



Quarterly Quest

January 2008 Vol.6



East London & Essex Section
News Letter

Section News

Over the Bank Holiday weekend 9 guys left the Green Man at 10:00am to be at the Countess of Warwick Show in Little Easton. However they were a little early; arriving more than 1 hour before the show commenced at 12:30pm. The following Sunday 2nd Sept was the North Weald Classic Sprint where more than 20 members displayed their bikes. We set up the marquee and large trailer so we had plenty of space to spread out. During the afternoon there were some strong gusts of wind that started lifting the marquee even though it was secured to both the car & trailer. We quickly removed all the bikes and dismantled the tent before any damage occurred.

The Woolwich AMC Day saw 19 members leave the Green Man. Four riders and two pillions from East Suffolk, plus our illustrious Chairman and his lady wife from Hampshire joined us, so that they could follow the route through East London. We had to make an impromptu stop en route so that one of said pillions could relieve himself before joining the M25; must be our bumpy Essex roads! We had intended to use the Woolwich Free Ferry but due to maintenance the service did not start until 11:30am. Still the route using the Blackwall Tunnel via Docklands enabled us to see City Airport and Docklands Light Railway. One of our guests Mick Dykes and his pillion wife Chris, and surprisingly, Vic Sayers, suffered broken clutch cables. I say surprisingly because Vic, of John O'Groats fame, never has problems. Both were repaired with new cables fitted one at the roadside and one on site. The day was really good with some super demonstration runs; but for many the highlight was being waved through a succession of red traffic lights, by the police no less, to attend the unveiling ceremony. All in all a very good day, even able to return via the ferry.

Some 14 or so gathered at the Green Man to ride out to the Motobelia Day on 30th September. The event was a combined classic car & bike show held at the Motorcycle Museum, Battlesbridge. The weather was warm and sunny, attracting a large entry that resulted in a three-mile traffic jam approaching the site. Fortunately we were able to filter down the side but some of the classic car guys must have been delayed for nearly an hour. The auto jumble stalls seemed to be split roughly half & half between car and bike. Good to see Charlie Widdowson out and about after his recent illness.

Front cover THE SHANGRI-LAS 1964

Section News

The following day we had our annual section committee meeting prior to the AGM: many thanks to Karen B for her usual hospitality. Seven riders met on 14th October to be led by Dave Nicholls on one of his mystery tours to Coal House Fort, for there open day. The 1870's artillery fort on the banks of the Thames houses a couple of small WW2 displays but is in severe need of restoration. Let's hope that our visits along with other local motorcycle clubs help them raise funds. Sad to hear that Alex Burnett is in hospital: get well soon.

We never managed to get to the change of clocks run due to bad weather. The only other run was Remembrance Sunday with a dozen turned up on a damp start but it stayed dry from then on nice to see Joan B with Peter even if they did come in the car. Our plans for Poland are now well under way with the accommodation booked and a route planned. Buy the time you read this the end of season dinner will be over with a new Clubman of the year (Dave Slater). Also the Piston broke trophy will be proudly on the mantel place in someone's lounge, (Lucky old Colin). It was good news to hear that Alex Burnett is out of Hospital and on the mend they found that he was only firing on one, with a new set of plugs he seems to be running OK. Lastly Graham Eaton has at last Bought another bike a G15 from Kettering that was once owned by D Speck its All there and just needs bit of tinkering with this one it will swell the section Count of G15s/33s to eleven.



The Young Pretender

In my previous article on the importance of the AJS name I happened to mention that although the style of the new Chinese built bike being sold by AJS Motorcycles of Andover was not to my taste, I nevertheless wouldn't mind having a go on one. So it came to pass that at this year's Jampot Rally Roy generously offered a trial of wife Karen's bike on the basis that I write a bit about it afterwards. I don't know if Karen actually knew about this offer or not, but I took good care of it Karen, honest I did!

