

SILK SCOTT — FINAL GLITCHES

It was agreeable to me that the colour feature I published from the small band of Silk Scott owners produced such an interesting response, the biggest I've had in my year in the editorial chair. Of course, owners are really enthusiastic about the last, and arguably the best development of the Scott format, and another factor was that we all had to get to grips with its shortcomings. I admit, too, that I had a hand in this as I had been in contact with some of the owners to discuss mutual problems. Since my 'final round up' some other points have emerged.

The first, on my own machine, emerged this later summer when I could at last get my leg over the saddle and discovered that the front stopper was not performing as well as twin-leading shoes should perform. My friend, Harry Lowing, of that 1912 two-speeder fame, came down to help me investigate, and it was obvious that when the bottom shoe gripped the top one did not, but when adjusting the top shoe the bottom one locked on. We enjoyed several strip downs and fiddling sessions.

On paper this Fahren brake is of racing pedigree, should really stop on a hairpin.

You know the design, basically single cable to single threaded rod with two levers and yokes, but ideally the adjusting rod and yokes should have both a left hand and a right hand thread, but this is not the case on the Silk Scott, both threads are right handed. I have asked a generous friend with engineering skills to make me a twin-threaded rod and yoke. This should make adjusting easy, whereas now it seems to be a frustrating business of using blocks of wood against the levers to get both shoes synchronised.

There are two different gearboxes on these bikes. Mine is a Velo box but I believe the clutch plates inside the Velo clutch are Jawa, with four big springs. As you know, Velo clutches were always a bugbear on adjustment, having 12 smaller springs. My clutch is definitely crunchy, maybe because of the bike's long rest. Some models have the Silk box, with no primary chain adjuster, so a slipper tensioner has to be fashioned. I have an adjuster, a pig to get at under the box.

There is a spares service for Jawa in Northampton, I believe, and I think that all Jawa models had identical clutches. The earlier disc brake did not work well so an expanding shoe type was used, but although this does work it is not ideal, the foot lever is short and needs a big push down to function. I haven't put my brain box to work on this yet.

Of course, George Silk would have gone on to electronic ignition, but I have my doubts. Spark timing is very tricky and critical to avoid hefty kick-backs and even reversing, which is why I had my fixed ignition changed to one I can manually retard for starting, which has made a tremendous difference.

The kickstarter was a pig and it's funny Titch Allen didn't mention this in his trial ride, and although a stop would solve it, it is almost impossible to make one strong enough, but Ged Rumble's adaption of a Triumph lever works well. On the Silk boxes this has to be bent for clearance, but if you have a Velo box the straight lever should clear without trouble. I show a photo of Ged's kickstarter adaption, which, he tells me, flips at the top, not at the bottom.

During my tenure of office I tried to discover drawings of the

modifications which Silk made to the engines supplied for the model, mainly Replicas, and though Ged was kind enough to send me the technical drawings of the crank set-up, also shown, I could not locate the whole ball of wax. All the motors I traced had the same larger cold-rolled steel cranks, and I believe that some oil channels were modified, though I'm not certain. My 'bottom end' and seals are sound so I've no need to dig deeper, and although one machine I traced did have crank trouble, I have no knowledge as to how it was used. Other models, having done considerable mileage, were also sound.

Owners I discussed this with ruled out petrol conversion, though if possible it might have meant grease-nipple application to main bearings, which is a bit of an inconvenience to 'kick and go' blokes like me.

A quick round up of modifications made by owners who contacted me, mentioned before — air-bleed units fitted to oil pump to overcome crankcase suction and excess smoke. Extra holes and stuffing in that noisy silencer. Spark control as above. A flat carb manifold made up to improve starting and running. Misalignment of primary chain, this seems to be with the Silk box, see previous article by Ged Rumble. My Velo box alignment seems to be OK. Attention to alternator drive for quieter running, see previous article. Old Scott engines of many breeds were used, mostly piston clearances were out, some old pitting in bores found, reboring often necessary. Some owners needed to rewire a very tatty harness, I did. Although handling is good, every owner I spoke to replaced that short racing-type handlebar with a more comfortable one. Some owners fitted the Scott primary chain oiler as the 'standard' one doesn't work, but as I find this unit to be cumbersome I rely on occasional hand squirts.

When you've done all of these things, and you will also find a few more things to do, no two models are alike, you will wind up with what all the owners I spoke to agreed, the very best Scott ever made in the sense that it leapfrogged back in time over the heads of all those intermediate heavyweights to the original concept of the very fast and light two-speed Sprints, as raced by riders like Paul Thomas of yesteryear, a friend, who tells me he got 90 plus at Oulton Park.

There you are, this last issue of *Yowl*, I couldn't resist the temptation to call again on the Superscott, and I may even buy myself that giant Mars bar, and who knows, the new Editor may return most of you to those elegant Edwardian days when sidecars were fashioned from wickerwork. My excuse — for ever so many issues of *Yowl* — under my respected predecessor I longed for some coverage of the last and the best. I persuaded Tom Wess and Ged Rumble gave us his excellent series on his beautiful machine, love of his life, another paeon of praise came to me from Roy Lambert and a Norfolk owner who has since sold on his machine and I promised myself to sing the praises of the marque, warts and all, when I compiled *Yowl*. In case this miffed you, ask yourself, did you help me to fill the journal each time, and why did I sometimes have to phone and scratch around for enough good, fresh material?

G.B.

