

BEDS VMCC NEWS

STILL KEEPING YOU INFORMED

The Hoppy Shield goes to...



...Norm Lorton, for organising some excellent runs

The Hoppy Shield is presented each year, in memory of Phil (Hoppy) Hopkins, to a member who, in the opinion of the secretary, has made a particularly significant contribution to the section over the past year. Lingered Covid meant our secretary, Brent, could not be there to present it in person. Also, no traditional congratulatory handshake this year for the same reason. When will we ever get back to fully normal? AGM report inside.

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EDITORIAL

Winter seems to be taking hold – frosty mornings, dark evenings and salted roads, all conspiring against enjoyment of our precious machinery. But that doesn't mean we need to go into hibernation, even if you do have a nice cosy, warm shed to retire to. Looking below you'll see that the traditional midweek lunches have taken over the 3rd-Thursday-of-the-month slot from midweek runs. The informal runs we started during the partial lockdown are back to see us through the winter, for those with thermal undies and a good pair of winter gloves; these have moved to the 1st Thursday.

Many thanks to Will Curry and Greg Cole (via Kerry Dellar) for brightening up this issue with their excellent articles.

Beds Section News

BREAKFAST MEET – SUN, 28TH NOV, from 10am

This Sunday we'll be gathering at Moggerhanger Park, Park Road, Moggerhanger, MK44 3RW, for breakfast from about 10am. The weather forecast doesn't look too clever – a bit on the cold side – so don't worry if you don't want to bring your pride-and-joy out; just come along by whatever means you fancy. Not sure where the nearest bus stop is. The December meet has been moved to January to avoid Boxing Day.

DECEMBER CLUB NIGHT – THURS, 9TH DEC

It's time to find a new home for all those unwanted bits and pieces hanging around after the lockdown garage clear-out, and raise a few pennies for some good causes. And, of course, there'll be some Christmas fayre (grub) to tuck into.

Please note that the start time for this meeting remains at 8.00 for 8.30pm (see AGM report) but please come along in plenty of time if you're bringing items for the auction. As I mentioned in the last issue, please resist bringing videotapes and piles of Classic Bike, etc. magazines as they prove nigh on impossible to shift. Old copies of the weeklies (Motor Cycling & Motor Cycle) are welcome – the older, the better.

INFORMAL MIDWEEK RUN – THURS, 2ND DEC

Please let me know (bryan.marsh@btinternet.com or 07309 731191) if you would like to come along and, once I've worked out a rough route, I'll let you know the starting point. This time we'll explore the top end of the county.

No route sheet – just follow-my-leader, provided numbers aren't too large. Coffee, etc. at start and finish locations.

MIDWEEK LUNCH – THURS, 16TH DEC



We return to an old favourite for December's midweek lunch – Toby Carvery, 403 Goldington Road, Bedford, MK41 0DS (01234 272707), at 12:00. No need to book or let anyone know you're coming; just show up and look out for familiar faces. Expect Turkey to be on the menu. Paper hats optional.

BOXING DAY MEET

At the moment, there is nothing planned. Suggestions welcomed.

PROGRAMME FOR 2022

In the last issue, I foolishly said that next year's programme would be included this time (oops, should have consulted Brent first). It should, however, be ready for the December club night. Details will also be available on the Section website, the main VMCC website and the newsletter. Meanwhile, here's a taster of the first few events:

January

- 2nd Breakfast Meet – Toby Carvery, Bedford
- 6th Midweek informal run – TBA
- 13th Club night – “Commuting on a Vincent”, Will Curry
- 20th Midweek lunch - Musgrave Arms, Shillington
- 30th Breakfast Meet - TBA

February

- 3rd Midweek informal run – TBA
- 10th Club night – Don McKeand
- 17th Midweek lunch - Tavistock Pub and Carvery, Bedford
- 27th Breakfast Meet – TBA

NB From January club nights will move to 7.30 for 8.00pm start, i.e. 30mins earlier than now.

Section AGM Report

As you may recollect, the AGM was a hybrid affair with documents sent out by email in advance to allow those not wishing to attend in person the opportunity to vote, should they be so inclined. Minutes will be prepared (if I can find my notes) but, in essence, the committee were unanimously sentenced to another year's hard labour - but with John Brooker being stepped down, on the grounds of ill health, and the addition of Richard Chambers. The resolution to bring forward the club night start time by half-an-hour was passed with 20 votes in favour and 1 against. Unfortunately, a formal financial report was not available at the time, but Bob had previously assured me that we are “doing alright”. In the absence of Secretary Brent, I had the privilege of presenting the “Hoppy Shield” to Norm Lorton, as reported on the front page.

It was good to see a couple of dozen of us there on the night, including some new members - and a couple of prospective members, checking us out. With the formal business over, we were treated to a very professional slide show of past activities, prepared by Nige and Sam Coote.

