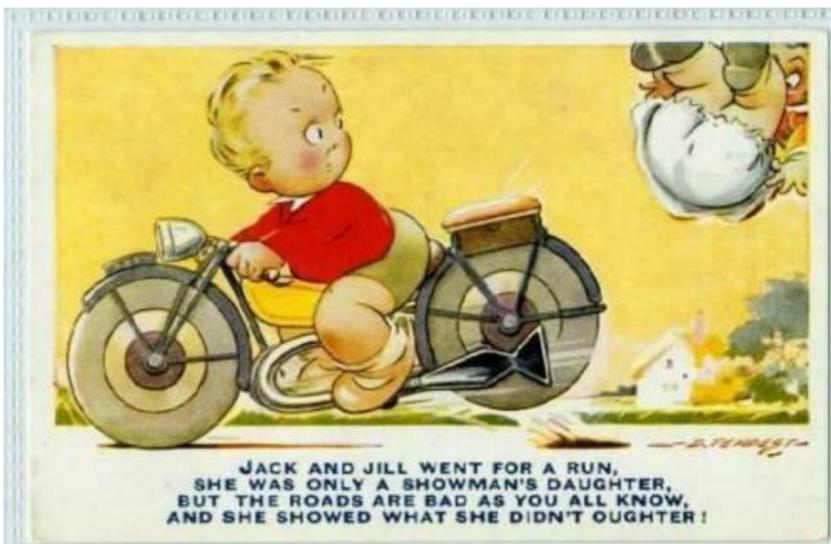


# BEDS VMCC NEWS

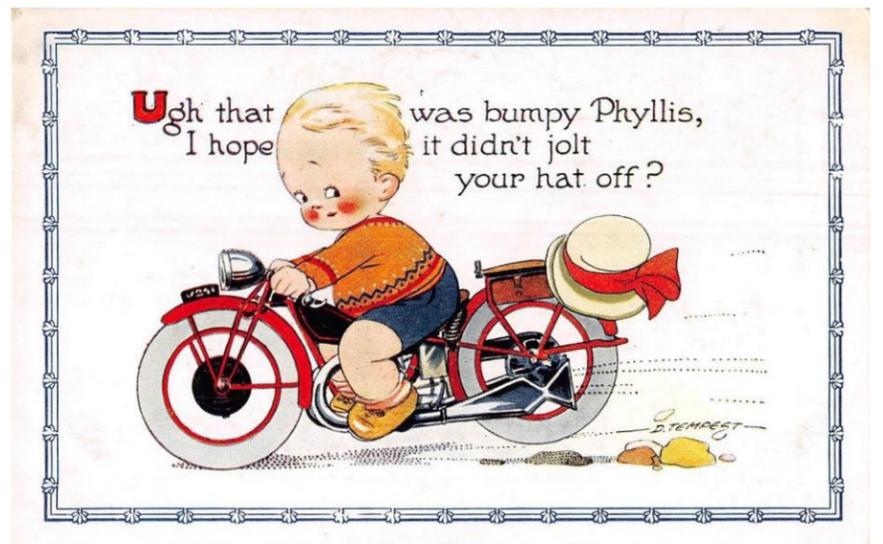
KEEPING YOU INFORMED DURING LOCK-DOWN



Cartoon by E H Shepherd, Punch 1912



Saucy postcards by Douglas Tempest for Bamforth & Co.



## IN THIS ISSUE

**SECTION  
NEWS**

**JACK AND  
JOHNNY – PT 3**

**BEASTS OF  
BURDEN**

**WILL'S  
PIN-UPS**

**BRAKE  
FAILURES**

## EDITORIAL

Some cartoons on the front page to start on a cheery note but Autumn is upon us and there's still no sign of any semblance of normality. It seems that some sections and other bike groups are holding runs and other events with up to 30 people. But, by my reading of the current guidance, see below received from Central Beds Council today (Thursday), the limit is clearly still six. Up to now, that hasn't affected our midweek runs as demand hasn't been that great. Nevertheless, I hope you are managing to get out on your bikes for your own solo or small group rides.

