

The third Dorset section virtual club night

Hello again everyone, I hope you're all keeping safe and well, fettling those bikes and preparing for when we can all meet up again. Writing this on the day we should have been together on the Blandford run is bittersweet. I'm glad we all seem to be OK, but for a change the weather would have been kind to us; it's ALWAYS cold or wet (or both!) for this event! Anyway, here is the 3rd edition of the lockdown newsletter and hopefully you'll find something interesting enough to keep hope alive for the better times ahead.

Please enjoy and stay safe

Paul miles – chair.



First up, Ian 'Hannibal' Clarke tells us about his six elephants.

A TALE OF SIX ELEPHANTS.

My first visit to the Elefantentreffen took place in 1972 when the event was held at the Nurburgring in the Eifel mountains. It later moved to the Salzburg Ring in Austria before moving again, this time to Solla in Southern Germany, close to the Czech border, where it's still run each year.

The following tales date from 1997 onwards when I started going to this event as passenger to Colin Ferguson who, at the time lived in Pulham. I should preface this tale by saying that almost all the problems we encountered on these trips are unlikely to ever be replicated in the UK. We don't have the severe weather conditions experienced on these trips with temperatures as low as -25 degrees nor do we (regrettably) have a road network where an engine can be held at c5500 revs for hour upon hour.

YEAR 1: For my first trip with Colin we used his 1980 R65 fitted with a Czech made Velorex 700 Series sidecar. It still sported telescopic forks, albeit fitted with stronger springs from a Matchless, whilst uprated springs were also fitted to the rear units but other than the fitting of a screen and heated grips the R65 was completely standard. To say the journey to Solla was painful would be an

understatement. We travelled to Dover, crossed the channel with Sea France and continued to Bailleul near Lille a distance of some 253 miles on Day1.

Very early on Day 2 we set off for our second nights accommodation booked in Eibelstadt 405 miles away. When making good time we were travelling at 55 to 60mph on the flat but Oh! the hills. They saw us down to 45mph or less, then the journey became nothing short of tiresome. Colin developed the (slightly risky?) technique of 'tailgating' lorries in order to try and maintain some semblance of progress on the uphill stretches of the Autobahn. Our sustenance during this gruelling 13 hour marathon consisted mainly of a bowl of goulash soup every refuelling stop.

The final day to our destination Solla was the shortest daily distance we had covered to date, merely 190 miles. Unlike many 'Elephanteers' we were not camping in the disused quarry that is home to the rally for around a week each year. We had a small, warm pension within a couple of miles of the site. At least we were comfortable in the prevailing conditions where the daytime temperature stayed well below freezing and at night fell to around -15 degrees C.

Leaving at 6am on Sunday morning we had 427 miles to get to Duren for our last nights stay, followed by a final 'shorter' day of 400 miles to get back home We'd had a



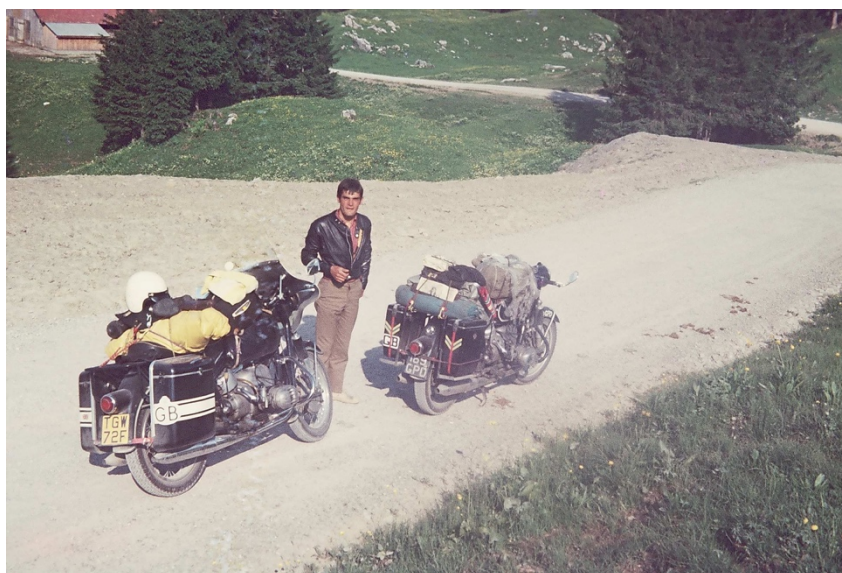
great long weekend but returned to the UK vowing never to return with a 650cc BMW ever again.....

