

# BEDS VMCC NEWS

STILL KEEPING YOU INFORMED

# MERRY CHRISTMAS



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Thank Heavens it's warmed up a bit and finally melted the compacted snow from the estate roads where I live which kept me off my bikes for a whole ten days. Almost enough to make me sell up and buy a house on a road that gets gritted.

Well, Christmas is almost upon us, not that I get particularly excited about it these days – especially as it now seems to start in October and finish on Boxing Day. Call me Scrooge if you will, but the sooner it's over the better and we can look forward to New Year's Day and Vintage Stony in Stony Stratford or the gathering in Barrington (between Royston and Cambridge). Fingers crossed for good weather. No Boxing Day meet for us this year as we were unable to find anywhere that would be open in the morning – all expecting to be too hungover, I presume.

Many thanks to our contributors this month – Don, Kerry and Will. Please submit any contributions to me on [bryan.marsh@btinternet.com](mailto:bryan.marsh@btinternet.com), or even hand them to me, written long-hand if you wish, at any of our events.

Here's hoping 2023 will be a great vintage motorcycling year for us all!

Bryan

***Beds Section News***  
***Upcoming Events***

**BREAKFAST MEET – SUNDAY, 25<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER**



Only kidding – this happens to be Christmas Day and, as much as you might like to escape the melee and visiting relatives at home, sadly there's nowhere open for us to go.

**INFORMAL RUN – THURSDAY, 5TH JANUARY, SHEFFORD MEMORIAL HALL (STMA), 10.15 FOR 10.30AM**

Hopefully we won't get another really cold snap so, if it's not icy, snowing or absolutely lashing it down, we'll head out for a quick spin to a suitable café somewhere not too far from home, for a warming cuppa and a bite to eat. Possibly try the Rufus Centre.

“Informal” means no route sheet - just follow-my-leader - and a distance to suit the weather and the inclination of those showing up.

**CLUB NIGHT – A CHAT WITH JOHN BULL ABOUT TRIALS & TRIALS BIKES - THURS, 12<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY, SHEFFORD MEMORIAL HALL, 7.30 FOR 8.00PM**

Not a formal presentation, per se, but a chance to ask questions and get a good conversation going.

**MIDWEEK LUNCH – THURS, 19<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY, FLITVALE GARDEN CENTRE, WESTONING, NOON**

A new venue for us, but one that comes highly recommended. It's on a corner of the road (A5120) between Flitwick and Westoning.

See the 2023 programme on the last page for future dates and venues.

**BREAKFAST MEET – SUNDAY, 29<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY, MAYPOLE FARM, KEMPSTON, 10AM**

We return to Maypole Farm (though not really a farm, and no maypole either) for our first breakfast meet of the year. They have a help-yourself buffet, or you can order from the menu. Hopefully, the egg shortage they suffered at our previous visit will have ended by then.

See the 2023 programme on the last page for future dates and venues.

*December event reports*

**INFORMAL RUN – THE DAIRY CAFÉ, THORNCOTE GREEN**

Unusually, Kawasaki ruled the day – numbering two, against one BSA and, of course, one Triumph – as we gathered on a cold and foggy Thursday morning. I wasn't sure whether anyone else would be foolish enough to want to go for a run on a day like that – but there we were, the four of us, gathered in the Memorial Hall car park, so off we went. We'd agreed that a short-ish route of about 25 miles was far enough on such a day, and that would have been the reality had I been able to read a map properly when planning it. A premature left turn in Clifton took us on a rather long detour to get to Langford, via Stanford. OK, I'll pretend that was the intention, but it was made worse by the “road closed” preventing us cutting through Broom, meaning we had to go up to Upper Caldecote before heading back past Jordans Mill to Langford.



**The seemingly interminable wait for a train**

Out through Dunton, Eyeworth and Wreslingworth, the fog lingered, and fingers were starting to get cold as we passed Cockayne Hatley (home to the graves of the little girl and her father who were the

inspiration for the characters Wendy and Long John Silver in JM Barrie's Peter Pan). On through the edge of Potton to Everton and down Tempsford Hill to the notorious level crossing on the East Coast Main Line, though apparently not as notorious as the one a little further north which is proposed to be replaced by a bridge. I swear they close the crossing gates as soon as the trains leave Kings Cross!