**Confused about how many people you can meet up with?**

**Meeting indoors**  
Only **TWO** households can meet at one time  
(anyone in your support bubble counts as part of your household)

**A maximum of SIX people can meet at a pub/restaurant**  
from no more than of two households

**Meeting outdoors**  
Groups of up to **SIX** people from different households can meet

**Larger groups can only meet if everyone is exclusively from TWO households**  
(anyone in your support bubble counts as part of your household)

**A maximum of SIX people can meet at a pub/restaurant**  
from more than two households

**You still need to socially distance from people you do not live with or who are not in your support bubble and wash your hands regularly**

Hopefully the weather in September and October will be better than we've suffered through August. Gosh, am I sounding really gloomy? I don't mean to as I've been getting out on a bike (ancient or modern) most days since lockdown was eased. Counting up, I've managed to squeeze in some 7,000 miles since mid-May; 3,800 of those on VMCC-eligible machines. And I'm not stopping there, I've trips to Somerset, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland planned for the next few weeks, albeit on my modern Triumph Tiger 800XC. It's just passed the 100,000 miles mark and I want to pile some more miles on it before I move on to Yamaha power next Spring. Ironic as, by then, all new Triumphs will be made in Thailand but the Yamaha is built in France! I know that companies have to remain competitive but, to me, a Triumph made in the Far East wouldn't feel right. It was bad enough that they built the T160 Trident in Birmingham...

Many thanks to this week's contributors: Don, Ivor, Nige, Norm and Will – as always, please keep the contributions coming.

Bryan

## Section news, and local events

### VIRTUAL CLUBNIGHT

Another of Will's excellent virtual clubnights will be available on the evening of Thursday, 10<sup>th</sup> September on the following link:  
[http://wcurry.co.uk/vmccbeds/net\\_night\\_sept/w\\_001.html](http://wcurry.co.uk/vmccbeds/net_night_sept/w_001.html)

Please note that it won't be available until that evening.

### REAL CLUBNIGHT

Sorry, current Government regulations (see editorial above) still don't permit this type of gathering.

## MIDWEEK DAYTIME RUNS

The next run, weather permitting, will be on Thursday, 10<sup>th</sup> September. Please contact Don if you'd like to come along, either by email: [donmckeand@hotmail.com](mailto:donmckeand@hotmail.com), or by telephone on: 01525 720629.

We will try to keep these runs going every couple of weeks through Autumn, for as long as anyone still wants to come out to play.

## ICKLEFORD BIKE NIGHTS

As far as I know, Wednesday Bike Nights continue at the Old George in Ickleford. I believe some of our members have been along – why not send a report and some pictures for this newsletter. Also, please let me know if you hear of any other events that are going ahead.

**OLD BIKES AT THE OLD GEORGE  
ICKLEFORD SG53UX**

**EVERY WEDNESDAY  
6pm**

**BEER BIKES AND FOOD**

**KEEP UP TO DATE ON  
OUR FACEBOOK EVENTS**

**OLD BIKES AT THE OLD GEORGE**

## BEDFORDSHIRE NAVIGATION EVENT

One of the navigation event locations, St Mary's Church in Potsgrove, will be open 11.00-16.00 daily from 11<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> September as part of the Heritage Open Days scheme. No booking required, just show up – I doubt it will be overcrowded. A brief guidebook can be downloaded from: <https://www.visitchurches.org.uk/static/uploaded/72ca0853-a3a2-4dc3-82250d682c63c09d.pdf>

## SAND AND MOTORCYCLES

Sadly, this very popular event in Leighton Buzzard is the latest victim of the pandemic and has been cancelled. If you are now at a loss of what to do that day instead, you might consider the MK bike show:

## MILTON KEYNES MOTORCYCLE SHOW

Probably not a lot specific to vintage or classic bikes but the show, now in its fourth year is going ahead on Sunday, 27<sup>th</sup> September at Stadium MK from 10am-4pm. Entry is free.

## AUTUMN GOLD RUN

This will not be going ahead this year, sorry.

## The page 3 girl



## My Motorcycle Pin-ups

WILL CURRY

These three are what I consider to be the most beautiful motorcycles ever made. That's not the fastest or the most technologically advanced or the best handling or the nicest to ride, just the most beautiful.

It's the petrol tank that usually catches my eye first, then the exhaust system.

The three bikes here all have both petrol tanks and exhausts that caught my eye. Funnily enough, given my somewhat limited experience with the sport, they are all racers and all well past pensionable age too.