YEAR 2: Over the next few months we decided the way forward was to build a 1000cc engine and fit it into the R65 rolling chassis. We'd bought out a BMW breaker located in Yeovil soon after the Elephant and were, at that moment in time, inundated with post '70 spares. In order to make the engine 'go' well Colin decided that he would have the heads gas flowed and twin plugged by George Mansfield, who made a first class job of them. Fitted with 40mm Bing

carburettors a minimum of 70 BHP should be achievable, possibly even a bit more with the gas flowing.

We retained the pre-81 flywheel (for additional torque) and fitted the unit into the old R65 chassis/ running gear. The only teething problem, an initial chronic pre-ignition (pinking) problem, was soon resolved by retarding the ignition and limiting the amount of advance on the bob weights of the canister points system

Having successfully used the outfit on a BMW Club Southern Section Treasure hunt after Christmas we left full of confidence that the outfit would perform well. This year we intended to visit Prague for a couple of nights, extending our trip to 7 days. The engine exceeded all our expectations. We were accompanied



by another outfit powered by a standard 70BHP 1000cc engine. Whilst our engine would comfortably hold 5500+ revs up hills on the Autobahn the standard engine in the other outfit always struggled to stay in touch with us. The trip went really well, right up until about 15 miles from Calais when the

85,000 plus (miles) R65 gearbox simply gave up the ghost with a bang.....having spent its life handling 45BHP perhaps the bearings simply couldn't handle the 70BHP and higher torque of the R100. We hitched ourselves to the other outfit, towed the stricken machine onto and off the Sea France ferry, then had a short wait for the rescue service we had rung from the boat before we docked. Quiet honestly I think we both felt the journey home in the warmth of the breakdown truck was a pleasant relief after so many days of sub-zero motorcycling.

YEAR 3: I rebuilt a 5 speed gearbox during the summer. Inside the R65 gearbox nothing other than the selection mechanism could be salvaged as every gear was damaged in some way but at least the shell was sound, or so I thought. My suspicion was that this total failure had been caused by the front bearing (clutch end) on the output shaft collapsing, the usual problem with these boxes, but there was so much damage in the rest of the box it was impossible to know exactly what 'let go' first. To be fair, we were aware during the trip that the

gearbox had started to get noisy but when you're 500 miles from Calais there's not a lot you can do except try to nurse it home.

Not only were we reinstalling the rebuilt gearbox but also trying to travel greater distances between stops by fitting a 43 litre Acerbis tank. Fuel consumption when running at c5500 revs proved to be around 28 to 30 mpg which, with the standard R65 tank, only gave a safe distance of around 100 miles between fuel stops. The Acerbis tank wasn't pretty but, to be fair, neither was the rest of the outfit. Purposeful yes, beautiful no!

With our rebuilt box and oversize tank, at the end of January we left for Solla once again via Prague. We reached Bailleul in record time and all went well until we left the Autobahn for our second nights stop at Eibelstadt. As Colin pulled off onto the slip road and went to change down the clutch lever came back to the handlebar with virtually no resistance. His first thought was that we had merely lost adjustment on the cable, so wound out the adjuster until he had a small amount of disengagement. Me? I thought it something more sinister as you don't get a slack cable simply by riding the outfit. Anyway we got to the 'pension' in the village, had a shower, then went down to the covered garage to investigate. The clutch operation felt really harsh when I operated the lever a few times to try and locate the problem. After several pulls there was an almighty crack and one of the cast support lugs for the clutch arm broke off the back of the gearbox. This lug had obviously been cracked for some time and had finally broken. At least we now knew exactly what was wrong!

Needing time to think this one through we retired to the local bar/restaurant for a few beers, a meal and a discussion. Ideally we needed a new gearbox back, something that we could have had sent out to us, particularly as the other outfit with us was being piloted by the then co-owner of a well known BMW dealership from Southern England. However, frankly, we had neither the time in our schedule nor the facilities to hand to go down this route so needed another solution.

