

# The Cotswold Section of the Vintage Motor Cycle Club



## Newsletter

Issue 94 – February 2014



Photograph of Len and Elvira Ore with the Wallet and Vomit sidecar outfit that travelled far and wide – photo from the Ariel Club

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Copies of the Newsletter can be obtained from our web-site, by letting the editor know that you want to receive it by email or by sending 6 stamped self addressed C5 envelopes to the editor.

**April 2014 deadline is 20<sup>th</sup> March 2014**

## From the B190

This issue of the Newsletter is the editor's way of thanking the readers who responded magnificently to the request for a sidecar issue. Within a day of sending the request for images and articles, I had already received three items. We now had enough to put out this issue a month early. What this enables me to do is change the dates of the two monthly newsletters from Jan, Mar, May, etc. to Feb, Apr, Jun, etc. An advantage is that the Christmas/New Year issue can be prepared in November rather than October!

**Sidecars:** Your editor is a failed sidecar pilot! Although taught by 'a noted expert' on a Panther with double adult sidecar in Brixton, he failed to complete a London – Land's End – John 'O Groats – London run somewhere in North Devon.

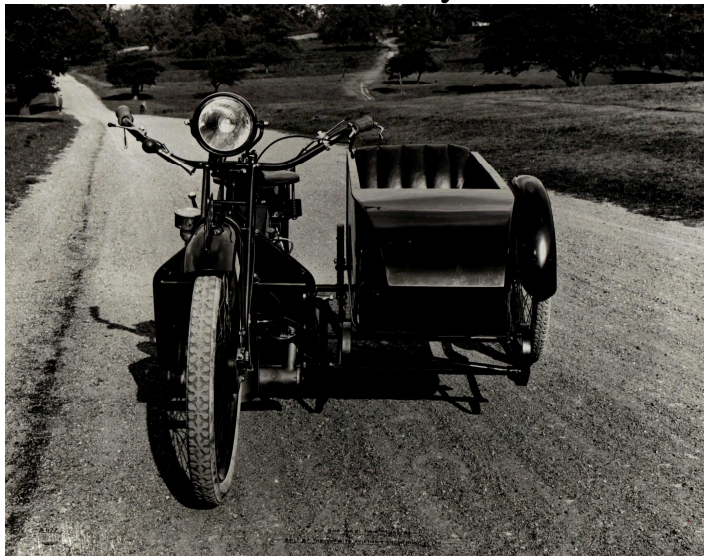
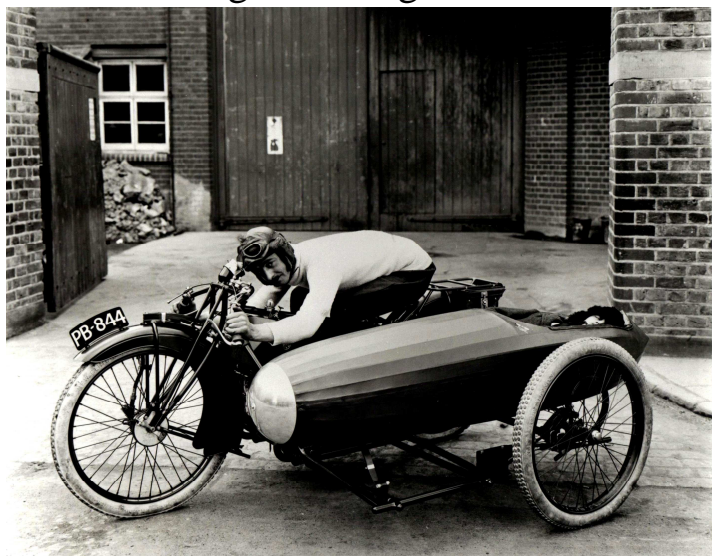
*Reg Eyre KOB*

The next photo shows a motorcycle and sidecar broken down on the flooded road from Stoke Abbot to Beaminster. The Triumph was first registered to C Smith of Stoke Abbot in 1926. The picture is taken from the 'Social History of Motorcycles', published by Halsgrove and written by Roger Fogg.



Roger will be giving a talk, with many slides, at the Flat Tank section on 27<sup>th</sup> March at The Huntsman Inn at Falfield at 8.00pm on the 'Social History of Motorcycles'. All members of the VMCC are welcome.

