



Quarterly Quest

January 2012 Vol.22



East London & Essex Section
News Letter

Thoughts on a G15 Hybrid

“Fancy swapping bikes for a while”, said Roy, after pulling alongside me in the heavy traffic of Saffron Walden. “Not while we are in the middle of town”, I replied, “I’ll do it on the return journey”. So that is how I came to be trying out Roy’s 750cc Norton engined Matchless while he rode back on my Royal Enfield Bullet. Apparently this particular bike is a 1965 G15CS, although I wouldn’t have known the difference from the standard G15, but it was as I like them – large fuel tank and low silencers. It felt comfortable enough when I sat on it except that the straight bars which were fitted and which would have suited me fine not so many years ago could now do with being slightly higher for me, to improve my body position to footrest stance.

This was the first time that I had ridden any Matchless or AJS model other than my lightweight 350 and also my first time for a bike with the Norton twin engine, so I really had nothing to compare it with other than the BSA Star Twin that I last owned back in 1982, as the 1996 Honda CB500 twin which I owned a few years ago was hardly comparable, but on this run I was not exactly going to be trying out the performance in any case. My first thoughts after getting on the bike was that I didn’t like the sponge handlebar grips which Roy had fitted as they didn’t feel as firm as I like, but in fact I soon got used to them and didn’t even notice them after a while. The eight inch Norton front brake looks quite impressive, but I wasn’t too impressed by it as to me it didn’t seem to have as much power as the BSA twin leading shoe item that is fitted to my lightweight special and that unit always seems to get criticised in magazines. However, it could be that my feelings were shaped by having just got off a bike equipped with a disc brake as by the time we had got back to Brentwood I was no longer thinking about stopping distances all the time so I must have been feeling happier with it, although I am not too sure that I would have felt the same about it if I had been stopping from considerably higher speeds.

As said previously, I didn’t get any sort of chance to try the bike for any higher speeds as on this run there were not many derestricted stretches and in any case we were usually running between 45 and 50 mph. However, on occasions I hung back a bit in order to try the acceleration out and I was surprised to find that the bike didn’t surge forward as impressively as I expected. I don’t really know what I expected because it “took off” well enough but I suppose that various magazine articles on Norton 750 engined bikes had somehow “programmed” me to expect something more. It was though, as Rolls Royce used to say about their offerings, adequate – at least for me. At first I was noticing what seemed to be a considerable amount of clattering and knocking noises seeming to come from the engine area, but then most bikes, unless they are water cooled, seem to produce bad sounding noises from the engine area which tend to get amplified by the fuel tank (and my new Enfield is no exception in

this) which you learn to ignore once you realise that they are not getting any worse as the miles go by and once I did that I settled down to appreciating the bike's good points.

As I have already mentioned, I would have preferred a slightly more raised handlebar position to improve my comfort. Even so, I was not exactly uncomfortable during the forty or so miles which I rode the bike for and I have to say that the seat was quite a bit more comfortable than the one on my Enfield as, unlike that bike where sliding back along the dual seat in order to change riding position brings you up against the noticeably hard lump where the rear mudguard rises underneath, the G15's dual seat allowed such movement in complete comfort. I also assume that the seat still has the original Dunlopillo rubber filling rather than the modern foam sponge rubbish as well, which helps comfort a great deal as it doesn't pack down and lose its springiness during a journey. So full marks there.

Another good point was the gearbox, or more precisely, the ability to be able to select neutral from either first or second gear while the bike was at a standstill at any time. This is in marked contrast to the modified Albion box on my Enfield, which despite being almost new, does not like selecting neutral at all while at standstill, especially when it gets hot in traffic (and being the 5 speed box it does not have the extra neutral find lever – the provision of which was surely an admission of a problem by the original maker – of the 4 speed version). The Albion derived gearbox of my Francis Barnett has a similar reluctance, to a lesser degree, for neutral selection, while selection of neutral on my Matchless G5 lightweight is also just as good as this G15 so I guess that AMC designers knew a thing or two about good gearbox selector design and the G15's box gave me no trouble whatsoever despite me being unfamiliar with the bike.

