

The Cotswold Section

Newsletter



Covid19 Issue 9 Lockdown week 10



ATS Mary Roberts, doing her thing for VE Day

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The purpose of this mailing is to occupy the thoughts of members of the motorcycling fraternity during the current crisis when non-essential riding might be deemed to be unlawful. Articles may be technical, thought provoking, humorous, accompanied by images, etc, but definitely about our hobby of motorcycling. Please feel free to share the contents with any other interested riders and send appropriate material to me at the above email address. Thanks!

From the B190

I have tried to assemble various articles based on what is happening in workshops; our cover image is a short piece from Mary Roberts about her new WD Matchless and her travails with starting it, Phil Henegan is seeking ideas for furthering his investigation into the loss of performance of his Humberette, Alastair Alexander shows us how he has resurrected an early Brampton saddle, Paul Whitehead from New Zealand is seeking ideas to sort out his BSA Round Tank, Ernie Lowinger describes his efforts to make a claim against insurers, which has the moral that we should be keeping notes on our regular maintenance of our machines in the absence of factory based dealers, Eric Bush reviews a police motorcycle escort group book, Gordon Doyle gives an account of his first motorcycle related job in the Forest of Dean, and Alan Yeoman has given us a word search puzzle. Attached, as a supplementary sheet is a scatter trial set of locations, centred on Evesham, for the local riders to plan and/or ride.

Reg Eyre KOB1

VE Day

I thought you might be interested to see my efforts for VE Day earlier this month.

I have a WD Matchless G3L and I am trying to get together information about female despatch riders in the ATS. I have started getting together the appropriate uniform – I have the steel helmet, the despatch riders coat and I am having a hat and a pair of the knickerbockers made for me as they are virtually impossible to get (they are like the land army ones but a different fabric).

I put a little display together outside my gate with two boards giving information about the ATS and about the G3L Matchless. I sat there most of the day repairing the leather waistcoat that I have and talking to any random people who went past. I did have to go shopping that day so what better to do then go on the Matchless in uniform? Luckily for me, the bike started 2nd kick outside the Co-op shop and first kick outside Boots. What more can I ask? (Unfortunately, I stopped the bike for a photo on the way home and it took LOADS of kicks to get going then!!!!!!!!!!).

I hope that we will be able to get back to VMCC events (and all our other hobbies) before too long.

Mary Roberts

Slippery Stuff Follow-up

I read with interest the item on oil by Chris Roberts in the recent publication, regarding aluminium piston expansion in cast iron cylinders causing clearance problems. I have been wrestling for some time with a 998cc v twin water-cooled engine in a 1914 Humberette, which fails to pull properly despite much attention to ignition, carburation, valves, etc. Many relatively expert people have examined and advised on the problem, but it remains unsolved. I have noticed that it also seems to overheat when running, but I put this down to working the engine too hard in an attempt to get it up very modest inclines, in second gear. It will not pull the car in third gear except downhill. The engine always seems to boil after about 20/30 minutes, but it does rely on thermal circulation to the radiator, so speed may be an issue. It is fitted with aluminium pistons, but I do not know whether they are NOS or of recent manufacture, though I suspect the former. The cylinders are single piece castings, and have probably been re-bored to take these pistons, but I have no information on this subject. In view of your considerable expertise on old engines, I would be very interested in your

opinion of a possible connection, and also possible methods of further investigation. Following my last email to you, today I ran a compression test on the Humberette engine, which gave me a reading of around 40 psi max on each cylinder versus a 'normal' reading of 70 psi. I have rebuilt the valve operating gear and had the valves sleeved and re-seated, so the problem seems to be in the piston/cylinder bore area. Next step is to remove the barrels again and check the piston/bore measurements. Your consideration and comments would be very appreciated, as I have run out of ideas.

Phil J Heneghan

Repairing a 1907 Brampton Saddle

The late John MacMillan used to host a fettling night in his garage, in Lanark, on a Wednesday night during the winter. There a small group of VMCC members practised their skills and talents on a range of early machines including Douglas, Sunbeam, BSA, Rudge, Victoria and a very early Peugeot. John was our splendid host, providing hot beverages, and the group used his garage facilities. Even the Dreadnought enjoyed the attentions of the Group. The standard of work was high as well as the enthusiasm and camaraderie. One of the machines they worked on was a 1907 Quadrant, which has been in the same family since new. I came across it quite by chance but that is for another story.

