



# Quarterly Quest

April 2011 Vol.20



East London & Essex Section

News Letter

## *My visit to “Twirlers”*

Chatting to Roy during our visit to the Southern Counties Meet in Surrey, he mentioned that as I was available on the following Tuesday it was about time I made my debut appearance at the “Twirlers” that day.

So we duly met at Kelvedon with Roy leading off down some interesting lanes. He was riding one of his recent finds, a 1953 AJS model 20. He refers to it as “Trusty Rusty” sister, so although it motors well “immaculate it aint”. After an enjoyable run we arrived at the venue at Matching Tye and I thought it most appropriate that the pub was named “The Fox Inn”!! A good collection of classic bikes and cars were present



With several of our section members attending, together with a number of British Owners clubmen that I have known for many years, so there was a nice atmosphere. Good food was available and reasonably priced and a very pleasant time was spent chatting. As was forecast it duly rained as we were about to depart so suitably clad we set off for home, fortunately in only a light drizzle. And so ended an enjoyable ride out with good company and I shall endeavour to fit in some more Tuesday visits in the future.

*Dennis*

## ***The Section's First Mid Week Run of 2011***

11am on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> March saw eight of us gather at Crown Corner for the start of our first mid week section run of the year. Graham Bister turned up on his Velocette, visible for miles around in his new yellow and black riding jacket and looking like (in his own words) a rather large wasp – a few runs on muddy roads will soon take care of that though. In fact there were quite a lot of wet and mucky roads on this run, as the day started damp and foggy. It stayed like this all day but never degenerated into rain and so did not spoil the run in any way. The theme for this year's mid week runs is garden centres and we set off in search of one at



Woodham Walter, with Dave Nichols leading us out on a picturesque run through the back lanes via Margaretting and South Woodham Ferrers, only going wrong once and leading us up a Blind Alley (literally). However, having circumnavigated it twice his personal inbuilt "satnav" kicked in and we were away once more. The garden centre itself was pretty second rate though as it didn't have a restaurant, so Dave gave it a wave as we rode by on our way to the Royal Oak public house, where they were expecting us and had set out a long table where we could all sit together. I can't speak for the others but my choice of meal was excellent and I think that everyone else enjoyed theirs as well. After the meal we split up, with people choosing to take their own route back home. As for me, I followed Roy, Dave and Graham on our way back, with each turning off at their appropriate point to head back home. It had been an excellent first run out, thanks again to Dave, and I look forward to taking part in some of the others throughout the year.

***Coiln***

## *A Friend For Life ? (well, quite a bit of it!)*

I have always kept a record of the motorcycles that I have owned and have usually taken a photograph of each one, for those records. So when I thought to myself that my folder of records seemed to be getting rather thick I started numbering them and even surprised myself to find that eighty one bikes had passed through my hands since the start of my riding in 1964. Not all got to pass through my legs though, as during one particular period of “madness”, encouraged by others who were even worse than me at saying “no”, bikes were coming and going at a greater rate than I could get them “back on the road”. I always had to get rid of something in order to make room for something “new”. I even failed that at one stage as I not only had the garage full of bikes but they were parked all the way up the garden path as well. I have cultivated a more stable outlook since those days though and bikes no longer arrive and leave at regular intervals. Despite all those bikes though, my only Matchless has been my 350cc G5 lightweight, aquired in 1994 and the only AJS being a Stormer, which has now passed on to pastures new at Roy’s abode (although in return I have gained a rather interesting G5 lightweight special to play with – swapping is so much more fun than just boring old buying and selling, don’t you think?). I suppose that my sixteen years with the G5 might be considered by some as a long time for me to own a bike, especially considering what I have just written. However, that fades into insignificance when compared with my first “proper” (as opposed to the Cyclemaster cyclemotor unit - which was all that I could afford to run for my first year) motorcycle, which I have now owned for forty six years. Or to put it another way, I have been in a relationship with this motorcycle for five years longer than I have with my wife Pam – It’s a good job that she knows that Francis Barnett is a motorcycle’s name rather than a person. Being that Francis Barnetts seem to have been mentioned in the Jampot mag’ a couple of times now and as the company was also part of the AMC empire I now feel a bit safer in writing about one here, especially now that I know that President Roy has had one or two of them in his shed in his time.

