

BEDS VMCC NEWS

STILL KEEPING YOU INFORMED



Ben Kingham at the Goodwood Revival – see “Otherwise occupied” inside

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Upcoming Events

INFORMAL RUN – THURS, 6TH OCTOBER, SHEFFORD MEMORIAL HALL, 10.15 FOR 10.30AM



“I think we lost track of time. Our wives put a missing persons report out on us, and half the state is looking for us.”

Don's excellent midweek run season has closed but there will be informal runs through the autumn and winter, weather permitting, for those foolish enough to want to keep riding in the cooler weather. "Informal" means no route sheet and a route that will be decided on the day – probably heading to a suitable café. In the past, we have had typically five or six riders and, with this number, it's generally possible to keep the group together using a simple follow-the-leader approach. The start point may vary month-to-month but for the first one we'll use the Memorial Hall.

CLUB NIGHT – THURS, 13TH OCTOBER, 7.00 FOR 7.30PM, SHEFFORD MEMORIAL HALL



A slightly unusual one – we have Malcolm Bates coming to talk to us about Shelvoke, and more. For those who, like me, had never heard of them, this is what Wikipedia has to say:

“Shelvoke and Drewry was a Letchworth, Hertfordshire manufacturer of special purpose commercial vehicles. It was best known for its innovative waste collection vehicles that were the preferred choice of municipal authorities in the UK together with their gully emptiers, cesspool cleaning vehicles and street watering and washing vehicles.”

MIDWEEK LUNCH – THURS, 20TH OCTOBER, NOON-ISH

No run beforehand but you can always come the long way to join us at the Cross Keys in Pulloxhill. It was very good the last time we went there.

Future dates:

- Nov 17th Scald End Farm, Thurleigh.
- Dec 15th Toby Carvery, Goldington Road, Bedford.

AUTUMN GOLD RUN – SATURDAY, 22ND OCTOBER, 10.15 FOR 10.30AM



Norm Lorton writes:

“The Bedfordshire VMCC Annual Autumn Gold Run will be held on Saturday, 22nd October. It will cover exactly 70 miles in a broad anti-clockwise sweep around the town of Bedford, starting at Shefford Memorial Hall at 10:30 a.m. proceeding to Cardington, Roxton and Keysoe before a well-deserved coffee and breakfast stop halfway at Scald End Farm. The route then continues via Carlton, Cranfield and Millbrook to finish at The Barns, Cardington around 2:30 p.m. for yet more enjoyable food.”

BREAKFAST MEET – SUNDAY, OCTOBER 30TH, 10AM

This month we are visiting the Danish Camp, Willington who do an excellent tradition full English.

Future dates:

- November 27th - Scald End Farm, Thurleigh.
- December 25th – no breakfast meet (Christmas Day)

September event reports

CLUB NIGHT – HOO'S THE FASTEST



The grounds at Luton Hoo played host to a series of hill-climbs and speed trials between 1908 and 1923. The first two years were solely for cars but after the collapse of the Luton & South Beds Automobile Club, later events were for bikes. Now largely forgotten, contemporary reports suggest they were quite major events in the motorcycle sporting calendar, and received a lot of praise for the way they were organised

A fairly short course, and not very steep - but a sharpish bend in the pre-WW I course provided plenty of thrills and spills for some of the top riders of the day. When activities returned after the war, they used a different, straighter and flatter course resulting in some pretty amazing speeds for the time. Famous riders over the years included Freddie Barnes, Bert Le Vack, Frank "Pa" Applebee, George Dance, Howard R Davies and Victor Horsman. The final meeting, in 1923, was almost spoiled by a heavy downpour but they eventually managed to squeeze in all the events apart from the 500cc solos because most of the riders seemed to have already got wet enough and had cleared off home. Speeds obviously suffered and had it been dry Alchin, on a Douglas, was expected to have topped the ton over the half-kilometre course.

If you missed the talk but would like to learn more, I'm afraid you'll have to wait until my book is published - or written at least. Also, see the article "The Great Automobile Fete" later in the newsletter.

MIDWEEK RUN & LUNCH – STMA TO THE SUPER SAUSAGE



Yes, it is rather pretty, isn't it? Everyone else seems more interested in something Don is saying.

