

May 2008

# North Birmingham News

NEWSLETTER

## The Spring Run

Anchor Garage 13<sup>th</sup> April 2008

The forecast had said rain, but the weather held and 24 VMCC members signed on for the leap of faith that was the Spring Run. The Older bikes were followed (or should that be scattered) by quite a few modern bikes all helping to raise money for the Deansley Centre at New Cross Hospital Wolverhampton. All VMCC members made it to the finish at the Bradford Arms Ivetsy Bank, the moderns didn't!



It was a great day, thoroughly enjoyable.

I must thank everyone for their help in raising the sum of £366 for the Deansley Centre, especially Mick Davies and friends at Barloworld, Paul & Shaz at Shire Oak Rider Training, and of course Pete Mellor at Anchor Garage for his help and good humour, and not forgetting Maurice Trupp who once again came to the rescue with the last minute panic to get the Dougie ready.

Cheers,

*John*





## From the Archives

### The Norton Story up to 1957

The post First World War models more or less carried on from the 1916 models. In 1920 the factory entered a five strong team to enter the revived T.T. races, characters such as Duggie Brown, the former Rover star and brother of George Brown of the Isle of Man Times, and Motorcycling's ex editor Graham Walker. The machines were chain driven versions of the 1916 model 16, referred to as the "16H" and to support Norton's policy of racing what they sold, no fewer than eight private owners had entered on similar models, Duggie Black nearly won too, after the early pacemakers blew up, Tommy de la Hay ousting him from the lead a lap from the end, while Graham was one place off the leader board at the finish.

One of the private owners Victor Horseman started to get amongst the records at Brooklands with a vengeance, taking the classic hour record at 72 m.p.h. before hurrying back to Liverpool to win the Butterworth Cup in the local reliability trial in North Wales on the same machine. Mr. Norton had a very high opinion of Victor's engineering abilities.

The overhead valve engine was now subject to intensive development work and by 1922 the Norton designed and O'Donovan tuned prototype was being persuaded up to speeds approaching the magic 100 m.p.h. at Brooklands by a slim youth named Rex Judd. In 1923 Bert Denly pushed the "one hour" up to 82 m.p.h. with his o.h.v. Model 18 which boasted the 79 x 100 dimensions of his forebears. Graham Black was a very wet second in the rain drenched Senior T.T. in the Island, while Graham Walker occupied the same position at the finish of the first Sidecar T.T., similarly mounted behind Freddie Dixon's famous Douglas banking outfit. Graham had fitted an extra fuel tank over the top of his standard tankage to allow for the increase in fuel consumption with the "chair" job which had a 588c.c. engine with the 79 m.m. bore of the "3 1/2" and the 120 m.m. stroke of the "Big Four".

Then in 1924 everything came right. George Tucker won the sidecar race in the Island, the second Norton success after waiting all those years since 1907, and Alan Bennett, who had taken Graham Walker's place in the team, won the Senior at 61 m.p.h.. The tale of other Norton victories came in from every quarter of the globe. Mr Norton was entertained at a civic reception by the Birmingham City authorities, but concealed the fact that he was a very sick man, and he paid tribute to all the "Boys" who had ridden his machines.

The following spring, James Lansdowne Norton passed away. He was a very religious man, a leading figure in the Salvation Army in Birmingham, and his motorcycles seemed to reflect his whole attitude to life. In his memory, the Norton Scholarship in Motorcycle Engineering at the University of Birmingham was instituted, a worthy memorial to a great man. His son,

J.L. Norton has carried on the family tradition of engineering brilliance.

In the 1925 T.T. Alec Bennett had trouble early on and Joe Craig was left to chase Howard Davies on his own make, H.R.D. but in 1926 Stanley Woods a new recruit to the Norton team won the race with Joe Craig backing him up in 4<sup>th</sup> spot.



*The first o.h.c. Norton after winning the 1927 T.T.*

For 1927 the races were entirely redesigned by Walter Moore who had been George Tucker's sidecar passenger in the 1924 T.T. and had

spent his earlier years at Bristol with Joe Barter designer of the early twin-engine which later powered the Douglas. The new Norton overhead camshaft engine in its cradle frame, with saddle tank, was straight off the drawing board, but Alec Bennett brought it home an easy 1<sup>st</sup>, after Stanley Woods, similarly mounted, had put up a record lap. And so the new o.h.c. Norton was born. Mr. W. Mansell who had been for many years connected with the R.T. Shelley Limited took over in 1927 as the Norton Managing Director. Mr. Mansell's son Dennis who was 18 at the time, came to the fore in 1928 as our No. 1 trials expert in the 3-wheeler class, using the production sidecar edition of the 490 cc o.h.c.

In 1929 following the now well known Norton racing tradition the "350s", was marketed in camshaft and pushrod form as the CJ and JE. They were later to be known as the "Norton Juniors". For 1930 the camshaft racers for the T.T. were redesigned by an underrated genius Arthur Carroll with the square lower bevel box and general features which were to remain almost unaltered for so long. Arthur had come to Norton immediately after an engineering apprenticeship and had the advantage of working directly under Mr. Norton himself who was always very proud of his protégé.



Walter Moore had now gone to NSU but this was the heyday of Graham Walker's all conquering Rudge team, and all the best Norton could do was to prevent a Rudge "slam" in the senior T.T. The standard range showed little change, enclosed valve gear, chromium plating, a new silencer and so on. But the firm faced the slump by reducing the price of the 16 H to £49.00 and even the camshaft model was down by £5.00.

