

LOCKDOWN NEWS

Issue five



GREETINGS FROM THE DORSET SECTION

Hello everybody, we trust you're keeping safe and well. Seems like the emergency newsletter, from now on known as Lockdown News, will have to continue for a few weeks yet, so please keep sending me in your contributions. I had a brief exchange with Bob Clark the Chairman, last week and Dorset were cited as exemplifying a great section; something we already knew, of course! Until we can meet in person again, perhaps this will help to remind us of how close we all are.

First up, a picture quiz! This wheel belongs to young Ken Druce. As you can see, he's managed to break it.



Did it break because:

- A) It was badly assembled
- B) Because Ken is a crazy man

Answers to the editor on a postcard wrapped round a packet of gummy bears, please!

Next up, Ray “I was the last person taken on at Meriden, you know” Dickinson has shared a story about his early involvement with bikes, including some great pictures (*I’ve never actually even ridden a Tiger Cub, am I missing anything?-ed*)

HOW I BECAME INVOLVED WITH MOTORCYCLES AND MY FIRST BIKES

Living and being bought up in Meriden 2 miles from the Triumph factory where dad worked from 1952 until it closed in 1973 it was inevitable I was going to work there. I left school in 1962 aged 15 spending 12 months in the drawing office before starting an apprenticeship at 16 to become a tool room fitter. Later on, I moved over to become a motorcycle production tester a job that appealed to me, being paid to ride bikes.



Dad bought me a 1957 Tiger Cub in rough condition when I left school. Which we rebuilt (or he did while I watched) This was a good bike to learn on and pass my test but like all young lads I wanted a 650, on apprentice wages I could afford the bike but not the insurance. In those days fitting a sidecar reduced your insurance by 50% as they were deemed safer than a solo (not in the hands of a 17 year old)

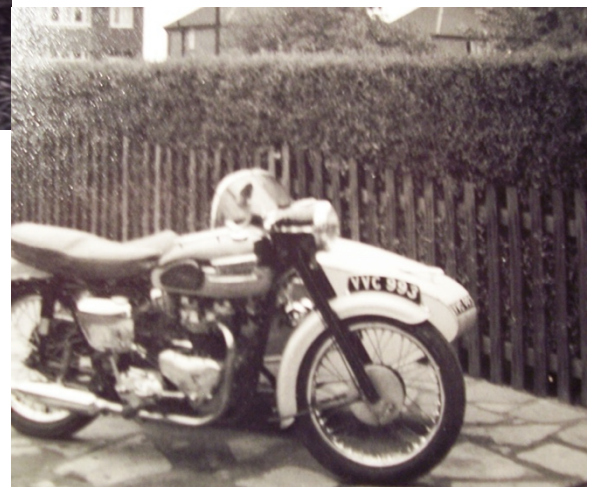


By now I had joined the Antelope Motorcycle Club Coventry and thought I would like to try my hand at grass track, I bought a 1937 250 Tiger 70 that had been used as a field bike it was rebuilt with bantam front forks and wheel and converted to run on methanol, I never came last but the bike was not competitive so it was swapped for a C15 trials bike, then a Tiger cub that had been enlarged to 225cc by the foreman in the experimental shop at Triumph.





When Sammy Miller developed the Bultaco trials bike they were so much better than the British bikes we all bought one. Then, in 1973 we were all made redundant from the Triumph factory, That's when we moved to Gillingham to take over a rundown cycle /motorcycle shop which we ran for 30 years.



(I'd like to hear more Meriden stories please, Ray. So you weren't part of the sit in, I assume?-ed)

Pete Hawkins, a very nice man, friend of the section and, inexplicably, of our secretary, also sent in an article. *(Blimey, issue one was a fifteen-minute job, I'll be full-time at this rate- ed)*

Our Trip to Switzerland

It's Summer 1972.

I'm sat in the Thatched Bar of the Antelope in Dorchester with my 2 mates Johnny and Malc. Our "A" Levels are finished and we are thinking about what we are going to do. My girlfriend Judy won't be around as she has a summer hotel job near Interlaken Switzerland.

