

MY MOTOR CYCLING DAYS PART 7 By Charlie Brown (Jul 1979)

The motor showed-so much promise that I couldn't help modifying it further. More information was obtained from 'Motor Cycle Mechanics' for a twin carb modification giving the mechanical specification of my motor, i.e., jet sizes, needle sizes and slide cutaway numbers.

I made my own splayed and downdraughted twin carb manifold as the accessory ones available were parallel tubed without any downdraught. Luckily I was serving my apprenticeship in the Research and Development workshop of a large switch and electrical goods manufacturer. I had access to machines and materials to do the job. Besides the manifold, I made an alloy and perspex extension to one Amal float bowl: as the other carb. had no float bowl owing to lack of space. I also made my own brass main jets. As I didn't fancy the cost and bother of experimenting with several sizes of jet, I devised an ingenious way of obtaining the optimum size orifice. Bulgins, the firm I worked for, was situated right on the Barking by-pass (speed limit 50 mph). During my lunch break I'd take the Triumph out and warm it up down the road, then I'd take it flat out in first and second before hitting the cut-out button and pulling the clutch in at the same time. I would stop by the side of the road and read the plugs (from a racing 'technique' I'd read about). I then systematically opened up the main jets with number drills (little, tiny ones) till my plug colours were reading right. I soon got the title of 'Foreigner King' from my workmates, not because I'm a 'dago or wog' but because I spent so much illicit time doing 'foreign' jobs. My trademark 'Chasmodified' was neatly stamped on much of my work.

The Triumph odometer was reading nearly 1500 miles since the engine restoration; time for my 'what can she do' run. The venue chosen was the Barking by-pass having three lanes each way with over a mile between roundabouts, the time midnight, for safety from the law if nothing else. I took off from one round -about watched by my mate Roy, holding :the bike in every gear, over 90 in third and into top but missed the 'ton' as I had to slow down for the next round-about. I turned around and flat out in second, kissing the 'ton' in third and top took me to 104 before I had to slow down and stop to pick Roy up. We sneaked home, not daring to repeat the action as I reckon every motorised cop was converging on the place to the call of a pair of open 'Goldie pattern' megaphones. The feeling of satisfaction that night was fantastic'.

Now that I had a decent, fast and reliable machine my interest in the Excelsior and B33 outfit dwindled. I flogged the Excelsior to a friend for a mere £5 and -Dave, the owner of one half of the BSA, bought my share but not before I had used it to transport some broken, smashed and hacksawed Matchless frame and parts to the dump in exchange for an almost new Avon Dolphin fairing. The conditions for this strange trade by the 'Mad Dave' were that I must repaint the fairing. I nosed around and found out that 'mad Dave' and his brother had stolen an immaculate, fairinged Matchless from outside a pub in Dagenham. They hid the machine in their lock-up

garage at Barking but when things began getting too hot with police enquiries they decided to get rid of unidentifiable parts and dump the rest. (Murder! say all Matchless restorers).

My Triumph was now equipped with an Avon touring fairing, short Norton straight handlebars and raised rear-sets, quite a necessity as the old ones were chamfered and worn out from scribing grooves in the road on corners. I got the reputation of having the fastest 500 in the Barking area apart from one Clubman Goldie, why the hell didn't I own one of them!?

Two engineering college friends owned 750 Norton Atlases (the original superbike) and invited me to join them on a weekend run to visit the Birmingham Rockers. To us-then this 100 mile run compared with an Adelaide-Whyalla run now. I took 'Mad Dave' pillion and met the others at the 'Busy Bee' cafe before the M1 on the Friday evening.

We set off keeping to the newly introduced 70 mph countrywide limit. It was rumoured that this was introduced to curb the dawn testing of LeMans sports racing cars. Nevertheless, many cars passed us, including Minis. The pace was stepped up a bit, much to my delight as the megaphones came on song at about 80 mph. Soon one of the Nortons dropped back a safe distance while the other tried to stay ahead of me and this manoeuvre upped our speed considerably and before I knew it we were travelling at about the 'ton'. I found out they were both trying to stay out of earshot of those megga's of mine; no full face helmets then.

We found the Birmingham Rockers uninteresting and not very friendly to us London visitors but our intended return that same night had to be postponed as the stator on one of the bikes had come loose with the subsequent rubbing of the rotor ruining the charging mechanism, leaving one Norton without lights. We spent the night around the railway station, the only place with life and set off at first light. It-wasn't long before I found myself falling asleep and my friends were faring no better. The 70mph limit was so monotonous and the Avon fairing made matters worse as over 60 mph no wind touched the rider (like .-a two wheeled car). Frequent stops and cups of coffee made no difference so in desperation I wound the throttle to the stop.

The needle rose to 100 -102 (two up!), and the added vibration, sense of speed and natural self-preservation kept me wide awake. My mates soon disappeared from sight and so did the little traffic that I passed. Luckily there were no cops around at that time of the morning and we soon reached home safe and sound.

I guess the Triumph was the best bike I have owned in England. I cannot decide best bike ever, as my present BMW will take some beating. I did a lot of touring with Dave Tillyer who owned a 600 Dominator SS. We did Devon, Cornwall to Lands End and back during our holidays, the 500 averaging 95mpg!! My third and final Dragon Rally in 1967 was the best yet with the Triumph. The weather was unbelievably good and I had no mishaps for a change.

Dave also owned a Bultaco trials bike and my interest to compete was livened. I duly bought a DOT trials iron fitted with a 197 cc Villiers engine and Earles forks. I also met Don Smith at his East London shop when I went to buy my tyres, I got a lot of tips and advice as well. The Flying Wheels Auto Club was ACU affiliated so it wouldn't be long before I could ride in a trial. Alas, one day I received a registered letter from Australia House advising me of a vacancy on a migrant flight to Oz in three weeks' time. I had applied to migrate some twelve months before, when my parents settled in Sydney and extolled the virtues of this new land. I hurriedly appraised the cost of shipping my Triumph but the £50 would leave me broke. Reluctantly I sold the Triumph, DOT, all riding gear and spares to a friend for £50, a bargain!

I arrived in Sydney on the 13th of May, 1968 with only my new, ACU approved Pudding Basin helmet which I had bought to ride in trials, to remind me of my motorcycling days in England.

Next issue - My Australian Adventures.