The following two images are of ABC machines and were sent in by Paul Button.



The image on the left shows Eric Porter with his racing outfit, probably at Brooklands. The other is a more conventional outfit.

### **Family Life**

In days gone by when a motorcyclist had his first child he was forced to attach a chair to his existing mount or trade it in for an already coupled outfit? Seeing as I wasn't born until the late 1970s I can't comment but I do remember many happy miles in the chair as a boy, my Dad's preference was for BSA or Ariel twins but I do also remember the occasional Norton single

Fast forwards thirty years and I too have a son who seems very keen on what he refers to as megabikes so a circa 1950 Swallow Velvet chassis was duly dragged out of a mate's hedge, a minimal sum of money exchanged hands. The original body had long rotted away so I made my own out of thin aluminium and ply; the whole contraption was attached to the side of the long-suffering Velocette Venom, which I had re-built some 15 years earlier. Contrary to common belief the Velocette proved to be an excellent chair-puller with just two drawbacks, the close ratio gearbox made pulling away a somewhat brutal affair and the all-alloy engine with baffle-less fishtail made a fair bit of noise. Because of this latter reason, I never took to the road with my son in the chair, as he is too young to wear earplugs. The Swallow chassis is of wobble-wheel design; this led to some strange road holding when travelling on bumpy country lanes since only the motorcycle wheels had any suspension in the true sense of the word, the sidecar wheel would just wobble a bit to iron out the worst of the pot-holes. Presumably Swallow had designed it with the intention of it being fitted to a rigid-frame bike. The day before the Cassington Bike night in 2013 I took the chair off of the Velocette as I thought it was time to set it free again as a solo.

The hunt was on for a replacement chair-puller. I wanted a 1950s machine as they tended to have frames with substantial sidecar lugs and quiet all-iron engines. The first machine to be viewed in any level of seriousness was a Gold Flash with a

coach-built Watsonian attached. That particular bike had suffered previous owners who appeared to only have pliers and hammers in their toolboxes, not Whitworth spanners so sadly it was not to be.



Matt Little's BSA A10 outfit

A Panther M120 with double-adult chair also provided much food for thought. Even the vendor, (who was considerably heavier than me) could not manage to stir the beast into life. He openly admitted that the worst decision he ever made was swapping a rigid M100 for a swinging-arm M120 – the latter (i.e. the bike he was currently trying to sell) was no more comfortable than the earlier machine yet was far more difficult to start. That was far from a wasted trip as I discovered that I wasn't Yorkshire enough to own a Panther plus I was able to buy a beautiful late-1930s aluminium sports chair that had been lingering unloved under a tarpaulin. My initial intention was to attach the sports chair to either the Velocette or a late-30's Triumph 350 that I've owned for a number of years using the same Swallow chassis that I used with my non-too beautiful homemade chair. Upon getting the chair home the Triumph was quickly discounted, as the Swallow chassis was so much more beefy than the Triumph's bicycle-like frame. Unlike many of their competitors who used parts commonality between 350 and 500cc machines the Triumph 350 shared parts with its 250 sibling hence even though the 350 engine is very willing the lightweight frame doesn't sport sidecar lugs and I don't fancy its chances at staying straight if used to pull a chair for long journeys.



Would this have made a better outfit for Matt? - *Ed*

After mulling over various pre-unit singles and twins a decision was made to purchase a 1959 Gold Flash that had been advertised in Birmingham. I was unable to test-ride the machine before making the decision to buy as I'd taken my toddler with me to view the bike - I was relying on my gut instinct that the seller was a genuine guy. Thankfully my instinct served me well. The BSA proved to be both very smooth and a willing performer on the open road.

Attaching the chair to the Gold Flash was not as straightforward as it had been with the Velocette as BSA failed to furnish the swinging-arm models with sidecar lugs. Period clamp-type brackets were purchased and the combo was soon on the road. To date steering of the BSA combination falls a long way short of the rock-steady Velocette the steering damper needs to be wound on hard to tame the low-speed shakes. Hopefully alignment correction will improve the road holding and enable the steering damper to be slackened.

