDAY, AUGUST 21**

#### **AFTERNOON PRACTICE**

I'm going for one lap on the Manx and starting alongside Bill Swallow, my main opposition and everybody's favourite to win. We pull away and I'm ahead going down Bray Hill. The bike feels really good and I'm keen to do a quick lap. I put the bike into top gear on the run to the Highlander, but notice it's still over-g geared. I decide to leave it - I don't want to put too much wear on the engine if I can help it.

*3/3* Bill passes and I immediately change down to get in his slipstream. The race is on. Just as we approach Greeba Castle Bill puts his hand in the air to signal retirement. Damn. I was hoping to do a quick lap with him. I wonder if he's foxing me and doesn't want me learning any of his lines. Maybe I shouldn't be showing him mine. I decide not to worry as there is only one fast line through here and we both know it. I glance over my shoulder along Cronk 'y' Voddy fully expecting to see Bill inches from my back wheel but he really has stopped. It turns out his machine seized.

I continue and manage a lap of 103.02mph, my fastest on a classic bike. And that's from a standing start while over-g geared. I'm so happy,

because I know I can go faster. I'm still finding my rhythm and until that's sorted I won't push too hard.

It's been a good day and I phone my girlfriend Jojo then go for a couple of beers with Andy Molnar, Steve Oversberg and his mates. They've hired Andy's go-bore bike and are going well on it.

### **TUESDAY, AUGUST 22**

#### **AFTERNOON PRACTICE**

We changed the gearing on the Manx and now I can use all six gears. The low sun is a problem and in places I have to be very cautious - it's almost impossible to see at some bends.

The bike doesn't feel as good as last night and I decide to come in after one lap. Andy says it's running a bit lean and I hope there's no damage. I'm well aware a lot of bikes have been seizing.

The lap time was 102.99mph, which shows the gearing change has worked. I know I wasn't riding any harder.

### **WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 23**

#### **AFTERNOON PRACTICE**

Fred Walmsley arrives straight from the INCA race at Brno and I tell him the bike's not feeling as good as the night before. He takes one look at the exhaust pipe and sets about richening the mixture.

Fred and Andy take the bike to scrutineering while I get into my leathers. When I arrive at the pits they look concerned. Andy says the

*Top: Glen English said hello to the fairies and scooped the Senior Classic Manx Grand Prix on the Molnar Manx Norton.*



bike doesn't sound good and withdraws it for closer inspection. They remove the head and barrel and it's obvious the piston has overheated, seized the gudgeon pin and cracked the piston. Fred comments that I wouldn't have made it to Quarter Bridge. That lean mixture was the cause.

I pop to the ferry port to collect JoJo and we go for dinner at the Hawthorn with radio journalist Andy Kershaw, who part-sponsors me under the Banners Café, Crouch End, London title.

#### THURSDAY, AUGUST 24

##### AFTERNOON PRACTICE

Andy Molnar has spent the morning running in the new piston. Fred and Andy were up very late the night before, getting the bike ready, and I thank them for it.

As I get ready for practice Andy tells me to keep the revs between 6500 and 7500rpm and only do one lap. I'm careful not to over-rev it and the engine bogs slightly so I have to slip the clutch a bit more to get it going. I take it to 7000rpm up to Union Mills, where it suddenly seizes on the exit. I can't believe it and don't feel like going back to the pits. I know Andy won't believe that I didn't over-rev it.

I hitch a lift back to the pits with a friend who is watching. I want to do a lap on the Benelli. When I arrive, Ian has already warmed up the bike. I set off for a lap, but as I reach the bottom of Bray Hill it starts missing. I retire at Quarter Bridge and ride back to the pits hoping we can fix it, but there simply isn't enough time.

I'm feeling a bit fed-up as practice week is drawing to an end. I've only managed three laps - and not yet qualified.

JoJo and I go back to pick up the Manx. As we are driving back she tells me to head for Fairy Bridge where she gets me to unload the bike and prop it up against the bridge. We each write little notes asking the fairies if they can help us fix the bike - and keep me safe.

