

# BEDS VMCC NEWS

**KEEPING YOU INFORMED DURING LOCK-DOWN**

## Can we ride again soon, please?



**“Cycling through the Beautiful Lanes of Hertfordshire on a Humber”**

“This illustration shows the road which runs from the top of Digswell Hill to Lemsford” *[original captions]*

### EDITORIAL

Probably more East Herts Section territory than ours but I couldn't resist this picture which, of all unlikely sources, comes from the July 13<sup>th</sup>, 1904 issue of “The Tatler” magazine; amazing what one can find browsing the (online) British Newspaper Archive. It's possible that the part of the lane pictured no longer exists because of changes to accommodate Junction 5 of the A1(M), resulting in part of the lane being abandoned.

Only a week to go until the transition from Lockdown to the return of a 3-Tier System of restrictions. I've been reading the guidance on the Government website and, by my understanding, there will be no restriction on riding in Tiers 1 & 2, but Tier 3 says “you can continue to travel to venues or amenities which are open, but should aim to reduce the number of journeys you make where possible”, which would appear to rule out recreational riding; others may interpret this more loosely - as they seem to have done with the current restrictions. New guidance will, no doubt, be issued by the Coalition of Motorcycle Organisations, of which VMCC is a founder member but, in my opinion and that of the Northants Chief Constable, they got it wrong about the current (until Dec 2) restrictions. Fingers crossed that we don't end up in Tier 3, but that seems unlikely at present.

Many thanks to all contributors to this issue – Brent, David, Don, Neil, Richard, Tim and Will. Feedback so far has been excellent; your efforts are very much appreciated. Please keep the articles and pictures coming; it's going to be a long winter. The next issue will probably revert to Friday.

Bryan

### IN THIS ISSUE

**DON'S FAMILY  
ALBUM**

**MORE  
YORKSHIRE**

**NEIL VS. DVLA**

**LOTS, LOTS  
MORE**

## Section news and events, etc.

### SECTION AGM

No comments or questions have been received yet on the written Secretary's and Chairman's reports in the previous newsletter, or the proposal to keep the existing committee in post. If nothing is received by the time of the next newsletter, we'll call the reports closed, and the committee re-elected. It's just occurred to me that we forgot to ask the individual committee members if they wished to continue – but I think the legal maxim is something along the lines of "he who remains silent is deemed to consent". Speak now, or forever hold...

I also forgot about the minutes of the 2019 AGM, which need to be approved. They are included at the end of this newsletter. Please let me know of any errors or omissions within the next couple of weeks. Again, if nothing is received, they will be accepted as a true record of that meeting.

Unfortunately, the financial report is still not yet ready. Time will be allowed for comments and/or questions when it is available.

### MIDWEEK DAYTIME RUNS/LUNCHESES/CLUB NIGHTS

As mentioned in the front-page editorial, runs should once again be possible, provided we aren't in Tier 3 (info not available at the time of going to press). Should anyone be sufficiently brave/foolish to wish to participate in winter midweek runs, strictly weather dependent, please let me know ([bryan.marsh@btinternet.com](mailto:bryan.marsh@btinternet.com) or 01525 877585) and I'm sure Don or I will be able to sort something out. The previous limit of six will still apply.

Still no midweek lunches or Shefford club nights for the foreseeable future, I'm afraid; I'm guessing it'll be Easter, at the earliest.

### LOCAL CAFÉ RECOMMENDATIONS

Cafés will be able to re-open from 2 Dec, so we can reassume compiling a list of our favourite establishments. Please keep sending suggestions, but here is where we left off:

- Blossom Café – Leighton Buzzard Garden Centre (Neil)
- Blossom Café – Willington Garden Centre (Bryan)
- Jordan's Mill – Broom (Kerry)
- Nobby's Farm Shop, Great Billington (Bryan)
- Scald End Farm Tea Room - Scald End, Thurleigh (Norm)

### VIRTUAL CLUB NIGHT

No word from anyone yet, but hopefully you're all working away on your ideas in the background. You just need to come up with the idea and the base material – text and photos – and I'm sure Will will be able to magically transform it into a suitable presentation format. I have one up my sleeve so, hopefully, that will materialise soon. I believe Will also said he'd try to do a virtual quiz night – sounds like a great idea.

### ROTARY CLUB CHARITY QUIZ SHEETS



David Sparkes writes:

“At this time of the year I sell Hitchin Priory Rotary Club Charity Quiz Sheets. They are available by E-mail, at the usual price of £2, from [www.hitchinprioryrotaryclub.org](http://www.hitchinprioryrotaryclub.org) or at Hitchin Information Office, 1a Churchyard, Hitchin; Brookers shop and trade department; and several other shops also have copies. So, please members do buy quiz sheets.

My very best wishes to you all.”