*Matt Little*

### **Once Bitten - A Sid Car Sidecar Saga**

It came in to the Garage where I worked as a part exchange against a Ford Anglia. It had recently had a brush with something solid that was obvious but nothing serious enough to spoil its fascination to a young and naive motorcyclist.

“Fifteen quid and its yours!” said our salesman recognising a “one born every minute” punter when he saw one.

Yes I was gullible then but not that gullible.

“You must be joking, look at those bent forks. Ten quid?”.

I listened to a load of waffle about soon bending them straight with a bit of pipe. I'd already thought of doing that, (Yes, I was that naive) but ten pounds was two weeks wages and almost my total wealth at the time.

The salesman agonised for all of thirty seconds before grabbing the cash and I became the proud owner of a 1954 BSA Golden Flash and Rankin Double Adult Sidecar.

The deal done, a wave of cold reality swept over me. Could I really straighten the forks out with a bit of pipe and what would Dad say when he found a large motorcycle combination occupying his drive? The answer to the first question was no, as I would soon find out. The answer to the second question was to park it on a friend's drive for the time being, while it was repaired, hopefully giving me time to break the news at a “suitable opportunity”.

Of the horrors committed to the front end of that machine, I shall say nothing thus sparing the blushes of an apprentice car mechanic, an apprentice instrument technician and an apprentice naval engineer but suffice to say the stanchions couldn't be straightened out and second hand ones from the local breaker had to be used. Even then I seem to remember a titanic struggle to compress the springs and get the fork tops on.

How many of you can show photos like these? Dad with his first motorcycle, and mum sitting on dad's bike.



On the way back from the garage where I worked, steering with the damaged forks had been downright dangerous. The myth with sidecars is that at the first left hand bend the novice tries to bank the machine and careers straight on through a hedge. With those forks there was no chance. It was as much as I could do to persuade the plot to go straight at all. Any easing of pressure on the nearside of the handlebars and the thing would lunge violently for the kerb like iron to a magnet. Right turns required a Herculean heave on the bars and praying that the turn would finish before your strength ran out.

After we had replaced the stanchions I could not say it steered perfectly. No matter what we did, it pulled gently but persistently to the left. In the end I just got used to it though to this day I swear it's made my right arm longer than my left.

Now that the device was more or less roadworthy friend Ian and I decided to try it out on a week end trip to Wales.

On the Saturday we would meander our way into North Wales to a lake near Tal-y-Llyn, camp there and spend the evening in a nearby Hostelry where the drink and song flowed well into the early hours. On the Sunday, not too early, we would motor down to Towyn, meet up with a few mates who were riding out from Birmingham that morning and spend the day on the beach. What could be easier or more pleasant but as I said we were young and naive.

The Saturday dawned dry and sunny and and after loading up with everything bar the kitchen sink (but including, for reasons that have disappeared in the mists of time, a neighbour's Alsatian dog, Sheba) ,we pointed the Rankin's blunt nose westward and set off on pleasure bent.

We covered the first thirty miles or so in grand style, although all the extra weight made the steering pull left even more than usual, and it wasn't until we were

somewhere the other side of Bridgenorth that the pedal travel of the rear brake started to increase.

At first I put it down to the extra load and thought little of it but every time I pressed the pedal it moved a little more until suddenly it just kept on going with no resistance whatever.

I pulled onto a convenient verge so we could try and sort the problem out. Now you don't get a lot for ten pounds, not even then, and part of the lot I didn't get was a rear stand, so while Ian searched the fields and ditches for bricks etc, I went to let Sheba stretch her legs. That was when I discovered that Sheba:-

- a. Suffered from travel sickness.
- b. Had had a good breakfast.
- c. Had rendered all the maps, spare gloves, etc we had put out of the way on the parcel shelf unusable.

After we had walked the poor hound, given it a drink and baled out the parcel shelf we turned our attentions to the offending brake. With a struggle and near hernia apiece we managed to wedge enough stones and bits of wood under the frame to get the back wheel clear of the ground. Another struggle and the expenditure of a great many expletives and we had the wheel out. The puzzle of the increasing pedal travel was solved when we removed the back plate from the drum and the brake linings or what was left of them fell into the grass.



