

## THE SILK TRAIL (three wheeled) — Chapter three

### The Wilfrid Street Days

Tom Ward had run a successful Scott business in Bradford before the war. His association with the marque went back to 1908; when working in the toolroom at Jowett a tall distinguished gentleman had walked in and asked Jowett to build the first six Scotts. Tom was a brilliant Victorian engineer from an era when craftsmanship and quality were more important than just cost. The pumping engines in Leicester are a working monument to these skills and well worth a visit. At the end of 1939 Tom was seconded to Rolls-Royce in Derby, closing his business and leaving his beloved Bradford. Tom was asked to help develop the Merlin supercharger, which became a constant quest for power. He also saw the experimental single cylinder Napier Nomad sleeve valve two-stroke, which remains one of the most powerful reciprocating engines. He also saw it misfire and blow a clean hole in the Nightingale Road roof!

Initially I lived with Tom and his wife Betty, a strict Yorkshire lady, just what a scruffy youth needed. At this time Tom had his office and Myford in the middle room. I absorbed all I could like a sponge, enjoyed being taught by a very fine Victorian engineer; I counted myself very lucky and I still do. The modern stuff was dealt with by going to the Derby Technical College, crammed full of RR and British Rail guys; there was another lad from Rocoester who worked at Bramfords and rode a little James. We became good friends.

Betty was a really good cook and once a week we stopped early, about five, washed our hands (important) changed out of our overalls and sat down for tea. On these occasions we had guests, more often than not John Hartshorne, another regular was Roger Moss and my local Scott hero Maurice Patey. After we had cleared the table we got down to the serious business of the rights and wrongs of the Scott world. We would cover all sorts of Scott-related topics, weaknesses and good points, but two things stand out for me. Where Scotts veered off the AA path by introducing the Forth bridge frames, and the crank/oil pump saga.

Work for me was fascinating, I learnt all I could. Brazing frames, the tubes are pegged into the lugs to position them, and if the flux is well coated first you run the braze in, perfect joint. How to bang up (with a dolley) the tapers, alternately three times nipping the bolt each times, never had one come undone (assuming tapers are in fit state!) The list is endless. The one job that was held back until I was 20 was Tom's patch, the two-speed gear. When I finally got to do one I realised why, and even I was still the sous chef. One instance, and I have to say I don't agree with all the H&S mumbo jumbo of today, common sense seems to have fled this country, you have to bear in mind Tom was 72 when I first went to Derby and came from a different era. One day I had finished a batch of 50 crankshaft bolts, tested each right and left thread on the gauges proud as punch. Tom took one look, sniffed, grabbed my hand, shoved it in the box of bolts, my hand came out dripping with blood. To this day you will never find a burr on any of my work. Lesson learnt.

Betty was a devout Methodist and encouraged me to join the local youth club. Two things happened here: I met my wife Wendy, my mate's reaction, she's a right load of trouble — encouraging start — he was wrong, of course. We formed a group. Dad had given me his old guitar and from humble beginnings the bookings started to roll in. I'm still playing in a band today — by the way, Brian Woolley was also a fine jazz musician.

Tom didn't really like me being in the band. By now I'd move to a

member of the congregation's digs, taking my Brum Scott with me. I realised it was a stretch to pay me, but 30 bob a week, and with petrol and insurance, balancing the books just wasn't happening. I had a living allowance from Dad, but that was going on the 'project', I'd been given a spring frame prototype by Matt on one of my monthly visits to 2 St. Marys Row, and I was busy sorting out an engine for a grass track bike that Maurice would ride. Something had to give, the Brum Scott had to go, especially as the new digs had a very narrow back entrance (I had moved in with the bass guitarist a few streets away). Looking back now I can see Matt's disgust, but at the time I felt I had no option, he never really forgave me. So on one of my long trips back home, I called in at Comerfords at Thames Ditton to pick up my brand new 20T Greeves, the swap for the Scott had been done on the phone. I was faced with the sucking teeth, shaking head salesman who demanded another £20. Haven't got it — big huddle, eventually they agreed and my money, access transport worries all evaporated.

As every month I had to get on the train from Derby to Birmingham New Street and walk round to St. Marys Row. In the silversmith and gun quarter, the front was really a big old house. The hall littered with Scott bits coming in and out, Matt's office in the front left hand room. In the Winter the black grate fire was made up, and Matt would chain smoke; after taking Tom's order Matt would exchange a few words and say alright, you can go up and see Les. So while Matt and Bill Read sorted the order I went up the stairs past rows of Scott engines assembled out of Shipley parts, by Harry Langman all greased up with protective paper, and other interesting bits, to the gun shop.