These just look good. I certainly don't want to own one and I'm probably not suited to own one either.



Replica of 1935 500 v-twin Husqvarna

The first pinup and the only colour one too is the Husqvarna racing V-twin. The bike in the picture is a replica, so I'm told.

I've never even seen one of these. My appreciation is entirely photographic although I believe there is one in the Sammy Miller Museum, somewhere I have yet to visit.

These bikes were the work of one Folke Mannerstedt and were pretty radical for their time, particularly in the use of aluminium and magnesium alloys. The exhaust system is wonderfully logical – it helps if both exhausts on a twin are the same length. I believe the layout was fairly quickly banned, especially after they started winning.

The bikes were dogged by bad luck. One lorry containing the race bikes got dropped in the sea while being loaded onto a ship. Another lorryload caught fire while returning from a race meeting. One of the survivors, possibly the one at Sammy Miller's, has 'wavy' finning on one cylinder, perhaps a legacy of that fire.



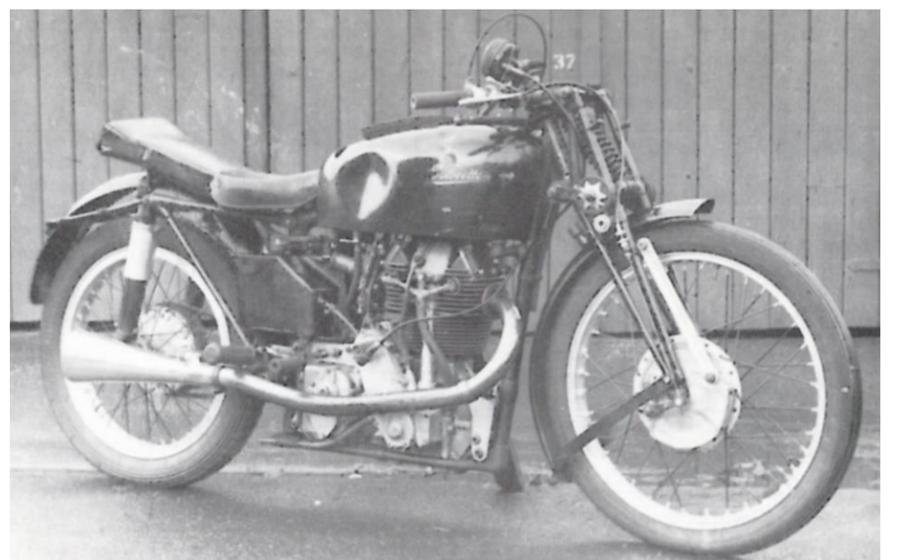
Late 1940's garden gate Manx

Number two is the Garden Gate Manx Norton.

At least I've seen these in the metal although I've not ridden one, or even sat on one.

I don't know where the 'Garden Gate' name came from . . .  
. . . unless Harold Daniell inadvertently coined it at the same time as he coined the 'Featherbed' name.

The design has a kind of misplaced logic about it. When it became obvious that rear suspension was a necessity the easiest way was to add plungers to the existing rigid frame rather than start again. The Roadholders has already been in use on the racers for 10 or so years by the time this example was built and so were fairly well developed. The whole needs the big-fin Manx engine to become really eye-catching: Garden Gate Inters just don't quite manage it.



Late 1940's MkVIII Velocette KTT

To my mind the most beautiful of all. Developed from a rigid-framed, girder-forked prototype just like the Manx the direction of development went the other way. The rear end is very sophisticated for its time and the front forks, although still girders were the best that could be had. Exotic materials too were employed. The hubs were magnesium alloy.

I have sat on one of these. A long time ago I lived for a while in Sheffield and lodged not far from Wilf Green's Emporium on Abbeydale Rd. On one early visit there were two Velos by themselves in the far corner of the showroom. The temptation was too great and very soon I was aboard the single. Seconds later I was invited to disembark. I found out later there was a system of mirrors this being very much pre-cctv.

While I might have called these pin-ups I don't have them pinned up anywhere. There is only one photo on the garage wall and that takes Ivor Rhode's request for photos other than RE, Triumph and Ariel a little further:



It's GWR King class loco no 6000 - 'King George V' or 'King Bell' because of the presentation bell on the front buffer beam. The photo is from preservation days and she's in her final condition - mechanical lubrication rather than hydrostatic, 4-row superheater, double chimney. Lovely. Mind you, you needed to know how to fire the long, thin firebox properly or you'd soon be short of steam. Growing up in Risboro' on the ex GWR 'New' line to Birmingham they were a part of my life until steam ended. Happy days.