After the usual frustratingly long wait, two trains passed and, hooray, we were free to go down to Blunham, ignoring the series of "Road Closed" signs in the hope that the closure would be beyond the Moggerhanger turn. Alas, no. The closure was right at the turn so we diverted into a side road to have a look at the map and see if was possible to find a way to avoid the signposted diversion down the A1 dual-carriageway. The map seemed to show where we were as a no through road, but we followed it anyway and somehow ended up on the Moggerhanger road, just the other side of the road works; crisis averted.

From thereon it was plain sailing through Moggerhanger to Thorncote Green where our intended destination was the Pallet Café, which I thought was on Franklin's Farm. But no, the sign at the farm said "Dairy Café" – what the heck, it's a café, it'll do - so we pulled into what turned out to be a very pleasant and, thankfully, warm place to have lunch, a good chat and disperse. Another excellent winter ride in great company.



Time for a bite to eat and a chance for the fingers to thaw out

## CLUB NIGHT – AUCTION & CHRISTMAS "DO"

With only a day to go, things didn't bode well – no Martin in the kitchen, no Brent to do the auctioneering, no Bob to keep track of the monies and no Don who usually steps in to help. We were left with little choice but to cancel the usual hot food and sandwiches. But, thankfully, it all came together on the day with Neil Cairns generously donating several boxes of mince pies, Will standing in as accountant, myself wielding the gavel, Sam press-ganged into wearing the obligatory brown warehouse coat, Nige handing out the tickets to the lucky buyers, and not forgetting Chris with the raffle.



The "stand-in" team in mid flight

Maybe a few too many of those general classic bike books, the type everyone gets given for Christmas by well-meaning relatives – most of

which seemed to come home with me for a pound a pop – but, otherwise, there was the usual eclectic mix of auction lots, including some real bargains, almost all of which found a new home. Until next year, that is, when they might well re-appear.



Kerry's haul – "Now what do I do with it all?," he says "Bring it all back next year and learn to keep my hands in my pockets!" But he was very happy to win a bottle of fine brandy in the raffle

Many thanks to everyone who donated items and to everyone who bought them. It all adds up and we managed to raise an impressive £320 to be split evenly between a diabetes charity, that I can never remember the name, and SERV - the Herts & Beds Blood bikes.

## MIDWEEK LUNCH – TOBY CARVERY, GOLDINGTON RD, BEDFORD

No report, I'm afraid. I couldn't get the bike out because of the snow and ice and didn't fancy digging out and de-icing the car. Sorry.

## The Xmas Page Three Girls



A couple of very pretty Triumph X75 Hurricanes, suitable adorned. Presumably the smug look on the blond means she's just found out how much they're worth these days.



## The Prince of Dunstable – Pt 2

DON MCKEAND

While the remains of the two Princes languished in the garage, our family circumstances evolved. The Morris Minor was exchanged for a newer second-hand Ford Escort van, and two children were now on the scene. When the children were big enough, two car seats from the scrap yard were bolted onto the cargo floor and children's seats strapped on to them. This meant that when we went to REOC rallies as a family, there was just enough room to fit a small motorcycle in the back with its front wheel between the children's seats. Something like a Royal Enfield Prince!

By this time, I had acquired a workshop manual and a number of illustrated parts books, and I now knew that the Prince was the last of a line of post-war utility two-strokes with their origin in the 1951 125cc Model RE2. This had been designed as a replacement for the wartime Model RE, often known as the Flying Flea. The engine and gearbox unit was completely new for 1951 and came in a rigid frame with very basic tele forks. Over the years this evolved into the Ensign with the engine enlarged to 150cc with a spring frame which looked like a plunger system but was actually an undamped swinging arm. By the time the Prince came along the engine/gearbox was virtually unchanged from the 1951 version, but it now had a Miller rectified lighting system and a conventional sprung frame with damper units although the front forks were little changed with no damping.

Between the two bikes I had all the correct tinware with one exception – the front part of the rear chain guard. With the aid of the parts-book I made up what looked like the missing item in Plasticene which was used as a mould to make a fibreglass “replica”. Both engines were in good condition and the only problem was a broken spring-post in one of the forks, which was brazed up by Steve Linsdell if I remember correctly. A clean up and re-spray of the mudguards and tank with a rattle can in Cherry Red and it started! It had been a remarkably easy renovation and the unused parts were traded for a new tyre for one of my other bikes.

