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The

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MERRY CHRISTMAS!

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General enquiries via email; please contact hello@thebuzzingclub.net. Items for the February 2021 magazine to be sent to editor@thebuzzingclub.net and reach Dave at Buzzing Production well before Friday 15th January 2021, as by that date 99% of the magazine will be finished.

Christmas is here again! This year has been a total disaster for bike-riding activities, not to mention social events and being locked-down for much of the year. The NACC membership is made of stern stuff however, and we took our pleasures where and when we could. Let's hope next year will be a vast improvement on the ghastly mess that was 2020. We wish you all the best, and stay safe!

Cover image - the Skylon was a Danish-built moped from the late 1950s. Caption reads "A full modern adventure."

Club Information

Membership

Membership of the NACC in the UK costs £18.00 a year. Associate Membership is £3 in addition to the full membership fee. European membership costs £20.00 and the rest of the world £25.00 per annum. Application forms are available from the Membership Secretary (see previous page) or downloadable from our website **www.thebuzzingclub.net** - click on "Join the Club"

Dating and Registration

The current dating fees for club members are: £10 (£20 for non-members) for a certificate supporting an application for an age-related registration, £12.50 (£30 for non-members) for processing a V765 application. Contact the Machine Registrar for details, please send an SAE.

Affiliations

The NACC Ltd. is a member of the **Federation of British Historic Vehicle Clubs** and we have corresponding agreements with; the Register of Unusual Microcars, New Zealand Classic Scooter Club, the Bermuda Classic Bike Club, Rijwiel Hulpmotor Club Nederland, AML GC17 in France, the Sjællands Veteranknallert Klub Denmark and the British Two Stroke Club.



Club Insurance

Full and Associate members of the NACC can benefit from our Footman James NACC Insurance Scheme, offering a range of policies to suit Autocycle, Cyclemotor and Moped owners, including those riding sub-50cc machines on full car licences without a motorcycle licence or CBT. Please quote your membership number when contacting **Footman James** on **0333 207 6293**.

Library

Dave Beare can supply copies of material held in the NACC Library (contact Dave for a copy of the Library List, see previous page for his details)

Website

<http://thebuzzingclub.net> Our new site has up-to-date news on upcoming events, events calendar, club activities and shortly a new forum. Next time you're on the 'net take a look.

Events Calendar

If you want to organise a club-permit event and wish information to appear in Buzzing in time, please write to the Events Secretary at least 2 months prior. Application forms can be downloaded from the NACC website. Events organised at short notice (min 28 days), apply via email or in writing to Events Secretary Bob Jeffcoat to ensure issue of a permit. Details will be posted on the NACC website. **Signing-on sheets must be returned within 14 days of holding the event.** The rule for riding on NACC events is **no membership card- no ride**. Those who cannot produce a valid card have to pay a £3 day membership fee. All participants must personally sign the official sign-on sheet issued by the Events Secretary. Events shown in **BOLD** on the next page are official NACC events, those not shown in bold are non-NACC events which may require a day membership payment.

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Chairman's Chat

Hello Members,

The loss of Ray Butcher, our previous Chairman, was felt deeply by many of us who had come to know him as a friend and as a thoroughly decent guy. His quiet influence and guidance were highly valued by the Club and he steered us through some choppy waters with a competent hand on the tiller. I am honoured to have been asked to fill his shoes and hope that I can do his legacy justice. I have a great committee to work with and with their help I am sure that I can.

A brief word of introduction for those who don't know me: I'm in my early sixties and retired from a 38-year career in Customs & Excise (which became Border Force) in 2017. My early aspirations were to become an engineer but fate and the Japanese electronics industry intervened and pulled the rug from under the precision engineering company for which I worked, mainly by doing what we did better, cheaper and more efficiently. Customs was a stop-gap which lasted for far more years than I'd planned!

The Devonport Collection currently consists of 15 machines, mainly mopeds but with a couple of cyclemotors hiding at the back of the workshop. My fascination with low-powered machinery began in the late 1980s as a distraction from a turbulent marriage and carried on after the inevitable crash and burn. Those with long memories or a collection of Buzzing back-numbers will have read something of those days. My partner now is the lovely Isabelle who doesn't entirely understand our wonderful hobby but is reasonably tolerant of it!

We have to touch on the strange days in which we find ourselves. As I write this, we are a couple of days away from entering our second lockdown with all that it implies. Our programme of events for 2020 was decimated by the pandemic and we don't yet know where 2021 will take us. Our earnest hope is that the measures being taken by the government will enable us to return to something approaching normality or a modified version of it. We have missed the joys of riding our machines together – in my case in this country and in France where the necessary cancellation of the SarsPoterles event in June put paid to the highlight of my year. Although some of us have continued low-key meets following the guidelines, it hasn't been the same, has it?

Fingers crossed for next year, then! Spend the next few months fettling your machines and preparing for any ride-outs that we are allowed to arrange. Please follow the guidelines and stay safe!

Nick Devonport

The EDITOR'S CORRESPONDENCE

The club does not hold itself responsible for the opinions of its correspondents. Please send all items to Dave Beare, contact details on page 2, and please include your name and address.

Dear Dave, 'May the Almighty guide thy footsteps,' said Kai Lung, courteously waiting until the door had closed behind him before adding 'into a vat of boiling sulphur!' On 23/4/18 I bought from Orange Imports 'ENG43 124cc 4 STROKE PIT BIKE ENGINE.' I fitted it to my recently rebuilt Nanfang, (the one with the exploding rear brake, an earlier Chinese tale in the December 2019 Buzzing). I hoped it would provide a little more power. And so it proved. Perhaps not as much as I hoped, but with the gearing raised it would now reach a comfortable 55 mph.

The engine was cheap: £249.99 for the complete unit with carb and gearbox; so I suppose I should not have expected much. Even so.....I carefully fitted it, drained the suspicious looking oil, and checked the tappets. They were very tight: no gap at all on the exhaust valve. After 100 miles, I changed the oil again, which was disturbingly discoloured, and nipped up the head bolts. Thereafter it was serviced every 1,000 miles. It ran very satisfactorily. On 1/8/20, whilst riding in Yorkshire, the bike became very reluctant to start, though it still ran well once going. Gradually it deteriorated, until eventually it was almost impossible to make it fire. The engine had covered 2,000 miles.

A fellow Wobbler, Dave Keeling, generously offered to strip the engine. What he found tempted me to quote Kai Lung to the seller! On removing the head a blown head-gasket was found, plus the head AND the barrel were both slightly warped. We also found a collapsed seal round one of the studs [*the passage for oil flowing to the camshaft and rockers*], perhaps explaining the blackened oil.

Photo 1 (right) is the head AFTER Dave had refaced it and removed the valves. When he released the inlet valve, the inlet seat fell out! How has it kept running? Photo 2 (next page top left) shows the piston after cleaning. Not too badly worn, but note the embossed numbers: 110.

This was not a 125, but a 107cc motor. We checked the measurements to confirm the lettering. Not very important, perhaps, but useful to know what you're buying.





Photo 3 (below) depicts one of the rockers, and the camshaft. While the latter is not worn, it showed contact on one side only of the lobes, indicating it was not 'square'. The rocker face is very badly worn, with what looks like an accidental grinding mark on one side. I know: there is a moral here, and of course it's foolish to expect quality in such a cheap product. But a life of 2,000 miles?

PS: On 9th September I met the owner of OO Racing at Woodash Garage, Woodnesborough, in Kent. He has given good service to several friends, and has huge experience of Chinese clones of the Honda OHC engines.

He related that there are two grades of Chinese engine: those that before export are tested, and those that aren't. The price difference is 4:1. But he finds he still rejects 30% of even the 'good' ones! He was unsurprised by my story. Moral: "The whitewashed crow soon shows black." Regards, **Howard Bentham**



Hello Dave,
The excellent Autocyclus VéloSoleX history left me wondering if there was any after-life for the Solex brand. From my brief research I found the following. The decline for the VéloSoleX was swift, with peak sales in 1964 of 339,502 down to 35,000 in 1976. The company attempted to stop the decline with new, more conventional models such as the 6000 and Tenor. To build these Solex constructed a new factory in Macon in 1970, but they were not commercially successful.