Midweek Run Report

BRYAN MARSH

Chilly weather and choice of start location (London Gliding Club, Dunstable) reduced the prospective group of riders to a very manageable six. In some ways this is an ideal number for an informal run, with no route sheet. With the tail-end Charlie bedecked in a bright orange bib, it's easy for the leader to see him, and keep the group together.



On his first run with us, Martin Rust surveys his lovely pre-war Beeza

With myself leading the charge, we headed down to Totternhoe, to avoid the busy main road, then back towards Dagnall, across Ashridge and down towards Tring Station. Past the Tring Reservoir, through Long Marston, and across the A418 Aylesbury Road to follow a loop around Dunton, and the picturesque village of Whitchurch, and across the A418 at Wing. Finally, through Mentmore and Cheddington to end at Nobby's farm shop and café at Billington for lunch and chat.

Chilly, but dry and with very little traffic on the back roads, we had a most enjoyable ride with no incidents, although Martin's BSA did take a little persuading to get going again after the brief midway stop.



“Comfort break”, on a quiet lane near Cublington

The page 3 girls



Caption contest anyone?

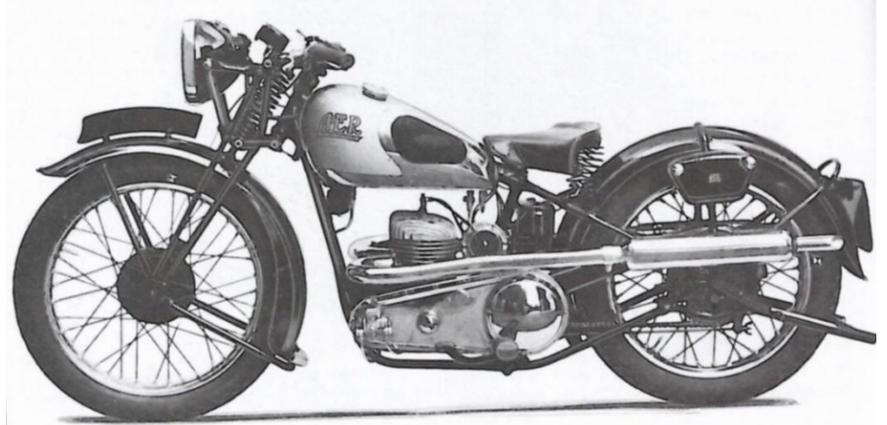
Just some old bikes in a museum

WILL CURRY

Issue 44 contained photos Bryan had taken during a recent visit to Sammy Miller's museum.

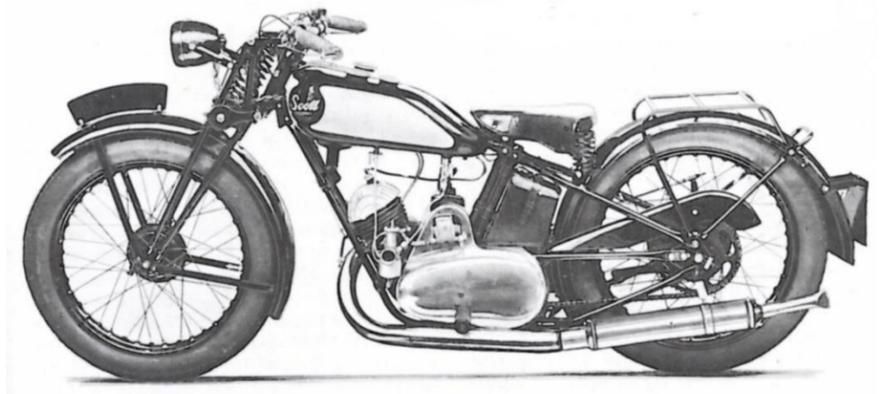
In amongst Bryan's photos there are a number of two-strokes, all multi-cylinder and all of interest. Once one gets involved with two-strokes, especially twins, it seems a very difficult habit to break. I'm fairly certain Bryan's early motorcycling had a Panther with a Villiers twin engine [yes, but I never got it to work properly – Bryan]. Certainly, his later motorcycling included at least two more of the same [trying to find one that did work properly– Bryan], and just to make the point, there is a Silk in the stable now. I've always had Ariels including the two-strokes in the '60s. I inherited an Arrow a few years ago which made the third two-stroke twin in my collection, the others being a Jawa sidecar and, yes, a Silk.

There wasn't much detail in Bryan's article about the bikes he chose to photograph, something I felt I could usefully provide for some of the photos. I'll deal with some of the bikes in in this article but two of them really deserve an article each: the EMC, and the Scott 3.



A period picture of the AER 350 twin. Rather dominated by a strangely long primary chaincase at least the presence of an oil pump suggests it was free from the curse of petrol.