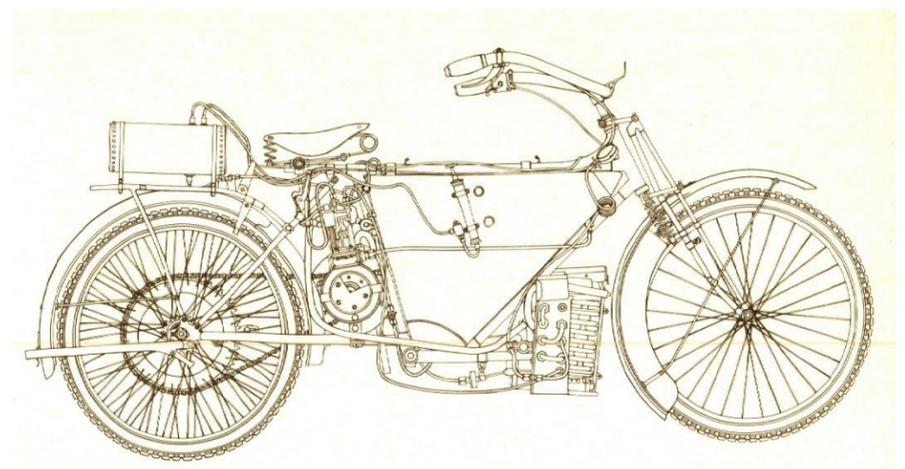
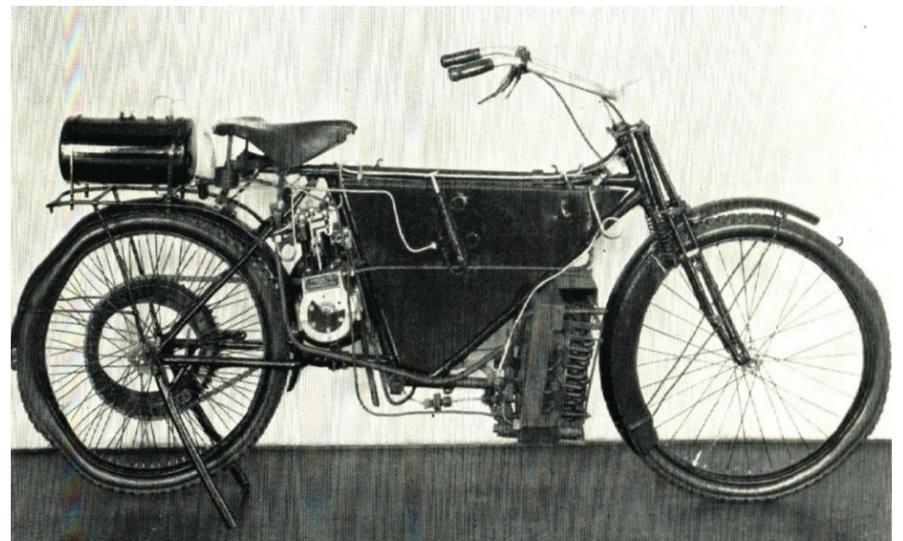
[The website is easy to use, including PayPal payment, and you will be supporting two excellent charities: GRIT (Growing Resilience in Teens) and “Just be a child” – details of their work can be accessed through the website. The questions are just as “challenging” as usual though – better than Christmas telly - Bryan]

## Electrifying news – time to let off some steam?

The Government has announced that the UK will end the sale of petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2030, but the position on motorcycles was not mentioned in the announcement. The Motorcycle Action Group (MAG) therefore contacted the DfT for clarification, and received confirmation that motorcycles are not within the scope of the current announcement.

The Department went on to say that there are no timeframes for ending the sale of petrol/diesel motorcycles.

But even when the petrol runs out, there will still be VMCC-eligible machines:



1912 Pearson-Cox 3 hp Steam Motorcycle



1941 Socovel Electric Scooter

## The page 3 girl



HOW FRÄULEIN RIDES IN BERLIN

The German lady has now taken to using the motor cycle

## The Family Album

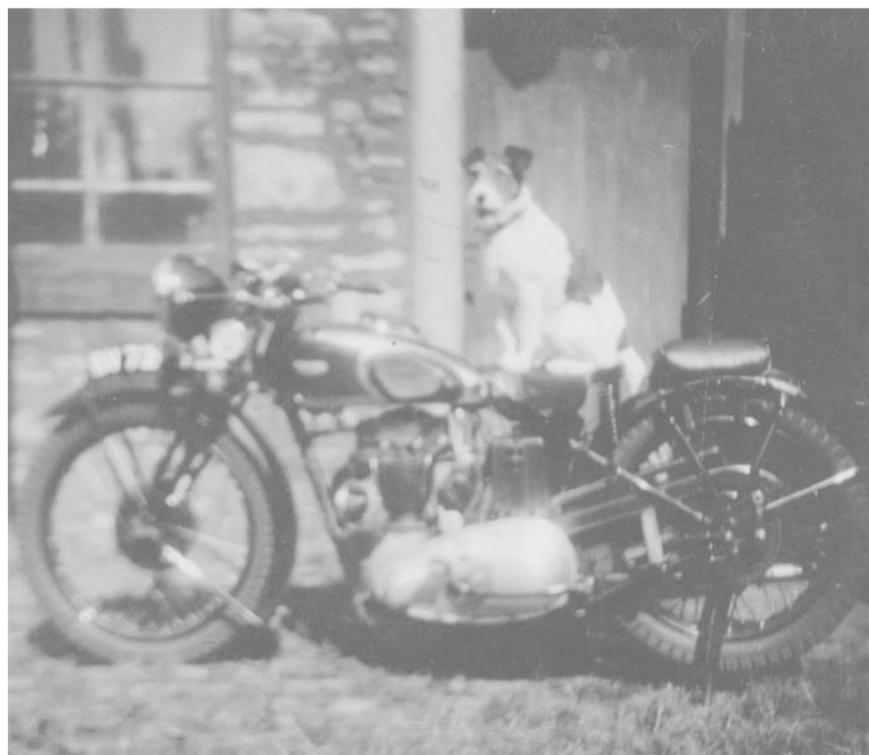
DON MCKEAND

Here are some bike pictures from my family album. It seems I had some motorcycling heritage on both my father's and my mother's side, and my wife's although I did not come to bike riding until after I was 21 and needed basic transport.



My mother's brother, Jack, was keen on motorcycles before the war and traded second-hand bikes as a side-line. The bike my mother remembered was a V twin Montgomery, which he tried to teach her to ride, but it proved too powerful for her and she gave up after crashing.

The picture of the Douglas rider is my grandfather – also Donald McKeand. After service in the Liverpool Scottish Regiment at Ypres in WW1, he became an accountant but spiced up his life with the Douglas. Sadly, he died when I was six years old so I never heard anything from his own lips, but my father said Donald used to compete in hill climbs in Lancashire and speed events at New Brighton on the Wirral, but usually entered under an assumed name to stop my grandmother finding out, so I have not been able to verify any of this. Maybe I inherited the Royal Enfield virus from Donald, as my father said he had an old RE during WW2 which he used on his duties as a wartime Special Constable.



