

Good Vibrations

JULY 2011



Slippery like a fish. The front brake is empty to save weight but the massive hub offers an aerodynamic edge. A solid wheel would be quicker but is against the class rules so this is as near as Tom can get to one whilst keeping the scrutiners happy. A world record is all about the details - and nerve, lots of nerve.

ALL BRITISH FIELD MEET, Van Dusen



The ABFM is always a good day out, and no wonder, just look at this fine body of work. Even the rain couldn't put the damper on things. Several BMOC members won awards for their engineering skills and many endured the conditions to share their restoration experiences with the very knowledgeable crowd that this event attracts.



photo: Alan Comfort

Our thanks to Mark Bird and the OK chapter for their generous support of this year's camp-out. Bill Sarjeant put in many hours and much effort in putting it all together. Thanks also to John Farguson, Allan Larson, Wayne Dowler, Ian Clement and George Pitman who, after many man hours, actually tracked down our *chef de jour*, Marty Lewis, and Dave Bartle for his great photos. Good job guys and thanks to all.



photo: Alan Comfort

And this, my friends, is what it was all about. A carnivore's rapture if ever there was one. Since the capture of fire, we, as a species, have worked over the eons to this rather tasty end. Not half bad.

2011 EXECUTIVE

PRESIDENT	
Nigel Spaxman	604 273 7736 nigel@hydracore.com
VICE-PRESIDENT	
Wayne Dowler	604 921 9788 dccorp@shaw.ca
SECRETARY	hillog@shaw.ca
Ron Hill	604 980 1688
TREASURER	
Ian Bardsley	604 941 8164 ian_bardsley@telus.net
REVIEW COMMITTEE	
Ken Campbell	604 339 9313 kencamp1@telus.net
Alan Comfort	604 431 0553 alan.comfort@gmail.com
Peter Dent	604 946 3132 p.dent@dccnet.com
Jack Oakey	604 986 7265 jack.oakey@shaw.ca
Dave Woolley	604 298 6775 caferacer@shaw.ca
RIDES CAPTAIN	
Geoff May	604 574 1605 maynorton001@shaw.ca
BCCOM/AIM REP	
Al Greaves	604 886 3600 smokeybike@dccnet.com
GOOD VIBRATIONS	
Peter Dent	604 946 3132 p.dent@dccnet.com

Fine print

The West Coast British Motorcycle Owners Club (aka BMOC) is a registered not for profit society dedicated to the preservation, restoration and use of British motorcycles. Our newsletter, Good Vibrations, is published sporadically and is intended to inform and entertain our members. Articles appearing in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the BMOC. Technical and other information contained in this newsletter should be treated with a measure of common sense, as we cannot test or vouch for every word written

Article Submission

We welcome all contributions from our members. Want ads and For Sale ads are free to members and non-members. Ads must be limited to motorcycles or related items. For Sale ads are printed with the good faith that the seller's description of the goods is fair and accurate. BMOC assumes no responsibility for the accuracy of the advertisements.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Nigel Spaxman

My motorcycling interest does not involve common sense. Maybe motorcycles do get good gas mileage, and they are economical, but we use them to make trips that are unnecessary except for the pleasure of riding. The reasons for buying a motorcycle are more to do with emotions than practicality. This is somehow the reason why motorcycles are a vehicle for adventure.

The best days on a motorcycle don't have to do with careful planning. You don't have to be trying to get anywhere. You just go.

Four of us from the British Motorcycle owners club, had one of those perfect unplanned days on the way home from the Isle of Lamb campout this year. After a nice Saturday that didn't end way too late or involve way too much drinking I woke up ready for a nice day of riding. I thought I might take the ferry back to Swartz Bay and then ride up the island to Nanaimo on the way home. Also there were some suggestions from Robbie Richter that we might ride around Salt Spring a bit. After sleeping in a bit late and taking too long for breakfast we realized that we only had about 10 minutes to get to the ferry. Robbie was awol. If we missed it we would have to wait about another two hours, so then the plan changed. You have to be flexible. Niels had arrived late the night before and had probably been up very late drinking Scotch with Alan Lawson so it seemed he was not going to participate in my adventures this day. Dave Charney mentioned that the ferry was leaving from Vesuvius in about half an hour so Bernt, Connie, John, Peter, Allyson and I rode off with Dave for the ferry. On the way there I made a new plan that we would ride south down from Crofton to Swartz Bay and perhaps partly re trace a ride I had done in about 1995, although I only had a very rough idea about that route. On the Ferry Dave told us about some of the routes we should take and said he would lead us on the first part.

