

NEWSLETTER

Spring 2021

The Talking Chair



"Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning." – Winston Churchill

If I am allowed any indulgences in life then to quote Churchill in this, the first Club newsletter, is one such indulgence. In fact, perhaps, we will continue the Churchillian metaphor and say that one day, soon, "the life of the world may move forward into broad, sunlit uplands". But not today, tomorrow or the week after that.

At a time when we are expecting Club members to gradually be called to their GP for their first "jab", we have had to do our own "reality check" of what is and is not possible or probable. Sadly, and after extensive consultation, both of the 2021 Club Runs have been postponed and ported across to 2022. This is not a simple cut and paste exercise and considerable efforts have gone into pushing the tabled 2022 events into 2023 plus securing the understanding and commitment of hotels and coffee stops to keep our arrangements open until next year.

First task then is to thank the Tavistock and Scotland 2021 organisers for their patience and understanding. Currently that leaves us as a Club without Runs; our natural mechanism to meet and socialise. But hope is at hand. Not only is Alan Halford doing sterling work updating and expanding the Club web site, but we also have the Newsletter you are currently reading to ensure we are all in touch and no Club member is either forgotten or ill-informed of Club business. Naturally the web site and this Newsletter are "works in progress" – and many thanks to Geoff Selvidge for being not only Hon Scribe but also Hon Editor of this tome (and its founding father!).

Please take a look at the hard facts relating to Club runs enclosed, as well as the general member and industry articles. We hope you enjoy the read and appreciate the sentiments and motivations behind this Newsletter and the evolution of the web site. And as Winston succinctly put it, "If you're going through hell, keep going!"

Martin

Website News from Alan H.

The Club website exists for the use of all members and with no runs to book you may not have visited for a while. The most requested feature for the updated version was a photo gallery but it does rely on your input to it make a success. More pictures have been added lately (special thanks to Graham Goodman and Tony Jakeman) but there are still several runs from the digital photo age not covered. Please check through your photo archives and if you find any relevant run pictures to add or any other snaps that you think members may find interesting you can easily upload them direct to the site.

Contact webmaster@the-club.org.uk for guidance.

Reminder www.the-club.org.uk

The site is password protected but we have kept this as simple as possible. No email or individual name is required and the details are the same for everyone.

In the User Box type **member**

In the Password box type **motorcycle**

If you experience any difficulties with logging in or for any other website matters including (hopefully) content to add, contact Alan webmaster@the-club.org.uk

My Favourite Tool Alan Halford

My flexible grabber has to be my favourite tool as it has got me out of trouble so many times. I always seem to have a problem with dropping important items that will then disappear into inaccessible locations. Why is it always those irreplaceable bits of engine or whatever that always want to go walkabout?



Be it under a workbench or behind a kitchen unit I couldn't be without my flexible friend and even with new technology - mobile phone - photo timer and it becomes a "selfie stick", brilliant.

What's your favourite tool? Please send in your contributions for this regular feature.

2022 Run Dates

Spring 22nd-24th April at Tavistock (Craig Carey-Clinch, Ian Kerr)

Autumn September at Fort William - details to be finalised.
(Andrew Smith, Bob McMillan)

Bob Mac is Back!



By now all in The Club know that ex Honda supremo, Bob McMillan had a serious motorcycle accident over a year ago. A year round, high mileage rider, Bob is an ex- Police motorcyclist who was the driving (riding?) force behind Honda's free rider training. Now – some 18 months after his accident – Bob is again riding his favourite routes in middle England and the Welsh hills. Not quite in perfect health but, by his own admission, “about

85% there”; which did not stop the old devil from embarking on an 1800 mile “Run Recce” to Scotland with Andrew Smith and ex Honda chum, Mark Davies recently. Below are his poetic recollections of that fateful day shared in the light of the reality that we should all be fully aware, at all times, and act/ride accordingly. Over to you Bob...

And it came to Pass...

That one lovely Day...Sunny, Bright and Beautiful.....That my Maker I did nearly Meet.....

So time to think, to ponder...Time to wonder... Why Me?

So sitting almost Naked by the Road... Wondering WHY and HOW it is.....I hear Voices and can see.....a MAN IN A VAN to my side...LISTLESS AND TRAPPED...I still Wonder WHY?

I Hear the RIPPING of my CLOTHES...I SEE my WRIST looking really BAD...My Left Leg Feels REAL BAD...

