

# FAMOUS BRITISH TEST HILLS

○ All the passes in England, Wales and Scotland, Honister, rising from Buttermere, is among those most worthy of the name. Beginning with a gentle gradient up a green valley, it steepens and becomes rougher as greater heights are reached, until finally, with a rocky slope of one-in-three, it breasts the summit between beetling crags.

It is a stiff hill and one eminently worth climbing. Two primitive stone bridges over the Gatesgarthdale beck prevent any rushing tactics, while the loose, stony surface results in wheel-spin developing instantly if the throttle be opened too wide. With Honister Crag towering on the right, the pass is remarkable for its grandeur. On a Summer's day one may sit at the top and watch one car after another creep slowly up to the steepest portion, only to fail and back down with much peril and anxiety to the occupants.

From Buttermere, situated roughly  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles south-west of Keswick, to the top of the pass is a shade over four miles, of

## No. 7. HONISTER PASS

which only the last two and a half, however, represent steady climbing. The summit is 1200 feet above sea level, after which one has the option of descending by a new toll road which has a gradient mostly of one in ten, or taking the really colonial public road down to Seatoller. This descent, taken in the opposite direction, i.e. as a climb, is thoroughly wild, with big outcrops of rock and boggy sections in which it is possible to get stuck. The gradient, admittedly, is steep; somewhere between one-in-three and one-in-four, I believe. Nevertheless it seems a scandal that the public road, whatever its gradient, should be allowed to fall into such a state that motorists are obliged to pay half-a-crown for the use of the toll road.

To make a successful climb of either side of Honister Pass the usual precautions when climbing a bad trials hill should be taken, i.e. the tyres should be fairly soft and the shock absorbers done up

tightly. It is necessary to use plenty of throttle to surmount the truly appalling gradient, but loose or muddy sections should, where possible, be avoided, and the amount of throttle opening required to climb the final slope should be nicely balanced against an excessive opening which would provoke wheelspin. As the climb from either side is long and trying, it is just as well to make sure that the sump and radiator are both full before beginning the ascent.

Honister Pass has not often been used in car trials, though it has figured in the motorcycle International Six Days. The Motor Cycling Club, with characteristic courage, is including it, with a stop and re-start on its slopes, in the route of its classic London—Edinburgh trial this Whitsuntide. This new section of a famous trials route includes other severe Lakeland passes and, if the weather is fine enough to make visibility good, competitors in the "Edinburgh" will have much for which to thank the organisers, as the country passed through is really wonderful.