

perfectly installed system. Combine the factors with high chain speed, intermittent lubrication and a dirty environment there should be no surprise that chains get a hard time. For info if you were designing the chain system based on long life and using the 3 Speed primary chain as a reference size it would come out at a max r.p.m. of 5000 and max power transmission capability of 2.5 h.p. without even applying the de-rating factors. To say they operate slightly beyond their limit would be an understatement!

Richard Blackburn.

LONDON AND SOUTH EAST SECTION SECRETARY'S REPORT

Attendance at our Section meetings at the Fox and Hounds (a lovely country pub) has fluctuated between four and 15 members. We have a widely dispersed membership and some travel quite a distance to attend, which is always encouraging.

We are limited to what we can do at our meetings, as we don't have a room to ourselves, so it's mostly a case of 'noggin and natter' and a bit of 'wheeling and dealing' with parts and advice changing hands and a degree of gentle ribbing!

Individuals from our Section have supported or organised various events throughout the year ranging from Beaulieu, West Kent International, various Brooklands events, marshalling on the Pioneer Run, Southern Classic Bike Show, Real Classic Bike Show, Biggin Hill Air Fair etc.

In 2010 we won the best Club Stand at the West Kent International Show with the ever-helpful assistance of the North London Section with whom we combine for various events such as the South of England Real Classic Bike Show where one of our Scotts on display won the best 1946-59 award. So we do, do our bit to fly the flag. And on top of all that, we always have a very successful annual lunch organised by Les and Molly Scott.

Anyone who would like to come to our meetings will always be made welcome. Details in *Yowl*.

Dave Bushell.

THE SILK TRAIL (three wheeled) — Chapter four

The Cotterill Years

I followed Alan into the machine shop. After brief introductions he took a phone call, "got to go out, Matt will show you, set this crank in the grinding machine and have a go at the mains!" So I looked down at this, to my eyes enormous, Perkins Diesel crank, which I felt you could get 100 Scott cranks in and we craned it in. As luck would have it the mains were short stroke piston size, so measuring these was easy for me. We set it up, still no Alan. Matt encouraged me to have a go, he checked the first on, OK carry on. Finished the mains, I had been puzzling how you could do the big-ends. "You offset and block it, I'll show you. But you must clock it", so fairly quickly I got the hang, still no Alan. Might as well grind the big-ends. Eventually Alan came back in, looked at the empty machine, and then the finished polished crank on the bench. Matt's grin gave way, he looked at it, checked it over, turned to me, "you can run the crankshaft department" (sounds good, but I was the only one in it that day) but things were about to change, we soon found out where Alan had been.

During my time at AJ Cotterills, for we had now moved to a workshop in a narrow Derby street (not far from Wilfred Street) I picked up a lot more skills: line boring, cylinder boring (although I had done this at Tom's it was with a Delapena hone, alright for finishing, but very laborious if you take out anything more than a few thou) this time it was with a Van Norman borer, brought over in the war to machine the Merlin cylinders which were blind head. Re-metalled con-rods, broached the small ends.

Wendy and I sold the Greeves and the guitars and amps — I know all sacrilege, the guitar would now be worth a fair bit — all in a good cause, we bought a second hand two year old Mini. Oh, and a house, and got married.

Perfecta, at that time a local bedding manufacturer on the outskirts of Derby, had a transport department run by Big Walter. The boss owned a small fleet of veteran cars including a Quadricycle. Walter strolled in one day with a 1901 De Dion Bouton engine under his arm. Alan asked me to look and report — we got the job. We lathered the crankcases with resin, built them up and had new ones cast by a foundry in Ashbourne (the old ones looked more like the local Stilton Cheese. We made a new big-end pin and mainshafts, fitted seals to the plain bush mains (just done this on my trials GTP which was going very well), re-cut the piston ring grooves and fitted modern rings and valves. The old engines all featured cast iron pistons, Tom said Scotts brought ally ones in 1924. Anyway, we finished it, it looked a picture. Walter picked it up and fitted it. Couple of days later the phone rang, there is a problem. Followed the Quad last night at 40 m.p.h. (four times original) cylinder glowing in the dark, the problem is we can't stop it; what do you know about brakes — over to you, Walter. Soon after he gave me another challenge, this time a White & Poppe engine, which had four crankcase halves upper, and four lower bolted laterally with long bolts. The crank was pressed up and the cylinder bolted on top. Quite remarkable little engine (I've overhauled three of these).