In STROKE TRAUMA WARD...They tell me I've been in a CRASH..A BAD CRASH..I can't Recall.....On my bike now BROKEN BAD...That's ME...And the BIKE...So SAD..

And ALL BECAUSE a Man in a Van...In... His Minds-Eye...Thought I Know Not What!

And so he pulled out – Head on into A Truck....YES...A TRUCK!

The Impact on the van forced it Backwards. ...INTO ME... and Bikes DON'T FLY or Travel BACKWARDS....

So There I am- Sitting on the Roadside.

Wondering WHY?

WHY ME?



Mods and Restos (or, if you prefer, Cogs and Rockers)

Within the club ranks there are some very clever engineers, some enthusiastic and competent home mechanics and some, well, just cack-handed hammer-chewers – your scribe identifies as one of the latter! Over many runs we have seen some interesting mods (think Peter Meek's extra pillion footrest) and some very nice restorations, so what is on your drawing board or bench currently?

From a dusty man cave somewhere near Silverstone, a well-known club member is trying to breathe new life into a bike which in its heyday had the soubriquet 'The Widowmaker'



In my foolish youth, I once paid £50 for a frame and some boxes of bits that were supposed to be a Kawasaki H1 500. Thankfully, once I realised that the sum of the parts wouldn't make a whole bike and worked out the cost of fixing everything, I saw sense and sold it on. Having bought another one some 40 years later, I find myself wrestling with similar thoughts about whether I have done the right thing – such is the curse of all those who restore old bikes!

My latest acquisition, a low mileage H1F, came from California and while it was corrosion free, it was clear

that it had been down the road and also suffered from an atrocious hand-painted matt black finish. With camera at the ready, the strip down started recently and apart from some particularly stubborn swingarm bushes, everything came apart fairly easily.

The first job was to despatch the motor to Gary Clarke (of Downpipe3 fame). While the pistons and bores were all in good order, the crank needed a refresh and the gear selectors were in need of replacement. Rather than buying the fine but expensive Ralf Gilles replacements, I fortunately sourced a near-complete engine and was able to use the selectors from that instead. Other repair items have been fixing crash damage at the footrest mounting point on the frame – maybe a common issue? The fuel tank also had more than its fair share of dents and pinhole leaks. Expertly repaired by Steve Cooper (VJMCC/Tansha editor), it now awaits painting along with the other bodywork – bye bye matt black, hello Candy Green!



More soon on the restoration when hopefully the painting and plating will have been done – the point of no return has now been well and truly passed!

Frank Finch

PS: If you fancy importing a project yourself, Frank wrote an article on how to go about it. It appears on the Devitt website [click here](#).

Brexit Bites and Container Shortages.

It seems that, for business, Brexit has been even more complicated than the doom-mongers predicted. But, there has been parity with companies both large and not so large taking on the challenge of a new way of trading. We spoke to two Club members about Brexit; Graham Matcham of Cambrian Tyres and Venhill's Rick Parish.

Graham Matcham, tired but optimistic, writes:



After 31 years of involvement in the motorcycle industry I have experienced many changes. The rate of change, with a new set of challenges, accelerated in 2020 to a level never experienced before! Leaving the European Union was expected to throw up some interesting curve balls and my prediction was pragmatic – in other words “whatever will be, will be”. Any change to trading conditions would be the same for everyone so, in reality, the playing field would remain level.

Add an unexpected global pandemic and the normal order is disturbed beyond belief. Despite the challenges of lock down the demand for replacement tyres has remained steady, with some segments actually

increasing dramatically. Demand for lightweight motorcycle and scooter tyres is booming as safe personal mobility is satisfied through the two-wheeler option over, say, public transport. There are also strong indications that tarmac “street warriors” have switched to off-road riding to maintain their adrenalin fix and take their version of “legitimate exercise” during lockdown.

To be honest, trying to satisfy this change of demand in tyre types has been the biggest challenge. Sourcing from Asia we are faced with daunting issues relating to container availability forcing our shipping costs up by over 400%! We are OK, we have a warehouse of product and more arriving daily but the net effect will be a steady increase in tyre prices throughout 2021. We can do nothing about that.

Personally, I am looking forward to a return to normality, but I am a realist and expect that some things might never be the same again.

Rick Parish adds:

Venhill is one of those small businesses which manufacture relatively low value items. The difference between being viable and not viable is crucial and can be a matter of a few percent here and there.