Maybe the fairies are quite pleased as they probably haven't seen a Manx Norton before. Jo reassures me that she knows all about fairies and everything will be okay now. I think she's bonkers.

We take the bike back and start stripping the engine. It turns out the motor has sucked in a large stone through the open carburettor.

#### FRIDAY, AUGUST 25

Jo and I go to Union Mills to collect Fred's spare engine, which has been shipped over from the mainland. He has said we can use it if the

other one can't be sorted out.

Ian, Jo and I take the Benelli up to Jurby to cure the misfire. Ian first changes the magneto. Then the condenser. Then HT leads. None of it makes any difference. We check the carbs in case a jet is blocked, but again, no luck. We finally decide to change the points, although they are new they might be causing a problem if overworked. Bingo. Smiles all round as we head back to Douglas.

We're halfway to Douglas and all is quiet in the van when Jo announces she was going to suggest changing the points because a new set went bang on her little old Honda CB100N. Ian and I exchange a quick 'yeah okay, smart arse,' glance.

Jo explains she assumed a bike that cost nearly twice as much as she paid for her house would have a slightly more sophisticated ignition system than her very old Honda. Fair point!

#### FRIDAY, AUGUST 25

##### PRACTICE

It's raining so we decide to do just one lap on the Benelli in the practice session. The mag is situated right behind the front wheel and I'm concerned that it will get completely soaked. I give it a spray of water repellent, but Ian tells me it should be okay as it is from an outboard motor - just as the originals were.

As I warm the engine ready for the off a crowd of admirers begins to gather. I rev it up to 10,000rpm and they all take a few steps back because of the racket. I allow myself an invisible smirk.

It's now my turn to go and I give it 14,000rpm as I release the clutch and it pulls away beautifully, up to 15,000rpm before changing into second gear.

It is very wet all around the course and this is not the easiest bike to ride in these conditions. There is hardly any torque to speak of so any speed comes from revs - I'm taking it to 13,000 and maybe 14,000rpm only very occasionally.

It's going well as I'm passing loads of riders. I settle in and enjoy myself, revelling in the exhaust note. Plenty of people are waving me on and I know a lot of them have been looking forward to seeing and hearing the bike. Suddenly it's here - and it's an exact replica of the machine Kel Carruthers raced here in 1969.

I know people keep calling it a George Beale replica - it's not. It's built by Ian Bennett who makes a lot of parts for George's Benellis, 7Rs and G50s. George only makes 350cc and 500cc Benellis, but lent Ian the patterns and drawings to create his own 250cc engine, although Ian bought the chassis from George.

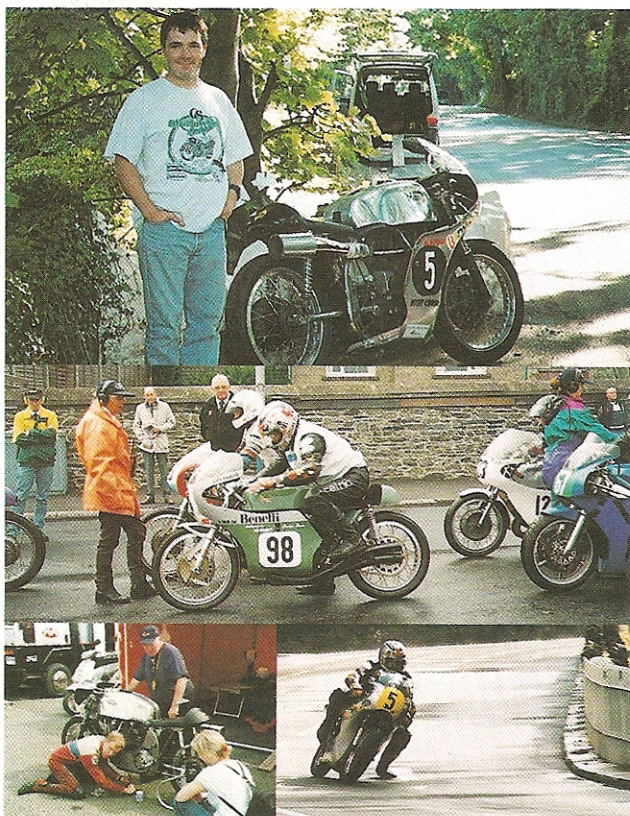
By the time I get down to the Glen Helen section I realise this is not the most comfortable bike I've ever ridden. It's just so small - and I'm used to riding little 125s round here at the TT. How on earth did Carruthers and Pasolini ever manage six laps? When I manage to get flat on the tank, I can't get my head back far enough to see where I'm going so I'm constantly holding my body weight on my arms.