So after getting off the ferry, John Parsons, Peter Dent, and I followed Dave South, Bernd and Connie headed north to Nanaimo. The roads on that part of the island are very pleasant. For some reason the whole area seems like it belongs more in the 1970s than the 2010s. It is just the layout of the roads, the corner stores, and the farms and schools. That makes it perfect for a machine like a 1971 Triumph. That is the machine that both John and I were riding. He has a Tiger and I have a Bonneville. Peter of course was riding the most fantastically developed special in British Columbia, his Impfield. We tried to keep off the Malahat highway because we knew it would be busy, so we wound our way first through Cowichan Bay, then Cobble Hill and Shawnigan Lake. Then we had to join everyone else on the Malahat for a short distance. We exited the highway as Dave had instructed us to at Goldstream Park. We began to follow a very windy single lane road up the mountain. It seemed like it must be the wrong road, but it had the right name,

Cover Photo: Tom Mellor's Trident engined record breaker at the ABFM, Van Dusen

Next Event: NORTON EMPIRE RALLY: CATSKILL NEW YORK, JULY 18-23, 2011



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Peter Dent

My next door neighbour, a very nice man I have to say, can sometimes be seen puttering around his garden with a tee shirt that boldly proclaims: "Real men don't read instructions". An interesting postulation; and he is not alone in this belief. As far as I can ascertain there is no proven medical link between the reading of instructions and any modulation in testosterone levels but, and this should be noted well, *neither has it been disproved*. There is, moreover, a growing body of circumstantial evidence that gives not inconsiderable weight to my neighbour's argument. Personally, for what it's worth, I generally find that instructions only add to the confusion and I only read them as a last resort; I have an assortment of scars and minor flesh wounds as evidence of this long held belief. But wait, I'm getting ahead of myself; let me start at the beginning.

The beginning, in this case, was Geoff's All British Ride held on a grey Sunday morning in May. We convened at the Coast and Country Diner in Cloverdale where one can be served a cowpoke sized portion of your favourite breakfast fare. That's how you start an All British ride on a brisk spring day: cold fighting calories and lots of 'em. So, you could order up a British style breakfast to go with your Anglo Saxon bike, and look, what luck, we have British style weather to boot. This was all touchingly authentic stuff.

Undeterred by such climatic setbacks, it was five bikes that rode gallantly out into the cloud draped hills of the Fraser Valley. The further we embedded ourselves in the lush greenery and country lanes that it is our good fortune to call our back yard, the drier the conditions became. By the time we wended our way, as only Geoff knows how, to Majuba Hill and the winding roads around Cultus Lake, the roads were thankfully dry and we could thread some winding asphalt under the tyres with the gusto that these bike were made for. We pretty much had the place to ourselves what's more; try that route on a sunny day and it will be chockablock with dawdling day trippers. As it was, we were moving right along.

We were getting well into this gusto threading thing when, on the side of the road, we saw an official looking placard that had been set up for all to see. The first



Finnlayson Arm Road. It was too much fun going up and down and around all those bends in second and third gear to worry if the road actually went anywhere. I think this road is only about 3 kms long but it must have been one of my favorite roads ever! Then the road ended. I stopped at the junction with another road and rather randomly decided to turn left. Before accelerating away I looked over at Peter as he stopped and observed an ear to ear grin. I am sure my face looked the same. We headed along this next road a short distance and then we were presented with a choice. This time it was pretty obvious which way to go. We were presented with Millstream Lake Road, the first sign said Local Traffic Only, the next one promised 6km of winding single lane road! So off we went; the worst thing that could happen was we would have to turn around and come back. What an amazing road, even better than Finnlayson Arm Road. The road winds up and down through a rain forest. The edges of the road were pine needles. The pavement was smooth and clean. About half way along the road we came upon someone with a leaf blower, blowing away the pine needles so we could have a clean road! The road ended a bit too soon and we were all giddy from the pure enjoyment of the riding we had experienced. Then we headed mostly North over West Saanich Road towards the ferry terminal. We arrived at the ferry, we had no idea what time it was or when the ferry would leave. It turned out we didn't even have time to turn off our engines before riding straight onto the ferry with Alan Lowson and Neils who had taken the ferry straight from Salt Spring. It is not possible to plan a day like this.