Ward Guns made two gun types, a .410 breaking gun, I think it was called a Squirrel (broke in the middle, supposed to be popular with poachers) and top end of market brace of 12 bores. Les had really thick glasses, but the work he produced was phenomenal. He would chase the stocks by hand with pictures of pheasants, and hand rifle the barrels. One day he said "try these", there was a pair of 12 bores made for the boss of Standard Triumph, Lord Stokes. The flew to the shoulder, so well balanced, and looked absolutely brilliant. I still feel privileged to have known and watched them work, real craftsmen who could produce so much from so little. Such a far cry from the .303 and .22 school rifles.

Aerco Jig and Tool were toolmakers and made the dies for Austins and others. Of interest to me was the fact that they made the Vale-Onslow barrels, and all the dies for their Leader/Arrows.. There is no doubt in my mind they were rock solid engineers who did a fantastic job of keeping the Scott name alive.

One of the more pleasant tasks was to road test any bikes that came in. This particular day we had a two-speeder to test. I decided to show it off to my prospective father-in-law who owned a café in London Road. Eric was a former motorcyclist himself and I could see the brownie points ticking over nicely. There is a knack with two-speeders which is handed down from father to son, or should have been. The two-speeder, given the right circumstances, does acquire a third gear: reverse. A combination of the rearward facing kickstart, too much advance, a little too much tickle, and the engine fires all right, beware if it sounds different, sort of quieter, smoother; you dear boy are about to go backwards — in front of Eric — much red face. Eric, he just laughed, "seen that before" he said, so some of the brownie points remained.

All this time I'd been attending Derby Tech and managed to get the

qualification I wanted. The band had gone very well, too well really. We supported the big names from Pudsey down to Stratford, playing three nights a week. We were semi-pro, the other lads were pro (we've since found out that they were being ripped off very badly), our transport was a four litre Daimler ex-Surrey ambulance and was the envy of the other bands; they were bumbling round in beat up Bedfords, we had four coach seats and darkened windows, pre-selector gearbox and half a ton of concrete in the chassis. It would purr like a great big pussy cat and go round any island at a really good lick. We would play the gig, get back to the greasy spoon at 12-1.00 and meet up with the other bands, have a fry-up, play pin ball, listen to all the latest music and crawl back to bed 4-5-ish. Even at my young age this did take its toll. Tom really didn't like the band, and in retrospect he was right. He lever liked the state of my bench much either. He always 'played hell' — "you're OK at machining (Yorkshire speak for good), but your bench is a mess, you can't do good work on that". He was right, of course — now I play hell with our fitters and give them the same message. Same blank look comes back!

Towards my 21st birthday in 1963 a few major things happened, I got the engineering qualification I'd been studying for, and Tom came up to me, "Here is an alarm clock to get you up on time and this is a P45 to give to your new employer". A young Derby Scott rider, Derek Durose, got me an interview with the local SAAB dealers Coterrills.

A family firm run by father and mother and two sons, Maurice (cars) and Alan (machine shop). I was waiting to see Maurice when Alan came in, a real hard worker and motivator, and asked me what I wanted. He looked at his watch and said "follow me", I did for the next nine years. Sometimes as one door closes another opens and, as I was immediately to find out, my strict Victorian engineering training was going to stand me in very good stead, and I count my lucky stars it still does today.

**George.**

## SQUIRREL MASCOTS

I don't have a full collection of *Yowls* but think I have missed very few over the past 50-odd years and can't recall an article regarding squirrel mascots for our machines, in which case the following may be of interest to members.

Since first becoming involved with Scotts around 1957 when I purchased my original Flyer De Luxe, I have been collecting these little chaps, but only on a very casual basis. None are more than 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ " high.

I have never seen a model of a Flying Squirrel, only pictures, so if anyone does have one, then let's hear from them please. I should be delighted to be informed also about additional conventional examples which maybe I could add to my collection.

My photographic skills are more or less non-existent, so I've called upon the assistance of a professional.

*No. 1.* This is the 'Jewel in the Crown' of the models illustrated, an original, and purchased by Eric Cliffe, we believe from Scotts at Charlotte St. before the war. It came on a Clubman's Special which he sold to Nick Sloan. Nick has no suitable machine on which to mount it (chrome-plated, you see) and kindly donated it for my '49 Show Model. It will be fitted centrally behind the damper on the handlebars.

*No. 2.* This little fell has an 'ethereal' look to me, but I have seen