

VMCC Warwickshire Section Newsletter

news letter No. 50

March 2024

March 2020 was at the beginning of the infamous Covid 19 'lockdown' so we decided that if we could not meet in person then we could still keep members connected by sending out regular news emails. The first couple were just 2 or 3 pages long and were sent to around 60 members for which we held email addresses. These then became weekly news letters with more pages and more varied content. Finally when lockdown eased we decided to send them mostly monthly; and our email list swelled to well exceed 200 members, and we usually include well over a dozen pages. We still rely on you to send in articles, comments, adverts, recommendations etc. So lets try to grow it even further which will only happen with your input.

In this issue, as well as more recent articles, we have included a few of the editors favourite pieces going back to the very early editions.

Lets start with the first article, from edition no. 3:

Rover and I *written all those years ago by David Kendall*

Back in 2008, I attended an event at the Gaydon Heritage Centre in Warwickshire. The automotive gathering in question was celebrating all vehicles made in and around Coventry. As expected most of the usual Coventry manufactured cars and motorcycles were represented. However, as I walked around the vehicles on show, a pair of vintage motorcycles stopped me in my tracks. To my surprise, both machines were Rovers. Up until that point I don't think I had seen a vintage Rover motorcycle let alone a pair. These lovely machines had been ridden to the event by VMCC members Graham and Brenda Hallard and over the coming years, I would see them on numerous occasions being used on the roads in and around Warwickshire.

In 2018, I found myself visiting Brenda in her Warwickshire home with a view to purchasing one of the Rover machines. Looking at the bike in the half light of her garden shed, in which the machine was stored, it looked just as impressive as ever. After sitting astride the Rover, I discovered that on the right hand side of the machine it had a foot operated clutch...and mounted on the left hand side of the petrol tank was the 3 speed hand change. Well, I thought to myself - You're never too old to learn new tricks! With Brenda's wise words 'It will need re-commissioning' still in my head, I became the owner of a Vintage Rover 3 1/2 hp motorcycle.

After getting the Rover safely stored in my garage, I went about the task of making sure the machine was safe to ride, and just as importantly, work out the starting procedure. After a week's work of greasing, oiling, checking the tyres and, of course, putting fresh petrol in the tank, the time came to kick the bike over and see if I could get her to start. After a few false starts, I eventually worked out the best position for the ignition and the air and fuel levers and was rewarded with a running motorcycle. Over the coming months, I ventured out on my new machine keeping mainly to small quiet winding lanes with very little traffic. This also gave me lots of practise using the foot clutch on the right and hand change on the left while also twiddling two levers on the right – think of patting your head and rubbing your tummy at the same time - because it does take some getting used to. On bikes of this era, the handlebars and their associated controls almost fall into your hands and along with a straight posture on a well sprung saddle, the ride is surprisingly relaxing and comfortable. The back wheel is driven by a belt made up of separate links of a very thick canvas type material, possibly similar to something that may have driven a steam mill long ago! I practised with some spare belt to see how well I could change or repair a broken link in an emergency, and now I have got it down to just under an hour after much sweating, swearing and bloodletting.

In the Summer, I was very pleased to have taken part in a couple of Warwickshire VMCC events especially the Coventry Parade, a perfect event for my Coventry Rover. Towards the end of the riding season, I decided to commission fellow club member, Rob Thomas of "Partsmade" to overhaul and rebuild the engine for me. After completion, the engine ticked over like a grandfather clock, and some gentle and enjoyable test miles have been taken. Rover has been entered into this year's Banbury run, however at the time of writing, the country has been put into lockdown and all further miles curtailed. With luck along with other VMCC members, we can meet up on the revised Banbury date in August. I can then be on the start line at Gaydon only a few yards from where I first admired those distinguished vintage Rovers in 2008.



Better Enfield seat

I've had a modern ish 500 Enfield for a couple of years its called a Redditch model. It's the last of the long stroke pushrod models but with many modern upgrades and is a peach to ride and averages about 100mpg.

It came with a sprung saddle and small pillion seat which looked and felt like an oversize house brick.

Because I regularly take my wife on the back I took the rear seat off and made a new pillion seat, one mounted on the same fittings but wider and better padding and I am told its now its very comfortable to perch on.

