

Media information
29. August 2016

40 years after winning the Production TT: Helmut Dähne does a lap of honour on the Isle of Man.

The successful rider and his BMW R 90 S are reunited at the 2016 Classic TT – BMW Group Classic recalls the triumph of 1976 and presents legendary racing machines as well as current new models.

Munich. After the Tourist Trophy (TT) races in June, the Isle of Man in the Irish Sea will once again be the centre of attention for motorcycle fans from all over the world up until 30 August 2016. The Classic TT not only celebrates recent victories but also the most spectacular accomplishments of the past. At this year's meet-up of two wheel legends, BMW Group Classic particularly recalls the year 1976. This was when Helmut Dähne and Hans Otto Butenuth won the 1000 cubic centimetre class of the Production TT on a BMW R 90 S. Since then, Dähne and his teammate Butenuth – who passed away in 1997 – have belonged to the exclusive group of riders able to enter their names in the winners' list of the oldest most demanding and also most hazardous motorcycle road race in the world. The now 71-year-old Dähne returns to the scene of his great triumph at the 2016 Classic TT. 40 years after his victory, he will once again ride his original BMW racer around the Isle of Man – this time by way of a lap of honour, not as fast as in 1976 but undoubtedly to the applause of thrilled spectators once again.

Dähne's anniversary ride on Monday, 29 August 2016, will be the highlight of the BMW Group Classic's appearance at the Tourist Trophy paddock next to the grandstand in the island capital of Douglas and at the festival on the airfield in Jurby. In a large display area, motor racing fans will be able to see not just the winning boxer motorcycle of 1976 but also numerous other BMW racing bikes with a TT history. The selection ranges from a BMW R 5 SS from the year 1937 and a BMW R 51 of 1939 to the BMW RS 54, which was designed as a racing machine in 1954 and already reached top speeds of over 200 km/h. The current model program is represented with the two latest new additions, the BMW R nineT Scrambler and the BMW G 310 R.

Helmut Dähne – motorcycle racer, tyre expert, record holder.

At a special exhibition in honour of Helmut Dähne, there will also be a display of numerous trophies, historical pictures and other memorabilia from his impressive racing career. Born in Bavaria, Dähne was active in motor racing for more than 40 years. At the age of 17 he took part in his first slalom race, and he went on to enter motocross competitions shortly afterwards. Dähne achieved his first success in a road race in 1968. After this he won 15 German

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championship titles in serial production motorcycle racing. All in all Helmut Dähne ran a total of 383 races, of which he won 131, before finishing his career in 2006. One particular feat that ensured Dähne a place in the history of motorcycle racing was his record run on the Nürburgring Nordschleife. In 1993 he completed the circuit in 7:49.71 minutes: this outstanding time can no longer be improved on as the track has since been modernised, so Dähne's motorcycle lap record is "eternal".

Helmut Dähne started his career by training as a motor mechanic with BMW. In the company's motorcycle racing department he was then involved in the maintenance and repair of the legendary vertical shaft engines for customer racing. In addition, he specialised in reliability testing and at the beginning of the 1970s developed racing machines based on the BMW R75/5. In 1972 Dähne rode this type of motorcycle in the 200-mile race in Imola, Italy. The talented mechanic was also quick to get hold of the BMW R 90 S launched in 1973 – the brand's first superbike. With full trim, stub handlebars, turned back footrests, a short jump seat and a boxer engine with its output increased by 9 hp to 76 hp, his machine reached speeds of well over 200 km/h. After this, Dähne attracted attention at numerous races with his elegant riding style and fast lap times – and his red leather racing suit with white stripes became a striking trademark, too.

Dähne remained faithful to the powerful BMW boxer motorcycles when he moved to tyre manufacturer Metzeler in 1974 to work in racing. Here he advanced the development of tyres for fast road bikes and serial production racing. Dähne was both a test rider and a racer, and this was how he came to be involved in the Tourist Trophy, which he first entered in 1972. Up until 1994 Helmut Dähne entered a total of 26 Tourist Trophy races, including several in the same year on some occasions. He became a TT legend when he secured victory in 1976, only narrowly failing to repeat his triumph in 1984 and 1986, when he finished second.

The Tourist Trophy – the biggest challenge in motorcycle road racing since 1907.

"The Tourist Trophy is in no way comparable to a conventional race on a permanent track," says Helmut Dähne. The 60.725-kilometre Snaefell Mountain Course consists of cordoned-off country roads – with front gardens

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instead of gravel beds and curbs instead of safety fences at the side. The motorcyclists speed through towns and villages, passing fields and meadows and riding up and downhill through forest and coastal landscapes.

The first motorcycle race was held on the Isle of Man as long ago as 1907: the original route was just 25 kilometres long, to be covered ten times. The Snaefell Mountain Course has been in use by motorcycle racers ever since 1911 and remains so to this day. While the route has stayed the same, the regulations and categories have changed over the decades. The Production TT category with its various cubic capacity classes is now no longer part of the program, for example. In addition to the sidecar contests, the highlights of the event nowadays are the Superbike TT, the Superstock TT and the Senior TT for solo riders.

The formula for success in 1976: fast and furious with brief fuelling stops.

