

## MY MOTOR CYCLING DAYS PART 4 By Charlie Brown (Jan 1979)

I could have choked the guy who sold me the Triton. I learnt in a roundabout way that it had a bent frame before I bought it. Others believed that the engine was set too high in the frame causing a gyroscopic effect, hence the difficulty in leaning it over. I enlisted Brian's help (the one with my old 350 NH) to drag the bent Triton into his back garden. He only- lived in the next block to where I kissed the lamp-post.

As luck would have it, Roy was still on the lookout for a feather-bed frame (refer episode two). I offered him the remains of mine in exchange for his T110 frame. He had the Norton frame checked and trued and I made part payment towards a pair of later model short Roadholder forks. I had had an offer of £25 for the T100 engine from Potts, the guy who had souped up Brian's 250 Honda. He owned a hot 500 Goldie which was reputed to chew up clutch plates at the rate of a set a month. He saw some potential in my 500 engine and reckoned it was a T100C model as it had square shaped alloy barrels. Knowing about this interest in my engine made me more determined to keep it so I set about fitting the T100 motor into Roy's 1959 T110 frame using his slickshift gearbox.

While without wheels my brother, George, requested me to look out for a machine for him. I located a pretty good 1954 650cc BSA Golden Flash, in original fawn colour, attached to a matching Watsonian Monaco Sports sidecar for £25. This appeared a damn good buy so I got it for him. This was ideal as George had only just got his learners which restricted him to 250 cc solo or unlimited sidecar. As R.A.F. rules strictly disallowed the ownership of motor cycles, I had charge of it until George could find a hideaway garage in a nearby town to the Halton R.A.F. base in Buckinghamshire.

I completed the engine transplant in the T110 frame which was just as well as George had found a secret home for the BSA. The Triumph had a short but hard life until major internal complications took over. I was returning home from work when a crunchy and disastrous sound coming from beneath me prompted me to cut the engine immediately.

My acquired wisdom (just age and experience I guess) and the ominous quality of the sound told me I should not attempt to ride the Triumph home as I did the Ariel when it exhibited the same gut problems.

I got my mate to use his van (that's what friends are for) and transported the stricken machine to the lock-up garage that Roy and I rented at East Ham. It was a good thing we rented that garage as it gave us a lockable area to do our work in. That's where the frame/engine swaps were made and where my Triumph was to be transformed into the fastest 500 of the area. But first, I stripped the engine down that evening to find that a 1/6d part had been the cause of so much damage. Triumphs used a small clip to hold the oil scavenge pipe to the wall of the crankcase and the screw holding this clip had fallen off, releasing the clip into orbit. The flying projectile

smashed the bottoms of both cylinder liners which protrude into the crankcase. The underside of the pistons and the alloy conrods were deeply gouged. I sadly left the remains in my garage and made my way home for tea knowing I was in for a long, hard and expensive rebuild. I was glad I had made the right decision not to ride the stricken bike.

It's marvellous how my luck runs, being without wheels is like being without legs. About, this time George asked me if I could. take the Beeza back, one of the R.A.F. guys had been killed while riding this 654 BSA Spitfire Mk 3 Special. A bike I'd love to own now and would top my list of most wanteds. BSA built them in 1965-66, I believe, and equipped them with over 10 to 1 pistons, a hot cam and twin GP's !! Getting back to the point, the R.A.F. was on the hunt for fellows with hidden bikes and things were-getting hot for George.

The Golden Flash was a very pleasant sidecar bike. It would do around 70 mph with a passenger, flat out. One of the Daves owned a Tiger 110 outfit and we had many speed and manoeuvrability skirmishes on our club runs. His bike was fractionally faster but I got my own back on the first 'Dragon Rally' I attended in 1965. He had bought on of the new 'fan type' of Stadium visors for use on the rally. On the many long straights he would allow me to overtake and then quite nonchalantly get past while I was flat out. On one occasion he did this and turned around to pull a face. The wind caught his fancy visor and blew it off. It landed on the road so I took careful aim and planted both wheels over it. In the meantime Dave made a flying 'U' turn to retrieve his visor. I saw him in the distance jumping up and down and shaking his fist. Needless to say, he did not speak to me all weekend.

Getting back to the Dragon (you must have heard of it), it's held on the coldest weekend of the year, the first week of February, at the foot of Mount Snowdon in North Wales. The ride takes you through Llanberis Pass and a lot of picturesque country but when the weather is mean, it most often is, it can get bitterly cold and treacherous. The Rally atmosphere is truly fantastic. When you ride in to the site you are met by a welcoming committee who show you to the check-in tent There you get a hot mug of beef and barley broth or coffee if you prefer and your Rally Badge and 'Dragon Songbook'. That songbook (I've still got one) contains words for 'bawdy bikie ballads' sung to the tune of popular songs. That evening at 7 pm there is an organised 'head-light parade' on the foothill roads of the mountain. It is something to see - like a glowing, growling motor cycle snake meandering its way around the mountain. On returning from the parade we collected around the 30 foot, organiser supplied bonfire and used our rally songbook to lend a little music to the Welsh countryside. The entrants came from far and wide, many from Germany, France and Italy, mainly on B M W s. Unfortunately we had to leave on the Sunday and so farewelled our new found friends.

The excitement began on our return journey. There were about 8 or 10 in our group with only Dave and I riding outfits. I cannot tell you of the events before my 'incident'

as I cannot remember it to this day. I was groggily waking up in this darkened space that I thought was my tent when I saw Eddie lying beside me (guess who was in the chair. He told me I had smashed the bike up. I said "Bullshit" but then I noticed this white clad figure in a corner and the sensation of moving. I then shut up and we duly arrived at the Litchfield hospital near Birmingham and I was not allowed to walk although I felt fine. So I got carried onto an examination table where a doctor checked for any broken bones, at the same time questioning me as to how far back I could remember in order to estimate the degree of amnesia and subsequent concussion. A nurse arrived with a wheelchair and ORDERED me to get into it when I said that I could walk. To my dismay I learnt that I was to be kept in for a week under observation whereas poor old Eddie was allowed home as pale and shaky as he was.....

(Next episode, my hospital experiences, bike retrieval, Eddie's dilemma and more biking....)