



PRESS RELEASE



17 SEPTEMBER 2026 · 09:00 MANX MOTOR CYCLE CLUB

MANX GRAND PRIX LEGENDS - CAROLYNN SELLS

SINCE RACING AROUND THE MOUNTAIN COURSE BEGAN THERE HAS ONLY EVER BEEN ONE WOMAN WINNER, AND THAT HISTORY MAKER IS CAROLYNN SELLS.

Now a familiar voice for radio listeners during the Manx Grand Prix, in 2009 she became the first and only woman to win around the Mountain Course, doing so in the ultra lightweight race on a 400 Yamaha jointly run by Damian Morrissey and Martin Bullock.

Carolynn, who got into racing through her dad who began racing in the vintage motorcycle club when she was five before he entered the Manx Grand Prix in 1985 when Carolynn was 12 which marked the start of her journey.

Carolynn said: "I must have said at the time I'm gonna do that one day, but I didn't really seriously think about that until I was in my 20s.

"It was 1985 when we first started coming here, and it wasn't until 1989 that the first woman raced in the Manx Grand Prix so I was 16 by that point.

"I used to come over here on my little RD50.

"My dad brought it on the trailer with his motorbikes, you know, and the van loaded up and everything.

"I think I used to buzz around the island thinking, yeah, I'm gonna do this one day, but I didn't seriously think about doing it until much later on, about 10 years later."

Carolynn first began racing in the year 2000 after her dad leant her his Yamaha TZ250 just before she turned 27 which she took racing at Jurby.

Two years later she had won her first championship at Jurby on top of a 400 putting her well on her way to competing on roads.

She said: "The whole thing really was to go road racing, that was the main goal.

"I only raced at the short circuits in order to get my license enabled to be able to do the Manx Grand Prix."

Then in 2003 she entered her first Manx Grand Prix.

"When I started racing on the roads, I was like, yeah, this is what I love.

"My dad approached Martin Bullock and asked him if he would help me out at the Manx.

"Martin Bullock was a team owner, he brought a lot of people to the Manx over the space of about 30 years and you probably would know him from the Tommy Club.

"So my dad spoke to him and he said he would give me a little bit of backing, he had my engine refreshed and stuff. "I did the Manx, it was under my dad's racing name but with a bit of help from Martin and I absolutely loved it.

"The weather was amazing, I got about 24 laps or something ridiculous that week.

"I did two races, I did the newcomers race and I finished fourth in that, which was the highest finish by a woman ever at that point.

"But I was gutted because that year was a record-breaking year, and the guy who came and won it obliterated all the lap records and then went and won the ultra lightweight proper as well.

"I was gutted because I looked at all the results in the previous years and my speed would have put me on the podium in any other year apart from that one.

Following her Manx Grand Prix debut, a year later in 2004 she started racing on the Irish roads as well in events such as the Northwest 200 and Killalane as well as returning the Manx.

From 2004 to 2008 Carolyn achieved good results in each race she entered and in 2008 was running in third in the 400 race before crashing out on the second lap.

Returning to the Manx Grand Prix in 2009, she would end the race meeting as a history maker after taking victory by over a minute in the ultra lightweight race.

She said: "So the race was really windy and it was pouring down all morning.

"There was a delay to the race because they got the road sweepers out because there was standing water at Greeba Castle and Handley's Corner and then the delay was because the road sweeper dropped all its bristles as well at Greeba Castle.

I remember they had a half an hour delay for that.

"We were getting ready and my bike, because we were using a big tank, they were having a few problems with the fuel getting out, so everyone was getting a bit stressed.

"The half an hour delay gave me a chance to walk away for a bit, and I think that actually really, really helped.

"It just gave me a chance to get away from everything for a little bit because everyone was getting a bit wound up.

"We set off and it was really windy.

"We had standing water in places, on lap two, it rained in Ramsey, there was really, really strong headwind up on the mountain, so it was a tricky race condition-wise.

"I was in the lead for two laps and I was out the front on my own. "I actually spent the last two laps talking to myself and talking to the bike as well

"Kept saying to the bike, don't let me down, you know, all of this kind of stuff.