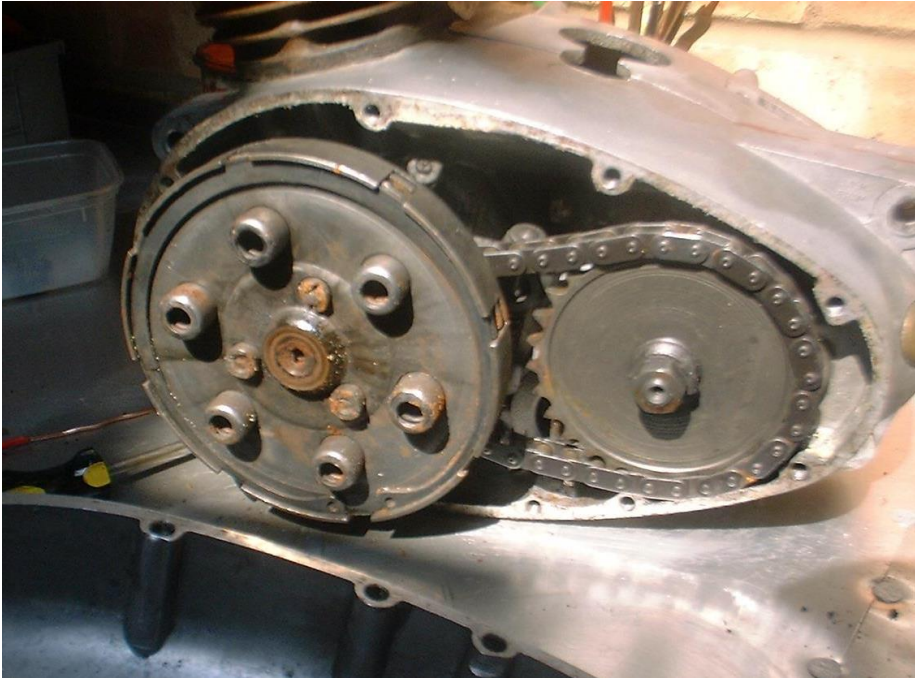


The Prince then became my local runabout, but I also took it on longer runs - on one occasion to the Forest of Dean and another up to Founders Day, where it demonstrated that fun characteristic of two-strokes – running backwards. It happened on the A5 at the Hockliffe traffic lights where the engine faltered and then picked up again only to propel me backwards, fortunately without incident as there was no other traffic about that early on a Sunday morning. I even ventured into London traffic with it, taking a trip down to the mecca of Enfield parts known as Gander and Gray in Manor Park. It was there that it had the only episode of unreliability. The running had been getting very erratic and down on power and I wondered if there was a leak at the cylinder head joint, so I took the cylinder head off on Gander & Gray's forecourt only to find that all was well, but that the plate holding the contact breakers had worked loose and just needed a tweak with a screwdriver. On reassembling the engine, one of the cylinder studs snapped, but as I was outside an Enfield parts dealer, a new one was purchased and refitted with the loan of a torque wrench from Jack Gray himself.

As “something for dad to ride at rallies” it travelled the length and breadth of the country to club camping events in the back of the Escort van. Sadly the van was stolen from a car park in Dunstable after several years of rallies, so the main raison d'être of the Prince disappeared as the replacement was an old Viva. The Prince was advertised cheaply in the REOC magazine in the hope that another club member would have a bit of fun with it. This brought a rapid response from someone who asked if it had an MoT. When the answer was in the affirmative he declared it was just what he was looking for, that a cheque would be in the post and a friend would pick it up. The cheque arrived and cleared OK and the friend arrived with a Luton box Transit. When he opened the back it was already full of Francis Barnetts, Excelsiors, Bantams and the like, and the Prince was picked up and literally thrown into the pile. It had been bought by a number plate dealer who sold the registration on for about 20 times what he paid me. I did see what little remained of my bike at an auto jumble many years later. Ah well!



