

# BEDS VMCC NEWS

**STILL KEEPING YOU INFORMED**

*Merry Christmas!*



*IN THIS ISSUE:*

**SECTION  
NEWS**

**USING A HAND-  
CHANGE**

**A TALE OF A  
BAUGHAN**

**CHRISTMAS DAY AT  
THE WORKBENCH**

## Beds Section News

**NB** Because of the uncertain situation over Covid and the possibility of new restrictions on gatherings, all events may be subject to change or cancellation at short notice.

### Events in January

#### **BREAKFAST MEET – SUN, 2<sup>ND</sup> JAN, from 10am**

The December breakfast meet would have fallen on Boxing Day and, unfortunately, we were unable to find a venue for our traditional Boxing Day get-together. So we've moved the breakfast meet to the first week in January - at the Toby Carvery, Goldington Road, Bedford.

#### **INFORMAL MIDWEEK RUN – THURS, 6<sup>TH</sup> JAN**

Please let me know ([bryan.marsh@btinternet.com](mailto:bryan.marsh@btinternet.com) or 07309 731191) if you would like to attend and, once I've worked out a rough route, I'll let you know the starting point. This time of year, the weather on the day will dictate the format – may just be a run to somewhere serving hot drinks and a decent bacon sandwich.

#### **JANUARY CLUB NIGHT – THURS, 13<sup>TH</sup> JAN**

At the moment, this is intended to be Will telling us about “commuting on a Vincent”. Don't forget, the start time is now 7.30 for 8.00pm.

#### **MIDWEEK LUNCH – THURS, 20<sup>TH</sup> JAN, noon**

The Musgrave Arms - 16 Apsley End Road, Shillington SG5 3LX – no turkey, honest.

#### **BREAKFAST MEET – SUN, 30<sup>TH</sup> JAN, from 10am**

I don't think the venue has been decided yet. Watch this space for updates.



## December event reports

### **INFORMAL MIDWEEK RUN**

From an initial group of six, numbers dwindled gradually due to other engagements and weather forecasts, until it was just down to Brent and me. The day dawned jolly frosty, so we decided to keep the prepared route for a better day, without the risk of ice on unsalted backroads, and a bigger group, and meet up at the Scald End Farm Shop café for their celebrated bacon sandwiches in the outdoor safety of their garden.

### **CLUB NIGHT – AUCTION AND XMAS FAYRE**

The hope of grabbing a bargain; or was it the prospect of pizza and sausage rolls, enticed some two score members along to the Memorial Hall for the Christmas Charity Auction. With our usual star auctioneer, Brent, money-man Bob sheltering and Nige having to isolate, a cabinet reshuffle brought a new team into play, with accompanying fears of disaster. But (thankfully), those fears proved unfounded.



...hmmm, that wine looks tempting.



...tensions rise amongst the assembled masses in anticipation of the excitement to follow.

With me elevated to the role of gavel-wielder, Don took over as Mr Shift-it, resplendent in his brand-new warehouse coat – Mrs McKeand having insisted he wasn't to appear in his battle-scarred workshop version. Will kept the books and collected the funds whilst Norm made sure the buyers were united with the correct purchases. Martin and his kitchen volunteers fed and watered us to complete a wonderful team effort. If I say myself, I think we did rather well.

The final tally came to a round £240, of which £50 will be donated to the Memorial Association, to help compensate for all the time they were without our usual room booking fee. The remainder will go to a Diabetes charity. Thanks everyone.



...and here we have a genuine Brough Superior SS100 Alpine Super Sports flyscreen, honest Guv.



Santa Rod (the fastest Father Christmas over the quarter-mile) entertains with another tall tale from his repertoire.

### MIDWEEK LUNCH



Oh dear, where is everyone?

You've heard of self-cancelling indicators, well how about self-cancelling lunches. Coming the day after Prof. Chris Whitty's sombre announcement on the telly about the latest twist in the never-ending Covid story, it seems we all took fright, leaving Richard waiting in vain.

### *The page 3 girl*



Yes, that's Jayne Mansfield – and a Triumph, as if you cared...

### *Using a hand-change gearbox*

WILL CURRY

This is an account of how I use a hand-change gearbox and why I do what I do. It would be presumptuous of me to attempt to tell you how you should use a hand-change gearbox.

Let's start off with a bold statement:

"It is very difficult, if not impossible, to change gear quickly with a hand-change gearbox."



