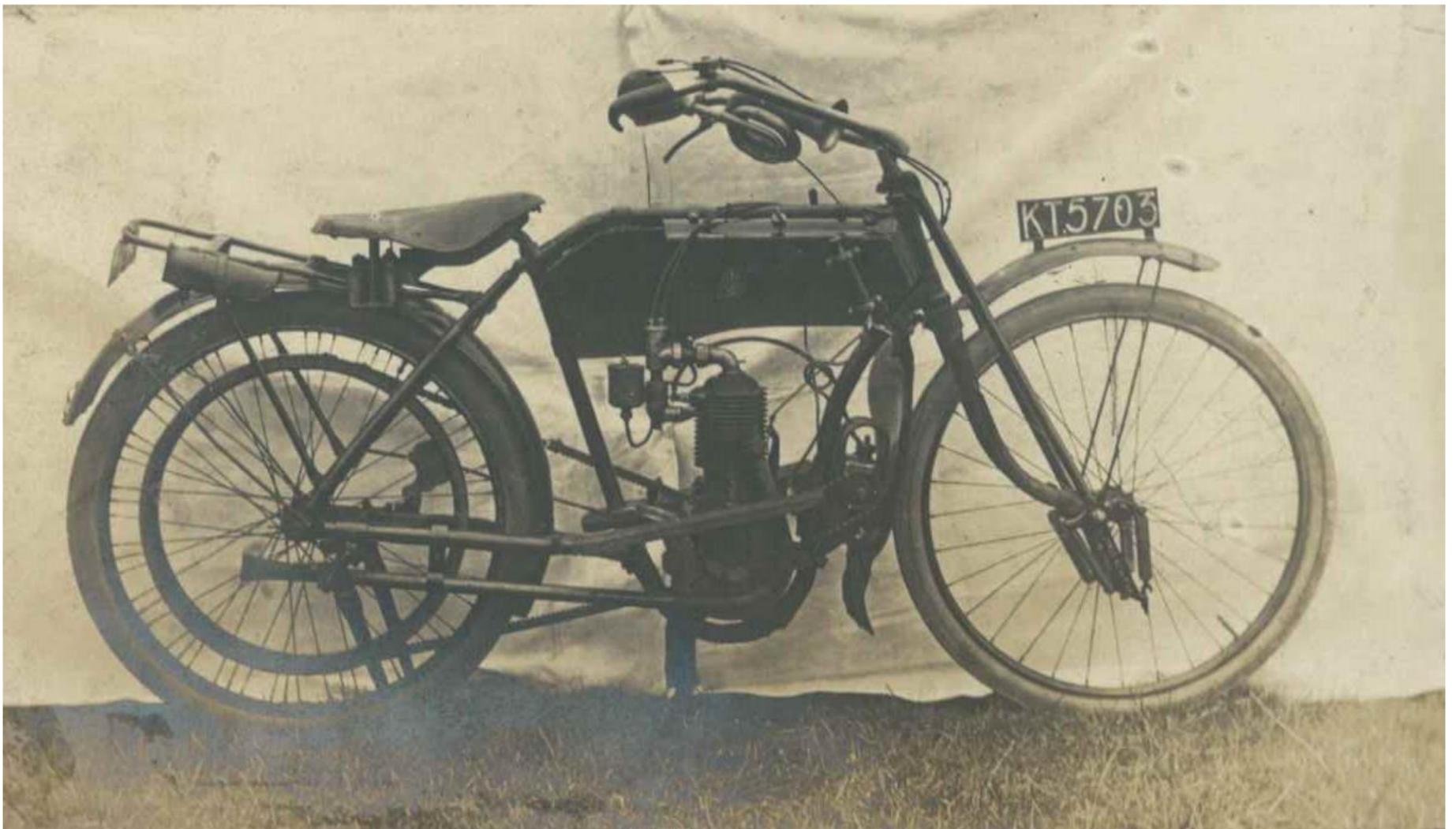


BEDS VMCC NEWS

KEEPING YOU INFORMED DURING LOCK-DOWN



Mystery bike- anyone know what it might be? See article inside.

We're getting there

EDITORIAL

This week's announcement by Boris has brought about the promised next step in the gradual relaxation of the restrictions on our normal lifestyles. Probably the most significant for our section's activities is the removal of the rule-of-six for outdoor gatherings, meaning we can remove that restriction on our midweek runs – assuming that no more than 30 will suddenly appear. See below for details of the next midweek run and thoughts about some more runs.

The committee is beginning to emerge from hibernation and trying to remember what we each did before our enforced sabbaticals. The first activity has been somewhat more taxing than we expected, and we have Nige to thank for saving the day. What we thought would be a simple resumption of our regular booking at the Shefford Memorial Hall proved challenging as they'd booked a Karate class overlapping into our slot. Much to-ing and fro-ing eventually saw the martial artists agreeing to give up their booking, allowing us to carry on as if nothing had happened (phew, wouldn't have fancied a scrap with them!).

It looks like things at HQ are beginning to sort themselves out with the election of Mario Costa-Sa and Brian Southam as Directors. (cont'd on p2)

IN THIS ISSUE:

**HOW TO BUY AN
OLD TAX DISC**

**CAVEAT
EMPTOR 2**

**EXPLODING
RATS**

**INCIDENT ON THE
GROSSGLOCKNER**

EDITORIAL (CONT'D)

Did you know that Mario lives in Bedfordshire? Hopefully, he'll be able to come along some of our section meetings and events.

From the next issue, the Newsletter will revert to a Friday publication day as I hope to be back in my Wednesday volunteering role at the Cotswold Motor Museum from next week; can't wait!

Many thanks to this week's contributors: Chris, Mick, Tim and Will. Please keep them coming as there'll be a few more issues before normal service is resumed. Don't miss this chance to write that article you've been promising yourself all along.

Bryan

Beds Section News

MIDWEEK RUNS

The next run will be on Thursday, 20th May. As described above, this won't be limited to six people, so no need to book. Meet on the village green at Broom at 10.15 for 10.30 departure. Route sheets will be available for those who would like to ride independently; otherwise we will use the tried and tested formula of follow-my-leader in groups of up to six. The route of approximately 45 miles will follow the Greensand Ridge and end at the BaaT Room at Nobby's Farm Shop, Great Billington, near Leighton Buzzard. Don is organiser and can be contacted on 07535 860745 in case of last-minute queries.