The front seat is quite high, although looking like an original sprung saddle its not. I decided to make a new one which was lower and better padded.

I made the base from ½" plywood which actually measures 11mm or 7/16".

Vincent's and Ariel Arrows used this base material so I forked out my £3.50 and bought a piece from the local wood yard.

I shaped it like the original and bolted some alloy angle to pick up on the original seat mounts. I then made a small skirt to go round the edge of the seat out of an old strip light. I also folded a piece to go over the rear fuel tank bolts so it wouldn't rub on the tank bolts and screwed this to the base.

I gave the new base to a local upholsterer who covered the rear seat for me to reproduce the same pattern to match both seats

The new seat has just over 3" of proper padding and is about 1" lower than the old one. It feels very comfy to sit on and is not smooth like the old one. Result.

Tony Harris



Club night February 14th talk by Frank Melling.

Well respected veteran journalist, motorcycle racer, author of over 30 fiction and non fiction books. He gave an interesting, lengthy and well delivered talk on his early life, his racing exploits and his interaction with British motorcycle manufacturers. He mainly concentrated on B.S.A. and his disapproval of the senior management's abilities to produce the right models to counteract the increasing threat from Japanese manufacturers.

He eschewed digital assistance and just used blown up, card mounted, photographs to illustrate mainly bikes with which he was associated. Around 40 members and guests were present and enjoyed his 2 part presentation and asked several pertinent questions which got some lengthy answers.



Arthur Farrow and the motoring press

Many years ago, I met a guy called Hugo Wilson who blamed me for his admiration of Morini motorcycles since apparently my 500 used to wake him up in the early 80s. This was good as he did not need an alarm clock, but from memory my ride into work was never that punctual so he must have had a tolerant employer too!

These days Hugo is editor of Classic Bike Magazine and remains a great enthusiast and friend who has borrowed several of my bikes for past CB articles so it wasn't anything of a surprise when he asked me if it was possible for journalist Rick Parkington to ride a couple of my machines notably my 1981 Hesketh V1000 and 1938 Vincent Series A Rapide.

So it was that one bright autumn day we set out with a photographer to do riding shots which will be appearing in a future issue of Classic Bike along with Rick's assessment of the Rapide and the Hesketh. I think Rick will give a positive report of the Hesketh, which for him is far more modern than he normally rides by a long-shot, and I hope it will encourage interest in the wonderful Hesketh motorcycle. He was a bit surprised at the engine characteristics, not being quite the lugging V twin Vintage lump he particularly favours and is used to, but by the end of the test he was getting to understand that the bike really liked fast A roads and lifted its skirts at 5,000 rpm or greater!

We set off on the two bikes and probably did about 50 miles and it seemed like 100 starts whilst the photographer set up his gear in different places and multiple angles whilst we rode back-and-forth through pleasant countryside some miles away from my home on the machines. The Hesketh never missed a beat nor the Vincent, but the latter did not really like the frequent re starts and sometimes took a few kicks to sing into life. That Vincent was for him the star of the show though as it would be for many guys as you may understand if you click on this link when ridden by another friend a few weeks before. Let the Video do the talking!!!

https://youtu.be/ukw1eHGjcm8?si=RL1sHyPtbsFvW2L_

Or search on YouTube Classic Motorcycle channel : Ridden: 1938 Vincent Series A Rapide – The Snarling Beast – GoPro footage

Members may know, despite some smashing rides on the Hesketh this year, my short inside leg measurement and crooked left leg (new knee just fitted!) made my riding and mounting of it challenging so reluctantly I decided to sell it. However the new owner, quite by chance, is a VMCC Warwickshire member so hopefully it will continue to appear at events and thrill its new owner.

Whoever the new owner is will he/she please step forward and report on their recent acquisition? – ed.

For Sale

Velocette Valiant 394UXS E.V20

.1598 F.1311/33 1958 Original Avon Vee line fairing, 1950's Craven panniers, side-stand, oil pressure gauge, single seat. No centre stand fitted. Top Box. Left and right-hand tool boxes. Bike Black. Last used 2018. Dry stored. Recently run. £1800. Warwickshire. For pictures and further information contact: Ian@thebrodies.co.uk. or 01926 812179 for information. Ian.