The hand change on my vintage Ariel. The gearchange lever is short and works in a 'Gate' which is intended to make selection of 2nd gear less uncertain.

There is some variation between types of hand-change but all the pre-WW2 types I've ever seen have had one thing in common and that's the feature which makes the gear change so slow - your throttle hand has to let go of the handlebar to make the change. Another feature they all share is that they are not sequential as modern foot change mechanisms are. It is quite possible to change gear and miss one or more gears in the process. For example, on my Ariel it is possible to change from 3rd to 1st or vice versa in one movement of the lever.



The hand change on Simon's vintage Royal Enfield. The pivot for the gearchange lever is much closer to the rider and the lever itself is both longer and ungated.

One thing that I find essential when using a hand-change is a throttle that isn't self-closing. Lever type throttles usually have a spring washer and large nut to set the stiffness while twistgrips usually have a small screw and locknut which pushes a spring shoe against the barrel of the hand grip. A throttle which stays where I put it makes changing down much easier, but I'll go into how later on.

It's also worthwhile making sure the clutch doesn't drag. If the pressure plate doesn't lift off and run without wobbling when the clutch lever is back against the 'bar, adjusting the clutch springs so it does will help. BSA single-spring clutches can be something of a challenge.

Enough of the technical stuff and on with my method of gear-changing. I'll start off with changing from neutral into first while stationary. With the engine running, left foot on the back brake and right foot holding things up I pull the clutch in. I open the throttle a little, so the engine is running at a little more than tickover, and then I ease the clutch out 'til it just starts to bite. A quick look round to make sure it's safe and, if it is, I ease off the back brake. Once the back brake is fully off, I fully release the clutch and take control of the speed with the throttle. If I'm pulling away and have to turn at the same time, I'll use the back brake to control the speed and not release the clutch fully until I'm pointing in the right direction. The advantage of this method to me is that I'm only using one control at a time. Revving the engine hard and dumping the clutch is far too exciting for me and it gives both the clutch and the chains a harder time than necessary in my view.

Next, I'll consider changing up on the move. First gear gets me moving and I will change up into second gear at around 10mph. Vintage and post-vintage engines are usually much more flexible in their power delivery than their post-war counterparts so there's no point in revving to the bloodline each time. Besides, I think these early gearboxes are easier to change gear, both up and down, at lower revs rather than higher. As it takes longer to change a hand-change gearbox, I'm careful to pick a spot to make the change where I'm not going to have deal with something else before I've finished. This includes turning or dealing with an uneven road surface as I'm going to have to take one hand off the 'bars to make the change. To make the change I close the throttle, pull in the clutch lever and move the gearchange lever from first to second. I then release the clutch lever slowly and re-open the throttle. I usually change from second to third at around 20mph.

The same considerations of place and time apply to changing down. I change down as I'm slowing down but as I can't both change gear and

use the front brake if I've got to use the front brake - the main stopping brake - I won't try to change down until I've stopped. One advantage of a hand-change gearbox is that this sort of block change is a lot easier than with a positive-stop foot change. To change down I apply the back brake gently to take the place of any engine braking which will be lost when I pull the clutch lever in and close the throttle, pull in the clutch lever and then open the throttle a little to allow the engine to speed up. I move the gear-change to the next gear and, when I judge the bikes speed to be appropriate for the revs, I ease off the clutch lever. Then I release the back brake.