As soon as I could afford something more than my Cyclmaster the money started burning a hole in my pockets. Someone at work had a 60cc Bianchi Sports, all dropped bars and racy fuel tank and it was for sale. "I'll have it, I'll have it!" I thought, but my motorcycling mentor (an enthusiast uncle) said that I would be disappointed with it in a very short time – and of course he was right. I then heard that an erstwhile schoolfriend's father thought about selling his 1950s 250cc side valve BSA C10. "I'll have it, I'll have it!" I thought to myself again, desperate for another bike, but again my uncle said that I would probably soon get disappointed with that as well (and having ridden one in later years I have to agree with him again, even though I didn't at the time). What I would probably find most suitable he said, was a 200cc Francis Barnett with Villiers engine (200cc insurance was a lot cheaper than 250cc in those days). So I searched the adverts everywhere local that I could until I found this 1959 Falcon 81. My uncle came with me to check it out, pronounced it as good and that was that, delivered to my door. Bought new from Rayleigh Motorcycles the bike had had six previous owners during the six years of its life. So many owners in such a short time is often a bad sign but it didn't seem to be in the case of this bike and once I started using it that proved to be so as it was very reliable.

My new bike was rather unusual in its colour scheme as well. Most Barnett's of that age were all green and some were green and white. However, this one was green and red. The additional colour of either white or red was an extra cost on a new bike, which was why most were all green. However, even amongst those who were prepared to pay the extra the vast majority chose the white and I have only rarely seen other red and green bikes. The first registered owner was a lady and she was obviously prepared to pay the extra for what she considered the best looking version and I must say that I totally agree with her on that point. The bike came with a horrendous looking screen and apron, not much "street cred" there for a 17 year old learner so that immediately came off (although I later transferred it to a "ride to work" NSU Quickly that I bought) and on went my "L" plates ready for the open road and with my motorcycle driving test booked for two months later. The eternal optimism of youth! My friends and I had already booked a week's holiday for four months later and which needed me to take one of them as a passenger on my bike.

For some reason it seemed never to have crossed our minds that I might actually fail my test and fortunately for our holiday I didn't, despite being so nervous that I had trouble in getting the bike back onto its centre stand on the steep camber of the road around the Wanstead test centre. I couldn't seem to get it at the right angle for it to stand up, but the examiner waited patiently for me, I eventually managed to get it on the centre stand and all was well.

Almost from the moment that I got the Barnett it was not my only bike. The previously mentioned NSU Quickly soon made an appearance at a price that I couldn't resist (that phrase sounds familiar!!) and it took over the daily commute to work from the Cyclemaster so that I could keep the Barnett clean for the weekend runs. Then a year later the NSU gave way to a 500cc BSA Star Twin, which I arranged to buy while my parents were away on holiday so that it would be a "fait accompli" when they came home and thereby avoiding any likely objections to a considerably larger bike making an appearance. The BSA, although being five years older than the Barnett and having plunger suspension, was my first step into the realms of greater than 60mph performance (and even 60 on the Barnett was only obtainable downhill or when lying flat on the tank) and as such it got the lion's share of the work for quite a while. The Barnett though still remained my "best" bike and it was the one I took on rallies etc as it had good luggage facilities and the seat was very comfortable. In fact, after all these years and bikes, despite the fact that it is quite a small motorcycle in physical size, it is still probably the most comfortable to ride of any the bikes that I have owned, or indeed still own. Although it is not exactly a performance unit the 197cc Villiers 10E engine is under a lot of strain because it is running "flat out" for most of the time once it gets on a main road. Two stroke engines are often criticised for having short lives, but I have not found this to be the case with mine. Although it is not exactly a performance unit the 197cc Villiers 10E engine is under a lot of strain because it is running "flat out" for most of the time once it gets on a main road. Two stroke engines are often criticised for having short lives, but I have not found this to be the case with mine.

