

BEDS VMCC NEWS

KEEPING YOU INFORMED DURING LOCK-DOWN



Norm Lorton “giving it some” at Cadwell Park – see story inside [Peter Wileman Photography]

EDITORIAL

Hopefully, many of you will have had, or will soon be having, your first Covid vaccination, and things will be starting to look a little brighter for the future. I’ve seen first-hand how well the inoculation programme is going, by marshalling arrivals at the Bedford, Kings House site weekday evenings for the last few weeks. Besides the satisfaction of doing my (little) bit to help, and seeing the delight of people leaving after getting their jabs, this has a couple of personal bonuses – first, I’ve already had my first shot of the Pfizer vaccine and, perhaps even better, I get to ride my bike legitimately. I’m only using the modern one at present, but as the weather improves and the evenings get lighter, there will be temptation to use something older.

Looking at my copy of this week’s Motorcycle News, I see the front-page headline reads “Norton’s back” – I’m just wondering how many times they’ve written that over the years.

Freedom to ride for pleasure is probably still a long way away but it’s not too soon to start planning. Ivor Rhodes is looking for expressions of interest in a long weekend away on the bikes later in the year – see page nine. Count me in!

Special thanks to everyone who responded to my urgent appeal for content; enough received to keep some over until the next issue – just in case it’s true that you *can* have too much of a good thing. Many thanks to this issue’s contributors: Gordon H, Gordon L, Ivor, Norm, Tim and Will. Apologies to Don and Kerry but your contributions will appear in the next issue. along with more from Richard and Gordon H. As always, please keep the contributions coming. Hopefully there will be a virtual club night next Thursday – watch for an email nearer the time or check the website.

IN THIS ISSUE:

**FUTURE OF
THE VMCC**

**NIPPY
NORMAN**

**TRIDENTS
GALORE**

**TIMING A
VINCENT**

VMCC HQ-type stuff

How we got here...



[taken from the VMCC website]

On 28th April 1946, a band of 38 enthusiasts assembled at the Lounge Cafe, Hog's Back, Guildford, Surrey, with the object of forming a Motor Cycle Club for owners of machines manufactured prior to December 1930.

The majority of those who attended that meeting nearly 70 years ago had ridden there on Vintage machines and, despite very bad weather conditions, came from as far afield as Cheshire, Nottinghamshire, Shropshire and Leicestershire. The Press also attended and excellent photographs were obtained of the event. The Police and the AA also assisted in regulating the traffic and the parking of machines. [presumably, they were expecting more because that hardly seems necessary for a group of 38.]

Where we are now...

The April issue of the Journal will mark the Club's 75th Anniversary, and as part of that the editor, Peter Henshaw, is looking for our oldest serving member – suggesting that it would be nice to feature a short interview with them, why they joined etc, along with our latest new member, whoever that may be.

Unfortunately, this information isn't available on the member database, hence the question. There is a gentleman in Cornwall who joined in 1965 - any advance on that? If you lay claim to either title, please let Peter know (contact details in the Journal) or let me know and I'll pass it on.



A candidate for longest-serving member, pictured on the day he joined.

Where we may be heading...

It has been suggested that the Beds Section Committee might like to give some kind of "steer" to the current consultation process. As Chairman, I shy away from such an action other than, perhaps, assisting with the mechanics of the process, if required. It is my strong belief that every member's individual view is important and that a unified Committee or Section view could never be truly representative.

I encourage you to read the original consultation document and the subsequent letter from the group of high-profile members included in the last issue. I've just received my February copy of the Journal this morning and I see that it contains the consultation document but, unsurprisingly, not the subsequent letter. A form is also included on which you can respond by ticking boxes, but without the option of adding your own comments or suggestions. Nevertheless, if you follow the internet link given on the consultation paper, the online reply form has space for comments and/or suggestions. So, I would suggest, if you reply by post you should feel free to include extra comments. NB the link does not take you directly to the consultation page – it is necessary to select the 'members area', log in, and then select the 'consultation' option from the drop-down menu.

Unprompted, Will has kindly submitted his personal thoughts, below. If anyone else would like to add their own views, please send them in. No bad language please.

Some thoughts on the VMCC's change of direction.

WILL CURRY

When I joined the VMCC in the early 70's, getting on for 50 years ago, it was completely volunteer-based. There were no employees and that dreaded word 'outsourced' hadn't even been invented. Sections arranged events and the club provided the interface with the ACU and other bodies. I think it worked well then and it still seems to be working well for the one-make clubs that I have dealings with.

That the VMCC is in crisis is, I think, beyond dispute. It has a cost base which far exceeds its income. If nothing is done the club will cease to exist within the next few years. I don't want this to happen and I feel reassured that there are quite a number of other members who share this view, including the club's officials. They have put forward four possible courses of action and asked the membership to comment on them.

Personally, I don't feel comfortable with any of them: option 4 being the least uncomfortable. It's not a hard choice as the other three options can well be described as toxic. The Northampton Section, bless them, came up with a fifth option:

"Option 5 – Same as Option 4 but staying with current membership prices; achieve a viable club with no loss of membership and operating within its budget."

It recognises that putting up the fees is counterproductive: raise the fees and the membership declines and so does the income. The club has raised the fees a number of times in the past to cover financial shortfalls and the inevitable result has been a decline in membership.

All this talk of outsourcing IT worries me too. It's too easy to get trapped by a supplier who provides you with something so convoluted nobody else can do anything with it and then raises the prices, considerably.

I wonder what Founder Allen would have said to all this?"

