

The Cotswold Section

Newsletter



Covid19 Issue 3 Lockdown week 4



We have received a couple of unlikely machines to include:

This appears to be a Spagthorpe Stoat and if I'm not mistaken it has the rare "Road Roller" front wheel conversion. Not a success smoothing the road but turned out to be ideal for making the slot in the road to take tram lines, *Alan Yeomans* – sometime Spagthorpe Marque Registrar

Editor: Reg Eyre KOB I

www.vmcc-cotswold.org or dr.reg.eyre@gmail.com

The purpose of this mailing is to occupy the thoughts of members of the motorcycling fraternity during the current crisis when non-essential riding might be deemed to be unlawful. Articles may be technical, thought provoking, humorous, accompanied by images, etc, but definitely about our hobby of motorcycling. Please feel free to share the contents with any other interested riders and send appropriate material to me at the above email address. Thanks!

From the B190

Thank you for the encouraging comments on the first two issues. Many thanks to those who have submitted stories, and I hope they will have persuaded you to submit your thoughts or reports of your actions.

The second part of the **Virtual Felix Burke Rally**, the questions appear in this issue courtesy of Eric, who is an IAM motorcyclist. There will be another set of questions, for use at checkpoints, published in the next newsletter. Thanks again to Bill and Paul for their contributions and welcome to Tony Page, the perpetual wanderer for his contribution, which will be published soon, probably issue 4.

Reg Eyre KOB

Questions, as promised

Answers are at the end of this Newsletter.

1. Who prepares the Highway Code?
2. In which year was the new Highway Code published?
3. What is the speed limit for vehicle over 7.5 tons on a dual Carriageway?
4. What is the maximum cubic capacity of a motorcycle that can be used by a qualified car driver without the need for Learner plates?
5. Roadcraft states, "We should indicate only when it is of _____ to other road users.
6. What is the distance between Motorway emergency telephones?
7. Which organisation answers the emergency telephones?
8. State the tyre tread requirement for a moped?
9. What do the two numbers refer to on the side of a motorway marker post?
10. Name an instance when driving on the hard shoulder of a motorway is permitted.

From Our New Zealand Correspondent

AMC had plenty of good ideas and made bikes to suit the working family man of his times and my 1954 G3LS is no exception. It is still an honest bike that does what it was originally intended to do and the designers had given thought to the man who preferred – or more likely, could not afford to pay someone else – to do his own maintenance. That it has lasted so long and has plenty of future potential is a testament to the company.

However, AMC had its dark side. In 1990 I bought one of its lesser makes, a 1961 James Flying Cadet with 150ccs of gutless wonder allegedly restored by someone who told me that it was a Captain and that it had a 197cc motor. As the Romans, (and countless lawyers) said, Caveat Emptor which, loosely translated, means “don’t be such a silly bugger”. Over time I discovered that the motive power – a term I use very loosely – was not by Villiers but by AMC itself from an Italian design but anglicised to include BSF and cycle thread fasteners. It seems that AMC and Villiers had had a parting of the ways but legend has it that before long AMC were having such difficulty getting it together that they got Villiers to assemble the engine and in the fullness of time replaced it with genuine Villiers engines. Back in the 1960s I had raced a kart with a Villiers 9E 197 engine that could be made to go surprisingly quickly and Villiers had earned my respect.

The great weakness of the AMC motor is a hefty flywheel magneto keyed on to a tiny crankshaft. The designers inflicted terrible insults on the unsuspecting public in that the

flywheel would chatter thus shearing woodruff keys if you were lucky. If you were unlucky not only would the key shear, but so would the keyway thus ruining the crankshaft and to cap that, the lighting output was outclassed by the residents of the Waitomo caves, (*a reference to a 'glow worm cave in New Zealand – Ed*). Over time I broke two crankshafts and went in search of a third, finally tracking one down at a UK swapmeet thus causing major holdups at Heathrow, Singapore and Sydney airports. When I got this NOS crank home and examined it I found two things. Firstly it had no keyway and secondly it had a left hand thread for the nut that locked the plot together. The second was easy and cheap to fix and I found a supplier of stainless fasteners in the UK who made me a couple but getting a keyway cut was a problem. How this had come about I can only speculate because trying the crankshaft and flywheel without a key just did not work and my best guess is that this was a rogue spare that had somehow got out. The journal where the keyway should have been was hardened to such an extent that milling cutters broke against it and no engineer that I tried would touch it. However, Lady Luck smiled and a contact of a contact turned out to be a toolmaker that had spark erosion facilities and whose employer tolerated homers. Lady Luck's other contribution was to tell me of Loctite, not the usual grades that have been around for decades but a high temperature grade of serious strength that appears to be holding and so we once again had a working bike.