The 'fettlers', as they became known, got the Quadrant running and all that was required was a rebuild of the magneto. The saddle is more than likely to be the original. It is hard to see the imprint stamped on the saddle sides but I think it reads "Brampton New Saddle No.4 Birmingham". The leather is pretty good for its age but the nose was badly torn around some of the rivets and disaster was not far away. I thought a repair might be possible. I had some high quality tough leather, which is 1/16 inch thick and capable of being shaped a bit. The original rivets on the nosepiece were removed. The saddle got a good clean followed by a good dose of saddle soap and then buffed to get a good finish. It was then left to dry out on the surface. My good friend, Roel van Maarseveen, suggested that I could get the right size of rivets from another friend Geert de Boer. The rivets arrived safely from Holland and were perfect for the job. The rivet holes in the leather were split or widened so I used thin washers under the rivets of a slightly larger diameter to get more grip. I cut a piece of my saddle leather and clamped it into shape under the saddle nose. Having been left for a while I then used Bostic glue to adhere the new leather to the old and to tease the stretched and widened pieces roughly back to where they should be and clamped the whole plot in place and left the glue to dry.

I trimmed off the excess leather and started by punching a hole in the best survivor of the old rivet holes. I then worked my way round doing one rivet at a time to make sure I got everything in the right place. The leather surface got another liberal dose of saddle soap and a good buff. The washers under the rivets are hard to notice but were essential to get that extra grip. The job seems to have come together nicely and should have enough strength to survive usage. Only time will tell but it was worth the effort to save such a nice saddle. The owner lives in South Africa and was planning to come back this summer to try out the Quadrant. It will have to wait until Covid-19 settles down so most likely the fun will be had in 2021.

Alastair Alexander



Before and after images of the saddle

Problems with a BSA

I seem to be going wrong with my BSA Round Tank. To recap, I removed the magneto to attempt to stem the flow of oil into its innards along the spindle. Whilst at it, I took the carb apart and gave it a gentle blow with the airline to ensure the tiny passages were clear. This is not the original Amac carburettor but a later Amal, probably a 274 but more effective and not substantially different from all Amals before the Monobloc.

The ignition timing on this bike is a bit of a mystery as I can find nothing written down about it but it had worked quite nicely with the points opening on TDC on full retard. I was able to get the usual increase in power on advancing it but at the same time achieve decent slow running at idle on full retard. I reassembled it as best as I could but now it will only run very gutlessly. I took it out this morning but could not do better than bottom (of 2) gear. I've rechecked the timing and my TDC opening is still there but I can't get a slow running on full retard, in fact as I retard the engine it will falter and die. The other characteristic that I've not noticed before is that the carb sends a mist back out of the intake as it is running.

Can you offer any idea as to what's wrong? What is your experience with timing? Have you ever known an engine to work with the spark after TDC? Has anyone got any thoughts on the mist?