The Triumph being ridden by the dog is my father's Triumph in the 1930s. A 250cc side valve, I believe, which he swapped for an Austin Seven as soon as he could - not as keen a rider as his dad. Maybe Bryan knows the model and an approximate date. *[are you sure that's a side-valve because the engine looks too tall, and the cylinder head looks more like an OHV? – if it is OHV, it could be a 2H from 1937-39. Moreover, I don't think Triumph had a 250 sv in the range at that time]*

On my wife's side, my father-in law lost a leg in WW1 so always had sidecar outfits. Apparently, he favoured AJS bikes and was known to carry out a decoke during family picnics between the wars. Somehow or other, he managed to overturn the outfit on himself (or maybe just the bike if it had been detached) in the garage at home which broke his good leg. Perhaps this explains my mother-in-law's antipathy towards motorcycles. Strangely we have no pictures of his AJS sidecar or any other bike he might have owned.



However, the family album does contain some other bikes, but we have no idea who the owners/riders were, but presumably some, at least, were family members and presumably were taken in Norfolk where most of

that side of the family came from. The sidecar outfit CL 4518 appears to be Triumph powered from the 1920s judging by the distinctive fork spring. *[I think it's a Model H – judging by the stirrup brake and presence of a clutch lever – Bryan]*



I have not been able to identify the bike E4308 attached to the wicker sidecar but it appears to date from the pre-1914 era.



CB1280 is much easier to identify as a Levis flat-tank two stroke.

Any information on these pictures would be welcome.

*[Anyone else with a family motorcycle album they'd like to share?]*

## ***Ey up, lad***

**RICHARD CHAMBERS**

In Gordon Hallet's splendid rides in Yorkshire he mentioned going through Husthwaite; my grandfather retired from the north east to move to Husthwaite, not sure if that was before or after the war. His six sons went off to seek their fortune, two to Rhodesia and one to Ford's at Dagenham. All left the north east except one, and the one daughter, Nance, married a local farmer's son from Husthwaite, and they then moved to a farm a few miles away near Easingwold.

Easingwold is in James Herriot country, and Herriot's daughter was later to become my auntie's GP. A lovely part of the world that really was a part of "All Creatures Great and Small", and all with that nice accent that sounds just like Brent!, "now then ow are yer", ...magic.

For many years I spent my summer holidays on the farm, at first sitting for hours on the old standard Fordson, or grey Fergie tractor, making engine/farty noises until the time came when they actually let me drive one, with one cheek of my bum raised from the seat so that I could operate the clutch, I was away - heaven.

A small hill farmer called Jeff used to come to stay and help my Uncle

with maintaining the machinery and when things were busy, like at harvest time. Jeff used to ride an LE Velocette. Although he used to point out its various finer points to me, I don't think it impressed me at that time too much... then when he turned up in his car, well it was a 1938 Morgan 3-wheeler with a Matchless V twin engine, now you're talking. Jeff took me out around the small lanes at what seemed a fair speed, with the wind in your hair, your backside so low, and that V-twin throbbing away in front, it was something else, quite different from my uncle's Humber Super Snipe and my dad's Austin A 40.

After I started work I remember last seeing the Morgan stored in a barn along with other machinery with its transmission defunct, covered in a thick coating of dust and crap from my auntie's peacocks. After a few years, it was then bought by my cousin in Seaham Harbour and restored.

I had numerous trips to North Yorkshire in the 90's, to meet up with my brother Dave who had Motor Neurone Disease and came down from Scotland to the Newcastle Royal Infirmary for treatment. Dave stayed with some fantastic friends that lived in Thornton Watlass, another small village that Gordon passed through. Although a long way from Aidensfield, it was a location used for some Heartbeat scenes. When PC Rowan (Nick Berry) left for his honeymoon, it was filmed outside the pub on the green. He made so many cock-ups of the gearchange that, in the end, someone else drove the MG TA, and the sound was dubbed on later.

We raised a lot of money for MND in the area, and, as we were entered to push Dave round the Great North Run in his wheelchair, it was deemed that we should practice round the green. It was bloody hard work not helped by our "training team", ... half the pub including some hairy-arsed ex rugby players bellowing at us from in front of the Buck Inn waving a pints of Theakstons, just to spur us on.

Thank you, Gordon, I really must get back up there again soon.

## ***A tale of two motorcycles***

**NEIL CAIRNS**

In September 2004 I purchased a very smart little 'plunger', BSA B31 350cc, 'Classic Motorcycle' from a Northamptonshire specialist, gleaming in maroon paint, and of allegedly 1953 vintage. It came with its old buff logbook, an MoT, and was fully restored, carrying the registration number 'ONN74'. It is a really likeable little machine, starts first time every time, is in excellent condition and certainly catches the eye of the enthusiast. By September 2005 it required its next MoT. The result was, as the system was now computerised by VOSA, the frame number had to be checked. Alas, I had not checked it, as once the MoT lad and I had removed the very thick layer of maroon paint from the down-tube, it was obviously not the frame as documented on the DVLA records. Also, the machine's restorer had passed away some years previously. I emailed the VOSA people to ask what I needed to do, as the bike had passed its MoT, but only on its corrected frame number. They replied that day, informing me to complete the part of the registration document with the 'new' frame number, and send it to DVLA at Swansea.