*[would anyone else like to contribute a short piece on their own favourite motorcycle pin-ups? I'm sure I can find suitable pictures if you don't have them. I can't believe there was no mention of Triumphs.]*

## **Norm's Round Bedford Run**

**NORMAN LORTON**

*[The description of the route is taken from Norman Lorton's pre-ride briefing notes and, together with the map, should enable anyone to follow it independently.]*

*We were blessed with good weather when we did this as last week's midweek run, the rain only arriving after everyone should have made it safely home. It is an excellent route and well worth exploring.*

*A larger version of the map is included on the final page of this issue.]*

This route gives the rider a circumnavigation of Bedford Town, following a decidedly rural route through the some of the nearest villages.

It covers 57 miles and is nearly a truly circular route in that the finish point is just two miles from the start. It was developed to illustrate the different types of countryside that may be seen in the four quarters that surround Bedford town.



**Gathering at the start, just North of Ampt Hill**

### **THE JOURNEY**

**Quarter One:** We head west from Ampt Hill and then enter the ex-industrial, brickworks and quarry environment of the southwest quarter. The terrain is flat but then changes as we cross the A421 dual carriageway and climb up to Cranfield Village and the nearby airfield. The elevated nature affects the farmland which is green and fully arable.

**Quarter Two:** Now heading north we cross the A422 Newport Pagnell Road and enter a different type of countryside. We stop for the first viewpoint just above Newton Blossomville that gives an extensive panorama across the River Great Ouse Valley that dominates this area and the next part of the ride. Starting now to turn east we follow the south side of the river until Felmersham.

**Quarter Three:** After passing through Milton Ernest we climb onto the escarpment that forms the base for Thurleigh Airfield. The high ground again changes the nature of the surroundings. We stop at Scald Farm, 27 miles into the journey. They have loos, plenty of outdoor bench and table seating, serve coffee and cakes, and do very good breakfasts. *[...and some very good cake - Bryan]*. The route continues east thorough territory familiar to Albert Brown riders, but then swings south to again cross the A421, near to the Black Cat roundabout that can be seen half a mile to the left.

**Quarter Four:** We head south over flat countryside that has been carved by the Great Ouse and see the river for the final time at Great Barford. The route climbs again to the familiar territory of Northill and then Old Warden, and this area is characterised by the many woods. We stop on the high ground above the Cardington Hangars and look north over the extensive Bedford valley. In the far distance north west, 14-15 miles away, we should see the wind farm masts that we passed just before Newton Blossomville. It will be surprising how far we have come. We are now just 8 miles from the finish at Maulden.



**See final page for a larger version of this map**

## Motor Cycle Camping

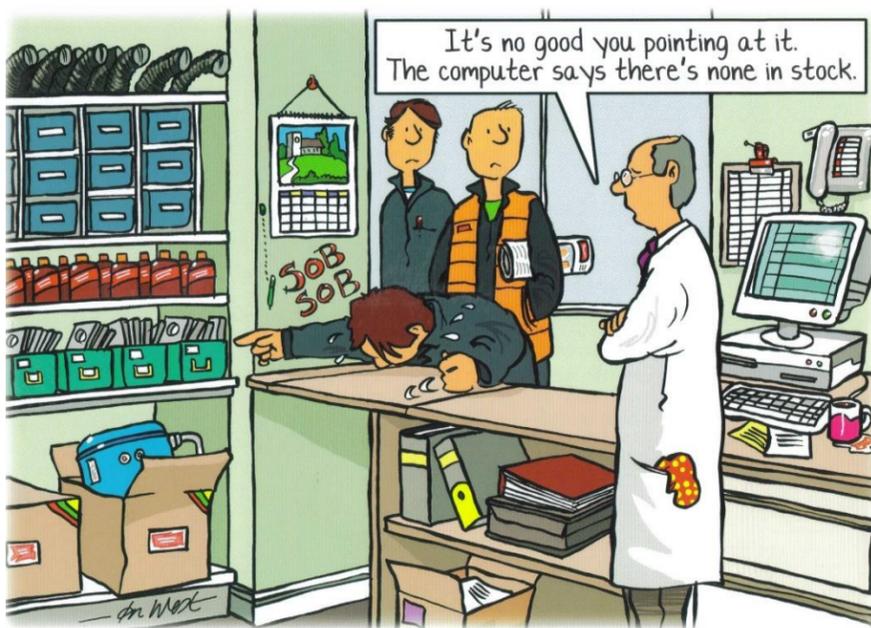
ADVICE FROM 'THE MOTOR CYCLISTS ANNUAL 1939-40'