In 1974 Renault bought 51% of Solex shares, this was swiftly exchanged for 15% of the shares in rival Motobécane giving them control of Solex. In 1975 MB ended production of all but the traditional VéloSoleX and the main factory at Courbevoie was closed.

In 1979 the manufacture of the VéloSoleX was moved to Motobécane factories and the Macon Solex factory closed, though the building still exists. In 1983 sales were down to 4,573 and the last VéloSoleX was produced in 1986. After the end of manufacturing in France, the VéloSoleX production machinery was stored at the port of Le Havre for four years before being shipped to Hungary, where the VéloSoleX was briefly built. There was also a Chinese copy.



The carburettor manufacturing part of the company and the Solex names were acquired by Magneti Marelli, part of Fiat. In 2004 the names Solex, VéloSoleX and Solexine were sold to Groupe Cible. They commissioned the Italian design consultant Pininfarina to design an electric Velosolex. In 2013 the rights were acquired by the French company Easybike, who now assemble four types of electric VéloSoleX in France. These all feature a stylised Solex motor, but are powered by Bosch pedal-crank motors. La fin. **Philip Vesey Holt**

Thanks Philip for the last few parts of the VéloSoleX story, a sad end to an important industry which employed thousands of workers all over France. Times they were indeed a'changing in the 1970s.



Dear Dave,
In response to Jim Waller's request (October 2020 Buzzing, page 14, When We Were Younger #4) as to whether his Solex Micron was still owned by a club member, the answer is yes, I confirmed details with Jim. It had been left out in a garden after Jim sold it, with the result that the paint on the wheels and back-end of the bike had parted company, though the front end remained remarkably intact. I enclose before and after pictures of the Micron, now back in presentable shape and road legal. It is great fun to ride, hopeless on hills, and inevitably raises comments. Regards, **Peter Jones**

(Above: Jim's Micron as rescued by Peter and restored, next page)

Wanted!

Hi Dave, I've just acquired a New Hudson autocycle and wondered if any member can give me the original paint codes for the green and cream colours many were painted with? Please contact me at briantaylor84@outlook.com. Many thanks, **Brian Taylor**

Has any member out there have any idea of the colour code for a 1976 PUCH M3 three-speed foot-change model, its a metallic green of some kind. Hope you can help, Regards **John**

Stoddard at *d.j.stodd@talktalk.net*

[illegible]

News

Sad news from Roger Worton, the NSU Quickly expert and supplier of NSU Quickly spares, that he is having to give up his business due to health problems. Roger has been helping NACC members for over 40 years - his membership number is 309 - his knowledge and experience with Quickly's is unparalleled. **Thank you Roger for all you have done for us over so many years.** The good news is that Roger's business has been taken on by Andy and Sue at NSU Quickly Spares, Ivy House, Maypole, Hoath, Canterbury, Kent CT3 4LN. Tel : 07714 781600, email: nsuquicklyspares@btinternet.com and their website is www.nsuquicklyspares.co.uk The new NSU Quickly Spares advert can be found on page 47, the inside back cover.

In Northern Ireland the official MOT date for testing was, unlike Great Britain, pre-1960 with no roll on. Vehicles are tested in special government test centres. After historic vehicle owners lobbied the Minister for Infrastructure Nicola Mallon to bring Northern Ireland into line with Great Britain, a bill was placed in Stormont to align Northern Ireland requirements with those in Great Britain. I am happy to announce that on the 12th October 2020 Northern Ireland now has a forty year rolling requirement for MOT exemption. Vehicle owners can still have their exempted vehicles MOT tested if they wish. **Ed Kilgore MBE**

Lightweight Fun.

Jim Leddy

I blame it on the virus! During the total lockdown I used the excellent weather to assemble a basket-case moped (Puch) but during the process realised that if I was looking for an ultra-lightweight, I'd really need a machine with a bit more oomph. The countryside hereabouts is not only hilly, but mountainous and the Highlands start some 13 miles from home. I began to think along the lines of a Honda step-thru, initially focusing on a C70 I'd found on-line in a dealers down in Yorkshire. It was an immaculate example, a JDM (Japanese Domestic Market) bike with a low mileage. It was top book price (£1,700) and I then had to factor in the cost of a courier to bring the machine up to Scotland, another £150.

The market is such for these machines, that this was still acceptable (just). Luckily though, delays in a refund of a Covid cancelled holiday put the brakes on final purchase, so a friend suggested that I looked at Gumtree. And there it was! Only 10 miles away, an immaculate low mileage, taxed and MOT'd C90. We went to view, agreed the deal and then went home to arrange insurance so that it could be ridden home the following week.

The day duly arrived, and we went fully equipped with riding gear and also a foot pump and pressure gauge. I checked the oil; slightly dirty and half full. Tyres; no dust caps and too soft - warning bells began a little tinkle. However, the fuel gauge showed plenty of petrol for the short ride home. The Cub started easily, and all the electrics worked, so once warmed up, I set off. What a super machine to ride! A surprising amount of power, and the handling and ride were predictable once one realised that on such a small machine, the slightest input from the rider actually has a large effect.

What was left of the summer was spent checking and servicing and then modifying. The previous owner was not a motorcyclist, rather more of a 'rider' - there is a subtle difference. My work uncovered a list of minor issues but all were straightforward and easily fixed. Reading through the thick wallet of paperwork that came with the bike uncovered quite a history.



The bike had been used for a big trip from Scotland to Stuttgart which it managed with no apparent problem. Unfortunately, after its return, the rider had given it to his son to ride around on and he had neglected to check the oil. The paperwork included an invoice for £250 of work to repair the seizure that followed. A new piston had been fitted and the bore honed plus a check for any other damage.

The oil was changed and refilled with 10/40 semi synthetic, and a magnetic drain plug fitted. The fuel bowl had never been removed and the filter was clogged up with fine brown fibres(?). The battery was a write-off; it had 3 or 4 dry cells and corrosion on the terminals which had migrated onto the battery retaining-strap. The carrier was removed and treated and painted and a new AGM Motobat fitted. Some parts were missing altogether, the heat shield for the exhaust pipe had gone AWOL, but a genuine Honda part was sourced readily on Ebay, pricey at £26.

Riding into the hills and moorlands quickly revealed a slipping clutch but the rider's handbook gave clear instructions on adjustment. The Cub can now tackle hairpins and 1 in 5 gradients easily. I bought some ex Polish Army ammo bags which serve as ideal throw-over pannier bags to carry sandwiches, camera and extra fuel for longer trips. They also take up less space than a rear carrier and top-box would, essential as storage is an issue for me.

As a result of 100s of miles riding, I decided on the following worthwhile mods. First, to fit a 16 tooth front sprocket (standard is 15). The Cub is definitely less buzzy at cruising speeds, and still OK for hill climbing. Secondly, to fit better rear shock absorbers. The originals are in effect just a spring under compression in a cylinder, there is no damping so the rear can pogo a bit and bang over sharp bumps. And lastly, I replaced my old worn, split, tatty and shiny seat cover with a real quality item - I found one on eBay by Classic-Car-Seats for £35.

There are a lot of spin-off benefits I hadn't anticipated in having an ultra-lightweight in the stable. It is ideal for rides out into the countryside when a lot of photo-stops are required. I was putting together an article which needed photos of glacial features called drumlins. This meant parking the Cub off the road whenever safe and convenient. A larger bike would have been too heavy to manhandle onto the grass verge, and in all probability, would have fallen over. The Honda is not seen as a "threatening" macho machine and more often than not brings a smile or a wave from motorists and pedestrians alike and friendly chats at the petrol pumps. "You meet the nicest people on a Honda!" Lastly, the economy, well, Wow! It cost less than £30 to add to my insurance policy, fully Comp and breakdown cover included and £20 road tax. Due to an economy challenge between two other Cub owning pals, I kept meticulous records of fuel use and after double-checking came up with 168m.p.g.!

