

North Birmingham News

NEWSLETTER

JOSIE'S JAUNT

The day had arrived Sunday 10th June for my first Josie's Jaunt, with a very good turnout of some 25 riders signing on at Lichfield for the day, equalling the new years day run for numbers.

The machines ranging from 1927 to 1981 with 11 manufacturers represented.

Moto Guzzi 3, BSA 5, Triumph 7, Honda 2, Greeves 1, BMW 2, Ariel 1, AJS/Matchless 2, Sunbeam 1, Velocette 1.

The 1950's being the most popular with 9 machines.

It was wonderful to see Ian Harris looking well and back in action again so soon after his operation. (photograph on page 3)

The route started with a short run of main road work until we turned off onto the quieter lanes which took us through some beautiful countryside. En-route Maurice Hardy's Triumph decided it needed a few adjustments, and at same time Maurice Trupp's Ariel decided to "Stop" as well (out with the toolkit). After a few minutes both machines were back in action.



The lunch stop was at Hartington, a small but very busy village with its own duck pond, cheese shop and of course a pub.

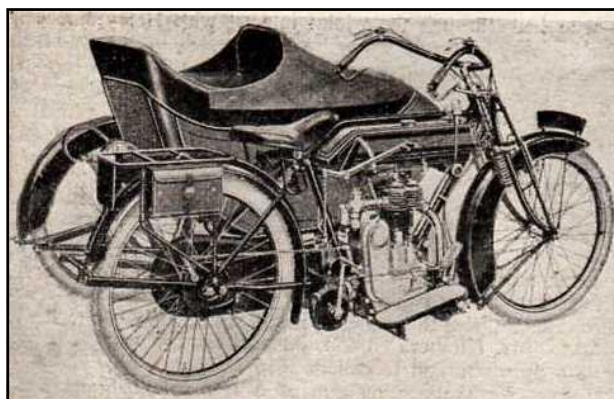
The afternoon run took us to the M&C Collection of Historic Vehicles at Bakewell. The collection has been put together by Phil Mather and Phil Crosby. The machines included the mundane "Get you to work" bike to the exotic sports tourer; from trials bikes and scramblers to speedway and racing machines totalling over 40 exhibits along with some period memorabilia. The era of the machines is from 1900 to the mid 1970's. We were served tea and biscuits ready for our return journey home, although the swimming pool did look very tempting. A really good day out, thanks to Josie for organising everything so well, even the weather!!



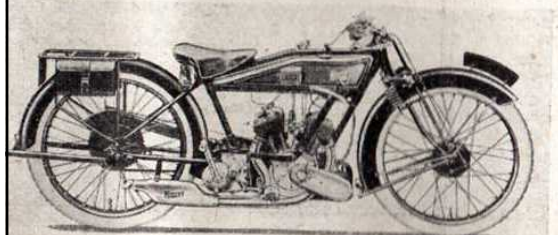
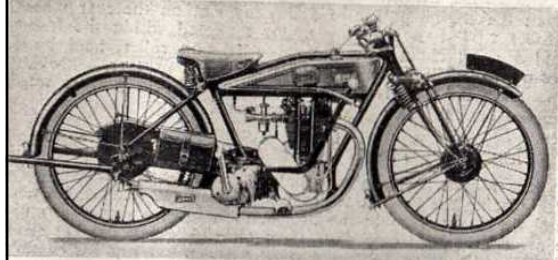
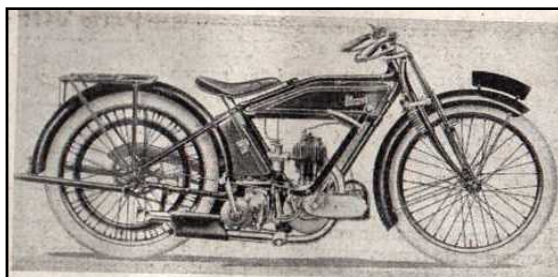
Julian

Part Two of The Story Behind The Name "JAMES"

In 1913 the James company began making their own design of two strokes, a 2 1/4hp chain-cum belt model that ran extremely well and which paired up with the 4 1/4hp 600cc model 6 side valve single that earned high praise, especially from sidecar users, which James were now producing having acquired from Meade ND Deakin the right to manufacture under licence the very popular "Canolet Model" which was marketed up until 1931.



The outfit that won many an enthusiast's heart in pre-Kaiser war days—the 4 1/4 h.p. "Big Single," paired with a James-built "Canolet" sidecar.



The three pictures above typify the 1927 James range — (top) a 250 c.c. side-valve, (centre) a 350 c.c. o.h.v. and the most famous "Famous James"—the 3 1/2 h.p., 500 c.c. "Twin Solo."

Having catered for the lightweight rider with the two stroke models and the combination enthusiast the big single engine, James went on to produce machines for the soloist, and after a year work in various reliability events produced for 1914 produced what was to become their most famous machine the model 7 a 500cc "Twin Solo."

This machine was gentle, smooth and efficient motorcycle which became an instant hit. It's 50 degree cylinders (64x77mm) were interchangeable and the quality of the workmanship in the power unit, the three speed gearbox, enclosed drive, frame and cycle parts was second to none.

The first model had a normal rectangular shaped tank with stirrup and belt rim brakes, but later when the wedge shaped tank and drum brakes were introduced the machine the two models were one of the prettiest machines ever built.

A trio of "Twin Solos" were modified and entered by the company in the 1921 Senior TT, the riders being J.Lidstone, G.E. Stobart and G.A. Strange.