Significant changes came in 1931, the standard range being re-designed and much improved, having a short single top tube frame which reduced the wheel base by some 2', and the magneto was moved behind the engine. The side valve models, still the 16H and big four had detachable cylinder heads and if you paid extra on the pushrod models you could have a two port head. The silver, red and black finish was something to be rather proud of and for the next eight years Norton won every senior and junior T.T. race in the island, except the 1935 senior and the 1938 junior. In that period the silver, red and black machines from Bracebridge Street acquired hairpin valve springs (1934), a megaphone exhaust (1935), plunger ring springing (1936), twin overhead camshafts (1937), a telescopic front end (1938).

Then in 1939 they got down to producing W.D. Nortons as Bracebridge Street for the next 7 years. Production of the side valve was very important and in all over 100,000 of them were produced, including several hundred of the "big four" type outfits, many with sidecar wheel drive. The works took quite a battering during the War but somehow production was maintained despite the bombing.

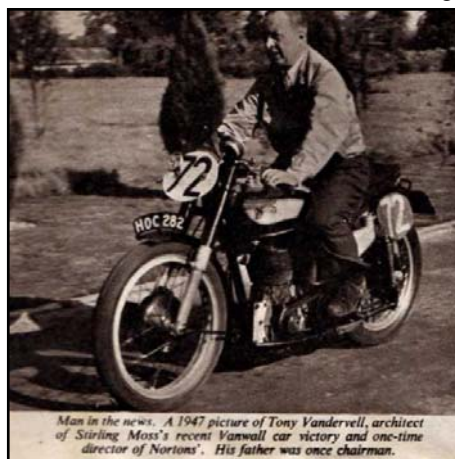
Peace at last, and under Mr. Gilbert Smith, a revival of the pre-war models. At the T.T. Harry Daniell came back with another senior win in 1947 when the races were revived.

In 1949 came the new vertical twin, the dominator with the now familiar plunger sprung frame and road holder forks, though production was earmarked for export and it was a while before we in this country could buy it. A new trials model, the

500 T had been produced and Mr. Craig signed on a couple of new trials riders after the Scott Trial, Rex Young and a youngster named Duke. Though he went to Birmingham as a Trials man, Geoff was destined to become the greatest road racing ace we have ever seen. Before the end of 1949 he had wins in the Clubmans T.T. and senior Manx Grand Prix behind him. He continued the good work with an outright win in the 1950 Victory Cup Trial and went to the island as a full member of the factory team for 1950. This was the first island appearance of the Classic "Featherbed" Norton with swinging fork rear suspension and duplex cradle frame to hold the famous old camshaft engine. From that day the featherbed had provided a standard by which road comfort and steering are judged in the motorcycle world. True to the firms tradition you can buy and island machine, a genuine 'racer' just as you could in Mr. Norton's day.

In 1951 Geoff Duke won both senior and junior T.T.s for Nortons and for good measure both World Championships too.

The side valve models, the 16H and big four were finally



discontinued for 1955, the model 19 the O.H.V. version of the oversize single being reintroduced as a sidecar machine.

A Norton interest was now acquired by the A.M.C. group.

Man in the news. A 1947 picture of Tony Vandervell, architect of Stirling Moss's recent Vanwall car victory and one-time director of Nortons'. His father was once chairman.

## Small Ads Section

**For Sale:-** 350cc AJS R6 1930, Ariel Arrow 1961, 1950-60;s BSA's A10, A50, A65, C15-SS-80, Bantam. Sunbeam S8 1952, Triumph 3TA 1959.

For further details on any of the machines please contact Maurice Trupp on 07836-538193

## Recommendations of local suppliers












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### Newsletter Postage

There has been a further postage increase in April. For those who have paid in advance their credit will be adjusted accordingly. If anyone wishes to cancel please can you call me on 01384-294666 and I will refund your credit. Julian

## FORTHCOMING ATTRACTIONS FOR 2008

CLUB NIGHTS	
APRIL 30th	History of the Air Ambulance & presentation of cheque
MAY 28th	Talk by John Fox on his experiences as a tester for Ariel, BSA and Triumph
JUNE 30th	Ride a Bike Night— no meeting
JULY 25th	Fish and Chip Supper
AUGUST 29th	Arrive on Your Bike Night
SEPTEMBER 24th	Talk by Johnny Brittain on life as a trials rider
OCTOBER 29th	Talk by Geoff Brazendale on early vehicle lighting
NOVEMBER 28th	Bring and Buy evening
DECEMBER 26th	No Meeting

## CLUB RUNS

DATE	RUN	ORGANISER	Tel No
May 4th	Relay Rally	Josie Stanley	01902-607293
May 18th	Girder Fork Run	Martyn Round	0121-550-1547
May 30th - June 1st	The Welsh Weekend	Josie Stanley	01902-607293
June 8th	Josie's Jaunt	Josie Stanley	01902-607293
June 18th	Wrinkly Signpost Hunt	Ian Harris	01952-299118
June 25th	Ride A Bike Night	Frank Ashton	01902-372719
June 29th	Roger's Run	Roger Greening	01562-730464
July 6th	Long Mynd Run	Colin Lloyd	01384-371385
July 9th	Wrinkly Run		
July 20th	Trent Valley Run	Brian Empsall	01543-264968
August 3rd	Breakfast Run	Rob Pell	0121-624-7674
August 17th	Picnic / Concours Run	Peter Ashen	01562-882854
September 7th	Flight of Fantasy Run	Trevor Bull	01905-778917
September 14th	Levis Cup Road Trial	Paul Harris	01952-299118
September 28th	Severn Valley Run	Bill Danks	01562-67103
October 12th	Autumn Run	Andy Briggs	0121-544-5938