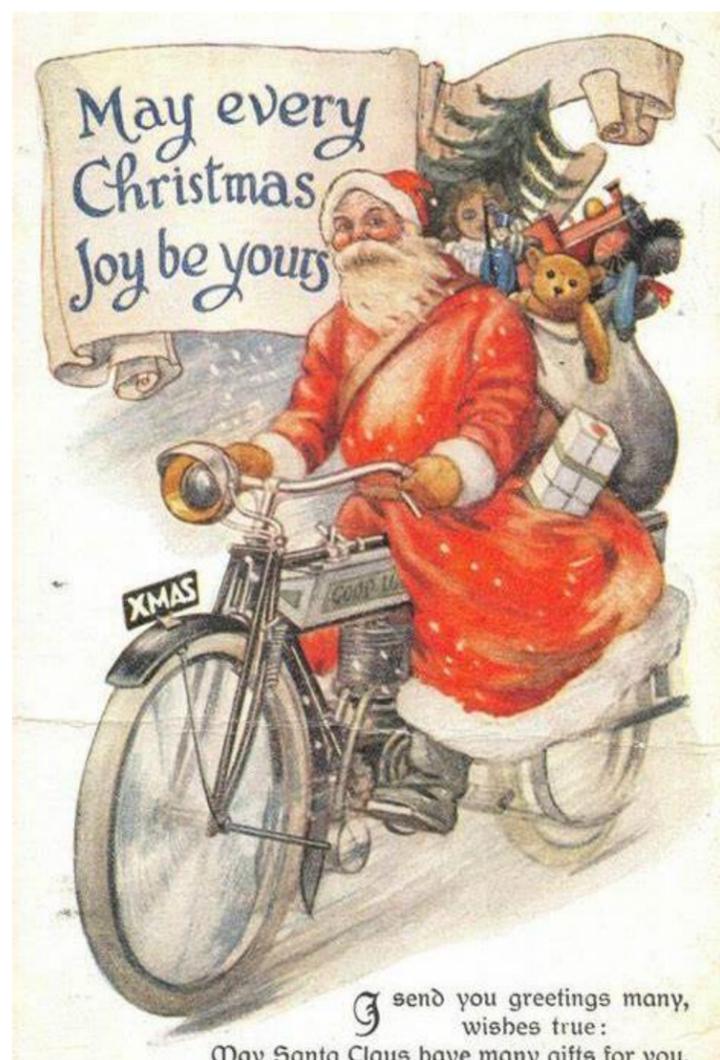
When it comes to stopping, I much prefer to be in first gear but there are times when this doesn't happen. I also much prefer to finish off stopping with just the rear brake coming off the front brake just before coming to a halt. I keep the back brake on and use my right leg to keep the bike upright. If I'm not in neutral, it's sometimes helpful to rock the bike back and forward while moving the gear-change lever whilst trying to find it.

Slow, hand-gearchanges disappeared when Harold Willis, Veloce's in-house genius, came up with an inspiration . . .

. . . which was the positive-stop gearchange. This meant that moving the lever would only change the gear sequentially, that is going from first to third, or the other way, took two movements. This reduced the chance of missing the intended gear and made foot operation of the gearchange lever possible. This in turn meant that your throttle hand could stay on the handlebar and work the throttle - or brake - while gear-changing happened. It wasn't long before bolt-on goodies became available.



A bolt-on positive stop foot change added to a vintage Burman gearbox.



## Yes, they do still turn up in barns!

KERRY DELLAR

I heard rumours from a man in a local village pub who had overheard conversations about a very special(?) BSA bike put away in a barn in 1992 because the mag was playing up.

After a few phone calls to the village, and to a few pub-goers, I luckily traced the family of the owner who had sadly just passed away.

After removing old cardboard and blankets, and viewing the bike, it was obviously not another Bantam but a Goldie. After checking the numbers with the Gold Star machine registrar, he confirmed it was an all-matching Gold Star DBD34 from 1961.



I put in my offer to their Probate Solicitor asap. Subsequently, my offer was accepted and I picked up this lovely bike that was in unbelievably nice condition

The owner had bought it in 1982 for £1500 and really enjoyed it going to the IOM several times on it until he put away. With the bike in the barn, I found some of its damp and scruffy old log-books, Goldie magazines from the 1960's and other old associated interesting items.

Bike cleaned up and really was in unbelievable nice condition, seems in the 30-year storage he must have looked after it but never taxed or rode it again, maybe he even had the Mag done. The only visible damage to the bike was that mice had chewed the HT lead. I cleaned the points and got a really good spark! Kicked it over 80 times or more, but no luck. Had to stop for a while each time for my rapid heartbeat to slow down. It had compression, it had a spark - it had to go, petrol down the plug hole but no.

Later, after my right leg recovered and allowed me to walk, I tried again, this time with petrol down the long bellmouth - IT STARTED!!, sounded very good, smooth and no smoke; incredible.