So after another beer or two we hit on the idea of an epic bike ride. "Let's ride to Switzerland, do some camping and say hello to Judy while we are passing through and take in the scenery." We all agree – it sounds like a good plan.....except I have an ex police Triumph Saint, Johnny has an Ariel KH and Malc has a Lambretta Li 125. Well the Lambretta's a total zero, so Malc is tasked with finding a real bike if he wants to come. We are leaving in about 3 weeks.

The Triumph is in reasonable condition for a 1965 bike with Police mileage, I must have paid at least £50 for it. The KH is really rough and rusty with a crack right through the rocker box that is clamped shut with a jubilee clip done up really tight. It seems to go OK. Bought for about 20 quid so if it blows up Johnny intends to dump it in a ditch and pillion back with me.

Finally Malc finds a rough old BSA Golden Flash that hasn't been on the road for years in a barn, (yes a real barn find!!) and sets to getting it running. If it doesn't work he's not coming with us! But with little time to spare it's on the road and the three of us are getting ready.

We've got camping gear (all 3 of us have been in the Scouts) but no racks or panniers, so the gear is bagged up and strapped over the seats and tank with bungies. The bikes feel a bit top heavy loaded up but we are on our way to Portsmouth.

Crossing the New Forrest, the sun is shining and it feels great that we are on our way. Suddenly with a loud bang, the BSA spits its left exhaust pipe onto the road. We go back, collect it, bolt it back on tight, have a laugh and continue in high spirits. As we approach Portsmouth, Malc's in trouble again and flags us down. Strange, the BSA sound fine to me. Then we find out that gear lever escaped somewhere in the last 10 miles so he can't change gear. Johnny and I leave him and scout back up the road for a few miles but there's no gear lever to be found.

How are we going to fix that? So we come up with a solution - Mole Grips clamped to the gear shaft. This works great, until Malc changes down, kicks the release lever and the Mole grips get dumped in the road. So once we've retrieved them, some string from our extensive repair kit (string, tape, wire and a few nuts and bolts) is utilised to tie up the release lever and keep the mole grips attached to the bike. Three heavily loaded bikes arrive at the ferry with no further problems.

As we ride aboard I notice that the surface is wet and slippery but I get my bike up the ramp and round a rather tight turn at the end and safely to our parking spot. Malc follows on the BSA but where's Johnny? He's slid off and is in a heap in the middle of the bend trying to pick up his bike. With help he gets back on his wheels and parks. Bruised ego but no other damage. We are on our way and when we reach France we disembark very carefully.

The trip round Paris is an experience. Round the Arc de Triomphe – a busy roundabout with French traffic priority causes a close shave and a loud horn blast but we survive. On we go down to Switzerland. The scenery is beautiful and the ride is uneventful in hot and sunny weather. Everything is good. I let the others go ahead as I stop for a wee (my Triumph will soon catch them up). As I get off the bike my stand sinks into the hot tarmac and the bike topples over. As I try to lift it back up, all the bungees stretch and my gear slides down the side of the bike making it impossible to pick up. Just when I start trying to unstrap everything, with fuel now starting to drip out of the petrol tank filler, a small Citroen screeches to a halt, 2 people rush to help and we get the bike up easily. With a quick "Merci" from me and with no words, just a smile and a wave from them, they are in the car and gone. Phew that was lucky. With an empty bladder and a re-adjusted load I am chasing after my friends and we finally make it to our campsite in Interlaken.

So, we are camped in Interlaken and have been on a few rides. The mountain scenery is wonderful. We ride up to Grindewald to see my girlfriend and look at the Eiger, a breath-taking towering rock wall of 6000ft that has claimed the lives of over 60 climbers. Soon back in the campsite we are lazing around our tents one afternoon, in the baking sun when a Yank biker on a very smart Honda CB750 café racer (awesome in 1972!!) comes for a friendly chat. He tells us that he has just done the 3 passes – hairpin bends and stunning scenery "You have got to do the ride man!" Sounds good to us.

So late next morning in sweltering heat we set off. The bikes feel so great to ride with no top heavy packs strapped on. We're dressed in jeans and jumpers. The scenery is awesome and the roads are wonderful, winding up and up into the mountains. Higher and higher we go up the zig-zag mountain roads. It's as we get close to the first glacier that we realize we might be slightly under dressed! Well it was a fantastic ride, and it may be sunny, but it's absolutely freezing. The bikes aren't keen on the altitude either, but after 200 miles we're back and exhausted, what a ride!! We made it and Malc's mole grip gear lever is still holding up.