The last of Don's runs for this year took us through some of the roads less well travelled in the North of the county, reminding us of what a lovely county we have. I didn't make a note, but I think there were seven of us, led by Don himself, clearing the way with his Hinckley Triumph outfit. Crossing over to Potterspurty in neighbouring Northamptonshire, we enjoyed lunch at the ever-popular Super Sausage café, voted "Britain's Best Café in both 2016 and 2017". Luckily, on a weekday it's not quite as crowded as it can get most weekends when the weather is favourable. The closure of nearby Jack's Hill café probably hasn't helped.

A huge thank you to Don for his wonderful series of midweek runs that so many of us have enjoyed over the summer. I'm pleased to say that he will be continuing the tradition next year. For me, it was worth retiring, just to be able to take part.



A rather "trick" Velo that joined our bikes at the Super Sausage

Vintage Motorcycling: Its role in the Triumph of Good Over Evil

MARIO COSTA-SA

The VMCC have been invited to participate in the filming of the role of a vintage motorcycle in the Chiltern – Oxford AONB next month

More information is here which will also be in the Journal. https://thvmcc-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/g/personal/mario_vmcc_net/EfH7EBLhkXFLkIVc5FIMCOsBf2UI3R_cT4ftiZ7YIerMyA?e=4y18w9

A private screening for the VMCC of the first Episode of this series will be held at on Thursday 6th October at 7pm and Bennets Lodge, (Royal British Legion) 21 Leyton Rd, Harpenden, AL5 2HU.

There is no admission charge for VMCC members. A voluntary collection will be taken.

RSVP to me (mario@vmcc.net) or use the link here so I can manage numbers:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/vintage-motorcycling-triumph-of-good-over-evil-tickets-421276237567>

More information:

As part of the work that the VMCC have performed over 75 years in promote the story of vintage motor cycling, we have yet to tell the tale of its acknowledged role in the triumph of Good over Evil.

The First World War laid waste to a continent and permanently altered the political and religious landscape of the West. For a generation of men and women, it brought the end of innocence—and the end of faith. Yet for J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis, the Great War deepened their spiritual quest. Both men served as soldiers on the Western Front, survived the trenches, and used the experience of that conflict to ignite their Christian imagination. Had there been no Great War, there would have been no Hobbit, no Lord of the Rings, no Narnia, and perhaps no conversion to Christianity by C. S. Lewis.

Unlike a generation of young writers who lost faith in the God, Tolkien and Lewis produced epic stories infused with the themes of guilt and grace, sorrow and consolation. Giving an unabashedly Christian vision of hope in a world tortured by doubt and disillusionment, the two writers created works that changed the course of literature and shaped the faith of millions. This is the first film to explore their work in light of the spiritual crisis sparked by the conflict.

The forthcoming documentary film series, "A Hobbit, a Wardrobe, and a Great War," involves the untold story of how a vintage motorcycle played a key role in the life of C.S. Lewis and, ultimately, in his great friend, J.R.R. Tolkien. The film explores the friendship between Lewis and Tolkien as they endured two world wars, while making outstanding contributions to literature and the renewal of culture.



Could this be the 1925 Norton outfit that led to CS Lewis' conversion?

As the world's largest collective of vintage motorcycle owners and machines, the VMCC's role will be to produce suitable outfits and experienced riders and possibly cast for the production of a critical moment in the film, which will be in the Oxford and the Chiltern area. Many thanks to Directors Brian Southam and Steve Allen for their role in spotting the film opportunity and especially to James Hewing, CEO of the National Motorcycle Museum for pointing the production team towards the VMCC to help with this production.

The documentary is being produced by Eastgate Creative, a non-profit film production company. The film is being funded by grants, private contributions from thousands of individual donors, and other benefactors. There is no financial exposure to the Club.

The Club's involvement in this is directly linked to our Aims and Objectives of conserving Vintage Motorcycling. As well as displaying our machines and riders, it demonstrates the value of the information held in the Library and the expertise and research from our volunteers, including Pat Robotham and Annice Collett. A trailer for the film can be found at <http://hobbitwardrobe.com/>

Rod Atkins

LYNNE HAWKINS



Message of thanks from Rod Atkins' daughter:

I would like to convey my heartfelt gratitude to those of you who took part in the motorcycle cortège and guard of honour at the celebration of Dad's life last month.

I wasn't sure how many of you would turn up on the day, but I needn't have worried as there were 38 riders in total from the VMCC and Oakley MCC!

So many people have commented on what a very special sight it was to see you all following Dad on his final journey around the village and past his house. It certainly made a difficult day more bearable for me and my family, and I know he had the very best send off that he so rightly deserved. He would have loved it.

