

Chronicle

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Talking Chair(S)

Well, where did that year go? Season's Greetings to you all!

2022 has delivered a number of historical events – three Prime ministers, two Monarchs, The Lionesses won the Women's Euro's, it was the hottest summer on record, and Martin thought that I would make a good Chairman. No Pressure!

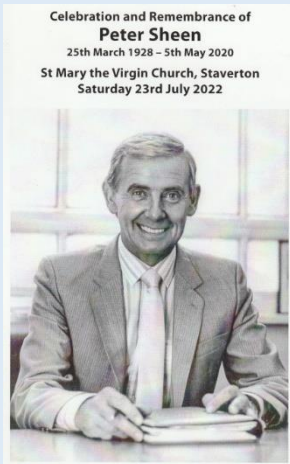
I was very nervous about taking up the Chairmanship but very honoured. Thank you Martin I hadn't realised how much work and discussion goes on in the background between runs; the Committee are amazing and very supportive, working together to make our great club great!

My first Club Run as Chairman has come and gone, and what a run it was! Thanks again to Andrew and Bob for organising such a great weekend, with a record breaking mileage too! We can now look forward to our Spring Run, which will be organised by Dan Sager and Graham Matcham.

Motorcycle Live has also passed, which is a mainstay in the Industry calendar, indicating that the year is drawing to an end. The show saw a little under 90,000 visitors, which is massively up on last year, due to Omicron also trying to attend the 2021 event. The show had a good vibe to it and felt busy on most days. I suspect 90,000 – 100,000 visitors is the 'New Norm', but if the quality of them is good, that's what we need.

Finally, I would like to wish you all a fantastic Christmas and Best wishes for The New Year, I look forward to seeing you all at some point during 2023.

Ben



Peter Sheen Celebration and Remembrance

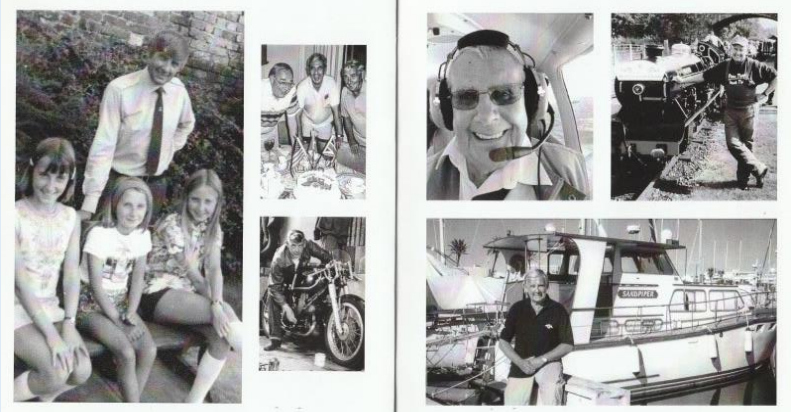
It seems an eon ago that a goodly number of club members assembled in front of Peter's cottage in Letchworth Heath to escort him to his final resting place in the churchyard at Aldenham. The Covid regulations then in force required that we had a written approval from the Funeral Director to escort the hearse.

It would be another two years before we could finally attend the celebration of his life; all meticulously planned by, of course, Peter himself! Presided over by his son in law, the Reverend Dave Battison, at St Mary the Virgin Church in Staverton, his daughters and grandchildren all recounted amusing memories that were all so Peter.

Tributes were also paid by Steve Kenward ex of Suzuki and a later successor to Peter as Director General of the MCIA and our own Tom Waterer.

Other Club members in attendance were: your scribe, Graham Matcham, Greg Elson and Tony Jakeman.

There was, as you can imagine, a good selection of club memorabilia that Peter had amassed over the years and his daughters passed it on to us for the archive. Nicks Jeffery and Hopkins have kindly offered to catalogue what we have and the Committee are currently considering how best to look after the complete archive going forward.



Peter Sheen: 25 Mar 1928 – 5 May 2020, one of a kind!

Diary Dates: - Spring Run 14-16th April 2023 Autumn Run 15-17th September 2023

Show and Tell - *the changing face of new product launches from a man who knows...*

Now that the world is resuming its mad normality post-Covid *writes Martin Lambert*, the first major international motorcycle shows have taken place without health restrictions but, inevitably, they have not resumed as they left off before the pandemic, and for good reason.

Even before a bat transferred a virus to a human the quaint analogue approach of many shows was evolving into a more digital friendly offering with lock-down accelerating the reliance on a virtual world. So, what of the future of reference point international shows and larger regional events; and what do exhibitors and those involved with creating these show think?

In mainland Europe Germany's Intermot and EICMA in Milan rightly take centre stage with manufacturers using them for major project unveils but events such as Motorcycle Live in Brum also have a loud voice thanks to their impressive audience penetration – in other words the sheer number of UK motorcycle owners and licence holders that attend.