Soon we had to say goodbye to Switzerland and start the journey home, back through France in glorious weather. We're cruising along happily, when Johnny's bike, suddenly revs up and slows down with no drive. Rear chain ok, Primary chain ok – strange! Off with the primary chain case and the shock absorber falls off. The crankshaft nut had come undone – easily fixed and the Ariel wasn't going to be dumped in a ditch after all. We're off again.

After setting up camp one afternoon we are out for a quick blast when I learnt some French phrase that I have never forgotten, after we are stopped by a very formidable policeman "La casque est obligatoire en France" Whoops, we return to the camp and put our helmets on. (Helmets were not compulsory in the UK until the following year).

The next day we get a little lost heading toward Rouen and with my largely forgotten 'O' level French I ask someone for directions to Rouen. The guy looks baffled and keeps looking at my front wheel (Roue in French). It wasn't until I said "Rouen la Ville" that he exclaimed what sounded like Ahh! Rwwwon! We are soon back on track. Languages have never been my strong point!

Finally we made it back to England after riding about 1600 miles or so. Malc is ahead of us leaving the boat, and as Johnny and I stop in Customs we hear Malc being rather loud and angry towards a rather embarrassed customs officer looking round his bike. Johnny and I carry on through and wait for him. When he catches up he tells us that he had asked the Customs Officer to let him park before his luggage was examined, but the guy ignored him and undid one of the bungee straps holding the washing up bowl on top of his luggage. From underneath the bowl his 2 duty free bottles of wine slipped out and smashed on the floor. Oh dear, no present for Mum and Dad!

Well all in all it was a great trip – 3 inexperience riders, 3 ratty old bikes, no phones, and no breakdown cover. Incidentally, the love affair with my girlfriend didn't last, but my love affair with bikes certainly did!

Now our very own Betsy is reminiscing about the good old days (*of Rickets, Castor oil and casual beatings by teachers with a power complex; or was that just me?-ed*)

On growing old

*We are the survivors
We were born before television, frozen foods
videos & before men walked on the moon.*

*We got married & then lived together- how quaint can you be?
We thought 'fast foods' were what you ate in lent, a 'big Mac' an
Oversized rain coat & crumpet something you had for tea,
We existed before house husbands
computer dating & dual careers.*

*A meaningful relationship meant getting along with cousins
sheltered accommodation was were you waited for a bus
We'd never heard of FM radio, hi -fi or men wearing earrings.*

*For us 'time sharing' meant togetherness, a chip was a piece of
wood or fried potato.*

*Before 1940 'made in Japan' meant junk, the term 'making out'
referred to how you did in your exams, & stud was something
you fastened your collar with.*

*And 'going all the way' meant staying on the double-decker bus
all the way to the depot.*

*In our day, cigarette smoking was fashionable
coke was kept in the coalhouse.*

*A joint was a piece of meat you had on a Sunday
grass was mown, Rock music was a grandmothers Lullaby,
Eldorado was an ice-cream,
while a 'gay person was the life & soul of the party.*

*We who were born before 1940 must be a hardy bunch when you
think of all the changes that have been made.
NO wonder we are confused & that there's a generation gap.*

*Remember that we old folk are worth a fortune,
with silver in our hair, gold in our teeth,
stones in our kidneys,
lead in our feet
and gas in our stomachs!*

Thanks Betsy. I'm unconvinced the good old days were in fact, all that good, certainly I'd rather be living now, in Dorset, amongst friends, than on the council estate I grew up on in the sixties. And, as for the abomination that passed for coffee back then, Camp Coffee was it? - blargh

Finally, the ever-reliable Ian Clarke has found the time to write about a special. I love car-engined specials, having lusted after a NorImp some years back which I foolishly didn't snap up. This one sounds like a great bike to me. Enjoy.