Bruno LeRoy passes me on the Mountain on his 500cc Manx but I manage to keep up with him for a bit. It's getting towards the end of the lap and as I leave Windy Corner I look down to reassure myself there are no oil leaks and such like. Everything looks good.

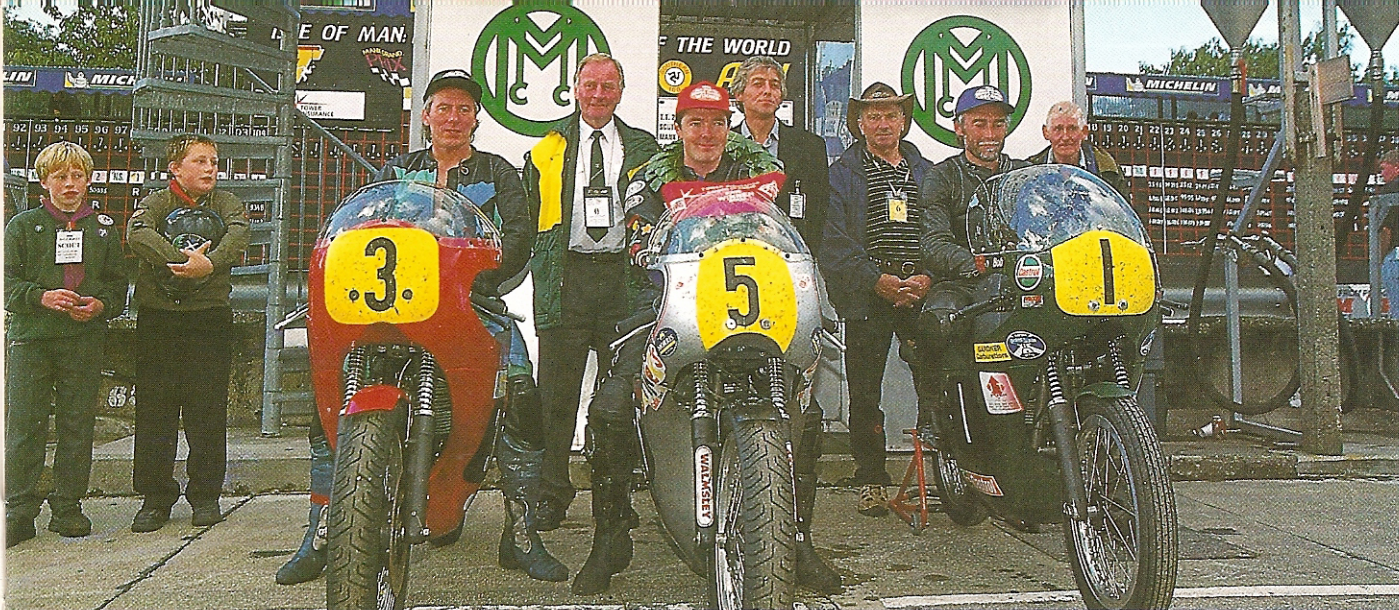
Suddenly I hear a thwack. The revs rise and I have no drive. The chain's broken so I coast to the 33rd and enjoy a coffee and cigarette with Ray the marshal. Thanks, Ray.

Ian and Jo pick me up in the morning, having driven the back way to Creg-ny-Baa. They arrive within ten minutes of the road opening. I tell Ian how well the bike is going and he's obviously pleased. He takes Jo and I for dinner at the Hawthorn.