The digital revolution – and competition among both manufacturers and the media to dominate column inches (be they real or virtual) – has resulted in more and more material being supplied pre-event (under embargo) and also a slew of pre-event launches which are now taking place on screen. It's fair to say manufacturers are looking at the ROI of press days and launch events at shows as well as the all up cost of building and staffing stands with sometimes vast acreages.

Both Intermot and EICMA felt, and were, smaller this year and a show goer can no longer assume that every manufacturer will automatically attend. As example, BMW recently stated it would not attend these large scale shows preferring instead to focus on regional shows; a stance that was “readjusted” recently to include Intermot as a regional show, but we digress.

It is also worth pointing out that while this readjustment of thinking in terms of stand space and how to launch new products has been considered, the “Press Contingent” has morphed too. A downswing across the board in paper-based print media has resulted in pretty far reaching rationalisation leading to drastic reductions in staff numbers in the face of rising raw material and wage costs vs the plethora of free content from unqualified, untrained and largely non journalist bloggers, vloggers and influencers.

A typical press call these days will not result in a sea of familiar faces ready to hear what is said, to pick up a press pack and catch up on new products. Instead those faces are obscured by GoPro high definition cameras mounted on sticks recording or even live streaming the event in real time held aloft often by someone who has no real idea of how a motorcycle actually works; not an overt criticism merely an evolutionary fact of life.

That is the reality and, it seems, that Covid did not make it happen, all it did was accelerate the process. Where does that leave us now and how are current shows creating a litmus test for success and planning for the future? – we asked Finlay McAllen, head of the tightly knit team that creates Motorcycle Live and Club member, Dave Dew, who provides a number of marketing services for said show.

“We are basing our plans and measurement criteria on 2019 moving forward. That was the last show with any real data pre-covid and we will look at our plans for the 2023 show and beyond based on that and the information gleaned from this year,” commented Finlay.

“It's not all doom and gloom either. We've had to have a second print run of show brochures such was the demand plus the retailers are making positive noises – and believe me if they are not having a good show I hear about it very quickly.”



Asked how the show is going to embrace upcoming changes such as the inevitable creeping presence of electric motive power and new fuel products and he admits it's a challenge. "Right now if you go into the show halls they are full of customers who are getting their annual motorcycle show fix but there are a lot of bald heads in there. How we keep these people on board and seek to attract the customer for a new type of technology is something we really need to think hard about".

Turning to Dave Dew and asking him to balance the value and evolution of digital and analogue approaches results in the same broad optimism as Finlay couched with the need to continually assess any and all available data.

"Our recommendation for 2022 was a simple "See you there" call to arms that expressed a return to normality and the annual pilgrimage to the NEC. As marketers for the show, both in terms of us as Motocom and other consultants, we are much more agile than in the past – especially in the digital sphere. For sure there is a degree of experimentation as to where to put advertising and promotion but the electronic reporting structures that are now in place mean you can almost instantly see what is and is not working and concentrate or reallocate your forces accordingly."

To round out the picture – and from a manufacturer standpoint – the tactical use of digital tools must be balanced against the fact that "we are not in the car world" meaning that motorcycle fans still like to see, feel and explore the focus of their enthusiasm and speak to like minded souls. The likelihood of an "all-digital show" is not something you would bet your shirt on. That said, previously assumed pillars of wisdom such as Press Days and live unveils of new product will, most likely, be assessed in terms of who they need to reach, within what time frame and to what effect. And as with all these things, it will take one, two or three manufacturers to move in a new direction to raise the corporate eyebrows of the others.

Just speaking to manufacturers and visitors at Intermot, EICMA and Motorcycle Live reveals that the days of the physical powered two-wheeler show are far from over, but complacency has no part in anyone's thinking. Digital is here to stay and the canny shakers and movers are those that can navigate between virtual reality and "real" reality choosing the best of both and dropping the worst of each for maximum effect in terms of sales, customer engagement and bang-for-buck.



A new Bike Show experience - Your Scribe eyes up possible replacements for his Versys at Motorcycle Live...

After joining the industry in January 1979, the first show I attended was the regional Belle Vue Bike Show in Manchester, where as part of my 'on the job' training, I was chucked in at the deep end explaining the features of the brand new Kawasaki Z1300!

Since then of course, I have attended many, many shows: international, national, regional - all over the World. But the one common denominator in all these countless hours in thankless exhibition halls (the worst being the Belfast Show with only a thin carpet separating exhibitors from the ice rink beneath) is, I never looked around as a potential punter - until this year.