This came to me at about 4am and I'm not still not sure to this day if Colin really appreciated being woken to have the 'fix' explained to him! My 'fix' was to weld a piece from the crossmember on the frame behind the gearbox to a point in line with the remaining lug. This new piece would have a 6mm hole in the end to pick up the pivot pin of the clutch arm.

Thinking it out was one thing, getting someone to do it or borrowing the equipment to do it ourselves another. Here the owner of the small 'pension' we

were staying in came to the rescue. He started ringing round as soon as we told him the outfit was 'kaput' and showed him exactly why. After a time spent explaining to him that the local BMW dealer really couldn't help us with our problem, later that morning we ended up at a non-franchised Harley-Davidson dealer (in Wurzburg) having carefully driven the clutch-less outfit the short distance from Eibelstadt.

Although he spoke reasonable English the owner of this establishment kept shaking his head, saying 'it won't work'. When I asked if I could borrow his welding set and do it myself he reluctantly agreed that he would give it a go. With plenty of bits of steel to hand in his well equipped workshop (he made Harley 'specials') he soon fabricated the part required, clamped it into position and fetched his MiG welder. For some reason he left his eye protection hanging on the CO2 cylinder and simply placed the torch near the job, looked away and pulled the trigger. After several abortive attempts he managed to secure the plate in position and left us to reassemble the clutch arm and cable.

This 'bodge' proved a complete success so, having settled up with the Harley man, we were on our way to Prague somewhat later than envisaged (it was now well after midday) and we had 250 miles to ride, in sub zero temperatures. Within a few miles we came across the most horrific accident on the Autobahn. It had begun to snow, the outfit had developed a misfire, and we were making very slow progress in virtually stationary traffic. With so little traffic flow we decided to stop on the hard shoulder and investigate the misfire. Having looked at the HT leads coils and plugs without finding any obvious problem off came the timing cover to see if anything was amiss in the points canister. Again, there seemed nothing untoward



but we cleaned the points as a precaution then fired the bike up. It ran faultlessly so everything was rapidly re-assembled and off we went again.

It was now well after 2pm, the weather had deteriorated further, snow had begun to settle in the outside lane of the autobahn and we still had well over 200 miles to ride to our booked overnight stop in Prague. All went well for around 30 miles until the Autobahn began to climb fairly steadily. By now the snow that had settled reduced the road down to one barely passable lane, we'd seen the snowploughs out but they were all on the opposite carriageway, temperatures had plummeted to several degrees below freezing and the misfire had set in again.



We struggled on for a few more miles running between one cylinder and two until our progress became so slow on the climbs that something just had to be done. By now we had jointly reached the conclusion that the ingress of

water must be causing our problems and that what we really needed was a can of WD40. Of course neither outfit had any on board.....The four of us were in the middle of a debate as to exactly how to proceed, especially as by now we were in almost 'white out' conditions with darkness fast approaching, when a Dutchman on a solo K75S pulled into the lay-by. 'Wish I had your outfit instead of my solo today' he said in perfect English. I replied that he certainly wouldn't want our outfit the way it was behaving! Having explained what we thought our problem was I then asked if he had any WD40 by any chance? 'Yes, I've a new can in the tank-bag'. What luck. Everything that could be sprayed with WD was sprayed, plug leads, coils, ignition switch, and the wiring all had copious amounts aimed at them as the can emptied. An offer of payment for the WD40 used was graciously refused and the Dutchman was soon on his way.

We followed, firing on all 4 plugs (remember, we were twin plugged) and with renewed optimism that the problem had been resolved. By now it was completely dark and we were still riding in the middle of a 'white out'. The temperature had fallen a few degrees more and we were now running with a huge piece of ice on the front of each of the telescopic fork legs, pointing

forward like a shark fin. Occasionally these bits of ice dropped off but quickly reformed to stretch almost to the edge of the front tyre. We carried on in these appalling conditions when, with still just under a hundred miles to Prague, the misfire came back with a vengeance.