The quality of the engineering and the materials used by Honda are outstanding. The Cub first appeared as a 50cc machine in 1958, and spawned a range of variants of differing capacities and designs. Production surpassed 60 million in 2008, and 100 million in 2017. It is the most produced motor vehicle on the planet. By the time my example came off the line (1996), the engine was a s.o.h.c., 12 volt electric start, semi-automatic 3 speed and with a hydraulically operated cam chain tensioner. To fill in an odd hour or so type "Ed March" into Google or YouTube searches and marvel at the adaptability and sheer guts of the Honda 90. No wonder they are now considered "collectable" and that the prices have shot through the roof. My MOT man rated mine as an investment!



The Motobécane Museum

Jo Stanley



Last September John and I were touring around France en route to Mezidon Canon, where we planned to meet up with Pat & Paul Witchard for the annual autojumble; we stopped off at Saint Quentin for a couple of days to visit a museum we had been told was very good.

We stayed at a campsite in nearby Seracourt-le-Grand, on a pitch alongside a carp lake (enjoyed a day's fishing too), and rode into Saint Quentin on our twin Hondas to find the museum, which is located within the old Motobecane factory.

The museum houses a wide variety of items from yesteryear; horse drawn carriages, shop fronts with old watchmaker's tools, barrels, cameras, old farm equipment, and of course lots of motorbikes! There were pedal-cycles, tandems, scooters, cars and even a 125cc van (below), plus a selection of the larger Motobecane bikes too.

There were a lot of prototype vehicles on display which were very interesting (and weird), including a four wheel 50cc machine from 1958 (below L). Of course I fell in love with the lovely yellow La Poste bike which looked very smart. It was a very interesting afternoon and I would thoroughly recommend a visit if you are ever in the area.



[illegible]

I would hazard a guess that every single member of the NACC has owned and ridden a Mobylette at sometime in their motorcycling lives. Not surprising really, the Mobylette was one of the most commercially-successful and widely-distributed mopeds of all time world-wide from 1949 to the late 1980s. Motobécane was already a highly-successful manufacturer of a wide range of 4-stroke motorcycles pre-WW2, the size of the factory pictured below in 1926 shows the scale of the business. Post-war it was inevitably much smaller due to materials shortages and lack of money.




The Motobécane company began life in 1923 in the Parisian suburb of Pantin, founded by Charles Benoît and Abel Bardin, and produced a wide range of two and four-stroke motorcycles destined for utilitarian everyday usage, the first being the “Standard” MB1, a belt-drive, single-speed 175cc two-stroke with bicycle pedals. Other models soon followed, including four-stroke singles, work-horses all. Once successful and flush with cash, Motobécane began making rather more exotic machines, sporting motorcycles such as the B5C, which won the Six Days trial in 1930. The 1940s 175cc Z2C (below) is rather more typical.



France was in a terrible state after 1945, most motorcycles were worn-out pre-war models and the rest of the country got about on bicycles.

Motobécane had also made bicycles since 1934, initially with conventional frames, but in 1937 the artist Geo Ham (Georges Hamel) was engaged to draw up a new logo for Motobécane (below), one which we all now recognise. Geo Ham also had a hand in redesigning the bicycle frames, drawing up those lovely swoopy bent-tube ones with a lower main tube and two parallel upper tubes braced by a small stamping - this was the BNX. Geo Ham's frames would remain a feature of Motobécane ladies' bicycles for over thirty years.



Another character entered the picture post-war, Willem Kaptein, the Netherlands importer of Motobécane products and a personal friend of Charles Benoît. He spied the BNX bicycle frame on a visit to Pantin and suggested that a reinforced version of Geo Ham's frame, fitted with a small engine, could be a huge success in Holland, a country which is almost entirely flat. Few citizens could afford or needed a large motorcycle in the late 1940s but almost everybody rode a bicycle, so they were a very familiar means of transport.

The result was shown at the Utrecht Fair in September 1949, and subscription orders for the “Kaptein bicycle with auxiliary engine”- the Kaptein Mobylette, as it became known in December 1949 - vastly outstripped expectations. The name Mobylette was created by the fusion of the words MOteur and BicYcLETTE, shortened generically for all mopeds in the 1960s as “Mob.”



Taken aback by the unexpected success of Willem Kaptein's idea, the directors of Motobécane realised that such a motorised bicycle could also help Frenchmen and women get about more easily and frugally. The new Mobylette AV3 was then displayed at the October 1949 Salon de Paris, partly hidden behind larger Motobécane motorcycles, almost as if the directors didn't quite believe in a future for their new small model. How wrong they were.

Controls of the first AV3 Mobylettes were extremely simple; there was no clutch so the 49cc engine had to be stopped and started all the time. Reversing rotation of the throttle actuated a decompressor for restarts, just like it has been ever since. Bicycle brakes front and rear were operated by reversed levers, and that was pretty much it. Paintwork was sombre black.

Advertising frequently featured female riders to reinforce the message of how light and easy a Mobylette motorised bicycle was in use. The headline in press adverts and posters was "For everybody to use" and it was justifiably the case for Motobécane's Mobylette. Three different models were on offer.



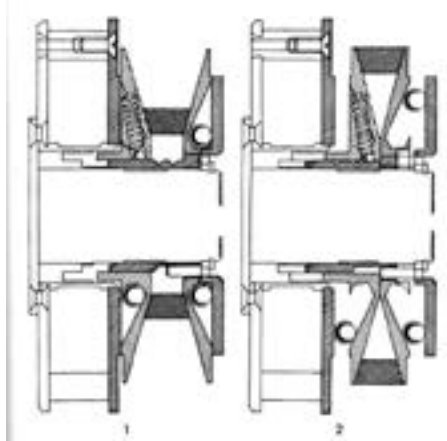
From 1952 the AV32 was supplemented by two new models, the AV31 "Luxe" with drum brakes front and rear, telescopic front forks and a simple centrifugal clutch, and the AV33 "Super Standard" which did without the front drum brake and telescopic forks but kept the clutch.

Further improvements continued to be made; in 1954 a larger 3.7 litre fuel tank surrounded the saddle tube, the engine benefited from two transfer ports and the cylinder bore was chrome-plated. More power and performance resulted from these mods.

Another revolution appeared in 1954 on the AV37, the 'Mobymatic' variator. Initially it just had three speeds, governed by small sprung balls (see below) engaging in notches on the outer pulley sleeve, gearchanging being

effected by load and power output variations. The primary drive-belt moved up and down inside the pulley sides, these being moved closer together by the weight of large ball-bearings moving up ramps as revs increased. The variations in belt length were accommodated by the engine pivoting back & forth on its top mounting, tensioned by two hairpin springs.

The 3-speed variator was chosen because Eric Jaulmes, the chief engineer at Motobécane, didn't want to spook his customers by presenting a continuously-variable transmission, preferring to give them a 3-stage transmission they were used to having on motorcycles with gearboxes. A continuous-variator soon replaced the 3-speeder.



A more progressive 'Dimoby' clutch was introduced in 1958, it no longer needed pedalling to move off, just twist and go.

The next revolution came in 1959, with the opening of a brand-new Mobyette factory at Rouvroy. Renault provided a

lot of input as the new factory had ultra-modern machine-tools and production equipment. Most important were the heavy-duty metal presses and high-speed welding lines installed for a new series of Mobyette models, the AV41 to 48 and many, many subsequent models. From 1959 on all Mobyettes would have pressed-steel frames welded up automatically on long transfer lines, such as the AV42s seen above with their teenage riders heading for school. Chroming and painting was now semi-automated and production volumes increased dramatically.