Cover up your motor cycle, and bed it down for the night taking precautions against marauding animals.

Treat your tent like a brother, for it will certainly have a very considerable effect on your holiday.

The secret of good camping is to put just about double the fun and pleasure into it that you expect to get out of it. A camper "with a sore head" should be buried with the next lot of rubbish.

## At the parts counter...



[Thanks to Ivor Rhodes for submitting this cartoon]

## Local motorcycle dealer directory (1939)

BRYAN MARSH

**Amptill** - Flitt Motor Co.; H J Woods, 96 Dunstable Street  
**Bedford** - Imperial Cycle & Motor Co., 58 St. Loyes Street  
**Biggleswade** - Bryants, 25-27 and 72-74 Shortmead Street  
**Bletchley** - R J Fleming, 17-25 High Street, Stony Stratford  
**Dunstable** - Bertram G England, Half Moon Garage, London Road  
**Hemel Hempstead** - Moore's, London Road  
**Hertford** - Webbs Stores, The Arcade; Quelch & Brown, 63 Fore Street  
**Hitchin** - J Chalkley & Son, Brand Street  
**Leighton Buzzard** - A Stratford, 31 Hockliff Street  
**Luton** - R S Bailey, 56 Park Street; Dunham & Haines, 46 Castle Street  
**Northampton** - P W Coldham, 47 Bridge Street; Goff & Lee, 14 Newland & Princess Street, and 181 Kettering Road; Lawes & Sons, St. Giles Square; Redhead & Sons, 40-42-44 Wellingborough Road; Spokes & Son, 1 Henry Street  
**Olney** - Soul Bros., High Street South; E & J W Sowman Ltd.  
**Royston** - Pepper & Haywood, 2 Melbourn Street  
**St. Albans** - Clarke's, 164 London Road; A H Findell, 43 Alma Road  
**Stevenage** - Vincent H.R.D. Co., The Great North Road  
**Tring** - E Brocklehurst, The Market Garage and Service Station, Brook Street  
**Ware** - C R Huckle, High Cross  
**Watford** - Lloyd Cooper & Co., Ltd., 61 Queens Road; Repair Depot at Loates Lane; Galley & Scobell, 326 St. Albans Road; Geo. H Gray, 57 Queens Road; Lewis & Foster, 29 Market Street  
**Welwyn** - North Road Garage (Welwyn), Ltd.

[I think the only two remaining, operating as motorcycle dealers, are Lloyd Cooper in Watford and Moore's in Hemel Hempstead]

## Jack and Johnny - part 3

DON MCKEAND

[This is the third and final part of a series of articles about ISDT riders Jack Stocker and Johnny Brittain. The first was about Jack's ride in the 1948 ISDT. The second covered his experiences in other ISDTs and as team manager. This one is about Johnny Brittain.]

I first met Johnny Brittain at an REOC rally I was helping to organise in the 1990s. By that time, he was retired. When he left competitive riding, he had been a motorcycle dealer in Bloxwich during the 1960s and 1970s and had then moved on to farming in 1984. We had invited Johnny along to the rally with several other factory testers and when he arrived, his first comment was "I didn't think anyone would remember me!" He was genuinely modest and did not talk a great deal about his achievements, so I think it is time I gave some background to why he should be remembered.

John Victor Brittain's father was Vic Brittain, a distinguished trials and ISDT rider both before the war and just after. Vic rode a variety of bikes in the ISDT including Rudge, Norton and Royal Enfield. Despite this there was no pressure on the young John to take up trials riding, but he did so anyway. The first time he competed in the ISDT was as a private entrant on a 125cc James in 1949 when it was held at Llandrindod Wells. He was aged 18 at the time and went on to win a Gold medal – the first of eleven!