Having the Prince and a 150cc Bantam roadworthy at the same time enabled direct comparisons to be made. To be honest, there was not much to choose between them. They both had three speed gearboxes which meant that on steep hills you were constantly changing between second, when the engine was struggling to cope, and first which meant the engine was screaming, or between top and second gear on long hills. The Bantam had a better clutch which was multi-plate, whereas the Prince had a large clutch with only a couple of plates mounted on the end of the crankshaft to give a bit of flywheel effect. It was operated by a quick-thread device in the engine casing and the operation can only be described as crunchy. However, the gear change return spring on the Bantam was buried deep within the gearbox and replacing it meant the engine out for a complete engine and gearbox strip which I had to do a couple of times, but the Prince had a figure of eight spring, easily accessible under the right hand engine cover, although I never needed to replace it. Bantam parts were much easier to source, but on the other hand if you did find parts for these bikes at an auto-jumble they were often very cheap as the stall holder usually had no idea what they were from.



Little did I know that Prince ownership was to herald a life-long affliction with the post war Enfield two-strokes. On the strength of that experience, I became the REOC two-stroke specialist and not long after the Prince had departed I was told of an RE2 in Hitchin. This was bought, refurbished and used for a number of years in various events, including the very first Albert Brown Run. This was sold on, only for another to come my way, but although I had got it running and nearly completed, I never got to ride it as a friend bought it to use on the low power coast-to-coast run (which he did successfully).

And guess what I was given in 2021 as a lock-down project? The partial remains of another RE2!



## *Bleeding hydraulic disc brakes*

**WILL CURRY**

I've always had sidecars both ancient and modern. They are great fun to ride and not only make fun people carriers. I've moved things with the sidecar that just won't go in the car - doors, sheets and planks of wood - and things that aren't allowed in the car - motorcycle frames and engines, bags of workshop rubbish, all sorts and very convenient.

The current sidecar is a Jawa 350 twin with a Velorex sidecar. It started life as an outfit and the sidecar has a proper swinging arm suspension, not a trailer unit, and its wheel is braked as well. We've had several of these Jawas and apart from sometimes iffy starting it is quite the strongest engine of them all. It also has a disc front brake, the subject of this article.

I've worked on all types of disc brakes over the years and once in a while I encounter a brake which won't bleed using conventional manipulation of the lever and the bleed nipple. Needless to say, following replacement of time-served brake fluid the Jawa brake steadfastly refused to bleed. The issue seems to be that there isn't enough depression in the system when the lever is released to draw more fluid into the pumping chamber. I've got round this once or twice in the past by clamping the brake hose close to the master cylinder on the handlebar, but this wasn't going to have any effect on the Jawa's system because of the braided armoured brake pipe.

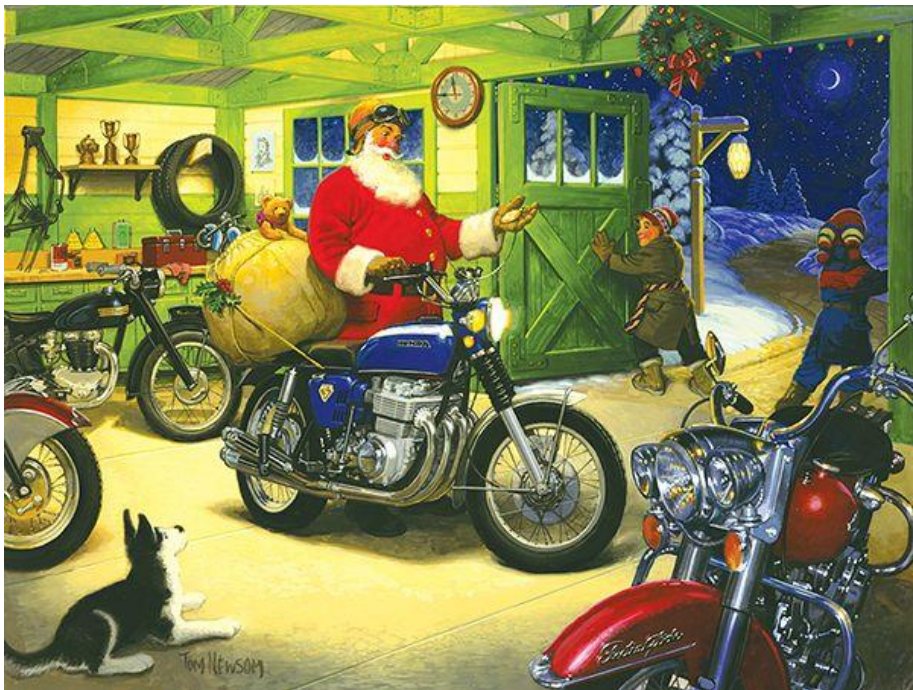
I decided to try something different. In the past on commercial vehicles I've used a vacuum device to suck fluid from the master cylinder down into the wheel cylinders with considerable success. Machine Mart supplied a hand-operated version in a neat little box for a modest sum.