Having studied it over the weekend I have to say that it didn't seem as crudely built as I expected, in fact it looked quite good bearing in mind its lowish price. A few ridiculous stickers such as the ones on the brake callipers which alluded to anti-lock brakes when the part indicated could not be anything more than some sort of pressure limiting valve did it no favours at all but are almost expected on any Chinese made bike. I think that AJS would do well to remove them as they could be misleading to a novice who might possibly assume that a proper ABS system was fitted. Other than that the bike looked quite smart in its black and silver colour. I thought that I would have great difficulty in sitting comfortably on the bike, given its "race-replica" styling, but in fact it was quite comfortable and, as the olden day magazines used to say, "the controls fell readily to hand". Although the bike is not particularly small for a 125cc motorcycle to look at, I own a bike which is actually physically smaller than this one but owing to the AJS' riding position where you are well forward over the front, it really seemed as if it was quite a lot smaller than mine. The engine, an air cooled single cylinder four stroke (no idea whether it was pushrod or OHC because it was mostly covered up) unit, started easily on the button and sounded quite nice, running smoothly on its stand. So now it was time for the test ride and bearing in mind it was only an ultra-lightweight and the need to keep excess weight to a minimum, I first left my infamous wallet behind, then it was ready for the off.

Now the first stretch of the route was a gravel track to the end of the lane and if this was a Motor Cycle News test I would first have to put on full moto-cross riding “gear” for this “off-road” stretch, before stopping at the end and changing into full race leathers for the “race-replica” test. However, the Section’s budget didn’t stretch to this and as no-one was taking any photos or looking at me anyway, it was down to my usual leaky old riding jacket and plain black boots. Getting out on the road, the first thing I noticed was how bad the mirrors were. I know that my riding jacket is fairly bulky, but the only thing I could see in the mirrors were my chest, shoulders, arms and the grass verge to each side of me. Virtually the only way I could see what was behind me on the road was to lean out to the side before looking in the mirror – definitely not a desirable situation, especially on a low-powered bike.

The second thing I noticed as soon as I changed into second gear was the power, or rather the lack of any. In fact the skin of even a medium viscosity rice pudding would be under no threat from this in a tug of war competition – or so it seemed at first. Now I am not someone who is only used to large bikes and therefore thinks of any bike of this size as having no power, I actually like small bikes and have got several. My 150cc MZ is supposed to have the same power output as this AJS and my Francis Barnett Falcon and Yamaha YB100 are supposed to develop somewhat less, yet all three feel far more powerful than this bike. Opening the throttle at 5,000rpm or less not only brought no increase in speed, the bike actually seemed to slow down, giving all the symptoms of fuel starvation (or a too large carburettor bore). Bearing in mind how few miles the bike had actually done I was a bit wary about “wringing its neck”, but noticing that the tacho’ was redlined at 11,500rpm I cautiously (honestly, Karen) gave it a go. In fact there was really no useable power until the 7,000rpm mark was passed, when it at last started to build up speed.

With the sort of power output this bike is advertised to have (about 12.5bhp) it should be capable of about 65mph and although I didn't reach that speed it did eventually pass 55 or so, which was not bad for a short run on undulating road and probably more or less what my MZ would do under the same circumstances. However, it was hard work getting it there and then holding it – much harder work than with the MZ and I think a long run on it would be very tiring in a way that the MZ is not. The other problem is that having worked it so hard to find and then keep it in the performance band it is then quite difficult to settle to any specific speed because if you dropped the revs to a more “restful” level any need to make a significant adjustment in speed in order to cope with traffic conditions wasn't just a case of using the throttle as with my own small bikes, but needed at least one downchange, if not two, to get any worthwhile acceleration. Otherwise it was a case of keeping the engine constantly “on the boil” with over seven thou' on the clock. As a result I sometimes then found myself charging into speed limit areas well over the limit without realising it because I was glancing at the tacho' more than the speedo' (how's that for an excuse officer?). Seriously though, the speedo' and tacho' were both clearly marked and easy to read correctly, but I'm just not used to having to pay so much attention to a tachometer.