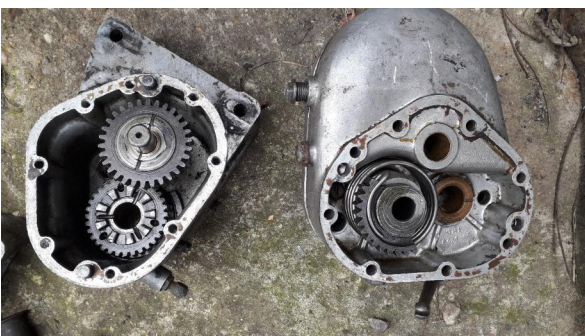


BSA pre unit gearboxes

One is, I have been told, from about late '40's



The other one is, I believe, mid 50's.



The pictures say more than I can about them.

They can be seen in Coventry.
They owe me about £70 each.
So offers in that region please.
Barry 07786718867



This article is from News letter no. 11. I thought that it was worth reprinting.

Bikes on television

As I watched the current re-run of Downton Abbey on TV the other evening *writes Judith Coote* I caught a quick glimpse of a BSA flat-tank motorcycle, a rare sight in this series, where the cars are more prevalent.

So it set me thinking, where are there motorbikes on TV, other than in the usual Henry Cole programmes? My first thought was Heartbeat, a police



soap set in the 1960's North Riding of Yorkshire. The two bikes seen most regularly are a Francis Barnett Falcon and later, a BSA Golden Flash A10.

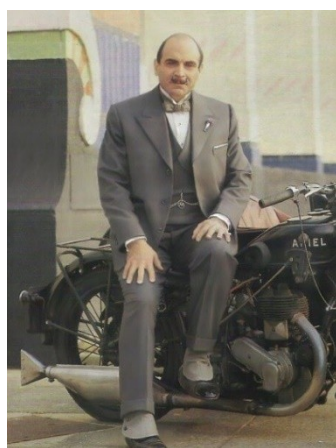
In the 1970's both Dad's Army and George and Mildred showcased the same 1934 Brough Superior combination.



Boon, in the 1980's and early 90's was a drama about the life of a recently retired firefighter turned crime buster, Ken Boon, played by Michael Elphick. His bike was a red and silver BSA A65 Lightning 650cc which was nicknamed "White Lightning" by the crew.

Even EastEnders has a look in. The character of Mark Fowler regularly rode his motorcycle around Albert Square and was rarely seen without his leather jacket. His bikes of choice were a Yamaha R6 and a Honda 250N Super dream.

A number of period dramas display an array of impressive cars but have few if any motorcycles, but here are a few I have come across. A 1929 Ariel Model D in one episode of Poirot; a lovely 1937 Triumph Tiger 70 in Foyle's War and a 1961 Lambretta in Endeavour. There is still hope for Endeavour as they are making a new series!



As a footnote to Judith's article, whilst I (Barry) was on my ride around Yorkshire a couple of years ago I visited Dick Craven's motorcycle collection. His extensive display includes several bikes used in the Heartbeat series. If you

are visiting the York area it really is worth a visit. Open days are infrequent so please check! I didn't but he is so nice I managed to talk my way in....you might not be so lucky. *The bike is a 1970*

BSA Star fire that I borrowed for the trip. The fuel tank from an O.I.F. B25 borrowed off someone else as the original glass fibre one was unusable.



Hi Barry,

Please will you see if it's suitable for the magazine. It's not bike related but might be of interest to people.

Neil Ives

In 1971 for my 21st birthday my father gave me his Ford Consul (MK2, highline) that he had bought new in 1958 for £950. That summer my wife and I decided to drive from London to the Scottish Highlands for our holiday. I was working as a motor mechanic by then so (possibly over) confident of my abilities to get us home in the case of car trouble. Anyway, I had my toolbox with me.

Round about the Midlands the car developed a rattle. I topped up the oil, which had become low, and carried on with crossed fingers. After sleeping in the car we carried on up the country. When the car started to gain altitude on the Scottish hills, the radiator top hose split, accompanied by clouds of steam. After a dose of Radweld followed by a visit to a garage we carried on with a new hose. A few miles before our intended camping place another huge gush of steam from the front of the car; the radiator had burst this time!