With my trusty Versys soon to reach its 7th birthday and me just past my 70th it's time to look around for something to replace its mile-munching armchair comfort: something a little easier on the old knees and back when shoving it around the garage! But as well as looking at possible new bikes I also took the opportunity to gauge who was doing well and who wasn't...

First port of call was Suzuki where Jonathan Martin saw me astride a V-Strom 650 and immediately guided me to the new (and more expensive!) variant with an 800cc engine, due for release in the spring. It's a good-looking bike, I particularly liked the gold spoked wheels, but the yellow colourway is a trifle sudden for my taste! Perhaps one of the more sombre colours would suit? I'll decide after a test ride...



A short way away was Honda and whilst the brand doesn't appeal (sorry Bob!) I did have a look around and was accosted by the ex of Yamaha and Piaggio and Laird of Scotland, Martin Marshall who was skulking around with Andrew Smith.



The stand was about as busy as Suzuki, a good few people but not so many that you were denied a good look at, and sit on, the latest iron. The similarity of the CL500 (pictured with Andrew aboard) to the Yamaha XSR Sport Heritage line was debated before we decamped to the Yamaha stand to pounce on a coffee.

Yamaha's stand was best described as functional; it did what it needed to do with minimal razzmatazz. And here's how things have moved on, there were some staffers there who didn't know who Andrew used to be!! Anyway, after a wrestle with the slowest coffee machine in Christendom and a catch up with old colleagues I moved on to poke and prod the Tracer 7 GT, another contender for my next ride.



In the 'maximum flash for minimum cash' category of stand building, Kawasaki took some beating. Whilst others were clearly cost saving, the 'old firm' had the only double decker stand at the show. A chat with head Sales and Marketing honcho Craig Watson revealed that he had severely twisted his stand contractors arm on price after the poor sap had revealed he had a marketing budget to promote his new 2 tier exhibition stand design...The stand was well lit and busy and gave your scribe cause to consider; stick with Adventure Touring in the guise of a Versys 650 or follow the retro route with a Z900RS? Decisions, decisions...

Like Honda, BMW holds no appeal to me, just as well as the stand was heaving. I would go so far as to say it was a toss-up between them and Triumph as to who was the busiest on the day. I did investigate the Triumph Tiger Sport 660: the jury's out on that one currently though.



Also busy on the day was Royal Enfield, they really have come on leaps and bounds and now have a cruiser offering with the Super Meteor 650. But am I ready for a cruiser yet? Maybe, but not this one, didn't give it a second glance.

Interestingly, the Harley stand, usually very busy, was quiet on the day I visited. Perhaps they are losing customers to Royal Enfield or the new kid on the block, BSA?

Amongst the other main players, KTM was fairly quiet and Ducati were blinding everyone with quite the brightest lighting at the show. Neither brand has anything interesting enough to me to warrant detailed investigation however.



Winning the 'like Glasgow on a charity flag day' award was Kymco who had absolutely no-one, not even staff, on stand.



The DOT stand caught my eye; they have chosen to offer modern bikes in a 'traditional' style, contrary to the Enfield/BSA retro direction. The backdrop being a large image of the old Manchester factory, a building I have passed a few times in my career. I don't know how they are doing but they had some cool looking bikes.

So, am I any nearer to choosing my next mount? Mebbe, but after a day at the show I'm torn between the practicality, comfort and weather protection of an Adventure Sport bike and the 'Urban Chic' of the retro offerings. On the other hand perhaps I should just hand the Versys over to Chairman Ben with a request to fit something cool and green to the left hand side...



The past isn't what it pretends to be... *Martin Lambert ponders the validity of re-emergent brands.*

They say you can't buy heritage, you either have it or you don't, but that is not strictly true. Just ask TVS who recently purchased the mess that Stuart Garner made of Norton and by doing so bought the rights to manufacture motorcycles under that famous brand name.

The new, new company looks by all measures to be making a good fist of the job with Garner customers being offered new or updated machines and, if money is mentioned, then cost adjustments are more in favour of the customer than the company - a good long-term strategy.

Two things have pushed this approach and they are both worth recognising. In the first place – and even though they have no legal obligation to do so – TVS want to convert a group of justifiably dissatisfied customers into brand ambassadors by doing all they can to right the wrongs of a previous enterprise. Secondly, they have every intention of playing the heritage card as hard and often as they can during the period that new machines and new technologies (such as battery electric power) are being researched and stepped up. In fact, one of the happy 'problems' the spotless new factory now has is how to display Ian Loram's comprehensive and recently acquired collection of classic Norton machinery to bolster that heritage angle (CNC machined billet drip tray anyone?).

It's not fair to single out Norton though as the automotive world is awash with players exploiting an assumed heritage for all they are worth, and the powered two-wheeler camp is no different. Norton are simply following John Bloor who bought the rights to manufacture under the Triumph name and numerous other evocative brands that are being leveraged to greater or lesser success. We asked Club members who had knowledge of either the original or new manifestations of several of these brands for their thoughts – this is what they said.

