

MY MOTOR CYCLING DAYS PART 6 By Charlie Brown (May 1979)

(For new readers, Charlie has told of his boyhood in India and his early days in London, his trials and tribulations.

The Excelsior was definitely not my 'cup of tea' and served only to put me off two-strokes. It was adequate, however, until I could afford something bigger and better. Meanwhile the 1966 Dragon Rally was fast approaching and I did not fancy my chances on the Excelsior. "Mad Dave" with the Ariel Huntmaster (see part 2) was looking for a sidecar passenger eager to share expenses for the Rally. I jumped at the chance, much to my future regret.

We set off for North Wales to battle the rain, wind, sleet and snow on the Friday night and reached the campsite at Llanberis about 1100 am the next day. Besides braving the elements we overcame four partial engine seizures and a snapped rear chain. If I thought that lad was mad before I knew it then. Even after the first couple of seizures he persisted in giving it full bore.

My turn at the handlebars was quickly cut short as I was nursing the motor instead of buzzing it. The Rally itself was as good as ever, meeting old friends and making new ones. On the return trip we only managed about thirty miles flat out before the motor seized solid, even the two of us standing on the kick-start couldn't budge the piston, so we pushed it to the nearest pub and abandoned it in their back yard. We removed our gear and got the rest of our mates from the Club to take it home for us. Then we started the long hike back home. We walked for about three miles before getting a lift for ten, another long walk before our 'thumbing' eventually paid off. This time our driver was headed for Birmingham. This suited us just fine as I thought we might be able to afford the train fare to London. Unfortunately, although I had the fare, Dave did not and our combined monies was not enough. I suggested we catch a bus to the last service station before the M1 Motorway. At least there we had the chance of asking every motorist who filled up if they could take us to the other end of the motorway (London). My strategy paid off for us as the third motorist had enough room and was willing to take us. It was now pretty late at night and we arrived at the 'Busy Bee' all-night cafe on the North, Circular Road in the early hours of the morning. There we parted company with our driver and decided to thaw out with a hot coffee and a sit by the heaters.

We got another lift almost immediately at the roundabout. To my surprise it was a young lady driving one of those old Renaults, very much like a VW bug. I suspect she may have been one of those ladies who make pleasurable profit by night, just coming off duty.

We were glad of the lift that took us closer to home and next we got a short ride with a 'Truckie' in a semi (called Artics by the Poms for articulated lorry). The driver was a Sikh (Indian feller with a turban). This landed us only 3 miles from home so we decided to foot it the rest of the way, providing the unscrupulous Dave with the

opportunity of shortening the residents quota of fresh milk. I must confess I did not allow him to do this on his own. We arrived at Dave's place about 8.30 am and soon demolished his mother's hot breakfast, then fell asleep on his living-room floor.

I was glad to get back. to my Excelsior, even with its habitual stopping. One day the Dave with the T110 outfit asked me if I wanted to buy a bike dealer's 'pick-up' outfit which was a BSA B33 fitted with a long box sidecar suitable for transporting solos of any size, for £40. I said I didn't have that much money but he talked me into having half share as he'd run his T110 into the ground. That Beeza was quite fantastic and well maintained being fitted with a Gold Star cam and high compression piston, even the swept-back pipe and Goldie silencer. With the sidecar gearing it would pull like a train and had a fair top speed too.

Meanwhile my Triumph was ready to be assembled in the lock-up garage I shared with Roy at East Ham. I obtained a brand new crankshaft assembly on a special, from the Royal Enfield specialists, 'Gander and Gray', various bits from Eddie Grimstead Motorcycle and others. In all I had higher compression 9:1 pistons, an E3134 (road & track) inlet camshaft, new main bearings, camshaft bushes and valve guides. The barrels were re-sleeved and honed to suit the pistons. Most importantly, I drilled the crankcase to fit a bolt and nut and safely secure the oil scavenge tube clip which had caused me all this trouble (see part 4). I also employed some tips from 'Motor Cycle Mechanics'. The piston skirts were 'knife-edge', chamfered inwards to provide less resistance to the oil film and also more oil cooling at the gudgeon pin. The alloy con-rods were polished to a mirror finish but I'm not sure if the only benefit was easier crack detection or whether it also provided greater skin strength and less oil drag.

The Peak Districts' Rally, sometimes called the 'Pre-Elephant Rally' as it was a warm up for the Elephant, was now at hand. My half share bike was going so it was only natural that I entered and went too. The Triumph work was shelved for a while as we left one cold Friday evening in mid-November for the hills of Derbyshire. The rest of the Club benefitted from our giant side-box as we carried most of- the tents, sleeping bags etc. leaving a space at the back, 'a-la-sledge' for Dave or me depending on who was driving.

We had a trouble-free run, the Beeza not missing a beat, the early fall of snow that year made it all the more enjoyable as the first thing we did when we got there was unpack our frying pans and have an almighty snow fight. This soon got us warm and into the spirit of things. The weekend was spent nattering and exploring the hills.(Exhausting when on foot in the snow.) We had a fair few eggs left over so decided the sidecar passenger should use them on push-bike riders (through the spokes) and old dogs (we were so considerate to people!). The look and language from some cyclists as yolk and white splashed around their wheels!!

Once home I had only to put the finishing touches to the Tiger 100 and make sure everything ran. If you've ever tried to kick over a completely reconditioned motor you'll realize what a time I had (dealer bought machines are factory tested and run) . I had to move against a new bore and rings, besides all the new bearings and bushes, and when it came up to compression (9:1) I had no more oomph left. After struggling for quite a while I had to call for assistance from Roy who, with his 14 stone, should make the motor fire once or twice. When quite fatigued we decided to use his old Morris Oxford Pickup (ute to you) to tow the thing. Towing the bike did get it going, although with a few flat spots on the rear tyre but I couldn't keep the motor running for any length of time as it got decidedly hot in a matter of seconds. The start-stop-cool down technique was used at least a half a dozen times before I rode it the three miles home, even then I stopped half way for a cool down.

That first ride gave impressions of a beaut motor cycle when run-in. The exhaust note was just right with the Goldie pattern megaphones I fitted and throttle response was instant. I put in as many miles in as short a time as I could so that I could blast her out for top whack as soon as the odometer read 1,500 miles...

(Next issue sees Charlie on his way to Australia.)