Paul Whitehead – New Zealand correspondent

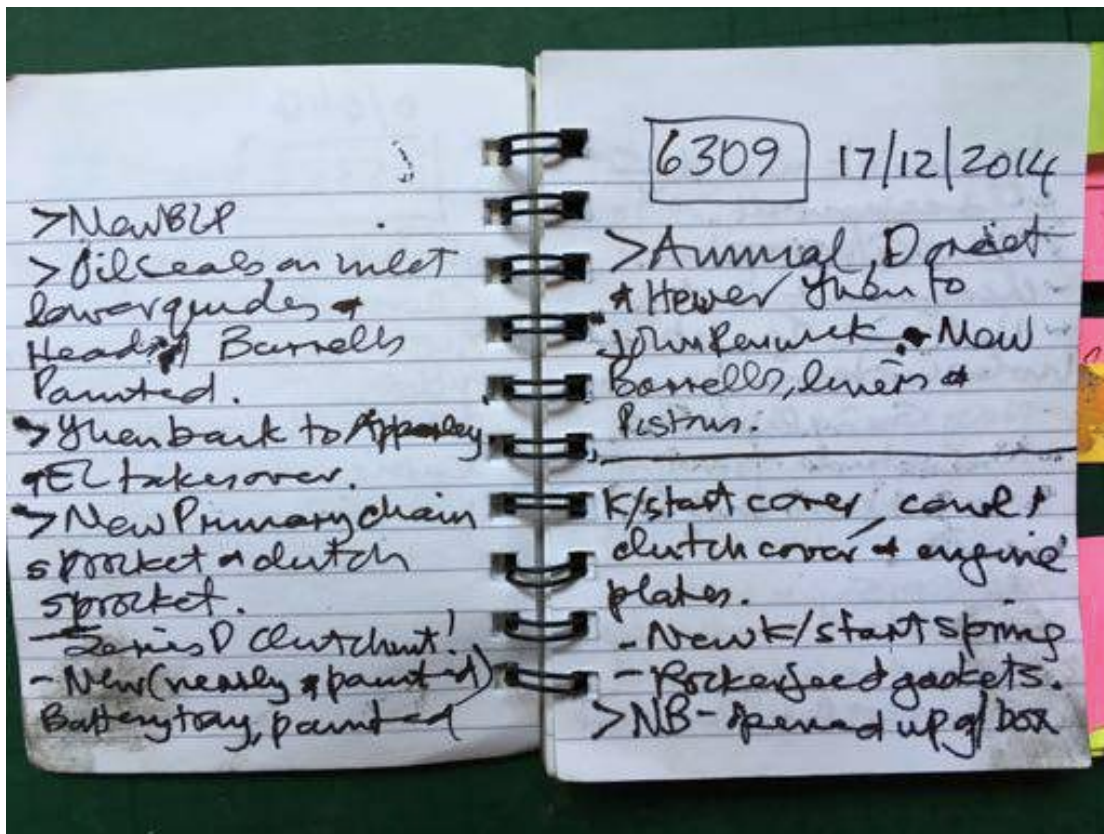
Regular Maintenance Checks

In 2017 Gill and I on our Black Shadows with John Heugel on his Honda Deauville set off for Harwich to catch the ferry on our way to the German rally. Gill's clutch started playing up and when we finally arrived in Harwich there was absolutely no grip. Stripping and re-assembly achieved no improvement, so we sent John on his way and called RAC for a trip home. The breakdown lorry arrived at midnight so I set off home on my bike in time to receive Gill and her bike on the lorry.

I eventually sorted the clutch out but not in time to get to the rally so, since the ferry ticket and pre-paid accommodation were not refundable, I put in a claim with the travel insurers for about £760.

The claim was rejected. The grounds were: that I could not produce evidence that the motorcycle had been properly serviced and maintained by a registered dealer/service agent. It took me 5 months to reply but I'm glad I did. Below is my response and I am showing it in the hope that riders of old bikes will not be disappointed as I nearly was.

I sent the scan of the logbook I have kept of every trip and every maintenance/repair operation.



Just one of the pages of the notebook. The insurers were good enough to meet my claim, waive the excess and add £150 compensation.

15 May 2018

To: Travel Claims.

Dear Sirs, In support of my contention that your rejection of my claim is erroneous please find attached the log I have kept of all the travel and maintenance activities on this motorcycle. I believe that this demonstrates adequately the care taken in maintenance of this motorcycle.

Yours faithfully

10 April 2018

Dear Sirs, I have received your letter of the 21 November 2017 regarding this claim and I must first apologise for the delay in replying to you. I have given the matter considerable thought and drawn the conclusion that I must dispute your decision to decline our claim. You are correct in your second paragraph when you state that maintenance of the vehicle is not something outside my control. I am entirely responsible for the maintenance of the vehicle – though technically it is the property of my wife. The reason for that is that the vehicle is - or was when it broke down - 66 years old. I am probably as qualified as anyone in the world to carry out maintenance on this vehicle since the manufacturer and registered dealers of this marque have long since disappeared. A testament to the quality of my work is that my wife and I, travelling on our Vincent Black Shadows, covered over 8000 miles last year touring Europe and the UK. Any motor vehicle is an electro-mechanical device governed by statistical laws that determine that any can suffer a breakdown at any time regardless of its age or quality of maintenance. Your decision means that many owners of historic and classic vehicles may be unable to insure their travels. This is because the manufacturers and registered dealers of most of the 300,000 or so (in UK alone) historic and classic vehicles no longer exist! Coming therefore to your third paragraph, you have no grounds for stating that the vehicle has not been serviced properly and maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. The vehicle was and is insured, taxed and legal and in a roadworthy condition and being used in accordance with the manufacturer's guidelines, as written some 70 years ago. It is available for your inspection. I

must therefore ask you to reconsider your decision and failing an acceptable (to me) response I will raise the matter with the Federation of British Historic Vehicle Clubs and the Ombudsman.
Yours very sincerely, by post and email, Ernie Lowinger 3 July 2018

“Dear Mr Lowinger

I am writing to update you regarding your claim.