Nigel.

Upcoming Shows - Member Alert

Heritage Classic

Remember the Heritage Classic Show at Waterfront Park in North Vancouver is Saturday August 20/2011.

All BSA, Triumph, Norton, Matchless, Velocette, Vincent, Ariel, Fanny B's, Royal Enfield or any other British bike welcome.

Show your iron and view the cars and bikes. This year the show is open to all British manufactured cars.

Crescent Beach Collector Car and Bike Invitational

Your BMOC Show Committee has been busy securing bikes for this prestigious show. We have approximately 10 of the 14 bike committed at this time and expect a full complement within the next week. Some very interesting entrants will be on view including 2 Brough's, 2 well traveled Nortons, some Italian flavour, some iconic Japanese bikes and a smattering from American, Canadian and English manufactures.

All this is in addition to the over 70 beautiful automobiles that will be attending.

The date is Saturday September 3/2011 and is to be held at Blackie Spit on Crescent Beach in beautiful White Rock.

Alan Comfort

When I awoke at 6:00 AM for the Saturday morning departure for the Isle of Lamb TT on Saltspring Island on June 25, 2011 it was raining heavily in Vancouver. I gathered my camping gear and tied it on the back of the '38 Velocette hoping in vain that the sun would emerge before my target 7:00 AM departure. It was not to be, so I donned my rain suit and headed for the Horseshoe Bay ferry terminal in the rain. After my usual stops for gas and cash I was on the road in earnest by 7:30; plenty of time to catch the 8:30 ferry to Nanaimo. Expecting heavier rain on the north shore, I was pleasantly surprised to find that the rain eased up as I approached Horseshoe Bay. It let up to a light drizzle by the time I passed through the ticket booth and there was an encouraging brightness on the western horizon.

No BMOC members were to be found in the bike line up. Did I get the wrong weekend? No, maybe it was too wet and too early for some riders. By the time the ferry landed at Departure Bay the rain had stopped and I disembarked the ferry with my rain gear stowed. After a pleasant ride through the back roads of Cedar and Chemainus, I arrived at Crofton in full sunshine just in time to see the ferry depart for Vesuvius. That left me with plenty of time to do a tour of the old schoolhouse museum. There were lots of fascinating old artifacts that reminded me of my childhood: kind of frightening to realize that the objects that I grew up with are old enough for a museum display.

As I wandered about the museum grounds I heard the familiar sound of a British twin pull into the ferry lineup. It was none other than Mike Taylor from Duncan on his well-preserved Norton Commando. A short ride from Vesuvius to the Booth Canal Road campsite and we were soon amongst familiar faces. Riding into a rally on a pre-war British single always gets a few thumbs up. After a warm welcome from old friends, some of whom I only see at the Saltspring event, it was time to pitch the tent and get things organized for sleeping.

The next order of business is a trip to Ganges for some lunch and a stock of liquid refreshments for the evening's entertainment. My favorite lunch stop is the Saltspring Hotel, which has patio tables that offer a view of all the incoming motorbikes. Mike Taylor joined me for this entertainment and we were treated to a most excellent bowl of seafood chowder served by an even more excellent young lass, and we got to see all the Nortons and Triumphs roll through town. Not a BSA to be seen. Bastards must've stopped again. Panniers filled with containers of suitable amber liquids, we head back to the campsite where there are considerably more bikes and tents than were present at our earlier arrival. But more importantly, there is an old oil tank on wheels that has had its top cut and hinged with a bicycle wheel cum rotisserie and a merry wood fire burning in its belly with two spring lambs turning on the spit. This will be our dinner in a few hours.

words were emblazoned in fire engine red: 'road flooded' it clearly stated. There followed, underneath that brazen declaration, a script of some sort that looked suspiciously like 'instructions'. Well, I don't have to tell you what we thought about stopping to read *those*. There must be something about piloting massive chunks of booming Anglo Saxon steel through this, surely God's country, that somehow raises the testosterone level to the point where instructions are so blithely, nay, *contemptuously*, disregarded.