VIRTUAL CLUB NIGHT

Tonight's virtual club night will go live at approximately 8:30pm on the evening of Thursday, May 13th. The subject is 'Handlebars' (should be possible to get a grip on that, tee-hee) and will be found on:

http://wcurry.co.uk/vmccbeds/net_night_may/w_001.html

VMCC 75TH ANNIVERSARY CLUB NIGHT

As I'm sure you're aware from the Journal, or should I say "magazine", 2021 is the 75th anniversary of the founding of the VMCC, and sections have been asked to promote an event as a celebration of that. The Car Park Concours would seem the most appropriate and there will be an award for the bike that, in the opinion of the judges, best captures the spirit of the anniversary.

SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER CLUBNIGHTS

Not wishing to alter the formula that has proved successful in the past, September and October Club Nights generally welcome guest speakers. At this stage, the speakers aren't fixed and we would like to invite any club member to put together a presentation, or make a suggestion that they think would be of interest to our members. Please let me know on bryan.marsh@btinternet.com.

VMCC WAYPOINT RALLY

It's hoped to arrange some group rides to the more local waypoints. More details when we've given it a bit more thought.

Tim Kingham has pointed out that I cocked up with one of the "what-3-words" references:

"The what 3 words for Harrold Butter Market takes us to Manitoba in Canada - it should be workbook not workbooks. And I had just paid for myself and bike as cargo on a freighter 😊"

[I checked the Manitoba location on Google Maps and, unless you're a great fan of prairie, I'd suggest sticking to Harrold.]

UNSOLICITED TESTIMONIAL

I must insist, Bryan, that you print the following compliment:

The Newsletters have been an absolutely brilliant effort, Bryan – and supported by some stalwarts – e.g. Will, in particular, in each issue – so THANK YOU, GENTS!

Mick 16H Ward, Great Gransden.

Well, since Mick insisted, how could I refuse? Blushes all around but thanks very much, it's nice to know our efforts are appreciated

MIDWEEK RUN REPORT

For last week's run I thought it would make a change to head up around the top end of our county. I forgot to take a picture of the group but Don, Gerald, Gerry, Will and myself gathered in a small car park cum trials section between Wooton Green and Wooton. From there we headed through Wooton to Stagsden, Stevington, Odell, Sharnbrook, Thurleigh and up towards the aerodrome. Stopping for a breather we were perplexed by a chained off area with what appeared to be a missing monument. Don later did some research and discovered it was the former site of the memorial to the USAAF 306th Bombardment Group that flew from Thurleigh during WW2. The memorial pictured below in its original location, where we stopped, was moved in 2012 to a site on the airfield near the museum dedicated to the American bombers.



Warmed up a little, we headed on through Keysoe Row, Bolnhurst, Wilden, Great Barford, Blunham, Moggerhanger, Ickwell (maypole disappointingly in use at the time) and on to Jordans Mill for refreshments and the usual chat. Pleasant countryside but it's the pretty villages that I really like about that part of the county.

Upcoming local events

See the last issue (available on the website) for details of Motofest '21 at Shuttleworth on Sunday, 21st Jun, and the Flitwick Lockdown Car & Bike Show on Sunday, 1st August.

This week I had an email about Vintage Stony; I'm not sure whether the links will work:



Market Square, Stony Stratford, Milton Keynes MK11 1BE

Dear Bryan

We certainly don't want to 'jinx it' but... it appears we might actually be able to hold 'Classic Stony' this year. Those of you who have visited our website recently will have noticed we have moved the date to Sunday 4th July.

This is of course assuming the current rules don't change. And it goes without saying we'll comply with any COVID guidelines as appropriate at the time. So, fingers crossed, we will be able to see you all again on the day!

After a string of enquiries we are pleased to confirm that you can now reserve a parking space in the Market Square. As with previous years the general rule of thumb will be your vehicle needs to be at least 40 years old to qualify. ([More info](#))

The proceeds, as previous years, will be going to '[Willen Hospice](#)' who have had a terribly lean year on the fundraising front. It's for that reason we are making this year's donations non-refundable, we do hope you understand why. [CLICK HERE TO RESERVE](#).

Those who pre-register will receive the usual coveted Collector's Rally plaque included with their reserved parking. Again, as with previous years, there will be a procedure in place for you to collect this from our 'Information Tent' on arrival. We'll share more information in due course.

Finally, we're calling out for volunteers. We're actively looking for individuals to help us with marshalling on the day, without which there would not be an event at all, so it's pretty important!

If you are interested and can spare some time please get in touch – initially via our email at info@classicstony.co.uk, or directly with our Chief Marshall, David at jendavew@outlook.com. – it really would be most appreciated.

Best wishes,
Classic Stony Team

The page 3 girl



Buying an historic tax disc

MICK WARD

I enjoyed Simon Smith's article on how to de-grade a tax disc holder for the sake of patina / authenticity looks; well done.

However, can I save anyone else the time and trouble to produce their own tax disc, especially in trying to get the right amount of tax duty / colour of discs / handwritten / post office issuing stamp & date / taxation class etc., because in Old Bike Mart there is a monthly advert – quoting just £12 for 3 identical discs! Here is the internet link:-

[Reproduction, replica British tax discs,- the best and cheapest! \(poplargreg.com\)](http://poplargreg.com);

Information extracted off the website:-

[Reproduction GB Tax Discs \(all years 1921-2015\)](http://poplargreg.com) ; 07710 267 336 ; email - greg@poplargreg.com

We are the country's leading (and cheapest) supplier of reproduction

tax discs for classic vehicles.

We are also the only supplier who will change the issuing stamp to your vehicle's date of original registration and issuing office.

- * Post 1960 discs can expire at the end of any month
- * We will supply blank or completed with vehicle details
- * With a clear issuing stamp (not an unreadable blur)
- * With two spare discs as backup
- * Sent on approval - no need to pay until seen
- * Lifetime free replacement guarantee against fading, water damage, loss etc.
- * The other main supplier does not offer any of these features and will also charge you more than twice as much!

I ordered 3 individual sets – for my 1949 Norton 16H; another for my 1930's car; and another for my 1949 s/d bus which had an extra requirement.

They are supplied in lovely handwritten actual ink on period / faded discs.

I found Greg to be both helpful & easy to deal with - he is exactly as it "says on the tin". I am not related or linked with Greg - just one satisfied customer happy to pass on this recommendation to other members.