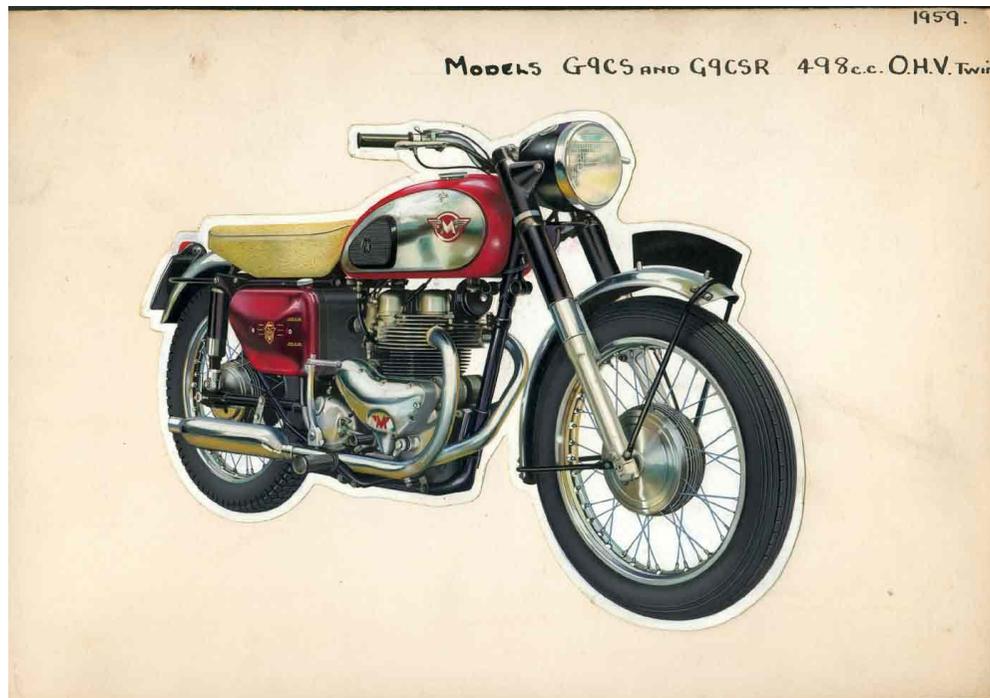
Ironically, this high revs at all times nature of the engine possibly suits those attracted to the perceived character of this styling of bike but it hardly seems to be the most ideal type of power delivery for a motorcycle which is predominantly going to be used by those who are new to motorcycling, although perhaps if I was 17 years old again and without some 40 or so years of inbuilt mechanical sympathy it might seem perfectly natural to thrash the thing unmercifully all the time. The trouble is that if someone starts their riding that way then they will probably continue to ride and drive everything else in exactly the same way, which is hardly the way to a relaxed style of riding.

It is said that the engine in this AJS is based on an old Honda unit, but I have previous experience of a 1970s Honda CG125 and the power characteristics were nothing like this and were as I expected for a bike of that size, even though the stated power output was more or less the same as for this bike. I noticed that Motorcycle News recently reviewed this AJS in a back to back test against its Honda and Kymco counterparts (both

considerably more expensive than the AJS) and made no comment on any difference in the type of power delivery, so I assume that they are all similar in their characteristics. Maybe it is the result of emissions control engineering, because I admit to having no experience of a current version of the Honda CG125, or any other modern 125 to see if they are the same. If so then it is doing no favours at all to those who are trying to convince people to move towards smaller engines and as for myself, I will stick to my old style non emissions controlled engines and carry on riding in a more relaxed style and probably using less fuel as well. For younger newcomers though, no doubt they will soon adapt to thrashing it everywhere and not think anything of it. In some ways this is encouraged in this style of bike by the riding position and the fact that it is set-up with the sort of quick steering that most modern sports bikes have. On an ultra-lightweight such as this it allows you to “change course” almost just by thinking, a characteristic which no doubt helps if you are in the habit of rushing into bends too quickly and have to “sort yourself out” halfway through. In this it tends to make you think that you are a better rider than you are because mistakes in “setting up” for a bend are not punished by the need for any drastic action unless you have really badly mucked it up, but I should think that with its light weight things could get a bit “lively” on a long bumpy bend taken at speed I never got to try that out though.