The rather utilitarian but more rigid new pressed-steel frames completely replaced the old Geo Ham-designed bicycle frames. The new frames were no doubt a lot cheaper and much faster to make, but the elegant style of those first AV3 series Mobyettes (left) could never be replicated.

Early AV3 series Mobyettes are now much sought-after by restorers and collectors.



Above: a publicity photo from 1949 of the new AV3 Mobyette. These are Spanish-made AV3s built under licence by Gárate, Anitua y Compañia (G.A.C.) in Eibar, Guipúzcoa, the Basque country.

(Grateful thanks to my friend Patrick Barrabès for the images and info from his book "Motobécane - La Mobyette Universelle".)

A Monument to the Unknown Cyclomotorist

Dave Stevenson



(The events written about here took place during Dave's marathon Le Jog ride on a Mini-Motor in 2018)

For four days I had travelled roughly in a north-easterly direction, then north and briefly northwest and finally for a further day pretty much due north. It was something of a surprise, therefore, to find myself the next morning heading south-east on an unplanned route and adding a further 20 miles to that day's journey. It was a lovely bright morning with sunshine glossing a verdant spring. The previous day had involved a lot of quiet 'B' roads but this morning's

run was on a fairly fast single carriageway road with cars and commercial vehicles speeding past my right ear. The general sense of insecurity was not alleviated by a traffic-light controlled alternate contra-flow that narrowed the carriageway to a single lane and forced me to accelerate as quickly as possible to my maximum speed of 23mph so as not to hold up an impatient queue.

It was with relief, after several miles of this road, that I turned right and into a forest. The linear nature of my journey repeatedly offered me gateways to different vistas or abruptly changed landscapes. After the noise and stress of the trunk road this unfenced forest track opened a peaceful world of light coming under the tree canopy, small streams and sun-dappled undergrowth. The lane at a final T-junction emerged into a pastoral landscape of blue sky and hedges with houses scattered in paddocks along the far side of the wood. I pulled up at the drive at the second house on the left as per my directions, cutting the Mini-Motor as I came to a stop. Nigel Pritchett came out to see me. Although not a cyclomotorist himself he immediately recognised my means of transport and asked for a demonstration of its mode of operation. Then he led me to his mother's garage and, opening the door, half-wheeled and half-dragged the object of my quest into the daylight.

Black and rust, shabby and down at heel, its front tyre flat and the rear scoured down to the canvas by the roller, the old bike teetered on its aluminium Suresta stand in the unfamiliar light. A spoke was flapping loose in the rear wheel but the dirt that covered the rear of the bike was authentic roller drive grime, petroil, dust, grit and tyre rubber. A home-made aluminium 'L' plate was screwed to the oxidised rear mudguard and a December 1953 tax disc was in the holder attached to the front spindle. So these were 65 year old tyres. That was 65 year old grime. Someone had last ridden this Royal Enfield bicycle with its Trojan Mini-Motor attachment when I, who was to be a pensioner in a fortnight, was seven months old.



Above: The Moment of Revelation - Nigel's finger replacing those of both God and Adam.

The issue date on the tax disc indicated that it had been bought when I was six days old. Here was the answer to a question I didn't need to ask, particularly not yet halfway into a ride from Land's End to John O'Groats on another similarly powered bicycle.

It had been while I was working on my Dad's Mini-Motor powered bike during the previous winter that I got to thinking that it would be good to own a bicycle and Mini Motor that had actually been paired in the early 1950s in the heyday of British cyclomotoring. Looking back, I'm not really sure why, apart from in a generalised 'wouldn't-it-be-nice-if' sort of way. It is true that most of the cyclomotors that you see for sale on the internet have obviously been cobbled together for the purpose of a sale from a left-over engine and a knackered bone-shaker by someone who has no experience of cyclomotoring and even less mechanical skill. But something similar is true of half the 'barn-find project' bikes of all ages and genres for sale on the internet. It's a very long time since the early 1950s and in truth what I describe as 'my father's Rudge' is actually a frame, handlebars, levers and brakes as ridden by male parent with substituted, hubs, gears, wheel rims, saddle and with a completely unrelated Mini-Motor bolted on the back where the rear rack, which I discarded, used to be. Even as I nurtured these hankerings for an 'authentic' cyclomotor, it was clear to me that the preparations of my Dad's erstwhile bicycle for LEJOG had been facilitated by the fact that neither the bike nor the engine needed to be preserved 'as found' or in a state of total originality. Indeed, had I thought about it for even a moment, I would have realised that the 'preservation' of such a machine in a state where it could actually be ridden, never mind ridden from one end of the country to the other, raised all sorts of practical problems.

Ah, if only the slow-cooked wisdom of time were available as the 'just-add-water' pot noodle of inspiration... Anyway, as you do, I started to look at cyclomotors on the website-with-the-cloven-hoof and put one or two in the 'Watch' box.

One in particular looked very original and I left it sitting there while I continued with other matters. Some weeks later I was in Worcester for the night and, having a few minutes on my hands, opened up the internet equivalent of the Mouth of Hell and glancing in my 'Watch' box, found that not only was the authentic-looking Mini-Motor still for sale but also the seller described his location as Worcester! The Devil's speciality is temptation and at 9am the next morning I was heading off seven miles in the wrong direction on a viewing.

Nigel is an antiques dealer and over a cup of tea in his Mum's kitchen he explained what he knew of the Mini-Motor. He had bought it from some auctioneers he quite often dealt with as part of a house clearance sale the previous September. There were no documents but the auctioneers believed that the deceased had been the only owner of the cyclemotor and that it had been in his possession when it was roadworthy and subsequently was stored by him until his death. Nigel's business is provenance and he was keen to help me find out more. Obviously he had a financial interest in passing on the machine but he was taken with the find. My mode of arrival had convinced him that I was destined to be the bike's next owner. I paid him a small deposit, part of which he returned to me immediately as a donation to Alzheimer's Research, the charity I was raising money for, and I arranged to pick the bike up once I had reached the North of Scotland and returned home.



About a month later I carefully unloaded KNP 240 from the back of the van and again half-wheeled and half-dragged it into our back garden where I set it up on our little paved terrace (above) and called Barbara out to take a view. I had explained the issue of originality to her, the untouched state of the machine, the possibly interesting back story. "Ow much?" she said. "It's a wreck," she added and then went back inside. Pearls before swine, I thought, although if it had been pearls her reaction and the level of her interest would have been very different.

I began my investigation by writing to the Worcestershire Archives to see what had been recorded at first registration. No engine numbers were recorded, but registration KNP 240 was attributed to a named individual as 'Mini-Motor 49.9cc' on 4th October 1951. I also asked the National Cycle Collection if they could date the Royal Enfield bicycle for me as it was important to be sure that the outfit was as original as it appeared. Scotford Lawrence, their Historical Adviser replied with a very encouraging letter dating this 'splendid relic' to '1948-1949'. With everything suggesting that the cyclemotor was exactly as it appeared I contacted Nigel to ask if he thought the auctioneers would disclose to me the name of the deceased owner.

Concerned that confidentiality would prevent them giving me the information he contacted them himself, as the purchaser of the bike, and they agreed to put the information in writing. It was the same name as the gentleman who had first registered the bike in 1951, although by this date at a different address. So I now had a bicycle with a number plate painted on it, KNP 240, and a tax disc for this registration which expired in December 1953.

I had an entry from the Worcestershire vehicle first registration book showing that it had been sold to an individual, part of whose estate it had been sold from after he died. I had a letter from the auctioneers confirming this and a letter and receipt from Nigel to show that I had bought the cycle from him. It was time to get in touch with Phill Wright, the NACC's registrations officer and through him the DVLA.