"Talking to myself, like, if I made a bit of a mistake or something, just, you know, what are you doing? Keep your head together.

"You do talk to yourself an awful lot because obviously it's quite lonely out there, especially if you don't see anybody for a couple of laps.

"You've got to keep yourself concentrating and focused so I was talking to myself and talking to the bike, and actually the last 2 laps were really, really consistent.

"I think my sector times were within like half a second of each other and stuff like that.

"I can't remember the exact times now, but I remember looking at the sector times and they were very, very similar for the last couple of laps.

"I was just trying to keep it smooth and consistent and keeping the flow really.

"On lap three where Martin does his boards up at the 13th, Andy Farrell's uncle was there as well and he was waving at me telling me to slow down and I was like, no, I'm not gonna slow down because I had such a big lead and I was just like, no, I'm not gonna slow down because when you slow down you start making mistakes because you lose your rhythm.

"I was just really focused on keeping it as smooth and as neat as possible because of the tricky conditions.

"I think we lapped at just under 108 on the last lap, which with the headwind and water everywhere is not bad on a 400."

As a result Carolynn crossed the finish line in first place, one minute and two seconds ahead of second place achieving an average race speed of 106.022mph.

"I had everybody waving, when you're in the lead, and this is something you don't experience in any other position on the road really.

"When you're in the lead, you're coming around corners and you can see everybody's getting up looking for you which when you come around in second or third or wherever, they're already looking for you.

"All the way around, I could see everybody getting really excited and standing up.

"I was just trying to keep my head together so before you can cross the finish line, you've got to get around Governor's Dip so I was just really cautious through there.

"I really held it together until I crossed the line and then as soon as I crossed the line and got the finish flag I just started screaming and crying and everything in my helmet, it was like it all came out.

"I slowed down and came up the return road, and I look at photographs now and everybody comes up the return road clapping hands with everybody, and I've done that loads of times myself, but I didn't do it that time because I was just like completely out of it

"I came into the winner's enclosure and there were hundreds of people there, when I got there, there were so many people there.

"Where you come in there's like a rise up into it and then it drops down into the winner's enclosure.

"They stopped me at the top just as the camber goes away and I put my foot down, and because my legs were wobbling, I dropped the bike.

"They stopped me on the slope and I just lost my balance and dropped the bike so everybody was laughing at me because of that.

"It was just amazing really because there were so many people there.

"Took my helmet off and I remember Chris Kinley standing there and he's talking on the radio and stuff and waiting for me to get my helmet on, and everybody was coming running into the winner's enclosure, giving me a

hug.

"Chris was just waiting patiently to be able to talk to me.

"My mum, my dad, my brother and his daughter, there was Roger, there was everybody.

"My dad was actually in that race, but he didn't like the conditions, so he pulled out at the end of lap one, I think and watched the rest of the race, so he got to see me win as well."

To this day she remains the only woman to win around the Mountain Course as well as the only woman to win at the Southern 100, having done so in 2005.

She said: "I've always said this, road racing isn't for everyone, male or female, but there are definitely more women coming through.

"I think it's great to see more women coming through.

"I never did it because I wanted to be the best woman at this or the best woman at that.

"I'm just me and I just wanted to race and that's what I wanted to do but if more women want to do it and if I think they've got the right approach and the right attitude, then I'll support them 100%."

Since retiring from racing Carolyn now takes newcomers out each year on their first laps around the Mountain Course but has ruled out a return to competition.

"We talked about this at the Manx this year, we talked about it on air actually, I said if I could go out there, guarantee that nothing was going to happen, just go out on the bike and go as fast as I can, then I would do it all day long.

"I miss going faster on a bike around here, I do miss that, but I have a little bit of a taste of that now doing the newcomers laps.

"Now I've done that for the last couple of years, so that gives me a little bit of a hit of doing it.

"I mean, it's not race speed, I do miss going fast on the TT circuit, but there's lots of other things that I don't miss about racing, like the constant trying to get money together and the trying to organize it all, and when things go wrong, all of those things I don't miss.

"But I do miss the buzz of going flat out down Bray Hill."

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