**The kit in its box**

This device drew fluid from one end to the other in a couple of minutes courtesy of the hand-operated vacuum pump. Something I hadn't expected was having to fill the master reservoir twice during the process. The armoured pipe connecting the reservoir to the twin-piston caliper must have quite a large internal diameter. It's this large volume in relation to the small displacement of the master cylinder which I think causes this problem with the bleeding. This would also explain why clamping the brake pipe near the master cylinder works.





## Early Hondas

**BRYAN MARSH**

I may not seem to be the obvious person to be writing about Hondas, having suffered from an incurable addiction to Triumphs for over 45 years. Nevertheless, I have actually owned three of them: a CB175K6, when I was a youth of 17; a very capable TLR200 trail bike; and, for the last year or so, a modern NC750X – all excellent machines but not enough to engender a devotion to the marque. So why this article?

The Triumph Owners Club each year run a Landmark Challenge whereby one gets to travel around the country visiting various nominated landmarks and taking photographs. One landmark this year was the David Silver Collection of historic Hondas, in Leiston, Suffolk.



Oddly, the first bike inside the museum is this rather wonderful Indian from 1914 or 1915.



This is where it all started for Soichiro Honda. Well, almost – his first clip-on attachment for bicycles used 500 war-surplus generator engines but this is the first true Honda – the hugely successful, 1947 50cc two-stroke A-Type. A very rare survivor, sourced in Japan for the museum.



Close-up of that 1hp clip-on engine and petrol tank



1953 Dream E-Type (no, not *that* E-Type!)

There followed two more models based on development of this engine mounted in bought-in cycle parts: the B-Type (a not very successful and hence short-lived cargo-carrying three-wheeler) and the C-Type (now 96cc and 3hp) before they built their first complete motorcycle, the 98cc two-stroke Dream D-Type, featuring a semi-automatic clutch, in 1949. This was followed in 1951 by their first 4-stroke motorcycle, the Dream E-type, a 1953 version is pictured above. A conventional lever-operated, dry multi-plate clutch was fitted following many problems with the wet cone-type one on the D-Type.



1956 Dream MF - 345cc, four-speed, single-cylinder OHC four-stroke. 20bhp at 6500rpm. One of only five known survivors.



The first Benly (from the Japanese word *Benri*, meaning *convenient*), an 89cc, 3-speed 1954 Benly J-Type from the second year of manufacture. Although based on the NSU Fox, it featured several Honda innovations including the engine attached to the swinging-arm suspension by a see-saw arrangement.



...or so they say. As a (modern) Honda rider, I couldn't possibly comment



**1955 Benly JB** – 125cc three-speed, four-stroke. Introduced a year after the 138cc Benly JA to take advantage of a change to the Japanese driving laws which meant that no licence was needed to ride machines up to 125cc.



**1959 Dream CE71 Super Sport** – electric start, 250cc twin-cylinder OHC. The follow-up to the C71 released the previous year. Intended primarily for the American market, only 390 bikes are believed to have been produced. It's rumoured that, for reasons unknown, Honda tried to buy them all back. This is possibly the rarest of all production Hondas.



**1957 125cc Benly JC-57** – originally introduced in 1956 but now with increased power, fully enclosed rear chain and oil-damped bottom-link suspension replacing the previous earles-fork type.



**1960 Dream C72** – 250cc, twin-cylinder. The last of the C-series – Honda's first move into the slightly larger engine-capacity market with a high specification including electric start, direction indicators, dual seat and fully-enclosed rear chain.



**1964 CB77 Super Hawk** – 305cc, twin-cylinder, twin carbs; first introduced in 1961 and produced until 1968. Elvis Prestley rode one of these in the 1964 film “Roustabout”. The example in the collection has only 283 miles on the clock since its restoration.



**1968 CB450D “Desert Scrambler”** – essentially a Black Bomber wearing a beauty kit to help shift large stocks of the rather dull looking standard machine piled up in American showrooms. Comprising a tank, seat, mudguards, upswept exhausts and a few other bits to transform it into what was later the CL range of offroad-styled machines.