1953 BSA B31 wearing its old number

This I did on the 14<sup>th</sup> September 2005, sending a letter with it to explain what the MoT had discovered. I did not get any reply. So, on the 24<sup>th</sup> of October, I wrote to enquire what was happening with my enquiry, enclosing a copy of my original letter. I received a reply stating they had NO RECORD of my first letter, or the registration document sent with it, and as it was now lost, I must pay £19 for a new one. So, I grudgingly wrote out a cheque for £19, completed the form they had enclosed, and sent it all back on the 30<sup>th</sup> October. Then, eventually, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> December I received a letter from the DVLA telling me exactly what I had already told them in my letter of the 14<sup>th</sup> Sept! They said that VOSA had brought up the 'discrepancy', no mention of either of my two letters. Then, on the 8<sup>th</sup> Dec, another letter arrived, telling me that my local DVLA office in Luton would need to inspect the machine. This was carried out on the 5<sup>th</sup> January 2006 at their inspection depot; I rode the bike there and back. Their letter told me I must not use trade plates for this journey, but as the BSA was taxed and insured, and MoT'd, I rode it. On arrival, I noted that many cars being inspected were indeed carrying trade plates! One rule for them, another for us perhaps?

The Luton DVLA office were much more efficient. They wrote to me the next day, 6<sup>th</sup> Jan, telling me I could not keep the registration of 'ONN74', and that the BSA would be classed as a 'reconstructed classic'. I was to contact the BSA Owners Club to get an age-related certificate. If this was not possible, it would be issued a 'Q' plate.

To make the BSA legal, I required a dating certificate from the BSAOC. I duly sent off the engine and frame numbers, and rubbings, along with my cheque for £5. You know how life is never straight-forward, well, we are about to set off on another tangent. Whereas the MoT chap had read the frame number as 1651, and the DVLA inspector read it as 1651, all along I had read it as a '1657' (The '1' sloped a bit to the left.) By now we were into February 2006, the farce had begun back in September 2005. The B31, itself, is perfectly OK; it runs, starts and goes well. But the documentation side is becoming an absolute nightmare. The bike was not a 1953 model, the BSAOC identified the frame as '1657', a 1949 one, using the pencil rubbed frame number. Fed up with it all, I bundled the various completed DVLA forms, a letter asking about the 'two' frame numbers, 1651 & 1657, the MoT, the receipt when I purchased it, and the BSAOC dating certificate off to the Luton DVLA office, and awaited their reply. Their reply was quick, the dating certificate was no use; I had to go back to the BSAOC and get one for '1651'. So, another letter, rubbing and cheque, went off mid-February 2006, and the corrected certificate arrived on the 24<sup>th</sup>. I posted off the new dating certificate with a cheque for £38 for a 'new registration'. I had, by now, a refund of the £19 demanded by Swansea DVLA back in October 2005 for the 'lost' document, as I was told it was too complex to transfer the money internally.

Finally, the new 'age-related' registration number '433UXP' and a tax disc arrived on 3<sup>rd</sup> March, so the little maroon BSA was legal again. It was now a 1949 model, and taxed until March 2007. One can only surmise that during its restoration back in 1998-ish, the original frame was damaged, so another was used! But, oh what a drawn-out farce it all became to correct it, even with the help of the VOSA and DVLA computers it had taken six months to sort out.



1953 BSA B31 wearing its new number

The story does not end there, as in August 2006 I received the paperwork, to re-tax 'ONN74', from DVLA (it ran out in September originally). They are telling me to either tax, or complete a SORN, for a motorcycle that no longer exists, at THEIR BEHEST. What sort of a mess are their records actually in?

## Made in Bedford

ADVERT FROM 1904

ALL OUR MOTOR BIKES are guaranteed; they are our own make throughout, the engine is the result of six years' specialization, it is an improvement on that with which we obtained certificate from the Catford Cycling Club for the Westerham Hill Climb last year. We are prepared to build engines and bikes to order, from £30. Sets of castings for 3 1/2 h.p. air-cooled engine, 55s. Repairs.—W. A. Walker, 12, Harpur-street, Bedford.

*I can find no further record of such machines – the advert only seems to appear in 1904. Does anyone have any more information?*

## What happened to summer?

It's so easy to control  
**RALEIGH**  
**THE GOLD MEDAL**  
**MOTOR-CYCLE**

There are no complications. You ride it as easily as you would a bicycle. Nothing to worry, nothing to bother, nothing needing constant watchfulness or attention. Just switch on and ride away. And its reliability gives never a moment's worry on the road.

The simplicity of the Raleigh is one of its greatest features. But send for the catalogue and get to know more about the "Gold Medal Motor-Cycle." From £47 solo, or £71 combination, with Dunlop tyres, Sturmey-Archer 3-speed gear and the best of everything.

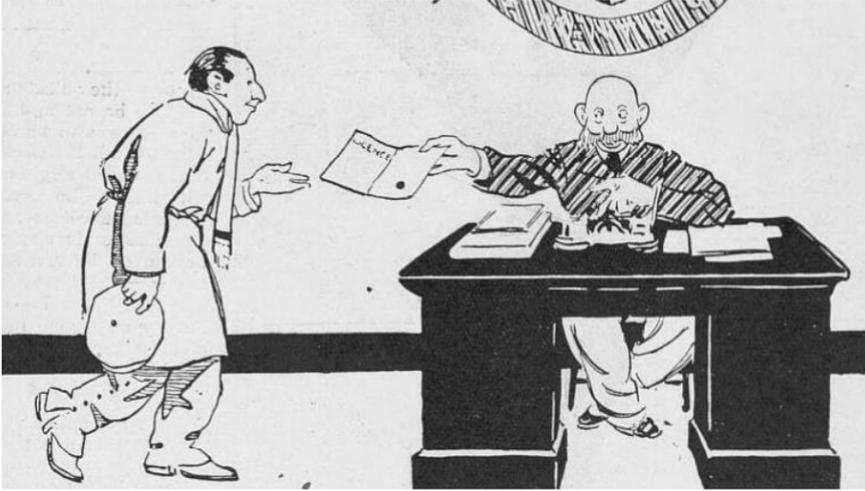
THE RALEIGH CYCLE CO. LTD., NOTTINGHAM.