I still went to Wilfred Street for tea and John Hartshorne said he was offered the loan of a Swift engine to go in his Sprint Special, would I be interested in mechanicing? — OK. So we went to Brian Wooley's sock factory in nearby Shepshed and there was a Swift engine, the 350 air-cooled Scott and 350 Greeves Oulton bits, an Aladdin's cave for me. I had seen the 350 bits at St. Marys Row in embryonic state and read in *MCN* the first few outings with Barry Scully it held the hill record at Barbon for a good few years.

John got the Swift going really well and it was totally reliable; it is such a shame that this project never went any further — as you will see later, it was not for want of trying on our part. Much as I enjoyed the mechanic bit, I was itching to have a go. Travelling to and from sprints gave John and me plenty of plotting time. I had recently built a 250cc GTP Velocette for trials which was going really well, so I was encouraged to have a go. We acquired a three-speed Super frame which Matt helped me to modify at work. Took the engine out of the grass tracker, put two six inch brakes on the front to offload the forks. The accent was on lightness for sprinting, so the oil tank was the fuel tank.

The first event was a Brooklands Reunion do where we were to go off in pairs. First time is always the worst, and with my habit of double checking everything the waiting time flew by and suddenly we

were called to the line. Then I got that feeling which still happens every time: “what am I doing this for”. I looked over at the reputed very quick Duggie, thinking I’ll be lucky to keep up with him. Flag drops, first gear, dropped the clutch, the Duggie got a good start and was away, but the little Scott just flew — passed the Duggie halfway — accelerating all the way to the finish line. A picture appeared in *MCN*. That really was the start of it all.

I’d read all about Clive Way’s exploits, especially the giant killing episode when Chris Williams flattened the modern opposition at Brands on his dope-burning Scott. The temptation became too much, with an offer from Ivan Rhodes to show me the way around we fettled up the bike, put a tank on it (very nice racing tank, don’t know where it originated, oil and petrol two T bar caps). Cadwell can get a bit sea misty at times, I lost Ivan on the second bend, but got round.

I really enjoyed the racing, but as an engineer I have to confess that I spent more time listening for noises instead of concentrating on the riding. This was rammed home one day when I got a good start and Dave LeCoq floated past me at the Gooseneck. What gear were you in? Just knocked it off a bit in top — I wasn’t even in that gear! Memories that stick out, funnily enough for me are the mechanical disasters. The first go at Mallory the flag dropped, the bend came up quick and the crankcase door blew off. Went back to the paddock on one, lot of condolences, but I had a smile on my face; fixing the ally straps was easy — getting a bike that quick another story. Going up the hill at Cadwell I heard a loud bang, looked down and thought, funny shouldn’t see pistons going up and down that fast — in fact shouldn’t see them at all. One day Chris was unavailable so I was taking the bike down to scrutineering, it’s a steep path, put the brake on, front wheel carried on, the engine hit the ground with a bang — steering column clean in two at the base (since found out it wasn’t that uncommon in their day). The finish of my racing exploits came at a twisty sprint at Curborough, near Burton. The first realisation I’d come off was the cones flipping up in the air and my leathers getting hot. What had actually happened was the back wheel nuts were loose, but I know during the week I’d crossed them off my check list. Then the penny dropped, at this time my middle son’s pals and their mums and dads would form queues at my front door, with parts of push bikes which Richard, my middle son, had dismembered and I had to take back and fix. He must have seen me swinging on my big ring spanner — possibly jumped up and down — but he got them loose. So, as business was demanding so much time and I couldn’t prepare the way I was accustomed to, this signalled the end.