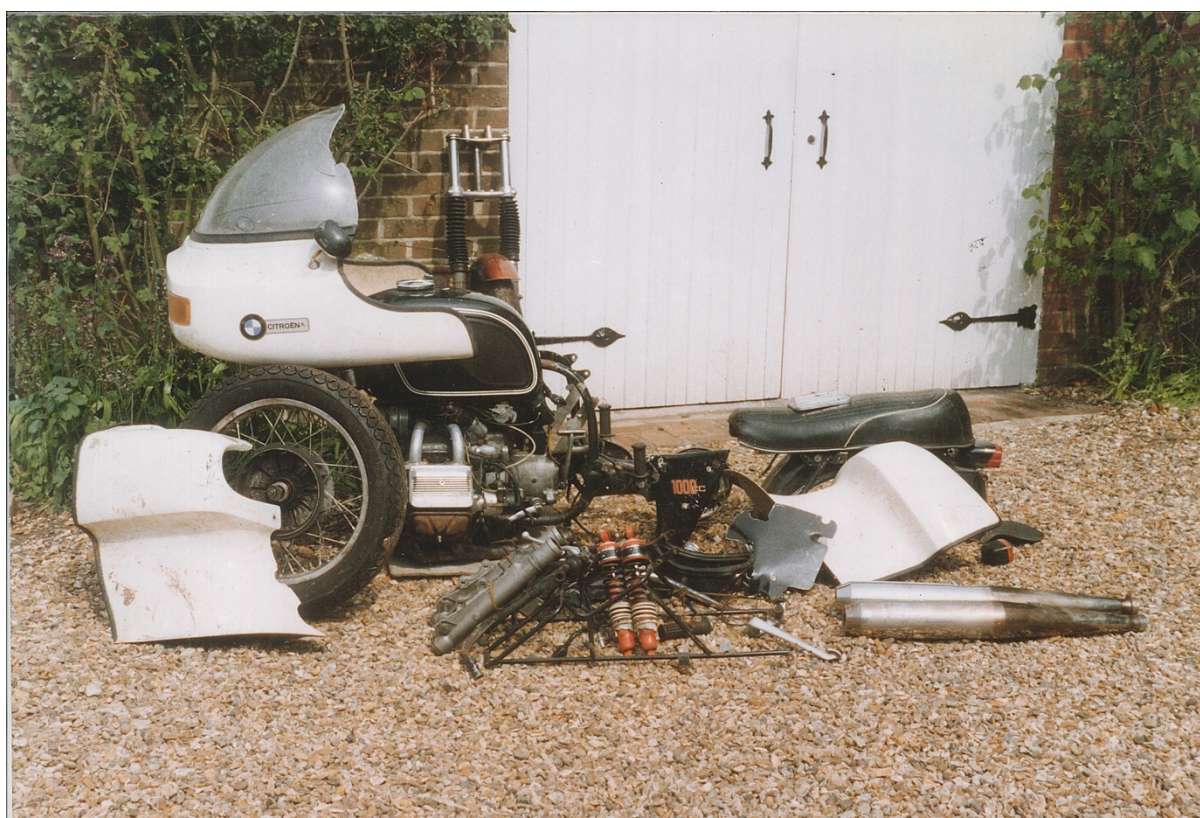
The Four Before the BMW Four.

By Ian Clarke.

Part 1 : The History.