One amusing memory in my first year with it is of going out for a run with a motorcycling friend and fellow apprentice who was definitely a four stroke enthusiast and who started with a Triumph Tiger Cub. As he had been always telling me that his Cub was capable of a higher speed than my mere two stroke, I set off at my normal 50-55mph "flat out" rate, knowing that he would easily be able to keep up, only to have him wave me down at one of the road junctions some miles later, to ask me to keep the speed down a bit because he was worried that his Cub's big end wouldn't stand the pace - I was rather childishly pleased at that. In fact the Barnett's Villiers engine has been very reliable, with most of the larger expenses being down to my "meddling" rather than the bike failing in any way. Over the years I have had a gearchange spring break, the Lucas headlight switch disintegrate, an ignition coil fail and I needed a set of clutch plates. Everything else has been usual running expenses such as tyres, plugs, chains, brakes etc. Oh, and more recently both a rear wheel spindle and the kickstart shaft broke - and after only 42 years as well, these things are just not made to last, you know!!- planned obsolescence I call it. The big expenses were down to my own worrying. In those days I avidly read Motorcycle Mechanics from cover to cover, carefully following their advice. After about 25,000 miles you might need a rebore, or at least new pistons, was the suggestion. Well I knew from my last de-coke that there were brown marks down the side of my piston and I had done that mileage, so therefore it must be worn out, even though there were no indications from the engine or performance to say so. Off came the head and barrel and a new piston ordered, it was still on standard bore and had little bore wear. The new piston turned out to be faulty, the ring locking pin came out and the piston ring turned and caught in the exhaust port, seizing the whole lot up. That cost me a rebore and yet another new piston - and it hadn't even needed anything doing to it in the first place. The second big expense was when I convinced myself that the engine was getting noisier. Fearing the worst I stripped it down and gave the entire bottom end to Villiers specialist Alf Snell to change the big end and mains. When I went to collect it he asked why I thought it needed attention as there had been nothing wrong with any of the old bearings, another big expense for no reason. I was starting to learn that you do not touch anything if things are running right, that routine maintenance does not mean major dismantling jobs just for the sake of it or because you have reached a particular mileage and don't get paranoid about engine sounds.

When using the bike these days I find the biggest problem is that the front brakes of the past, particularly on lightweight motorcycles, are not very good when everyone else on the road, including myself, have got used to using much better brakes. I changed its original five inch front brake for a six inch one from an MZ, which improved things a bit but not really by enough for my liking. To compound the problem I have so far been unable to find any modern linings which are anything like as good as the ones they replaced. So quite often I found that I was using the Barnett as my winter bike because road surface conditions mean that I would not be using the far greater braking power of more modern brakes in any case, so the poorer braking of the Barnett's front brake is not so noticeable. Also it is easier to clean, come Spring, than most of my other bikes and its comfort meant that I did not suffer from my colder limbs getting cramp like I do with some other bikes in winter. So the poor Barnett's reward for this good service in bad conditions seemed to be that it was perpetually covered in road filth. Still, when Spring returned then a good cleanup usually brought it back to much the same condition as it has always been and in any case it seems to have weathered the past 52 years in a lot better condition than its owner, so I fully expect and hope that it will continue to give me good and enjoyable service for the rest of my motorcycling years. This one is for keeps, and in the meantime I will keep on searching for a decent set of front brake linings.



**Proud new owner, complete with “L” plates in April**



**Still a proud owner in 2006, but said owner seems to be showing the ravages of the passing forty or so years rather more than the bike.**

### ***THREE WHEELS ON MY WAGON***

In a recent article in a classic bike magazine I read a story when the author was invited to try a sidecar outfit. Although he had very limited experience in this type of motorcycling, I found it amusing that he was in fear of mastering the skill required to avoid crashing and in fact never mastered. It.

This revived memories of two outfits that I owned over some eight years, covering thousands of miles without crashing. Agreed, care had to be exercised in making left turns when the sidecar was empty especially when someone was on the pillion, particularly on my first outfit (causing some exciting moments!)

