

## THE COMPETITOR AND HIS VERSATILE SCOTT

I'm waiting for the flag to fall  
With beating heart, feel on the ball  
I've raced a year or two — and yet  
There's still a tinge of nerve I get.  
The man stands still with Union Jack  
His tweed suit fitting like a sack!  
He knew he filled us all with tension  
Such power from a man on Old Age Pension.  
The anxiousness, I felt he also knew,  
And he had been a racer too.  
He knew the way that time stood still  
Before exploding and the thrill  
The bike pushed forward against the brake  
That little tip I always take  
I know Scotts start on their first bump  
It's just that mine feels quite a lump  
Of machinery that's no good at rest  
It just likes running with the best.  
Yes, under way feels best of all  
I'm waiting for the flag to fall.

Again, waiting for the flag to fall  
This time certainly relaxed  
It's quite a different feeling  
With the Scott MoT'd and taxed  
The man who holds the Union Jack  
Has a smile upon his face  
He wants to start us spot on time  
Yet he knows it's not a race  
He's resplendent in his red cloak  
He is also wearing chains  
As the mayor of this fair city  
I don't thin anyone complains.  
It's the International Rally  
It's a lovely Summer's day  
The Scott is ticking over  
Leaving not much more to say  
Except that I'll be riding  
With good company that's all  
I think you'll get the picture as  
I await the flag to fall.

**Jim Baxter.**

## THE SILK TRAIL (two-wheeled)

### Early days

Dad never talked about it much, but recently they released the tapes on the Malta convoy — the one in August 1942 where 53 ships started out and only four got through. Dad was on HMS Manchester, sunk in bomb alley off the Tripoli coast, swam ashore — captured by Italians, released by Canadians and spent the rest of the war in Canada.

Mum was expecting me, and with the news of the sinking, I thought I'm the man of the house now, better get born then. The only things about the war I can remember were the Land Army girls, the sound of the Spitfires, stray bombers, which was very exciting because we had to hide under the stairs, and trips to the village store, coupons at the ready.

Then everything got very exciting. We had a massive party and bonfire on the village green, and food! Then this strange man walked into our house; he did have one grace, he put this great big wooden sea chest in in my bedroom, not supposed to know, but it had maple syrup and brown sugar — U was the most popular kid in the village!

This bloke coming back was a double-edged sword. By now we all had bikes and spent most of our time either in speedway races on the small green, or riding up the road for a couple of miles, very steep, then coming down through the woods at breakneck speed (today this is called 'Mountain Biking', of course it's real name is dirt tracking).

Problem was both pursuits ended up at some stage in spectacular falls in the mud (points awarded), some quite evil smelling (bonus points). After several warnings my beloved dirt tracker was hung high up on the shed wall. Grounded, I even tried tidying the shed, stopped eating the chicken peelings, removed the threat of feeding my little brother worms again — nothing worked. Then a master plan. If I cut a path through the woods at the back, if I stood up on some boxes, got the bike down out the back, mobile again, yes! At the age of five I had forgotten one important point, the cause of the ban, I fell off again — eek! Hung the bike back on the wall, went out the back, came in the front — but somehow these people pretending to be my mum and dad had turned into, well, just like teachers. I was well and truly grounded.

Around this time Mum was quite poorly and from time to time spent months in hospital. As Dad was still in the Navy this meant we had to stay with my aunt. This meant leaving the village school in Grayswood, where all my mates were, and moving to a new school in Grayshott (about 12 miles away) and I hated it. So it was decided to send me on a round trip of 24 miles every schoolday. No one else could understand it, but I was happy as larry.

Apart from Uncle Splonk's (don't ask me!) three-wheeled blood red Morgan with a big V-twin Matchless engine stuck out in front, my childhood up until around eight years was pretty motor cycle free. My older cousins were now drafted into the RAF and at weekends when they came home on leave the main attraction was the local dance in Haslemere (and no doubt girls). Both Geoff and Graham had single cylinder two-strokes and the oils and fuel at the time required decoking fairly regularly. So, to give the cousins more 'girl time' I decoked them, built them back up; early in the morning they had a quick once over, and off back to Norfolk they went.