This time it really had to be sorted once and for all. We pulled into a service station to investigate. When we built the bike we decided to remove the toolbox from under the seat and fit a purpose made plate to carry the twin output dynacoils. Looking under the seat by torchlight it suddenly dawned that the Acerbis tank had a shape that was funnelling the snow down the spine of the frame, straight onto the coils. With heat rising from the engine and a delay in looking at them (because it was easier to check the plug leads) each time we had eventually looked at the coils they were dry. This time they were covered in melting snow. Having dried them out as much as possible with the materials available to us they were wrapped in polythene bags and sealed with duct tape.



However what was really needed was something to blank off the front of the Acerbis tank, so our party set off individually around the service station to see what we could find. W. came back trying to conceal a hard, thin plastic

Kenco coffee sign. Having taken some rough measurements he disappeared into the 'Gents' to fabricate the required piece. Unfortunately the only way to shape the 'Kenco' sign was to place it on the window sill of the toilet and snap off the bits we didn't need. It was so cold the sign snapped easily but every time it broke it sounded as if someone had been shot. Fortunately no one bothered to check if it was in fact gunshots. The improvised sealing piece was soon installed under the front of the tank, hopefully to prevent further trouble until we were able to fabricate a more permanent solution back in England. We were quickly off once again, running very well now, thinking we really were going to make it to Prague this time. How wrong we were.....

In those days the Autobahn didn't run all the way to Prague. About 50 miles from the city the dual carriageway went to single track and on this trip was packed with slow moving ancient lorries from the old Eastern Block countries. We were on and off the newly constructed bits of Autoroute for several miles until exiting one chicane back onto a single track piece Colin leaned over towards the chair to shout that he hadn't got a gear lever anymore. The two outfits pulled off the road by what appeared to be a lay-by located adjacent to a slag heap in this mining area then we turned off the lights. I can honestly say you couldn't see anything. There wasn't a vestige of light to be seen anywhere, the traffic had all disappeared and it was absolutely pitch black. Having found our torches it was apparent what had happened. The bar on the R65 remote linkage between the lever and the gearbox had broken on one of the bends but at least the lever itself was still there. It's amazing what you can do in an emergency with a few cable ties, even if some unfortunate person (in this case me) had to lie on his back in the snow between the bike and the chair to fix them in position. That in itself wasn't too bad, the worst bit had to be the side cutters I was trying to cut the surplus off the ties with sticking to my ungloved hand in the -20 degree temperature.....



With the gear change problem fixed the final run into Prague was trouble free and by 9.30pm we were in a local micro-brewery come restaurant reminiscing on a very eventful day. After a good night out

and some sleep things were looking better. During our two days in Prague the coils and tank received further attention and we were now reasonably confident that the modifications made would ensure no further problems. For once we were proved right.

Previous experience running 1000cc engines had made us appreciate how marginal the starting can be in cold conditions with a standard 30 A/h battery fitted, so in the boot of the chair was a new 180A/h Exide 'Torque Starter' with heavy duty cable connections to the bike. This too was proving marginal. We were using 10/40 oil but with temperatures down to around -20 degrees C if the bike didn't fire within the first few revolutions the battery soon started to struggle. A couple of times we got caught out when the bike had stood out for a night when the temperature dropped to below -20 degrees and ended up having to 'bump start' the outfit. We were 'on site' at the rally ground on Saturday morning just as a chap with an R100 outfit was getting ready to leave. He pressed the starter, the engine spun but didn't start. He pressed again, the same thing happened. We always reckoned that about 3 reasonable tries and any battery would struggle in these temperatures but this guy just kept on winding and winding. We moved on debating just how big the battery he had in the chair must be, especially knowing exactly how the 180A/H 'Torque Starter' performed under these conditions. When we passed again about 20 minutes or so later he was still trying to start it. Whilst we stood there he succeeded in starting the bike so, having now seen the BM was displaying a British licence plate, I couldn't resist asking how big the battery in the chair actually was. 'There isn't a battery in the chair, only this one on the bike' he said, pointing at the small orange battery in the battery box, 'its a Hawker Oddysey'. The four of us hadn't, at that time, heard of Hawker Batteries, but after the demonstration we had just seen, certainly intended to find out what we could about them. The rest of the trip was uneventful, the bike ran faultlessly whilst the cable tied gear change held all the way home. We were confident we knew the problem area's of the outfit now and thus next years trip would be trouble free. Again, how wrong we were.....