SEEN IN THE PAPERS

Exchange Amazon Parrot, splendid talker, for belts, tyres or lamps – 234, High Town Road, Luton, Beds
[The Motor Cycle, October 20th, 1909]

3½ h.p. Rex (1909), unscratched, and equal new, spring forks, spring cantilever seat-pillar, S.G. belt, Clincher tyres, lamp, generator, horn, foot pump, tools and spares. Winner in London-Edinburgh run, gold medal in London-Land's End and back, Jarrott Cup Competition, and first prize in 100 miles non-stop run, etc.; will ride 100 miles to prospective purchaser; £32 10s., complete and ready for anything; Cowey speed indicator extra – F Mussell, 28, Rothesay Rd., Luton.
[The Motor Cycle, November 3rd, 1909]

The page 3 girl



The Flying Myrtle?

An Interesting Time with a Manx Norton

NORM LORTON

A few years ago, I found a Manx Norton. Have you ever wondered what it's like to go racing? Well I had no intention of doing so, but somehow I ending up experiencing something that has been quite out of the ordinary.

I have enjoyed a few Nortons: A Commando that came new in 1976, a Commander a few years ago and more recently a 1926 16H and a 1951 ES2. But racing has always been 'sort of interesting but not for me thank you'. A bit like watching Doctor Who when you, or your children, were small – best peeped at from afar. But the 1950's Manx Norton was always an iconic and beautiful machine. At its most glorious with Geoff Duke aboard, the featherbed-framed DOHC Manx Norton was a pinnacle of Norton racing success. Geoff Duke won world championships in 1951 and 52, and other riders saw race success in 1953 and 54. However, for 1955 the factory scaled back and finished its race team effort. The Manx was then sold by Norton as an 'off the shelf' racer for amateurs and upcoming stars of the future to purchase until 1962.

In 2004 I was half pretending that I would quite like a Norton cammy single. I have always enjoyed working on my motorcycles and trying to understand how they ticked. It's then quite nice when they run, and you ride them, and feel quite attached to all that machinery that you carefully assembled. There I was, browsing Old Bike Mart one Thursday over a cup of coffee, it had just landed on the doormat and I had a day's holiday to enjoy. A quick look at the bikes for sale, straight to the Norton list. Oh, there's a 1959 500 Manx; Oh my, the phone code is the same town, Oh Oh, my my, the first digits of the main number are the same as mine! It must be really close! So, I had to call the number and go and see, didn't I? I arrive at the chap's house and his phone rings incessantly with enquiries. Is he having me on: Scotland, Dubai, the Scots chap is

setting off now? Clearly, I have only a few minutes to decide; the numbers match, he seems genuine, it's covered with a layer of dust where it's stood in his study for many years; and he subjects me to a series of questions along the lines: "...and what do you think you are going to do with my Manx, you're not a dealer are you?" I wasn't, and I bought it.

So, a few days later it was in my garage, and I thought "now what do I do?" I was 'chuffed to bits' but it was a very strange feeling to actually own one. Here was this piece of history, dust covered and perished and so far from working – I resolved not even to turn the engine over until it was fully stripped and checked. It was a March 1959 30M 500cc model supplied to a Mr Whitham at premises in Greenwich, London. This one must have had an easy life with a clubman, as it had matching engine and frame numbers. I knew I wanted to restore it to a smart, but proper working condition. It wasn't going to end up as a front room ornament; it was going to go back on a race circuit – so perhaps I ought to find out how to go racing then?



The Manx without fuel tank and front nose cone, undergoing maintenance as is very usual between races. Note how tall the engine is in the frame.

Some 18 months later it was fully rebuilt, every last nut, bolt and screw came apart. The engine was in good condition, other than the fact that the ancient vegetable oil had part crystallized and part turned to a gooey tar. During the rebuild I spoke to many individuals and realized there was a wonderful set of people ready to help. The engine cases had to be grit blasted, fully drilled out and washed for days to make them useable. The con-rod was original, and delightfully engraved '17.3.59' with a curling script. A few new bearings, hours with a timing disc confirming the cam timings, squish clearance checks and the compression ratio set to 1959 values of 10.0 to 1. It had some interesting variations from standard: a Fontana 160mm, double-sided, two-leading shoe front brake; also a five speed gearbox being number 63 of some 100 that Michael Schaffleitner of Austria made before the design went on to be made by Colin Seeley, then Petty, and today Summerfield. Both of these have been dated to 1962 and it seemed as if the bike had its glory days then with the latest modifications; I was more than happy to keep them as period features.

I discovered how to apply to go racing. Photographs were sent to the VMCC Historic Racing Group and a machine registration certificate obtained. The same application was made to the CRMC. The Manx was defined as Group 1 – classic Grand Prix machines, and Period 1 – up to 1962/3. I attended a one-day course at the ACU offices, supplied an eye examination report, and some money, and obtained a Novice Road Race Licence. Add some one-piece leathers, close-fitting gloves and boots, a helmet with that gold ACU sticker and an orange novice's vest, and I could apply for the VMCC Practice Day at Mallory in March 2006. Before then, it was February, cold, and we had to find out if this Manx would run. I borrowed a set of rollers, plonked the Land Rover on those with my son controlling the clutch, and with me sat on the Manx, which was on the rollers, we turned over the engine. No petrol yet, spark plug out, but the plug was grounded, and very cold Castrol R was gradually pumped around until it came out of the loosened cam box feed oil pipe. Now for the start up. I was more nervous than going to the dentist, taking the driving test and doing exams, all rolled into one. Flood the carburettor, rollers rolling, drop the clutch – domph, domph, domph,

domph – nothing. Stop, look at the engine, that usually makes it go, tickle the carb again, rollers rolling again - domph, domph, ease the throttle open, domph cough, bang, bang, whip in the clutch, boom, boom, boom, it was firing! Ease up the revs to 2,000, I was shaking like a jelly – she runs! After a minute, ease the throttle between 2,000 and 4,000 rpm and that glorious Broooooom... baaaa... Broooooom... baaaa... resounds around the neighbouring houses – absolutely amazing and thrilling! I had to go indoors and sit down for a long time to recover.