## Malta

Then Dad got a posting to Malta. In those days it was normal for the family to be transported out there. So Dad found a fantastic flat right in the middle of St. Julians Bay square, and we were to fly out! The plane was a BEA Viking (converted DC3), Ed, my younger was

always a pain, but this time he surpassed himself. In those days, with no oxygen or pressurisation, you were restricted to 8,000' (I think). This meant flying down the valleys in France. Ed suddenly shouted "Mum, the propellers stopped"; everyone went to see, the plane lurched — probably didn't help much. We had to land at Nice, in those days a strip of Tarmac flanked by grass, with a hut a bit like our old village hall, where we had a drink outside in the sun. Mum said the cost was ridiculous. After a long time we were in the air again, only to land at Rome where we changed planes, eventually arriving at Luqa airport, tired and bedraggled.

Malta had been portrayed to me to be an island basking in the sun, surrounded by deep blue Mediterranean sea. Well, mostly it was, but two things struck me on the journey back to our flat. It was raining very hard and every other house was rubble, big square rubble. When we got to St. Julians it was a torrent (at the head of the valley) and we had to wade in.



Malta to a nine-year old was indeed heaven (although we did miss our mates, green fields and Christmas trees a bit). With good fishing 50 yards, roller skating 100 yards, and we soon learnt to swim in the next bay round, St Georges. Across the bay was the Army Lido, and with rafts moored in the middle we could easily reach the other side, These all attracted the scourge of the Med, the sea urchins.

Up the road a couple of miles St Andrews barracks held Saturday afternoon films for army kids. One day we were down at the lido pretending to be army kids when this 'Ain't arf hot' army sergeant came up to us, moustache twitching. "What are you kids up to" etc. Well that the upshot was that if we collected 20 sea urchins each week we could have free tickets to the films. There were no more sea urchins on the rafts or the lido while we were there — fact. Officers' wives, army lido, for the use of.

During our stay Dad had shipmates and guys from the Saturday night dances he and Mum ran at the Methodist church hall in Floriana, back to our place. The dances were good, but we had to go to Sunday school the next day. In those days Floriana church was next door to the Scout headquarters, so if you nipped into the toilet, over the back wall, you could sit on a Spitfire (how it got there I don't know), but it had no fabric on. This did not stop us shooting down an incredible number of Me109s in the skies over Floriana till we got found out.

During one of these visits by some NZ carrier pilots, after we had exhausted the number of carrier crashes and how mangled they got, Dad cried enough and got the boring photos out. Boring except there was a picture of a motor bike, not one that I had seen before. It had a radiator, a round biscuit tin for a petrol tank and a funny little oil tank — I was staring at my first vision of a Scott. The lights went on, Dad was muttering something about 1928 two-speed Scott to the pilots, but I was just staring at something so beautiful and simple it blew me away!

**George Silk.**

### **JOE DIVER, 1929-2009**

Joe was born and lived all his life in Impington, Cambridgeshire, a great stroke of luck, as it was also the home of arch Scott enthusiast Ossie Neal. Joe first met Ossie during the war when Ossie was living on a houseboat on the nearby River Cam. He remembered Ossie getting some petrol and they went to his workshop and fired up the '23 Scott TT outfit. Joe was 16 in August 1946 and got his first bike, a thirties 250 Triumph, on which he went with Ossie, Flyer mounted, to the Manx in September. National Service followed, two years in the RAF. His first Scott, a two-speeder, was built up from bits with Ossie's help, going much better with the fitment of a Triumph charging plant magneto. More Scotts followed and many sporting events through the fifties. Trials, scrambles, sprints, road racing; notable successes being winning the Silverstone Saturday handicap race in 1955, alas the mount was a vintage Norton. Also trials, winning the Southern Trophy Trial sidecar class in 1950, with Ossie in the Scott chair and the solo class in 1958 on Ossie's two-stroke Model U Velo.

In the late fifties sailing became another passion with his self-converted lifeboat, taking part in the Old Gaffers race at Maldon, Essex, and much cruising. In 1969, when son Neil started to take an interest in things mechanical a 1949 Scott was purchased and many pillion miles enjoyed.

Through the seventies and on many more bikes were built up, usually from bits, mostly vintage Scotts and Triumphs, including another two-speeder, always his favourite. As many events and runs as possible were attended, including many events in Belgium, where Joe made many friends. Failing health in his last years didn't dampen his enthusiasm and his last ride was on the two-speeder at the 2007 Banbury Run.

Through his love of vintage bikes and sailing, Joe travelled extensively and made a great many friends. Son Neil intends to carry on the tradition.