In the summer of 1951 after demob from the Army I began preparing for my attempt at road racing and it quickly became clear that I would need some transport to the circuits for the race bike. Money was very tight and I had in fact to ride the bike to the first two meetings in early 1952, which fortunately were at Brands Hatch and not too far. This was managed with a bung bolted in the huge megaphone and my pals all carrying my tools/spares etc on their solos, obviously something had to be done swiftly! If MR PLOD had seen me he would have had field day with my lack of road going equipment !! Fortunately I was lucky to meet a fellow competitor (amused at my lack of race transport, as were many others) who offered to sell me his current transport as he wanted to sell it quickly having a good deal in prospect with a van. I of course felt

obliged to help him out by knocking him down to his rock bottom price!! This was of course my first sidecar outfit, being a 1937 Norton model 18, with a large box affair on the sidecar chassis fitted with a drop down back ramp up which you ran the bike, into wheel blocks. It was then secured by a T piece which fitted into the bike frame and was wound down by a large cable fitting which pulled the bike down on its suspension very firmly, the ramp then raised and tightened. There was plenty of room for tools, spares, leathers etc All very practical.

As I had little experience of riding sidecars and he was based in Bedfordshire . my method of collection arranged was that my best friend took me up there on the pillion of his MAC Velo and the return journey would be a double test by putting his bike on the “chair” (as we called them) with me riding the bike and him on the pillion. What a brave man, you need friends like that don't you! A steady ride home, with only one little “moment”, proved that the outfit could easily carry the bike and two passengers and that the fittings worked very well. And so it did to race meetings all over England.

The Norton however had quite a “personality”!! It had a very definite method required to start it and if not followed would kick back hard enough to throw you in the air. I had by this time acquired a sponsor who would to ask me to deliver spares to other dealers and it became quite well known for this trait. I would often be asked to ask some young member of their staff to “just nip out and start the outfit would you, be out in a minute” They would all wait gleefully for the result. Another peculiarity was that it would sometimes be pulling strongly when without warning the engine would suddenly “die”. This first happened at night on the old A1 single carriageway road en route to Silverstone. Being a Friday all the truckers were anxious to get home and were not hanging around so it was no fun with lorries missing your backside by inches. We revived it but it did the same again, but I found that by simply declutching , coasting a short distance and then dropping the clutch it would roar into life again and carry on as good as gold. Amazing that this poor old bike worked as well as it did with minimal maintenance other than that which became strictly necessary and the jam jar of replacement spokes for the back wheel, caused by my “enthusiastic” cornering style All available money being lavished on the race bike of course. We had great fun with this outfit I cant relate them all here, but one story that remains in my mind, that my club mates loved to sit in the box in a line “bottoms “ down on the floor and when in transit call out to the passers by ( where appropriate) “room in here for you Blondie” and such like! Can you imagine that happening nowadays!? The cops used to laugh at the time.

My second outfit was a 1953 AJS model 20 (are you surprised?) which I had from new and had ridden solo for a couple of years. However, by now married and with my first son the way , family transport was required. Quite normal for the time a Canterbury chassis was connected and a Watsonian “Ascot” single seat saloon body fitted. After changing the engine sprocket and fitting stronger sidecar fork springs etc the chair performed well for many thousands of miles for four years before a second son forced our first family car upon us. The “Ajay” ran superbly and much fun could be had (when on my own) sliding around corners in snow and wet roads. In my view ( I would be interested in hearing Colin Atkinsons views) there is no great secret in handling an outfit if you are sensible and after some experience problems only occur if you are careless or take liberties. I rode an outfit again fairly recently after some forty years with no problems at all. Should any reader require info on the technique needed to ride an outfit, have a word with me at a club night.

### *Dennis*





***The Bunker Bash  
( Sunday 22nd May)***

is fast becoming one of the top events for Living History. Few other shows can offer permanent trench systems for groups to work on throughout the year, as well as [Woodland War](#)

[Walks](#), Where one can literally walk back in time, entering the woods in WW2, leaving in Vietnam.