Year 4: We selected the 'best' gearbox back from our cache of spares, inspected it by eye as best we could to ensure that nothing was likely to break off this one then changed all the bearings re-assembling and re-shimming the box. We fitted a new Hawker Oddysey battery, removed the 'Torque Starter' from the boot releasing more space for spares and beer, re-placed the remote gear change linkage and worked on fully waterproofing the electrics. The coils were now completely boxed in whilst an improved waterproof membrane was installed in the front of the Acerbis tank to prevent water funnelling through onto the newly sealed coil box. Having had a thorough look at the machine our confidence ran high. This year we felt we had a really good chance of a trouble free run although from previous years experiences we did just wonder what fate might have in store. And it all started off so well.....

The outfit ran better than it ever had, again proving to have more pulling power than a standard 1000cc engined outfit that accompanied us on this trip. Each time we came upon a long steady incline our outfit maintained its cruising speed



of between 75 and 80 mph just by giving it a little more throttle. The standard motor inevitably lost ground on these long inclines. We felt very satisfied, even vindicated, for persevering with this old outfit. The trip to Prague and then down to Solla proved completely uneventful, even giving us time to visit

the Jawa factory and (in a different location) a Jawa Museum. We had a good Elephant and started the return journey with everything running well, however by the time we passed Frankfurt we knew we had a problem. The engine would try to stall if not kept above 2500rpm. The further we travelled, the higher the revs needed to keep the engine running. Prior to this we had easily been keeping pace with a German couple on a trick 'Walther' K100 16v outfit, in fact passing them on one occasion at around 100mph (we were still solo geared). We pulled off the Autobahn to investigate. Once stopped the engine wouldn't restart and appeared to be spinning too easily. It's difficult to check compression without a kick start but our collective view seemed to be that we didn't have a lot. Removing the offside rocker box cover to check the tappet clearance revealed that whilst clearance remained on the inlet valve, the exhaust valve had less than zero clearance and, in fact, the valve was well open on compression. Adjusting it to get the required 8thou clearance needed an estimated 16thou of movement on the tappet. The nearside rocker cover removal (between bike and sidecar) took rather more time but eventually showed the same issue. My assumption was that we were witnessing valve seat recession, a view that didn't get wide acceptance from my fellow travellers. Once the valve clearances had been set the engine started immediately, settling down to its normal 950 rev tick over.

Underway again all ran well until leaving a wine supermarket in Calais (we liked to load up with as much booze as possible) the engine very reluctantly started

but wouldn't tick over. Although we made it to the Port once inside the loading area, waiting for the ferry to dock, the engine died completely and wouldn't start again. There wasn't time to sort it before boarding the Sea France ferry to Dover so the tow rope came in handy again. Once on board the tools came out and the rocker boxes came off. Most of the crossing time was spent waiting for the motor to cool before adjusting the exhaust valves to get some clearance again. My theory on valve seat recession now became accepted as fact. I still find it hard to believe that no one from Sea France challenged us about remaining on the car deck for probably 75% of



the crossing time. The rest of the trip home went without a hitch. It wasn't many days before the heads were off and the damage assessed. Both exhaust valve seats were really badly recessed, so much so that they would certainly have to be replaced. This trip took place just after German petrol stations had ceased sales of leaded petrol, however, as the engine had run several thousand miles on leaded fuel, we felt the build up of lead protection on the valve seats would see us through this trip. It didn't. I believe the reason for this is directly related to the continual high revs at which the engine was run. As mentioned earlier it ran at 5500 to 6000 revs for hours at a time on the Autobahn where the exhaust valve temperatures would have been very high. Had we run at, say, under 4000rpm I suspect we might have got away with it. Fitting unleaded seats appeared to be the answer.....