## An ignoramus on wheels

BY RICHARD KING, IN THE TATLER, MARCH 7, 1923

I once belonged to – and still am an honorary member of – that inglorious multitude who ask for a corkscrew when they really need a screw-driver, and for whom anything in pure mechanics more complicated than a hammer and a nail is a mystery more puzzling than the mystery of Life after Death. I bought a motor-cycle last year, inspired by vague visions of wandering over England hampered by impediments so little embarrassing that it could be shoved into any old shed and even taken into the house provided the front door were wide enough. I began my motor-cycling life under the best auspices. I obtained a driver's licence without the least difficulty from the local

town hall for the sum of five shillings, in spite of the fact that within two minutes after I had mounted the machine I ran into a brick wall.

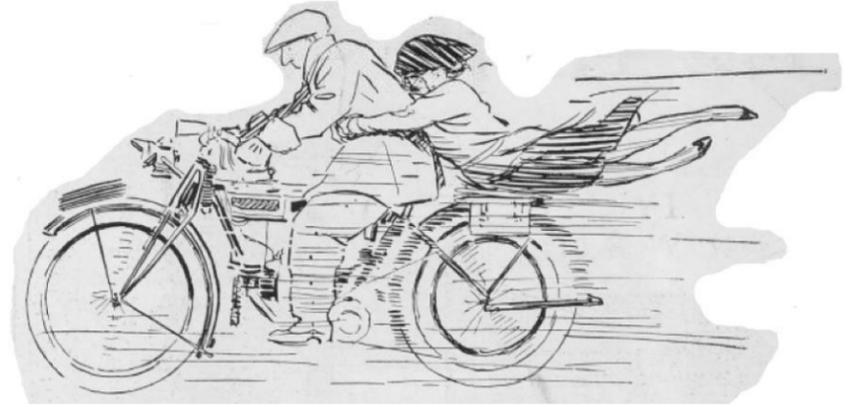


This convinced me that an insurance policy was also necessary. My pockets bulged at length with all kinds of important-looking documents. I subscribed to various newspapers who insure their readers against everything without – thank heaven! – insist on being read. I was worth infinitely more dead than alive. That is a comfortable feeling when first one begins to be a motor-cyclist. True, after my first few runs I came to the conclusion that it was as well to take out a “Get-you-home-from-anywhere” policy as well; otherwise, it looked to me as if the purchase of a motor-cycle were but the finest preparation for becoming the world/s champion long-distance walker. For, being a complete ignoramus, I was inclined to forget such simple things as turning on the oil, to leave my tyre repair kit at home, and run so perpetually on the first speed, since it seemed to me so much safer than the second and third, that the engine became so over-heated that I was nearly roasted alive on the saddle. Perhaps the latter fact may have accounted for the tragic moment when, returning from my longest trip and quietly meandering down a hill, the machine suddenly stopped running, and with a slight grating sound quietly broke up its own inside. Nothing daunted, however, I pushed the remains to the nearest garage, where the main in charge sympathetically hinted that as everything that could be broken WAS, it would really be cheaper in the long-run to get a new motor-cycle altogether. The shock was a horrid one, I must confess; but as the machine was still living within its three months’ guarantee, I despatched its inside to the maker with a letter the sarcasm of which was veiled more by intention than actuality. Meanwhile I lived peacefully for the next six weeks with the frame of the machine, comforted by every kind of accident policy except the one which covered the accident that has actually happened.



“Everything important that could be broken was”

At last a brand new engine coming to me from the makers, my motor-cycling life began anew. The man at the garage where I kept it took the opportunity before he fixed the new engine into the old frame to explain the mechanism of motor-cycle construction. He might have saved himself the trouble, but happily I don’t think he realised it at the time because, although my interjections were entirely monosyllabic, I believe they were not altogether unintelligent. You can’t, after all, go very far wrong with “Ohs” and “Ahs” and “Is that so’s,” even in the most unintelligible circumstances. At any rate, the new engine seemed of a superior quality to the old one. In fact, I am at last beginning to think that my motor-cycle really likes me, which I was once upon a time convinced it didn’t. Perhaps the truth is that we are beginning to understand each other better. I now realise its idiosyncrasies. I know that it dislikes anyone sitting on the pillion seat. Something always goes wrong, I have discovered, when any friend of mine is clinging like grim death on to my waist-line at the back.



I know that it dislikes being left in any garage except the one that is its home. Among alien surroundings it weeps petrolic tears, so, although the tank may be quite full when I persuade a garage-keeper to let me put it up for a few hours, it is invariably empty when I call for it again. I know that it likes to linger, with a preference for stopping, half-way in any busy High Street which is built up a steep ascent. But knowing its preferences as I now do, they have taught me guile. My pillion seat, for which I paid three guineas, and which is of so luxurious upholstery that only a daddy-long-legs could hope to touch the ground, hangs rusting on a nail in an out-house. Whenever I enter a strange garage I have the petrol tank filled there and then, since otherwise I know, when I wish to depart, that petrol still remaining at the beginning will have mysteriously evaporated. This precaution makes a difference of at least half a pint at any wayside garage. While as for the ignominy of having to push one’s motor-cycle up a hill through a town, the sting is considerably lessened if, while doing so, one gazes intently at every house as if one were searching for a certain number.

Briefly, I have begun to master my motor-cycle, when before it mastered me. I have learnt how to cure a few of its childish complaints; and, though the motive of most of its “in’ards” still remains a mystery, if I keep to the main roads I can snap my fingers at their complications. Moreover, I have now reached that stage when I must not of mysterious necessity run over that very stone, or bit of glass, which I was striving with all my might to avoid. Traffic now fills me with only the slightest fear, through tram-lines will, I fancy, for ever make me uneasy. But I am beginning to enjoy the freedom which a motor-cycle confers on those who own one. And if I can begin to enjoy this freedom – well, *anyone may!* For a more unmechanical man never hoped to be propelled onward by mechanism, nor one, who sought to command the road, possessing less of what I will call the “road sense.” I would not be without my old mo-bike now for worlds. Spring looms ahead, and already I am making plans for tour after tour. Friends shake their heads when they hear the toot-toot of my motor-horn, but I care not! Friends always dislike secretly the friends of their friends. And certainly my motor-cycle is my friend. Within a radius of a hundred miles or so, it has opened up the world for me. And who knows but that that radius may yet be enlarged? Indeed, I am thinking of making a motor-cycle trip through Europe. Even if such a trip never materialises, the mere thought has enlarged my mental prospect. I have ceased to be restricted in my energies by railways and such expensive transit. I think of some place I want to visit, of some friend I wish to see, and, hey presto! I turn on the petrol, press down the kick-starter, seat myself on the saddle, push down the lever from “Neutral” into “First speed,” and off I go, hoping for the best.