Starting a Manx, and most other singles on GP carburettors, needs a technique. Never mind flooding the carburettor, you must lean the bike over 15 degrees away from the remote float bowl so that its fuel level rises above the carburettor jet and within a few seconds fuel will flood out of a hole under the body, and a good dollop goes down the inlet tract. Now it will fire up, and immediately. It's already in first gear and pulled back against compression, in with the clutch, push on the bars and really push hard until you are running. Throttle tight shut, jump and plant your bottom on the saddle as you let go the clutch, now jump off as it starts to turn and continue pushing. Count the compressions: one, two, three, four and ease the throttle a ¼ of an inch – it should fire instantly, and you have now got one more firing stroke to whip in the clutch and apply the front brake before it runs away with you. Of course, if you were Geoff Duke you would hop back on and roar away.

Firing up the Manx for the first time after a few weeks is always a magic moment. Arriving at a new race circuit for the first time is exciting, confusing and daunting. Lots of people all moving around seem to know what they are doing – best to look cool and pretend the same. If it is a VMCC event they will have sent you a Technical Control Card with your circuit tickets. Go to the Scrutineering Bay first, it's a bit like taking your bike for an MOT, and as concerning. But really, if you don't know that everything on that bike is absolutely right, you shouldn't be there. The scrutineers check lots of extras like wiring up oil bolts and covering sprocket teeth and other things you have to learn about. Nice young ladies then check your race clothing, that you must wear, and embarrass you if it is too new and shiny “your first time, young man”? Take the signed Technical Control Card to Race Control and sign on, collect a transponder to fix on the bike and record lap times, and tokens to get onto the track for practice. By now it is approaching 9.00 a.m. and practice time nears. Bikes are firing up and the heartbeat quickens. It already has oil in, so add the fuel and try the bump start, always looking for a slight downhill slope, it helps when the engine is very cold.

Setting off for practice can be fraught with some race organisers – a bit like foreigners queuing for a ski lift. Others control it very well. At a new circuit I always liked to walk the track the evening before, then try and memorise it. It means that practice brings no surprises of where on earth to go, and you can gradually build up speed one corner at a time learning braking points, apexes, and the right gears. It is a BIG mistake to follow someone else and think you will learn from them – you will soon find yourself in the wrong place and at the wrong speed. Learning a new circuit is a super experience if you go about it gradually. After the first day's racing, I sit down with the circuit diagram and mark on it all the gear change positions and braking points. Then rehearse the circuit over and over in the mind. When you are racing you need a knowledge of what is going to happen after the corner you are just entering, and what gears you will use where. When all that comes automatically, you can start to think about people in front of you, and whether you are going to dare to overtake them.

Arriving in the assembly paddock for your race is quite tense. Yes, I was always nervous, but it was more the anticipation and the sense of lining up with people you had got to know, and to whom you were about to entrust your safety. Like going on a bike ride with some good chums, but 20 times more intense. I will always remember sitting lined up with a few other Manxes, all warming the engines, when Phil Read walked past, looked at each bike, looked at each of us in turn and gave a personal nod – I was humbled and very proud. Race starts are now all clutch starts by flag or red lights, the Lansdowne had to give up push-starts a few years ago. If you are lucky, you have found your grid position after the sighting lap, and, if you are even luckier, you have managed to snick neutral, desperately trying not to stall. The grid marshal at the front with the red flag starts to move away and points up to the Union flag holder, crunch into first gear, heart rate shoots up to 140, pick up the revs to 4,000 while holding the brake, watch that starter flag person's eyes, flag goes up, revs all around rising to 6,000, flag falls suddenly – time stands

still – now what? – an explosion all-around of noise, fumes and sudden movement and time ticks again. For the first few starts, I awoke to bikes streaming past me as the Manx bogged down with megaphonitis at just under 4,000 rpm. Oh blast! Slip the clutch and chase after a horizon that was a moving ballet of leather-clad backsides poised over rear tyres. In my second year of racing I had got the hang of it. As the clutch goes out the twistgrip runs to a full turn, and all in less than two seconds, and the revs should be just on 6,000 all the time – not easy until it becomes intuitive. Get it right, from the fifth row of the grid, and you get a strange ‘Star Trek’ warp drive moment as the bikes in front seem to rush towards you. You then arrive at the first corner hot on the heels of the leaders and the next lap will be the best one of the whole race.

Racing is interspersed with totally exciting and absorbing moments. But mostly it is the pleasure of being with others doing the same thing, and often it is miserable when the weather is bad, or something expensive has gone wrong with the bike, or something has gone wrong with you. Make no mistake, people come off and get hurt. You start off thinking it won't happen to you because you are not trying quite that hard. I knew I had got sucked in when I would eagerly collect the time sheet at the end of a race and look to see if my lap times had improved. In the early days you should just concentrate on being consistent, taking smooth lines and then your times will improve. In my first year I achieved my ten race finishes, which allowed me to upgrade my licence to Clubman and remove the orange vest. I had run the original engine throughout and had complete reliability; a total of 307 miles and 11 gallons of fuel used. But there had been plenty of minor repairs, usually of things vibrating loose and attempts to control the oil that escaped the exposed valve pushers and sprayed the bike. Old race hands would come up and say: “that's nothing, at the end of a TT the oil tank would be empty, and the bike would be dripping from everywhere rear of the motor”. The vibration would try and undo everything. The amount transmitted through the rear chain would undo sprocket nuts and remove brake torque arms – wiring-up and split pins are not for decoration.



