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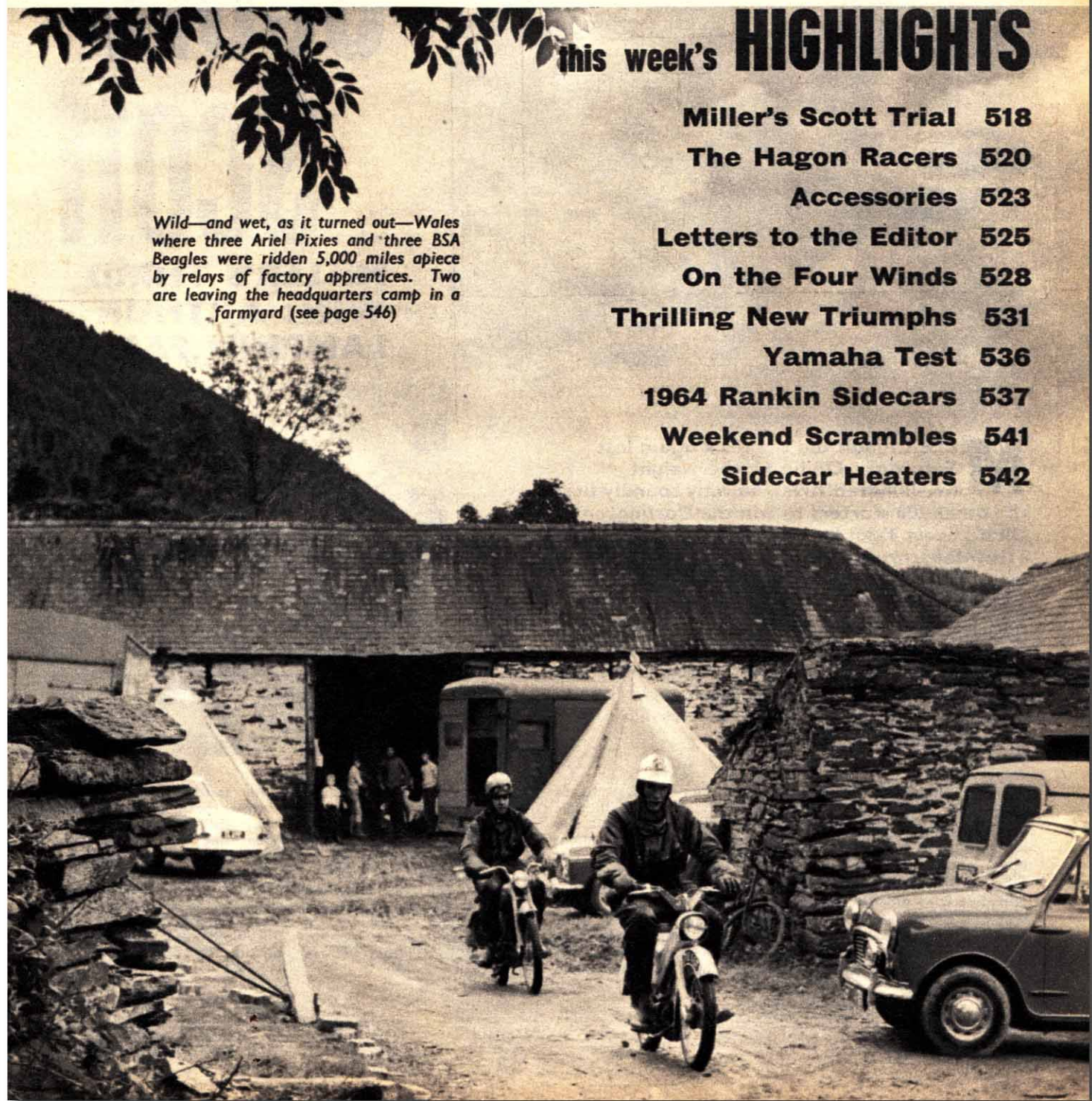
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this week's HIGHLIGHTS

Wild—and wet, as it turned out—Wales where three Ariel Pixies and three BSA Beagles were ridden 5,000 miles apiece by relays of factory apprentices. Two are leaving the headquarters camp in a farmyard (see page 546)

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Six bikes and 18 Lads



Chore: it isn't all riding at the camp in Wales

HOW does a factory prove a new design? Usually, by exhaustive bench runs of the power unit and by sending out factory testers to cover thousands of miles on the prototypes. In preparing the 50 cc Ariel Pixie and 75 cc BSA Beagle for production, Small Heath did just that. Yet, pondered development manager Ken Whistance, was it sufficient? A works tester, accustomed to day-in day-out riding, might unconsciously tend to nurse his model.

No, surely a prolonged test by inexperienced ordinary riders would be better. And so Ken thought up a scheme which combined routine testing with an experiment in apprentice initiative.

The plot was to take six machines—three Pixies, three Beagles, not hand-built prototypes but made on the production tools—into the wilds of Wales.

Camp in the Hills

Riders? A team of 18 apprentices from the benches of the factory with a camp at Corris in the hills above Machynlleth. Arranging the camp and cooking facilities for a group of healthy youngsters was almost a military operation.

A whole side of bacon, recalls Ken, would disappear at one breakfast sitting; and when pancakes were on for tea, over 8 lb of flour went into their making!

In the course of a fortnight the little mounts covered around 5,000 miles apiece (Beagles slightly more, Pixies slightly less, naturally).

One model was selected to

run for 3,000 miles non-stop then, after a plug and valve-clearance check, to carry on for a further 2,000 miles. The other five were stopped from time to time so that various ignition and carburettor settings could be tried out.

The 35-mile lap included the 1-in-5 climb up Dinas Mawddwy; yet, as though that were not enough, the fortnight ended with a series of consecutive climbs of Bwlch-y-Groes. Much was learned and the real credit for that must surely go to the apprentices who did all the riding.

Keen lads? You don't know the half of it. With 18 riders and only six bikes there was almost a free fight for the honour of riding back to Birmingham!

CASH BOOST

ALMO

Shortly, the Ministry of Transport is expected to announce details of projects on which will be spent.

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