



Welcome to the August edition of the Notts & Derby Section's Newsletter.

In this issue we have another tale of an owner being reunited with a motorcycle, the trials and tribulations of restoring motorcycles for customers and a story warning of the tribulations involved in buying a motorcycle. Plus the Barrie Sherras Memorial Run.

### Reunited.

Following on from the story of Mick Gather and the rediscovery of his CB250 in the June edition of the newsletter, here is a similar tale from Malc Sheppard.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Malcolm was racing in the Production class sponsored by Clarkes Motorcycles in Carlton, Nottingham.



Having seen him riding on the road, this was about the safest place for him at that time, though he has matured a great deal since then!

Clarkes provided him with a Velocette Thruxton which he raced for a while. Malc rode the bike to race tracks with girlfriend Sue (who later became his wife) on pillion along with Clarkes proprietor John Clarke and his wife on their Thruxton, then raced and rode back home.

A customer then bought Malc's racer and Clarkes ordered another bike for him. This second Thruxton ordered from the Velo factory turned out to be the last Thruxton to leave the factory as it was returned under warranty.

After the Velocette, Malc then rode Clarkes' Triumph 1969 Bonneville and he then tested a Kawasaki 500cc two-stroke triple. He never raced the Kawasaki as it would not stop.

After solo racing, he turned to sidecars to split the costs, having success at club then national level and then later, home international road racing. In thirteen years of racing, Malc never missed a day's work through injury.

He says "I like to think that all my risks were calculated, with some amount of luck!"



Many years later, a workmate told him that the person who had bought the original Thruxton had passed away and the bike was for sale. Malc decided that it would be good to ride his old bike again and arranged to buy it. He paid what he says was "a lot of money for the time" for a machine which was in quite a poor state as it hadn't



been ridden for about 25 years. In fact, when he got it home and dragged it out of the van (the tyres were both deflated), Sue told him that he was mad. I have known Malc since 1967 and he is a meticulous mechanic and very persevering. His work resulted in the bike in the first picture.

The second picture shows Malc receiving the prize for the bike most members would like to ride home at the 2019 Car Park Concours. Proof indeed of Malcolm's expertise.



**Malc posing for a newspaper after winning the Racing Fifty Club (now New Era) Sidecar Championship in 1975. The machine previously belonged to Chris Vincent.**

### What's on in September.

**The Duke William 'lunchtime' Classic Bike Meet**  
**12 noon Wednesday 1st September 2021**



**Church Street, Matlock DE4 3BZ tel: 01629 583111**

Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> September: Lunchtime Classic Bike meeting, 12.00 noon, Duke William, Church St, Matlock.

Saturday 11th September, from 09.00 Bakewell branch RBL centenary celebration.

Attractions, bands, motorcycles, stalls, drink and food stalls, hoping to have a WW1 Triumph despatch riders' bike, also a couple of 1920s Ridges, subject to the weather. (Mike likes to ride them so no trailer in)

Yorkshire Regimental band, pipes and drums as well as Leicester and Rutland bands

Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> September: Normous Newark

For those of you looking for a longer ride, there are lunchtime meetings every Thursday at Byards Leap Cafe near Cranwell Airfield on the Ancaster road just off the A17.

### Looking after the customer..

We have sometimes read, or heard, how a customer has, in their own opinion, had an unsatisfactory experience with a dealer/trader. If their claim is justified, one must sympathise, and hope the matter is resolved in their favour.

I like to pride myself that I have always given good service. If I ever got things wrong, I endeavoured to put things right without any further expense to a customer. When restoring, or working on an older bike, I often say that it does not matter how many test miles you do, an old bike can always go wrong on the next mile. I once had a customer's bike and, when completed, did my usual test ride to Burton and back. As the Robin hood was on the next weekend and the customer could not collect until the following week, I used his bike for a good test ride. After about fifty miles the gear lever broke. This was due to a previous owner's weld repair failing. The R51 could be ridden back to the start using the auxiliary hand lever. Not being anything due to me, I purchased a new repro lever which went on his bill.

I once did some work on the late Don Cameron's R65. Well, I say I, but much work was done by my assistant who is very familiar with these machines. When complete I asked how many hours were spent on the R65. The answer surprised me, but then not all jobs go to plan. Don was not happy, so I queried the hours spent. It turned out that he had included some time answering the phone when I

was not available. Naturally Dons bill was suitably amended.

Sometimes, though, it is the other way round and the customer “tries it on”. Fortunately, I have had very few such experiences, and you can count those on the fingers of one hand. Over twenty-five plus, years, I suppose that’s not a bad record. The following are those experiences. Three are easily laughed off.

In the following, any actual names, initials or references have been omitted to protect the guilty.