Photograph at Cadwell Park at a VMCC meeting in 2007. By permission of Peter Wileman Photography.

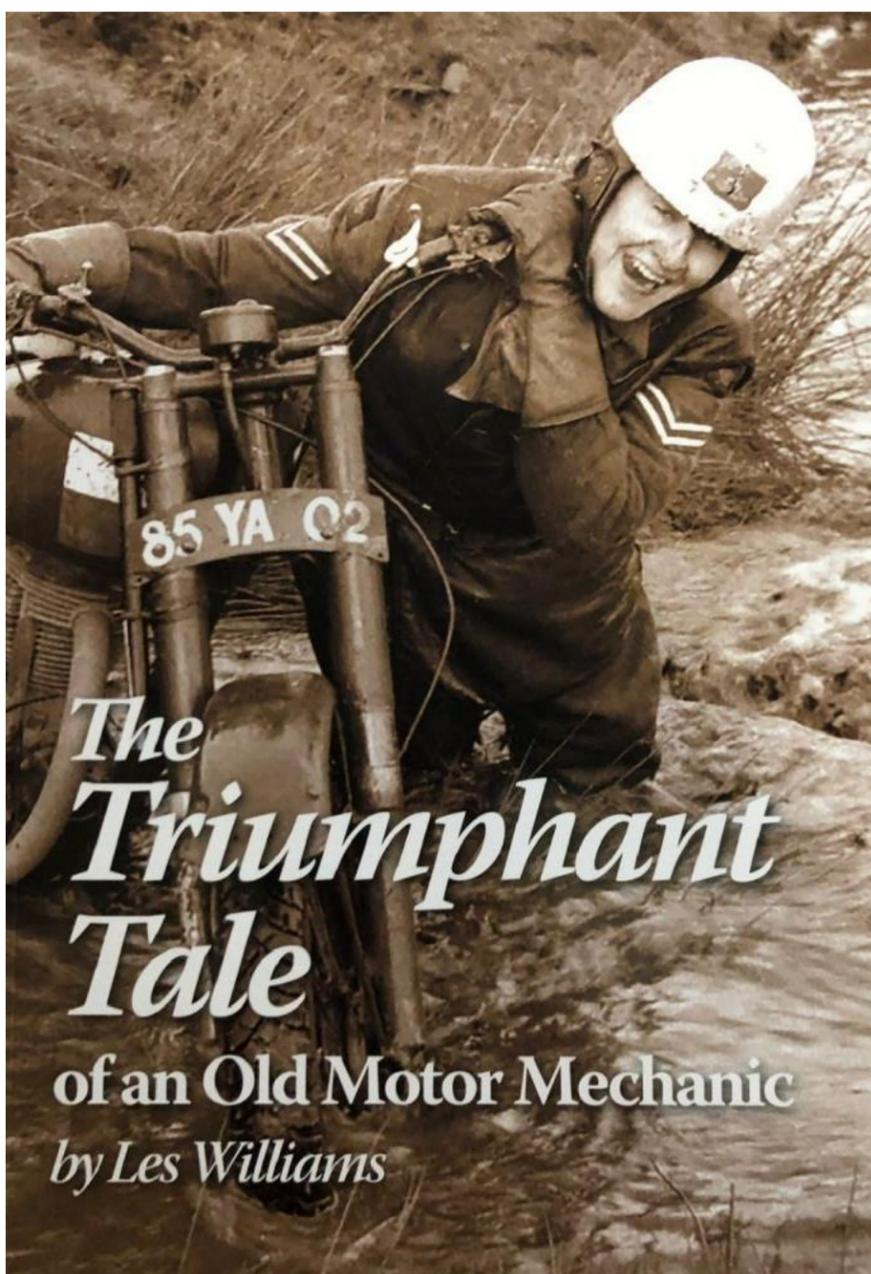
This Manx was one of the most original being raced. It retains fork shrouds, primary chain, GP carburettor, Lucas magneto, a low-level exhaust and 19" wheels with a ribbed front tyre. But you can't race a 50-year-old machine without some temporary changes. In the race photograph at Cadwell the non-original items are the rhomboid oil tank from 1961, a fibreglass nose cone and perspex screen, rear shocks and a new Molnar engine used for 2007. I took the decision to use a new engine being concerned about the original one's survival. It was quicker, with a lot more mid-range grunt and you could even pull out of a corner at 3,000 rpm. The red line was nearer 7,500 compared with a standard, old engine's 6,500. New materials, but especially coil valve springs make that rev difference. Hairpin springs were the latest technology in 1930, but other race engines had coil springs controlling twice those revs by the 1960's. The most wonderful difference was the total lack of oil leaks. Andy Molnar has done an enormous service to bringing Manxes back to life, and you can reckon on one of his race engines easily doing a whole season with no attention other than changing the Morris R after every race. Sadly, even for racing, Manxes need quietening to bring the original 112dB down to less than the 105dB allowed, hence the unusual silencer. Interestingly, the footrests have to be set higher because lean angles on today's rubber are greater than they were in the 1950's.

In 2007 I started with the Lansdowne race series and continued some VMCC races. For 2008 the original engine, rebuilt with a new big-end, and with castor oil flying everywhere, was back and in roaring good health. There are another 20 stories to tell for those two years. I had stopped racing at the end of 2009 but continued with a few club track-parades. In 2013, at the Mallory 1000 bikes I had a big 'off' at speed when, I think, the Fontana 4LS grabbed and caused a high-side. I repaired the bike, after I was repaired for a few broken bones, and it was sold by Bonhams; I didn't want it sat in the garage as a museum piece, we had had our time together and experienced a lot.

