



Another 1928 TT survivor. This is Andrew Cunningham's TT6, taken at the 1998 Banbury Run.

SILK SCOTT PROJECT

In 1974 I bought a Ducati 750SS production racer and in mid year competed at Silverstone race meeting on it.

At this meeting a friend was competing with his 500cc Suzuki T500 air-cooled two-stroke twin that had been mildly tuned by Eddie Crooks. I was impressed with the Suzuki. It had a good spread of power for a schneule scavenge motor and the chassis was adequate, if a little short, high and heavy.

The following weekend, George Silk brought his young family to visit and brought the prototype Silk Scott on a trailer for me to have a trial ride. While a picnic was being laid out on the lawn, I headed out on the bike.

The route started with a hill, then a combination of 'S' bends, a downhill fast right hand curve and a section of snaking B road with a poor surface. After this initial section I said to myself "Nice bike Bob Stevenson (Spondon Engineering), pity about the engine!" The engine had been modified according to the wisdom of the period as applied to vintage racers.

In a bid to extract more power from the engine and remain competitive with contemporary sporting four strokes, the Scott factory had modified the engine in 1928. They reasoned that if they extended the stroke, this would prolong the period that the inlet ports were open and give enhanced charging.

In order to gain more speed for vintage racing in the 1970s, the practice was to enlarge the ports and modify the effective length of the inlet skirt to leave the inlet open longer. The transfer and exhaust were also opened up, the latter I remember to about 187 degrees!

As a new boy to Scotts and the racing scene, I took advice and modified the porting on my replica barrel accordingly.

I was bitterly disappointed with the results, as the engine lost its most attractive spread of torque and most of its bottom end urge. My reward for these losses was an ability to rev a little higher and thus shorten the already short life of the cranks. Like Fagin, I reviewed my situation!

I reasoned that the motor was strangled by a very small inlet duct and resolved to concentrate my efforts on getting as much mixture in the engine as possible, without making any significant changes to port timings. I found that I could improve the breathing of a standard Scott to achieve a 50% power uplift, but could achieve a 100% uplift with a revised but externally identical crankcase and an aluminium barrel.

The objective was to retain the very flat torque characteristics of the traditional Scott engine.

I do not claim to have a 'World Beater' or anything near it, but I have an engine that retains original characteristics but just more power throughout. The nearest I can describe would be to ride a 1,200cc Scott.

Back to the Silk Scott. I sold my Ducati last year and decided to use some of the cash to buy a Silk Scott.

I bought a bike that had been owned by both John Underhill and Roy Lambert. The whole idea was to keep the good bit — the bike, and replace the engine with one of mine.

Other mods planned are as follows. To discard the alternator on the LH crankcase door. This to be replaced by a series of magnets in a non-metallic ring fitted under the RH lip of the flywheel rim. A generating coil set would be mounted adjacent, as there is no mag chain to complicate matters.

The oil pump on the RH door I will discard and fit a simple dripper for the main bearings and let general engine lube be via petrol.

The ignition will be triggered by a pair of magnets incorporated into the flywheel assembly, so we end up with nothing on the doors and weight saved.

Some of this weight saving will go on making the flywheel heavier. The two-speeder is an excellent handler, but the three-speeder flywheel is half the weight of a two-speeder and stability and vibration are inferior for this reason.

Our race rider Paul Dobbs, whose weekday job is as a development rider for the Triumph Motorcycle Co, will sort out and optimise the chassis suspension.

Before we start the project, I decided to go a ride on my new acquisition. It would be good to get a 'Before and After' assessment. At the end of our lane there is an uphill right turn. It stalled. Start again and I found that plenty of revs were needed to get going. I rode along and would have enjoyed the light elegant handling, were it not for the vibration!

Any extended period of this would surely lead to "industrial white finger", which is a reportable industrial injury that can lead to nerve damage in the hands. I found that it would travel at 60 m.p.h. reasonably once my hands had gone numb, but that opening the throttle resulted in much inlet roar but little action. I tried changing down to see if it would like to rev. It would rev, but the vibration was very uncomfortable. I stopped at some traffic lights — it stalled and did not seem inclined to restart easily. For those not acquainted with the position of the Velo box in the Silk Scott, the kick starter is set

forward of the footrests and requires the rider to lean well forward over the bars and to kick backwards, just as a mule kicks, which I thought was appropriate. Finally it started and I prepared to start, apply revs and — what is that! Oh damn! The licence holder had come unscrewed with the vibration and a dozen or so old and new tax discs were blowing down the road. I employed some interesting Anglo-Saxon expletives while the tax discs were rounded up and refitted into their holder. OK, time to go home, I have had enough of this game. Two miles further and a direction indicator fell off from vibration, but in order to add interest it started to misfire on one pot and eventually would run only on one. I decided that I could make the few miles on one pot, but it was very lame and I reflected on the time I took my racer to a Vale of Belvoir run. I had not put in road plugs and potted round with rather too much oil until we got back to the pub car park start finish venue. When I came to go home, a distance of about 15 miles, it only started on one pot. I could not be bothered to sort it out, so rode home on one pot. I remember it was doing 70 m.p.h. on one pot down the A46. What a difference!

The concept of a race-bred rolling chassis with a decent Scott motor is one that appeals to me. I do not need the 160 m.p.h. that my Honda will do, but prefer a light lithe bike with a strong flexible engine that owes its design features to one of my personal heroes.

To the previous owners of this bike. Please understand that I am not complaining about how it has been cared for. It is EXACTLY as I remember it and this example is in remarkable condition considering that it was made over 30 years ago, but then, perhaps on reflection, it has not been used so much! I understand that masochists are an endangered species nowadays!

Roger Moss.

Dear Roger,

Further to my article on the early Super Squirrel engines, here is the story of my first encounter with Y-7132.

During 1973 I was 'on with' my second Scott, built up from spares around a 1924 frame. I now had all the ingredients at hand, apart from an engine. The only engine available was my spare 1922 486cc Squirrel engine, so things were in the doldrums.

A pal visiting me told me that he had seen a Scott engine on a bench in a building close by his and the person to see was a Walter Brown, giving me the address and phone number.

"Yes, you can have the engine for a fiver, come over on Thursday, I think". So I went over to Castleford on my 1921 532cc Standard to see him. We left the bike at his home, driving a short distance to a lorry compound.

He unlocked the main gate, in I went, before HIM. I only walked a few yards when, in a sudden rush two large Alsations were bounding towards me. More like Russian timber wolves. Someone had forgotten to lock the side fence door! At last the engine was revealed, like a 3³/₄ h.p. model with a water-cooled head. The engine appeared in good order; it turned over with a 'big-endish' play clunk. The other observation was that white lines had, with deliberation, painted on it markings: inlet, exhaust. The engine, prior to my intervention, was going to be sectioned for the engineering students at close by Whitwood Tech. 'Y' cut up a prefix 'Y' Scott engine? 'Y'! Money changed hands and the engine was mine. With the engine affixed to