Many years ago, I tried to help a customer with a worn carburettor. This required some machining, which was proving troublesome. The customer, not unreasonably, wanted his bike on the road, so I offered the loan of a similar carb off one of my similar bikes. The offer was taken up. To enable me to do the machining was going to involve me in making some special tooling or purchasing such. But there was now no great hurry. After a very few weeks I had an irate phone call. The carburettor I had loaned, and which the customer had fitted himself, and had used satisfactorily up to that point, had fallen off, when he was miles from home.

**This, he claimed, to be my fault** and what was I going to do about it? My reply was to wait a little longer for me to complete the job; or I’ll have it back and he can have his part machined carb back; or purchase my carb at a part exchange price and I would keep his. After a couple of reminders, the second by recorded delivery, he took the second option. What happened after that, I have no idea.

I once worked on a bike, one of several, owned by a customer. A few months later, I was informed that some incorrect spec. spark plugs had been fitted by me when working on that bike. **These were plugs I do not stock.** The correct plugs were only a very few quid, so I sent correct replacements on to him. Why argue with a good customer over a very small amount? I can understand that parts had been swapped around between bikes, and the customer had lost track of what he had done. He was making his number one bike as good as it could have been made, by swapping around parts from all the bikes.

A few years back, I sold a very nice bike which I had purchased in. I knew there had been some very minor cosmetic damage repairs. These had been repaired to an extremely high standard, leaving just a few jobs to be completed. Subsequently, this was sold to, an apparently, very satisfied customer. Well over a year later, this bike

was advertised for sale, but did not sell. The customer must have wanted to sell quickly, so came up with a cunning plan. He found out that there had been an insurance claim in the past through, perhaps, his insurance company. He then contacts me to say I had repaired the “accident” damaged bike and had not told him of the damage and repairs. He should have asked his source of information, what the damage was! Perhaps he did. It was only a minor fairing scrape, and the whole fairing had been re-finished to an extremely high standard. He wanted his money back, after well over a trouble-free year and many happy miles! I could have told him “Where to go”, but why give him, admittedly, unjustified grounds to complain? I offered to buy back the bike for his purchase price, less depreciation and “wear and tear”. This he accepted. Straight away, I then sold the bike on for a modest profit to a very satisfied customer, who still owns and uses this machine to this day.

Finally, the real humdinger CFH (customer from hell) experience! I once sold three incomplete machines, from my private collection to a customer. I subsequently gave several parts to him to help complete the machines. When he came back, yet again, I had no more of the wanted parts in my private collection or business, so told him all I could do was to get parts, which I would sell at a price that just covered my costs, i.e., no profit for me. Having helped as far as I possibly could, including parts that could have led to yet another bike plus spares, I naturally refused getting these parts for him FOC. This was followed by correspondence saying that if I did not pay for the required parts, CFH would start court proceedings. He was told, politely, he could go ahead. To this he replied, “So be it”, or words to that effect. He took me to the Small Claims Court, and his claim was thrown out. The judge easily saw through him, obviously understanding the word “incomplete”, which CFH did not. He lost, I won, “So be it”.

Believe it or not, CFH wrote in a Club Journal that, when a student in London in the 60’s, he studied Law. GCE perhaps? Fail maybe? On one occasion he came in on one cold, wet January Monday morning when there was a howling gale outside. His first remark was “I hope you are not putting oil down the drain”. He had, he claimed, just started work in the legal department of a utilities company. Possibly as an assistant or an office boy?

Overall, working for myself has been a very satisfying experience with very few unpleasant experiences. These can be laughed off, especially



after the event. The pleasant experiences considerably outweigh the unpleasant, but you'll never keep all of the people happy all of the time.

**John Lawes.**

### **The Barrie Sherras Memorial Run.**

On 29<sup>th</sup> July, Malcolm Sheppard led the Barrie Sherras Memorial Run; a tribute to one of our most respected members whom we lost last year. Barrie was very involved in trials for most of his life but in addition, he was a good friend, mentor and advisor to many of us. He was riding on the road until shortly before his death at the age of 87.



**Barrie at the start of a run in 2015.**

We also remembered his son, Bill, on the same run. We were lucky to have Barrie's wife, Gladys, and Bill's wife, Kate along with us. Another son, Bob, was riding with us and the third son, Brian, was having his own run at the same time in the USA!

Malcolm took us via Oakerthorpe, South Wingfield, Brackenfield, Ashover, Slack, Two Dales, Matlock and back to The George Inn George Inn, Ripley. The run had to be shortened as a rider tumbled at a junction in Oakerthorpe. His wife was shaken but finished the run in the sweeper car while she recovered.