Payments have now been put forward in settlement of this matter.

The total of the amounts paid are as follows:

£341.17 for the accommodation

£379.40 for the ferry

£150 compensation”

Following on from the comprehensive article on hand signals, here are a couple more that a Police motorcyclist may use:

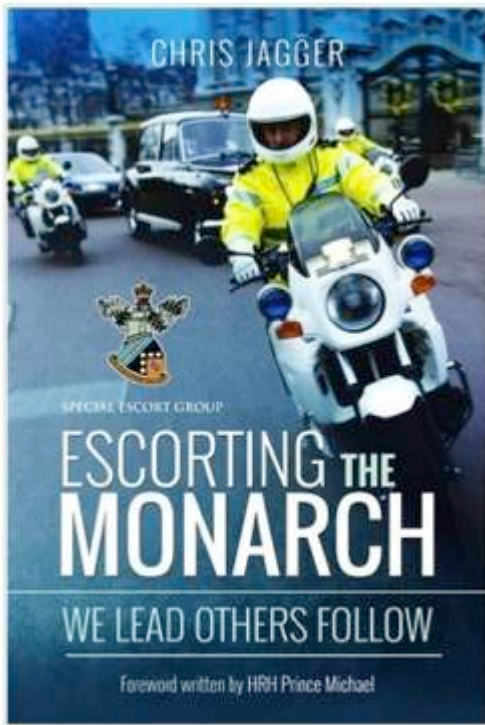
1. Left arm pointing left from the hip – I intend to turn left. (When riding into a low sunset the hand signal reinforces the indicator).
2. Right arm pointing right from the hip – I intend to turn right. (When riding into a low sunset the hand signal reinforces the indicator).
3. Right arm extended and waving slowly up and down – I intend to slow down.
4. Left arm pointing upwards, hand waving and pointing to left – We would like a word.

Escorting the Monarch by Chris Jagger

Escorting the Monarch is as close to an official history of the Metropolitan Police's 'Special Escort Group' (SEG) as one could hope for. You may have seen the team at work; as the combination of motorcycles and cars pass you by, they glide elegantly and seemingly effortlessly through busy traffic. Developing a dedicated and diligent team culture, they are masters of their trade. They hold a well-earned reputation for excellence amongst their peers; delivering their passengers (and cargo) on time, safely, in a great deal of style, and without fuss or mishap. Professional and precise in the execution of their operations, they are neither shaken nor stirred. Although the work of the SEG demands exquisitely high levels of presentation there is little room for gloss or glitter. They are charged to protect individuals and property assessed by government to need the highest possible levels of protection. From queens, kings, presidents and emperors, to priceless works of art, terrorists and high risk prisoners, the group escort them all. Written by the son of a retired SEG officer who himself served in the British Government's security and intelligence community, *Escorting the Monarch* is told, in part, through first hand stories and anecdotes gleaned from former officers of the group. The insights offered are unique, privileged and first of their kind. Chris Jagger unfolds a collection of fascinating and never before told stories built on high profile events, such as the funeral of Sir Winston Churchill, and the visit of Nelson Mandela. Now the SEG have honed their skills for over 6 decades. Through a carefully constructed description of a changing security and political environment across the decades, and an insightful analysis of the ingenuity of those who have served with the SEG, *Escorting the Monarch* explains the events that made the group who they are today.

One of Gloucestershire Constabulary riders is a topic of the book.

Eric Bush



My First Motorcycling Job

This tale is set in the winter of 1962/3, when I was a ‘as green as grass’ telegram boy, all of 16 years old. Back in those halcyon days, ten of us hooligans were based in King’s Square, Gloucester, where we delighted in racing round the square leaving showers of sparks from our leg shields as we cornered at maximum speed, (all of 20 mph). From Gloucester we covered a large area, including the Forest of Dean, the furthest reaches of which we covered by manning a detached post at Lydney, while on day release. However, when the worst of the arctic weather hit, our bikes were eventually withdrawn, and we were sent down from Gloucester in a mail van with a Postman Driver. This was because few postmen had the vaguest notion of the geography of the Forest, and many telegraph addresses were vague, to say the least!