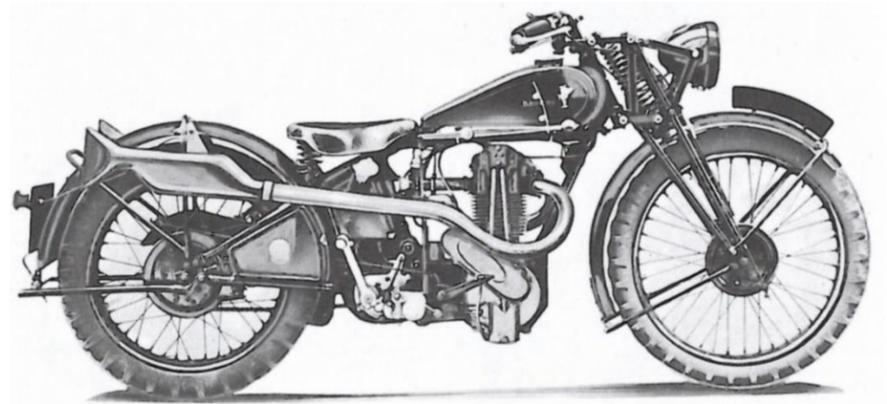
So they can still turn up! Keep looking, - maybe a Vincent next!



## A Tale of a Baughan

WILL CURRY

His 'shake-down' ride was going quite well so far. He'd done over fifty miles and had another thirty or so to do on the first real long run with the Baughan. It had been over ten years since he bought the remains of the bike from a dealer in Leicestershire. He hadn't liked the man at all, but it was the only time he'd ever seen one advertised, and ownership had been an ambition ever since he was a lad and had seen a picture of one in a book in the local library.



**A Baughan - but not the bike in this story. Notice this one has a hand gearchange, inverted levers and serious sports tyres. It doesn't seem to have any heat shields on its high-level exhaust pipes either. [ouch!]**

A larger sum of money than he'd care to admit to his wife had purchased a frame with engine plates, a pair of wheels and a set of forks. No paperwork came with the frame and, likewise, no history. More money got his purchase repainted and refurbished with the forks being rebushed and the wheels rebuilt. Yet more money purchased pattern mudguards and stays and a saddle. Trial and error showed that the engine plates were for an Albion gearbox and a Blackburne engine. An Albion 'box and clutch came with only moderate difficulty and, eventually, a 350 OHV Blackburne was found which proved to be a money-pit as it was completely worn out. In the end the best he could do for a petrol tank was to have a BSA tank modified to fit. His intention was to get the bike rideable and then use it in the hope that somebody might own up to having things like the proper tank and other bits and pieces that he'd had to have made, such as the primary chaincase.

His route was a large circle and he'd drawn himself a route map which was in the roller on the front forks. This last leg was westwards and into the low winter sun. It wasn't making things easy, and he was becoming sure he'd missed his turn. He slowed down and then made out the silhouette of a man walking his dog just up the road. He rode up to the dog-walker and explained where he was going and asked if he'd missed his turn. "You have, but there's another just a few hundred yards up the road. Turn right in the village at the green and you'll meet your road at the T-junction. Turn left and there you are".

He thanked the dog-walker, rode up the road to the side turning and duly turned. He followed the road into the village and opposite the church the bike stopped dead. It was absolutely solid, and no amount of rocking would get it free. It started to rain too, just to add to his woes. He pushed the bike, with the clutch pulled in, over to shelter under a yew tree which leaned over the churchyard wall. Out came the mobile carried for such circumstances. Somehow, he wasn't surprised to find there was no signal and nor was there a 'phone box in view either.

He was still wondering what to do when the dog-walker came over. "A Baughan - I've never seen one before" said the dog-walker "My aunt's got a picture of her when she was a little girl sitting on the tank of her dad's". This little snippet of detail, which would normally have caused ears to prick up and attention to be grabbed, didn't make it through the rising tide of frustration over the breakdown. The question "Is there a 'phone box round here?" received the answer "There used to be one on the Green. but they took it away when they put up the mobile phone mast. Has it broken again?". "My aunt's got a land-line and she lives just over the road. Go on, she won't mind", volunteered the dog-walker. "It's stopping raining. It doesn't last long at this time of year. I'd better get off or I'll be late for tea" and off he went into the village.

Our motorcyclist looked at the imposing Victorian residence at the end of a curved gravel 'in-and-out' driveway. This was manor house or rectory style and not exactly motorcyclist-welcoming. However, if there was a 'phone he could use, he was going up that drive. There were several brass plates attached to the wall by the door. The uppermost and cleanest declared the house to be 'The Old Surgery' and the next, and far less legible, declared 'Dr Jonathan Heyward'. Others, similarly illegible, directed patients to the side door and listed the times of surgeries. He knocked on the door which opened immediately to reveal an elderly lady wearing an equally elderly raincoat, wellingtons and with a scarf tied over her head. "Have you broken down? I was just coming to see if I could help".