YEAR 5: During the summer the heads were fitted with unleaded exhaust valve seats, new guides, valves and springs. Things didn't appear to be going too well when, upon trying to start the engine in his local garage after refuelling, Colin heard an ominous metallic noise as he pressed the starter. He realised something was really amiss and fetched his trailer. Once the heads were off the cause of the problem was plain to see. One of the new valve inserts had dropped out and jammed under the valve, bending it badly, fortunately without much further damage to head or piston. Now valve seats in BMW heads are cast in

whereas any replacement seat is simply pressed into a suitably heated head having an interference fit. This one obviously had insufficient interference to hold it in place when it got very hot. The firm that fitted the seats were as concerned as we were about what had happened, soon replacing all the damaged parts free of charge whilst apologising profusely for the trouble and inconvenience.



So, off to the Elephant once more. By now, with a quicker outfit, less refuelling and using the Channel Tunnel we had extended the first days journey as far as Duren (400 miles from home) to try and even up the daily mileages a bit. The second day we went to Eibelstadt

(225 miles) then to Prague (250 miles) before arriving at Solla (150 miles) for the rally. The outfit was flying, certainly going as well as it ever had done. It wasn't until we started the last bit of the return leg that it began to play up, once again stalling at tick-over speeds and being extremely difficult to start when hot. We'd been here before with these symptoms last year when we suffered valve seat recession, but surely with unleaded seats running unleaded petrol this couldn't be happening again? Well actually it could, and was. Once again we had no exhaust valves clearance caused by recession of the seats. How could this be with hardened seats fitted? I believe the answer to this is for either (or both) of the following reasons. 1. The seats fitted were designed for use in car heads which, being water cooled, run lower exhaust valve temperatures. 2. Few vehicles run (once again) under load (the sidecar) for hour upon hour at 5500 to 6000 revs as we were doing. Anyway we made it home under our own steam whilst considering our next move.

Year 6: This turned out to be our most successful year. The previous years valve seat recession had been insufficient to do any real damage to the hardened seats so after re-grinding the valves we were ready to go. Rather than lower the engine speed to avoid last years problems we decided to give it a go on Morris'

Zero Lead 2000 additive, something I was already using in my own 'leaded' machines. The trip was an outstanding success, absolutely no problems and having returned home and checked the valve clearances we found these hadn't changed at all in the 2000+ mile trip. After our first trouble free trip we looked to the future, 'retired' the 1000cc engined R65 and Colin set about building a K100LT with a Velorex for the next trip. Now these early K's really were bullet proof.....weren't they? Er, actually no, but as they say that's another story.



Next, Chris Biddicombe finally sees the light and ditches his Italian junk in favour of British rubbish; an opportunity to buy more spanners. Sorry to say, it's another flippin' Ariel, they're breeding like Guinea pigs.

Beauty and the Beast

As the years roll on and I am one of the many who are not allowed out on my own at the moment (70 plus). The end of last year and a year of riding the back lanes of Somerset and Dorset with the club on my MV 350 Sports it seemed time to get a sit up and beg old single to potter around on. So, what to get? Well, I believe in fate, and as the club resembles a sub-section of the Ariel Club and they are better value than say, a Rudge or Sunbeam, that was one thing in their favour. There was a local dealer with a 350 Red Hunter for sale and he seemed happy to do an exchange (it was a 1949 model a very good year to be born another plus). I believe that an early memory of bike makes for a lot, and often draws you back; you may need to settle back with a drink close at hand for this next part.



In my teens and having passed my test on a Tiger Cub - the first week I fell off with no helmet, resulting in a cut head, broken arm and a trip to Wincanton Memorial Hospital to meet the night sister- My Mum. Was she glad to see me? I still bear the scars!

Not being put off by the minor early mishap and now with a full licence in my hand, a bigger bike was called for, and a scan of *Motorcycle Mechanics* mag showed a chap who had built a Arton -a Sq 4 in a Noton frame (*sounds like the worst of all worlds- ed*). Fate stepped in again as a guy near Mere just happened to have a Sq4 engine and a Norton frame. I had a hacksaw and large hammer and being in my third year as an apprentice panel beater at T Budgens in Wincanton, I had room to build it in the workshop and many other large hammers to hand. Somewhere down the line I also purchased a Mk2 Sq4 for £17 10 shillings and this duly went under the cutting axe; you may need the whisky now! All the running gear was scrapped and let's say there were far fewer engine mountings than it left the factory with. It did find it way to the Isle of man and a trip to Holland in its cafe racing gear with four pipes, before being swapped for a mini car; I had a girlfriend by then (*it's always a woman that spoils our fun-ed*)

