

# North Birmingham News

## NEWSLETTER

### **New Years Day Run**

The New Year started with a very grey and misty day, but with a fantastic 29 signing on for the New Year's Day Run. I can't remember having so many sign on for any run for quite a few years, I hope it continues. Amongst those 29 were 3 Vintage including Maurice Trupp on his Scott and Brian & Pat Empsall with their 1928 Triumph outfit, we also had 2 Post Vintage and the rest were Post War machines. It was nice to see that there were also quite a few visitors and spectators who came along to admire the bikes and wave the riders off on their way.

I decided to use last year's routes, with 2 routes going out in a figure of eight pattern through Claverley and Worfield towards Badger, and then returned in the same manner still crossing each other back to the Hollybush. Even though most riders knew of the two routes, it still caught people out, and was still entertaining to watch as the riders met in opposing directions or passed at junctions with some looking very bemused. There were a few late arrivals who managed to catch up; Mark Homer arrived on a 1932 Sunbeam Lion with Mick Jones riding in the attached sidecar, and Paul Harris on his BSA also caught up and arrived at Worfield desperately trying to work out who to follow as riders disappeared in various directions.

Most arrived safely back at the Hollybush, although there were problems for some, one with a puncture, one who ran out of petrol and one who was stuck in 3<sup>rd</sup> gear and headed straight home. The rest of us gathered in the pub and met up with friends and family to enjoy a drink, a chat, and for some a well earned meal by the fire before heading home.

Thanks to everyone that turned up, whether on 2 wheels or 4, I hope you all enjoyed the day, and perhaps next year we can top the 30 mark for signing on.

*Josie*

*29 riders joined us for the New Year's Day Run*





## From the Archives

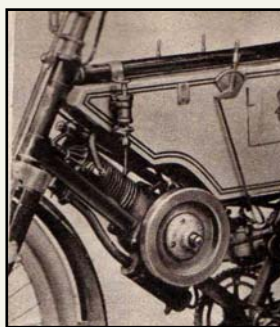
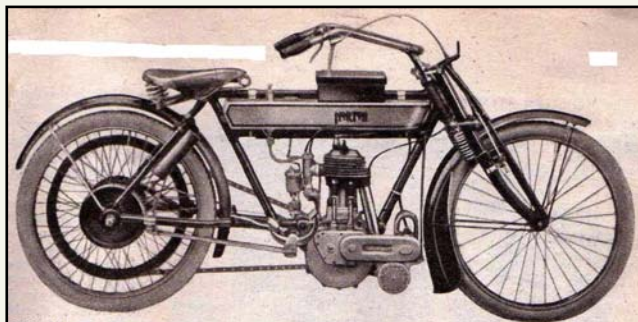
### The Norton Story up to 1957

With a faith in the future of motorcycling, as other names disappeared, Norton carries on production through the middle years of the first decade of the century under his own name, a decision probably encouraged by the fact that his products were liable to be blamed for deficiencies in design by the other makers who utilised them. His lightweight, marketed as the Norton Energette, was now fitted with a little Swiss-designed Moto Reve engine, a tiny V-twin which he obtained from Basil Feeny who was building the Moto Reve in Action, West London. The larger machines had Peugeot engines, singles or V-twins, with automatic inlet valves, and it was one of the latter, ridden by private owner H. Rem Fowler, which



*Rem Fowler aboard his 1907 twin. This picture was taken in a hurry as the magneto has been mounted back to front. This machine made the fastest lap of the first TT in 1907 and won the twin class.*

achieved for the name of Norton a place of honour in our history by winning the twin-cylinder class and the Hele Shaw Trophy in the first Tourist Trophy Race in the Isle of Man in 1907. It also helped to found the tradition that Norton racers were built to standard specification, the same as you could buy, even down to that silver and black tank. Norton's machines had by this time, grown right away from their pedal cycle ancestry, other than in the retention of pedal gear, the engine being mounted low and far forward with a very long frame and tank. "Ferrets" we called them, until most other manufacturers adopted similar designs, to give the motorcycle a shape it retained to the end of the Vintage years.



*( Above )  
The 1910 Roc 2-speeder and  
( Left )  
The original Norton had this  
1 3/4h.p. Clement engine*

Meanwhile, back at Birmingham, Mr. Norton had been lavishing his attention on an engine of his own design, and it was duly introduced in 1908. Known as the "Big Four" it was a long-stroke single of 82 mm. bore by 120 mm. stroke (633 c.c.) and had mechanically-operated side valves, with such telling points as an air space between them and the cylinder.