As I have already mentioned, the styling of any motorcycle is subjective, a matter of personal taste and this “race track” style is not to mine. Taken as a bike in its own right though and leaving any personal prejudice aside it seems to be good value for the relatively low price it is offered at if you can live with the engine characteristics. I have read lots of comments from AMOC members about this bike besmirching the hallowed AJS name, presumably just because it was made in China, as I doubt that any of the detractors have actually ridden or even studied the bike closely. I do not see why this should be the case at all though, provided that (and it is a big proviso) the Andover AJS concern provide a really good backup for the bikes in both servicing and parts supply, because this is something which Chinese built motorcycles in general have a very bad reputation for. A failure to do so, thereby leaving a long list of disappointed customers with useless bikes is what would really disgrace the revered name of AJS and I very much hope that this does not happen.

Colin A





The TT Riders Association Annual Dinner

“What are you doing on Wednesday 21st (of November)?” said the voice at the other end of telephone. It was Roy asking if I would like to attend the TT Riders Association Dinner at the National Motorcycle Museum where Colin Seeley was being installed as President for the forthcoming year. Most certainly I would, as a long time enthusiast of the Manx TT and MGP races it would be a great chance for me to see all those riders of past years whose names I knew so well yet had mostly only seen in racing attire. “There is an ulterior motive though” continued Roy, “You have got to do a write-up of the event for the Quarterly Quest”. Well, that didn’t seem too onerous a task and so it came to pass that at 8am on the 21st Roy collected me and together with Graham Eaton and Dennis Fox we set off for Solihull, while Dave Nicholls and Dudley Woods accompanied Alan Jennings in his car. Unfortunately there had been several accidents at our end of the motorway system and the traffic was bad no matter which route we took, however, despite taking different routes we all got there in time for the dinner, which took place in the Imperial Suite at the Museum complex.

It was a large gathering with about 480 people attending and Roy had booked us a table with enough room to accommodate the seven of us together with representatives of the main club committee who he had also invited. Our table was close up to the stage on which was stood the first Seeley G50 racer campaigned by John Cooper until 1972 and still owned by him and also one of the HM Plant works Hondas as ridden in this year’s TT by John McGuinness. John had a very successful year at this year’s centenary TT and currently holds the lap record at 130mph and he was at the dinner together with Ian Hutchinson, who lapped at over 125mph on a 600cc Honda. Anyone who has ridden around the Island road course can only marvel at how anyone can get around it at that sort of speed. The event was primarily a reunion of past riders however and all the former TT riders wore name badges. It was fascinating for me to see all those riders who seemed like gods to me when I was a youngster anxious to get my first bike on the road, people like Luigi Taveri, Stuart Graham, Phil Read, John Cooper, Percy Tait, Tommy Robb, Nick Jeffries and many others. Of course, because they were all a lot older than I remembered them it was also a stark reminder of just how many years have passed and I suppose also of one’s own mortality.

Nick Jeffries was the outgoing President and once we were all seated he announced that he was handing over his chain of office to Colin Seeley, the door nearest us opened and in rode Colin attired in his old racing leathers, last used in 1967 but which still fitted him, on a later version Seeley G50 ,