I have dealt with the DVLA re-registration process before but it was when they had regional offices. I re-registered two bikes with the Sheffield office in the late eighties or early nineties without any problems. Their inspector came out to view the bikes on both occasions and was very helpful. All correspondence now is with the central office in Swansea. Phill explained to me that the current ruling is that there must be a document that ties the bike's frame and engine number to the registration on the bike if the bike is to retain its original registration number. Since few archived county records actually record the numbers at first registration this means in most cases the owner must have the original logbook. He could see, however, that there was quite a strong case for the retention of KNP 240 and agreed to try and help me retain it.

The documents did not go off as speedily as they might but that was entirely my fault as I failed to understand that the bike had to receive a Nova number even though it was first registered in the UK. The answer came back pretty promptly – no logbook, no original number. I asked Phill about appealing and he said it was worth a try. Back came the reply repeating the same mantra, no log book, no original number. In fact it was quite a grumpy letter and Phill told me he had received a similar missive. The evidence said the letter was 'circumstantial'.



Now forgive me a moment if I tell you that I think the inadmissibility of purely circumstantial evidence in a criminal trial whose outcome could incarcerate a human being for the rest of their life is a crucially important rule. On the other hand, I think, if the unknown cyclemotorist unexpectedly ditched his first purchase and bolted his numberplate on a completely different Mini Motor and then bolted that illicit power-pack onto a completely different and unrelated bicycle, the resulting cyclemotor was still known in the two and a bit years of its active life as KNP 240, sat in a garage for 64 years bearing the registration KNP 240 and was sold to its new owner as KNP 240 from the estate of the named individual who was assigned that number-plate.

Who would be incommoded in the slightest if the non-transferable registration KNP 240 was returned to the bike that had born it for 68 years? How would it have set a precedent? Anyone who could produce similar documentary evidence to give a provenance to a registration number should also be allowed to keep it. Let us be honest, if you manage to 'forget' about a cyclemotor in your shed for 60 years, are you likely to remember where the logbook is? There is a whole area where the force of statute law is given to procedures by state agencies which have no independent oversight and are challengeable only in the highest level of civil court at a cost way beyond the means of most members of the public. I still my indignation with the knowledge that there are far worse injustices perpetrated by such procedures and must accept that KNP 240 will henceforth travel the byways of Britain as LXS 722.

So, very much in contrast to my relationship with my Dad's Rudge Mini-Motor, I have become the custodian of a most singular monument to a man of whom I know only four objective truths; his name, that he lived in Malvern for what must have been most of his adult life, that for a period 1951-1953 he was a cyclemotorist and that he put the bike away at the end of that period and left it exactly as it was until he died more than 60 years later. Around these four bare stones of irreducible fact imagination must paint a portrait.

Influenced perhaps by the National Trust property Mr Straw's House in Worksop, my inclination is to see our cyclemotorist as an eccentric figure, living on the fringe of ordinary domestic life, a loner perhaps, a hoarder maybe, certainly somebody who stood outside of the growing spend-get-have of later 20th century life. But who am I to say? Our Mr Average may have passed his motorcycle test on the Trojan Mini-Motor and then bought a Triumph 650cc twin (as you could at the time) and ridden off into an endless summer of sociable Worcester evenings which left no time to dispose of the rusting, discarded wreck at the back of the shed.



An internet search in his name brought up results which suggested he may have died intestate, so it is quite likely that there is no one left who can give me any answers. The bike remains, like the blue ridge of the Malvern Hills viewed from the east, a one dimensional entity behind which exists a three dimensional backdrop that can only be conjured in imagination. It should perhaps be bolted to a plinth in a tree shaded garden somewhere so that it can act as a remembrance for all of us who passed this way through the pages of Buzzing until it gradually dissolves like a memory in the damp autumn air.

Stramproy Hulpmotor Treffen 2020

Martin Preston

Although the above event was cancelled it was only cancelled in a very Dutch sort of way, so by and large the weekend followed its normal course. I had intended to visit the Stramproy Hulpmotor weekend on my way to a Panther rally in Monschau the following weekend, and was accompanied by three other Panthers and a Suzuki.

The sailing from Hull to Europort was a little strange, we were the only motorcycles onboard together with 20 to 30 cars, so we had the boat to ourselves. After docking at Europort we then took a back route to Stramproy, arriving mid-afternoon on the Thursday. The campsite was a bit busier than usual due to the Dutch having to holiday at home and, despite my usual pitch being occupied by a newly erected hut, there was room enough for 'Camp Panther.'



Many of the usual suspects were already on camp; the Germans with their highly polished and renovated machines and the Dutch and Belgians with some odd contraptions, a number of which were powered by two engines. With no other British there it was left to us to fly the flag, but don't worry chaps, I think we will still be allowed back next year!

The runs took place on an unofficial basis, with no prize-giving, speeches etc., just a few beers afterwards at the cafe in the village. There was also the now customary visit to Mark's house for coffee and strudel, and a look at his vintage collection, and the run out to Pete's museum for more food and drink.

The weekend was enjoyed by all and we even managed to blag a few mopeds to take part in the Sunday run. On the Monday we left for a couple of days in the Belgium Ardennes, then on to Luxembourg, Monschau, and finally, two days in Delft before returning home. During the two weeks away the weather was hot, too hot sometimes with no rain at all, that is until we arrived in Hull into heavy rain for the 100 miles trip home. Roll on next year!

Akela, We'll Do Our Best #2

Phil Nuttall

Small Adventures with a Tiny Honda Cub contd.

In parallel with my modern motorcycle ownership, in 1982 a colleague offered me a 98cc Excelsior Consort, in big pieces but complete, that his mother-in-law was threatening to throw into a skip as part of her garage clear out. I couldn't let that happen so the Consort came home and became my first renovation project. I subsequently joined the British Two Stroke Club and met my friend and long term riding companion David Stevenson. We started ride-outs together and it quickly became obvious that the Consort had a major flaw – it started easily when cold but refused to even try to fire when hot. The crunch came when I took it for an MOT (which it passed) and then refused to start. In a fit of pique I told the MOT tester to keep it and walked home, I believe he sold it soon afterwards for a not inconsiderable sum. I also now know that this is a common fault with small older Villiers engines as the beetle juice (honest) derived shellac varnish separating the HT coil windings breaks down with damp and age so the windings short out when hot and a simple coil swap or rewind solves the problem.

Dave then found me a New Hudson autocycle in Hull which was very sound but a bit bodged together. Even with its single speed Villiers engine it could achieve a genuine 45 mph on the flat and far more down hill. At that time Dave was riding a Bown autocycle and, over the next few years, we did a lot of long(ish) trips (100mile +) and organised a series of well-supported runs for our local section of the National Autocycle and Cyclemotor Club (NACC).



However, several problems started to rear their ugly heads: The wheel bearings in 1950s autocycles were large cup and cone bearings which wore through their case hardening and collapsed, replacements were unobtainable (I've since found some on a market stall in Cuba). Tyres of the correct size were virtually unobtainable and 'new old stock' offerings often had cracked sidewalls or rusted bead wires. The final blow, however, was when all local MOT stations insisted on roller brake efficiency tests – on one occasion the carborundum faced testing roller wore through the tyre tread and burst the inner tube.

I had also acquired a 'restyled' New Hudson with the intention of renovating it but being short of spare time decided to sell it via the NACC magazine. A buyer arrived to collect the project, saw my other New Hudson and offered to buy both and, as I was in an MOT melt-down phase, they were both sold for a bargain price with a 1930s New Hudson pedal cycle thrown in free for good measure – this represented several very bad mistakes in one transaction as the MOT regulations changed shortly afterwards and of course, all autocycles are now of an age where they are MOT exempt.

Too late, as mine had gone before this change was announced and prices for 1950s vehicles and vintage bicycles went through the roof.

Between selling my New Hudsons and before the MOT Regs changed I was offered and bought a beautifully restored and rebuilt Cyclemaster (named Clarissa) from its rebuilder and previous owner – David Scott, an engineer of great skill and ability. As a result of the previously described MOT testing woes I decided to sell Clarissa – the announcement about MOT requirements being removed for pre-1960 vehicles came, literally, one month later. This was possibly my worst selling decision ever as Clarissa was a beauty in every respect and I would dearly love to have her today.