Johnny Brittain (No. 15) on a James in the 1949 ISDT

His talent was recognised by the Royal Enfield factory and in 1950 he was mounted on a 350 Bullet in the ISDT again held in Wales based on Llandrindod Wells. This time he was a member of the Vase A team and, although his team did not win the Vase, he gained an individual Gold Medal.



Johnny Brittain on a 350 Royal Enfield Bullet in the 1950 ISDT

In 1951 he was mounted on a 500 Twin for the ISDT held in Italy at Varese. Again, he had no penalty points and was awarded a Gold medal. Things did not go so well at the 1952 when the event was held at Bad Ausee in Austria. He was riding another 500 Twin, KAB 547, which

had been Jack Stocker's bike the previous year. Uncharacteristically, he was penalised for the bike not starting in the allotted time on the morning of the fourth day and he had to resort to a push start. The explanation appears to have been that there had been very low overnight temperatures and the thick oil used to deal with the hard riding demanded by the event was like treacle and made a number of machines difficult to kick over, including Hugh Viney's AJS although he just managed to start within the time. Subsequently the riders took to changing to SAE 20 oil just before leaving their bikes overnight, and then changing back to heavier oil once the bikes were warm the next day. Whether or not this was the reason, the engine on Johnny's bike failed terminally 31 miles from home on the fifth day.

For the following year in Czechoslovakia he was again mounted on a 500 Twin, this time LWP 424, which has been beautifully restored by John Ely and has appeared at a number of shows in recent times. This time everything went well for him and he gained another Gold medal as a member of the winning Trophy team. This was the last year that Great Britain won the Trophy.



**Johnny Brittain on the 500 Royal Enfield Twin LWP 424 in the 1953 ISDT**

It was back to Wales for 1954, and there were problems for him in the selection tests when he damaged the front end of his 350 Bullet. However, it was sorted out by the time of the ISDT and he went on to gain another Gold medal as a member of the Trophy team. That year the British Trophy team was the only one to be un-penalised but lost out to the Czechs on the result of the speed test.

This meant that the 1955 event took place at Zlin in Czechoslovakia. And Johnny was again riding in the Trophy team on a 350 Bullet although this was now a 350 top-end on a 500 bottom-end and had a crankshaft mounted alternator and racing magneto. That year, Bob Manns on an AJS and Johnny Brittain were the only Trophy team members to be un-penalised and win Gold medals. As an aside, Johnny's brother Pat won a Silver medal also mounted on a Bullet.

1956 was not a good year for Royal Enfield in the ISDT in West Germany, especially as Johnny Brittain had been appointed Trophy team captain. They had adopted a new frame design which was all welded, but during that year's ISDT, the frames broke at the headstock on Johnny's 350 Bullet, and also on those being ridden by Pat Stirland and Sammy Miller. I once was incautious enough to ask Sammy about his Enfield ride in 1956 and received a very curt response. Having said that, for several years, I did own a 1956 Bullet with the all-welded frame. With rather gentler road usage it is still giving reliable service down in Devon, but from 1957 onwards the frames reverted to forged lugs for the headstock which gave no further trouble.

In 1957 the ISDT was again held in Czechoslovakia, but no British teams were entered because of the international political situation. The following year the event was back in West Germany, so Johnny was back in the saddle on a 350 Bullet, riding to another Gold medal. Royal Enfield also gained a manufacturer's team prize, thus laying the ghost of 1956.

1959 was another difficult year when there was no British manufacturers' team support and the ACU entered a team of privateers instead. The name J. V. Brittain did not appear in the entries for that year and likewise in 1960.

But in 1961 he was back on a 350 Bullet in the Trophy team, riding to another Gold medal in Wales.

For 1962 in West Germany, he had swapped to a 250cc Crusader based bike and went on to a Gold medal as part of the Vase A team. The Crusader carried him to another Gold medal the next year in Czechoslovakia.



**Johnny Brittain on the 250cc Royal Enfield Crusader in the 1962 ISDT**

1964 was to be his swan song at Erfurt in East Germany. This time he rode a "big head" 500 Bullet with the leading link forks Royal Enfield had designed for a two-stroke motocross project. This was the bike which Will Curry sent a picture of in an earlier newsletter. John Victor Brittain went out on a high with his eleventh Gold medal from thirteen entries.