And so the long, low, frame and the long-stroke single cylinder engine, the hall-mark of the vintage motorcycle became an accepted fact, and that frame just asked for a countershaft gear box, and got it eventually, while by the time the sport had decided on cylinder capacity classification (instead of single and twin classes) there was a 70 bore by 100 mm. stroke (490 c.c.) edition called the "3 1/2". The two models were to form the basis of the entire range in later years, and were to stay in production till 1954. At the end of the first decade of the century, the little Norton Manufacturing Co. Was at Deritend Bridge, Floodgate Street, Birmingham, with a range still including Part three  
to be con-  
the Norton made engines, and with Mr. tinued  
Wall's Roc rear hub-gear under the name next  
Nortoroc. month

# AGM and annual awards



1. Jim Boulton Award most runs on a vintage machine :- Brian and Pat Empsall
2. The Post Vintage Award :- Roger Greening
3. The Post War Award:- Maurice Hardy
4. The Tiddler Cup :- Alan Jinks
5. The VMCC NBS Award for the most runs within the section on any machine :- Paul Harris
6. The Harold Scott Award for outstanding service to our section ( for his work on the Levis) :- Paul Harris

## Small Ads Section



Bruce Harrison still has available his route map holder for anyone preparing for this years season. Please contact Bruce on 01902-884224.

For Sale:- Royal Enfield Continental GT. Older restoration.£2150  
Tel Malcolm 01902-721982

## Recommendations of local suppliers

**ORDER ONLINE NOW : [www.racelubricants.co.uk](http://www.racelubricants.co.uk)**

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RACE INDUSTRIAL (PRODUCTS) LTD - BRIERLEY HILL - DYS 1QA

If anyone is interested Russell Hale has secured a discount on Castrol products which members may be interested in. Details are available on the club notice board. A full catalogue is available of all the Castrol range.



## John Round's Story of how he became interested in the VMCC

How I came to join the Vintage Motorcycle Club was as follows.

My brother Charles ('our Charlie') was attending a caravan club rally (June 1954) at a farm near Berkswell, not far from where the Motorcycle Museum is now, and was told that there was a gathering of old motorcycles and that they could be observed descending 'Fish Hill' (up from Broadway in the Cotswolds). I think Charlie went with his wife (Grace), brother-in-law (Arthur Patstone) and Arthur's wife and Grace's sister (Maisie).

The next day he enthused about the old machines he had seen, in particular an old Collers Matchless like Dad used to own and an unusual motorcycle which he described as three wheels in line with the engine mounted on the two front "Bogey" wheels, surmounted by a larger copper cylinder of hot water! He was of course describing the 1901 4 1/4 HP Slinger ridden by J.P. Smith from Keighley in Yorkshire.

In June 1955, on the third Saturday in the month, Charlie happened to mention to me that the "old bikes" would be performing again the next day. (It was the annual "Banbury" Run of the Vintage Motorcycle Club – V.M.C.C.) – normally held on the third Sunday of June each year. Charlie told me to meet him at the farm near Berkswell where the caravan club 'Meet' was being held. Christine my fiancé and I went in my Ford Consul and Charlie, Grace and all the "Patstones", (they had two sons Neville and Dennis), went to Middle Tysoe near the bottom of Sunrising Hill.

It was a glorious day and we had a picnic on the side of the road. Eventually a man appeared on a new red scooter, Dennis explained it was a German scooter – a 150cc kick-start Zundapp Bella and they had been importing them since 1954. Then a man appeared on a four-cylinder Royal Enfield – this was an experimental model ridden by Ivor Mutton from Redditch. Ivor is the originator of the Banbury run. We then realized that the best vantage point to observe the bikes was Sunrising Hill. So we went there and were soon helping a young lad to start his bike. We had to take the magnet apart, clean it, and put it together with the result that he had only a very weak spark. We closed the plug points down to a few thousandths of an inch and away he went. I remember it was a 1921 Vindec, ridden by John Grundy from West Wrattling. I have never seen or heard of him since.

About a month after this event, we were at Charlie's house and Arthur Patstone arrived with Maisie and told me that he had found three old motorcycles – a 1926 BSA 500cc sidecar for him – a 1926 Calthorpe two stroke for Charlie – and for me, a 1921 398cc ABC – all in bits. I had not heard of an ABC. The three bikes were £20 (BSA £8 and the other two £6 each).

They were owned by another caravan club member who owned a service station at Hampstead (Birmingham) – his name was Freddie Weaver. When we went to pick them up about a month later, Freddie assured me that all the parts were there. It had come from Wooten Wooten and had been dismantled in 1926 (Reg. No. AC8564).

# A Recollection of "Red Marley" in 1962 or was it 63?

Yes it's that time of year and traditionally Red Marley was the first major event on the sporting motorcyclist's calendar. It allowed 1000's of frustrated motorcyclists to burst out of Birmingham and the Black Country and bee-line their trusty steeds to the freak hill climb, sadly freak weather usually accompanied this Easter Bank Holiday event. My apprentice mates and me were up for it. By 5 pm Sunday evening my bike was fettled, tuned and polished (why?) and ready for the thrash to Great Witley next morning.

I was looking forward to my tea when there was a knock on our front door. "It's Bengy, he can't come tomorrow he can't start his bike. Did WE have any suggestions?? Sheepishly he wheeled it into Dad's workshop. Now Benjamin O'Malley owned a Francis Barnett Falcon, a sort of sit up and beg lightweight (much like Bengy) in that rural shade of green which allowed it to be hidden in a wood and with luck, never found.