*Left: Glen at the Fairy Bridge asking for them to look out for him and the Molnar Manx; On the line with the Benelli in practice. Sadly, the exquisite four-cylinder drive chain snapped, smashing the crankcases; Andy Molnar carries out some last minute machine prep; Glen takes a quick dab into Bradden Bridge in the wet. (Barry Davies photo)*







### SATURDAY, AUGUST 26

Jo and I arrive at the paddock at around 10am to find the Benelli dismantled and a pretty glum-looking Ian. It appears the chain went straight through the crankcase and bent the gearbox shaft. "That's it, then," he says. "I'll have to withdraw it." We're really disappointed as it has just started to come together and a broken chain ruins it all. At least we know that the bike goes alright.

We pop over to Fred and Andy, who report that the head on the Manx was badly damaged by the intake of stones so they have decided to fit Fred's spare engine. It was last used by Barry Sheene at Donington for the INCa race in July where Barry recorded the fastest lap.

We manage to install it in time for evening practice and Fred tells me to just do one lap. This is my last lap of practice so I am going to check the gearing's okay and that it's running correctly. I ride a steady lap until Glen Helen. I must congratulate the marshals there as I was riding very hard when I came round the left-hand corner before Glen Helen Hotel and clearly saw vertical red and yellow flags indicating a slippery surface.

The marshals' flags are right. Suddenly it's very wet and I wonder if I would have been able to slow down enough to make the corner if I hadn't seen the flags. I just cruise the rest of the lap.

Kim Molnar and Jacqueline Walmsley cook us an excellent meal - thanks girls.

### SUNDAY, AUGUST 26

Jo and I go to the pits to take part in the Joey Dunlop memorial lap. I've brought my Mike Hailwood-replica Ducati over especially for the occasion. We go to the start line to watch the unveiling of Joey's memorial plaque next to Mike Hailwood's on the Glencrutchery Road. All of Joey's family and friends are there - he will be very sadly missed. The number of bikes - an estimated 7,500 - is incredible and stretches out over 17 miles! I've never seen so many people out on the course watching, not even during a TT race. We then go to Joey's memorial service at the Villa Marina, which is very moving.

Back at the paddock I prepare my helmet and visors for tomorrow's race. Andy is fettling the bike. We all go over to Steph's house for a barbecue, then back to Ramsey for an early night where I always stay with Colin Aldridge and family.

### MONDAY, AUGUST 27

#### RACE DAY

I'm woken up early with Colin telling me my Uncle Jim is on the phone. Feeling restless, a bit superstitious and not in the mood for talking I ask Colin to tell him I've already left.

Jo and I drive the coast road to the pits and it's absolutely pouring with rain. Unbelievable. The weather has been so good. This is the

*Top: Senior Classic Manx GP top three with English flanked by runner-up Bill Swallow (right) and third placed Wattie Brown.*

*Right: English shadowed Bill Swallow during the early part of the race. On the road it was close. Against the clock English knew he had time in hand.*

best chance I've had of winning a classic MGP and it decides to rain! The race is delayed by half an hour, then three quarters of an hour. I tell Andy that I'll just ride around at my own pace if it rains, and see what happens. I'm not prepared to play the hero. Andy agrees and takes the pressure off me.

I head to the start 30 minutes before the off, and wait around getting agitated and nervous. I'm really fed up with the rain. There's been a big black cloud above us for more than an hour - it's hardly moving. When it finally does move it heads over the island and I'm expecting it to get wetter as we progress.

Why can't they just put the race back two or three hours to when it will be fine, which we can see on the horizon and by the weather forecasts? Geoff Cannell (Manx GP commentator) grabs me as we head for the start line. He asks me how I feel about the rain, adding: "Surely it won't bother a man of your experience." All I can say is that we'll see how it goes as I don't know what to expect.

Andy fires me up for a good start and tells me not "to let that John Loder get away at the line". He adds that I must try to get clear of him as he will try to stick his wheel inside at Braddan.