Photos from Bill Craswell's camera

Given the trouble I had stopping the plot with two brakes, (no luxuries like a sidecar brake here); tackling the mountains of Wales with only one was out of the question. Reluctantly we decided to proceed on to Clun, not far away, have lunch, then make our way home.

We reached Clun safely enough though the stopping distance was akin to that of the Queen Mary. However as I tried to negotiate a line of parked cars an oncoming car appeared round the far corner. No problem I thought. Cat in Hell's chance of stopping but I'll just nip in behind that Austin 1100 (Austin America?), let the car pass, swerve back out and on we go rejoicing. Well parts one and two of the manoeuvre went as planned but I could have done with another inch or two of

clearance to get past the 1100. As it was there was a loud thud as the knock off hub cap on the Rankin attacked the rear bumper of the 1100.

“I thought you were too close” said Ian in an irritating, pleased to be proved right, tone of voice.

“Why the bloody hell didn’t you say so” I grumbled as I tried to pull up within walking distance of the 1100. “Get the dog out in case this bloke turns nasty.” Not that there was a trace of aggression in Sheba but I reckoned while she was throwing up on this blokes foot we’d have chance to leg it. Fortunately Sheba was not called upon to sacrifice what little food she’d managed to hang onto as the owner of the now somewhat battered 1100 was politeness itself and seemed rather bemused by the fact that his rear bumper was now bent with a large dent in it while the Rankin’s only sign of contact was a now very shiny aluminium hub cap. Names and addresses having been duly exchanged we decided to call it a day and turned for home. Depressing for us but the best news the dog had heard all day. The drive home was slow but uneventful and I never did get to Wales with that outfit. I put some more brake shoes (second hand) on it and kept it for a couple of months eventually selling it to a family from Quarry Bank for £50. They were delighted with it and the new owner said he’d soon sort out the steering. I wished him luck but as I watched him trundle off down the road I knew it would not be the last outfit I’d own. The bug had bitten and there’s no known cure.