I would also like to thank Norman Lawton for coordinating the cortège arrangements and also to Bryan Marsh for putting together the lovely tribute to Dad in your previous newsletter. I really enjoyed reading your memories of Dad and seeing the photos, most of which I hadn't seen before.

Sadly, Dad's beloved Vincent Comet will be seeking a new home soon and I would much prefer it goes to someone who will cherish and enjoy riding it as much as Dad did, so if anyone may be interested I can be contacted on 07743020102.

Thank you again and best wishes to you all, Lynne.

Lynne also sent the accompanying photographs:



Otherwise occupied

TIM KINGHAM

The reason I have missed most of the runs and events of the section this year is shown below.

My son Ben and Josh Brooks at the Goodwood Revival winner of Sunday race, 2nd overall and lap record.

All those hours in the workshop paid off - Ben was awarded rider of the meeting.



Our cover picture, showing Ben with winner's wreath and congratulatory cigar



Vintage Box

WILL CURRY

This all started with the clutch dragging a little, enough to make the change from neutral to first gear reminiscent of that first gearchange of the day with a Triumph twin and just as loud.

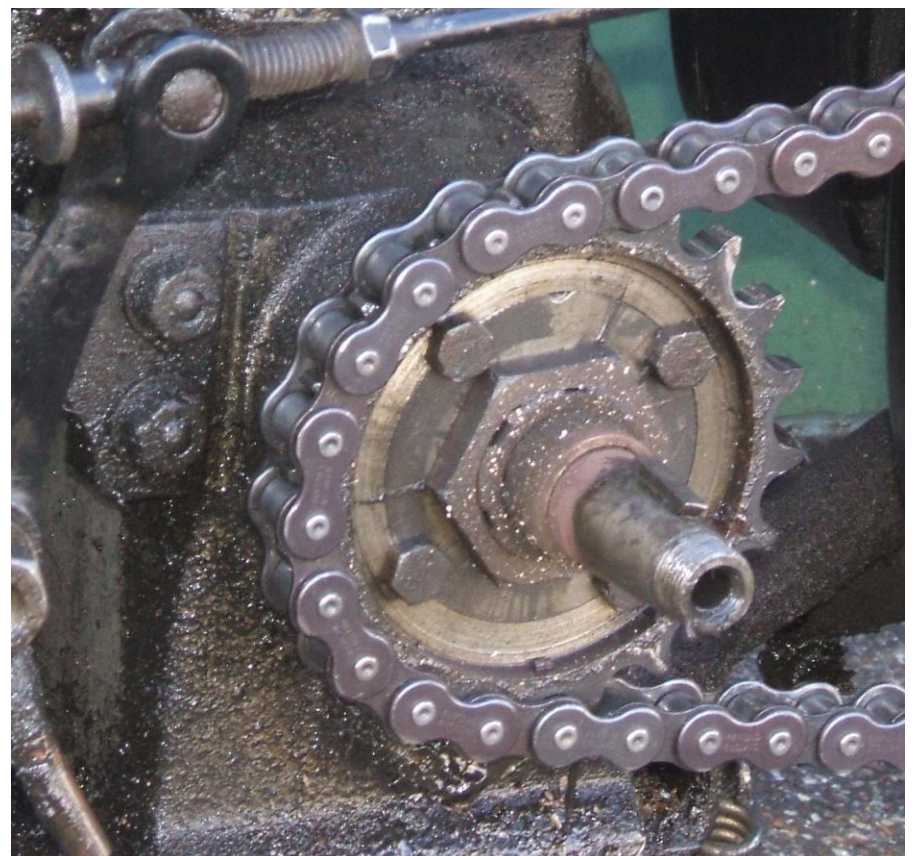
Access to the clutch is simple. There is a 'bowler hat' held with four screws which covers the clutch, a dry, five-spring Burman. This clutch is quite sensitive to the adjustment of those five springs. a quarter of a turn on one or two of them is often enough to get the pressure plate lifting squarely again. The whole job is usually comfortably finished within half an hour.



Primary chain guard with the clutch cover - 'bowler hat' - behind the footrest

This time it has taken months.

There was a lot of up and down movement on the clutch, much more than the last time I looked. Worse, the back of the clutch and the front of the back sprocket were decorated with flecks of goldy metal. It was obvious that the sleeve gear bearing was breaking up. I rather suspect that trying to ride much further would have been catastrophic.