A 1959 Ford Consul Highline -
image from the internet

Making camp at Shiel Bridge I removed the radiator from the car, took it on the local bus up to Kyle of Lochalsh where it was put on a train, along with an envelope containing cash, to Inverness on the other side of Scotland to a radiator specialist company. At the end of the week the refurbished radiator was returned by the bus driver who had collected it from the train for us.

By now, it was time to start for home. I drove carefully, always listening for that elusive rattle first noticed on the way north. Somewhere near Scotch Corner Yorkshire, the car suddenly developed a really nasty knock. I pulled into a lay by. The weather was cold and raining.

Suspecting a seized piston. I took the cylinder head off so I could inspect the cylinder bores. Piston number two was there but only the skirt was left! I could see the con rod going down and joining the crankshaft! After a little time I decided that I should remove the damaged piston in case it broke up some more and the con rod tried to make a bid for freedom. The next step was to remove the sump so I could get at the big-end nuts. Removing the sump was made horribly difficult by a chassis tube passing below the sump. I had to tilt the sump at an angle so I could loosen the oil pump and let it drop into the sump. This allowed me to slide the sump out, being careful to retain as much oil in it as I could; I had very little oil left and being skint after paying for the rad repair I had to be careful.

I removed the affected con rod and piston and started to put the sump back on. At that point I realised that with the con rod removed all oil pressure would escape through the crank journal hole. What could I do about that? I found a spare Jubilee clip, opened it out, passed it over the crank journal and re tightened it so it blocked the oil hole.

I got the sump back on, using the old gasket of course. During this work, the clutch pedal got pressed, the clutch piston was not restrained so the hydraulic fluid was lost on the road!

I then refitted the cylinder head, using the old gasket, of course! My three cylinder Ford Consul engine fired up.

The clutch, missing its fluid was the next problem. With no correct fluid I topped up the clutch hydraulics with engine oil, bled the air out of the system, it worked, great!

So, we set off for a 250 mile drive back to West London.

After a few miles the mineral oil had caused the clutch pistons to swell so after pressing the clutch the pedal only came back up slowly. Negotiating a roundabout was fun; they had to be coasted through while the clutch re-engaged. This became a real problem so I let the engine oil go and used water for the hydraulics. This was OK but it leaked out and had to be constantly topped up.

Anyway, after many hours of lumpy travel I was mightily relieved to get the car home.

A few weeks later. Engine block rebored. New pistons. Valves decoked and reground everything surgically cleaned and reassembled the car lived to fight another day.

Events to look forward to

Club night Wednesday 13th March: Bring and Buy auction night.

This is one of our major fund raising sources. Bring your saleable items to be auctioned then bid for other items and take home more than you brought!

These evenings are always fun with plenty of banter whilst earning us cash.

Amongst the 'stock' are, amongst other things, a genuine ARP satchel complete with bandages and wooden splints.



plus a rare 1918 basket case Harley Davidson...just needs patience.

VMCC national AGM. Sunday 17th March

Your presence is requested at this major club occasion. The venue is the wonderful National Memorial Arboretum. See the Classic and Vintage journal for more details.

B.H.R. Fri. 22nd. Test day at Darley Moor racing circuit

Mike Hailwood Memorial Run. Date t.b.a.

A gentle run to Tanworth in Arden to visit his grave, via Umberslade Farm cafe.

Land Access & Recreation Association (LARA)

The Warwickshire Section like a few other sections and individuals contribute to LARA fighting fund which enables us to have an observer at LARA meetings which we have felt necessary since the previous Board decided not to renew membership.

Peter Kent sums up the situation very well and the resolution at the AGM as well as the potential risks of not being a member of LARA.

I would encourage members to read Peter's summary and use their proxy vote accordingly.

Many thanks, Mike Wills, Past President

VMCC AGM

From Peter Kent.

The current directors of the VMCC are encouraging members to vote at the AGM in March either by attending the meeting or using the proxy system.

The February Journal (pages 30 to 34) has details of the AGM including the agenda, a proxy voting form and some additional information on two resolutions. One of these resolutions is about something that I believe is important to all of us who wish to continue riding our motorbikes in the countryside. Countryside such as the area covered by the Flat Tank Section, and I'd ask you to consider voting in favour.