Cave iterum, or, Caveat 2

WILL CURRY

This follows on from the article in the last issue, which covered complete machines. Its subject is replacement or pattern parts.

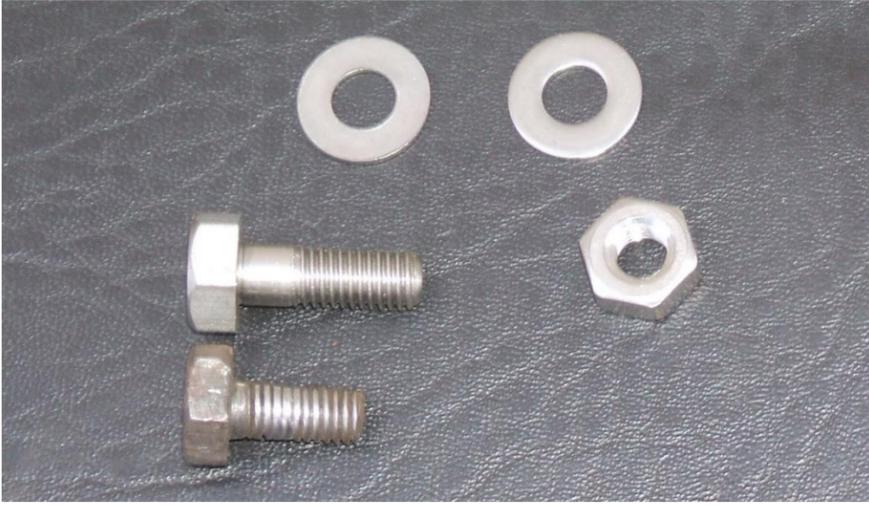
My Ariel scrambler had a 57 tooth back sprocket when it arrived and because of the use I intended to put it to it was swiftly fitted with the standard 47 tooth sprocket and road tyres.

This was accomplished seemingly without issue. It was at the end of one of Don's midweek runs that problems began to appear. I hadn't been hanging around and the effort put the chain oiler into overdrive. While the back tyre was still free from oil the same could not be said of the rear sprocket. It was dripping oil onto the paving slabs on which we had stopped. I have a piece of rag in the toolbox on standby for such events and it was whilst mopping up the surplus from the slabs I noticed that some of the 10 bolts which should hold the sprocket to the hub had deserted. The journey home was a restrained affair.



Missing bolts. I did get home like this, slowly

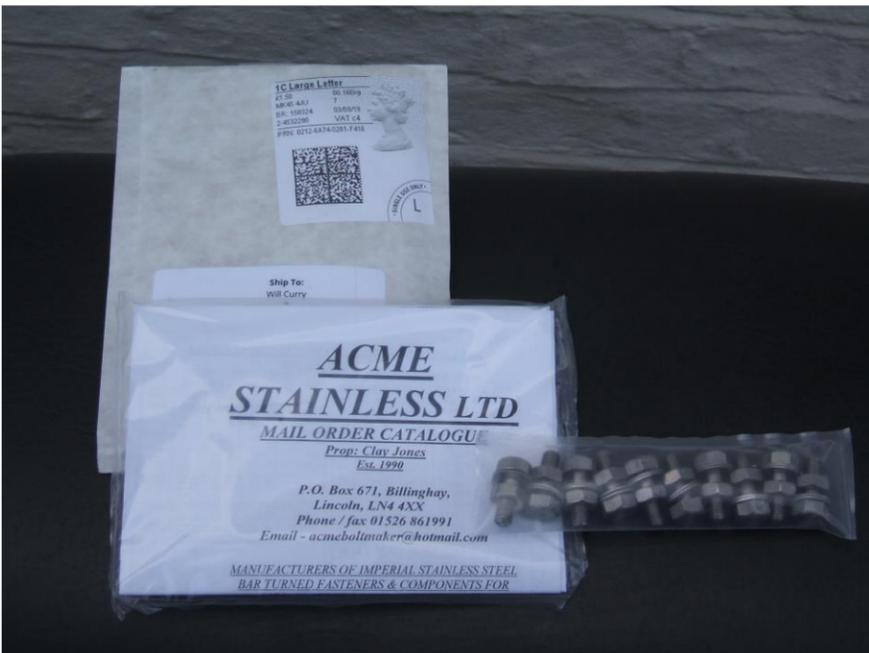
Once at home I looked a little closer at the remaining bolts. They weren't bolts at all. They were what I know as set bolts - the thread goes all the way to the underside of the bolt head. The proper part - 0522 - is a bolt. There is a plain shank for some 1/4" under the head. It is this plain shank which should be a good fit in the hole in the sprocket, like a dowel. The threads on the remaining fixings were hammered where the sprocket had hammered them and, worse, the threads in the hub were damaged. Luckily, the holes in the sprocket didn't seem to have suffered.



Top is the replacement, longer bolt and below is the incorrect set bolt

I looked at the website of a supplier of Ariel parts. They had them in stock but the image on the website suggested that what was on offer was a set bolt, remarkably similar to those that had failed. This was confirmed with a 'phone call. "Nobody else has queried it and we do sell a lot".

Time for a wider search. I found a supplier of stainless fixings who not only offered proper 0522s but better still, an extended version with a nut and washers for use when the threads in the hub were challenged. The icing on the cake as it were was that they cost less than the incorrect parts would have done. When they arrived two days later they were beautifully packaged.



The package of replacement bolts. Nearly too neat to open.

The original vendor's website stated that they supplied replacement, not pattern parts. Whatever you care to call them, the parts on offer were unsuitable.



And, finally, I can open the throttle again.

Caveat emptor once more.

The Vincent, the Douglas and the Grossglockner

TIM KINGHAM

A few years ago, I twice drove to Austria to race my Vincent twin up the Grossglockner hill climb. That's 700 miles for 20 minutes riding but what a ride. The Gross Glockner road was, it was said, built by Hitler to keep people busy in the depression. Anyway, it was an invitation event and we had a morning and an evening run on closed roads. The road had a lot of hairpins (I lost count) and there were all sorts of bikes going up - from Sammy Miller on some exotic, to early BMWs, it was a long way at the top and it ended at a very high point since, in July, there was still snow.