### **You've got to hand it to Honda!**

Well, I wanted a nice boring, reliable, classic that started on the button to join in on VMCC runs and events as riding my modern Ducati always felt out of place among the classic Triumphs, BSA's et al. I have other old, slow, "interesting" bikes but they're not always guaranteed to get you home!

I've never owned a Honda and they have been around a while now and VMCC eligible of a certain age so I thought it will be reliable, cheap, have an electric start, and be plenty to choose from. After viewing a couple of 250s at a dealer near Rugely,

an eBay search eventually brought up 400 Superdream at a comparatively reasonable price and my offer of £250 below the asking price was quickly accepted by the seller. I know why now! The bike was over in Lincolnshire at Fleet near Spalding so a fair trek in the van to view and collect.

It was rust free, very clean, had new tyres, a new chain and new dampers. It started on the button with no funny noises and everything seemed to work.



I wasn't taxed or insured so didn't ride it out on the road and the seller seemed a decent sort of chap. I paid the man and loaded the bike in the van for the trip home.

All taxed and insured I took it out for a run that night and it went well if extremely boring as expected but, oh dear, after about five miles I could smell hot oil. Oil was puthering out from somewhere in the front of the engine below the cylinder head, it had covered the engine and my boots within just that few miles!

Returning gingerly home, I messaged the seller saying he had duped me and wrongly described the bike as there was no way he could have been riding it himself and not have been aware of the problem. Basically, his reply was "bought as-seen mate, it's 40 years old.. goodbye"! A parting shot was a threat of solicitors if I named him on any forum!

Lessons learned I guess and my only redress was eBay negative feedback. He seemed to deal in classic cars too so be aware of buying from anyone near Spalding!

I can rebuild a bike and take my two-stroke Villiers engines apart but a twin-cylinder, ohc four-stroke is not my thing so asking around for help a friend

introduced me to sidecar racer Tom Burchall who has a workshop unit near Sutton in Ashfield. Tom had a look and was amazed to find so much oil being pushed out somewhere from between the barrels but not until the engine was revved and crankcase pressure had built up hence the reason I hadn't experienced the leak until going a decent ride. Tom was racing that next week at Oulton but could possibly start work on it in two or three weeks' time.

I was relating the story to my good neighbour Alan Coxhead who himself has vintage bikes and also an engineering firm in Somercotes. Alan said "wheel it around, let's have a look at what's going on". Within the hour the tank was off, the cylinder head, rockers and barrels all set aside for inspection while I searched the internet for possible causes and diagrams. It seems it's not uncommon for the Superdream engines to suffer such oil leaks and several causes were put forward.

We had found two small machined slots from the cam-chain chamber into the cylinder bolt holes. Supposedly there to feed oil into the holes to help stop them seizing in the crankcase as they are open to the elements higher up the finning. To stop oil pushing up the side of the bolts and out of said opening there are sleeved rubber seals... only there weren't any! Problem found! Whoever had previously had the barrels off had not refitted these essential bits. Not only that, several of the bolts had been cut and welded to alter their length and should have had special copper washers.

Amazingly all the parts are available from David Silvers and with £125 worth of bolts, washers, seals and gaskets installed the engine is back together and running oil-tight. I diplomatically phoned Tom to explain we were sorted and I think he was secretly relieved not to have to tackle the job but what a nice guy he is.

I've since given the bike a good polish, fitted my universal screen and a power socket for the sat-nav. The twin-disc front brake wasn't doing its job so new pads have transformed the stopping ability. The old pads weren't worn but I think they had been soaked in oil blown out of the engine.

After at first feeling like dumping the thing in the nearest skip I now quite like this old Honda. It's steady, it's heavy and the suspension is a bit wooden but at last I won't be the odd one out in the vintage stakes now and look forward to a few runs

around the Peaks and maybe even into Nottinghamshire.

**Andrew Cooke.**

#### **FOR SALE:**

1987 Harris Matchless G80 494cc.  
E140 HRW  
2 owners, 2500 miles  
Silver in very good condition  
New tyres, no tax or MOT.  
£2000 ONO  
Derbyshire  
Please contact Tim Hall  
07740026475



**Genuine Lucas 6-volt ammeter 8-0-8 bought in error.** Brand new, never used, bought in error. £10. Bruce 07442168932.



#### **WANTED**

A new member is still looking for a **1930/40s Triumph Speed Twin** or something very similar. Please contact Peter Gibson 0115 9314362.

#### **CONTACT US:**

**Please** let me have any stories from the past, amusing or otherwise, concerning motorcycles, or

any technical information, rebuild stories, photos or news of events by replying to this email.

Let us know what you've been up to by emailing me at: [nottsandderbyvintageclub@outlook.com](mailto:nottsandderbyvintageclub@outlook.com)

Use the same address and format if you have any items or motorcycles for sale. Don't forget to include a phone number and a price.