

FAMOUS BRITISH TEST HILLS

No. 1—LITTON SLACK

By

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THESE are few "observed hills" used in modern trials which have such a sinister reputation as Litton Slack. For some years included in the course of the Motor Cycling Club's one-day sporting trial in the Peak District, it has never failed to take a heavy toll of gold medals.

And it looks so harmless! Just a sloping track of grey granite chippings, curving gently between high, steep banks. The sort of hill, you would think, that a good-class "Yank" ought to take on top or hiss up on second. In dry weather you would never suspect it of causing wheel-spin, even on the rainiest day.

But try it! Leaving the hamlet at the bottom you turn sharp left and zoom up a steep pitch of 1 in 5 or so. Fine! Then the gradient appears to flatten out and the rest of the hill looks a boring, second-gear climb. If you are foolish you throttle down and change up, to find suddenly that the engine labours and pinks disconcertingly. Frantically you change down again, stamp on the accelerator and . . . shudder to a standstill with wheel-spin. At the best you will travel haltingly upwards for a few yards before your engine just "dies on you"—just fades away without as much as an expiring sigh.



If you are wise you take the sharp turn at the bottom of the hill as fast as you possibly can without hitting the wall or skidding completely round, and keep your foot hard down for the whole of the rest of the way. Even if wheel-spin develops it is unwise to drop engine revs., for the gradient is far steeper than it seems, and it is better to skip about a bit with spinning wheels than to konk ignominiously to a standstill.

Actually, Litton Slack starts with a short, steep pitch of 1 in 4 to 1 in 5, and does not "flatten" at all higher up. The gradient eases only momentarily, and its apparent harmlessness is a delusion fostered by the upward lie of the land.

I have never seen an official survey of this hill, but I believe that the final stretch about

100 yards short of the summit has a gradient of something like one-in-

three. To cap it all, there is an exceedingly nasty, sharp left-hand turn through a narrow gateway at the very top, with two large boulders, almost steps, that seem ever to be looking hungrily at sumps or axle-casings.

Why the surface should be so slippery when wet I have never quite decided; probably the soil is of a greasy nature, for to the eye it appears a perfect non-skid road.

To counteract the risk of wheel-spin, of course, shock absorbers should be tightened up as much as is reasonably possible and the rear tyres should be let down considerably—personally, I would not consider 12 lbs. too low a pressure in the case of a Midget or Magnet, unless "competition" tyres are fitted. In the latter case too low a pressure is not to be recommended, because the increased "drag" of the prominent tyre tread puts a severe load on the engine at the very stage where a moderate amount of wheel-spin might just give the engine a chance to pick up revs. again.

So when you are next up Buxton way, enquire about the road to Litton Slack; let down your tyres, tighten the "shockers," keep your foot down—and mind the gate at the top!