



Graham Walker (1897–1962)

Graham William Walker was a well known figure in the motor cycling world with successful careers as a racer, journalist and broadcaster. To the current generation he is perhaps best known as the father of the popular motor sports commentator Murray Walker.

Graham Walker was the son of William Walker of Aberdeen, a company secretary of the Union Castle shipping line. He developed a passion for motor cycles at an early age, joining the Royal Engineers during World War I where he became a dispatch rider, rising to the rank of Sergeant. He was later injured in the leg by an enemy shell, necessitating the use of a modified brake pedal throughout the rest of his riding career. Whilst convalescing from his injuries in England he met and eventually married Elsie Spratt. They had one son, Graeme Murray Walker, born in 1923.

During the early 1920s Walker was a works rider for the Birmingham based Norton Company, achieving some success including a second place in the 1923 Isle of Man Sidecar TT. In 1925 he moved to Wolverhampton and took a position as Competitions Manager and rider for the Sunbeam Company. He was the European 500cc Champion in 1927.

In 1928 came another move, this time to take up the post of Sales & Competitions Director with Coventry-based Rudge. Walker continued his racing career, retiring from the lead in that year's Senior TT only a few miles from the finish line in Douglas. A few weeks later he achieved a thrilling victory in the Ulster Grand Prix, competing with Charlie Dodson for the lead for over two hours and attaining an average speed of over 80mph/128.75kph!



Figure 1: Graham Walker on a Rudge at weighing-in with his entry for the 1928 Senior event.

The success with Rudge continued, Walker going on to win the Lightweight TT in 1931 with a new and completely un-proven machine, the same year in which he also became European 250cc champion. His talents were not confined to road racing as he also represented and captained Britain in the International Six Day Trial.

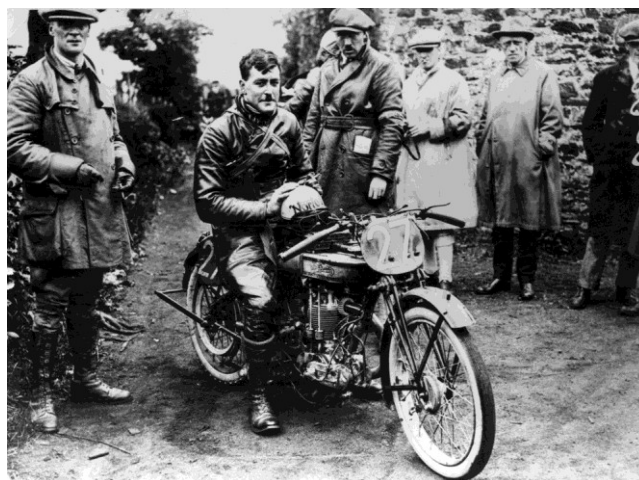


Figure 2: Graham Walker as a Norton factory rider sitting astride his bike at the 1923 Senior TT in which he finished 4th.

Following the end of his racing career Walker started a second career as a radio, and later television, broadcaster with the BBC becoming perhaps as famous for his TT commentaries as he was for his TT rides. He was joined

behind the microphone in 1949 by son Murray. During World War II he was involved in the recruitment of army dispatch riders.

In 1938 Walker also took on the role of Editor for the popular weekly magazine *Motor Cycling*, a post that he held until 1954, continuing as Consulting Editor until 1957.

From 1957 Graham Walker worked closely with Edward, Lord Montagu in the establishment of the motorcycle collection at Beaulieu, a contribution commemorated today in the Graham Walker Motorcycle Gallery of the National Motor Museum.

Further Reading:

Walker, Murray, 2002 .*Unless I'm very much mistaken*.
London: Collins Willow.

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