In the paddock I saw a bike I recognised. It was the late George Eastons special 500 Douglas that had been a close contender in the pre-48 BHR race class with my son Ben on our Comet racer. I saw it had the next running number after mine. Now normally there was a minute between each bike from the start line, and the previous year I had still been caught by an experienced guy on a fifties OHC Moto Guzzi single who knew his way. By blindly following him, I found lines I could only dream of (no crash barriers on the edge!), the result was that with his help (tow) I made my best ever time. This year the morning run was fine, and I was not overtaken. However, in the evening session there was an accident, and the delay caused the interval to drop to 30 seconds. Knowing how fast the Douglas was, I knew that if the new owner was any good, and knew the way, he could catch me. Anyway, when I did the run he didn't come past and, after we came back down (behind a cop car escort), I was browsing round the paddock and I saw the Douglas with a cylinder barrel hanging off and a bent conrod. So, I guessed he had blown it up. In the evening there was prize-giving, an Oompah band, beer Steins by the dozen and an evening meal, and who was I sitting opposite but the guy with George's Douglas. "What happened", I asked "I can't believe George's Engine exploded"

"I had you in my sights", he said, "and as I came up to a bend near the top with a big rock wall on the inside, the plug lead came off! I was so near the top I pressed on round the bend and the plug lead jumped back on! My throttle was well open, and it shot me into the wall, where the cylinder saved my leg".

A reminiscence

IXION

The pukka motorcyclist is often quite as happy in his garage on a wet December evening with a motor-bicycle which won't go, as he is on the open road in August with a beautiful flapper on the carrier.

The motorcycle never fails to blow the cobwebs out of a stuffy brain. An hour in the saddle, and the week's work simply ceases to exist, whilst the entire body is oxygenated more entirely than a week at Brighton

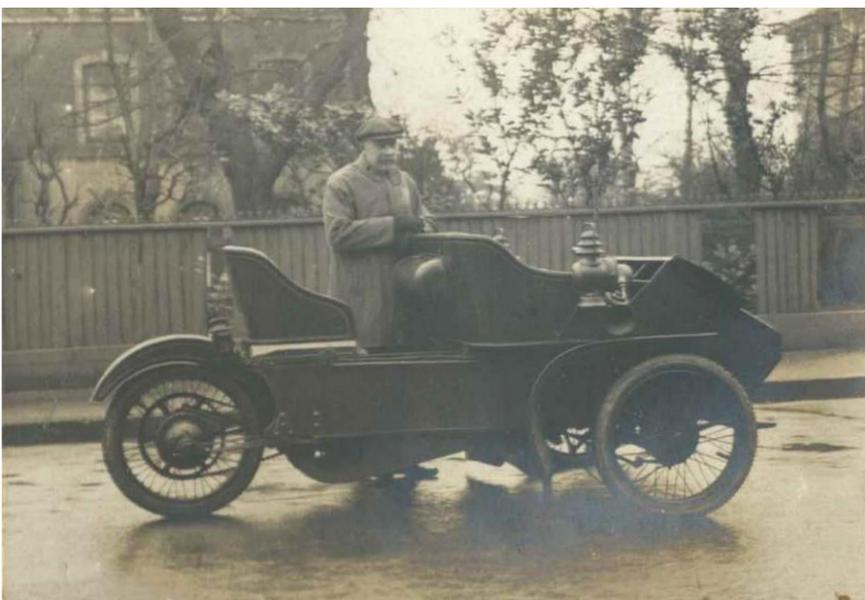
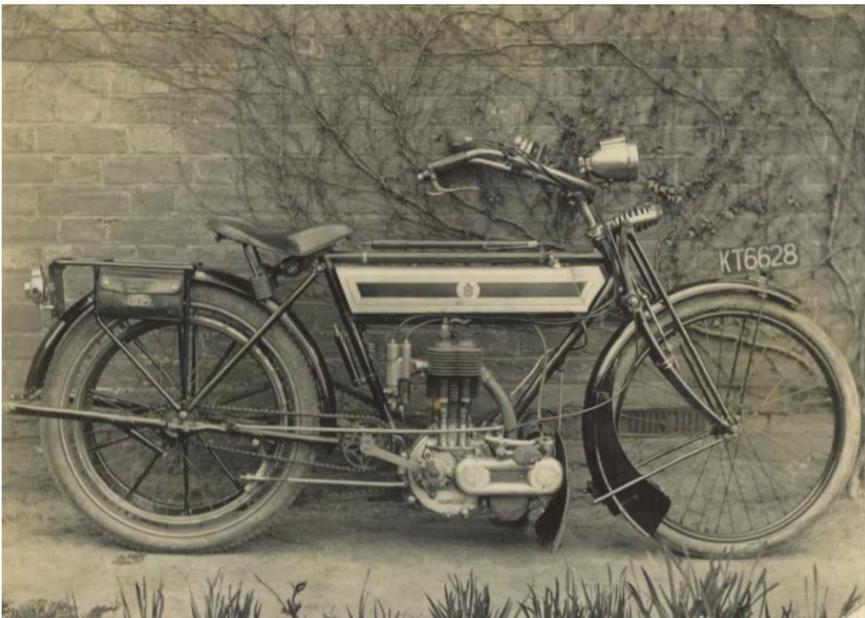
could do it. As a healthy distraction for busy men past their first youth, the motorcycle has no equal, excepting perhaps the motorcar.

On the road our intrinsic slavery is forgotten. We may go where we will, and – except in Surrey – we may go as fast as we please. The willing machine between our knees is our slave, and we are its king. Nobody except a policeman can command our obedience, and even police authority does not extend beyond the next corner – unless fate should have placed a second bobby there. During these brief hours in the saddle we be free men; and we like the taste of it.”

Interesting Ebay find

BRYAN MARSH

For just a few quid, I bought these original photographs, along with that of the mystery bike on the front page. The top one is clearly a “free engine” triumph. Not sure about the lower ones – two pictures of the same machine in slightly different trim?



Station 12 and the Exploding Rat

CHRIS SAWYER

From the viewpoint of this article, the central location is the village of Aston which is near to my home. Some of you who have done the Vincent (cyclemotor) Run may remember our lunchtime stop was at the Crown at Aston End. Funny how we seem to use the term ‘End’ referring to a distant, non-connected part of an English village. It has a rather interesting ring to it somehow.

Anyway, the main village is just a couple of miles up the road and its local connection is one of the reasons why my first foray into the world of the ‘small bikes’ was to buy a Corgi (bike not dog). The picture here shows Corgi outside the remains of Aston House.