Say Lawrence of Arabia to any time-served motorcyclist and the products of George Brough will be mentioned in return. The most famous customer of the "Rolls-Royce of motorcycles", T. E. Lawrence and his Brough Superior, appear as often as reference to his Ottoman exploits. Like so many seekers of perfection, the cost to purchase one of George Brough's fantastic creations meant only the well-heeled (or well connected) could afford his steeds leading to an eventual cessation of motorcycle manufacture at the start of WW2.

Switch forward to 2008 when committed Austrian-based Brough spares supplier and enthusiast Mark Upham had scooped up the mothballed trademark and decided to reawaken the name with machines being manufactured once more, not in England but in France. This was by licensing Toulouse-based Boxer Design to produce a new machine utilising the skills of the Akira engineering company for power unit design and Boxer's earlier experience with Voxan in producing low-volume high-cost vee-twin motorcycles.



Image: New Brough (foreground) vs old.

The result has been a huge amount of publicity in both the specialist and non-specialist media for machines with pretty healthy price tags trading very heavily on the Brough legend. But is the association legitimate and are the machines of the same quality? Who better to ask than Nick Jeffery, owner of two original machines and "Brough Buff" of some note. He opines:

"I am amazed the modern Brough company are still in business because their cash flow must be virtually non-existent. Having ridden an early model of the new iteration, it is as if the designers of the instruments and controls had never ridden a motorcycle. Tiny fiddly buttons on the switchgear and a speedo for which you needed a bi-focal visor to read the rev counter. Thankfully the latest models are fitted with ABS because the pre-ABS model with the 4-disc Beringer front set-up was potentially lethal.

Brough Superior are trying to do the most difficult thing: make their own power unit in-house rather than utilise an already-sorted power unit complete as Ariel do with Honda and Bimota with Kawasaki, hence simplifying their task enormously: plus they use as many French suppliers as possible with the attendant implications.

Personally, I hate 'fake' heritage - like claiming George Bernard Shaw was a Brough Superior rider! And why do journalists gushing over it not understand the difference between the ability to machine a lump of aluminium ('billet' of course) and true engineering?"

So that's an unequivocal no to the joining of new and old from Nick in the case of Brough Superior. Let's turn to another Nick; this time Mr Hopkins with his views on another household (and sometimes courtroom) name, Norton.

"The recent Norton story is rather different to the success story at John Bloor's Triumph concern. Kenny Dreer had been working on his updated Commando and eventually designed his own and superficially similar engine. It didn't work very well, needed a lot more money for development and to cut a long story short his wealthy backer (Ollie Curme) pulled the plug. Enter Stuart Garner who was really only interested in the Norton name but got the Dreer Commando development project thrown in. Quite what his original intentions were is difficult to say but it didn't take long for ideas of a scam operation to take root.

Lots of people believed what they were fed and were taken for a ride – suppliers, customers, news media, everyone – and it is quite extraordinary how he managed to keep it going for as long as he did. While in no way related to anything "proper" Norton he shamelessly (but perhaps understandably) traded on past reputation and the various model names.

Now we have the Garner outfit reincarnated. It is too early to say how it will succeed but at least there appears to be some money in the pot. They will need it if they bog themselves down with the ex-Garner 961, a bike which the late Bob Trigg told me was quite the worst bike he had ever ridden. His sons had bought one for him as a present but after only a few miles he gave it back saying "it's just too awful to live with!"

And, finally, Martyn Roberts' thoughts on Triumph, his early input into the initial Hinckley range and their eventual use of the heritage card.

"My original modular range was based on a 1200 triple, 800 twin and 400 single - the twin would have been a spiritual successor to the Bonneville. John Bloor insisted that the 1200 was a



four (like established Japanese bikes), and it was obvious from the start that small engines couldn't share a gearbox and chassis with big ones, so we ended up with 1200 and 1000 fours and 900 and 750 triples which could share over 90% of their parts.

I did go as far as scheming a 600 twin, loosely based on half the 1200, but the real reason no twin was included was marketing. At the time, John wanted to put as much distance as possible between the new bikes and the Meriden bikes. His view was that he thought customers would associate Triumph with oil leaks and vibration.

Calling the bikes Trident, Trophy and Daytona was as far as he was prepared to go in referencing the past. We constantly debated leveraging the heritage with me saying it was a valuable asset; but my overtures did not become part of the initial plans.

Ten years on, once the new bikes were well established in the market, and with the triples having outsold the fours by three to one John felt more inclined to start exploiting the brand heritage. There was no engineering carry over from the modular bikes to the retro models, but the company was big enough by then to fund the development of separate model streams.