Agenda item 11 is about membership of LARA. It asks the Board to consider rejoining LARA as a full member. LARA is the Land Access and Recreation Association and is a grouping of motoring organisations acting together to protect the interests of motorcyclists and motorists in rural areas. Over the years since its formation in 1986 it has dealt with protecting these interests against the changing threats. It is a volunteer organisation that uses experienced specialists where necessary. Their actions and publications are to support responsible motoring and motorcycling in the countryside. In the past the issues related to off-road motoring – the use of farming land for motorcycle trials and motocross, riding on 'green lanes' and trails etc. – and such threats continue.

Recently another threat has become more prominent, the right to ride and drive along small country roads and lanes. In response to this, LARA's primary objective is now 'The safeguarding of all minor highways both sealed and unsealed', (note: it's not just 'green lanes'). The threats come in many ways, whether as part of proposed legislation changes such as in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill or from very vocal interest groups such as GLEAM which campaigns against

motoring in the countryside. There is more information on LARA on page 34 of the February Journal and on page 36 of the January Journal.

The Flat Tank Section has always had activities that use country roads for social runs and events. The Flat Tank Weekend, the Belt and Braces Run and the Severn Saunter as well as social runs. Rural access for this Section and its members is important. A particular threat to riding in one of the areas we use is from a proposed blanket Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) to cover the whole of South Gloucestershire for the purpose of preventing 'car cruising' and similar events. It could affect us because this is where the Severn Saunter is run. LARA have already submitted suggestions on this subject, such as limiting the area subject to the PSPO, on behalf of responsible motoring events.

Until a few years ago the VMCC was a Full Member of LARA but left when money became tight. But a number of individuals and Sections felt that the work of LARA was too important to lose and joined together to continue giving funds to LARA in a small way and to be present 'at the table' as an observer.

Full membership at £3000 sounds a lot, but it is a bit less than 30p per year out of each member's club subscription (currently £55). LARA needs the money to be able to fund challenges to potential closures of country roads and 'green lanes', to meet with civil servants in Government Departments, to 'scan the horizon' for potential new threats and so on. It is a small sum to pay to enable us to act on such an important issue and a club like ours ought to be part of supporting it. I believe that membership of LARA should be seen as a benefit of being a member of such a large club as the VMCC.

So, may I please encourage you to vote on this resolution and, if you agree with me, to vote FOR item 11. The voting form is on Page 31 of the February Journal or you can vote online.

My bikes, by one of our members, Andy Bean

first published in News letter 12

As promised a few lines from home, here in rural Warwickshire. I have only recently joined the VMCC, though I did come along a few times back in the late 1970's when I was in my mid 20's but was not that interested in "old" motorcycles then. Like many I have been busy in the workshop as well as the garden doing some of the jobs I have been putting off for months.

Living in a village I am lucky as there is plenty of space for country walks and exercise. Rides on the bikes have been limited to a short ride on my 67 BSA WDB40 going to Lighthorne to make a delivery and a rather longer ride ending up to Culworth for a coffee at "The Forge". I gave a wave to Alan in Byfield as I

“sped” past on my way to Eydon and thence to Culworth. A bit about myself and my motorcycling past. I started at 12 riding a BSA Bantam D1 round our orchard. We amassed a small collection of Bantams and a C10L for me and my brother to ride – I well remember riding pillion on the C10L up to the local windmill behind my uncle. The bike was road legal I might add. I seem to remember we also had an old Lambretta 175 which we were given, again it was road legal but had punctured front and rear tyres. Later my uncle found me a beautiful maroon 1960 BSA C15 c/w handlebar fairing for when I was 16, however my parents were not keen on me having it so I had to put up with a 1964 Suzuki M15 50 cc Sportsman reg. 99 BWK purchased from Mellor Motors in Coventry if I remember correctly.

I had an accident on the Bantam at the age of 13 and was off school some 6 months so, justifiably, my parents were not keen on motorcycles! The next bike after passing my test was 1963 BSA B40 reg. 616 AWK, not a bad bike but after it was stolen at MWCFF, Leamington Spa and later retrieved with a broken big end it was never the same so was repaired at Jack Butlers, Leamington Spa and sold on. This was replaced with a 1968 Triumph Bonneville reg. PAC 565F where are you now?*

This I bought from a friend in Southam for the princely sum of £235.00. After the Triumph I had a succession of bikes mainly British, BSA's, Triumphs and a 650SS Norton. These were followed by a number of more modern Honda and Suzuki bikes. **I have checked DVLA and it neither 'taxed' or sorn. - ed.*

After getting married and having a family I have now returned to my first love, old bikes.