I remember this as I hear Bill Swallow pull away. I'm certainly fired up now, eyeing Loder's machine and telling myself there is no way he is getting in my way. Wattie Brown is away too and I start counting backwards from ten, put the bike in gear, revs up flag down. It's a brilliant start, real short circuit stuff down Bray Hill - flat-out all the way to Quarter Bridge. I feel okay.

Steady round Quarter Bridge. I've arrived a little bit quick and lose a little time coming out into Braddan through the damp patches. It's still damp through Union Mills, but from here on it's dry and sunny. Coming into Cronk 'y' Voddy I can see all three riders in front of me and by the time I reach Handley's I'm right behind Tony Myers. I pass him on the run to Barregarow, then I pass Wattie Brown at the exit - one of my favourite parts of the course.

My mate Kenny Harrison is holding out my first pitboard, which reads P1+4, much to my surprise. I set about catching Bill. I hope it's him I can see. By Ramsey I can read 'Swallow' on the back of his leathers and I've done it. All I have to do now is keep with him and I've won!

By the end of the first lap I'm right on his back wheel. Only inches separate us. We approach Hillberry, I can see it's wet and I expect Bill to gain a few yards on me through here. I'm surprised to exit still on his back wheel. I've been losing my concentration following him and





## Manx Grand Prix 2000 RESULTS 65

### Senior Classic

4 laps - 150.92 miles

1	Glen English	Norton	1h 25m 51.4s	105.46mph
2	Bill Swallow	Norton	1h 26m 06.1s	105.16mph
3	Wattie Brown	Norton	1h 28m 03.0s	102.84mph
4	Bruno LeRoy	Norton	1h 28m 31.9s	102.28mph
5	Mick Robinson	Norton	1h 28m 45.7s	102.01mph
6	Tony Myers	Norton	1h 30m 37.9s	100.37mph

### Junior Classic

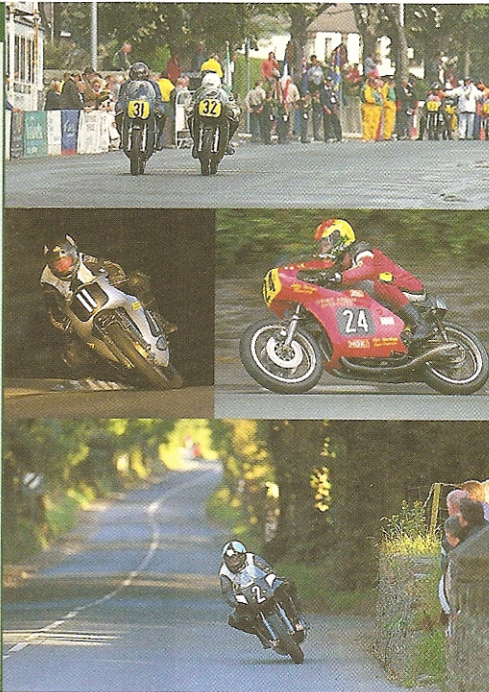
4 laps - 150.92 miles

1	Jason Griffiths	Honda	1h 30m 53.8s	99.62mph
2	Wattie Brown	Aermacchi	1h 31m 01.9s	99.47mph
3	Chris McGahan	Honda	1h 32m 00.6s	98.41mph
4	John Goodall	AJS	1h 32m 45.0s	97.63mph
5	John Loder	Greeves	1h 32m 45.0s	97.65mph
6	Tim Johnson	Norton	1h 33m 23.6s	96.95mph

### Lightweight Classic

4 laps - 150.92 miles

1	Barry Wood	Suzuki	1h 32m 37.1s	97.76mph
2	Bud Jackson	Suzuki	1h 32m 53.0s	97.49mph
3	Roy Richardson	Suzuki	1h 32m 53.0s	97.49mph
4	Karl Hayes	Suzuki	1h 35m 08.5s	95.17mph
5	Stephen Smith	Suzuki	1h 36m 35.2s	93.75mph
6	Dave Thurlow	Suzuki	1h 39m 23.8s	91.10mph



decide to try and pass as I'm sure it would give Jo, Fred and Andy a surprise if I came past the grandstand ahead of Bill.