It was too good to last and a visit to a new warrant tester, (*equivalent of a UK MoT – Ed*), found a broken rear spring. AMC designers must have been influenced by the burgeoning scooter market and dressed the bike in similar bodywork. Indeed the centre section is a monocoque assembly of pressings hiding two rear springs anchored at the top under the dual seat and at the bottom on the swinging arm. At first glance the springs cannot be seen but by kneeling on the floor with a powerful light it is possible to look up into the rear wheel cavern and find them. Now what do we do? Get them out I suppose but easier said than done and first the swinging arm must be extracted. This involved much brutality and bad language, as the thing was an interference fit from birth. Removing all the fastenings loosened nothing but finally levers and a big mallet had it clattering on the floor.

Now AMC's next joke was apparent. The springs were like nothing I'd ever seen before, were barrel shaped and had half inch diameter studs at each end that were captive. The broken spring revealed all, as the picture shows.



The studs were closer to poppet valve shape and would have been in place with the spring wound round them. Who made them for AMC is lost in the mists of time and who would remake them now the problem of the moment. By the time this bike was inflicted on a gullible public, AMC had bought, and proceeded to destroy, another proud maker of old, Francis-Barnett. Indeed, you could buy the identical bike in red as a James and in green as a Fanny-B reflecting their dual marketing of AJS and Matchless. There exists in the UK a club devoted to Fanny-Bs with their own spares officer no less. Lady Luck now got into overdrive and introduced me to someone who not only could supply a pair of used springs for a modest price but who had actually “been there, done that”. A few days later the pigeon arrived with two useable springs and nuts. All that remained now was to fit them. The joke was to continue. “Put one end loosely into the upper mounting and the bottom end of the other spring into the swinging arm and manipulate the remaining ends into place” quotes the book. Cue more muscle, scraped knuckles and bad language. Several hours later the remaining ends were in but only with the locating screws on the outer ends of the swinging arm not in place so the whole plot dangled about an inch below its true home. The cure was an old one, leave it alone for a few days until its mood had improved. The swinging arm screws had a tapered lead in and by increasing that taper could be induced to finally go home where they belonged. After tightening everything I truly never want to touch that part ever again. How some poor soul did that twenty times a day on the production line, for piecework where speed matters, baffles me. My best guess is that the aforementioned monocoque bodywork must have been held upside down in a special jig whereby pressure from above on the swingarm compressed the springs into place.

The bike is back on the road and goes like a scalded tortoise although its noise is closer to a tsunami warning. I’ve abandoned the flywheel lighting in favour of a total loss battery system and LED lights that are sufficient to impress the tester yet give a few hours of headlight use. Next problem; it jumps out of second gear. Any takers?

Paul

The Tale of a Motorcycle Suit

Back in 1959 when I acquired my first bike and was a working but impecunious lad, a decent Barbour suit was way out of my reach financially, so I muddled along with all sort of odds and ends in the clothing line. I had two very good pals, Mike and Tony, both of whom were into motorcycles.

One Saturday the conversation got around to clothing and the fact that Mike had just acquired a second hand Barbour jacket. Mike was a salesman in the Caerphilly Motorcycle dealership of Cyril Morgan and someone had sold his bike to the dealer and was giving up motorcycling. Consequently, he didn’t want his Barbour jacket any more so had given it to Mike. After a long discussion, Tony became quite excited and said to me “I’ve got the answer, let’s go to Milletts and buy a WWII flying suit”. I just thought, how is that going to work, one suit and two guys to fit in it? Tony explained that flying suits came in two pieces, an inner suit made of silk and padded out with kapok, and an unlined outer suit for a total cost of 7/6d.

We were soon in possession of a pristine two-piece ex-WD flying suit and had to decide who got which half. Tony, who had the initial idea, got first dabs and chose the inner suit, as he reckoned that it looked warmer. I got the gabardine outer, which had no lining at all. Both Tony and I felt quite chuffed at having some sort of protection on the bikes, all for the princely sum of 3/9d each, not bad at all, even though my outer suit was a tad too large for me.

It wasn't long before Mike suggested that we wire Tony's suit up to his bike, as it was full of the wire type heating elements that are found in an electric blanket. The WWII pilots would plug their suits into the aircraft in order to keep warm at the cold heights that they flew. We sorted one of those little brown plastic, or Bakelite, two pin sockets that were plentiful back in the 50's. Tony had a trials Tiger cub, and the brown socket was fixed to the steering head, using a two pin plug attached to the wires coming out of Tony's suit and Mike and I plugged him in, as he sat astride his Cub.

We kept asking him if he felt any warmer but Tony just kept shaking his head. After ten minutes, Mike suggested starting the bike to see if the alternator could boost the power output, so we ran the bike engine for ages in the hope that things would work. "Must be a break in the wire somewhere inside the suit", said Mike. It wasn't until several months later that we were told that a Cub's 6v system just wouldn't run the suit, as Spitfires etc were all fitted with 24 volt systems. I continued to wear my rather large gabardine part of the suit and Tony continued using his silk inner half.