My Mobility Scooter (Imagatively known as "The C90")

First of all, cards on the table – I was one of those boring old motorcyclists who claim to have owned a Vincent. Admittedly only a 50cc Firefly clip-on, which I swapped with a lad at school for a single record by, I think, The Animals or Screaming Lord Sutch. This began the long and financially incompetent career in motorcycle-dealing described in the previous chapter.

Fortunately, my Honda C90 has saved me from a lifetime of bad motorcycle deals and at this stage in my life, with arthritis biting, really has become my red mobility scooter and, as a bonus, is an appreciating asset.

I bought my red 1987 C90 some 7 years ago as a joint venture with my son – the plan was that we would pay half each and he would use it to commute to work and I would use it at weekends for pleasure runs. We bought it from a young man in Mansfield after seeing it advertised in a free

motorcycle newspaper. We took £500 in cash with the firm idea that we would beat him down to around the £400 mark. When we arrived at his house he explained that he was selling the Cub as he had just lost his job, showed us his ferrets and introduced us to his young wife and their newly born baby (note these useful ploys if you are a motorcycle vendor). I resisted the urge to double our offer but paid the full asking price without any suggestion of haggle and quickly left – I hope that the money helped and he found a new job (because things were then, and still are, grim in Mansfield).

My son rode the C90 home with just a brief stop at a motorcycle shop in Mansfield where he bought a Honda CB600 Hornet, ended the shortest joint ownership venture in history and I became the seventh proud owner of the not quite immaculate, red C90 with just over 8,000 miles showing on the clock, two “full sets” of two keys, a full tool kit, a Haynes manual and 12 month’s MOT.

The first job was a thorough clean to remove the protective layer of many years’ worth of deposited coal dust slurry. Obviously, several previous owners had used it to commute to one of the many local pits, now long gone. Younger readers may not remember these and can visit The National Coal Mining Museum near Wakefield to see what they were all about.



The second task was an oil change. When I say oil, what actually drained out was about 200ml of something very black and semi-solid, which possibly also had NCB origins, it seems that scheduled maintenance had ranked in importance with cleaning. It has to be said that it had apparently done its job as the engine continues to run untouched to this day with no apparent problems. The Haynes manual had obviously only been used to wedge the ferret hutch door open – the hutch being in a far better state of overall care than the C90.

While in my ownership the C90 has received regular servicing in accordance with the Haynes manual and an original Owner’s Manual that my daughter managed to find for me on the much-maligned but indispensable eBay. I have always used only the finest (frighteningly expensive) Castrol oil and the C90 has now covered an indicated 17,000 miles without ever letting me down. It has needed no engine work, burns very little oil and is still running with the original chain and brake shoes. It always starts second (never first) kick and stops “on a sixpence”. Cables, controls, sprockets and wheels are also all original, the electrics have been faultless and eight annual MOTs have been passed with only one advisory.

HOWEVER – possessions are misery, life is never totally without care and several issues have had to be sorted out. The only routine service problems I’ve had have been removing the tappet covers and I always seem to struggle with the air filter box. Oil and spark plugs have been expensive (detailed costings later). I’m on my third grease gun and I still can’t find one that gives a satisfactory greasing experience for the front suspension pivots – these have been replaced once as a result of the MOT advisory and still seem fine. The main issue around any C90 is the dreaded ‘tin worm’ (rusting structural metal), which has, in fact, probably been a major reason for the virtual disappearance of Cubs in the UK.

When I got the C90 it was slightly frayed around the edges, mainly along the rear wheel arch edges. I cleaned this off as best I could, painted it up with the supposedly matching paint supplied specially mixed at the local spray shop and the repeated the process every six months as the rust bubbled through again. But at least it was only cosmetic corrosion, not the dreaded structural rot which sounds the death knell for so many Cubs and variants which all have structural sheet steel body panels. Things came to a head, and thankfully eventual solution, as a result of stupidity on my part.



One afternoon, with nothing better to do I decided to remove the plastic moulding covering the rear of the bike to check for rust. Under this is a metal plate held on to the main sheet metal body by four bolts. Surprisingly, there was very little rust so I cleaned up the area and replaced the bolts with new stainless steel bolts and big stainless washers before replacing the plastic cover – job done. About 18 months later I was bored again and decided to repeat the clean up, removed the plastic cover and to my horror discovered a spider-web of rusting metal with immaculate stainless bolts, nuts and washers still in place. This began an interest in galvanic (or electrolytic) corrosion – Google it and I hope you will be as fascinated as I am.

Fortunately there is an excellent fabricating welder not far away who specialises in one-off motorcycle parts for professional racing teams but fits in repairs for lesser mortals during the quiet season. He repaired the rotted area to at least as good as new and whilst he was at it sorted out the centre stand pivot pin - another weakness on C90s. These pins seize in the stand if not removed and lubricated very regularly and pivot in the frame

holes which then wear oval. If both your wheels touch the floor when the bike is on its stand or the stand hits the bottom of the chain guard when raised then you’ve got the oval hole syndrome. The only answer is to cut the pivot pin with an angle grinder, press the pin out of the stand with a hydraulic press and have the holes repaired before refitting the stand using a well-greased pivot pin.

My welder did this, plus he made a bespoke pin with greasing drillings and a captive split pin mechanism to prevent future seizing. If you find someone this good keep him close and keep him sweet; for such a craftsman is rare indeed. AND learn from my errors and never mix stainless steel fasteners with mild steel or aluminium, no matter how much marketing hype surrounds them, how good they look and how much antisieze compound you apply, or you will pay the price after one or two UK winters. After the welding work was done I stripped most of the frame back to bare metal, sealed all the seams, treated with galvanising primer, undercoat and several coats of “rattle can” British Leyland Nightfire Red finished with clear lacquer. This gave a far better match to original than the specially mixed paint.

As with all good things there is a “but”- I find myself increasingly unwilling to go out in the rain, particularly in winter when the roads have been salted. The plan was never to have an immaculate “show” bike but to have something I didn’t worry too much about for day-to-day use. Possibly this unwillingness to expose both me and the C90 to adverse conditions is due to our advancing years or perhaps I’ve just gone soft and just making excuses.

The other cause of rapidly diminishing numbers is, as many people are aware, theft. Probably many of the people who claim to have ridden a C90 (they almost always refer to them as a ‘Plaggy’) rode a stolen (or borrowed) one round a field and one “Cub admirer” told me of the place where he and his friends threw stolen Cubs into the River Rother after they had had their “fun”. One day I might hire a crane with an electromagnet and fish all the remains from the river – of course with fresh petrol they will all start first kick and I’ll sell them for a large fortune!

I didn’t think theft had affected me until I took the Cub for its third MOT and the tester asked me if I was aware that my C90 had been a ‘Cat. C’ write-off at some time in the past. This was a surprise but not a concern as what I want is a bike to ride – so no problem and it probably explains the different keys for the ignition and the steering lock. I assume that the ignition key is standard and steering lock is a replacement but I could be wrong about that. The helmet lock opens with either of the keys or a screwdriver and as I don’t use it I don’t really care. What it may also mean is that the recorded mileage may not be correct but I don’t much care about that either,

There have actually been very few other costs, just disposables and cosmetics & accessories. I have kept a record of everything that has been done or spent and really this has been fairly minimal over my period of ownership.