In July 1940, Section D of Mi6 was taken over by the Special Operations Executive (SOE) and the already requisitioned house, the Frythe in Welwyn village in Hertfordshire, was given the designation Station 9. It was put under the command of Lt. Col. R V Dolphin.

In early 1941, the Frythe became solely a research and development establishment and any weapons production moved to a satellite establishment at Station 12 which was at Aston about 10 miles away. It is important to our story, that the many projects that started at the Frythe were given (mostly) self-explanatory names prefixed with the letters “Wel” for Welwyn.

Let me say at this stage, that I’m indebted to two books used for reference here. The first is the definitive work on the Welbike itself, ‘From Welbike to Corgi’ by Peter Miller. Peter has written a number of books on motorbikes and this book is typical of his close research and interesting style. I think that this is one of the most informative books on the history, design, production and use of any bike.

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The second book was one that I discovered by accident whilst browsing the shelves of the local Oxfam shop. Its title caught my eye, ‘Station 12, Aston House, SOE’s Secret Centre’. This just had to be bought and if nothing else, it’s a fascinating insight into how the life of a sleepy English village was changed by WW2.

The Author, Des Turner is the local historian for the village of Aston and like so many of his ilk takes his discipline seriously. Like Peter

Miller's book above, this is a fully referenced and researched work. The book was published in 2006 and Des calls on many interviews that he conducted with local people and those who actually worked at Station 12. Des' research actually goes back to at least 1973, a time when things to do with these establishments were still considered secret to the people who worked there.



It must be said that Peter Miller devotes only one page to the Frythe and its place in the history of the Welbike, he is really writing about the bike itself. In a similar way, Des Turner makes just a few references to the Welbike as it was only one of many products that were associated with Station 12. It is from this that I've tried to pick up the threads of the story.

Aston House was first set up as a government establishment in November 1939, its first commanding officer being Lieutenant-Commander A J G Langley. He came to Aston from Bletchley Park. I think it's fair to say that Station 12 was predominantly an explosives development establishment, but it was along with the many strange inventions it produced, also a production location employing up to 1000 people at one stage. The various workers were billeted not just in the main house, but in locations around the village.

When I was young, newly arrived in Stevenage New Town and originally from a very urban town, I was greatly taken with the access to the countryside. I still spend as much time out in the countryside as I can. I can remember often walking up to Aston where there were old Nissen huts and in which we played. All the huts, the billets and Aston House itself are now gone and have been built over in the 60's and 70's. The only remaining part is the Stable block shown as a backdrop to my Corgi picture above.

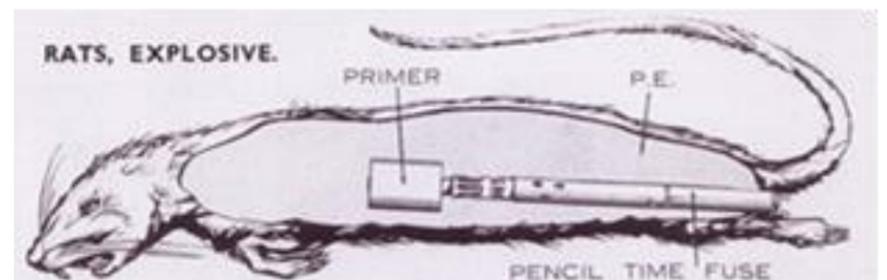


This aerial view of Station 12 at Aston, is in fact a model made after the war for English Electric who were planning to use the site as a social club. Eventually they used Bragbury End, another large house just a couple of miles away.

Apart from the Welbike, Peter Miller mentions 'numerous projects' developed at the Frythe. Mentioned are the Time Pencil (a detonator), the Welgun and another firearm, the Welrod also the Welman, a one-man submarine.

Referenced in Des Turner's book are others, Welfreighter, Welmine, and Welbum! The later, not as may be imagined an emergency cure for a secret agent suffering from piles, but a motorised swimming aid. One of the more bizarre inventions was the exploding rat. This is one of those 'good ideas' that ends up being let down by practicalities. The idea was that a rat carcass was disembowelled and filled with explosive. Somehow it is arranged that the rat is then placed on a heap of coal intended for the boiler of a building occupied by the enemy. It is assumed that on discovering the offending rodent, the stoker would scoop it up and throw it into the furnace, result bang!

The idea failed when the first consignment of rats were found by the Germans and thus warned always to search for dead rats near furnaces! I wonder if it was the smell of the dead rats that gave it away. Anyway it acted as a good distraction for them.



You can see from the picture here, using the typically military expression, rats, explosive (Germans, exploding, for the use of), that it uses the pencil, time fuse, a Station 12 invention that was actually produced there in vast numbers.

The time pencil is so important in the work of Station 12, it gets no less than 23 references in Des Turner's book. Although stated above that it was 'developed' at the Frythe, there is a direct quote in Des' book from the first CO, A J G Langley describing how he conceived it.

Although the Welgun was what might be called a proper gun and was eventually superseded by the more well-known Sten gun. It's simpler brother, the Welrod (shown here) was maybe more successful. Essentially a one-shot handgun which was silenced and could be taken apart to be concealed, it was so effective that it is reported as still being in use during the first Gulf war. Chris Ryan the ex-SAS author is quoted as requesting the Welrod as never being surpassed for quietness.



We can see that there is a difference in emphasis about the origins of all these products and none more so than the Welbike. Let's take the start of the story according to Peter Miller.

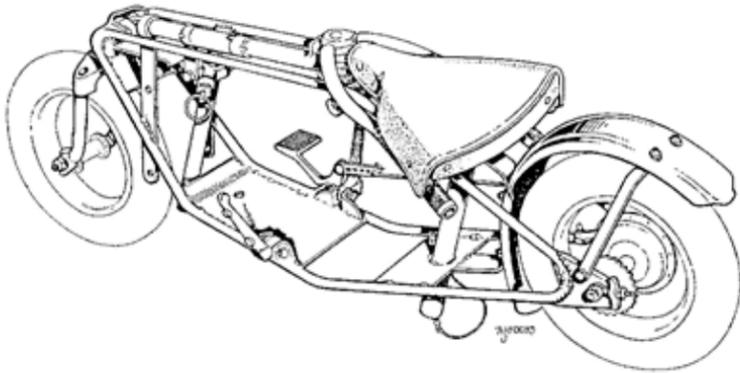
The original concept was the work of Harry Lester who before working at the Frythe had been a motorcycle dealer. He was assisted by Ken Taylor, a mechanic for Malcolm Campbell.