The bike I wish I still had would be the Gold Star as it was an easy starter and very fast for a 350. It is still about as a few years ago I googled the registration and it came up for sale at one of Bonham's sales. I sold it for £650.00 and bought the Rocket III.

Attached is a photo of my 1955 BSA B31 and my 1967 WDB40, just part of my BSA collection. I also attach a photo of my 1956 BSA DB32 Gold Star which I owned some 40 yrs ago and should have kept, though if I had I would not have been able to purchase the 1969 BSA Rocket III !



Bits and pieces

section annual awards

At our AGM in January the ladies award went to Sarah Brooke-Taylor who attends events on her 1942 ex army Matchless.



British Historic Racing (a section of the VMCC) test/practice day is being held at Darley Moor, near Ashbourne, Derbyshire, this year because Mallory Park, where it has been held for several years is proving to be too expensive. I am hoping to go there if you wish to come. I have been to these days several times with full access to the pits. It is very interesting to wander past the bikes and see how are built and how they are prepared for the track.

Huggy's Speed shop, Mallory Park.

This Saturday, March 2nd at Huggy's which is an amazing used motorcycle dealer, is a classic car and bike event. 10am till 2.00pm. The first of several this year. Should be a good turnout and the contents of the shop building are worth a visit on their own! Videos can be found on Youtube and Facebook. May be a couple of quid entrance but well worth going if you have a couple of hours to spare.

VMCC Warwickshire Section Events diary 2024 *(see notes at the bottom)*

March	8	Wed.	Club night. Kenilworth Rugby Club. Bring and buy auction. 7.30 start.
	17	Sun.	VMCC AGM At National Memorial Arboretum (see notice in V&C.)
	22	Fri.	British Historic Racing (BHR) Practice/test day Darley Moor
April	7	Sun.	Spring Run. More details to follow.
	10	Wed.	Club night. KRC.– Guest speaker David Bardell on The Falklands Conflict
	28	Sun.	VMCC Relay Rally – Warwickshire Section checkpoint, the Long Itch Diner
May	8	Wed.	Club night – Guest speaker Patrick Fitzgerald – “In praise of the turbo prop”
	19	Sun.	<i>Rugby Bikefest – Warwickshire Section have booked a stand</i>
	19	Sun.	<i>Norton Owners Club meet at Welford, Northants (Non Section meeting)</i>
	26	Sun.	Breakfast Ride in to the Malt Kiln Farm (BH)
June	2	Sun.	The Kenilworth Run (MG)
	12	Wed.	Club night – On Yer Bike night Fish & Chip supper
	16	Sun.	VMCC: The Banbury Run, Gaydon, Warwickshire.
	24	Mon.	<i>Cassington Bike Night (Non Section meeting)</i>
	30	Sun.	Steam Event at Pailton. The 3 rd year of this super event.
July	3	Wed.	Chairman’s Social Meet at The Blue Lias Inn
	10	Wed.	Club night – Bring a bike
	21	Sun.	Founders Day, Stanford Hall
Aug.	4	Sun.	The Bill Lacey Run, Princethorpe to Evenley, Northants.
	11	Sun.	Coventry Parade (Provisional date – TBC)
	14	Wed.	Club night – Bring a bike
Sept.	8	Sun.	Genteel Run (DK)
	11	Wed.	Club night – Guest speaker Mike Wills presenting End to End
	29	Sun.	Afternoon Tea & Cake Run (SD)
Oct.	9	Wed.	Club night – Bring & buy
	13	Sun.	Autumn Leaves Run (SD)
	26	Sat.	<i>Open Day at National Motorcycle Museum.</i>
	27	Sun.	Ride in to the Antelope Inn, Lighthorne
Nov.	13	Wed.	Club night – Guest speaker Steve Allen
	27	Wed.	Christmas Lunch (Provisional date – TBC)
Dec.	11	Wed.	Club night Christmas Quiz

* all events and dates are subject to change. Please check before travelling.

* events will be added (or deleted) as we go through the year.

* if you know of an event you think members may be interested in then please contact one of the committee.

* *events in italics are NOT VMCC events but may be of interest to members*