

## FAMOUS BRITISH TEST HILLS



**S**IMM'S Hill, hidden away near Ilsington, a tiny village on the fringe of Dartmoor, was first "discovered" a little more than ten years ago, when the *Light Car and Cycle Car* organised a rally to this point in order to tackle an alleged unclimbable gradient. Weird and wonderful devices for making certain of getting up were fitted by many competitors. C. M. Harvey, for instance, turned up in an Alvis with spiked steel bands instead of tyres on his rear wheels. All that happened was, however, that the rear wheels dug themselves deeply into the surface of the road, which was at that time very muddy and covered with dead leaves.

It is interesting to note that Norman Black, who has done so well in winning classic races on an M.G. Midget, distinguished himself on this occasion by making the fastest climb of the day on an 8.7 h.p. G.N. with a bottom gear of 13-1.

Simm's Hill (which the locals, with unconscious humour, call Simp's Hill) is one of the most ladder-like ascents I know. It is positively terrifying to look down it from the summit, and looks even steeper than Alm's Hill (now barred to the public) near Henley-on-Thames. The gradient

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By

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is a genuine 1 in 3, there is a sharp right-hand bend at the bottom and it is quite impossible to get any sort of run at the gradient. Although ten years ago only a very small proportion of those who essayed the climb ever reached the summit unaided, a modern sports car with an adequate bottom gear and an engine in first-class condition can generally be relied on to make a clean ascent. Driving, however, enters very largely into the matter, especially at this time of the year, when the surface is liable to be deeply covered in fallen leaves. Pretty work with the throttle pedal is called for, as if the back wheels develop wheelspin, due to too much engine power, the car will most certainly stop; while if full throttle is *not* given, the chances are that the car will not get up the hill.

The easiest way to reach Ilsington is to take the Newton Abbot road from Exeter, keeping right at the fork in about five miles. This takes one through Chudleigh, by the river Teign, and so to Chudleigh Knighton.

Here one can either keep straight on along the Ashburton road (the main road to Plymouth) turning right through Liverton after passing through the Great Plantation, or one can turn right through Bovey Tracey. In this case one leaves by the Newton Abbot road, keeping right by the church and right again at the next fork after crossing the railway, for Brimley and Ilsington. Explanations of how to reach the actual hill might be difficult to follow, if given here, and I would suggest that on reaching Ilsington Church inquiries be made of a local inhabitant.

The Brighton and Hove Motor Club were, I think, the first to have the nerve to include Simm's Hill in a trial course. It was used in the Brighton to Beer run of 1928, but with the improvement in hill climbing of modern cars and the excellent competition tyres which Mr. Dunlop makes, the gradient has lost much of its terror. During the last ten years, however, it has played its part in forcing car manufacturers to build cars which can climb the most precipitous gradients and are, therefore, suitable for use, not only on our good English roads, but under the worst Colonial conditions.

**SIMM'S HILL—**

was particularly selected as the subject of this month's Famous British Test Hill, owing to its inclusion in the M.C.C. London-Exeter Trial, in which, at the time of going to press, it is looked upon as the chief potential terror of the Trial.