

NEWSLETTER

Issue No. 2



The Talking Chair

For some years I have lived near Corby, Northants, a place of steel working until the 1980's. The furnaces glowed 365 days a year as it would be complex to relight them once quenched. For me, The Club is much the same as a furnace. It's been over a year since we last met, aside from a noble representation at Peter Sheen's funeral at the early part of lock-down. Yet we have remained in contact and the warm glow of camaraderie is still evident.

Now we are at Issue 2 of our Newsletter and we hope the oxygen of enthusiasm will transform embers to flames as we announce not one but two informal events hosted by volunteers in the shape of Chairman in waiting, Ben Matthews and Club stalwart, Andrew Smith. While Club Runs proper will not commence until 2022, these informal events (Covid restrictions allowing) are another gearshift down the road to normality.

Please now dive into Issue 2 of the Newsletter and, if you have not contributed so far, think about what you could share with fellow members – this is your newsletter. To close, my thanks go to Hon Editor, Geoff Selvidge, IT “propeller head” Alan Halford, my ever-helpful Committee colleagues and, of course, Ben and Andrew – “Come on fan those flames!”...

Martin

Diary Dates - First off - those two ride-outs for you to join!

22 May 2021 - Cotswold Canter: Ben has mapped out a route of 100 miles or so around his very pleasant part of England. Meet up in the Oxford area (venue tbc) at 10.00. Lunch at a point of interest is in plan, as are tea and buns (courtesy of Ben) at ride end: which will be at Watsonian HQ, close to Moreton in Marsh, at around 4 o'clock. Cost will be £20 per head to cover organising costs. Advance booking (via The Club website <http://www.the-club.org.uk>) will open on Monday April 26th and is limited by the Covid regulations to 30 people: **first come, first served**. Booking will close on **Monday May 3rd** or before if full.

18 Sept 2021 – Salop Gallop: The Shropshire Lad, aka Andrew, is planning to re-ride most of the route of the Spring Run of 2018, starting from the same Mercure Hotel. This will be a longer ride than Ben's, meaning an earlyish start (time tbc) and so Andrew has negotiated with the Hotel a dinner bed and breakfast rate of £125 for Friday night and £135 for Saturday. There are only 26 single rooms available and so (as for Ben's event) it will be first come, first served!
NOTE: These prices are approximate and do not include bar kitty. Coffees, lunch etc on the ride itself will probably be about £25.

If you would like to join Andrew, please respond directly to him: andrew.smith0160@gmail.com by **May 6th LATEST**. If you are planning to go, you will also need to tell him by then whether you want a room at the hotel for: 1) Both nights, 2) Friday only, 3) Saturday only. A small deposit will be needed to secure any room requirements.

Both of these ride-outs will only go ahead if Covid regulations allow and, as the number of people who are allowed to meet outdoors will be limited to 30 from May 17, no allowance has been made for friends to join you on the rides. If space allows this to change, the organisers will advise.

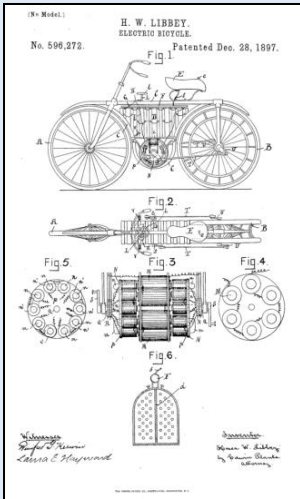
2022 Club Run Dates

Spring: 22-24 April 2022 based in Tavistock (Craig Carey-Clinch, Ian Kerr)

Autumn: 16-18 September 2022 based in Fort William (Andrew Smith, Bob McMillan)

The Electric Switch

The first electric bikes to attend a club run were a pair of Zeros ridden by Dave Taylor and his guest (and Zero's UK and Ireland Business Manager), Dale Robinson. It's fair to say the day wasn't without its challenges for them! Chairman Martin takes a look on how the electric PTW market is developing...