As we approach the long, flat-out, tricky left-hander of Cronk-ny-Mona I ride around the outside of him and lead into Signpost. At the tight right-hander before the Nook, I can see the road is soaking wet so I sit up.

I'm being cautious and I'm not prepared to throw away a win just to give the team a thrill, then Bill comes past me as I sit up, and we go round Governors. It's very wet and Bill puts his foot out just in case. It's a smart move and I do the same, deciding not to play the big man. My job is to win so I decide just to stay with him for the remaining three laps. But Bill starts pulling away so I begin racing again at Ballacraigne. By Ramsey I'm with him but I'm having trouble concentrating. I'm okay racing, but when I catch him I know I have a 20-second lead so change up early and give the engine an easy time. I keep the concentration going by riding hard through the corners. It's not easy. He pulls away every time I catch him, but I feel I have it under control.

On the third lap Bill's bike misses coming out of Ballaugh and I think he's in trouble. I can't help but feel sorry for him - I like Bill. Thinking that he's out I put the bike into top gear on the Mountain Mile and keep the revs down. All of a sudden Bill comes flying past. Doesn't this man know when to give up?

I stay behind him and enjoy the ride. Bill's a great rider to follow, really neat and tidy - just like the old days when everyone wore black leathers and rode for the love of it, just like we do. I've got the best seat in the house.

On the last lap I just keep him in sight. I would love the lap record, I'm only four seconds off it, but it's not a priority. It would be easy to break it, but for today I just want to win so I don't get too ambitious approaching Hillberry and that wet patch again.

I decide to cruise to the finish, but as I come into Governors for the last time I can't see Bill. I start worrying. Paranoia sets in. I think I've screwed up. I see him cross the line and start to count the seconds. Crossing the line everyone is cheering me. I pull up in parc ferme, where Andy takes the bike. "Brilliant ride," he says. I ask if I have won. I need to know and I'm relieved to get the response I wanted. My mouth is so dry I can barely speak and a spectator hands a can of

**Top (clockwise from top left):** Seeley duo Frank Rutter and Wallace Seawright at the start of the Senior; Mick Robinson towards Bray Hill on his Petty Norton; Tony Myers - sixth on a Molnar Norton in the Senior; Frenchman Bruno LeRoy took fourth on his Godet Norton in this year's Senior.  
**Middle:** Barry Wood Lightweight winner on a Suzuki.

drink to Jo to pass on to me. Thanks mate.

I'm in a state of bewilderment as Geoff Cannell approaches for a radio interview and says I don't seem too pleased for someone who's just won the Senior Classic Manx Grand Prix!

I'm pleased, but I can't believe how easy it's been after nine years of disappointment.

All credit to Andy and Fred - and thanks to my good friend Colin Aldridge. He always had faith in me - and it was Colin who put me on the road to meeting the people who helped me win today. During the race I thought of Colin and that I was taking Jo to the mountain railway tomorrow.

### TUESDAY, AUGUST 29

#### LAST DAY

It's a perfect day. Jo and I listen to the Kirsty McColl version of that song all the way back to Ramsey. We stop off at Murry's museum to see owner Peter and end up signing some autographs and having my picture taken with some visitors - surreal!

Every time we've visit the museum in the past Peter has given Jo a Manx Fairy lucky charm. Before the Senior Classic Jo gave me her latest fairy to put in the pocket of my leathers for luck. Having visited the fairies she decided they were now official sponsors. She even made a couple of stickers out of duct tape, which read 'Fairies of Fairy Bridge' and stuck them on the fairing!

In Douglas we saw a postcard showing the fairies crossing their little bridge and this went into the pocket also. Before we go home we drive back to Fairy Bridge to write them little notes of thanks. Jo blows them a kiss. And yes, I really do believe in fairies.

DIARY: GLEN ENGLISH

PHOTOS: DAVE COLLISTER