As is well known, the requirement was to fit into a 15" parachute drop cylinder. For years, I've been explaining to the inquisitive, mainly

motorcyclists, that my Corgi was not ‘one of those army bikes’ and saying that the cylinder was 16” in diameter, so I was actually understating the achievement by an inch!

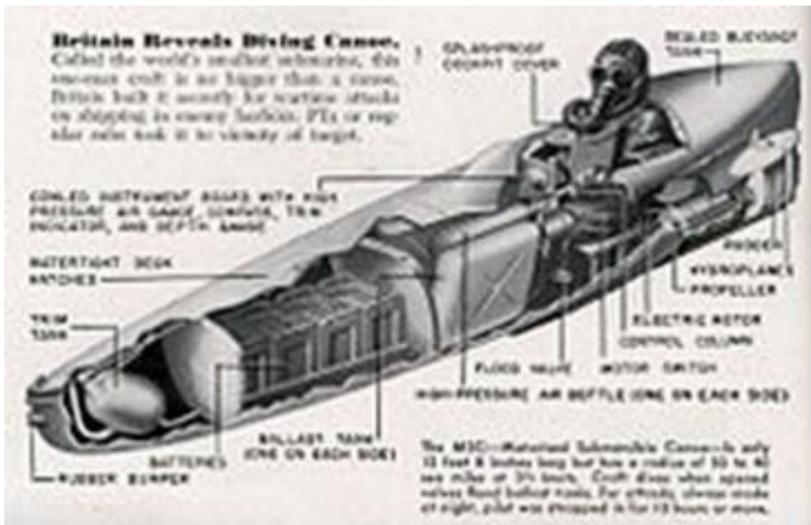
Six prototypes were built but initially didn’t receive acceptance. However, the central figure, John Dolphin succeeded in promoting the Welbike into production.

There are many unique features about the Welbike, one being the duplex frame which was of all-welded construction, a novelty at that time. Welded frames had been pioneered by Len Vale Onslow, the owner of SOS motorcycles. There was a link between him and Harry Lester, hence the use on the Welbike.



The simplicity and elegance of the frame design is well illustrated in this drawing reproduced from ‘Motor Cycling’. The lowered saddle holds the folded handlebars in place and the total height of the machine, when folded is barely 2 in. greater than the tyre diameter. The illustration is of a Mark II machine. The Mk I was not fitted with a rear mudguard.

I cannot doubt the above history of the Welbike’s conception at the Frythe, but from Des’ book there are enough references to the Welbike being developed and tested at Station 12 at Aston and maybe even the design work being done there.



In Des Turner’s book, he devotes a chapter, entitled, ‘The Design Office Story’ to the work of one man whose son he interviewed, Ernie Welch. Ernie had worked at Shelvoke and Drury in Letchworth before the war, a company that I nearly went to work for, so he clearly had an automotive background. A lot of Ernie’s time was spent on a device called Sleeping Beauty (see above), officially called the Motorised Submersible Canoe (MSC). Over 200 were built.

One of Ernie’s own ideas was the exploding bicycle pump of which 138 were made. After the war Ernie went on to work locally for Vincent and subsequently, Norton, AJS and BRM so we can reasonably assume that there was at Aston, the experience to design part or all of the Welbike.

This is a quote from Cicely Hales who worked at Aston:

I remember seeing big parachute containers being packaged at Aston House. I didn’t order the contents for those which varied from explosives to Welbikes, scissors and even sweets.
The Welbike was given the prefix ‘Wel’ for Welwyn. In other words identified with The Frythe, Station IX, which was also a country house in nearby Old Welwyn. There was a feeling, always, that we did more of the design of the Welbike than did The Frythe. I used to see the completed bikes being loaded into containers and overheard Cecil Lake and Max Hill saying that we had done more than The Frythe but they had claimed the credit. I am not sure where the containers were destined prior to dropping but it was probably RAF Tempsford. They certainly took our leaflets there. I think the rollers for the leaflet drops in the Halifax bombers were also made at Aston House.

Here is a quote from Workshop Engineer, Johnny Riches who says:

I often used to see the Welbikes being tested around Aston House – the lads had fun riding them. I think we co-operated with The Frythe in the development stage of this small motorbike. It wasn’t often that we received any feedback on our products but one day we were assembled outside the workshops and told that a British platoon was surrounded by Germans on one of the battlefronts. To get them out we air-dropped a supply of Welbikes overnight which enabled them all to escape *en masse*.

And finally, a quote from Richard Bignall, a storeman:

Richard continued:
The Welbike, a small motorcycle intended for use by paratroopers, was in my store. It had a bump-start 99cc two-stroke engine and was made commercially after the war and renamed the ‘Corgi’. I tested these Welbikes by riding them over ploughed fields. I’m tall so I had my knees up in my armpits! One threw me off and I landed in a heap. It was designed to fit snugly inside a large parachute container that I also stored. Everything needed for fighting a war was packed in those containers – guns, ammunition, etc. They were dropped in Burma and Holland, etc. A lot of our stuff was dropped down at Arnhem, for Operation Market Garden.

This article is really intended to cover the development of the Welbike at the two SOE stations at Aston and Welwyn, but it is worth rounding it off with some production figures. The production Welbikes were made by Excelsior with Villiers Junior engines and can be broken down into the various contracts awarded. This table taken from Peter Miller’s book gives the details, a total of 3641 bikes.

The development of the Welbike concept into the Post-war Corgi for the civilian market by the originator, J R V Dolphin is quite complex and really outside the scope of this small article. However, I will try to cover it briefly.

After the war, Dolphin formed the Corgi Motorcycle company to make the Corgi. The new bike was similar in look and general concept but differed in almost all details, including the engine which was now an Excelsior Spryt.

A relationship developed with the Brockhouse and Co. group, based in Crossens, Southport. Brockhouse took over the manufacture of the Corgi and at one time also made the Spryt engine under licence. The story of the evolution of the Corgi through marks 1 to 4 including badging as the Indian Papoose in the US is quite complicated so we won’t go into it here but suffice to say it is not only covered in full detail in Peter Miller’s book, it is also dealt with in some depth by Mark Daniels in one of his excellent and deeply researched articles for Icenicam. Mark deals at some length with the evolution of the Spryt engine and this work is recommended to the serious Corgi student (that’ll be me then!). So due acknowledgements to Mark although I haven’t used his material directly.