We thundered on with nary a backward glance and I was beginning to wonder where my neighbour had got his tee shirt from.

At least, that is, until I saw the other bikes stopped up ahead. The road was no longer visible. In its stead a vast expanse of water stretched out before us. If you looked carefully you could see the centre yellow line leading out into it, almost as far as the road that emerged once again on the far side. *Almost*, but not quite. At a critical point, reflection had us confused as to what depths or washouts lay in wait. The water was remarkably clear too, again confusing its depth.

We pondered our next move, but we didn't have to wait long. It was Bob Wheeler who proved to be the bravest of us as he engaged a gear and calmly slipped his Interceptor into the icy waters.

We watched with bated breath as he forged across the watery void, a bow wave of flood water gushed from his wheels and great plumes of steam wafted from his cooling fins. But Bob preps his motors well and despite the dousing, the Enfield thumped its merry way clean across to the other side. Give that man a tee shirt, you know what to put on it.

One by one we followed Bob's example. New member John Parsons who showed up on a nicely turned out 650 Tiger got his camera phone out to record my personal crossing as you see it here.

It turned out that we all had waterproof ignition systems so we could all swap wise cracks with some satisfaction sure in the knowledge that the instructions had been left both redundant and ignored. My neighbour would approve.

Alas, the weather steadily degenerated after that excitement. We stuck to the programme but with rain gear slowly abandoning us we were glad that Geoff had picked out a great place to eat at Mission Hills where we could warm up and reminisce on what was a great day out. There was much to reminisce about and that is what makes days like this particular All British Ride so rewarding.

My thanks of course to Geoff and Sue May for putting it together but also to Bob, Bernd, John and Bevin for their company most excellent. It could so easily have been a right miserable day out but thanks to all of the above, it was as good a ride as I have had in a long time.



photo: John Parsons

The rest of the afternoon is spent admiring bikes, telling lies, converting malted barley to uric acid and watching interesting vehicles come and go. I was particularly struck when a 1926 Model T Ford rolled into camp immediately followed by a Symba 100; a modern rendition of the Honda 50 Cub. If a VW Beetle had rolled in, then we would have had examples of the three highest production vehicles in the world. The Honda Cub started production in 1958 and more than 60 million have been built to date. There were 15 million Model T Fords produced between 1908 and 1927 and VW produced 21 million Beetles between 1938 and 2003. There is no doubt that these are the most influential motor vehicles in history. But I digress, so back to the Saltspring Island event. Henry generously took all those who were interested for a ride through Ganges in the Model T. I must say that this is a wonderfully simple vehicle that is well suited for the roads on Saltspring, and all those who had a ride came back smiling. Thank you Henry!

By 6:00, dinner was served. Generous portions of lamb accompanied by the obligatory mint jelly and six choices of salad left everyone amply fed. We all settled in around the campfire for a very relaxed evening.

Local resident Dave Bartle wandered through the campsite taking pictures of all the bikes. He then returned later in the afternoon and left high quality prints on the seats of all the bikes he photographed Thank you Dave, a most kind and generous gesture!

The Okanagan boys were up at dawn and headed for home early, while the rest of us loafed about camp drinking coffee and telling more lies. Then it was off to Dagwood's Restaurant for breakfast and a short ride to the Fulford ferry terminal. I suggested to Steve Gurry that we swap bikes for the ride across Saltspring Island. Riding the BMW GS behind Steve on the Velocette, I realized how far motorcycles have evolved in 73 years. The Velo is tiny compared to modern cruisers, dual sports and sport bikes. The exhaust note is primitive, yet it was more than capable of pulling up the hills and maintaining the 90 km/hr speed limit. Like the Model T passengers, Steve was smiling when he parked the Velo. I think I see a pre-war thumper in his future.