To summarise, there was no engineering logic in the move from modern water-cooled machines to the retro Bonneville family. It was driven by business judgement, which I failed to grasp at the time. Having bought a famous brand with a chequered recent past, the first priority was to rebuild credibility. Only then, once the link with painful memories of the later Meriden products had been broken, could the company risk playing the heritage card."

Three Club members with a special interest in three manufacturers who - although having no link to the original creators sharing the name they purchased – have all adopted the heritage strategy for their brands with differing levels of market success and consumer acceptance.

But these are merely figurehead examples. A short walk around EICMA and Motorcycle Live revealed yet more such as the resurgent BSA concern or even a modest AJS stand complete with new product and an original 7R plus assorted old off-road product. And let's not forget the Polaris owned Indian who also plaster founder dates on any available surface to "remind" us that the company has been in existence since 1901. (To their credit, they freely admit that there was a "five decade break in the company's rich history" on their web site.)



As Nick Hopkins also astutely observed about the Mahindra owned BSA concern; "One can hardly criticise them for using old model names – one has to start somewhere." Perhaps too, as a Club with many members who worked and have fond memories of the "original" companies referred to, many of us are bound to feel that imitation is not actually the best form of flattery. Perhaps we are not the target market... or maybe we are!

Speaking to the recently appointed UK distributor for BSA, Luke Gregory, the initial interest has been from people who not only know about the brand, but many actually own a Small Heath built machine. "Our target or current customer is actually 50+. We have found that most of the customers who have ordered so far (at around 500 pre orders currently) have been people who fondly remember the brand and maybe have an old BSA at home". And pushed

on whether this new Indian funded incarnation of the famous marque will fish in the past pond the answer is an unequivocal yes from Gregory who adds "We will use the history in all of our marketing".

For the 30 to 60 age range that these "modern heritage" machines appeal to, style and reliability are the main concern; in other words, a bike that looks to the uninitiated like a classic yet can be left in the garage for months on end and still start at the touch of a button along the lines of a Kawasaki W800 or Royal Enfield Interceptor. The additional benefit of this heritage is, of course, the wide range of bolt on accessories that can be added to the initial PCP package when ordering a machine (increasing chassis profit for the dealer) plus endless amounts of retro clothing, or should we say "apparel".

In closing, it's clear that there can simply be no reason to buy or lease a redundant motorcycle name if your intention was not to use the value of the heritage to your advantage. Otherwise, you could just pay a clever agency to simply invent a name for you to trade under. And let's not ignore the fact that Triumph, Norton and Royal Enfield have and will create hundreds (if not thousands) of much needed jobs (directly and indirectly) in what was a declining sector of UK manufacturing.

So, with the "if" taken for granted maybe it's the "how" that should be put under the microscope. And whilst the latest incarnation of Norton work out just *how* they will display that huge inventory of past classics in their snazzy new factory and what should be written on their talker boards perhaps – just perhaps – we should simply be glad that people are still buying motorcycles either new, old, retro, classic or any point between. And hope that they have enough information to appreciate the difference between original and new (products and brands). From the evidence so far, it seems the advantages of modern tech outweighs any sneaking doubts about authenticity.



Two wheels are part of the DNA of all Club members and the more people that become involved then the longer we can all enjoy a fundamental component of what makes us tick. The past may not be what it used to be but let's all hope for a bright future for our shared passion whatever we ride, whoever built it (and when) and whatever name is emblazoned on the fuel tank!

Who do you think you are, Barry Sheene? A brief history of Police motorcycles by our own PC49 (retired), Ian Kerr MBE - with additional photographs from PC48 ½, Bob McPlod.

The first thing you have to know about police vehicles is that even globally, there are insufficient numbers for any manufacturer to make a purpose designed police vehicle, they are all adaptations of retail products. In many cases, alterations are few and in some under-developed countries, the appropriate word for police on a sign or a small blue light might be the only difference between a service machine and a stock bike and that can even be just a moped in some cases so profit margins are low too!

Motorcycles have been in police use since they first appeared on the street and looking across the pond, there is a record of a civilian spec Harley Davidson first being used by a police officer in Detroit in 1908. In the UK, female police officers of the Gloucester Constabulary were employed on two wheels as far back as 1917; to mention another historical fact in line with current political correctness!

The big problem when asked about an historical insight to police motorcycling (including government agencies and military police etc), is information relating to the vehicles is very fragmented. Take the UK. When the Highway Code was first published in 1931 there were 180 police forces in the UK; by 1947 there were still 133, all doing their own thing with vehicles and different manufacturers; plus police forces globally where there were many makes and models in service use!

It is fair to say however, that from the thirties right until Company's demise in the late seventies, Triumph were the main choice of police forces around the world, apart from the USA where Harley ruled the roost following the demise of Indian.