The last time I saw him was at Brooklands in 2013 when he had been invited to the launch of the Royal Enfield 535 Continental. He was reunited with his 500 Twin and while looking at it he shook his head and said, "I don't know how we did it with those heavy bikes". I don't know either and take my hat off to all the ISDT riders; I am just glad I was able to meet two of them.



**Johnny Brittain reunited with LWP 424 at Brooklands in 2013**

This article concentrates on John's ISDT Career, but he had an equally distinguished career in one- and two-day trials as well as the Scottish Six Days Trial.

Last year Johnny died at the age of 87.

## *Ivor's Motorcycle Miscellany*

**IVOR RHODES**



Just to conclude the photographs from the French Museum (see previous issues), here is a photograph of what purported to be a 1905 Autofauteur Environ. The frame and particularly the welding looked very suspect to my untrained eye and the overall condition was pristine. I concluded it was an old engine that had been found a home in a bodged-up child's cycle frame. I may be wrong but it does not appear in Tragatsch so it is either a NAIT or a fake, unless one of our readers know differently.

### **BEASTS OF BURDEN.**

This interest started back in 1996 when Jane and I visited Saigon (Ho Chi Min city). Travelling down a main street surrounded by thousands of small motorcycles and cycles we were passed by a machine and the pillion had both his hands high up in the air. We could not believe what we were seeing. By the time I had fired up the camera they were ahead of our trishaw but if you look carefully between the two cycles in front (Glass man) you will see someone who looks like he is riding a bike with a pair of high ape hangers. The pillion is holding a large sheet of plate glass across his knees and holding on to the top, the glass was wider than the bike!!! Not a good combination in an accident.



Spot the glass carrier (with his hands in the air)

In Thailand we came across the Wicker man who was riding a motorcycle and float laden with wicker seats and loungers (bulk but no weight), we managed to catch up with him when he stopped for a smoke.



The Wicker Man, or a sidecar gone crazy!



You've been framed... (predictable, I know)

Using motorcycles to carry goods is not unique to the Far East we have been doing this since motorcycles were invented. I came across Cow man in a book by Valerie Porter - English Villagers, Life in the Countryside. This practice must have been popular in the 1920's and 30's for an article by Pete Kelly in the October 2018 Old Bike Mart shows a further two examples of carrying cows in sidecars. No, not the mother in law!



**That's what you call a rear-view mirror!**

The Panther man photograph shows a once common means of transporting your completion machine to and from an event. The AA and RAC used motorcycle combinations for breakdown service. Talking of RAC remind me of dear old Geoff Davies who worked as a patrol man when he first left the Royal Air Force. He rebuilt the Bryant's of Biggleswade motorcycle float, this machine was for a time exhibited in the Stondon Museum. Does anyone know where it went when that museum closed?



*True vintage motor cycle transport  
Kevin Alexander's 1937 350cc Trials Panther neatly installed on his 1975 Ural chair outfit*

## Brake Failures

**BRYAN MARSH**



The remnants of one of the rear brake shoes from my recently acquired 1953 Triumph TR5 Trophy

Coming into Pirton one day last week on my newly purchased 1953 Triumph TR5 Trophy, a rather nasty bang emanated from the rear end as I applied the rear brake and simultaneously hit a pothole just before the give way line. Pulling over to the verge to allow a car to pass, reapplying the rear brake clearly indicated something was amiss. Luckily the wheel still turned freely so I coaxed the bike home, front brake only.

Off with the rear wheel and wow, didn't expect that – both linings had detached from the shoes and one of the shoes had broken clean in two. I say 'clean' because there was no evidence of corrosion on the fracture surface. A quick safety check of the front brake found those to be rivetted rather than bonded.

Bizarrely, a similar thing happened to a friend's Ariel just a few days later. Luckily, his came to light when he was taking the bike off the stand and not out on the road because his made a better job of jamming the wheel.

This has caused a debate to rage within our small group over the suitability of bonded linings compared to traditional rivets. I believe that both sets of failed linings were very old, and that modern bonding materials should be perfectly reliable. He takes the opposite view and is insisting that all his machines use rivetted shoes.

I'd be interested to hear any learned opinions on this subject.