A special thanks to Ian Clement for providing the facility, Allen Larsen for preparing the site, John Ferguson for holding the purse strings and Bill Sarjeant for organizing it all. There were, of course many others who quietly did their part in making this event possible. Thank you.

ALL BRITISH FIELD MEET at Van Dusen Gardens

Peter Dent

It was a long time ago now and not only have the details of the event been blurred by its passage, but, to make matters worse, the intervening years have also been partially filled with the consumption of jars of warm Bitter Ale, and so the exact details of what I saw that drizzle soaked day in Ireland have been diminished somewhat from the crystal clarity it once had: but make no mistake, the spirit of what I saw remains as fresh as the wind that swept across the emerald peat bogs that blustery summer's day.

I was on a trip from Dublin to - where was it now? If I had to guess I would have said Donegal but it really isn't important. I was on holiday over there, and it's every bit as beautiful as they say it is, although the roads that cut cords across the middle of the country are not the best part. They are in large part straight and flat; Depression era 'make-work' projects I had been told at the time, but these were not US Interstates. They were thin, tenuous ribbons of asphalt laid out on the boggy ground with walls and ditches on either side - and none too smooth either by the time I got there, forty odd years later. But they were long and they were straight; very long, very straight. I was on such a road all those years ago when I took a break in a lay-by that offered itself up just ahead.



I walked a few paces to stretch my legs and there, laid into a stone wall, a small plaque caught my attention. It was to commemorate the fact that a motorcyclist had once attempted a world land speed record on that very stretch of bleak and lonely, wall lined, Irish highway. I remember being struck by the bravery of this fellow - whoever he was. And that's the problem; I have no recollection of who he was, where he was from, nor do I recall the year of his ride nor, indeed whether he was successful in his endeavour. A brief search of the record books revealed that in 1930, in Cork - whether it was the town or the county was not specified - one Joseph Wright had indeed broken the 150 mph barrier on a 995 JAP engined OEC Temple. Perhaps it was him, perhaps it wasn't.

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Of course the flat-out boys have always been resourceful; well, they had to be. If you had the clout, back in the day of that brave Irish speedster, you could pull some strings and have an Autobahn or an Autostrada shut down for you to play on. There was sufficient public interest and flag waving national pride that the event would be recorded on flickering black and white Pathe Newsreels replete with scratchy, dramatic sound track and commentary.

Try that now, even if you could, and expect a fusillade of 'loss of income' lawsuits from ticked-off truckers. Times have changed.

You could freight your streamliner out to Lake Eyre in good ol' Aus. but that once dry lake now has a yachting club where Donald Campbell tripped the clocks all those years ago. Only a memorial marker remains. Climates have changed too.

Others attempted speed runs on the low tide sands at Pendine in Wales or Southport, Lancs. It was all very glamorous until someone died trying for one of these flat-out records. Pendine saw the very first fatality and the city fathers banned future attempts: public attitudes had also changed, it wasn't fun any more.

Henry Ford once took a land speed record on a frozen lake somewhere in the back woods of Wisconsin. Never mind wall lined skinny roads, crusty salt pans, barely stable tidal sand or compacted mud; let's try *ice!*



So the flat-out boys have been steadily retreating for the last hundred years; victims of many changes but mainly, victims of their own increasing speeds and the need for ever longer runways and stable surfaces. Their last stand is now high in the Utah and Nevada deserts. The absolute land speed record, Richard Nobles/Andy Green', is at Black Rock Nevada but for the bikes of course, it's at Bonneville Utah.

The Bonneville salt flats are worth visiting just for the geological phenomena that they are. A startlingly beautiful place; get there before sun-rise and watch the day dawn. Be alone for best results.

Fitting then, that what is arguably the most handsome bike ever made should be named for a place of such transcendent beauty; but it was not the looks of the place that appealed to the Triumph marketing people. They were taking advantage of a recent record run by a Triumph engined streamliner, and so was struck the greatest name ever written in chrome; *Triumph Bonneville*.