So that is why I went down the Ariel path, all those fond memories of my youth. A deal was done and the Ariel replaced the MV in my workshop, but with a second look you see all the bit you missed on first inspection - cracked tyres, most of the wiring loom being purple and tape and a back mudguard mostly full of filler. There I was with a Bedstead and a Lister pump engine in one corner and my immaculate MV Disco Volante in the other -Beauty and the Beast. Well, there was no going back,

Draganfly was added to phone list and a mudguard ordered from main dealer in New Delhi, which never turned up so a trip to our great leader (*say what now?-ed*) at his Ariel Museum/junkyard to check out this cut and bolted up rear section-mudguard. A trip to Feked soon followed and a steel guard for half the Indian



price was obtained off the shelf. So as the sun returned in March the Beast was ready to hit the road and...oh what have I done? Well off we go, and in just a mile or two it just all made sense and just clicked. The motor pulled well and the world was suddenly a better place; for me anyway. Now all I need to do is grow my beard a bit, call the Beast a Bobber, break out of house arrest and be the coolest old git in Yeovil.

See you all soon, best
Chris



Andrew Rae, all-round nice man, but with a strange smoking habit, shares his tale:

Anyone who has been unwise enough to ask will know that in early August I attend the Scots Double and have done so for many years, this entails usually on the first Saturday of the month the Stirling Sections Strathendrick & Trossachs Rally and on the second the Central Scottish National Rally. The S&T at Cultybraggan by Comrie and the National at Blairgowrie Rugby Club, due to space booking problems at Blairgowrie the National was moved forward to the



last Saturday in July for 2018, I cannot stress this enough, that these are two excellent events set in gorgeous countryside, both regularity events with social runs on the Sunday and often further runs during the intervening week.

My custom has been to drive up the Friday before the event this time with the Puch MS50D in the back of the Renault Kangoo with wheelchair access (an easy fit) . Social in the Rugby Club in the evening, we are fed and watered, retire refreshed to the tent. S&T timed starts from 10am on the Saturday (wet as is traditional in Scotland) I have elected for the short and slow option of 70 Miles at 20mph, self-timed lunch stop, remember not to chat too much to avoid being late out. A good run on time with no tech problems and plenty of opportunity to enjoy the views, and at the Dinner and prize presentation that eve I have done fairly well with awards for Best Performance on a Two Stroke and Best Endeavour followed by liquid refreshment.

The rest of the week under wet canvas were social runs on Sunday, Tuesday & Thursday then ready for S&T at Cultybraggan (an ex POW camp for German Officers, oddly most suitable for a VMCC event). Off we go on the Saturday and the Puch is going fine the Pilot malfunctions and misses a turning, so at the evening function, no awards but a nice bottle of Scotch in the raffle was a compensation, this was the day of the photos climbing a steep hairpin along the Glen



Quaich road between Amulree and Kenmore, hard work for a moped, hence the thumbs up. One more social run on the Sunday and then off to St Andrews to Visit with the Outlaws.

Unfortunately both of these events have been cancelled this year for obvious reasons, but why not load up your favourite mount and motor along to the 2021 Scots Double I may see you there, one warning there is a slight risk of contracting mildew (is that a virus ?)



And finally, for this week (I spoil you, I know) we asked friend of the section, John Young (No, not him, the other one. No, not him either, I meant the Brummie one) who you will recall is the slightly crazy bloke that rode a leaky and unreliable Triumph Trident around the USA and survived the experience, to pen a few words especially for us. I recalled his throwaway comment last January when he likened the racing challenges they faced back then to an imagined modern scenario.

Enjoy.

I'm not known outside of my own home for much, but within the Classic Bike world, I guess that I am acknowledged amongst a few folk as "that strange guy who does stuff on the old triples"

Of course that leads to people ask me the obvious question "Why BSA/Triumph triples?" I mean, even when they were new, they hardly set the "world on fire" either as a sales success (only around 35,000 were built over an 8 year production run) or as a reliable everyday means of transport.

Well, I guess there are two answers.