With the expertise acquired at the Nürburgring and the knowledge gained from his five previous entries in TT races, Helmut Dähne already had extensive experience of long-distance racing when he set off for the Isle of Man once again at the end of May 1976. His BMW R 90 SS sporting the standard Daytona Orange finish also seemed excellently prepared – almost 30 kilograms lighter than the road version, fitted with softer springs and featuring various modifications to the engine. He was also backed by a strong team made up of mechanic Helmut Bucher and the second rider Hans Otto Butenuth. The latter was from Dortmund and also had a wealth of experience in motorcycle racing. The fact that he was familiar with both the BMW and the island race course further qualified him for the role of co-rider. “I knew Hans Otto was the right man for the job,” says Dähne.

Butenuth immediately put in an impeccable training lap on the BMW R 90 S. Meanwhile Dähne was confronted with technical difficulties. The intake manifold bolted onto the right-hand cylinder came loose. This problem was solved with a two-component adhesive. Not long after this an entire engine overhaul was required: here the trio joined forces to deal with the setback by fitting a substitute power unit they had brought along with them. The intake manifold again proved unstable, so extra work was done to permanently eliminate the problem with a flexible carburettor mounting bracket: this time

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the crew believed they had finally overcome all obstacles. “We were the fastest in training,” said Dähne, “so I thought I had a good chance of winning the race itself.” But then the rain set in. The start was postponed several times, which was good for the BMW team since Dähne’s new employer did not have rain tyres in its program at the time.

When the race finally got under way, the weather conditions were ideal. The racers now faced ten laps covering a total of more than 600 kilometres on the Snaefell Mountain Course. Dähne took the lead right away. His BMW R 90 S was as fast as he had hoped, clearly outrunning most competitors on the numerous bends of the island course in particular. After three laps it was time for the first fuelling stop and rider changeover. Here the BMW team was able to play another joker. The trio had developed its very own fast-filling system which significantly accelerated the fuelling process. Dähne arrived in the pits 30 seconds behind, Butenuth rejoined the race with a ten-second lead. The two other stopovers also went very smoothly, so the two riders were unstoppable. They finished the Production TT race as winners of the 1000 cubic centimetre class and fifth in the overall ratings. “The fact that Rolf Steinhausen and Josef Huber also won the 500 cc sidecar class at the 1976 TT perfectly rounded off the success as far as BMW was concerned,” says Helmut Dähne today.

BMW and the Tourist Trophy: the success story began with “Schorsch” Meier.

By winning the Production TT in 1976, Dähne and Butenuth were the first BMW solo riders to successfully follow in the footsteps of Georg Meier. It was in 1939 that Meier became the first non-British rider to win a title at the Tourist Trophy. “Schorsch” won the Senior TT on the Isle of Man riding a BMW racing machine with a 500 cubic centimetre boxer engine, a vertical shaft and compressor charging; it produced an output of 60 hp and reached a top speed of over 220 km/h. British rider Jock West finished second, securing a perfect victory for BMW.

After this, BMW was mainly successful in sidecar racing, also in the Tourist Trophy. From 1955 to 1976, 28 racing victories went to sidecars powered by BMW engines. But another 37 years were to pass before the BMW team won its next solo victory with Helmut Dähne. And it was to be another two decades

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before BMW tasted victory on the Isle of Man once more. In 1997, 1998 and 1999, British rider Dave Morris won three times in a row in the Singles TT riding a motorcycle developed by Chrysalis Racing Team and powered by the single-cylinder engine of the BMW F 650.

Another 15 years later, Northern Ireland's Michael Dunlop started his winning streak at the most famous of motorcycle races on his BMW S 1000 RR. In June 2014, exactly 75 years after Georg Meier's legendary win, Dunlop crowned a superb performance on the 4-cylinder BMW superbike by clinching the Tourist Trophy triple. He finished first in the Superstock TT, the Superbike TT and the Senior TT. And the BMW S 1000 RR dominated the 1000 cubic centimetre class in the very latest Tourist Trophy, too. Michael Dunlop won the Superbike TT, while the UK's Ian Hutchinson secured first place in the Superstock TT. What is more, the two BMW riders won a double victory in the Senior TT, with Dunlop in first place and Hutchinson finishing second. On this occasion Dunlop also completed the fastest lap ever run on the Snaefell Mountain Course when he travelled at an average speed of 215.6 km/h.

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BMW Museum – Hands-on history

Visitors of all ages can explore the past, present and future of the BMW brand at BMW Welt, the BMW Museum and the BMW plant. The BMW Museum plays an important role in this. Since re-opening in 2008, it has been successfully presenting the history of BMW and offering a glimpse of the future. The museum also explores the theme of mobility for the benefit of younger visitors. The Junior Museum organizes a special program for children and young people, basing its educational concept on learning through play. The museum also has a history of its own: it is one of the oldest automobile museums in Germany, was built in 1973 and declared a historic monument in 1999.

The BMW Group

With its three brands BMW, MINI and Rolls-Royce, the BMW Group is the world's leading premium manufacturer of automobiles and motorcycles and also provides premium financial and mobility services. As a global company, the BMW Group operates 31 production and assembly facilities in 14 countries and has a global sales network in more than 140 countries.

In 2015, the BMW Group sold approximately 2.247 million cars and nearly 137,000 motorcycles worldwide. The profit before tax for the financial year 2015 was approximately € 9.22 billion on revenues amounting to € 92.18 billion. As of 31 December 2015, the BMW Group had a workforce of 122,244 employees.

The success of the BMW Group has always been based on long-term thinking and responsible action. The company has therefore established ecological and social sustainability throughout the value chain, comprehensive product responsibility and a clear commitment to conserving resources as an integral part of its strategy.

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