From the sun drenched starkness of Utah we move to the verdant gardens of Van Dusen. At this year's All British Field Meet the organizers had chosen the Triumph Bonneville as the featured marque. To depict how this, the most fabled of bike names came into being, the BMOC had on display Tom Mellor's Bonneville salt flat record breaking machine, and, standing close by, it's namesake, Robert Smith's road going Bonneville. As well as the machines we had a photo display showing Tom well



tucked into the fiberglass and flying across the Utah salt. Together, Wayne and Robert had furnished us with photos and a brief history of the Bonneville name and of the Triumph engined 'Texas Ceegar' streamliner record breaker that started it all, thus connecting the dots for the uninitiated of this very clever exhibit. Written also was a brief, though concise and sometimes painful history of the rise, fall, lock in, bail out, fall, rise, burn down to the ground, rise yet again, of Triumph's turbulent past.



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John Bettoner



Both machines were very nicely turned out and garnered plenty of attention as show-goers pored over them. The uniqueness of Tom's triple with it's Rolls Royce tow vehicle drew them in large numbers, and the Show Committee of Wayne, Ron, Dave and Alan have to be congratulated in coming up with a unique and fascinating display. We were treated to a glimpse inside Tom's motor the other week and to see the complete machine in all it's glory was very rewarding. The fit and finish of even the finest detail was simply astonishing.

I'd like to thank Tom for his generosity in lending us his record breaker, and indeed, everybody who brought machines along for the club display. Tom and Lyle with his Ariel in particular, stood with the patience of Job in the steady drizzle answering any and all questions that came their way. The weather wasn't the best which made making these contributions even more challenging but, believe me, it was very much appreciated - not only by your fellow club members but by a discerning crowd of show-goers who went away well satisfied with the day despite the inclement conditions.



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I was born in Sheffield, Yorkshire 1942, so I remember the after wartime stuff; the food rationing, no candy for kids. I still remember the first banana I saw, and ate. My father was in the Air Force as a dispatch driver and rider. He was stationed in Andover and had to take secret dispatches into London, usually on a motorcycle but sometimes in a small van with my mother (to be) along for the ride.

All this aside, my dad loved cars, so I got introduced into the automotive world. For a few years after the war ended we did not own a car, eventually my dad stepped up and bought a Ford Prefect, but I digress. I was fourteen years old when I saw an ad in a local newspaper from a motorcycle dealer in Sheffield, Yorkshire, for an old age pensioner, or similar, to clean and detail motorcycles for sale.

Well, I was not an OAP but a student with a keen interest in all things automotive, two or four wheels; so I applied for the Saturday job and got it. Pay was one pound a day, 20 shillings. Within the next couple of weeks I showed up on Saturday morning at 8.30 am to the new world of motorcycles.

There were a couple of old guys already working down in the basement of this place when I showed up bright eyed and bushy tailed on the appointed Saturday morning. I was greeted by these Old Farts who told me to dip the brush in the solvent and clean this chain, or brush off this oily crankcase from some Francis Barnett, BSA, Ariel, or just whatever was down there in these basement depths. So there I started my automotive passion, and much later, my career.

Time went by, I showed up on the bus on a Saturday, and got all those menial dirty jobs. The old guys really didn't like some young kid stepping on their patch but I did as I was told, collected my pound Sterling, and went home on the bus. After cleaning a bike I had to push it around the back lane to the showroom upstairs. One Saturday a customer asked me about a bike I was taking to the showroom. I must have sounded enthusiastic because he bought the bike and put a good word in for me. The next Saturday I showed up I was asked to work in the showroom and try and sell some bikes.....

There I was the next Saturday, about fifteen years of age, shirt, tie, jacket and not quite old enough for a drivers license, selling motorcycles, wow. I was totally in my element. The salesman said I could take a deposit on a bike and do a lay-away plan. So the customer would make a deposit then pay each week or month until he had enough for the minimum deposit necessary for financial hire-purchase. Once the deposit was paid, he signed the papers, I went to the tax office, transferred the ownership, familiarized him with the bike and off he went into the Lucas darkness, sometimes.