Debris from the sleeve gear bearing

This bearing is a bronze sleeve which presses into the sleeve gear and should be lubricated by the grease in the gearbox. This bush is available from the Ariel Owners' Club spares scheme and so one was purchased. To get the bush out requires removing the sleeve gear from the box and, while this can be done with the box still in place, reassembling the box is much less difficult if the box is on its end.

The gearbox is mounted with four studs onto a plate welded across the bottom tubes of the frame. The top of the gearbox is steadied with a bracket which bolts to the saddle tube. It's getting to this bolt which makes the job tedious.

My arthritic knees make low-level spannering uncomfortable and while there are enough pennies in the jar to invest in a bike lift there isn't enough room to put one. I know what the answer is, but I've had some of the junk for decades and something might yet come in useful.

The first challenge in stripping out a Burman 'Q' gearbox is to get the clutch hub off the taper on the mainshaft. This isn't always a problem, for some people the challenge is keeping it on. I removed the footrest and the brake pedal and then the chainguard which gave me access to the primary chain. While its exterior was well greased the pins on the spring link were dry. Once off and washed the chain was indeed worn to a point where even I would not feel happy putting it back so it's time to hunt for a replacement.

The clutch springs undid, the plates came out and the nut holding the hub to the mainshaft undid without drama. The next task was to pull the hub off its taper on the mainshaft. I have a 3-jaw puller I had to buy to replace the 2-jaw puller I broke the first time I had to pull the hub off not long after I first acquired the bike many years ago. The 3-jaw puller works well and did so again this time. It does seem to need more hands than I have to get it into place. Once in place though it shifted the hub with only a moderate fight.

Getting the gearbox out of the bike went reasonably well. There was no obvious sign of cracks in the plate that the gearbox sits on. So far, so good.

I don't remember ever having had one of these boxes to bits. I do have copies of the Burman manual and parts list for the box so what could possibly go wrong?

It was while stripping the gearbox down to get the sleeve gear out that things began to go wrong although I didn't realise it at the time. With the sleeve gear out, it was a pitched battle to get the remains of the old bush out. I could move the bush only about half an inch at a time and then the exposed part had to be cut off. As the bush is some three inches long and almost impossible to cut in the end, I crushed the exposed end in the vice and crumbled it off as I went. It still took a very long time. This did not bode well for fitting the new bush.



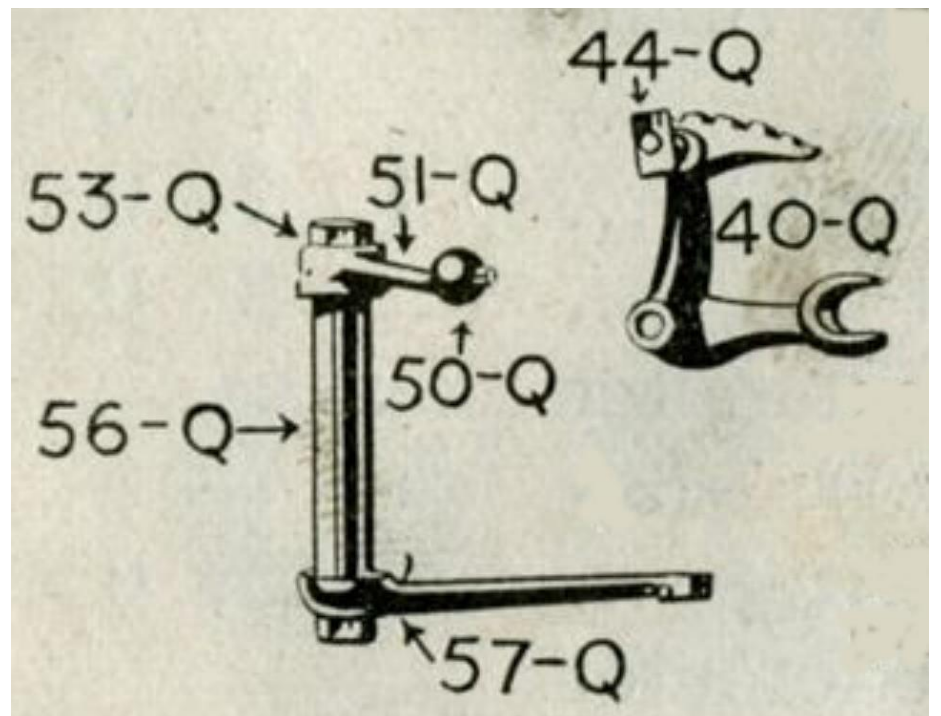
At the top is the replacement bush. What's left isn't much good as a pattern

The inside of the old bush was full of green dirt and the grease scroll was jammed solid with it too. No wonder it eventually gave up - drier than a Welsh Sunday.