After the formation of the Metropolitan Police Traffic Division in 1919, it was the Douglas and Chater Lea factories that supplied the majority of their motorcycles in the early 1920's. As in America some officers had been allowed to use their own personal mounts for escort duties prior to the purchase of service motorcycles, with many of the fledgling UK manufacturers getting a look-in.

Just as an aside, it was not until 1952 when the Triumph mounted Met Police Special Escort Group (who do all the high profile escorts of Royalty etc.) was set up: their first job being to escort Marshal Josip Broz Tito of the then Yugoslavia, on an official visit to the UK.

The 1930 Road Traffic Act resulted in Police forces having to look at two wheels to deal with the many new motoring offences created, like Dangerous Driving and also to deal with the new higher speed limits. Strangely many new bikes purchased from the likes of BSA and Matchless were combinations. Along the way even Brough Superior got a small part in the development of the police motorcycle, despite its high costs!

It was just prior to the Second World War that Triumph first appeared in the official list of purchased vehicles for the Capital's police force. In fact in 1938 Douglas, Matchless, Norton, Panther and Rudge were listed as the official machines for motor patrol duties in London.

Whilst Triumph became the staple diet of Traffic Officers, the humble Velocette LE 'Noddy' bike was the mainstay for officers before the Panda car. At that time you were supposed to salute senior officers, but taking ones hand off the throttle was seen as dangerous so riders were told to nod instead. (*Ed: Is that where the nickname came from then?*)



Triumph's later success in dominating the market was due in the main to one man, Neale Shilton, the International Sales Manager for Triumph, who during his 22 years with the brand, created the famous 'Saint' (Stops Anything In No Time) and sold it throughout the world to police and the military. (*Bob McMillan's Staffordshire Police Saint is pictured*)

When he resigned in 1968, he was taken on by Norton Villiers Triumph (NVT) to design a police bike with the result being the troublesome Norton Interpol, the unreliability being a similar story for Norton later with the Wankel engine powered bikes!

When NVT was going under in 1975, Shilton failed to keep the 'Interplod' going so he jumped ship to BMW and, with his contacts, quickly helped the German brand effectively take over the UK police market from 1980. Triumph did try to survive in the market with electric start 750 Bonneville and Tiger twins complete with anti-vibration engine mounts but they failed to attract any real interest, still being low spec when viewed against the German opposition.



Since the 1980's BMW have managed to survive as one of the major suppliers to the world's police forces (despite their handling issues) but now face serious competition from Yamaha even though the latter have lost the FJR1300 from their range, lauded by many as the best police bike ever .

In between of course there has been the superb Honda Pan European (pictured with Test Riders in Germany, young Bob McMillan and Norbert Schuert) and Kawasaki also had a brief nibble with the 1400 GTR.

But these days it is just a two horse race, in the UK at least, because contrary to popular belief, the fact that the police use a product no longer sells it to the public - and the government contracts are so onerous with little in the way of profit.

Arguably the original Triumph brand may well have had the best of the police market worldwide in terms of volume and they also benefitted from subliminal 'association advertising' at a time when police use (*Ed: or race wins on Sundays*) sold bikes!

My Favourite Tool - By Dan Sager (Form 1B)

Have you seen the price of motorcycle batteries these days? A replacement AGM battery for a middleweight machine can set you back between £100-£150! Which is why my favourite tool is the OptiMate smart charger (other smart chargers are available, but I don't get free samples of those).

Not to be confused with a trickle charger, which is basically a regular charger on a go-slow, smart chargers stay permanently plugged into the battery when the bike is parked up for any length of time, monitoring its condition, and charging it whenever voltage dips, keeping it full to the brim and in peak condition.

So now my Enfield starts on the button, and the battery lifespan is also being significantly lengthened. And best of all, the plug-and-play design makes it idiot-proof, an essential feature for anyone with similar [lack of] mechanical skills to me.



Don't forget the Spring 2023 Club Run will be held on 14th-16th April at:-

[Leigh Park Country House Hotel & Vineyard.](#)

Located in Bradford-on-Avon, which was once a manufacturing base for Royal Enfield, this Georgian house is ideally suited for a weekend of motorcycling in Wessex. The Saturday Run route will be heading west into Somerset, then down to Dorset and back up through Wiltshire, spiritual home of the unique [lardy cake.](#)

Make sure you have the dates in your diaries. Booking will open in early 2023.

Do you believe in Karma? *Following an unfortunate episode of enthusiasm over ability in 2005, your scribe certainly does...*

There was a calm sea, bright sun and I was on the high speed crossing from Harwich to the Hook of Holland after a week at home celebrating my birthday. I was just a month in to my new life as a Vice President of (amongst other things) Marketing at the recently created Kawasaki Europe organisation in Hoofddorp. All was well with the world - then my mobile rang out...