He explained that the engine had just stopped and was solid and there was no mobile signal to call his wife to come with the trailer to rescue him. "Shellacitis" came the prompt response "although it doesn't usually happen with the engine running. Don't force anything or you'll snap the end off the mag drive, and then you will be in trouble". "You'd better come in. There's tea in the pot". He came in.

"My father had a Baughan but it didn't survive the war. Just before the war he decided to tidy it up as it was getting a bit tired. He used it a lot in trials. It was one of the last bikes Harry made and I think he only made it because my uncle worked for him. The engine, magneto and gearbox were overhauled, and the cycle parts went off to a company in Chelmsford for re-enamelling. Before they could finish the job, they were bombed-out in the first air raid there. They were after the Marconi factory".

He looked at the photo of a proud father sitting astride the Baughan, with his daughter seated on the tank. He explained his fascination with Baughans and the origins of his. She was quiet for a minute or two and then said "The phone's over there. You'd better call your wife, or she'll worry". He obeyed. He relayed that his wife would be about an hour and he'd go and wait with the bike. "There's more tea and you'll want to look in the workshop I'm sure".

The workshop was part of an elegant 'Motor House', the sort where you'd expect to find gas lighting and a Morgan three-wheeler. In fact, it was a 'Plus 8' and brightly lit with florescent lights. There was a bike under wraps in the far corner. "My Inter, haven't ridden it for years. Shame really. My daughter doesn't approve. Theresa Wallach was one of my heroes".

They went through to the workshop at the back. "My father kept all the parts of the bike. I think he hoped that someday the rest of it would turn up. You'd better take a look. It's all in those boxes under the bench". Silently, he looked in the boxes. An engine, gearbox and clutch, together with a magneto and carburettor occupied two of the boxes. The third had a petrol tank and oil tank and a pair of footrests. "Have you any idea what this lot is worth?" he asked. "Yes" she replied. "Every few years the insurance insists I get everything valued. It's never the same people and it's never pleasant. They know the cost of everything and the value of nothing. An awful lot of people must know by now what's here and what it's worth". He asked if she would consider selling any of the parts to which she replied, "Oh no, I couldn't possibly sell them".

He was amazed by what he had seen, but there was more to come. "There's all the paperwork in the drawer over here". There was the original receipt for the purchase, old tax discs and a buff logbook. He browsed through the papers and stopped when he came to the logbook. He searched back through the other papers and found the original receipt for the bike. He drew his breath in slowly and stood up. "Are you all right dear?" she asked. He turned round and said, "I think I may know what happened to the rest of your father's bike". "The frame number on my frame is the same as the number on this logbook".

"The bike certainly knew where to break down". She insisted he took all the parts and that she would take no money at all for them. She also suggested that he didn't try starting his bike until he'd got it back home and taken the timing cover off to check the magneto. "It would be rather embarrassing if it started when your wife got here".

"I'd love to see it when you've got it sorted if you get the chance. Ride it up the drive - feet up mind you - and stop outside the Motor House. When you stop the engine, give two toots on the horn. That will make

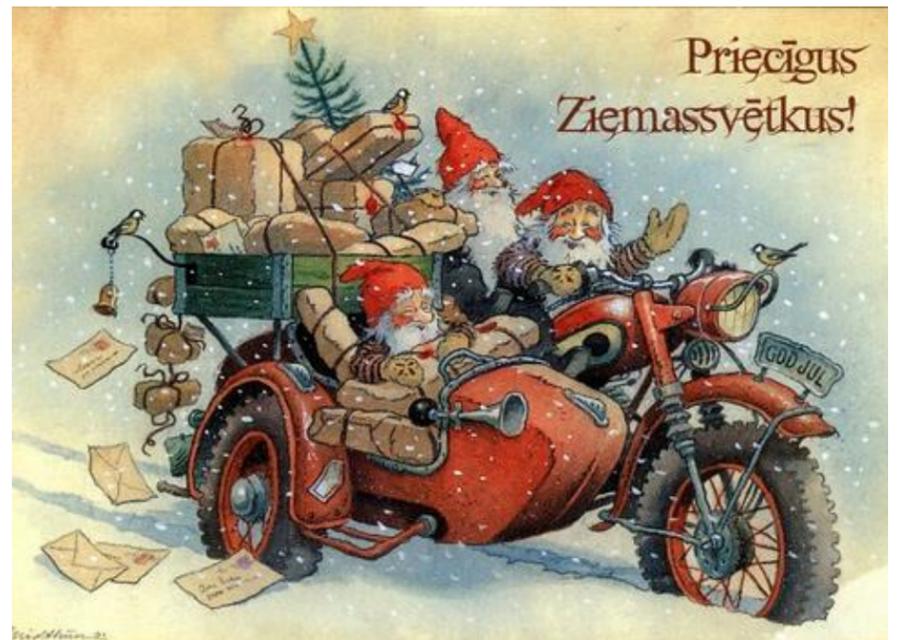
an old lady very happy. Mind you, if you do come here it will be interesting to see if it will start when you want to go home".