Year	Model	Engine Number	Frame Number
1948	Mk.I	M5385	2372
Apr.48	Mk.II	16005	6303
1949	Mk.II	continued	
1950	Mk.II	24146	15775
1951	Mk.II	29562	21258
Nov.51	Mk.II	continued	
	Mk.IV	1008	25008
Oct.52	Mk.II	discontinued	
Nov.52	Mk.IV	continued	
Jun.53*	Mk.IV	2101	26101
1954	Mk.IV	2604	26604
Oct.54	Mk.IV	3050	27050 (last)

* Introduction of Mk.IV Series 3.

Corgi production figures, courtesy of Peter Miller’s book are shown here, 27050 over 6 years, not an inconsiderable number. Plenty still seem to exist, but are seldom seen and, apart from mine, never seen on

the roads these days, but I won't get into that one again although it is a shame as they are a delight to ride and certainly different, too different?

So what can we conclude? Well, at the least, it's fair to say that the Welbike was instigated and conceived at Station 9 at the Frythe in Welwyn and the production certainly took place at Excelsior in Tysley, Birmingham. Certainly, something significant happened at Station 12 at Aston House. I would say there was certainly the capacity for at least some of the design work to have taken part there and at least one of Des Turner's interviewees suggest this. Others certainly suggest testing taking place there and why would that be as there are enough lanes and fields around Welwyn.

So, we leave it there and readers can choose the story they prefer. Mine is that there is sufficient to link the Corgi, through the Welbike to Aston and my own association with the village was sufficient for me to decide the Corgi was the way to go in my entry into the 'small bike' world. Indirectly the acquisition of another 'all up and running, ready to ride' bike (he lied!) led to almost selling the previously acquired project, a Cyclomaster in big bits. Fortunately, I stopped just in time and the rest is another story, as they say and probably why I'm writing this.



SEEN IN THE PAPERS

The Motor and Policeman

At the Warwick Borough Police Court on Monday, before the Mayor (in the chair), Mr. J Thacker, Colonel Cooke, and Mr. Lloyd Evans, Frank Wilson, 6, St. Peter's, Bedford, was charged with driving a motor tricycle at a greater speed than was reasonable on the 12th June. - PC Tromans said the motor on which defendant and another man were seated was going at from 20 to 25 miles an hour about 100 yards from the bottom of West-street. He put up his hand to them but they took no notice. When they passed him they were not going so fast, but the rate was fully 20 miles an hour. There were several children in the road. On reaching the top of the hill they stopped, and witness charged them with furious driving saying they were going along at 20 to 24 miles an hour. The defendant admitted. He thought he could go as fast as he liked. He remarked, as the road was wide. - Defendant: Did I stop when you called upon me? - Witness: You stopped at the top the hill. - How do you calculate the rate at which I was going? - Because you were at the top of the hill in three or four seconds - You don't seem to be aware that it is impossible for a motor cycle to be driven at that speed up a hill. - William Adam Davis, The Saltisford, thought the motor was being driven at 18 or 20 miles an hour when it passed Mr. Jolley's grocery store in West-street. He had often driven a horse at 10 miles an hour, and was pretty sure the motor was going twice as fast. - William Cook,

landlord of the Nelson Inn, corroborated The motor was going at a much faster rate than it ought to have gone. The practice ought to be stopped, as the children playing in the road were in great danger. - Defendant asked the Bench for permission to prove to them that it was impossible to drive his motor cycle (which he had brought to show them) at twenty miles an hour, and he invited the magistrates to ride his machine. - The Mayor: I don't think I should like to risk it (laughter). - Defendant, continuing said that the ordinary public had very exaggerated notions of the ordinary speed at which motor cars were propelled. They judged by the number of explosions which the engine made and the number of revolutions which the wheels made, whereas the speed could not be judged in this way. His reason for not stopping at once was that it was not advisable to stop the cycle in the middle of the hill. He was a respectable tradesman of Bedford, and had driven a motor for many years. He was well known to the Bedford police, but never until that occasion had he been spoken to by the police about his speed. - Walter Grew, of the Enfield Cycle Works, was then called as a witness for the defendant. For the last twelve months he had driven cycles similar to the one which defendant was driving on the day in question. He should say it was an absolute impossibility to drive the Enfield Quad up a hill at twenty miles an hour. The Enfield cycle had been driven in the one thousand miles motor race and had mounted many steep hills. It was found that the average rate for the whole journey was 9.33 miles an hour, and, of course, they were going at their fastest speed. The engines went rapidly, but the speed was not so great as onlookers imagined-- The Bench considered the case proved, and although defendant was not going fast up the hill, at the bottom he was going at a far higher rate than he should have done. They were bound to protect the public and the children. He would be fined £1 1s. including costs (15s.). This, the Mayor thought, was letting him off very lightly. - The money was paid. [Amphill & District News - Saturday 07 July 1900]

Half a Million Miles on Triumphs (and quite a few on other makes)

BRYAN MARSH

PART 5: THE REMAINING CLASSIC TRIUMPHS

I've always thought the rigid-framed TR5 Trophy was one of the most gorgeous bikes Triumph ever made, particularly the slightly later ones with the close-finned Tiger 100 engine rather than the original, more sought-after, "generator" barrelled ones. I had mentioned to a MCC long-distance trial friend from Sussex that I fancied one and, when I was at Verralls in Handcross buying the Model H, he came in. Next thing I knew I was heading down to look at a 1950 Trophy he had for sale and, yes, you've guessed the rest, I headed home having bought two bikes that day instead of one. That was the one that graced the cover of the last issue, resplendent with its chrome petrol tank. I did a bit of soft green-laning and entered the MCC Testing Trial on it, coming last of all the bikes but beating one car (how bad can they have been?).



To cut a long story short, for once, I was always conscious that I felt I had paid over the odds for it and when Simon said he'd like to buy it back I took the chance to recoup my original outlay. But I missed it and just had to have another one. Off down to see Simon again (he had now set up Ideal Motorcycles, near Worthing, www.idealmotorcycles.co.uk) and we struck a deal of the 1953 version that had appeared at the Chelsea Flower Show and which I featured back in Issue 13.