...and now for something completely different: the 1963 Juno M85, 169cc, flat-twin OHV scooter with hydraulic tappets. First introduced in 1961 as a follow-up to the 1954 Juno K, a rarity for Honda inasmuch as it was a “splendid failure” after many warranty claims. The M85 didn’t fare much better and only stayed in the range for a single year. This particular machine was imported to the UK by Lucas to study the (Italian) stepless hydraulic transmission.



**1961 Z100** - 49cc single-cylinder, four-stroke. The original Monkey Bike, only produced in small numbers for an amusement park in Tokyo and never sold to the public. Their popularity with the Japanese public convinced Honda to develop a production version in 1963, the CZ100 – and the rest is history. The bike on display is actually a recent reproduction as the original bikes are exceedingly rare.



**1965 Dream CB450K0 “Black Bomber”** – 444cc, 43bhp at 8500rpm, twin-cylinder, twin 32mm CV carburetors and twin leading-shoe front brake. Honda’s first large capacity machine. The bike in the collection is an early American production model with zero miles on the clock.



**1983 MVX 250X** – liquid-cooled, two-stroke V3; yes, that’s right, a V3! – two horizontal cylinders at the front and a vertical one at the back. A bit modern for this article but included because I’d never heard of such a thing. Produced mainly for the Japanese home market but, for some reason, also sold in New Zealand.



## *You never know who's listening*

A GHOST STORY FOR CHRISTMAS - BY WILL CURRY

I've always enjoyed the section runs, both formal and informal and I still do. The weather doesn't matter, wet or dry, hot or cold. I seem to be blessed with the sort of constitution which is impervious to the vagueries of the weather. I'm lucky too with the bikes available and now-a-days of course reliability isn't an issue. These are good times indeed.

The runs present an audience and hence opportunities to make a little mischief as well as opportunities to be helpful.

One outing I remember well was a midweek run with a route card. I knew the rider had gone wrong as he approached me, slowly, going the other way. I waved, stopped and waited. As he pulled alongside, I set off again and he followed. I made the left turn he had missed and, once I was sure he had followed, I waved him past. I don't mind at all being helpful but as far as I'm concerned one of the pleasures of a run is finding the route and who am I do deprive him of this?

At the coffee stop I kept to myself as usual and admired the various bikes. They ranged, as one might expect, from 'Showroom Shiny' through to 'Shed Scruffy'. I find it interesting that when trouble strikes, 'Showroom Shiny' is inevitably recovered by some device covered in flashing lights while 'Shed Scruffy' usually gets fixed with the tools and parts carried by its rider - or fished out of the hedge in the case of one wonderful BSA - and usually in less time than it takes for the flashing-lighted device to arrive.

I was interested to hear the rider I'd helped explain to the others what had happened. He said he'd realised he'd gone wrong when he came to a T-junction rather than the left turn off the main road and had turned round. He hadn't gone far when he saw me wave. He said he'd turned round and followed me onto the right road at which point I'd waved him past and from there he'd only had a few glimpses of me behind on the way here.

The general consensus was that he had been the last to arrive and nobody had followed him and that the group was all there. On being challenged to describe who had helped him I was amused to hear him struggling to describe me, something bound to be difficult. "He seemed to be oldish, dressed in rather old-fashioned gear and with an open-face helmet. His bike was postwar, rigid, teles and a single but I couldn't see what it was. He started it easily too, first kick".