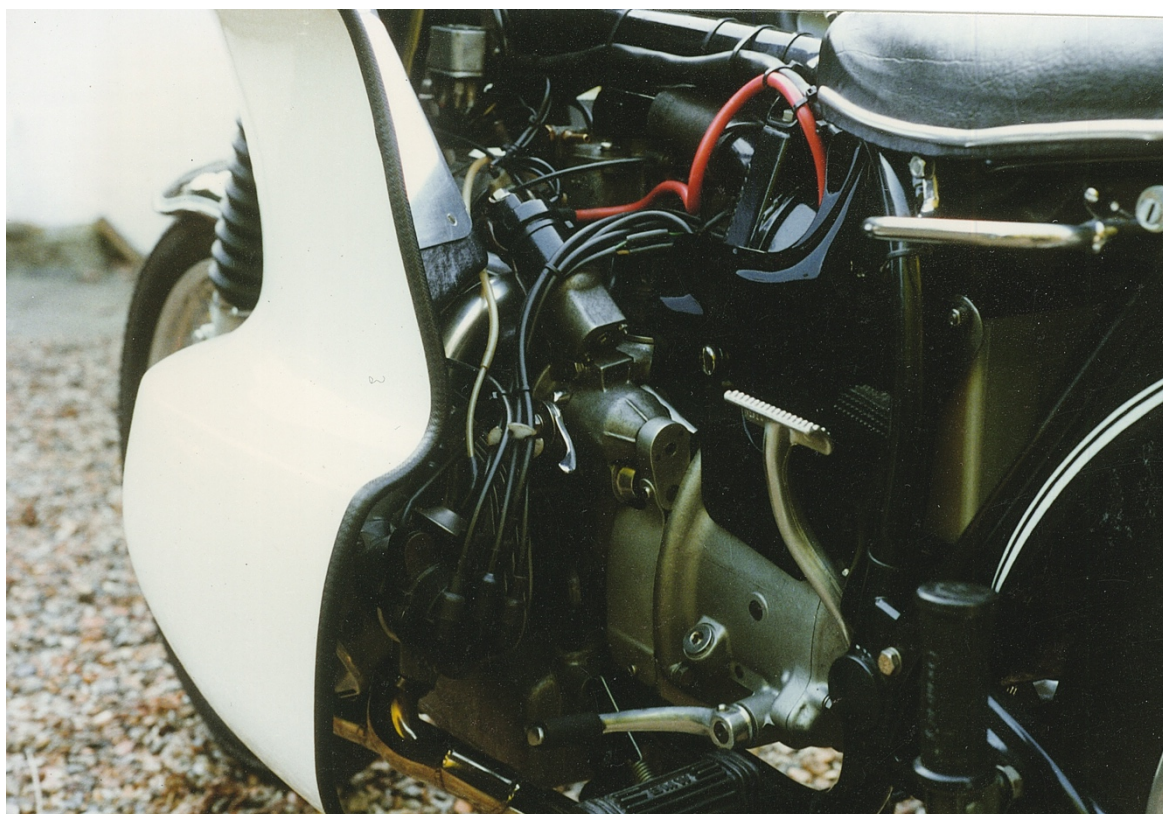
After the launch of BMW's /5 models in the UK in 1970 at least one person thought that maybe 750cc's wasn't really big enough for his purposes. I don't think I'd cause too much offence by saying he was of above average build himself. That man was Ivan Rouse of Leamington Spa in Warwickshire, who had already built a number of road going 'specials'. The /5 chassis obviously appealed to him as a base and he considered fitting the engine from a Fiat 127 before settling on his final power plant....an air cooled, overhead cam, flat four Citroen unit.

So the basic components of the BRC (BMW-Rouse-Citroen) were purchased. The rolling chassis came from a crashed R60/5 of 1969 vintage, originally brought back to Banbury by a serviceman returning from his posting in Germany. A 1972 Citroen GS Club estate car (also crashed) provided the 1015cc engine and electrical systems. Well some of the electrics, as Ivan decided that a modern electronic system would be advantageous and promptly decided to fit one from a Chrysler Alpine.



I first encountered the machine in the mid '70's and, as a keen BMW owner, simply thought WHY? The answer didn't become at all apparent until over 20 years later when working on the bike. At the start of Ivan's project the largest

BMW available was a 750, by the time he finished it the R90S had been launched but it was still only a twin.



The /5 chassis, in short wheelbase form, provided an ideal starting point for the 'special'. It was light yet strong well capable of taking the extra power and (more importantly) torque of the 1015cc engine. The engine itself with its overhead camshaft, is about 45mm narrower than a /5 but weighs in at 28 pounds more, this figure coming from Ivan's bathroom scales! The Citroen crankcase is strong enough to enable it to be used as a structural member and therefore the lower frame tubes have been removed. As the new unit is 50mm longer than the /5 the two rear frame tubes have been repositioned in line with the end of the frame top tube. Another longer tube has been pressed into the top tube to stiffen it and also provide the extension required to mount the original tool tray. BMW stiffened their frames this way on later models but Ivan did it first! An extra bracket is welded to the top tube enabling the engine to be steadied at the top. This bracket also act as a support for the air filter housing taken from

an Austin/Morris 1100. The end result is a chassis with exactly the same wheelbase as any long wheelbase (1972 on) BMW i.e 56.5in.