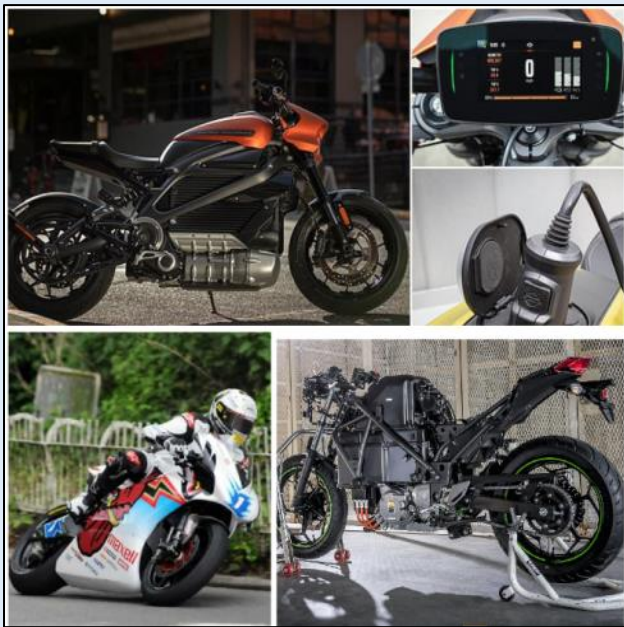
Electric two-wheelers or EV (electric vehicles) have been around since 1895. Back then the novelty of electricity spurred inventors on; now environmental issues are the "silent" driving force. What is the EV landscape like currently for two-wheelers? And what barriers remain to be overcome?

Zero of the USA still dominates in terms of column inches while EV newcomer Harley-Davidson with their "Livewire" are the new kids on the block in a segment with a plethora of niche players. That said, the electric scooter and delivery bike parc is buoyant thanks to increasing city restrictions on fossil fuel engines and the availability of urban recharge points, but the mass "middle to large capacity" equivalent market still has some way to go.

One aspect that Zero had less trouble overcoming than Harley-Davidson is customer engagement. Perhaps of all brands "The Motor Company" has one of the most defined brand profiles, that of "Outlaw" meaning that getting non motorcyclists into Harley-Davidson stores has proved more of a cultural challenge.



So what are the next steps – who will be first to "flick the switch" and make a successful, keen costed mass market full size EV?



Unless Elon Musk suddenly decides he will make a Tesla-Two-Wheeler, the field is open. Of the traditional manufacturers, KTM already have some experience, Triumph have made bullish noises and BMW Motorrad has the might of the car division behind it while the Japanese "big four" possess almost limitless technical resources – remember Honda have a strong alliance with Mugen who have dominated the TT Zero race for the past six years. Yet this may not be where the challenge resides. Perhaps we need to await the blossoming of a new generation of "passive two-wheel users" that don't want to know "how it works" or need to congregate at Box Hill but simply want to travel from A to B efficiently with the smallest ecological footprint. Technically just about anything is possible, but culturally we may still need to adapt to and adopt a new whirring, whooshing world of electric power quite unlike the one most Club members are used to.

Images: Top Left - Electric Bicycle patent of 1897 Middle right – Deliveroo scooter, make unknown Below left clockwise from top left: HD Livewire, Kawasaki electric Sportsbike concept, John McGuinness wins 2014 TT Zero on a Mugen

My Favourite Tool - Not one but 3 for you this time!



Left is David O'Neill's 'Beta Tools spring pulling hook wrench'. A snappy name for something he calls 'The Little Bugger'.

Right is an angle grinder. But probably not Martyn Roberts' angle grinder. His has a 'W' logo but it's now 'Shed and Buried!'

Below is a genuine HD tool courtesy of Dave Martin who says "turn the black knob and the bit at the other end turns at 90° to the shaft". Ooh, Matron!



A letter from the Low Countries...

Amstelveen, April 2021

Brexit and the B50MX Airbox!

What has Brexit to do with a B50MX airbox? Well, quite a lot when it comes to shipping delays caused by the newly imposed Customs regulations!

I ordered the special, made-to-order 'for racing purposes fibreglass airbox' in question last November and hoped that it would be produced and shipped before the New Year. Sadly it wasn't. The supplier sent me the invoice on the 19th of February, together with a UPS tracking reference showing that the package was collected that day and had arrived in Eindhoven on the 23rd, 3 days later. So far so good you would think! Fast forward to the 17th of March and the package is still somewhere in UPS' system; all I have are emails saying *"The package has been delayed due to a Brexit-related disruption. We will adjust the delivery schedule as quickly as possible"*.