They loaded all the parts in the back of the car and lashed the bike to the trailer. It would take a while to check over all the parts that had been donated to make sure they'd not suffered from being stored for so long. There was one thing he just had to do though. Off came the timing cover from the engine which had seized and started this whole episode off. The magneto was quite free, no sign of shellacitis and so the cover went back on. Fuel on and tickle the carb, retard the ignition, ease it over compression on the valve lifter, let the kickstart back up and then a gentle push down on it. Naturally it started first kick.

It took nearly two years despite his best efforts to get the bike ready. It was a bright summer's day when he set out on his 'shakedown' route once again. He stopped a little way away from the house. It looked the same as when he'd first seen it. Into first, and onto the gravel drive. He was surprised at just how much throttle it took to keep the bike moving on the gravel which seemed to suck at the tyres. He made it to the front of the motor house, stopped the engine on the valve lifter and tooted the horn twice.

He thought he heard a faint voice, like the old lady's, call "Thank you" and then, much clearer, a child's delighted voice calling "Hello Daddy".

--oOo--



## Issue 45 caption contest - results



- 1) Now what do we do?
- 2) Do we really need to tuck our dresses into our knickers!! – but why?
- 3) Speedo says 20mph! – but we don't seem to be moving!!
- 4) All ready to film 'The Tour de France'!!!
- 5) When we cross the channel – do we turn left or right for Paris?!

All entries submitted by Mick Ward – blame him!



## Christmas Day at the workbench

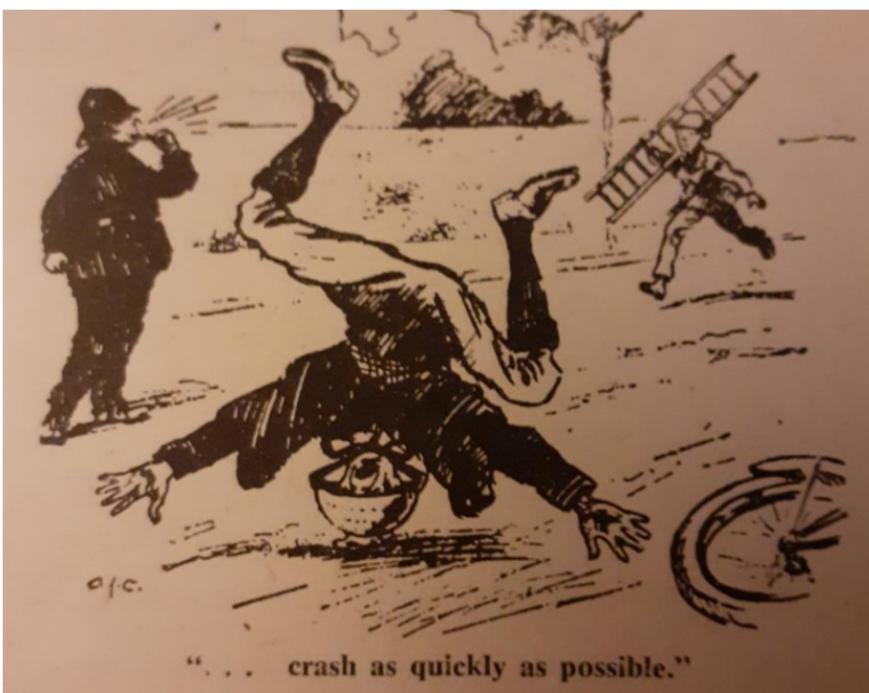
BY "PASSENAIRE" – MOTORCYCLING 1922



### A USEFUL HELMET

Obtain an ordinary colander from an oil-shop and stop up all the holes. (In the colander, not the oil-shop.) Line the inside with felt, indiarubber, blancmange, or similar material, and attach two broad ribbons to the handles. If you like to attach one ribbon and cut it in halves there is no objection.