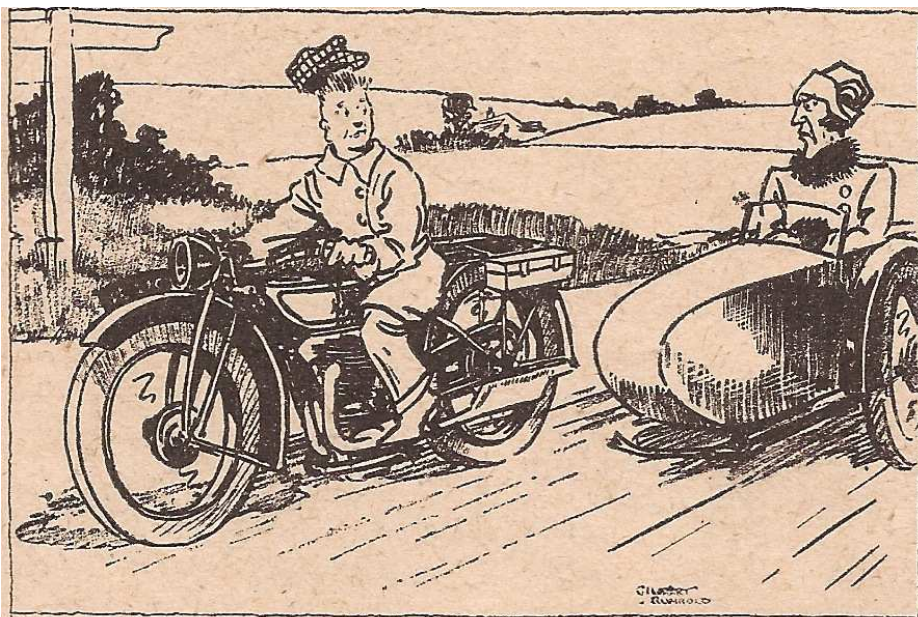
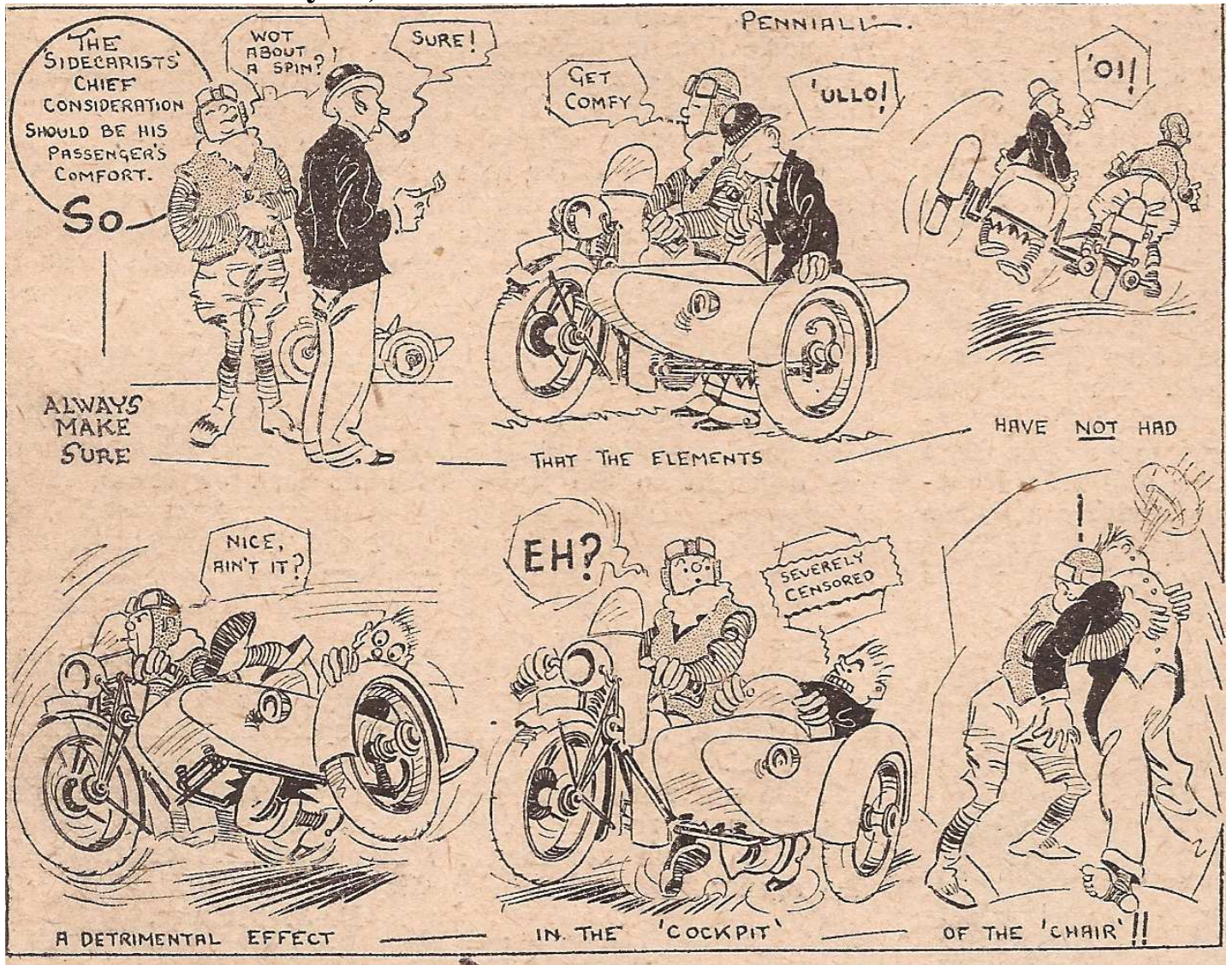
*Sid Car*



Len Ore with a lucky(?) passenger and John Mitchell’s outfit – both Ariels



From The Motor Cycle, 1928



These show an interesting humour, which we no longer see today.

**PERTINENT PREDICAMENTS.—No. 6.**  
The sidecar which came adrift on mother-in-law's first trip.



I thought this was an early Felix Burke Road Trial, but with a date of April 1928, I think it could be earlier? Is this why the Rambler's groups don't want us to use their green lanes?

### From a modern Felix Burke Road Trial



Corina and daughter – Starting them young – hopeless with the questions!