[originally published in 'Roadholder', the Norton Owners' Club magazine, but now edited and updated especially for us.]

Book Review

BRYAN MARSH



Les Williams is possibly best known for his times at Triumph, NVT and with his own company that produced the Legend and Buccaneer motorcycles, based on the Triumph T160 and T140 respectively. That said, I was a little disappointed to find that the timeline of this book stops short of those times – leaving room for a sequel?

The book is a very personal account of his time from leaving school to the point where he left the army and was about to join Triumph at Meriden. Despite some deficiencies in the proof-reading and a slightly annoying excessive use of the exclamation mark, it is a captivating read.

On leaving school in 1947, at fifteen, he started work as a motor mechanic apprentice at a local garage in Brecon, South Wales, where he worked mainly on lorries. Initially travelling in by Hercules bicycle and bus, he eventually saved enough to buy his first motorcycle, a rather dilapidated pre-war Francis Barnett 250cc Cruiser, eventually graduating to a shiny 1937 Ariel 350cc Red Hunter. After some interesting adventures in the garage and on the bikes, his National Service call-up papers arrived.

Determined to become a dispatch rider in the Royal Corps of Signals, he signed up as a three-year regular where it would be much more likely than as a National Serviceman. His wish came true and he did so well that he was selected for a slightly cushier role in the White Helmets motorcycle display team, where he eventually became team mechanic. This role involved spending time in the Triumph Meriden factory preparing the TRWs used for display which, in turned, opened the door to his future career not covered in this book.

Two hundred pages, packed with anecdotes and a few black-and-white pictures from his days in the Brecon garage, army barrack room and on his travels with the display team, I can recommend this book as a good solid read. I was particularly fascinated to learn they mostly rode the Triumph TRW display bikes between shows across the country, getting up to various tricks en-route and detours to see family and girlfriends – one of which had fatal consequences for their officer-in-charge.



The famous White Helmets 'pyramid' on TRWs – Les Williams, because of his slight stature, was often the man at the top.

--oOo--



No, not PC Neil Cairns on duty in Leighton Buzzard

Timing at the top

TIM KINGHAM

Now using timing marks is not something I do with a Vincent anymore, and nor do many other Vincent builders. Perhaps once we have checked and set the timing out we may pinch a bit of the wife's nail varnish and mark the cams for ease of assembly, but the mantra of "opens at so-many-degrees before TDC, closes at so-much-after etc., etc" is long gone from our vocabulary.

Some years ago, some clever chap looked in his little red book (which is not unlike the revered "Pitmans Velocette"), but in the Vincent world it's called "Richardson's Vincent", and in it he noticed the position of the cams in a picture and pondered a while (there was no mention of this in the text) and then he noted that the exhaust closing and inlet opening paths on a graph of valve opening and closing, (I guess you know the graph, the two hump curves. There is one in the bible "Tuning for Speed" for a Manx) well, for a Vincent, the curves crossed at four degrees before TDC and so, aided by two dial gauges on the top of each valve (easy with a Vincent as the rockers work halfway down the valve not on top), he found a new way to time a Vincent by setting both valves equally open as near to four degrees before TDC as the timing accuracy (cogs) will allow.

Now this was a bit of a shock to many. Normally, timing opening and closing points on a Vincent is taken at a five thou lift, but picking the point of the lift on a cam on that early gradual lift is, at most, a bit arbitrary and I guess that when that first crack between the seat and valve emerges or disappears, within a quite few degrees, makes practically very little difference to the engine later in the cycle. When, if you think about it, what happens at TDC on the change between exhaust and inlet stroke is much more important, gas inertia must rule and the timing and position of the valves must be correct; if it was not, there is nothing to stop exhaust gases rushing up the inlet or charge dissipating through the exhaust.

Of course I have been talking about a Comet single; with a Vincent twin it is more difficult there are two TDC 50 degrees, ± 360 degrees apart, to contend with and practically a figure between 3 degrees and 6 BTDC for the equally open point is an acceptable compromise, however with a single it's about possible to get things within a degree

So, it's my suggestion that, faced with foreign cam/cams and an unknown profile, setting them up with opening a few degrees BTDC will be a good compromise, and could even improve things

One final suggestion: use digital gauges if you can. Trying to watch two dial gauges, with their dials rotating in opposite directions, is a lot harder than watching two figures reaching a single figure from different directions.

Fun in the snow

TIM KINGHAM

[A double bill from Tim because I've just discovered that I'd overlooked this contribution he sent before Christmas, my apologies]



Here is a picture of a youthful me on a Velo, my mate Nigel on an AJ,

and Ron Kemp's trials Comet on a snowy Chiltern Cholesbury common (we went through there on one of our few runs this year).

That Comet was something, it was a rigid back end, with the Albion box screwed to the to the flat, vertical rear of the Vincent crankcase. Ron also used a Grey Flash, with Bramptons, on long distance trials; he raced on the Flash and won races at the Silverstone MCC trials, changed the handle bars tyres and sprockets and did the MCC Land's End trial, still with the TT carb! We did the Trial together - Ron led and I followed on my Triumph. In the middle of the night it got very foggy round Frome. I couldn't see his brake light come on, but I knew when to brake as I could hear his front brake squealing; he still had AM4 racing brake linings!

Away with the birds

IVOR RHODES



My first motorcycle, bought at the age of 16, was a Bantam, worst bike I ever owned, I pushed that bike more miles than I ever rode it. But I don't want to talk about the bike, the name Bantam is the name of a bird and in the boredom of lockdown my mind turned to what other motorcycles are named after our avian friends?