(To be continued)



The Red Sparrows Fly East

Ted Bemand

Back in 2017 Ted Bemand, one of the founder members of the infamous Wirral Wobblers noticed that the group’s ‘convoy’ riding skills had reached acceptable standards. For a bit of added value he suggested they form a Display team as the army Dispatch Riders used to have! He managed to blag (sorry, negotiate) a small fund from a local firm of solicitors to purchase hi-vis tabards with suitable logos. Given the rather slow speed of the mopeds Ted came up with the name, ‘The Red Sparrows’. Unfortunately the opportunities to practice intricate manoeuvres were few and far between. In fact the first and only performance took place in 2018 on closed roads around Ormskirk, at their famous ‘Motorfest.’ The afternoon parade of Vintage/Classic cars, motorcycles, and assorted race cars was lead by the Red Sparrows - bad move! The police monitoring team said “20mph - we are watching you”! Well, the lead autocycle, not having a speedo, very soon got up to combat speed (30ish) and swept through the town roads, the whole procession more or less keeping up! The following year the police motorcyclists lead the procession...



I digress!
An invitation in August from our Yorkshire Wobblers, Jane Bothroyd and Martin Adams, to spend a weekend touring East Yorkshire found nine riders descending on Dunsell near Hull.

Not wishing to advertise the NACC or the Wirral, the Red Sparrows’ tabards were on view. Obeying all social-distancing rules was difficult, but respected to the letter. Saturday found Jane leading the group on a run of approximately 80 miles through superb scenery, rural villages with names that could have come from a Harry Potter novel - Wetwang, Wharrah Percy, Hutgate, Bishop Burton, Gorton in the Wolds. At the lunch stop Howard kindly treated us all to coffee and cakes; the pretty, uplifting scenery making him feel particularly benevolent!



That evening an excellent meal in the local restaurant was served by masked waiters, to our well spaced tables. Sunday's run was lead by Dave Keeling, riding more undulating lanes to reach Hornsea, a quiet seaside watering hole. We noticed the sea was very blue, in contrast to the muddy brown liquid that surrounds the Wirral peninsula!

It was a bikers stop, we and the local riders had a communal 'ogle' at each other's machines, including a 50cc Nanfang modified to be an almost perfect replica of a Honda 50cc racer (right). And the face of the future; a small motorbike, cost about £4,000, does 0-60 in 4 sec. It slid silently away.....it was electric! Then off we went to more 'Harry Potter' villages - Burton Agnes, Sledmore, and Beverley, covering another 80 miles to get back to Dunswell.



Breakdowns: Saturday - Pete's Peugeot lost virtually all its clutch dogs (left), just making it back - a well trained machine! Sunday - Howard was having lots of trouble getting started; his reluctant Nanfang also only just got him back to base. (see pages 9-10) A post-mortem revealed a bent valve and valve seat adrift. Dave suspected over-revving because if, once in top, you select another up gear, you go back to 1st! A splendid weekend, despite difficult distancing rules.

Riders:-
Martin Adams,
Martin Archer,
Ted Bemand,
Howard
Bentham, Jane
Bothroyd,
Allan Griffiths,
Pat Keeling,
Dave Keeling,
Ron Leyland,
Pete Nolan &
Austin Reed.



The Things People Do...

Autocyclus

Ever since I was a teenager, long before 'Elf & Safety ruled out that part of our lives, I've been addicted to trawling through scrap-yards. In the early 1960s I worked in a big one during my school summer holidays - my version of heaven - and they had a large stack of old motorcycles and mopeds to pick over. I'd spend most of my hard-earned holiday money on the likes of an early girder-fork Motom, a Lambretta TV175, 1948 BMW R25, Sunbeam S7 and a Rumi scooter. Plenty of choice!

More recently, I mapped a circuit of several scrapyards in northern France, visitable en route to or from the annual Rando Cyclos outing at Sars Poteries. One yard had an extraordinary collection of ex-WW2 military hardware; piles of Hotchkiss-build Jeeps, big Dodge 6x6 Power-Wagons and the odd DUKW amphibious vehicle. On one return from Sars Poteries in the late 1990s, accompanied by Nick Devonport, I wanted to revisit a large scrapyard near Lillers, close to Béthune, which was visible from an *aire de repos* on the A26 autoroute. The yard was (I'm not sure if it is still there) sandwiched between the A26 and a main railway-line, traversed on an unguarded crossing. The scrapyard was run by two Irish sisters who went to France in 1944 as nurses to care for wounded Allied soldiers driving the Wehrmacht back into Germany. They stayed on afterward, married Frenchmen and founded a successful business recycling the immense amounts of war-time scrap left behind. By the time of our visit they would have been very elderly and no longer involved.

Nick and I parked our camper-vans in the filthy yard and asked if we could have a look round for any VéloSoleXes, which would give us an opportunity to have a ramble around. A curt wave of the hand meant we could go ahead, but we should watch out for random encounters with bad-tempered guard dogs. Nick was very tempted by a ratty Ligier *sans permis* microcar, but how to get it home?



Foraging around, we came across a hand-powered 3-wheeled Poirier invalid carriage, the kind of thing commonly seen in post-war France being used by *les mutilés de guerre*. It was too good to leave behind for the crusher, so we somehow hung it on the back of my Transit camper and I took it home, as you do.

After messing around with it for a while, rowing it up & down our lane with a silly grin on my face, thoughts inevitable turned to some form of power-assistance. The front forks were suspended with a moped spring unit and the whole rear axle was suspended similarly, making a chain-driven rear axle a bit difficult to achieve. The Poirier had a 2-speed + neutral gearbox taking drive from the rowing motion of the steering-wheel, so powering it along could be done in neutral.

A Poirier invalid carriage is very light, being built to be muscle-powered, though later models had a Sachs 2-speed moped engine to help things along. So, it was looking most straightforward to fit a compete Solex front-end, which is what happened. It seemed like a good idea at the time....



A rusty Solex 4600 was sacrificed as it had small 16in. wheels. The entire front fork assembly with engine was grafted onto the Poirier frame, plus the 4600 back wheel as it had a drum brake. The rear axle Poirier brakes were pathetically useless and I planned on going a lot faster than rowing it along! The 4600 handlebars were fitted in place of the steering-wheel so throttle, decompressor and front & rear brake levers were all to hand.

Trial runs under power (right) revealed the Poirier frame to be alarmingly bendy in the middle, so some reinforcing plates to brace it were welded in.

After sorting out a few glitches, like major front-wheel shimmy (cured with stronger steering-rods) and trying to improve those really bad brakes, the Poirier-Solex turned out to be a bit of a laugh to drive.



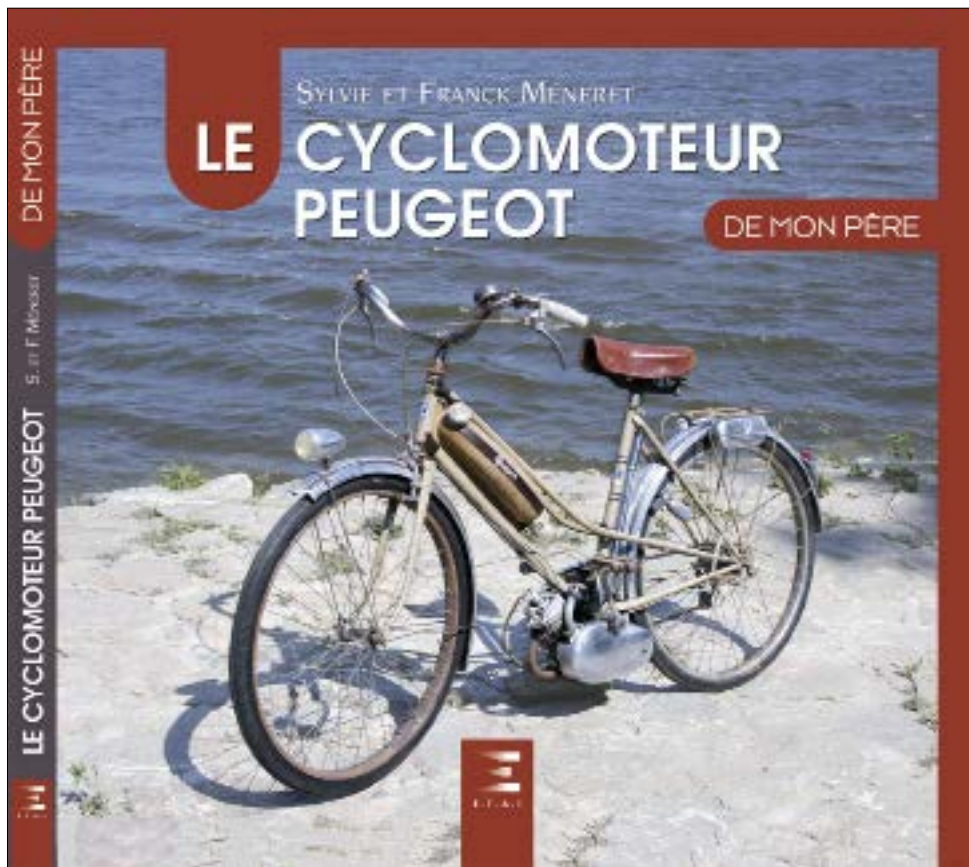
Next, how to go about road-registering it (never happened), plus insuring and having it MOT'd. Insurance first; that came via the company which insured my kit-cars, but then there was the MOT.