A problem arose not long afterwards when, out on a run, the weather decided to bucket down. My gabardine suit was not bad at all, but Tony's silk inner, filled with kapok, acted like a sponge, and soaked up oodles of the wet stuff. Not a real problem until Tony got off the bike and the crutch of the suit hung down below his knees with all the water that it had soaked up. If only I'd had a camera in those days.

The idea didn't last long and I got fed up with the fur collar on my suit also soaking up water. Tony, of course never wore his half of the suit again, especially after all the stick he took from the other members of our motorcycle club. Both suit halves soon disappeared – somewhere, but if I ever get a bike that runs on 24v, I know what to do!

Bill Phelps

Thank you Contributors

Greetings Reg, Delighted to receive the Covid 2 Newsletter. Had no idea the Antiques Roadshow Triumph rider was Bill Phelps, congratulations to him. Here's an odd thing my 1925 Calthorpe Model D 350cc which in many respects has a good level of sensible design features and quality, but has a daft rear brake operated by heel. Any explanation? Best regards, *Reg Gladding*

Dear Reg, Thank you for taking the trouble to produce a small but perfectly formed newsletter to brighten these strange days we are experiencing. Just what we need to cheer us up - absolutely!

You asked for contributions; here's a short appeal from me for help with my latest conundrum. The attached pictures show a recently acquired 1925 BSA flat tanker, an E25 according to the V5 but more probably should be L25 as E was allocated to early V-twins I think and this is a 350 OHV single. Anyway to get to the point, somewhere in the mid 1970s whilst being ridden (probably quite hard) by the previous owner it suffered a broken valve. When bought the bike in February this year it looked like picture 1 with two boxes of engine and other parts, not enough to re-build a complete bike but a start at least. If you could please include a 'Wanted' ad in the next newsletter, I'm looking for: 1. Rocker assembly caps - 2 off. See picture 3 close up showing the rockers exposed to the elements at the moment. Caps are BSA part numbers 15-1103 and 15-1104. 2. Valves and springs - inlet and

exhaust, the valves I've fitted that came with the box of bits were different lengths and fastener type. I modified the shorter one by welding on an extension and grinding a recess for the tapered split cotters but the result is not elegant. Valves are supposed to be BSA part no. 15-1188. 3. Carburetor - clamp on type thus not flanged: AMAC, B&B, etc. suitable for 1925 period.

Maybe someone out there can help - here's hoping.

I last saw you at the Banbury as I recall, who knows if it will run this year but if so, hope to see you again. Regards our kid.... *Tony Eyre*



Many thanks Rob/Reg and the contributors – a good read!

In response to Reg's 'Gremlins in the Workshop' – I am compelled to offer my 'Irritations in the Workshop!'

I have always been a tidy person, not OCD, but organised – whether in my past career or in my workshop, I cannot work in muddle or untidiness. My workshop can be described as somewhat forensic, and is always clean and tidy and my 3 benches are always clear after working, (this goes back to my apprentice days at Dowty Group - 'a tidy machine is a tidy mind David') I can hear my instructor say! My irritations start when going to the usual place to find an implement and it is missing!! Someone in the household has taken the said item and not returned it..... the culprit, when rumbled, usually saying in an un-concerned way 'well, I haven't finished with it yet' - JUST PUT IT BACK!!! Also, seeing a clear work surface seems to attract washing baskets, boxes, and most recently – hatching chickens just left there! JUST PUT IT AWAY!!

I'm not turning into a Victor Meldrew (yet) but I can see where it's all going.

Infamy, infamy – they've all got it in for me!! Keep safe, well and TIDY! *David Plews*

I particularly liked the feature on Gremlins. I have my own set in the workshop who are certain to be family members of your set. Strangely, they seem to breed and get more active with each year that passes. Can't think why!

I also note the fear and trepidation that electricians cause. Maybe it's because you can't see what is happening and it is with a) working b) not working c) smoking.

Don't hesitate to ask if I can help. *David*

Image of an unknown machine from Holland with its finder, Lex Biermans



The second image comes from Roger Fogg, “Quite by coincidence I came across some previously unpublished photographs from the MOD showing the same AJS mentioned in Issue 1 under the protection of the military. Not sure quite at which point in your narrative this happened, but I thought might share them with you. I believe the motorised vehicle is in fact a lawn mower, not a Humber scout car of the 7th Armoured Division HQ Company as you might be led to believe.”



I sent this image of my 1913 Motosacoche with Real Classic hat to Rowena Hoseason of Real Classic magazine and they suggest that if you have not heard of the magazine, you can read a free online copy, download it from here:

www.real-classic.co.uk/free-issue/

Quiz answers

- 1 – Home Office
- 2 – 1931
- 3 – 60mph
- 4 – 49cc
- 5 – benefit
- 6 – 1 kilometre
- 7 – Police
- 8 – tread is visible
- 9 – Distance in km from start of motorway and tenths of a km
- 10 – By authorised individuals, highway officers or gantry signs