The first name that jumped into my brain was Coventry Eagle, I don't know why that brand name suddenly came to mind. This was soon followed by Francis Barnett Plover; again don't know why I never owned any FB's. FB also made a Hawk and a Falcon I believe.

On a roll now these were swiftly followed by Honda Blackbird and Suzuki Hayabusa which I believe is Japanese for a Peregrine Falcon (a killer of Blackbirds!). Sticking with falcons we can also include the Moto Guzzi Falcone and a little-known Moto Guzzi, the Albatross. I think Honda distributed a machine in the USA for a time under the name Hawk. [the NT650 'Revere' was sold as the 'Hawk' in the US]

A bike called the Hironnelle (swallow) was made in France in the 1920's.

Let us not forget the Triumph Thunderbird (Bryan would never forgive me), that mythical bird which stands proud at the top of a Native American totem pole.

So there you are, gentlemen: your starter for ten. I must have missed many motorcycles named after birds, so send in your contributions to myself and Bryan and we will add them to the listing next month.

SEEN IN THE PAPERS

St Albans, Luton, Dunstable – F.N. four-cylinder motor cycles; liberal terms; trials by appointment – Heron, Abbeyfield, Harpenden, Herts. [The Motor Cycle, July 22nd, 1908]

The Application of Idleness: Part 2

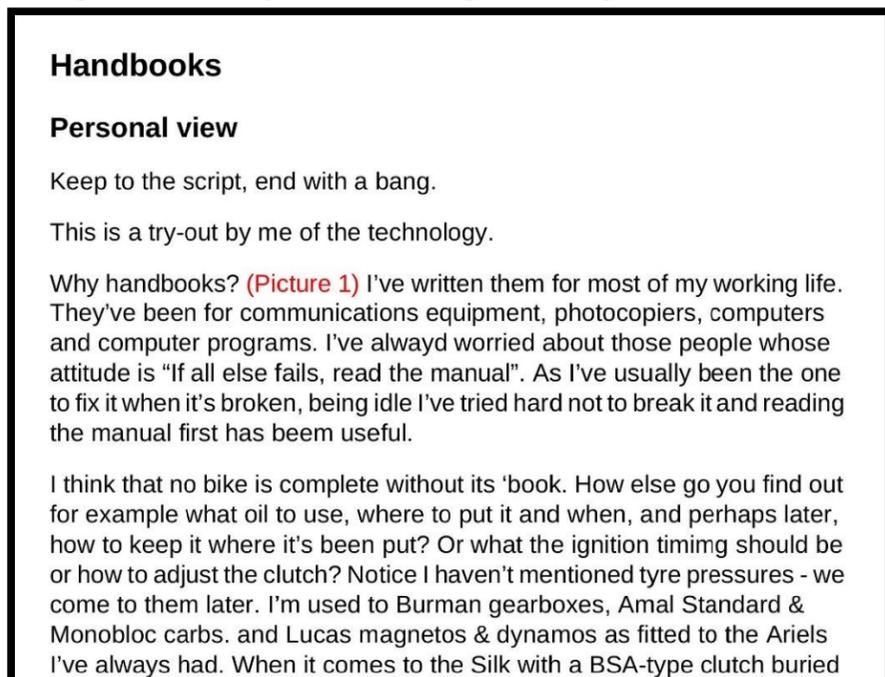
WILL CURRY

With the arrival of the first lockdown I began to think about what I could do to keep things moving in the section. It didn't take long before the idea of virtual clubnights arrived.

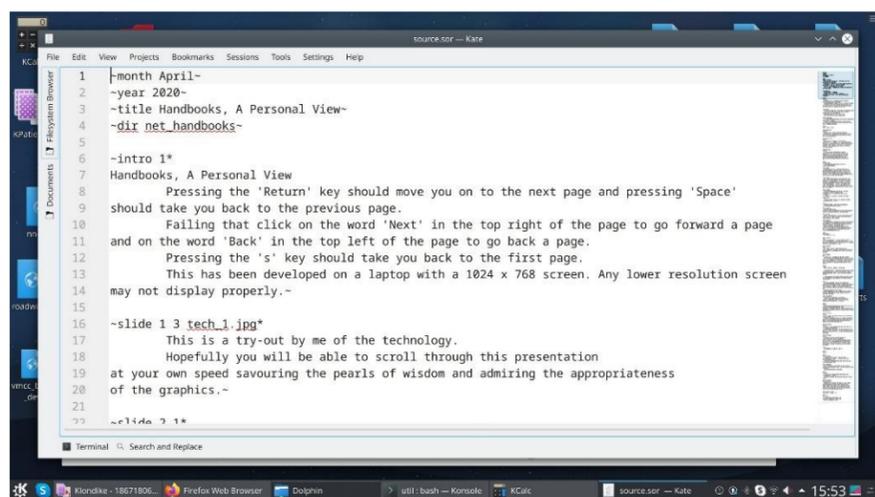
No matter what sort of presentation the clubnight is going to be it needs to have both content and format. For a live presentation it's mostly content and not a lot of format but for a virtual presentation there needs to be a lot more format.

I already have a number of live presentations under my belt and I also have the formatting software for the quiz so the first challenge was to combine the two and see what developed.