Those who know their Triumph history will be aware that the TR5 frame was used to form the basis of the 500cc side-valve twin TRW built from around 1949 to 1964. That's another bike I'd always fancied, not sure why – possibly because of the look of the side-valve engine and it being slightly out of the ordinary.

The first one I owned was a 1964 Mk III that had belonged to the Military Police at Catterick Barracks and was in lovely condition, complete with the pannier frames and saddle-bags missing from most TRWs in civilian hands. Unfortunately, I felt it was a bit too "military" and, with no service background, I felt self-conscious riding it, so I moved it on.



But I'd been bitten by the TRW bug, so I replaced it with a less military looking 1953 Mk II (almost identical to the Mk III but with magneto ignition and a different shape silencer) in a rather fetching shade of blue, with a tan coloured seat. I assumed this colour scheme had been added when it was de-mobbed, along with the Scottish registration number so common on re-registered bikes. After I had sold, it later appeared on the front cover of Real Classic and the new owner had discovered the registration and colour scheme were original, the bike having belonged to the Forestry Commission on the Isle of Bute.



But the TRW story doesn't end there. Just like the TR5, I missed it, so off to Andy Tiernan to strike a deal on another 1964 Mk III in a rather attractive non-military-looking black. This one, it seems, belonged to the Home Office in London. I'm guessing it was probably used as a despatch rider's bike around "Town".



Some people believe the early 650cc iron Thunderbird engine was one of the best that Triumph ever made, so I had to have one, didn't I. I'd always admired Merv Kendall's 1953 6T and, chatting to him at one of our Shuttleworth Breakfast meets, he invited me around to have a chat about it. Ten days later it was mine, and what a fine machine it is. A very simple trick by Triumph, just upping the engine by 150cc but keeping almost everything else from the 500cc 5T – but somehow, it looks bigger, maybe the paint scheme? Those 150cc's don't disappoint – no wonder Marlon Brando chose the T'bird over a Harley in "The Wild One". It's a very capable bike for covering the miles at a decent pace.



Another itch that just had to be scratched was the T160 750cc Trident. Now that, to my eyes at least, is a stunning looking machine. My desire for one went right back to when I was 17, at school. There is a tracking station on the North Cornish coast and, at that time, it was staffed by American servicemen, the son of one was at our school. One day, 1975 it would have been, he showed up with a brand-new white and gold T160. I could have died from envy; my Honda CB 175K6 not quite being its equal as a babe-magnet. Many years went by until I could eventually afford one myself. I drove to Lichfield to collect it and had my first experience of its sheer weight when I lifted it off its side-stand; blimey, didn't expect that. It was late by the time I got home and I was only saved by a neighbour walking his dog to help me unload it from the trailer as I was too scared to attempt it on my own. I loved that bike but hated it at the same time. The previous owner had rebuilt the top end but got it wrong and it smoked like billy-o as the oil pumped down the valve guides. I had that sorted but never quite got the carburation right so couldn't release its full potential; and fuel consumption in the low 30s made touring an expensive proposition. So, it had to go but the itch had been scratched. Shame, it could have been such a great bike with a bit more development.



That leaves just the two bikes I used for MCC long-distance trials. The first I originally bought as a winter hack. It was a 1970 Triumph 250cc TR25W "Trophy" which at some stage had been fitted with a 1960s BSA B40 engine and subsequently, unknown to me, ridden into the ground. I had the engine rebuilt and, when I decided to fulfil a long-held dream of entering the Lands End Trial, it seemed a (fairly) suitable mount. A couple of cheap Cheng Shin trials tyres was about the sum total of machine preparation and off on went on the easier Class O route of the "Land's End". I had great fun – Class O isn't too tricky – and made it to the end, even managing to get up Blue Hills 2, albeit without the hairpin and restart of the main trial. The only problem I had was losing the rear number plate somewhere on Exmoor in the very early hour of the morning. An improvised number plate with letters made from white insulating tape during the breakfast stop made do to get me to the finish. I also did Class O on the "Edinburgh" but the following year I decided to go for the main routes on the Land's End and Edinburgh trials on it and that was when I decided I needed something more suited to my limited abilities.



A Bonhams auction produced an abandoned project where someone had mounted a 1964 5TA "Speed Twin" engine in a 1971 T25SS "Blazer", oil-in-frame, rolling chassis. Major surgery resulted in the "Mock Adventurer" based loosely on the 1970s 500cc "Adventurer" (hence the name, i.e. not a real Adventurer) or "Trophy Trial". And boy, did I have some fun on that. Lovely soft engine, wide-ratio gearbox, Mikuni carb, electronic ignition, Renthall bars, trials spec shocks, Aluminium mudguards, side-panels and genuine (very expensive) Adventurer petrol tank. I rode that in MCC trials for about eight year and even got as far as a "silver" in the Lands End (it was very dry that year making it much easier than usual). In the right hands that bike could be a gold medal winner – Nige Coote has it now so maybe that'll happen.



There you are, add up all the distance travelled on the 23 Triumphs I've owned, and it comes to over half-a-million miles, and counting. Maybe next issue I'll cover the non-Triumph classics I've owned. Yet unable to find the cure, I currently have nine Triumphs and, if only I could find an inch or two of spare space, there is still one model that I hanker after. Watch this space...

Word Search

This type of game seems popular in the papers and magazines (blame lockdown, I guess). I found a website where you can create your own:

M	E	T	I	R	C	R	M	N	E	R	E	R	A
N	I	N	E	A	A	N	B	O	B	E	U	T	V
B	O	W	N	L	L	A	T	T	B	H	E	A	I
T	A	A	O	E	T	M	S	R	A	T	G	S	N
R	A	A	R	I	H	R	N	O	R	N	D	J	C
I	B	B	E	G	O	O	V	N	I	A	U	H	E
U	C	A	C	H	R	N	M	I	E	P	R	C	N
M	T	O	M	I	P	A	T	T	L	B	R	J	T
P	P	N	G	R	E	E	V	E	S	S	E	H	P
H	E	U	C	B	E	S	S	E	I	A	I	U	E
E	M	O	N	B	T	B	I	T	V	R	M	M	E
A	A	U	L	E	V	I	S	N	C	O	E	B	T
E	S	J	A	M	E	S	N	L	M	L	R	E	T
B	E	S	S	E	L	H	C	T	A	M	P	R	T

Buried in the above matrix are the names of twenty British motorcycle manufacturers. Can you find them all? Answer in the next issue.