The AER twin has to be the first on the list. Albert Reynolds was a Liverpoolian motorcycle dealer with a passion for Scotts. One of the first manifestations of this passion was the production of a line of bolt-on goodies for Scotts: 'Refined Scotting'. This developed into Aero Scotts and then Reynolds Special Scotts in the early post-vintage period. If you bolt on enough goodies to your motorcycle it eventually becomes so heavy that it can't be moved. Reynolds Specials didn't quite get that far but definitely 'built for comfort and not for speed'. Perhaps because of this AER moved on to develop his own engine, a two-stroke twin naturally and with extensive use of alloy to keep the weight down. I don't know how many were made and it's nice to know that at least one has survived.



Scott's 300cc two-stroke single - not the best of Scotts, by far.

It certainly deserves a better fate than Scott's own lightweight offering from the late vintage and early post-vintage which seems to have been a complete lemon - I believe some at least were even finished in a touching yellow. [I remember seeing one in Verralls shop a few years ago – Bryan]



Another RCS, this time a trials bike, arriving at Sammy Miller's.

Talking of specials leads on nicely to the RCS which I've always assumed stood for Robert Collier Special. Bob Collier was an inveterate special builder and a keen and competent trials rider on both two and three wheels and a contemporary of Sammy Miller which may explain how some of these bikes came to be in the museum. The bike in the photo in Bryan's article is obviously a road bike but there is also a trials

version in the museum [see picture above]. The Austin 7 was a popular engine for special builders – George Brough built 10 of them. Unlike the Broughs, Bob's specials had the engine across the frame and coupled to a motorcycle clutch and gearbox. The engines Bob used were considerably modified too. The cast-in water jackets were removed - chiselled - from the block and air-cooling fins added. The cast-iron head was swapped for an alloy example too, something the Broughs had too.



The side-valve Norton in pre-assessment days - spot the differences.

Bod Collier also had links with the side-valve twin Norton. He worked for them in the experimental department and was responsible for the cycle parts of the Norton. When AMC finally called it a day one of the bikes Bob rescued was this one. The photo here shows the bike as it was while being developed and before it went off for assessment. One difference is the Feridax seat being swapped for a military issue saddle - embodiment loan was the expression used in the day for such things - the MOD provided it. Bob worked for Feridax for a period as did somebody else we should know but not, I think, at the same time.



The 1949 AJW Grey Fox with its 494 cc JAP vertical twin, side-valve engine

A period photo of the AJW JAP twin.

The idea of a side-valve twin had inspired J. A. Prestwich - JAP - to produce the engine which was used in the AJW. As far as I know the JAP engine pre-dates the Norton but not by many years. The JAP engine was a masterpiece of simplicity - there was for instance no oil pump. The crankcase compression was used to force oil from the wet sump into the timing chest. Otherwise, it was splash lubrication all round. The shell big-ends were fed by hollow extensions of the connecting rod dipping into the oil in the sump. What didn't go into the extension was splashed about for the benefit of the bores, mains and camshaft. Bizarrely for an engine of the time the valve clearances were set with shims under the head of the tappet. What would have been a 5-minute job on the Norton or Triumph must have been quite an exercise with the JAP especially at the roadside. There can't have been many built. Ambassador and Montgomery both made prototypes with this JAP engine but neither went into production.

A. J. Wheaton was a printer in Exeter and the motorcycles were a sideline. The bikes were top of the range offerings but by the time of this bike the motorcycle side of things had been sold twice. The printing side of things survived until 2016 as part of the Polestar group.

...and the award goes to...



Special delivery for Brent from Trevor Pinfold, organiser of the Northants Section's Navigation Run.

Brent bravely rode his 1973 Honda PC50 in the Northants Navigation Event to win the "Grafton Rose Bowl", for the best performance by a non-Northampton Section member, and the "LPA Cup" for the best performance on a pedal-assisted machine.

Other Beds Section winners, though deprived of a personal presentation from Trevor, were Will Curry on his 1929 Ariel 500, taking the "Vintage Cup" for the best performance on a Vintage machine, and the "A Jed Cup", awarded to the rider whose age, and that of his or her machine, adds up to the greatest number; and Bryan Marsh, winner of the "Post Vintage Vase", for the best performance on a post-vintage machine, on his 1939 Triumph Speed Twin.

Breakfast at Tiffany's



Yes, that's the VMCC Chairman, Mario Costa-Sa, taking a selfie with us at the October breakfast meet at the London Gliding Club.

VMCC General Meeting – 21 November 2021

BRYAN MARSH

Partially out of a sense of duty and, probably more so, as an excuse for a ride, I signed up a few weeks back to attend the General Meeting to consider the various forward plans proposed for the VMCC. As it turns out, I'd already ridden some 600 miles that week already so I might have bunked off if I hadn't already made the commitment.