### A Bit on the Side

When flapper-bracket's out of date  
 And comfort is the need  
 It's time to fit a sidecar and  
 Insult your precious steed

In early days a wicker chair  
 Could grace the extra wheel  
 But mother-in-law or portly wife  
 Would tell you what they feel

"A comfy seat at least" they said  
 "A door" they made it plain  
 "A screen and then perhaps a roof  
 To keep out wind and rain"

It's going to take a lot more space  
 To garage it at night  
 And then of course you have to learn  
 The way to drive it right!

Those solo days are over now  
 No swinging through the bends  
 Though when it comes to giving lifts  
 You'll have a lot more friends!

But if you have no heart for this  
 Don't fancy driving far  
 Then best to sell the thing old chap  
 And buy a b\*\*\*\*y car!

*Oje Ryfer*

During the snows of a couple of years ago, my friend Bryn couldn't get out of his rural Surrey road on or in any of his vehicles, which included BMW GS1150, various solo Ariel singles and an Audi A4. His Ural outfit however, made short work of the task. It became the family transport 'for a while'.



*Tony Page*

### **BMW with sidecar for use on either side – A bit on either side!**

A friend built the outfit to take his wife and luggage to Morocco. Unfortunately she died shortly after he built it. He sold it to me at a very fair price because he felt that we would use it as intended. We have not taken it to Morocco but have toured extensively in the UK and on the continent.

The bike is a 1983 BMW 800 ST, the road going version of the first of the 'trail' bikes from BMW. Swinging arm with mono shock, rather than a swinging fork with twin units.



**In the Lakes and on an Alpine Pass**

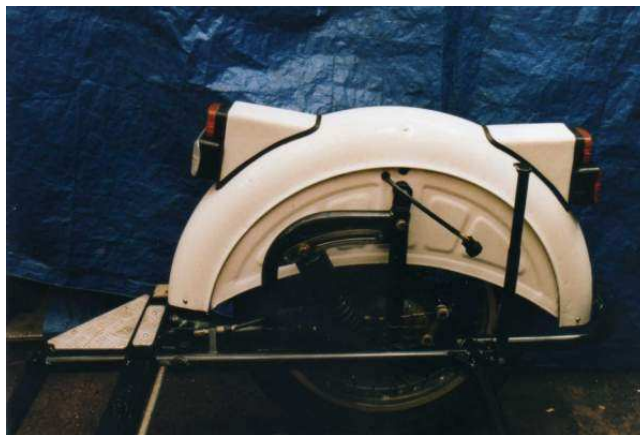
When built, as an outfit, it had a modified Jawa chassis using a BMW bevel box less the input gear so the sidecar wheel matched the machine's 18" rear wheel and a spare wheel. Leading link forks, 800cc engine, standard gearing, and Ural body

with rust. We have fitted 1000cc barrels with modified cylinder heads including twin plugs, as there is no alternative gearing available. We get between 45 and 50mpg. Riding normally in the 50s.

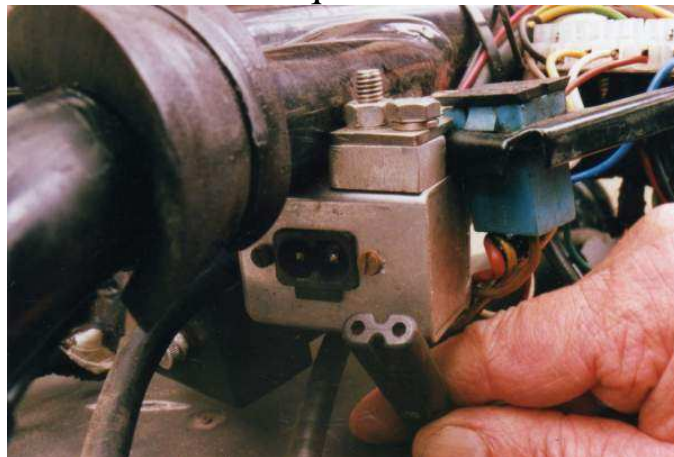
It was OK but over geared, under braked and the chassis started to bend. All the essential bits were there, to make a grand touring outfit. I had ridden abroad many times with a left hand sidecar but the disadvantages of, needing to re-align for reasonable handling, squeals from the sidecar when stuck out so the driver could see etc. were a little off putting and hard work.