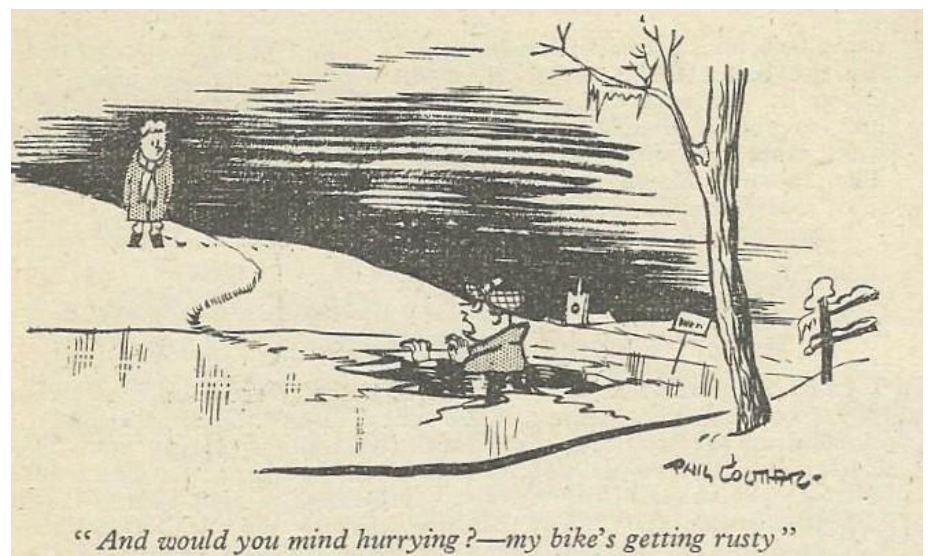
There was an amount of muttering about full-face helmets and how many cylinders various riders', mostly oriental bikes, had. Finally, George said "That sounds like old John. That's just the sort of thing he'd have done - put you right and then made sure you had to work on the route and not just follow him. That must be the best part of five years

now since the funeral. I quite miss the old sod. Things were never boring when he was around". I'll give you 'old sod' George Blagdon. You just wait.

When they came to go, they had to bump George's Honda. It seems he'd left the lights on or something and the battery had gone flat. Bit of a problem what with the Honda not having a kickstart and all. I wonder if he heard me laughing.



Maybe a little insensitive given recent events, but what the heck...



**VMCC Bedfordshire Section Diary – 2023**

12 Jan	Club Night - Trials Bikes and Chat
19 Jan	Midweek Lunch - Flitvale Garden Centre, Westoning
29 Jan	Breakfast Meet - Maypole Farm, Kempston
09 Feb	Club Night - Gyrocopters!
16 Feb	Midweek Lunch - Musgrave Arms, Shillington
26 Feb	Breakfast Meet - Scald End Farm, Thurleigh
09 Mar	Club Night - Intersection Quiz Night
16 Mar	Midweek Lunch - Danish Camp, Willington
26 Mar	Breakfast Meet - Jordans Mill, Broom
13 Apr	Club Night – SERV Herts & Beds - Blood Bikes
16 Apr	Spring Run – Jordans Mill, Broom
20 Apr	Midweek Run - STMA
30 Apr	VMCC Founders Relay Rally/Coffee - STMA
11 May	Club Night - Fish and Chips Night
14 May	Roger & Arthur King Memorial Run - STMA
17 May	Ride to Velo Club - Rose & Crown, Ridgmont
18 May	Midweek Run - STMA
28 May	Breakfast Meet - Danish Camp, Willington
08 June	Club Night - Ride a Bike to Shefford Night
15 June	Midweek Run - STMA
25 June	Breakfast Meet - Flitvale Garden Centre, Westoning
02 July	Albert Brown Run - Wilden Village Hall
13 July	Club Night - Car Park Concours Competition
20 July	Midweek Run - STMA
30 July	Breakfast Meet - Toby Carvery, Bedford
10 Aug	Club Night - Noggin and Natter
17 Aug	Midweek Run - STMA
27 Aug	Summer Saunter/Breakfast Meet - TBA
14 Sept	Club Night - Moto Giro (Gordon Hallett)
21 Sept	Midweek Run - STMA
24 Sept	Sand & Motorcycles, Leighton Buzzard
24 Sept	Breakfast Meet - Scald End Farm, Thurleigh
12 Oct	Club Night – Bradbury Motorcycles (Mike Wills)
19 Oct	Midweek Lunch - Cross Keys, Pulloxhill
21 Oct	Autumn Gold Run - Saturday! - STMA
29 Oct	Breakfast Meet - Danish Camp, Willington
09 Nov	Club Night - AGM and Slideshow
16 Nov	Midweek Lunch - Scald End Farm, Thurleigh
26 Nov	Breakfast Meet - Flitvale Garden Centre, Westoning
14 Dec	Club Night - Xmas Bash and Auction
21 Dec	Midweek Lunch - Toby Carvery, Bedford
26 Dec	Boxing Day Meet - TBA
31 Dec	Breakfast Meet - Jordans Mill, Broom