It is now only necessary to tie the strings under the chin and crash as quickly as possible. After a little practice it will be found quite a simple matter to fall on the base of the colander, and, if necessary, remain in a vertical position until help arrives.



### A CAT SWINGER

The need for the above accessory is revealed in a letter from a correspondent, who complains that his garage is not big enough to swing a cat. This, as a matter of fact, is a fairly common lament from owners of suburban houses where machines have to be kept in the toolshed or the larder. For those anxious to perform this apparently somewhat purposeless operation the following hint will undoubtedly prove of service.

Obtain a bench drill, such as can be bought from any toolmaker for £10 or so, and fasten it securely to a bench. Drill four holes at intervals of 90 degrees in the large horizontal flywheel and attach by a similar number of bolts four pairs of nut-crackers. The cat, or cats, are now fastened securely by the caudal appendages in the *casse noisette* aforesaid, and if the handle be turned smartly the cats will be swung in the minimum of space, and the fact that four may be swung at once will appeal to those who have a large number of cats to be swung.

### TO PREVENT GENERATORS FREEZING

While it is fairly common knowledge that glycerine placed in an acetylene generator will make freezing unlikely, it is not widely known that nitro-glycerine inserted with a hammer will render it absolutely impossible.

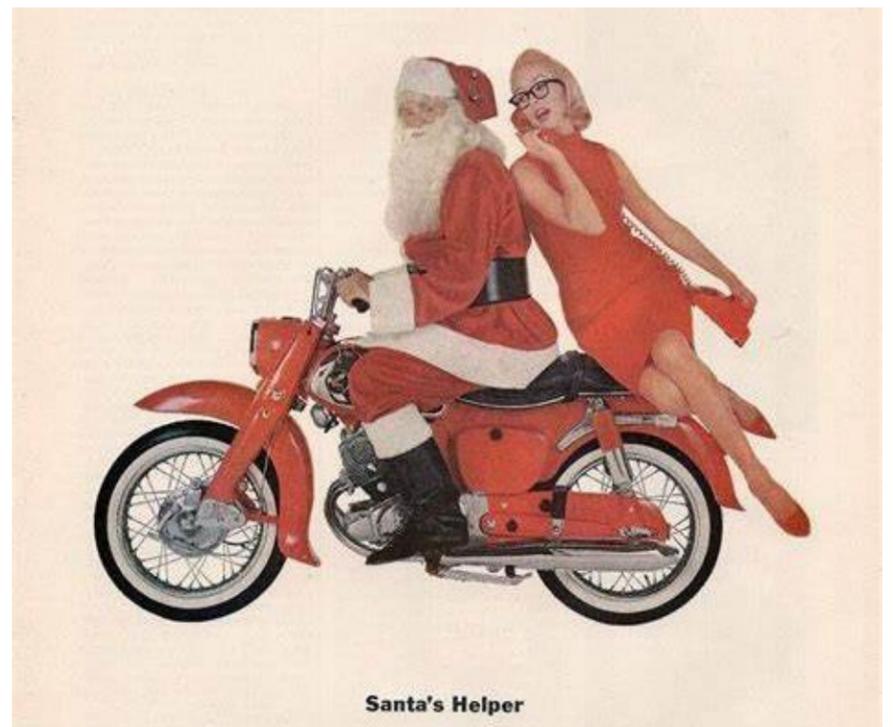


### EDITORIAL

Well, that's 2021 pretty much done and dusted – and not a year, I think, we would wish to repeat in a hurry.

Huge thanks once again to Will, without whom this newsletter would just be a rather dull news-sheet. Thanks also to Kerry and Mick for their contributions to this issue. I may have mentioned this before, but it would be great to receive a few more articles. You did it before, you can do it again.

And finally, the management and all the staff at VMCC Beds News wish you and your loved ones a happy and safe Christmas and New Year.



## *The Westminster Carol*

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**FROM CHRISTMAS 1956 AS PETROL RATIONING CAME IN**

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God rest you new pedestrians, let nothing you entice  
To squander fuel at Christmas time regardless of the price.  
Your ration has to last four months so follow my advice;  
Don't go riding for pleasure or for joy, pleasure or joy,  
Don't go riding for pleasure or joy.