My attempts to find out why my package was delayed included trying to call UPS; which was an unbelievable pain in the proverbial! After several aborted attempts, I finally spoke to an "English speaker", based in The Philippines. A nice gentleman but a complete and utter waste of time! Trying the Dutch language service, and waiting 17 minutes, I finally spoke to a home-working Dutch speaker (a Belgian) based in Portugal. The line went dead seconds after I gave him the Tracking number. Aaargh!

In desperation I phoned the NL Technical helpline; the gentlemen I spoke to couldn't help but did divulge some useful tips as to how to navigate UPS' ridiculously customer un-friendly telephone system, to contact someone at Customer support! Fourth time lucky! After another 10-minute wait I spoke to a nice Dutch lady (also based in Portugal) who quickly told me that the reason for the delay was because there was no accompanying invoice to allow customs clearance.

Contacting my supplier elicited this response; *"There are 2 customs invoices on your box, plus one electronically sent. UPS automatically print 3 invoices when overseas. 1 goes behind the address window and one for the pocket on the side of the box. Can't believe there is so much trouble, I am so sorry. Some parcels are getting delivered quickly;*

others are just taking an eternity." My parcel had obviously fallen into the "eternity" category!

My final, desperate, course of action was to visit to UPS' Administration Offices by Schiphol Airport. A kind lady heard my tale of woe, and called UPS' Eindhoven depot. 10 minutes later she said the package should be delivered within a week. And it was. Thank goodness for the human touch!

My package was delivered after 34 days in transit. And the 2 customs invoices, showing the correct HS commodity codes and Country of Origin were exactly where my supplier had said they were, on the box!

What has this got to do with Brexit? Well, UPS, DHL and others have been inundated with Covid-induced, tsunami-like, online shopping volume increases and time-consuming new Brexit customs procedures, coupled with incorrect declarations. So much so that one UK Company I know suspended (mid-February) all exports to Europe for 1 month because there were so many issues, they too use UPS! A German Company I know is still awaiting goods, shipped via DHL, at the end of January! Shipping from The Netherlands to the UK is also not without its challenges!

Now, Nigel Farage is not on my Christmas card list, but I do agree with three points he made before the "The Vote". He said, *"Let's be friends with everyone, let's trade with everyone, but no Federal Europe"*. Bring back the EEC I say and keep it just that. A simple European Economic Trading Area with frictionless inter-country trading but where each country retains its own culture, laws & sovereignty!

But let's get back to the B50MX...



1973 BSA B50MX – change the tank logo to Triumph and you have the 1974 TR5MX Avenger.

I am the proud owner of not one, but two, Triumph TR5MX's which were repatriated from the USA, desperately in need of total restoration.

The TR5MX Avenger was sold as a 1974 model and was I understand, one of BSA group's last pre-bankruptcy products. My bikes, just 10 matching E/F numbers apart, were built in September 1973 on, I assume, the same day/shift. One is currently in mid-restoration back to original MX specification and the other, for which the special B50MX airbox is intended, will be built in Enduro road-legal(ish) trim.

The OEM tyres fitted to the TR5MX were Dunlop Sports 3.00-21 and 4.00-18 and in my quest for originality, I found a pair in Australia! Both tyres date from 1973 and the NOS front looks like it has just come off the Fort Dunlop production line. The rear is almost new and also in excellent condition, they don't make them like this anymore! The journey from Australia to Amsterdam took just 4 days, courtesy of DHL; in sharp contrast to the airbox! The tyres were surprising cheap, DHL's charges were, regrettably, not!



In closing, with The Netherlands still subject to a nightly curfew, with 7-8000 positive Covid cases per day and overfull hospitals, I would like to wish all Members safe riding as the UK navigates the Covid unlock route map and I look forward to doing the same when circumstances here allow. Take care my friends.

Kindest regards,

David

Ed's note: More pictures of this project and the following item are in the gallery on the Club website.

On the subject of photos on the website; did you know you can upload yours directly on to the site? If you already have a sign in to the Gallery section (it's different to the main site sign in) crack on! If not, contact Alan Halford and he will sort you out!

Cogs and Rockers

Now we all know Martyn Roberts is a bloody clever bloke, but did you know he'd built his own bike? Me neither. But armed with his trusty angle-grinder and a Black and Decker Workmate he set about producing a thing of beauty: he writes...



Semi-retirement brought me the time to indulge in building a motorcycle from scratch. I've always loved the Manx Norton but not the stratospheric price tag. What I needed was a low cost alternative that could

provide a credible 'homage' and be painless to live with.