De-bonded brake linings on a friend's Ariel



Face masks should be worn...

## From the Archive

NIGEL COOTES

### A MISCELLANY OF EVENTS AND PARTICIPANTS

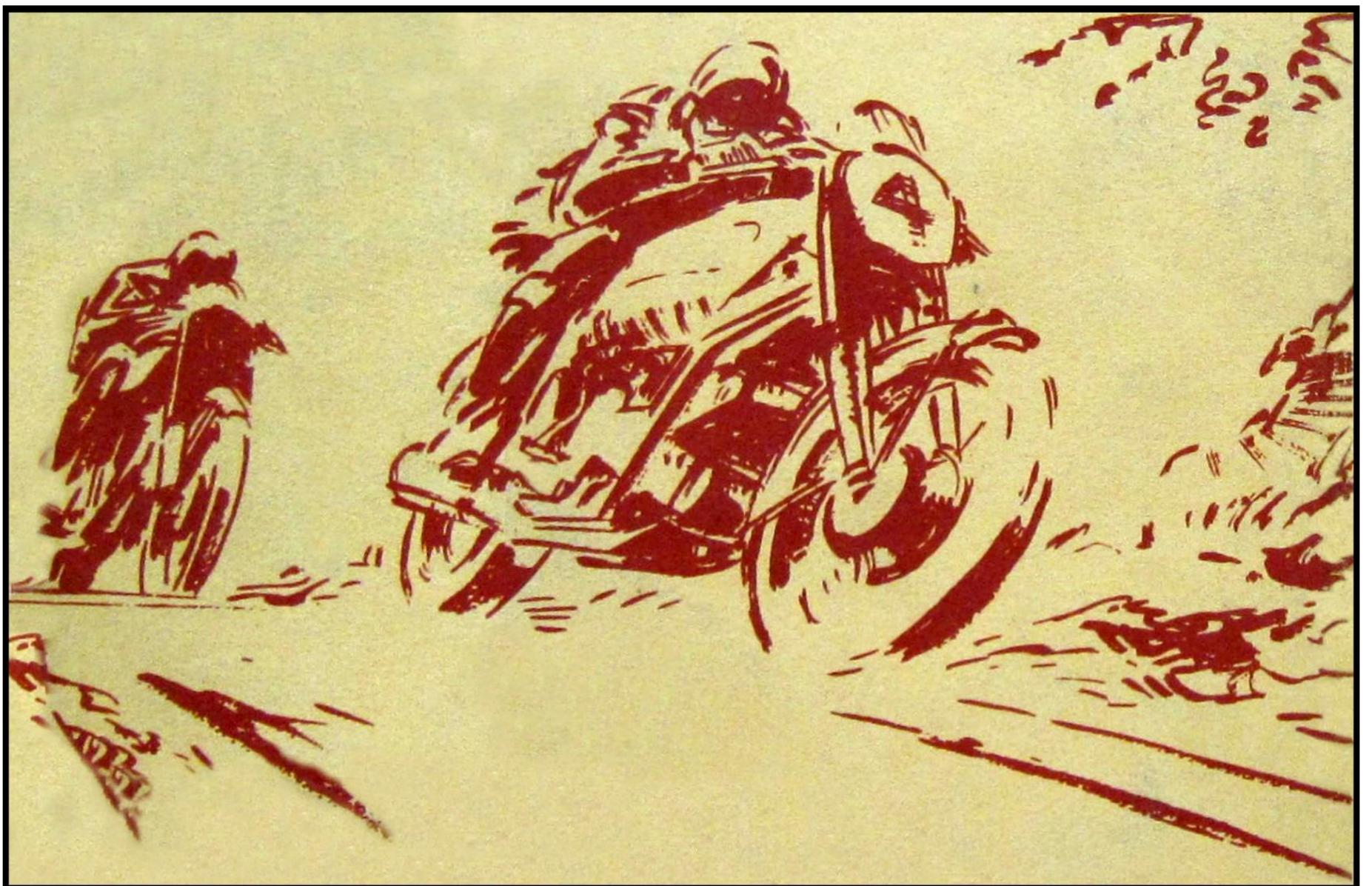


[Hey Brent, I recognise that bike – Bryan]





Norm's Round Bedford Route



I'm sure we can make it to the coffee stop before they stop serving breakfasts.