The first is very simple. When I was 17, my first bike was a BSA Bantam. Unlike most of my friends, I had no interest in Japanese bikes or indeed any foreign bikes. To me there was something alluring about British bikes. Of course, by the time I reached 17 in 1977, the only "new" British bike choice left consisted of the last few T160 Tridents, the last few Norton Commandos or the Bonneville - and of the three, it was THE "Three" that was my dream bike. It took another couple of years before I could afford a, by then, 5 year old T150V, but that's where the love affair started.

However, there is another reason and a far more romantic one at that – the racing successes that the bikes achieved. Now I was far too young to have ever seen the race bikes in their "heyday" of 1970/71/72 but I've read the stories and marvelled at what the race team - both riders and fitters - achieved. I've also been lucky enough to get to know many of them over the years through being heavily involved with the TR3OC (Trident and Rocket 3 Owners Club) and despite what you are told in that you should never meet your heroes, none have ever disappointed me – they have all been as great as I imagined they would be.

But why was the racing success so romantic ? Well, to answer that, let's "fast forward" some 50 years from 1970 and set the story into a modern context.

So imagine that Triumph at Hinckley have just launched their new "white hope" – the bike that will "buy them time" to get themselves straight. It's based on a fairly old design from some 40 years ago and they've created this new model by basically sticking another cylinder onto an existing twin cylinder design.

And then, in 6 months, along comes Honda or Yamaha or BMW or Moto Guzzi etc. and launches a bike that immediately makes Triumphs new offering obsolete ...

So, John Bloor decides that he needs to generate interest and then (hopefully) sales by "going racing" – i.e. the old sales technique, "Win on Sunday, sell on Monday"

So, he calls in his engineers and the conversation goes something like this :
“Guys, we’ve got a problem – this new bike isn’t selling well at all so, using this road bike as a base - and you can mess around with the rolling chassis a little - I need you to develop a race bike to win Daytona 200 for us oh, and “race-day” is less than 3 months away. Then when you get back, can you tweak this “race bike” again, so that it is no longer a “200 mile oval charger” but is a bike capable of racing on the short circuits of the UK and Europe – and within a year or so, can you make sure that this (road based) race bike is capable of beating the current Moto G.P. Champion, Marc Marquez on his factory Honda Moto G.P. bike (Because that’s what happened when Cooper beat Agostini and the Factory MV Agusta (twice) back in 1971)

And, you know those “Frenchies” – and we’ve got a big market in France – they love their Endurance Racing, so if you can just tweak it again and win the Bol D’or, that would be good – oh, this year and next year please.”

Now at this point, the engineers start to walk away, thinking “how the f*ck are we going to do this” and they’re just about to walk through the door when John Bloor says :

Oh yes, sorry, I forgot, the Isle of Man ... Enter the bike into every class it’s eligible for and win please ...And if you wouldn’t just mind continuing to win on the I.O.M. for the next 5 years that would be quite useful for our sales.”

Now okay, I’ve made it into a slightly humorous story, but effectively that is what actually happened. Those guys took a road bike, whose roots were firmly established back in 1936 and the Speed Twin, and for 2 or 3 years, took on and beat everything the rest of the world could throw at them.

Now, if that isn’t a good reason to love the triples, I don’t know what is 😊

Of course, there is one final comment to make about myself and my love affair with the triples and that is this.

Back in the late seventies and early eighties, when I gamely soldiered on with my leaky, noisy, unreliable T150V, all my friends with their reliable, shiny and new Japanese bikes used to take great joy in telling me just how rubbish my Trident was.



But, as I finished the Iron Butt Rally back in 2011 on the T150, guess how many Honda CB750s crossed the line with me. When I rode across Alaska and the Yukon in Canada a few years ago, again on the T150, guess how many Z1 Kawasakis I saw. When we competed in the Tuareg Rally in the Sahara on the T150 Wasp, guess how many Suzuki GS750 outfits we saw and riding through Russia over the last few years on a variety of different triples, guess how many Yamaha XS750s I came across

I'll just leave that thought with you 😊😊😊



Thank you everybody for your brilliant contributions, I think this is more interesting than most of the magazines on the shelves! I've even got enough material for the next issue, but if we're still in lockdown by week five I'll need more content, otherwise its back to my stuff- and nobody needs to read that.

Be well, stay safe, miss you all

Paul