The electrical system uses the original Ducellier alternator with a /5 Bosch regulator. The 28Ah battery is located in its normal position, made possible because the air filter housing is no longer on the top of the gearbox which is now used for mounting the heatsink and all the electronics required to run the ignition system.

The exhaust system, made throughout in stainless steel, consists of two into one front pipes on either side feeding into /5 short wheelbase silencers, an arrangement that certainly gives the machine its unique sound. The original 4 speed gearbox obviously (or rather, unfortunately) didn't match the bell housing on the Citroen engine so suitable adaptors were made up. The /5 flywheel had its 5 mounting holes welded up and was re-drilled with 6 holes to suit the crankshaft. Unlike the bike engine the Citroen fortunately has the rear main oil seal running on the crankshaft and not on the flywheel. A standard clutch plate (pre 81) is used albeit with a stronger diaphragm spring to cope with the extra power and torque.

Car engines of this period were ugly things and this one is no exception. The only thing to do is to hide as much of it as possible. Ivan did this by fitting a Churchgate Mk3 fairing, a huge fairing designed for /5 and /6 machines featuring the square headlamp taken from a Ford Cortina which is in fact only marginally less ugly than the engine its hiding. They do say 'beauty is in the eye of the beholder' so perhaps Ivan liked it. Churchgate Mouldings certainly lacked the wind tunnel available to BMW's designers but more of that later. The instruments and warning lamps were taken straight from the car and

located on a curved panel under the double curvature screen in the fairing. These consist of a speedometer, rev counter, clock and voltmeter plus warning lamps for main beam, direction indicators (separate left and right),



neutral, oil pressure and oil temperature.

As Ivan was employed by day at Lockheed it's hardly surprising to find the front brake master cylinder one of their racing products, suitably modified to take a BMW style straight pull single cable throttle using many of his homemade parts. The front wheel and double disc set up came from a Suzuki and used their calipers mounted on brackets welded to the original /5 forks. In the interests of simple maintenance the front end is now from an R90S and all the controls are now BMW, however all Ivan's hard work on the front end hasn't been destroyed and the original parts are still with the bike.

Both front and rear suspension systems have been fitted with stronger springs to cater for the extra weight. The rear axle ratio currently fitted is 3:1 (11/33) from the R100RS giving 18.2mph per 1000 revs in top gear. The petrol tank has been raised about 50mm and moved back the same amount in order to miss the top of the engine and allow for the extra length of the top tube. This has the added benefit of giving a greater head of fuel for the gravity fed system.

The car of course pressure fed the twin choke Solex carburettor mounted on the top of the engine.

Almost no part of the engine or chassis escaped Ivan's attention. Although not immediately apparent the rear mudguard has been cut down the centre and 35mm added to its width. The seat no longer hinges but lifts off completely, being secured by the original lock on one side and a simple but very effective catch on the other. Anyone who has experienced the problem of accessing the tool tray on a /5 with Krauser panniers fitted will understand why this modification was done. Aluminium side panels were made to cover the exposed battery and electronics located on the top of the gearbox whilst the same material was used to make the louvered panel protecting the cam belts and alternator drive. To replace the four original pressed steel valve covers Ivan milled new ones from aluminium billets. Having found the distributor fouling his shins he simply(?) turned up his own shorter version. How many hours work went into this unique machine? When I spoke with him Ivan was somewhat reticent to reveal the time he spent on the project but eventually conceded it was 'probably' in excess of 2000 hours. Having restored it and seen the quality of his workmanship I'd say that was a conservative estimate. So, was it worth all that effort?

Part 2: A Road Report.

The first thing you notice when you approach the bike is the sheer physical size of it. Ivan was a big bloke and this is a tall machine. On the centre stand it measures 39 inches to the top of the tank and 56 to the top of the double curvature screen. However, unlike so many other car-engined 'specials' it doesn't have an excessively long wheelbase at 56.5 inches. Push the BRC off the stand and the additional weight (74 lbs giving a total weight of 537lbs including petrol, oil tool kit etc.) over and above that of a /5 becomes apparent, especially when trying to manoeuvre it without engine power.