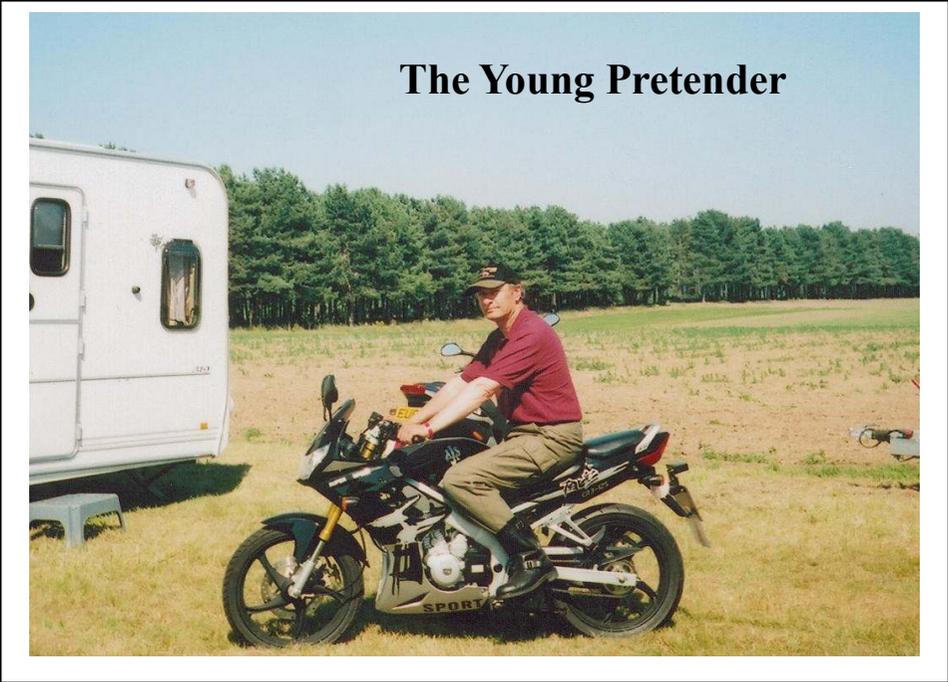
owned and raced by Malcolm Wheeler of Morton's Motorcycle Media, with much revving and scent of burnt vegetable racing oil – very nostalgic!. Colin then went off to change into normal clothing while Nick reviewed the past year of the Association. When Colin returned he was given a time limit for his inaugural speech – which he ably accomplished and which turned out to be 17 minutes, the time taken by John McGuinness to lap the Island on his record breaking lap. We all then sat down to a very enjoyable meal, which was preceded by both grace and a toast to the Queen and followed by a couple more toasts, by which time none of us had any wine left.

After the dinner there was an auction of some of the memorabilia and various presentations of donations and fund raising speeches, which took some time. The TT Riders Association is anxious to get more younger riders to join in however there will always be a huge gap between the love of traditional formalities which always appeals to the older members who are of course the majority and what younger people would be attracted to. Ian Hutchinson and John McGuinness were on the next table to us, they were by far the youngest people in the room and when I looked across at them during this part of the event and sensed their eyes glazing over I couldn't help remembering back to how I used to feel at such events when I was that age and thought to myself that no matter what the Association desired for the future it is always going to struggle to get young riders to be part of the "reunion scene" until they get older themselves. That is, and always has been, the way of things – it's called the generation gap. When all that was over though things livened up again when John McGuinness rode into the room on his record breaking Honda I have to admit though that burnt synthetic racing oil will never match Castrol R in the fragrance stakes and as if to prove it Malcolm Wheeler fetched his Seeley back in and with the aid of a starting roller fired it up again for much more revving and Castrol R fumes – Health and Safety fanatics would have had a field day.

After that it was time for everyone to start heading for home. For myself and, I hope, all the others of us who attended, I had a great time and it was something that I would otherwise never have got the chance to do. I cannot finish with adding what a very pleasant and "genuine" guy Colin Seeley appeared to be when he came over and chatted to us. I had never met him before except when he came to our club night to talk about his racing days, so had never known him other than by seeing him race before now. I am sure that he will make a worthy President for the Association. I would also like to thank Roy for inviting me along to an event which I suppose was a bit of a milestone for a Manx enthusiast like me.

