



October/November 2020

Newsletter No. 16

VMCC Warwickshire Section Newsletter

Welcome to our latest newsletter. It has been a while since the last one mainly because I have been busy. However this edition promises to be a very good one. We have a couple of articles from members, as well as regular items plus a short piece about my JOGLE ride. Firstly though:

Chairmans chat

As I write this article for our October/November newsletter Our Email network and Newsletter has a healthy following, ensuring that we can keep Vintage and Classic enthusiasts up to date, and in touch with the changing situation. This is where you, dear reader, can play your part...in keeping us all amused and informed during these dark times. Many of you will have an ongoing project, favourite old motorcycle ride or event, or personal travel story along with some old photos....anything you could share with us to keep our newsletter interesting and entertaining would be welcomed by our editor Barry Heath. Lets not forget we may have a long winter ahead of us and so a bumper edition would be a welcome distraction.

Rovers Travels. After its Lockdown lay up, I thought it time to get re-acquainted with the idiosyncratic vintage controls of the Rover, and go for a bumble along my local lanes. After flooding the carburettor and remembering where to set the handlebar controls, she fired up on second swing of the kickstarter. Before I knew it, I was heading onto North Warwickshire country lanes, for a circular route taking in the villages of Withybrook and Pailton. Pausing for a photographic opportunity outside the beautiful grade 1 listed church of



St Edith's at Monks Kirby. Apparently, the tower has a fine ring of 8 bells, and the first church on the site was said to have been founded by Etheldreda, the daughter of Alfred the Great....but to me, this church is always an inspiring sight, while riding these lanes aboard my favourite Vintage bike.

David Kendall

This next article was written by Geoff Booth, a very long time member and is one of the main organisers of the (usually) annual Coventry Parade.

A little Tiger and the Coventry Parade

Part 1: "When I were a lad....."

Let us not be specific about the year, let me just say that this is prior to the "year of the hot summer". Picture a young boy, sat in his lesson at junior school (the subject escapes me); not paying much attention to the drone from the front of the class but his mind musing whether or not broken fins should be brazed back onto a Triumph Tiger Cub cylinder barrel and the associated risk of distortion..... You see, out of school- I was the (very) young "apprentice"; the "Master" was my Father, experienced (aero) engineer and all round decent motorcycle restorer and in order to help cut my teeth and see if I would get "into" the world of motorcycle engineering, a rather beaten up Triumph Tiger Cub had been purchased from a mate at Dads work (Hello Dave Morton, if you happen to be reading, I saw you and your son on TV a few years back turning an aircraft fuselage into living accommodation, but that another story).

This poor dishevelled machine had been in the hands of the schoolboy scramblers and had been subjected to lots of suitable "performance modifications"; it was "finished in a fetching shade of metallic green paint that had been applied with something akin to a bicycle pump, there was lots of "butchery", wear and tear and neglect.

It transpired in actual fact, I think on a trip to Jack Butlers in Leamington Spa, that the machine was actually a Bantam-Cub; a last gasp effort to modularise production of the little machine by using BSA Bantam D7/D10 cycle parts and the Triumph engine.

The former being the "Bantam Cub" and the latter being the "Super Cub".

Assembly was carried out at BSA Armoury Road, engines being shipped, complete from Triumph Meriden.

The little machines were derided by the BSA employees – there was much bad feeling that something with the Triumph name should be on an assembly line in the mighty BSA works and stories of poor quality, bad workmanship and downright sabotage are plentiful, sales were a disaster and the thing was a flop – bring on the Ariel 3, pronto....

However, I digress; as a young lad, I was mightily excited by this little Tiger and, under close supervision, the machine was stripped, carefully logged, labelled, bagged and boxed. Father was meticulous and this was very important training!

I can still vividly see the front fork legs being removed from the yokes, exposing clothes pegs encased in araldite to offer a level of support to the sawn off fork shrouds (I kid you not) and the torrent of water that poured out when they were upended. I can still also see and hear Dads reaction to this situation....

Work progressed – evenings and weekends in the workshop and I was shown a plethora of things along the way about design, materials, measuring, “how stuff works”, spanners, threads, painting, polishing, getting things wrong, being told off etc etc and I soaked it all up – I was hooked and in love with this little Tiger!

I was in a position to recite all sorts of “useful” information to whoever I felt may wish to listen – it is still there now, 63mm bore 64mm stroke, Amal 332 carburettor (on the early ones), sports models had Amal 376/272 monoblock with a 15/16” bore and 14.5 bhp engine output as opposed to the early models mere 10 bhp....drone drone; I had a bit of idea what was going on in the school lessons but the first opportunity I had, the mind would wander- so here we are, back on the day where the cylinder barrel had been under scrutiny the night before. She was 20 thou over in the bore and the machining looked recent; the conclusion that I came to was if it was a standard size, we should repair the fin damage but as the bore was oversize, we should leave it alone due to the risk of distortion of the bore.... This was reported to Dad when I got home and he acknowledged my logic, which I have to say, even as the author, along with the risk of arrogance, not at all bad for a 10 year old..... I was learning the rudiments of the wonders of engineering!