The easy bit was choosing the frame; a slim-line Norton featherbed. The engine was more difficult. Eventually I managed to find a Suzuki 650 Savage. With huge flywheels, 94mm stroke, 4-speed gearbox and maximum torque at just 3400rpm its spec read more like a 50s British single than a typical Japanese bike. It also had a wonderfully stylish exhaust, sweeping round the crankcase in the classic style. Sadly I wasn't able to use much else from it beyond the wiring, speedometer and rear hub.

Unlike a restoration, I wasn't constrained to use correct parts for a particular model year but there were still some engineering challenges like getting the engine into the right position and changing from belt to chain rear drive. Short engines often look wrong in a featherbed frame. To avoid unsightly gaps I positioned the battery box on the right hand side and blended a BSA Plunger A7 primary case onto the Savage crankcase on the left side. The front forks came from a Kawasaki GPz500 and I laced flanged alloy rims onto a Norton front hub and the Savage rear. The NOS race tank was a lucky find and I made the seat from a bare pan.

A VMCC pal insisted that every project has to have a name so I christened it Manki (MANx suzuKI) which seemed suitably tongue-in-cheek. Hopefully the end result is Manki rather than manky! The only shakedown problems were welding flux left in the alloy tank which blocked the fuel line, and the silencer, deemed too quiet by observers, quickly replaced!

The Road Test Milk Bottle: *By Mike Evans*

Flick through the bound volumes of *The Motor Cycle* or *Motor Cycling* from the early 1960s, and you are rewarded by detailed road tests of new models, including the first upstart Japanese bikes to challenge the legendary Midlands manufacturers. It was a time of great upheaval in the world of motorcycling, as the over-confident bosses of Triumph, BSA and Norton adjusted their blinkers and carried on up finishing straight.



I joined *The Motor Cycle* staff in the spring of 1962 and met the leading road testers of the day, including Peter Fraser, David Dixon and the eccentric but brilliant technical editor, Vic Willoughby. I was soon rolling up my trouser leg for the induction into the sacred mysteries of testing bikes. My brief was to look after lightweights, particularly Japanese bikes, not considered to be of any great importance.

As part of the induction, David unbuckled an oil-stained wartime DR bag to reveal The Road Test Kit. The equipment consisted of an aluminium housing containing a stopwatch, activated by handlebar lever via a short Bowden cable, and an aluminium slave (sorry, auxiliary) fuel tank for consumption testing. Then there was The Road Test Milk Bottle.

This Heath Robinson collection was all that was needed to check the performance of a bike of up to 250cc. Bigger bangers (as Harry Louis, the editor, insisted on calling them) went to MIRA for a more sophisticated timing experience. Even there, though, the auxiliary tank and milk bottle were the sole means of measuring fuel consumption.

It went like this: The little tank was filled with a carefully measured half-pint of petrol (using the milk bottle) and connected directly to the carburettor. The tester then rode at constant speeds, noting the odometer readings. As David explained, it was then a simple matter of multiplying the resulting miles by 16 to reveal the consumption figure.

An excellent and precise science, I was assured. At least, it was until one-day road-tester-in-chief Willoughby borrowed the DR bag.

He returned to the office incandescent with rage. Who, he demanded, had replaced the half-pint milk bottle with a third-of-a-pint school bottle? Since this smaller container had been in the kit for at least two years, the awful truth soon became apparent. All fuel consumption results had been compromised. No wonder there was a general opinion at the time that bikes were getting less efficient.

The school milk bottle immediately gave way to a standard half-pint measure, and testing recommenced. But how to explain the sudden greater efficiency of the new bikes submitted for testing? The best course was to say nothing and hope no one noticed.

Who was the culprit? Vic knew who to blame. David Dixon, who could be a bit vague at times, had difficulty wriggling out of that one. After all, he did more testing than anyone. He did try to blame me in later years, but I wasn't having any of it. I now claim the survivor's rights in the matter.



The Scribe's Last Word

The sun has been shining now for a good few days and hopefully it will continue to beam down, at least to grace the two ride-outs planned by Ben and Andrew.

I'll be dusting off the old Versys tomorrow for a trip out with a couple of chums, and to sharpen up ready for the *Cotswold Canter* I hope to see you there!

That's it for now, I hope that you have enjoyed Issue 2 and are sufficiently inspired to put some words down for the next issue. Remember the email address for your contributions is scribe@the-club.org.uk

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