The day dawned a lot colder than the previous few days, so any thought

of taking the Tiger 100 or the Commando were soon shelved in favour of the new Honda with its power socket for my heated jacket and gloves. And they soon came into their own as I left home at 7.30am with only 4°C showing on the thermometer.

I hadn't realised that the M1 was closed between Junctions 14 and 15 that weekend, but my sat-nav seemed to know all about it and safely guided me through that maze of roundabouts they call Milton Keynes. A dry, sunny day meant that, for once, I wasn't the only one there on a bike. Indeed, there were three or four VMCC-eligible bikes in the car park at the National Memorial Arboretum, including a Jubilee Bonneville and a BSA twin (sorry, showing my ignorance of BSAs again in not knowing which model). The Arboretum is a great venue with an excellent visitor centre and café but, until Sunday, I didn't realise they had conference facilities – and very good ones they turned out to be. Time for a coffee before the meeting and a chance for a catch-up with Roger Bibbins, the VMCC's riding legislation guru.



The more interesting bikes at the National Memorial Arboretum

Alan Cathcart, the well-known motorcycle journalist, gave the 60-or-so assembled delegates a half-hour or so chat on his racing and journalistic career. Quite why, wasn't clear – presumably just some entertainment to attract us punters to an otherwise potentially dull, and short, event. On then to the business which essentially comprised voting on each of the six VMCC forward plans previously published in the Journal. Quite unusually for a VMCC meeting, there was very little by way of controversy but, then again, the usual "trouble-makers" weren't there. Adding the votes in the room to the proxy votes, and votes already submitted by email or post, gave a large majority in favour of each Forward Plan. From what I could understand, the total number of votes received was in the region of 500-600 which doesn't strike me as a lot from a membership of 14,000 or so – but significantly more democratic than the "old days" when only those present got to register their views.

An excellent hot buffet lunch, then a gentle ride home. Not a bad day out, particularly compared to some of the VMCC AGMs I've been to.

A ride on a Vincent

GREG COPE, SUBMITTED BY KERRY DELLAR

My father worked on the Fleet Air Arm's Fairey Swordfish during the war and was, I believe, employed as a "fitter" by Vincent. Quite what this entailed is lost to us but my brother, who was born in 1952, remembers going with dad in a maroon and white van, as well as a trailer lorry, to places such as Lucas in Hemel Hempstead to obtain electrical

components used in the manufacture of the bikes, and mentioned that the amount that Vincents could buy compared to larger manufacturers and the Japanese coming to the market made Vincent products expensive due to their smaller buying power from suppliers compared to the competition. He also confirms my own recollection that dad was involved in testing Vincent's "jet ski" on the Thames but, again, we don't know in what capacity.

I was schooled at Alleyne's in Stevenage and remember many lessons in the historic "Maltings" which were, of course, previously Vincent's factory.

As a result of the above (dad died in 1988, mum in 2016), I somehow acquired a Firefly tank that has travelled with my wife and I in our various moves (19 or 20 at last count...) around this country and abroad. I remember in the late '90s (when we lived in Derby) thinking that I must do something with it but then we moved to the US and it got packed up again with everything else...

Then, earlier this month, my wife and I had a week travelling in various parts of southern England including Portsmouth and Salisbury and, looking at the map, I noticed Sammy Miller's museum, in the New Forest, was relatively close. I met Sammy at an Ace Café event in Brighton a few years ago when we lived in Horley, close to Gatwick, and I'd driven down on my BSA A65 and bought a signed copy of one of his collection's catalogues and thought then that I should visit. We subsequently moved to Cromer in Norfolk which is now our home.

Sammy's collection includes a number of Vincents, including a Firefly which reminded me again about the tank (which I found in a box with a Starfire swinging arm and, I think, Bantam crankcase) as a result of which I contacted the Owners' Club and Vincent Spares, asking if anyone might be interested in it and whether I might "trade" a ride on a Vincent for it?

Bob Patchett at Vincent Spares picked up the cudgel, as a result of which I was (very) quickly contacted by Kerry Dellar who told me he had just bought a Firefly and would happily trade my tank for a ride on one of his Vincents and mentioned he lives in Upper Stondon, not too far from Stevenage. Remarkably, my wife's sister-in-law lives in Shillington, just 3 minutes away from Upper Stondon and we were meeting her and other family members for lunch just two days later, a matter of yards away from where Kerry also had a family gathering – a small world indeed!

So, I packed my helmet, jacket and Firefly tank in the car and met Kerry and his wife last night (26/9), where he kindly put his trust in me (an almost complete stranger) and let me ride not just his Black Shadow but also his (even rarer) Black Prince!



Greg on Kerry's Vincent Black Shadow

What an experience and link back to my father and school – thanks Dad!

Thanks to Kerry for making it happen.