We bought the bikes in Pounds Sterling and sold them in Guineas, (i.e. one pound one shilling). This was a bit more up-market way of selling things; racehorses were sold in Guineas, so there was that air of exclusiveness that only this type of merchandising could bring and they were pretty successful at it. The company, Grays of Sheffield, had several branches around England, so if a BSA wasn't selling

it would be brought to a different branch of the dealership in the North, or conversely, a bike would be shipped to a dealer in the South. Sometimes when I arrived on a Saturday morning there would be a Volkswagen truck, i.e. a Volkswagen 1200 cc flatbed, with several British bikes on it ready for unloading down a plank, then we would get them ready for the showroom.

As my career progressed, I was now sixteen and ready to leave High School. I had a Saturday job, a girlfriend, (to whom I'm still happily married) and an application in to start an apprenticeship for the British Admiralty in gauge and toolmaking. This was another job I got and I signed on for a five year apprenticeship, which I did.

There I was learning mechanical engineering Monday to Friday and selling motorcycles on a Saturday. The good part was taking demonstration rides; the prospective purchaser would sit on the pillion seat as they were not allowed to actually be in control of the bike. I would go up some of the steepest hills and exclaim which gear I was in thus extolling the power of the machine. This would happen two or three times on a Saturday before taking some lunch - usually a cheese sandwich - and a trip to the tax office to register bikes to their new owners.

Life was good so I thought it was time to buy my first motorcycle; and there it was on Saturday, a Norton 16H had been traded in on a newer bike. The owners knew I was in the market for a first machine, so I was offered this bike with some small mark-up for five Guineas (about \$12.00). So there it was, my first bike; a girder fork, side valve, solid rear end, ex-army panniers, in all its glory!!!

Well I rode and kept this bike for a year or so as daily transportation until one Saturday I had the chance to buy a 350cc Velocette MAC for 69 Guineas. I convinced my Dad to sign the hire purchase form and then I was the proud owner of a 1953 Velocette MAC. The mechanics at the shop were not too happy for me as they didn't particularly like the vagaries of the Velocette clutch. I would hear nothing of this and purchased the machine. I must say things went really well for almost two years until the Vello stripped the fibre timing gear and left me stranded. The only other time it let me down was on the intake of some bad gasoline when I was coming home one Saturday night from the pub with the wife-to-be on the back. Things came to a halt which involved pushing the bike home some five miles. This time the culprit was bad gas; goopy stuff from the bottom of some service station's gas tank. Tank and carb cleaned and it was on the road again.

I was totally a happy teenager, two jobs, transportation, steady girlfriend and then I had to take a demonstration ride on the next Saturday on a Gold Flash combination motorcycle sidecar rig. I really think all motorcyclists should have a go on a Combination. It's just not what you expect; the things don't steer unless you manhandle the handlebars, turn like crazy and lean your weight on the side of the car - depending on which type of corner you were trying to take. On my first bend I was on the opposite side of the road mounting the sidewalk.

Then the three wheeler cars became more popular. Most bikers were reluctant to take their car drivers test and went from two wheeled to three wheeled transportation. This, to get the wife out of the elements, without taking an actual car test (4 wheels). Another plus - the road tax was far more on a car than any type of three wheel transportation, hence the popularity of Bond mini cars; (197cc engines, open the hood and kickstart it). Reliant three wheelers, Messerschmits and Morgan three wheelers were always popular, because they were basically a motorcycle anyway.





Things in the automotive world progressed to the Mini, and by the early 70's British bikes were being surpassed by the Japanese bikes. One by one the Brit bike manufactures folded to the relentless pursuit of the more reliable Japanese makes, of which we have all heard the story. The working man got a little more affluent or at least his credit got a little better, his better half was tired of getting wet and cold, so the natural progression was to the four wheeled variety.

As my story goes, I will be forever beholden to that foray into the motorcycle industry in the early 50's where I got the practical training in mechanical engineering combined with a second job in motorcycles. I got to ride a lot of the forgotten marques; Ariel, Vincent, Velocette, Douglas, Dot, Francis Barnett, Sunbeam, Panther, Royal Enfield and many more. We would start them up in the showroom and if they had wet-sumped, there would be clouds of blue smoke which nobody seemed to mind; we would also put in gas or purchase one gallon at a time, as all we could afford until next pay cheque (or cash in a small envelope). I own four motorcycles now in my sixties, two are Velocettes, not everybody's cup of tea, but therein lies the challenge; there really is a prescribed procedure to start these IOM, TT winning machines, and once you have, you're smitten. The bark of exhaust from a big single is something most riders should experience at least once.