So, after many hours of toil, and visits to – let me think – Jack Butler has been mentioned – the thing I remember about Jack was how polite, gentle and encouraging he was to me- he treated me with real respect for such a young lad, nice man.

The ubiquitous “Bob Bull” emporium on Foleshill Road, the loveable “rogue”; the place always stunk of dog – not sure whether it was the motorcycles and spares he was selling or the animal he had..... Trophy Autos on the Stoney Stanton Road was a regular haunt too. Bromley’s place (Not Ken!); a terraced house in Chapelfield – the chap used to advertise in the Coventry Evening Telegraph – no phone, just pitch up and knock the door; the place was a complete tip, like an indoor auto jumble, all rooms bare boarded, walls a mix of bare brick and damaged plaster, curtains (rags) drawn, unshaded lamps glimmering, bits of motorcycle literally everywhere- Bromley looking like a tramp – overall quite a character building experience for a young lad to experience – on one visit, I remember eyeballing the orange box he was using as a seat in his “living room” the floor strewn with several wrappers from

recently devoured Cadbury Dairy Milk, in his kitchen was a white Triumph Tiger 90 that he was doing his bit to try and sell to my Dad- funnily enough, it looked very like the one Barry Heath purchased last year.....



There was another “traditional” place we used to go to, over in Rugby somewhere, was he called Bromley too? The name escapes me but I remember failing to get the bits we wanted but being sold a (fairly) freshly shot rabbit off the hook by the door; I can still

see Dad stuffing the rigid-as-a-board thing into the backpack with the words “that’ll make a nice Sunday roast”!

Anyway, the little Cub got completed, complete with lucky rabbits tail (ok, I made that bit up); not a concours job but nice and smart – resplendent in its reapplied factory colours of blue and white. This was the machine that I learned to ride on; at the time, we had access to a little private drive and this is where I practised the basics of machine control and riding in first gear; but the real carrot was the promise of an early morning ride at Coombe Country Park Coventry Parade....
To be continued.....

Talking of Tiger 90’s

Barry’s recent ride up north and down south.... on a 1963 Tiger 90.

This just a very brief summary of my trip. The full ish account should be in December’s VMCC journal. (I can send you a much fuller account than will be published if you would like the unexpurgated version):



In the last week or so of September I rode up to Wick, a few miles from John O’Groats. I spent 3 days getting there, stopping at b&b’s on the way. After a rest day I went to J.O.G. to start the run proper. Then continued west then south for 3 days to the Lake District, where I had another rest day. 3 more days took me to Padstow in Cornwall. After another enforced 2 rest days the ride to Lands End was completed. Then back to Padstow for the night.

The final 2 days riding was to near Yeovil, then back home to Coventry. A total of around 1900 miles (can’t give an accurate figure as the speedo cable broke after 54 miles!)

12 days riding – about 120 -220 miles per day.

I have included the link to my fund raising page in aid of ‘Save the Children’ just in case any more members would like to send a donation. I also accept cheques and cash. A huge thank you to the large number who have already donated by the various ways. Well over £700 has been donated so far.

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/barry-heath1>



A pre 65 Trial.

The last time I attended a motorcycle trial, the machines being tiptoed around the course consisted of the latest from Bultaco, Yamaha and Montessa possibly in 1977?

In September of this year, I went along to watch a pre 65 motorcycle trial taking place in the middle of nowhere. To be precise, in a beautiful wooded coppice, with lovely views of the surrounding countryside, on a warm Sunday morning. The machines on trial included Triumph Cubs, Triumph twins, James, BSA 4 strokes and 2 strokes (in fact quite a few Bantams) and completing the line up, giving a feast for the eyes and ears was a wonderful Ariel single. My thanks go to the Midland section for letting me tag along (using the 2nd man drop off system) and enjoy this Vintage motorcycle "Gymkhana". By the way, I did manage to find my way home....the trial location was at Tanworth in Arden near Hampton in Arden.
David Kendall

The 1935 BSA Blue Star

The Blue Star was BSA's sporting model of the mid-1930s before the Empire and Gold Stars and was so named because it had achieved the Blue Star (85 mph lap) at Brooklands Motor Racing Circuit.

I bought this bike at auction in 2016, I just had to have it despite spirited bidding. It is VERY unusual since it is the ONLY bike I ever bought at a Public (hammer) Auction that was not massively flawed. 1 out of 5 is not good so be warned! Strangely a few bikes bought at E Bay Auctions have been a far better bet probably because you get to look the owner in the eye.