There were some highlights of the riding, especially the meeting after the door had blown off. We went to Oulton, somehow I got stuck at the back of the grid, I had a word with a Velo rider and got on the outside lane, bearing in my mind my sprinting background, a quick start and we got up to 15th out of 46. Then a funny thing happened, I was passing people I shouldn’t pass. Daft as it sounds, I was embarrassed, eventually ending fourth, I think.

With Chris Williams in the saddle, if I prepared the bike properly he could slide it round every bend at Mallory, breathing down the neck of Mick Broom on his Triumph; sometimes I couldn’t bear to watch. He had confidence in my mechanicing, I had total confidence in his ability, the results showed this. His masterly demo at Shelsey Walsh was quite remarkable.

On a rare day when he wasn't available, I entered the vintage class at Darley Moor. The Morgan Club had a speed trap on the back straight, and we came in for a lot of ribbing from the local lads with their Suzukis and Yamahas. The results soon started coming in, with me on board we'd gone through at 102.3. In the second race Ivan had suffered a rare Velo malfunction, he went through at 101.4, so it wasn't a fluke. The modern bikes came in at 99.5 — an eerie silence descended. No more leg pulls. In between races Dave Midgelow was injecting a gas flow trace element into the tank when an old boy passed by "nitro eh — now I know your little secret" but, it's not — he'd gone shaking his head! We only ever ran on petrol, would have liked to see what dope did, but pennies were tight.

Now before anybody says anything I did not believe that I was the first Scott to clock 100 m.p.h. I met John Catchpole in the IoM (a hero of mine from the early days). I said I was sure he was the first, graciously he said, "but yours was timed" — so we shook hands on that.

Our last real Scott exploit was the Manx Grand Prix with Stuart Hicken, a Coalville lad who worked a bit for us. He and his mechanic took a Silk Scott and finished. I would love to say they won, but on the last two laps the Velo box lost second and third. It says a lot for a Scott engine if it did two laps with only bottom and top, especially round there.

Actually the Island, like the Peak District, where a lot of the Silk 700's development took place, is very similar. I had uprated Dad's two-speeder after much arm twisting. I really wasn't keen to do it, not so much the engine, but the cycle parts. It did (and still does), go very well, but you've still got to stop it. He came back about three weeks later, the 7" brake had bent the forks. Pate (Maurice) straightened them for him. He had quite a bit of fun on it after that.

But I'm jumping the gun. During the late sixties and early seventies, I held a job down at Cotterills, had acquired a family of three lads, and just for fun (?) made cranks and oil pumps, pistons etc. in my garage till three in the morning. Alan was very good to me and actually encouraged me. He called me in one day and said "look, I don't want to see you go, but why don't you give it a try for a few months, if it doesn't work out come back". He was a truly great inspiration to me and we would meet at trade dos around Derby an was genuinely interested in what we were doing.

So Tom and I got our heads together and we converted the stables/loft, installed three phase and 59 Wilfred Street was open for business. Ward Motors at the front for the two-speeders, and Silk Engineering at the back for everything else. We opened on the Monday, on Tuesday my part-time turner came in with a very long face, "haven't you heard, Rolls Royce has crashed?" In a town where every other worker was an RR employee this was serious. Fortunately, as it turned out, our work was global, certainly national, and we went from strength to strength. Maurice had joined me, I'd dragged him away from the local BSA dealer and we set out on a partnership which lasted until he retired. We never ever had a cross word, and if I was the get up and go, he was the steadying hand. The tales of the river bank could be endless, so we will have to try and pick some out. Because in 1972 we'd outgrown 59 Wilfred Street, we bought out the three-speed side of Tom's business and moved to a cotton drying shed in the Boars Head Mill in Darley Abbey.

George Silk.