I think most motorcyclists are more individualistic than proponents of most other sporting activities. I have never met guys that are in love with hockey, soccer, pro football, etc at the same time as they have a fascination with motorcycles, at least that's my experience.

Just recently it's been my pleasure to help form a motorcycle group on the North Shore for the over sixties. We meet every two weeks at a coffee shop, there are no dues, we don't care about the make of the machine; the idea is to promote the love of motorcycles and the camaraderie that this association brings. We are just getting into the riding season so it's time to do more riding than drinking coffee.

I would wish everyone out there with a yearning for the open road on two wheels to just do it. Wear good protective gear and go for it.

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AI "Smokey" Greaves

Day Seven We ate breakfast and continued on our way. We are now north of the Great Lakes where the Highway winds its way around picturesque lakes and evergreen trees and follows the lay of the land. There are very few really flat sections where the road can be wider so no shoulders to pull off and let traffic by. Jack tells me that he has to go, we ride a ways looking for some place to pull off. There's one, an opening on the side of the road that we ride into, that's strange, there's a bicycle leaned up against a stump pile and no one around! Hold on there's a car parked to the far left of the clearing, the passenger door is open and a guy is sitting on the seat. The drivers side door opens and an older man stands up and waves us over. We ride up and the driver has a liquor bottle in his hand and says "Have a drink" I decline. My attention is drawn to the young fellow on the passenger side, he is lightly dressed and yes, that's his bike. He says he left Long Beach on Vancouver Island a month and a half ago after dipping his front wheel in the Pacific and he is going to the Atlantic Ocean to dip his front wheel in it. Now this guy had nothing with him but a string bag with a loaf of bread and a jar of peanut butter to sustain himself. That he had set this task for himself was amazing considering the road he had to travel on. He had shorts and a pair of sandals on, no socks, his feet were all puffed up from the rain. I often wonder if he made it. We continued on our way stopping at the Terry Fox memorial out side of Thunder Bay, then into town to have a bite at the big "M" (another bit of history) When Port Arthur and Fort William were amalgamated to form Thunder Bay the residents were madder than hell already at each other so no one from either side of the river that separated them would go across the bridge to the other side.

So what they did was build TWO McDonalds, one on each side of the river! We ate and carried on into the night, We were going up a slight hill when the bike slowly came to a stop, engine still running! It never did that before, (that's what the farmer said when his cow died). I unscrewed the inspection plug on the primary cover, aha no primary chain in view! Took out my tools and opened the cover, there lay the chain, broken into three pieces! Jack said "Well I guess that's it" I replied "It's not over till it's over" So here we are in " the middle of nowhere", in the middle of the night, don't even know where we are. I decide to push the bike to a better location and wait till daylight. No sooner do we start when this Rancho style pickup towing a utility trailer goes by, turns around at the top of the hill and goes by us and turns around and comes to a stop. The driver asks what's wrong? I tell him and he and his two passengers get out and we load the bike into the pickup. He tells one of his passengers to ride in the back so Jack can ride in the cab. We drive to the nearest town, stop for a coffee and he tells me "I'm moving to another town so I will take you to the nearest town so you can get a chain. I had noticed that while he had the trailer full of stuff there was nothing in the pickup bed, he said the tires on the back are not too good so I didn't want to carry any weight there! (Now I don't know, dear reader if you believe in guardian angels or not, but read on) Now my bike and Jack and I have added weight. What's going to happen next, well of course we get a flat tire. We put on his only spare and carry on. What's next, well of course we get another flat, fortunately there's a pull-off to park in. The driver says "we'll wait till dawn and I'll hitch hike into town (where ever that is) and get some tires. Daylight arrives and he takes the two flats out to the side of the road and waits for a ride. Fat chance you think? Stay tuned for the next incredible chapter!

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