On loading it outside the Auction rooms I was approached by the former Journalist Brian Crichton and well known 70's motocrosser Andy Robertson (the last time I saw him was when he lapped me in an event and cleared off into the distance leaving me eating his dust) as they knew the former owner who had apparently had it over 60 years and had died in a nursing home the previous year aged 95, but had been a regular on the bike at VMCC Mid Wales events.

The bike is extraordinarily unusual, it being almost entirely original down to every nut and bolt, none of which have been butchered with ill-fitting spanners. The detail is a delight, for example, the silencer brackets have the piled arms logos on them and the handlebars have the patent number stamped on them...everywhere is unusual detail like that. Whilst it may never have been cleaned, pampered or polished (when I purchased it, it was covered in a quarter of an inch of grime and baked solid grease

which I washed off with old paraffin) It has clearly been respected all its life by its two previous owners and started up easily although I did need to replace the gearbox shell which was cracked from over tightening of the tapered sump plug.

It is a nice thing to ride with fine handling, powerful brakes and good pulling although it does tend to "nip up" if used continually at over 55 MPH. It came with a spare barrel and I have managed to acquire a new BSA piston so that will be investigated over the winter.

The machine has been continually taxed since 1935, has seemingly had little use and is in perfect order. To restore it to its original glory with new paintwork and chrome plating would be a crime and destroy the character of this most unusual machine.

Here is a link to it running <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TW31INiGg28>

Why I have a soft spot for this model

In the 1950's my mother was having trouble conceiving. My parents went to the doctor my mother riding pillion on Dads 1935 BSA Blue Star. As they entered the Doctors surgery he looked up at the young couple in front of him. "How can I help" he asked and Dad explained the issue.

Looking at Mum then back to Dad he said "Did she come on the back of a Motorcycle?" asked the Doctor pointing at Mum but looking at Dad. Mum and Dad nodded in agreement....."That's the problem" the Doctor replied..."get a side-car for the bike and she will conceive"

Dad got the side-car and mum conceived almost immediately and well here I am ... in confinement mum was taken to the hospital in the side-car and thus after my birth I had my first motoring experience going home in that 1935 BSA Blue Star and side-car. Bliss!!!!

Arthur Farrow
Stretton on Dunsmore

A meet up in September

Despite the fact we had a chilly start to the day, our Sunday morning social gathering at the Pavilion Cafe, in Lighthorne on Sunday September 27th, proved popular. We had 17 enthusiasts enjoy Tea, Coffee and hot food, served up by a friendly and well organised staff at this pleasant venue. Machines on parade in the car park ranged from a Vintage AJS to a Classic Rotary Norton, all looking wonderful in the early Warwickshire sunshine. Judging by the response of people in attendance, the Pavilion Cafe could become a firm favourite, and if you know of other similar establishments for a safe social gathering, please let us know.

David Kendall



Members and their bikes enjoy the sunshine at Lighthorne Pavillion Cafe.



Secretary's Shorts

As you will probably know by now we have reluctantly decided to call a temporary halt to the unofficial get togethers. When things are looking better we will resume arranging suitable events, in keeping with government and medical advice.

We shall have to look at next years calendar soon. Its about now we have to plan meetings, speakers etc. but how can we do that not knowing how long this Covid situation will last? We will do our best to arrange things as and when we can.

We will certainly keep members fully informed.

To be optimistic we always welcome ideas for events to attend, rides, club night activities etc. So please let us know what you would like on the calendar.

On a personal note I get asked what has been happening in my workshop:

The Tina is still awaiting the missing spark! My auto electrician and I have checked the absolutely basic ignition system but despite our best efforts it refuses to spark! And yes we've checked all the coils, condenser, points, flywheel, timing etc.

Bridgestone 100 TMX in September I finally got it registered and on the road.

However, on the third very local test ride it stopped. Back home it ran a bit, sparked occasionally but was not working at all well.

I passed it to my professional mechanic whilst I swanned off to far off northern parts.

He went through everything and finally, by accident, found the h.t. lead was barely touching the coil's threaded connection. It now starts but wouldn't 'pull the skin off a rice pudding'

So I have it back, as he is busy with proper paying jobs, and its awaiting my attention.



Triumph Tiger 90 is brilliant! It took me all the way on my E2E without missing a beat. Only the speedo cable and Chinese replica rear lamp failed me by breaking / falling off.

We still need you to send in your stories, handy hints, bikes you've loved or loathed etc.

The next edition should be around the first week of December.

One last thing. I have **For sale** 2 pre unit BSA gearboxes in parts. I've been told that 1 is late 40's the other mid 50's. They owe me £50 each. If you are interested please contact me.

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