It was a chum of mine who I went flying with and who used to be a teccy on the Kawasaki BSB team. "I see Suzuki have bought you out then" was his greeting. After a brief exchange along the lines of 'you're talking bollocks again Ralph', I hung up and rushed off to the ship's shop to find a copy of the latest MCN and there were the respective Presidents of Suzuki and Kawasaki shaking hands and smiling at me from the front page!



An agreement, it seemed, had been announced for the companies to co-operate on all aspects of motorcycle and ATV development, from design to manufacture in, as global.kawasaki.com described, "A strategic business partnership in the spirit of reciprocity and equality." Just a shame that they hadn't thought to give their staff around the world the heads up to prepare for the inevitable requests for quotes from the media!

The alliance didn't last overly long, in fact within 3 years it was quietly being dropped. Some ATVs, smaller MX bikes and trail bikes had been badge branded and swapped, as had the Kawasaki Meanstreak (anything but!) to Suzuki and the V-Strom 1000 back the other way. The only properly jointly developed bike was the 250cc 4 stroke MX bike KX250F/RM-Z250. Built in KHI's factory the green version did well but as I recall the early yellow ones were plagued with problems – hmmm, I wonder...

Fast forward to May 2005 and I had been in the employ of Yamaha since the beginning of the year after, let's just say, perhaps being a little vague about what I would be doing after I left Kawasaki Europe in December 2004...

It was a similar day weather wise and I was at Yamaha's off-road test facility in Japan. The morning had seen us riding the following year's enduro bikes against rival machines on the 'beginners' track and after a short lunch break, everyone bar me progressed to trying the MX bikes on the more challenging expert track. I intended to sit that out, knowing my limitations.



Seeing me taking in the rays, an engineer advanced towards me pushing, yep you guessed it, a Suzuki RM-Z250. "Geoff-san, you try!" Despite my protestations, he proceeded to attack the kick start with venom. The bike obviously shared my reluctance to play and steadfastly refused to fire for 5 minutes or more. When it did eventually chime up after all his efforts I felt duty bound to at least ride it. Just the one lap I thought.

Just short of a tricky descent back to the pit area on the numpty track a small trench ran across the track and because I was scared of the descent, I was on the brakes with the front end well loaded. Hitting the trench, predictably, the back end fishtailed and I was flying through the air, still holding on to the right side handlebar...

It's the numbness you get immediately after the initial impact that makes you think, oops (or words to that effect) that's not good. Sure enough after a day at Hammamatsu General being pushed around in a wheelchair by Miles Taylor (remember him?) and repeatedly saying "I want that one" to his intense annoyance; a 4 part fracture to the neck of the humerus was diagnosed and before you could say Bubba Stewart, I was back on a plane to Blighty and the rest as they say, is surgery!

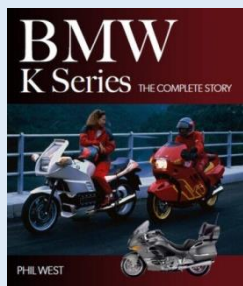
That alliance announcement was made on my birthday; 29th August 2001, which chinesecalendaronline.com tells me was the year of the snake. So, yes, I do believe in Karma and I still carry the plate and 8 screws to remind me.

And the difference between Karma and Schadenfreude could be summed up by an incident in which your scribe and his opposite number from Australia, David Baines, were 'volunteered' by KHI's Marketing Chief to enact a cameo of the alliance at the global distributor meeting in early 2002. David was dressed as 'Suzukiman' in a Superman outfit (with a face flannel rolled and stuffed down the front of his tights) and me as 'Ninjaman'. We approached from opposite sides of the stage with me camping it up John Inman style and shook hands with the dialogue: "Suzukiman. Ninjaman. Together we will conquer the World!" The smug look on Ishikawa-san's face was pure schadenfreude!



Book Reviews – Ian Kerr reviews a couple of 2022 released motorcycling titles to help you while away the dark nights... firstly BMW K Series – The Complete Story

When people talk about the K series BMW's, you probably think back to the 1000cc four-cylinder 'flying bricks' as they were nicknamed when launched in 1983. Radically different to the R series Boxer twins that had been the mainstay of the product line for decades, the multi-cylinder, liquid-cooled machines were aimed squarely at the Japanese competition. But instead of the cylinders being vertical, they were horizontal and, like virtually all BMWs before, they were shaft driven.



The naked machines became big touring mounts sporting the RT moniker and these were soon joined by three cylinder 750cc versions. Like their larger siblings these came in various versions from touring to sport and again, were to many, something of a marmite machine – love them or hate them!