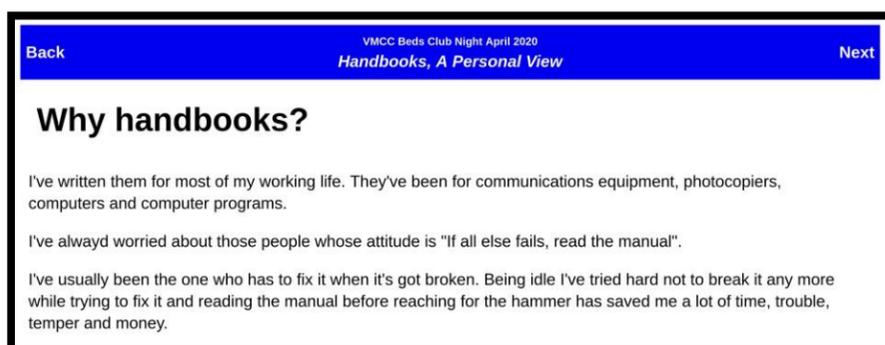
Handbooks was the obvious choice. The live presentation was a long time ago and it had a good number of pictures to go with it.



The start of the first page of my notes for the live handbooks presentation



The source text for the virtual handbooks presentation



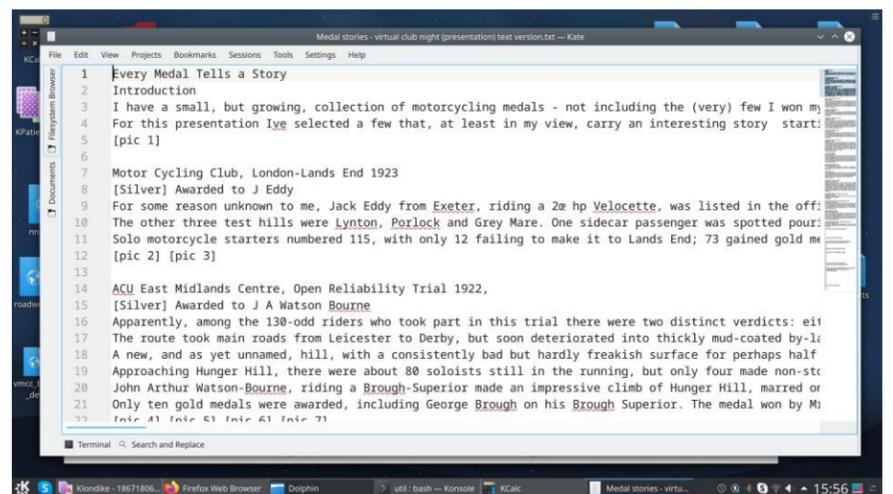
What the handbooks presentation looks like on screen

Pages, pictures, format, function and live testing

Once this worked the next challenge was what to do next. At this stage I thought this would all be over by July - not even close by my relaxed standards.

One thing that's always been a concern of mine is starting the bike, especially in front of an audience. Second kick is acceptable, occasionally, but the ideal is first kick. Here was suitable topic and with the formatting done there would be some time to work on the words. I soon dawned on me that I had quite a collection of motorcycling concerns and that here was a theme for coming virtual clubnights: the Terrors of Motorcycling. There were seven of them I was prepared to admit to. This would take me to November. I quite expected to be able to present most of them live at Shefford.

With a virtual AGM in November the terrors lasted until December when Bryan offered his medals presentation for January. The format I had used for the Terrors only expected one picture per page. Bryan's medals had multiple pictures so the format needed extending. I also simplified the way that the position of page breaks and pictures was indicated in the source text. It took two goes to achieve something I was happy with.



The source text for the medals presentation



... and what it looks like on screen

As it doesn't look like we'll be meeting for a few months there'll be some more virtual clubnights. For February I'll do a presentation on motorcycle seating which could be the start of a series about various motorcycle features that don't usually make the headlines - stands, footrests, controls, etc. To keep up with tradition March will be a quiz of some sort.

If you've got a topic you'd be prepared to share with the members send me the text and the images and I'll do the rest. You won't have to do any formatting, just mark where the page breaks are and where the pictures go. Best of all you won't have to stand up in front of an audience struggling to make sense of your notes while wearing a microphone.

Forty years in an open neck shirt or life with a T160.

GORDON LUFF

Dave Aldana, Steve Brown, Don Castro, Ron Chandler, John Cooper, Dave Croxford, Dick Mann, Bill Fannon and many others. These people

are all honorary members of the Trident and Rocket 3 owners club, whether they like it or not. During 1971 and 1972 the Trident was quite successful in the racing arena. With the advent of the Japanese two strokes all the above jumped ship and who can blame them, the idea is to win. Then came the five wins of Slippery Sam in the production 750 TT. Little interest in this and it was finally abandoned. These days in classic production racing the Trident is against FZ 750 Yamahas and the Kawasaki ZXR, no chance.



A Rob North replica

Because of the above, a new Trident owner will immediately build a Rob North replica. This vandalism converts a lovely touring machine into a racer. Head on tank, and knees in arm pits, no centre stand and thus awkward to start. Once a year it will be vanned to wobble round at the TROC track day. These bikes are never seen on the road again, such a shame.

There are as many myths surrounding these bikes as Scottish history. They were launched with some curious faults. The clutch pull rod bearing will soon fail. I replaced mine at 5,000 miles - now 80,000 and no problems. The rocker box gaskets and cylinder base gaskets will fail - replaced at 5,000 with copper items and no problems. The bike will use enormous amounts of oil, not the guides but rubbish piston rings - replaced at 5,000 with American Black Diamond rings, no smoke no oil burning. The three Amal carburettors were awful (36 mpg) now replaced at last with new Premier Amals from Salisbury. Tick over at last, no spitting and 55 mpg.