## The selling points...

TIM KINGHAM

*Tim provides the following extract from his book on Vincents:*

Long before the term USP (Unique Selling Point) was coined, PCV with one eye as ever on what would help sell his machines, made three decisions, which to some engineers would have been of minor importance, but he knew would become the selling points that would help make the Black Shadow one of the most iconic machines of the motor age. While history records PCV as responsible for these three salient points, the fact is fate also had a hand in the creation of the legend. Marcus Bowden, who was a ship's engineer and a friend of PCV, told the following story, quoted in his own words:

*Until he had his first stroke, I visited PCV on numerous occasions. My visits came when at the end of each voyage; I left the passenger-banana boats (SS Golfito or SS Camito) at Southampton. Then I would hire a car and detour via Mr Vincent's home with the usual offerings of a 40 oz bottle of whisky and a stem of bananas. He always took the full bottle of whisky, but only cut off a few hands of bananas! Many discussions ensued, mostly about his new engine, but he was also happy to discuss adaptations to it for marine use (he had a wonderful way of selling you his product to match your requirements). He also reminisced occasionally about the works; he said he wouldn't have survived so long if hadn't been for the Black Shadow. He said they had such a stockpile of crankcases that had all been machined ready to build, but when being tested whilst submerged in water with blanks fitted to all apertures, the application of compressed air often revealed porous cases. This underwater testing only came about when they weighed up the wasted man-hours that were involved if they built a complete bike only to find after road testing that it oozed oil through the castings. So, typical of a manufacturer with a poor product, PCV devised a method to seal the cases by submerging them into a vat of shellac, pulling a vacuum, by extracting the air and then on releasing the vacuum, the shellac had as expected been sucked into the cases. Following this they were cleaned off and coated with yellow chromate and stove enamelled black (this gave a nice shiny overcoat but was reputedly poor at dispersing heat).*



1952 Vincent Black Shadow

So, it would seem circumstances helped nudge one of the major selling points of the Black Shadow into reality. Although nowadays it would not seem an unusual decision to paint the engine black, this action should be viewed in the context of the late forties. Cast iron cylinders and heads had for decades been painted black, but this was for reasons of rust prevention and heat transference. Generally, however, the tradition of gearboxes, crankcases, and where possible also primary chain cases, being polished to a high shine was sacrosanct and embedded deep in the psyche of motorcycling. Although fate and poor castings did have a hand in forcing the situation, reverting to the black paint on the crankcases was still a courageous decision.

With the engine complete in its matching covers, all now in a sombre black, the next act was for PCV to name the machine something a little

more resounding than the Vincent Sports Rapide. Perhaps with a nod to the Rolls Royce Silver Shadow, the name Black Shadow was selected, creating the second major selling point.



The ubiquitous Vincent Smiths speedometer

The last major selling point came from a simple observation that the standard three-inch speedometer was not capable of displaying the expected top speed of the machine. From the requirements of a dial that displayed well in excess of 120 mph grew the idea for a large five-inch instrument. This was supplied by Smiths and supposedly without too much effort, since the internal mechanisms were the same as the smaller ones and large dials were common in motorcars. The initial Smiths rendition, believed to be from a Jaguar, was too ugly for PCV, whereupon he promptly placed the works inside a black painted saucepan, which to this day can be seen on the prototype Black Shadow. This had the desired effect of forcing the supplier into collaborating in designing a more acceptable shape. The final design was a dial reaching 150 mph with the almost unobtainable goal of all other current motorcycles – the 'ton' or 100 mph being almost contemptuously reduced to a mere mark without an engraved number.

## Yet another eBay purchase

BRYAN MARSH



1950s motorcycle racer, made by Technofix in "Western" Germany

## SEEN IN THE PAPERS

### A MARVELLOUS ESCAPE

On Thursday evening, of last week Mr. J C. H. Daniel was riding his motor bicycle up the London Road, with Mr. R. F. Conder in a trailer, both gentlemen were violently thrown to the ground, by Mr. Daniel applying the brake too suddenly, when nearing Mr. Conder's residence. Mr. Daniel was badly bruised, but Mr. Conder escaped injury. The front wheel of the cycle was wrecked.

[Biggleswade Chronicle - Friday 08 May 1903]

## Norfolk Motorcycle Museum

**BRYAN MARSH**

Just before the current lockdown, I managed to escape to Lincolnshire & Norfolk for a few days for a break and to put some miles on my new modern motorcycle. One of the places I wanted to visit was the Norfolk Motorcycle Museum in North Walsham, as I'd only been once before and that was quite a while ago, 2004 to be precise.

Having stayed overnight in the lovely coastal village of Overstrand, near Cromer, it was just a short hop over to North Walsham. Just as well, as it started to rain quite heavily before I got there. I couldn't remember exactly where it was, but my TomTom satnav claimed to know, so off I went following the directions on the screen. It turns out that TomTom doesn't actually know where it is, after all. I did see a sign at a junction but probably missed the next one as there were temporary traffic lights near where you turn off, and I was probably concentrating on them. Anyway, two or three trips up and down through those lights, a tour of the local residential streets, a near-miss into the station car park, and I eventually found the museum behind a timber-yard; just where I'd left it in 2004.