What, we felt, was needed was a reasonably quick way of swopping the sidecar to the right side. So I did!

Starting with steel tube a basic rectangle was formed (All chassis welding done by my, very accommodating, local spiral staircase maker. I would go out with a bundle of bits, set it up on their welding table, say, "weld there, there and there please", couple of quid in the tea box, "Thanks! See you next time." A slimmed down BMW swinging arm, a `U' piece made from sidecar fittings to carry mudguard and top of suspension unit with Velocette type adjustment completed the kit.



The bike was modified by two ball fittings welded to the frame and an eye below the saddle, at the same height and distance apart on both sides. A single eye across the two down tubes, below the steering head, was used for the front top fixing. The off side footrest was fitted to the ball on the required side.



Electrics: mudguard has matching lights, stop/tail plus winkers. Lamp glasses from Land Rover, when exchanged - stop lamp becomes bright side light on main-beam. Winkers reinsert two-pin plug at rear of tank. All happens when plug

connections are re connected on opposite side. Only change to electrics: swap sidelight/rear light glasses and move winker units to opposite side of bike  
In use the top of the chassis on one side becomes the bottom on the other, the `U' loop bolted on whichever is the top. Mudguard is reversed. Sidecar brake pedal needs to be swopped with the connecting point to reverse action. No realignment of bike to sidecar needed.

Change over takes me about an hour at home. All controls stay the same in use except that the sidecar 8" brake is under the opposite foot. Handling is the best I have had in nearly 60 years of riding outfits, very light steering, and with a new Avon triple duty on the front no steering damper needed. The difference in driving right or left is completely instinctive and much easier than driving on the right with a left hand sidecar.



Sue was having difficulty getting out of the sidecar after a long ride, so I built the present body which she can step into and then sit down in the car seat.

We feel that the whole exercise was well worth the effort.

*Dave Boon*

### **Running a single gear sidecar outfit**

Most people who find out that I ride a single speeder with a sidecar attached usually raise their eyebrows and probably think I'm barmy, but it was the norm back at the turn of the last century and not as difficult as many think.



**Back to the beginning, Bill and Jean Phelps with their 1908 Triumph outfit**

My introduction to this type of transport came when I met Doug Bailey in 1959, just after joining the VMCC. At the time Doug owned and used a 1911 Triumph fitted with a sidecar. Doug had no problem at all with the outfit and rode many a Saundersfoot, when Gloucester was the start. He even attempted the Founders Cup route through Pendine and Amroth.

Back in the 1960's, Doug used to loan me his outfit (we did that in those days) and I certainly became enthusiastic about it. In fact I rode the outfit in several Cotswold road trials in the 1960's and won best single gear performance in 1964.

Needless to say I wanted my own outfit and was running a 1923 Triumph and chair during the 60's. It was not until 1970 when, as Triumph Marque Specialist, I was asked to date a bike. It was 1908, and in my reply I said to let me know if it ever came up for sale. A year later I had a letter offering me the bike. The price was £250.00. I needed to raise the money so offered a 1913 James that I had, and wasn't interested in, to Don Mitchell for that amount. Don very excitedly asked for 24 hours to sell his caravan, which he did, and the next day I made the necessary arrangements to complete the deal. The vendor agreed to travel from Liverpool to the Stafford junction of the M6, Don travelled from Leicester and myself from Cardiff. £250 went one way, a Veteran James another, whilst I loaded the Triumph into my car – I had, at last, a 1908 single speed Triumph.

After restoration I made a copy of Doug's Mills and Fulford sidecar and, as the saying goes, never looked back.

Over the past 40 odd years I've ridden the outfit in many events, both at home and on the continent. It's completed many an Anglo-Dutch, Banbury, Flat Tank Weekend and has been seen in Holland plus the Oude Klepper every year, and even a weekend event at a club in Antwerp.

Needless to say this is not the only sidecar outfit in my garage, I have owned, and ridden hard, a 1959 Tiger 110 and Steib for the past 50 years and only recently handed back to the VMCC the 1923 P&M and sidecar that I had on loan for two years or more.

Over the years the bike has proved Triumph reliability, although I have had the rear wheel and on another occasion the sidecar wheel collapse when riding – makes for exciting stuff, I can tell you. Even the sidecar mudguard fell off on one of the VMCC Internationals.