Gordon's T160 Trident

Electrics were illogical, one fuse for all systems; if anything at all is wrong with any of the circuitry the bike will stop. One early morning, 2 a.m. after a reunion in St. Neots I thought it would be great fun to test my new powerful horn the length of the village of Offord Cluny. On leaving the village, darkness and silence was so peaceful. With the Zippo lighter and silver wrapping from my Benson and Hedges I was able to make it to St. Ives. The bike now has one live lead to a six-way LED fuse box from Vehicle Wiring Products. All circuits lights, charging, horn stop light and ignition are now separately fused. The headlight was crammed full of wires, most odd.

During lockdown I fitted the starter motor with a Shido lithium ion

battery and it worked well. I have now removed this as it looked so ugly and increased the amount of unsightly wiring. On reflection, starting a T160 with three Amal carbs, which have to be tickled when cold until petrol is flowing down the gutters (no chokes or air box – so ugly) but treated very differently when hot, priming kicks and waiting the correct number of seconds. All this is pure theatre. Recently, on leaving the excellent pub at Turvey a group of doubters had gathered to witness this performance. It was like being on stage at the London Palladium, and when the bike started there was a subdued cheer. Who am I to deny the public this cabaret by fitting an electric starter?

Finally during lockdown we could interview members about their lives. We could do a Zoom with just the interviewer and victim with the rest watching but not taking part, a Desert Island Discs where members choose their favourite records, - a railway runs through the middle of the house by Alma Cogan, Diana by Paul Anka or the Spaniard that blighted my life by Billy Merson, that sort of thing.



With apologies to Gordon for muscling in on his article but here's the T160 I had back in 2009, pictured in the Lake District – lovely but troublesome bike and 33mpg! - Bryan

Talking of Rob North Tridents...

RICHARD CHAMBERS



My pal's Triumph T150 in a Rob North type frame with Steve Linsdell's beautiful and fast 500 Royal Enfield behind, at Snetterton.

Some people have strange ways of spending their free time, I have been known to watch 11 blokes running up and down chasing a ball, I've also paid good money to watch some go after a funny wobbly ball but also I have travelled thousands of miles to watch expensive motorbikes go round and round the same bit of tarmac, and enjoyed it, makes no sense really.

My pal Trev shares this passion for racing bikes and a few years back decided to buy another racing Triumph 3; he had a genuine Rob North BSA version years ago and says they sound nice... that is true, so, after

shelling out quite a lot of money, off we went racing again - yet another final go !.

Although Steve Linsdell had won on it at Anglesey some time ago, it was now in need of a rebuild, so the bike had a lot of work done at Peckett and Mc Nab, who are the people in the know. Eventually, the bike was improved no end with twin plug head, latest cams, six-speed gearbox with low first gear to get off the line quickly, plus lightweight Maxton suspension, it became a winner again in the right hands.

Racing with the Classic Racing Motorcycle Club, Ollie Linsdell won spectacularly on it at Pembrey and Snetterton, Jerry Longland 250 aircooled (Suzuki X7) CRMC champion won on it at Castle Combe and Rob Whittey won at Mallory also.



Slightly grazed...

In the picture above we are at Snetterton where Ollie had his first outing on the bike, having a great ding dong in his first race and he was going well until a tad too much throttle on the last, nadgery chicane resulted in him losing it, hence the slightly grazed finish. What with the Covid issue, the high cost of keeping a Triumph 3 at the sharp end, plus Trev and me are getting a bit old and knackered to take a bike all over England and Wales. It may be that we won't see the bike much now, but it was fun even if it does make no sense.

Too many Triumphs?

GORDON HALLETT REDRESSES THE BALANCE



For all the millions of Enfield fans out there, I show my latest "tiddler", the Enfield Silver Plus "step-thru". Made in India, in the early '80's, alongside the Explorer, a 50cc motorcycle. Both originally 65cc, but only imported into the UK as a 50cc.

Fitted with a Zunddap engine & twistgrip controlled 3 speed, it failed to attract sales, in a 50cc heavy market. I don't know how many were sold, or even if there are any other survivors.



In case you were in doubt...

It certainly goes well, better than the label states, but it has only covered a few thousand miles but the Indian chrome is not good. All I need now, is some NACC, or VMCC cylemotor runs to show it off.

[The next issue will feature a Gilera from Gordon's eclectic collection]

What we need is something to look forward to...

IVOR RHODES (RHODESIVOR@GMAIL.COM)



My thinking is as follows: an away weekend (Friday to Monday) with our motorcycles.

- Day 1; a leisurely scenic ride to our hotel for the weekend, with maybe a stop or two for a look around / tea / cake/ ice-cream.
- Day 2; after breakfast, a tour route to follow for circa 75 miles with a fixed rendezvous for a light lunch followed by another say 30 miles back to the hotel.
- Day 3; a day tour again 100-150 miles to somewhere interesting, and back to hotel or for those that wish - a please yourself day.
- Day 4; after a leisurely breakfast a scenic route home with lunch stop on-route.

Riding solo or with wives/ partners/ girlfriends. Where to, has still to be decided - possibly Derbyshire, Cotswolds, Shropshire, Worcestershire i.e. somewhere not too distant. I am looking for expressions of interest and, if five or six are interested, I will work on a hotel and likely cost.

Given the Covid situation, I think we should aim for September to mid-October, i.e. virus under control and children back at school. I suspect that when restrictions start to ease, all hell will break loose - with everyone trying to book themselves weekend and weeks away. **SO WE WILL HAVE TO MAKE A HOTEL BOOKING SOON** - this is why I am asking for expressions of interest, followed by a deposit to secure our booking. I will be endeavouring to have the deposits transferable as we are in such uncertain times. If you want something to look forward to, let me have your name and email address by the 12th February 2021.