Although we sell to 35 or so countries, including the USA and Australia, Brexit really worried us as the majority of our day to day profits came from Europe. Even if we could overcome any Brexit imposed duty or pricing issues, psychologically we started to feel no longer part of the European ‘team’.

To address that we’ve worked really hard to keep talking to all our European distributors to the extent that many allowed us to ship product to them early, well before the 31st December deadline.

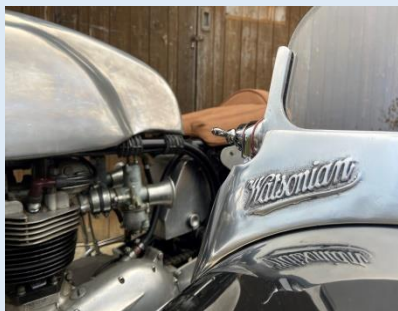
Thank goodness we did as haulage companies really weren’t keen on earning perhaps two day’s pay and getting stuck in port for a week and then not allowed to ship the goods. We simply wouldn’t have been able to get product into Europe for the first few weeks of the New Year amongst all the confusion.

Add to this the fact that the deal itself being quite last minute meant the likes of software houses couldn’t upgrade software to allow simple things like invoicing; though that did arrive finally in mid-January. We’re also starting to work out how the VAT or deferments work. All this extra compliance is keeping us busy and we’re getting very slick at filling in forms. Perhaps a future club quiz should include questions about the variety of forms now required from EORI, MOSS, Common Transit Registration, NCTS Registration, VAT Deferment accounts, forms CN22 & CN23 and not to mention SAD Form 88. Like Cambrian, we are dealing with the reality of the here and now, but it is additional hassle for a small company and we still have not worked out yet who pays for the extra effort required!



From Three Wheels to Two! Ben Matthews tells his story: -

When I joined Watsonian Sidecars way back in the mid-nineties, I expected my working career in the motorcycle industry to involve two and three wheeled machines. Little did I know that a big part of my future was to involve two-wheeled products of a completely different nature!



In 2010 we were busy with various products – Watsonian Sidecars and Squire Sidecars and Trailers, as well as being the UK distributor for Royal Enfield - when we were contacted by Cathy Chamberlain, a solicitor from Cheshire. She was in the process of purchasing a company called Pod Teardrop Caravans, and was looking for a manufacturing partner to help her build the chassis and fibreglass bodyshell.

Cathy brought one of those Pods to show us. It was a very small caravan, with the kitchen outside at the rear. There was no headroom, so you had to crawl through the main door and straight into bed!

We really liked the idea of a small two-berth caravan, but the product that she was about to buy simply wasn't good enough. We reckoned we could do much better than that!

So, we set up a brand-new business between us called Barefoot Caravans, scribbled some ideas and designs down and contacted the Automotive Design Department at Coventry University. The students listened to our brief and used the caravan as a project for a term. Some came up with great ideas, others were rather odd, to say the least! Two of them had really understood what we were looking for and had some brilliant sketches. We employed them for the summer, and they set about making a prototype.

What followed was a huge amount of head scratching, research, and stress.

Four years later, we launched our first Barefoot Caravan - a unique monocoque, one-piece fibreglass moulded two-berth caravan, with very high specification. We have now built over 100 units for the UK, and have also appointed licenced manufacturers in Korea, Australia and the USA.



The fully story can be seen on our website www.go-barefoot.co.uk

The Scribe's Last Word...

Early last year, the Coronavirus was something that was just a minor news item that really only concerned China: didn't it? Who could have predicted at that stage the devastation that it would wreak around the world? After all, the perceived wisdom is that most Chinese exports have a very short lifespan!

Sadly, the virus took our great friend Peter Sheen and we said goodbye to him in June. But now that Team UK has got the holeshot in the European vaccination race, our fervent hope is that you, your family and friends can look forward to returning to something like normality very soon.

Now that the daylight hours are lengthening (as is my hair – at least, where I still have any!) what plans do you have for getting the detritus off your bike and blowing the cobwebs out of your helmet? As I write this, a disturbing image of Old Mike Jackson's "Kawalski" W650, covered in chicken shit, swims into my mind. Buxton run autumn 2000 wasn't it?

So, share with us what you have been doing over the last 12 months. Maybe a new bike, a resto project or two, planning future adventures or, like Dan Sager, indulging in miniature railway locomotive servicing. Whatever it is get in touch, with a picture or two, to scribe@the-club.org.uk you could be the star of the next newsletter!

Until we ride together again, stay safe!

END