One day, when the mercury had frozen in the thermometer, I found myself told to accompany Postman Driver McMillan to deliver a batch of telegrams to the Forest, and off we toddled in a brand-new Morris J4 van. The omens were bad from the start. The J4 was a new (prototype) van, and somehow had been fitted with a gearbox whose gear change was opposite to normal, that is to say that 1st gear was found where 4th usually is, and so on. McMillan was a notoriously loony driver, who could out-drive Mike Hawthorn any day of the week! Our journey through Highnam, Huntley, Longhope, Mitcheldean and Drybrook, en route to Cinderford, was accomplished in a series of kangaroo hops as McMillan sought to change gears in his usual way, only to find that the gears were not where he thought they ought to be, but somehow in the far reaches of the gearbox. I believe to this day that had it not been for three or four inches of snow and ice on the road, thus allowing the wheels to spin freely, he would have wrecked the box completely before we reached the Forest.

However, we eventually reached Cinderford, where we had to deliver a telegram to the Hilldene council estate, in the middle of town. Access to Hilldene was gained via a fairly steep and winding road; a left turn off the main road through the town, best taken with caution in good conditions, let alone in snow. McMillan, post office cap down over his eyes like a Grenadier Guardsman, kept his revs screaming as he performed a racing slide into the entry road, ending ignominiously by drifting to the offside kerb, where he stalled. Having re-started his engine, he managed to get back into the ruts on the nearside, but now he had lost

momentum, and the van covered only a few yards before the wheels began to slip. “Quick, lad, jump out and push!” said McMillan, so I heaved the sliding door, (another novelty!) open, and put my shoulder to the back of the van. There was no noticeable effect, except to cover me in dirty ice from the churning wheels, and just as I was about to give up, McMillan joined me behind the van. I stared at him with my mouth open as I struggled to understand what was happening. “Who’s driving the van, Mac?” I asked. “Oh, don’t worry, lad, old army trick, I’ve wedged the throttle with a mailbag! When she starts to move, I’ll jump back in and off we go,” grinned Mac.

Well she started to go, with her wheels held by the rutted ice and snow, off she went into Hildene, quicker than we could run in our wellingtons on the snow and ice! McMillan was extremely fortunate that there was a little bend in the road where he could cut across the snowy grass, and throw himself headfirst through the door. It took several minutes before we were able to draw breath without gasping, and several more before we could compose ourselves sufficiently to get on with the job in hand.

I was happy to get back to Gloucester in one piece, and never again volunteered to guide a driver around the forest. I was happier on the bike, even though our gauntlets froze so stiff that one couldn’t move the fingers!

Gordon Doyle

Eric Bush has sent us a photograph of his newly acquired 1928 Sunbeam



(You appear to need an engine?)

Word search Puzzle, (with answers next week)

M	A	S	S	E	Y	E	L	L	I	H	G	N	I	S	I	R	N	U	S
A	H	E	N	L	E	Y	F	H	W	R	E	E	N	I	T	U	R	C	S
K	Y	N	O	C	H	J	A	P	R	E	M	I	E	R	G	U	M	E	E
E	N	O	H	R	T	E	E	M	O	N	G	S	A	R	O	L	E	A	L
S	O	S	I	R	O	U	S	U	N	E	H	E	G	R	A	L	P	A	R
U	S	U	A	G	G	E	C	I	N	D	I	A	N	T	L	L	I	O	E
R	L	D	H	E	C	B	L	R	O	V	E	R	I	O	U	R	U	P	E
E	I	O	O	E	A	A	U	T	O	J	U	M	B	L	E	T	A	S	P
Y	N	T	O	S	T	S	H	E	L	D	O	N	O	P	E	A	W	U	Y
O	G	O	S	H	E	N	D	E	R	S	O	N	M	C	F	B	A	N	A
U	E	T	E	H	C	O	R	A	H	E	R	I	A	R	I	E	L	B	L
S	R	T	M	A	R	S	H	A	L	E	W	R	S	E	M	A	J	E	D
I	R	A	C	A	R	E	N	W	U	E	D	M	I	N	E	R	V	A	N
G	E	L	I	N	O	T	R	O	N	I	N	T	H	R	D	I	L	M	I
N	X	A	D	I	R	E	F	O	T	P	R	I	C	I	S	I	O	N	R
O	T	T	O	C	L	A	C	L	I	Y	R	B	S	A	C	A	C	U	G
F	M	C	E	V	O	Y	E	E	M	V	A	M	E	T	O	N	Y	L	C
F	R	E	R	A	F	F	D	R	E	M	Y	R	R	U	T	L	A	E	S
N	O	T	O	U	B	N	O	I	D	E	D	E	D	N	T	P	O	P	E
T	U	N	D	A	R	D	S	N	O	I	N	O	S	Y	A	D	L	L	A