If you've ever been to the National Motorcycle Museum, then think total opposite - as you'll see from the pictures. Scores of bikes crammed into every available inch of space; most complete, some not; all dusty and with little by way of information on the bikes that did have cards. That said, it's a great collection and worth calling in if you're up that way – and it's only a fiver to go in.



**Bikes, bits, and assorted junk, taking up every available inch at the Norfolk Motorcycle Museum**



**I think this is a 1950s Radex Express, built in Germany, using an ILO engine (stylised as JLO on the crankcase) – the information on the card was obscured by the rust stain from the forks!**

I think this must have been a relatively recent addition as it was remarkably dust-free!



**1960s Panther 35 with Villiers 2T 250cc twin engine**

This is just like my first ever bike, a £15 special bought locally in Cornwall, when I was seventeen (having suffered for a year on a Raleigh RM9 Ultramatic because of the, then recently introduced, moped law for sixteen-year-olds). I bought another a few years ago but couldn't get it properly sorted so I sold it to Brian Cornwell who applied his two-stroke wizardry to it. Brian – I'd love to buy it back if you still have it and ever want to get rid of it. Terrible thing, nostalgia.



**Vincent, 1000cc something or other, having been spared the Turtle Wax and Solvol treatment.**



**Veteran New Hudson, in "original" condition.**



Francis Barnett "Super" Fulmer with 150cc AMC engine, apparently built by Villiers, with Triumph Terrier hiding, embarrassed, behind

I'm not quite sure what was "super" about it – answers on a postcard...



Mopeds galore – nicely up where they can't do any more harm



...and also Velocettes galore – LE, Vogue, Viceroy, Valient - and the normal black and gold ones beyond



175cc BSA Sunbeam Scooter and 98cc Triumph T10 Automatic (incorrectly labelled as a Tina, the disastrous forerunner)

I had a very original and low mileage Triumph T10 Automatic scooter once (we reckoned it still had Coventry air in the tyres), with great aspirations of restoring it, but which never happened. I only rode it once, indeed the only time I've ever ridden a scooter – thought I was going to die going round the corner by the Barn Owl pub in Luton!



1922 BRS Norton

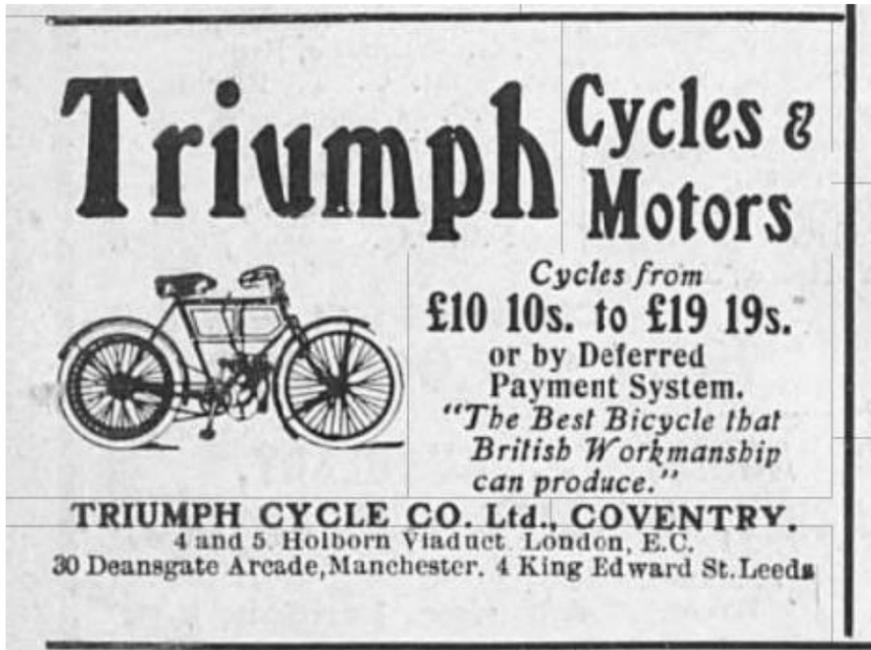
<http://www.vintagenorton.com/2014/03/1922-model-brs-model-8-norton.html> contains a bit of history on this bike, and doubts that it is a BRS, too late, but accepts it is a genuine and original machine.



1922 500cc Blackburne



1934 Triumph 250cc (L2/1?)



Triumph advert from 1903

## Safety

WILL CURRY

The first bike I rode was a 250 BSA C11. It was a field bike in the sense that it was ridden round a field. It was only one ride, but it was enough. The first bike I owned was a DOT with a 197 Villiers 3-speed engine. It was nominally a trials bike and that's what I used it for. The DOT is important because it became the 'standard' against which I measure all other motorcycles, albeit somewhat indirectly nowadays.



An early DOT but not mine - my daughter's

"The XSR is better than the FZ8 that got stolen and that was more fun than the MZ Skorpion which was so much easier to start than the Rotax Jawa which had lights so much better than any of the Ariels and didn't weigh any more but the Ariels were so much better in every way than the DOT."

The thing about the DOT was that as far as this article is concerned it didn't have any safety devices fitted at all. No ABS, Traction control or side stand safety switch. It had a side stand and I set off more than once with it still down. I don't think I ever fell off as a result of the side stand being down - there were all sorts of other reasons why I fell off.

The first bike I encountered with 'added safety' was a Moto Guzzi V1000 G5. This was attached to a Squire QM sidecar. It was either a sidecar or a pram and as both my wife and I are motorcyclists the pram didn't stand much of a chance. The QM was a lovely sidecar and ideal for wife and two kids except it was spoiled by a nasty trailer suspension with little movement and no damping and a wheel trim which rattled incredibly. The G5 was the manual gearbox version of Guzzi's automatic V1000 Convert. The auto version featured a parking brake operated by cable from the side stand to a caliper on the back brake. This feature didn't make it to the G5 version but it had the Guzzi coupled brakes and a system of microswitches which stopped the electric start from working unless the clutch was pulled in. This was so reliable that I soon rewired it, making a much better job of the rewire once we'd got home and I could use the workshop.