## *2011 Events*

<b>Date</b>	<b>Day</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Time</b>
13th January	Thursday	<b>Club Night.</b>	Squadron	7.00PM
27th January	Thursday	<b>Club Night.</b>	Squadron	7.00PM
10th February	Thursday	<b>Club Night.</b>	Squadron	7.00PM
24th February	Thursday	<b>Club Night</b>	Squadron	7.00PM
27th February	Sunday	Section Run TBA	Crown C	10.00AM
10th March	Thursday	<b>Club Night.</b>	Squadron	7.00PM
16th March	Wednesday	Mid Week Run	Crown C	11.00AM
20th March	Sunday	Run To Ardingly	J28 M25	9.00AM
24th March	Thursday	<b>Club Night</b>	Squadron	7.00PM
6th April	Wednesday	Mid Week Run	TBA	11.00AM
14th April	Thursday	Club Night Eastern counties meet	Squadron	10.00AM
17th April	Sunday	Drive it Day <b>Club Night. Fish &amp;</b>	Suffolk	10.30AM
28th April	Thursday	<b>Chips</b> Jericho Cottage Bike	Squadron	7.0 PM
8th May	Sunday	Meet	Crown C	10.00AM
12th May	Thursday	<b>Club Night</b>	Squadron	7.00PM
18th May	Wednesday	Mid Week Run	Crown C	11.00AM
26th May	Thursday	<b>Club Night</b>	Squadron	7.00PM
9th June	Thursday	<b>Club Night</b>	Squadron	7.00PM
10-13th June	Fri- Mon	2011 International Jam- pot Italy 12th Classic bike show	Switzerland	
19th June	Sunday	Knebworth	Crown C	9.00AM
23rd June	Thursday	<b>Club Night BBQ</b>	Squadron	7.00PM
26th June	Sunday	Section Run TBA	Crown C	10.00AM
29th June	Wednesday	Mid Week Run	Crown C	11.00AM

3rd July	Sunday Section Run Battlesbridge Bike Show	Crown C	10.00AM
14th July	<b>Thursday Section</b>		7.00PM
10th July	Sunday leighton buzzard	Crown C	9.00AM
27th July	Wednesday Mid week Run	Crown C	11.00AM
28th July	<b>Thursday Club Night</b>	Squadron	7.00PM
29th July- 1st Aug	Jampot Rally Section attendance Bishop Auckland		10.00AM
7th August	Sunday British Owners Club Meeting Takeley	Crown C	10.00AM
11th August	<b>Thursday Club Night</b>	Squadron North	7.00 PM
14th August	Sunday Classic bike Festival North Weald	Weald	9.30AM
15th August	Monday Section Visit to the Kent Section	TBA	6.00PM
21st August	Sunday 13th Classice Bike Show Knebworth	Crown C	9.00AM
25th August	<b>Thursday Club Night</b>	Squadron	7.00 PM
8th September	<b>Thursday Club Night</b>	Squadron	7.00 PM
11th September	Sunday	Crown C	10.00AM
14th September	Wednesday	TBA	11.00AM
22nd September	<b>Thursday Club Night</b>	Squadron	7.00PM
25th September	Section Run To Battlesbridge	Crown C	10.00AM
30th Sep-2nd Oct	Fri-Sun Alternative Rally North Weald	TBA	9.00AM
13th October	<b>Thursday Club Night</b>	Squadron	7.0 PM
23rd October	Sunday section run To Ardingly	J28M25	9.00AM
27th October	<b>Thursday Clib Night</b>	Squadron	7.00PM
10th November	<b>Thursday Club Night</b>	Squadron	7.00 PM
13th November	Remembrance Sunday	Squadron	10.00AM
24th November	<b>Thursday Club Night</b>	Squadron	7.00PM
26th November	Saturday End of Season Dinner	TBA	7.00PM
8th December	<b>Thursday Club Night</b>	Squadron	7.00PM
22nd December	<b>Thursday Club Night</b>	Squadron	7.00PM

## *The Next Quarter*

### **April 2011**

Wed 6th Mid Week Run

14th Club Night.

Sunday 17th Eastern Counties Meet

28th Club Night Fish & Chip Night

### **May 2011**

Sun 8th Jericho Cottage Run

12th Thursday Club Night

Saturday 14th Kettering Open Day

Wed 18th Mid week Run

22nd Sunday Run to Bunker Bash

26th Thursday Club Night

### **June 2011**

9th Thursday Club Night

19th Kenworth Show

23rd Club Night

26th Sunday Run TBA

29th Wednesday Mid week run

### **Section Committee**

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