The only MOT station equipped for 3-wheelers was 25 miles away, so an appointment was made and the Poirier-Solex strapped to a trailer. No doubt they were expecting something like a Reliant Robin. When the MOT man saw it, he looked me long and hard in the eye and said "I've never seen one of those before." Heroically, he carried out the MOT and passed it, despite the appalling brakes.

A couple of forays were made abroad. The first was a run from Calais organised by Jean-Maurice, head honcho of Solex Club Spirales. Surrounded by hordes of Solexes, all was well on the flat, but Jeanmo's route took us up the long, steady climb from Calais to Cap Gris Nez. It was obvious the Poirier-Solex was woefully under-powered and that considerable HAA (heavy arm-assistance) was needed most of the time, even on slight hills.

Having survived that baptism of fire without too much physical damage, the next outing would be to celebrate the millenium at Rando Cyclos 2000. The Poirier-Solex again proved to be a major liability - I trailed along at the back, gasping and panting, just in front of Hubert's rescue van.

While Mrs. B. sailed off ahead on a two-wheeled Solex, I gave up on the run and took a short-cut back to Felleries campsite to pick up a moped. After that failure the Poirier-Solex got relegated to the back of the shed in disgrace. Some months later, an email arrived from Jean-Maurice, asking if I'd like to sell him the Poirier-Solex for his collection. Is the Pope a Catholic? Do bears s**t in the woods? So, the ill-starred Poirier-Solex returned to the land of it's birth and is sometimes displayed at major Solex Club Spirales events, but, as far as I know, never driven. I don't miss it at all.



The latest French-language book researched and written by Franck & Sylvie Ménéret, published by E.T.A.I. in early November, covers all 50cc Peugeot *cyclomoteurs* and mopeds. Peugeot, a maker of bicycles since 1882, launched a simple VAP-powered bicycle in 1949 and in subsequent years continuously evolved different models for various markets, such that Peugeot became the biggest manufacturer of 50cc mopeds in France by 1977.

From the VAP-powered PHV 25, to the compact roller-drive BIMA (which had primary drive by cogged-belt), to the emblematic 103 - which remained in production for 46 years from 1971 to 2017 - Franck's latest book covers all Peugeot 50cc models except for the modern range of scooters.

A full review and details of how to order copies will be in Buzzing, February 2021 issue.



Virtual Stafford Show

Nick Devonport

The two Stafford bike shows in April and October are pleasant events at which to catch up with friends, see interesting machinery, search the bike jumble for elusive parts to complete a restoration and, just now and again, to buy yet another bike. Who, me? It has been known! April's show was guaranteed to be a non-runner as we went into lockdown but Mortons kept alive our hopes of a show by putting it off until August, then combining it with October's before sensibly pulling the plug altogether. By the time that news was released, we had decided not to risk anybody's health and had cancelled our attendance, assuring the organisers that we'd be back when conditions allow.



John Burgess then came up with the idea of a Virtual Stafford report, showcasing the bikes that would have been on the Club stand so, with thanks to him, here goes; John is a regular at Stafford and has won awards for his restorations. He had two exhibits lined up, the first following the Mortons theme of WWII in the year of the VE Day commemorations. A rummage in the store revealed a 1945 Norman

Autocycle in kit form (above). Paying tribute to Guy Gibson, famously pictured in a period photo on just such a machine and followed by his faithful black Labrador whose name we are not allowed to mention, this was assembled and painted in RAF blue. A pair of panniers intended for Top Secret documents – or a flask and sandwiches – completes the look.

The second Burgess machine is an Italian Job, a Ducati Piuma 48 (right). This 48cc three-speed two-stroke moped was a 2019 auction purchase, again in boxes, and the restoration called for parts from places as geographically diverse as the USA, Macclesfield and Eccles with Italy and Spain filling in some of the gaps. Some unobtainable parts had to be fabricated in-house and the Ducati is just about ready for registration.



Next up, Liz Butler's 1949 45cc swan-neck VéloSoleX, affectionately named Monsieur Hulot. The oldest bike here, this pampered machine lives in a nice warm kitchen and is a proper survivor with matching numbers. It was originally imported from France but minus the headlamp, saddle and pedals due to government import restrictions. It was fitted with UK-spec replacement items by the dealer.

Liz has owned it for nine years, after waiting patiently for five years for the previous owner to sell it.

Another take on the cyclemotor theme is Dave Beare's John Hook-built Dawes-Bernardi (below). This 50cc clip-on has electronic ignition and an automatic clutch. It's fitted to a full-suspension aluminium-frame Dawes mountain bike and is a great machine to ride. I took it round the course at Stramproy a couple of years ago (rather than risk the icy stare of the organiser for riding a VéloSoleX!) and it is a joy to ride.



Talking of joy (cheesy link alert) Bob Jeffcoat had another rarity lined up, his 1958 Powell Joybike (below). This was an attempt by a Birmingham bike shop owner to compete with the Continental moped imports of the mid-fifties. Only eleven bikes were completed and three are thought to survive. Bob's is powered by a JAP 80cc motor which endows it with a cruising speed of 30mph and he says it doesn't need LPA to climb hills – always a bonus in my book.



The clutch arrangement is an interesting one: increasing the tension on a vee-belt connects the engine to the transmission very much like some old lawn mowers.

A bit more mainstream is Rob Hirons' Cyclemaster. New in 1952, it sports the 32cc engine and has been in Rob's care for many years. Although eventually sidelined by the tide of "proper" mopeds arriving from Germany (NSU Quickly) and France (Mobylette).



The Cyclemaster was a popular machine in its day and remains deservedly so today among the cognoscenti. Over 181,000 were sold before production ended in 1961.

From the same year comes my Power Pak (below left), a non-synchro model and modified to a coil and battery ignition system when the original Wipac magneto finally lost the will to spark. It's a nice machine to ride with a cracking sound-track created by the 49cc engine's exhaust. It'll never win any concours prizes but it would be a shame to lose that patina – a bike only looks like this once!



Simon Lake's Simson SR4/2 (below) was made in 1975 in the former East Germany. Known under the model name of Star, this 50cc machine has a three-speed gearbox with foot change. Simon has a stable of four Simsons so we'll be seeing more at future shows. This one is in good used original condition. The Simson company has an illustrious history going back to 1856 (that's just before 7pm in the old money) when they started production of armaments, getting into car manufacture in 1914 and motorcycles in 1949.

That about wraps it up for this report. My desk has looked like the bridge of NCC 1701D, the Galaxy-class Starship Enterprise, with my laptop, iPad and iPhone all lit up and whirring away as I coordinate emails, messages and photos from those who sent me details of their machines and to whom I am grateful for their efforts. Let's hope that the next show report features machines that were actually there and maybe one that I actually bought!



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