With everything clean I tried the new bush. It dropped right through, but I did catch it before it hit the workshop carpet. Measuring with a vernier suggested that it was just over 1" in diameter while the sleeve gear was some four thou bigger. An oversized bush and loctite did the trick and I reamed this one to give a generous clearance to the mainshaft.

These gearboxes are lubricated with soft grease, and it was while cleaning this out of the main case I found an aluminium block - now identified as 'Operating block 44-Q' - which turned out to be part of the selector mechanism. It must have been late when I did this as anybody more on the ball would have wondered what else might have fallen into the grease. I however carried on spooning out the grease.

When I reassembled the gearbox, it did strike me as odd the way the parallel end of the gear change arm slotted into the spherical end of the cam arm. With everything together and back in the bike there seemed to be rather more play in the gearchange than I remembered, and it was a lot trickier to get the get the gearchange rod adjusted too. However, it changed gear much better than previously and seemed a lot quieter as well.



You're looking for '50-Q'

It was only while looking at the Burman parts list for something completely different that I noticed 'Trunion, ball 50-Q'. There followed a moment of enlightenment and a much longer period of self-annoyance. Trunion, ball 50-Q must have made good its escape as I struggled to remove the end cover from the gearbox. I didn't hear anything fall and there was nothing in the carpet so it must have fallen inwards and into the soft grease at the bottom.



The hiding-place of Trunion, ball 50-Q. Significantly less enticing than a haystack but not as sharp as a needle.

Luckily, the unemptied rubbish bag was still in the garage. It took some time to search through the various layers to reach the soft grease from the gearbox, helpfully contained in paper towels purchased specially for the job. Eventually I found the trunion embedded in a large dollop of soft grease, somewhat to my surprise and definitely to my considerable relief. I suspect that Trunion, ball 50-Q is as readily available as the proverbial hens' teeth.



The wayward item, now found.

That left the challenge of replacing it. There is a large access cover on the top of Burman model Q gearboxes. The deformed battery tray on my Ariel was just enough to prevent the cover lifting clear of its studs. So the box had to come out. This isn't quite as horrible as with later Ariels as the box is mounted on four studs which pass through a plate on the bottom of the frame rails. There are no engine plates at the back to get in the way. Better yet, the clutch doesn't have to come off either - there isn't an inner chaincase to get in the way.

Even with the access cover off there wasn't enough room to reinstall the trunnion, so the end had to come off the gearbox case again. The clever part was to ensure that the 'Operating block 44-Q' doesn't take the opportunity to abandon ship again. In the end I took the box out again. The task was easier than before as everything had been cleaned already and the appropriate tools were handily close to the top of the toolbox.



Not much to see really. The hole in the trunnion fits over the end of the arm on the left and the trunnion fits into the spherical end of the arm on the right.

Once reassembled, the gearchange was much easier to adjust and just as quiet and effective.

Sand and Motorcycles

BRYAN MARSH

The popular Sand & Motorcycles event was welcomed back into the local motorcycle calendar by some 600 motorcycles and scooters after the mantle was taken up by Mario, VMCC National Chairman. The continued success is possibly the result of the format developed over the years by Neil Cairns -essentially a simple free-to-enter gathering in a large open park with a band, burger and ice-cream vans. This seems to

attract the most eclectic mix of machines one could imagine – where else would you see a classic Lambretta parked next to a Harley, next to a flat-tank Norton and a 70s Kawasaki triple, alongside brand-new Yamahas, KTMs and the like. The pictures below certainly don't reflect the variety of machinery on display but is a simple personal indulgence into some of the bikes that caught my eye. Apologies to the scooter riders who were there in surprising abundance and to the Vintage Japanese Motorcycle Club with their colourful display of oriental delights, particularly from the 70s.



One of just a hundred – the beautiful Wankel-engined Norton Classic



BSA 650 Thunderbolt



An early BSA Rocket 3 – unpopular styling in its day, less so now



“Widow-maker” Kawasaki two-stroke triple – here in 500cc guise but 400cc and 750cc models were also present.