Due to my age – not the bikes, I hasten to add – I find it harder to pedal and push the outfit up hills, when needed, despite the help of my long suffering wife. But I haven't quite given up yet as there is just too much enjoyment still to be had!!

*Bill Phelps*

**2014 is a very special year for the Cotswold Section** as it is our Diamond Jubilee (60 years) celebratory anniversary.

One heck of an achievement and it says volumes for the members over the years that have contributed to the club in all ways to reach this milestone.

This year will be marked with a special Celebration day on July 12<sup>th</sup>; the Cotswold Road Trial (Felix Burke) will also be the 60<sup>th</sup> running of the event, the Signpost Rally, the Cotswold Weekend Trial, Touring Week and finishes in the autumn with the Night Trial. Make sure your bikes are in fine fettle for a busy riding year.

Let's hope that the weather joins in with the spirit of the Diamond year and provides end-to-end sunshine at least for all of our rides.

*Brian*



One for the 'purists'?

# COTSWOLD SECTION CALENDAR - JANUARY 2014 to APRIL 2014

## January 2014

26 <sup>th</sup>	Winter Wandering	The Haw Bridge Inn, Tirley, Gloucester
28 <sup>th</sup>	Committee Meeting	Churchdown Club, Church Rd., Churchdown
29 <sup>th</sup>	Quiz Night	Churchdown Club, Church Rd., Churchdown

## February

5 <sup>th</sup>	Club Night	Churchdown Club, Church Rd., Churchdown
12 <sup>th</sup>	Club Night	Churchdown Club, Church Rd., Churchdown
16 <sup>th</sup>	Winter Wandering	The Gloucester Old Spot Inn, Piffs Elm, Cheltenham
19 <sup>th</sup>	Understanding modern Aero Engines - Mike Tennett (ex Rolls-Royce plc)	Churchdown Club, Church Rd., Churchdown
25 <sup>th</sup>	Committee Meeting	Churchdown Club, Church Rd., Churchdown
26 <sup>th</sup>	Chris Roberts' Picture Quiz	Churchdown Club, Church Rd., Churchdown

## March

5 <sup>th</sup>	Club Night	Churchdown Club, Church Rd., Churchdown
12 <sup>th</sup>	Club Night	Churchdown Club, Church Rd., Churchdown
16 <sup>th</sup>	Winter Wandering	The Carpenters Arms, Miserden, Stroud
19 <sup>th</sup>	St Patrick's Night Quiz	Churchdown Club, Church Rd., Churchdown

## 20<sup>th</sup> DEADLINE FOR APRIL 2014 NEWSLETTER

25 <sup>th</sup>	Committee Meeting	Churchdown Club, Church Rd., Churchdown
26 <sup>th</sup>	My French Veteran motorcycle - Vic Blake	Churchdown Club, Church Rd., Churchdown

## April

2 <sup>nd</sup>	Mid-Week Social Run	The Aviator Inn, Gloucestershire Airport, Staverton, Cheltenham
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Mid-Week Rally	The Aviator Inn, Staverton, Cheltenham
5 <sup>th</sup>	Felix Burke Weekend Social Run	Andoversford Sports & Social Club, Templefields, Andoversford, Cheltenham
6 <sup>th</sup>	60th (Felix Burke Memorial) Cotswold Road Trial	Andoversford Village Hall, Crossfields, Andoversford, Cheltenham
9 <sup>th</sup>	Mid-Week Rally	The Highwayman Inn, Winstone, Cheltenham
13 <sup>th</sup>	Breakfast Run to Three Shires Garden Centre at Newent	M&S BP Service Station, Barnwood Road, Gloucester
16 <sup>th</sup>	Mid-Week Rally	The Kings Head Inn, Birdwood, Gloucester
23 <sup>rd</sup>	Mid-Week Rally	The Lower Lode Inn, Forthampton, Gloucester
27 <sup>th</sup>	Summer Meeting	The Royal Spring Inn, Lower Lydbrook
29 <sup>th</sup>	Committee Meeting	Churchdown Club, Church Rd., Churchdown
30 <sup>th</sup>	Club Night	The Haw Bridge Inn, Tirley, Gloucester