The side stand was of the 'suicide' variety in that it had to be held out against its spring and the bike leaned onto it until the not inconsiderable weight of the bike held it firmly in a bracket which was supposed to stop the stand flying up should the bike be knocked. If this wasn't enough there was a warning light on the dash as well.



V1000 cockpit - sidestand light is 2nd down on the right

It also boasted a 'Kill switch' - a device which has featured on all my subsequent modern motorcycles. This device has possibly caused more woe to motorcyclists than any other device with the worst part being that it is mostly self-inflicted. The Rotax-engined Jawa I had could be truly bovine when it came to starting, not least because it was kickstart only. So, having got it to start and then stop it by inadvertently knocking the over-vulnerable kill switch was annoying to put it mildly.



Rotax Jawa - as catalogued

The Rotax-engined MZ that replaced it had the electric start version of the Rotax engine- the ugliest bike I have ever owned but at least it started easily.



Rotax MZ - Ugly but functional, on dray duty outside Fullers at Chiswick

The first bike I owned which didn't have a light switch was a Yamaha Diversion. This meant of course that the headlight was on all the time. I hadn't even got home from buying it before a car pulled out in front of me. This was something I was to have to get used to. It is extremely difficult to determine how far away a single light is or how fast it is travelling toward you. That is, if you can pick out a single light from the masses, especially at night and when it's raining. I feel strongly about this - there are times when a light is a good thing - and times when it isn't. This is another situation where I feel that my safety has been compromised by the efforts of some misguided 'expert' to justify their position. Eventually, 'they' accepted that all was not well with their idea of lighting and went to all the trouble to amend the Highway Code to reflect this.

86

**Daylight riding.** Make yourself as visible as possible from the side as well as the front and rear. You could wear a light or brightly coloured helmet and fluorescent clothing or strips. Dipped headlights, even in good daylight, may also make you more conspicuous. However, be aware that other vehicle drivers may still not have seen you, or judged your distance or speed correctly, especially at junctions.

#### Highway code - The last sentence says it all

The next safety feature I encountered was on Jeff's K100. It had ABS. Picture the scene - four Instructors in the Art of Motorcycling on a school playground, all taking turns to try out the ABS on the boss's new motorcycle. In the end, none of us had the testicular fortitude to get the ABS light on. I still haven't managed it - or needed to.



**K100 dash with ABS light out**

The last on my list is traction control. I've never owned a bike so fitted but I have ridden two Yamahas with it, both very new. Somehow, I didn't feel the need to give them a handful to see what happened. I wonder how long it will be before some legislator says my next bike must have it too. I can't help but feel we may not be very far from leg protectors making another appearance.

I have mixed feelings about the effect all these safety features have on riders. I don't think my riding style has changed but I'm pretty sure that isn't the case for a lot of riders. I've been told by some learners that there was no point in making them do hard stops as any new bike they get will have ABS and all you need to do is grab the brakes and the ABS will do the rest. There are local riders who rely on the rev limiters and traction control rather than any skill. At least they can be heard coming from a long way away.

There are two items on my Yamaha which I'm very conscious aren't on my VMCC bikes and they are the indicators and the brake lights on both brakes.

## SEEN IN THE PAPERS

### ACCIDENT

On Tuesday the 12th inst, Mr W H Jordan, corn merchant and son of William Jordan, Holme Mills, Biggleswade, had attended Hitchin market and was about to return home on his motor bicycle. He had not long started when he met some bullocks in the road and in trying to avoid them he ran into a horse and cart. He was violently thrown off his machine and the horse was also thrown down and fell on Mr. Jordan in such a way that he was completely pinned down. At first the accident looked to be a very serious one and wild rumours were soon afloat that Mr Jordan was very badly hurt. We are glad to find however that his injuries are not so bad as were reported. He has a bad cut on his face, one of his fingers badly hurt and one of his legs bruised and under the treatment of Dr Strover he is progressing favourably.

[Biggleswade Chronicle - Friday 15 October 1909]

## VMCC Beds Section AGM 2020

Herewith the minutes from last year's AGM. Please send me any errors or omissions that you might spot. If nothing is received by the next newsletter, they will be deemed to be, and accepted as, an accurate record.

## AGM 2019 Minutes

### BRENT FIELDER

#### BEDFORDSHIRE SECTION VMCC AGM

##### MINUTES 14th NOVEMBER 2019

1. Opening of Meeting and apologies for absence - Apologies from Mick Curry.
2. Minutes of 2018 AGM agreed and any matters discussed - Bryan read the minutes from 2018. These were agreed as a true record, proposed by Martin Brookman, seconded by Brian Cornwell, voted through unanimously by all present.
3. Matters Arising - There were no matters arising.
4. Secretary's report on the past years activities and presentation of the Phil Hopkins (Hoppy) Shield - Brent read out his report, Will agreed to place on Section website. Presentation of Hoppy shield, to a somewhat surprised Bryan, for all of the work that he does for the Section.
5. Chairman's Report - Bryan read out his report, Will agreed to place on Section website.
6. Treasurer's Financial report - Bob read out his report, the 2018 auction raised £264. Including all of the money in the bank and the raffle float there is approximately £1,200, about the same as last year. Will to place on website. Chris Illman proposed acceptance, seconded by Brian Coote, unanimously voted through.
7. Consideration of nominations for Chairman, Secretary, Finance Officer and seven Committee members. (All ten of the present incumbents have indicated that they are prepared to stay in post if required) - No applications were received and therefore the whole ten existing members were swept back into power. Proposed by Roly Doggett, seconded by Brian Coote, carried unanimously.
8. Any other business - Chat involved the Children in Need Rickshaw challenge, the book of the Ivel Tractor, mid-week lunches and the Chiltern Quiz Night date.

Meeting closed at 2104.