The weight is, however, low down and as such the bike seems more 'user friendly' than, say, a 'K' series.

Sitting on the machine the rider is faced with the array of warning lamps and instruments previously described, nicely angled towards you and easy to read. All the controls fall readily to hand even though the handlebars are a rather strange shape. They're almost like a swept back Vincent bar but shorter in order to enable them to move inside the vast Churchgate fairing. Turn on the petrol, apply the choke fully (mounted on the starter motor), press the button and the engine just might burst into life. I say might because unless it's fully charged the 28Ah battery will struggle. The car starter motor certainly takes some current to turn the engine from cold. It really doesn't matter that much as the kickstart is still fitted, the combination of 254cc

cylinders and electronic ignition making it easy to start by foot. Once fired up the choke can be eased back and as the machine warms up it settles into a 950rpm tick over. Then there's the noise. Well actually there isn't much more exhaust noise than a /5 but rather the unique sound as it burbles away under you. Little if any mechanical noise emanates, above a very slight rustle of the valve gear and whir of the cam belts. Oddly there appears to be no amplification of these noises through the fairing. Engage first gear using the shortened gear lever, let out the heavy action clutch and you're underway. You immediately notice how smooth the rigidly mounted engine is. No rubber mountings required here to eliminate (mask?) vibration. As you change up through the gearbox (slowly, it is a /5 box after all) the huge amount of torque available at low revs makes itself apparent. Once on the move the gearbox seems a little superfluous as this unit has more grunt than a pig, right from tick over. Overall performance is similar to a good R100RS but with a lot more pulling power. Unlike many car engines this one thrives on revs and is red lined at 6750. The crankshaft is a roller bearing pressed up unit, much the same as on pre '69 BMW's which a local Citroen specialist reckons is actually safe to 8000rpm but I guess he would say that as they're a service replacement item....

The BRC can be ridden at speeds up to 125mph (so I'm told!) but any speed above about 85mph shows the severe limitations of the Churchgate fairing as the machine shows an (initially) alarming tendency to 'wander'. The sensation would lead you to believe you either had over tight head bearings or that the steering damper was applied (there is no damper fitted or required) however the 'wander' never gets any worse with increased speed or, so far, out of control. I've always put it down to airflow around the huge fairing but could

well be wrong. After the first couple of exciting moments you get used to the movement and are able to ignore it but what it must look like to those following is anyone's guess.

The front end now consists of suitably stiffened up R90S forks with twin ATE calipers working onto cast iron discs. These ATE units were never renowned as the best in the business but the combination of Goodrich stainless steel hoses, a handlebar master cylinder and cast iron discs makes the braking performance acceptable if not in the same league as modern 4 pot systems. You just need to ride with the knowledge that the brakes will always stop you, given sufficient warning. Front fork dive is always present with a telescopic set up and the BRC is little different in this respect to any other /7 model. Rear suspension is by two units of unknown origin. These are fitted with two springs on each unit and are longer than the standard Boge suspension legs. They seem however to work reasonably well and, overall, the handling is acceptable up to and slightly above the legal limit. The BRC certainly wasn't



designed as a sports bike but as a long legged, long distance touring machine, the performance and handling reflecting this.

So, was all Ivan's hard work worthwhile? Well, yes and no! On the one hand he built a unique machine, later perhaps giving rise to the French BFG which was mainly sold to the police and used the much wider 1220cc engine. His creation also showed flair, considerable engineering skills and proof that a four cylinder overhead cam air cooled boxer engine in a bike was possible and with less overall width than the (then) current BMW twin. On the other hand it had few benefits over the R100RS or RT other than 4 cylinders but then Ivan had his 1000cc bike on the road over 2 years before they came out.

Thank you, Ian, I loved that.

And with that the fifth Lockdown news concludes, we hope you've enjoyed it and please feel free to share and ask others to subscribe to the website; the more we get the message out there, the better the section will become.

At the request of Paul Wirdnam I'm scribbling a few lines on how I got into bikes, starting with sports mopeds, of course! Fair warning- unless you send me more material you'll have to read it next week. Until then, please stay safe and well, it won't be long now until we're back out there again.

In peace

Paul Miles