Colin Atkinson

Photos of the Quarter



Photos of the Quarter



Colin. This years Proud Piston Broke Trophy Winner I know we all wish him well on his great achievement. (what's in Your Wallet)

Dave

being presented with this years Clubman of the year Trophy. As you can see he was chuffed to bits.



<u>January—June 2008</u>	Venue	Time
6th January	Sunday North weald Fly in	North Weald 10.00 AM
10th January	Thursday Club Night.	Squadron 7.30 PM
13th January	Sunday Jumble Witham	10.00 AM
24th January	Thursday Club Night. Alf Hagon	Squadron 7.30 PM
14th February	Thursday Club Night. Titanic Talk?	Squadron 7.30 PM
28th February	Thursday Club Night	Squadron 7.30 PM
13th March	Thursday Club Night.	Squadron 7.30 PM
22nd March	Thursday Club Night	Squadron 7.30 PM
30th March	Sunday Coalhouse Fort Tilbury	TBA 10.00 AM
6th April	Sunday Club Run To Ardingly West Sussex	TBA 9.00 AM
10th April	Thursday Club Night	Squadron 7.30 PM
20th April	Sunday Eastern Counties Meet Finchingfield	TBA 10.00 AM
24th April	Thursday Club Night. Fish & Chips	Squadron 7.30 PM
8-12 May	Thurs- Mon 2007 International Jampot	Poland
8th May	Thursday Club Night	Squadron 7.30 PM
11th May	Sunday Jericho Cottage Bike Meet	TBA 10.00AM
17th May	Saturday Open Day Kettering	TBA 9.00 AM
22nd May	Thursday Club Night	Squadron 7.30 PM
1st June	Sunday 8th Classic bike show Knebworth	TBA 9.00 AM
4th June	Wednesday Evening Section Run to North Essex Section	TBA 6.30 PM
12th June	Thursday Club Night	Squadron 7.30 PM
21/22 June	Sunday North weald Air Britain	TBA 10.00 AM
26th June	Thursday Club Night	Squadron 7.30 PM

July-August 2008		Venue	Time
6th July	Sunday Club Run To Battlesbridge	TBA	10.00AM
10th July	Thursday Club Night	Squadron	7.30 PM
20th July	Sunday British Owners Jumble	TBA	10.00 AM
24th July	Thursday Club Night BAR B Q	Squadron	7.30 PM
27th July	Sunday Classic bike Festival North Weald	TBA	9.00 AM
1st-4th August	Fri - Mon Jampot Cornwall		
14th August	Thursday Club Night	Squadron	7.30 PM
18th August	Monday Evening Run To Kent Section	TBA	6.30 PM
28th August	Thursday Club Night	Squadron	7.30 PM
31st August	Sun/Mon Countess of Warwick Show	TBA	10.30AM
11th September	Thursday Club Night	Squadron	7.30 PM
21st September	Sunday Run TBA		
25th September	Thursday Club Night	Squadron	7.30 PM
12th October	Sunday Run TBA	TBA	10.00 AM
9th October	Thursday Club Night	Squadron	7.30 PM
23rd October	Thursday Club Night	Squadron	7.30 PM
26th October	Sunday Change of Clocks Run	TBA	10.00 AM
9th November	Sunday Remembrance Sunday	Squadron	10.00 AM
13th November	Thursday Club Night	Squadron	7.30 PM
27th November	Thursday Club Night	Squadron	7.30 PM
29th November	Saturday End of Season Dinner	TBA	7.00 PM
11th December	Thursday Club Night	Squadron	7.30 PM
25th December	Thursday Club Night	Squadron	7.30 PM

The Next Quarter

January 2008

Thu 10th Club Night

Sun 13th Maldon Owners jumble Witham

Thu 24th Club Night Talk Alf Haggon

February 2008

Thu 14th Club Night Talk on the Titanic

Thu 28th Club Night

March 2008

Thu 13th Club Night

Thu 27th Club Night

Sun 30th March Coal House Fort Tilbury

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