BSA 250 “Woodsmen” – the high level exhaust indicates a US model but, apparently, only about ten were ever made so, if this one is genuine, it’s exceedingly rare.



Matchless-Norton Hybrid



You wait hours for a Triton, then three show up together...



Not sure if that’s the actual registration number



Tony Garner (ex-Rod Ward Motorcycles, Luton) brought his BSA 650 Lightning



The ex-Merv Kendall Italian “Frera” puzzled many with no maker’s badge on the tank

Mario wants to continue his involvement but is looking for help in developing and organising it for next year. There are plans to include an autojumble, to have judging of the machinery, and avoid a clash with the Kop Hill Climb weekend. If this is something you think you would like to get involved in, please let me know and I’ll pass on your interest to Mario.

The 1922 South Midland Trial



H Reyre makes a 2nd gear clean climb of Luton's Bradgers Hill on his 499cc Ariel. In fact, the hill troubled none of the competitors and was described by *The Motor Cycle* as "hardly worthy of observation", unlike a slippery grass track near Houghton Regis which claimed quite a few victims, some others remaining upright "more by luck than skill".



One of the best climbs of Alms Hill, the "Henley Terror" with its maximum gradient of 1 in 3 and surface strewn with wet leaves, was made by the only lady competitor, Miss Bates, on her 499cc Triumph. Miss Bates was reported to have "toured up, without a sign of wavering or anxiety, what was now a positive avenue of stationary machines awaiting outside assistance. Hers was a faultless climb."

The Great Automobile Fete

LEIGHTON BUZZARD OBSERVER AND LINSLADE GAZETTE - TUESDAY 19 AUGUST 1902

Subsequent to my talk on the events at Luton Hoo, I found this rather amusing article that puts a different slant on the event held to celebrate the coronation of Edward VII:

[The Great Automobile Fete] at Luton on Coronation Day was a dismal failure. The affair had been hurriedly arranged and the committee seems to have forgotten their most important duty, viz., to ensure that the motor cars should be there. Mr. E. W. Hart, of Luton, is a member of the Automobile Club, and it was taken for granted he would see the thing through all right, but it happened that the members had had a pretty busy week at Welbeck Abbey, and Dashwood Hill, it really cannot be considered at all surprising that on Coronation Day they should turn in other directions than Luton Hoo for their pleasures. Speed trials were announced, but on the face of it, these were hoped for more for the entertainment of the Luton crowd than as a serious test of the speed of the machines, because the course over the private road at Luton Hoo could not by any means be considered an ideal one for racing. Not one-tenth. Cars to the value of over £100,000 it was expected would be on view, including several brought over specially from the Continent, and

many other types representing British industry. As a matter of fact, and putting tip-top value on the motor cycles which Luton people took to the Park, there were not £10,000 worth. With the exception of one all the motor cars there were locally owned. Mr. J. W. Stocks, of former cycling fame, attended on a speedy looking car evidently built for racing purposes, and the only one of the many of renowned foreign manufacture which were expected was a powerful Darracq, said to have been fourth in the great Paris to Vienna race, which is owned by Mr. Hart. This, driven by a Frenchman, certainly provided some amount of interest, and astonished the people by the great speed to which it could be put, whilst the driver demonstrated his skill in controlling it again and again. Sharp corners were turned with wonderful precision the car answering with exactness of movement to the slightest turn of the wheel. Apart from these few runs round the corners there was nothing to interest the two thousand people who paid for admission, for the committee having neglected to rope off the sports course it was an impossibility to run off the various foot races and cycling events which it had been intended to do. There was one redeeming feature about the whole affair which was that the proceeds were to go to the Hospital Extension Fund, but it subsequently transpires that it is shorn of even this consolation the committee have managed to lose money instead of making it.

EDITORIAL

As Summer turns to Autumn and the lining goes back into riding jackets, we still have the Autumn Gold Run to look forward to and, with such a dry summer, the autumn colours should be spectacular this year. Please note that, as last year, this is on a Saturday. This worked well last year. Many thanks to Norm Lorton for organising this once again.

I'm delighted to report that the section committee has been hard at work and already has a full programme for next year. Details nearer the time. Many thanks to our contributors this month – Lynne, Mario, Tim and Will. As always, it would be good to get a few more written articles – please submit them to me on bryan.marsh@btinternet.com.

Bryan