Moving even further away from the traditional BMW styling the K100RS morphed into the radical K1, one of which our late friend Chris Ventress used to ride on Club Runs. But, while traditionalists stuck with the Boxer twins, a new customer was buying the liquid-cooled tourers, which were gradually increasing in engine size, first with the K1200LT and then gradually moving up through the capacity ranges to the 1600, which now tops their touring line-up.

Given the continuing impressive sales of the Boxer range, especially the GS, it is easy to have missed the march of the K series. However, well-known motorcycle journalist Phil West, has now written the K series history. And, as with his previous works on the BMW Airhead Twins and BMW GS, he has painstakingly researched the K series history and found pictures never before published.

The lay-out makes it easy to read the engaging text, which is liberally spread with mainly colour images, factory drawings and box-outs containing launch reviews from the various motorcycle publications of the time. The book is printed on quality paper and the images are pin-sharp.

The 176 pages cover all 30 models within the K series range and whilst box-outs list the specifications of various models in the 16 chapters, there are no detailed appendices at the rear which may disappoint some readers. However, the book is a valuable resource and I found that I had forgotten many of the bikes that have come and gone and the impact they have had on recent motorcycle history. It is an excellent, well researched work and for BMW fans it is an important addition to their library and well worth the £30.00 cover price.

ISBN:-978-0-71984-110-1 Available from all good book shops or direct from the publishers Crowood www.crowood.com

John Hobbs and the Age of the Twins



John Hobbs is probably the greatest British Drag racer of all time. Starting in sprints with a single engined Triumph called Olympus, he clocked up many records, including world records, before taking the world, and all comers, by storm with his Top Fuel, twin engined Weslake drag bike known as 'The Hobbit'.

In the days when the weekly press covered all aspects of motorcycle sport, John Hobbs' name was to the fore of any report on straight line racing; Motorcycle Weekly actually backed him.

The bike magazines ran features on the awesome double engines bikes that were regularly seen at Santa Pod and no doubt fuelled (if you will pardon the pun) the enthusiasm and desire for speed of many a builder working in their garden shed to build a record breaker!

As many a fan of straightline racing will tell you, the sixties into the eighties were the golden age of drag bike racing and sprinting in the UK. John Hobbs was at the epicentre of it and Keith Lee, regarded by many as the sport's number one photographer, has written a book about that period, focusing on the racing life of the top rider of this era - John Hobbs.

In this hardback, Lee charts the rise of drag racing from its sprinting roots and the variety of twin cylinder - and twin engine bikes - which proliferated up to the point when multi-cylinder machines took up the challenge. The book is packed with over 360 photographs, black and white and colour, which bring the narrative to life. Hobbs, quite rightly, is the king throughout, but the book also tells the history of the sport during his reign and is a totally absorbing read from start to finish. Keith Lee was part of the scene and has the knowledge to go with his superb evocative images making it a snip at £32.00 including postage!

Available directly from the author/publisher at www.keithleeimages.co.uk

Out and About.... an occasional feature where members can send pictures, news clippings, in fact anything that may amuse our readers...

We have all seen them, those businesses that use puns to grab our attention. Quite close to me the local fish and chip shop proudly has the name 'Oh My Cod' over the door. I have seen 'Herr Kutz' over a barber's door and once, in Germany, a flower shop was spied with the name 'Blumen Eck'.

Then there are the signs like the one Camping Continental in Hinckley used to put out every November to promote their winter sale, 'Now is the winter of our Discount Tent'. So let's have snaps of what you may come across on your travels, punny signs, oddities or just things that make you say, 'Well I'll go to the foot of our stairs!' Here's a couple to start you off...



The left hand picture, from our Far East Correspondent, Simon Hill, shows the Thai equivalent of Deliveroo just dropping off a Subway meal: he's obviously doing better than the fella in the baseball hat he is just overtaking...

And on the right is a sign I saw at the excellent Rural Life Living Museum near Farnham in Surrey. It may help to explain our Webmaster's love of the food from the sub-continent!



The Scribe's Last Word...

Well here we are, almost at Christmas and before the year draws to a close I feel I should apologise for the tardy arrival of this somewhat epic issue; you should have been reading it around the end of October.

The problem was, as Covid restrictions faded into history and everyone got back on with their lives, the member contributions that make or break the Chronicle dried up! I am thus duly indebted to Martin Lambert for his prolific input, together with Ian Kerr, Dan Sager and of course, Alan Halford for making the jigsaw of my edits fit the page and for getting the finished article to you!

As we go into the New Year, I will target the next issue around March time; if possible, just before the Spring Run. So as Delia Smith famously slurred to the Norwich City fans, 'Let's be 'Avin you!' How are those restos coming on? Have you acquired anything new and or unusual recently? Or, simply, from our current Captains of Industry, how's business? Let me know at the usual address scribe@the-club.org.uk



Wishing you all a very Merry Christmas and prosperous New Year!

Geoff

END