During the past week I'd seen Bengy kicking the living daylight out of this Barnett and I was not about to join his club. Half a dozen kicks and Doctor Danks diagnosed it needed new piston rings, a pair of crankcase seals and a decoked exhaust system. By then I was well into Villiers two strokes having acquired an ex-works James trials iron and the spares were in my stock, handy that as it was Sunday evening, and all the motorcycle

dealers were closed.

Gingerly Bengy asked if WE could fix it and how long would it take US to fix. Easy and about 9 o'clock was our united verdict. At that the starter's flag dropped. My apprentice mates let fly with every tool in dad's workshop. Nuts bolts spanners and mallets flew in all directions, literally. Bengy stood mesmerised, as his Barnett became an empty shell. Although an apprentice he did not share our enthusiasm and confidence for mechanical devices. He was a butcher's apprentice and the closest he got to tools was a meat cleaver and a set of scales!!

On stripping the motor I found something very special, full circle polished crank and conrod, crankcase stuffers and the biggest shiniest ports I had ever seen. Wow! This was professional, not your amateur sitting at the kitchen table with a file, piece of emery cloth, and a copy of "Speed and how to obtain it". I enquired from whence it came. "Oh a bloke from Wolverhampton" was the casual reply. Of course it did, 2 and 2 made 4, this motor had been liberated from the Villiers competition shop and was the stuff of dreams.

Well work went almost to plan. Mum, in her element, pushing sandwiches and mugs of tea at everyone but we misplaced some vital components. In their frenzy my mates had kicked then in all directions under the workbench, under my bike and under dad's car. After some considerable time a gudgeon pin circlip was found outside on the drive. I can only assume it had stuck to the sole of someone's shoes and "walked out" when he went for a fag into the darkness. We finished at 10 o'clock and wheeled it out into the night.

Now Mum and Dad lived at the bottom of a long steep hill, which was perfect for test runs. Yes it went first prod; Bengy snicked it into gear and zoomed off into the night. He returned almost speechless. W-W-What have you done? T-T-Try it yourself. I did and it went like stink. My mates tried it and were equally astonished by its speed and noise. On the fifth or sixth moonlight test session, half way up the hill a wildly gyrating figure appeared in the glimmer of the Villiers direct lighting. It was a py-jama clad Harry Hadley.



damage was done except to the riders pride.

Time for home we plodded off towards Northfield, Bengy still "running in" but gaining confidence by the minute. Paul Yendall was leading "the pack" on my old Tiger Cub but by Lydiatte Ash I'd had enough and on the long climb to Rubery I drew level, the thumbs went up, the red mist came down, chins on tank and we were off. To our astonishment Bengy steamed past bolt upright and rigid and zoomed over the crest of the hill.

We didn't see much of Bengy or the Barnett the following week, it transpired he got the message wound the throttle against the stop but on entering

He had heard enough, leapt out of bed, hurled himself down the stairs and into the roadway.

Track session stopped, everyone reduced to whispers, we said our good nights, and the lads dutifully wheeled their bikes round the corner and out of sight, leaving William to tidy up the carnage in the workshop.

Came the dawn and bitterly cold driving rain, typical of an Easter Bank holiday Monday. No need to worry about running in Bernard's steed, the pain on your face limited the throttle opening to 30 mph. It was a laboured and frustrating journey but we arrived without a hitch and guess what? The wind dropped and out came the sun. All was right with the world and we all agreed the labours of the previous evening were well worthwhile.

The meeting attracted works entries from BSA, Dot, Greeves, Cotton and Triumph. I think Brian Martin, riding his works B44 BSA, took away the prestigious silver helmet. He was lucky and managed to stay on his motorcycle. Others tried every trick in the acrobatic textbook from cartwheels, to somersaults, their riderless machines careering off in all directions. However, greatest fun came from watching the antics in the spectator bike-car park. It was situated at the bottom of the hill and heavy overnight rain had reduced it to a quagmire. Of course every rider spectator was a trials expert or so he thought. We would have willingly paid the entrance fee just to watch the spectacle. We came to the conclusion that the bigger and more expensive the motorcycle the more spectacular the crash. It was soft mud and no real

the 30 mph limit was unable to shut off. Whether he had a frayed inner or we had trapped the outer throttle cable replacing the petrol tank I knew not, but Bernard was now flat out down Rubery High Street. Fortunately he had the sense to shut off the fuel tap but he took a long time to come to shuddering halt just before the "chicane" at the bottom of the hill. In just twenty four hours we'd transformed a bike that wouldn't start, into a beast that wouldn't stop!!! No, we didn't see much of Bernard after that lucky escape. He thought motorcycling was a bit of a dangerous game and turned his attention towards women and his newly acquired Ford 100E ex-butchers delivery van.

Can you blame him?

*Bill*