The 1914-1918 war saw few motorcycles emerging Greet, the factory mainly producing ammunition, although a number of special 6hp despatch rider mounts were supplied to the Belgian and Russian forces.

A stroke of bad luck occurred after the War, while other factories were enjoying the boom that followed the hostilities motorcycle prices soared to astonishing new heights. A disastrous fire in 1920 had completely gutted the new factory and it was not until 1922 that a new motorcycle appeared on the market. This was the Model 7, a very luxurious 7hp twin made specially for sidecar work and having QD wheels, with a spare available as an extra if required. This was followed by a succession of medium weight singles a 350cc side valve, a 250cc version, then the first o.h.v. James, a 90 degree-valve push rod job with coil rocker return springs. All these models performed well in trials, and a notable "works" driver of combinations at that time was George Kimberley—no relation to the "gaffer".

The last of the James twins was undoubtedly the most exciting machine ever produced by the factory. It was the o.h.v. 500 cc model, first shown at Olympia in 1928. How I coveted one of those silky, swift little machines, especially after I had conducted a "Motor Cycling" road test of the 1929 crack at the speedway, and this engine was often seen in action at tracks such as Stamford Bridge and the White City.

Then came the slump of the 1930s. One after another established names "folded up". One was the Baker, who had earlier made a great reputation as the designer of the Beardmore-Precision. The Baker business was acquired by James in 1930 and the black and white lightweights were, for a time, produced at Greet.

Sales, however, became more and more difficult and, like others who kept their heads above the troubled waters, the James directors had to retrench.

They abandoned the policy of making their own engines and gearboxes and also decided that the future, for them at any rate, lay mainly in the light-weight utility field.

Back in 1921 experiments had been conducted with an autocycle and a modernised edition of this was added to a range that consisted of Villiers engine two strokes, all very well made and priced in line with the competition. It was one of these models the M.L. that was adapted for use by the airborne forces during WWII, nearly 6000 machines were produced but the war work at James from 1939 to 1945 was concerned mainly with shells, aircraft fittings and other armoument components. This effort was severely hampered in 1940 by the Blitz. In Birmingham most of the James factory was damaged. Rapid rebuilding took place but all of the old records, catalogues, photographs had been lost.

The M.L (Military Lightweight) was a development of a pre-war design adapted for military use with the intention that it be dropped from an aircraft for use in the period after the D-Day landings to allow airborne troops greater mobility. The M.L. was nicknamed the Clockwork Mouse.

After the war production was limited by raw materials shortages and the need to consign almost all production to the export market. There were only two models ready for production - the autocycle and the M.L. Both models were developed a little over the next couple of years but it was not until the 1949 season that new models became available.

In the early fifties the company was bought by A.M.C. the makers of Matchless and AJS motorcycles. They bought also the Francis-Barnett company and the next few years saw considerable badge-engineering although, right to the end, each make kept some models distinct from the other. A full range of models was produced through the fifties and sixties in capacities up to 250cc and the range included a scooter to try to capture some of that market which had blossomed in the late fifties. Unfortunately it was the wrong design too late and though a wonderful machine it must have cost the company dear in development.

The James was known, post war, as a ride to work machine. There were a couple of sporty models but in the main they were honest, reliable, well designed bikes with few frills.

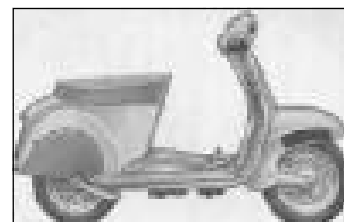
The decision, by A.M.C., to design and build their own range of two stroke engines has been criticised by many. Costs will have been considerable. The programme began in the mid-fifties when motorcycle sales were buoyant and both James and Francis-Barnett made use of them in large numbers, but the engines did not have much, if any, advantage over their Villiers equivalents and reliability was questionable.

Around 1962 some of the engines (150cc and 199cc anyway) were assembled by Villiers in the hope, presumably, that the two-stroke experts could put right some of the faults.

When the factory gates finally closed in 1966 it brought to an end a long line of highly regarded motorcycles.



1948 James M.L.



1961-64 Scooter

A few more photographs from Bakewell.



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Local Events / AOB

Arley Vintage Vehicle Rally– Arley village
Hall-Nr Shatterford 27th August
Vintage Vehicle Rally-Holbeach Farm-
Trimpey-Nr Bewdley 5th August
Far Forest Show near Bewdley (Callow
Hill) 12th August

F O R T H C O M I N G A T T R A C T I O N S F O R 2 0 0 7

	CLUB NIGHTS
JULY 25th	Fish and Chip Supper
AUGUST 29th	Arrive on Your Bike Night
SEPTEMBER 26th	A talk and slide show on “International trials riding” by Scott Ellis
OCTOBER 31st	Slide show by Stephen Mills on the History and development of Morgan, AJS, Austin 7, and the pocket watch.
NOVEMBER 28th	Bring and Buy evening
DECEMBER 26th	No Meeting

CLUB RUNS

DATE	RUN	ORGANISER	Tel No
July 29th	Long Mynd Run	Ian Harris	01952-299118
August 5th	Breakfast Run	Rob Pell	0121-624-7674
August 19th	Picnic / Concours Run	Peter Ashen	01562-882854
September 9th	Flight of Fantasy Run	Trevor Bull	01905-778917
September 16th	Levis Cup Road Trial		
September 30th	Clun Run	Paul Harris	01952-299118
October 14th	Autumn Run	Andy Briggs	0121-544-5938