The handling of the bike also never gave me any problems. Now this is in no way any sort of performance review so I will ignore such nonsense talk about roadholding at speed and bits of the bike touching down on corners etc as I had no opportunity to try such things and wouldn't do so on someone else's bike in any case. This is a heavy old bike though and that probably benefited it in that it always felt stable on the road, reacting to longitudinal strip road repairs and depressions but a lot less disturbed by them than a much lighter bike would be. The damping of the rear suspension units of this bike was a bit tired and allowed an amount of wallowing when accelerating out of a bumpy roundabout, but the frame felt secure and steady enough at the same time and I have to say that the longer I rode the bike the more I liked it. The only problem with a heavy bike though (and my Enfield is not exactly as light as I thought it would be for a 500) is that sooner or later you are going to have to stop and wheel it around and put it on and take it off the stand and such like. I did take this one off its stand without too much effort at the start of my run, but cannot report on wheeling it about or actually heaving it onto the stand. These things become more of a concern to me as the years go by however.

The other thing which gave me some cause for concern was watching Roy start the bike,

with great hefty bootings of the kickstarter seeming to indicate a fairly highish compression ratio. On a 500 single of the older style your body weight and flywheel momentum over two revolutions does most of the work in starting, but on a large twin with one “bang” every revolution you cannot build up such a momentum so you have to put extra effort in with your leg. While being careful with my damaged right knee I would not want to risk too many starting attempts on this bike and although I very much enjoyed my try-out and first time experience on a G15 such as this and found it a nice bike to ride I would not choose it as a bike for myself for that very reason. I feel that by taking what was originally designed as a 500 twin out to half as much again and trying to increase the performance it might have taken away the very virtues that I would have appreciated, by increasing the harshness of the engine as well as making the starting more difficult. My old BSA Star Twin 500 (also a Bert Hopwood engine design) could run happily at 70mph and was extremely easy to start and that is all I ask of a bike of this style now. As I have never tried one of the AMC’s own engine design twins I cannot say if their 500 twin would be as easy to live with as was my Star Twin, perhaps I need to try “Trusty Rusty” next!!!.



Is it more Norton or more Matchless and does it really matter as long as the end result is right?

January—June 2012

		Start Venue	Time
4th January	Wed Mid week Run	Crown corner	11.00AM
12th January	Thursday Club Night.	Squadron	7.30 PM
22nd January	Sunday Jumble	Witham	10.00 AM
26th January	Thursday Club Night.	Squadron	7.30 PM
29th January	Sunday Ace Cafe	Crown corner	9.30 AM
9th February	Thursday Club Night. Bits in a Bag	Squadron	7.30 PM
15th February	Wed Mid week Run	Crown corner	11.00AM
23rd February	Thursday Club Night	Squadron	7.30 PM
24th-26th	Ally Pally Show		11.00 AM
8th March	Thursday Club Night.	Squadron	7.30 PM
11th March	Sunday Run To Ardingly West Sussex	J28M25	9.00 AM
14th March	Wed Mid week Run	Crown corner	11.00AM
22nd March	Thursday Club Night	Squadron	7.30 PM
1st April	Sunday Run TBA	Crown Corner	10.00AM
12th April	Thursday Club Night.	Squadron	7.30 PM
18th April	Wednesday Mid week Run	Crown Corner	11.00AM
22nd April	Sunday Eastern Counties Meet	TBA	10.00AM
26th April	Thursday Club Night Fish & Chips	Squadron	7.30 PM
6th May	Sunday Run To Battles Bridge	Crown Corner	10.00 AM
10th May	Thursday Club Night.	Squadron	7.30 PM
13th May	Sunday Jericho Cottage Bike Meet	TBA	10.00AM
16th May	Wed Mid week Run	Crown Corner	11.00AM
19th May	Saturday Open Day Kettering	TBA	8.30 AM
24th-28th May	Fri- Mon 2010 International Jampot	Kent	
24th May	Thursday Club Night	Squadron	7.30 PM
14th June	Thursday Club Night	Squadron	7.30 PM
17th June	Sunday Classic Bike show Knebworth	Crown Corner	9.00 AM
20th June	Wednesday Mid week Run	TBA	11.00AM
24th June	Ace Cafe National Club Day	Crown Corner	9.30 AM
28th June	Thursday Club Night	Squadron	7.30 PM

July-August 2010		Venue	Time
1st July	Sunday Section Run To Battlesbridge	Crown Corner	10.00AM
12th July	Thursday Club Night	Squadron	7.30 PM
15th July	North Weald Bike Feast	North Weald	8.30AM
18th July	Wednesday Mid week run	Crown Corner	11.00AM
26th July	Thursday Club Night	Squadron	7.30 PM
6th August	Monday Evening Run To Kent Section	J28 M25	6.30 PM
9th August	Thursday Club Night	Squadron	7.30 PM
15th August	Wednesday Mid week run	Crown Corner	11.00AM
19th August	Sunday Section run British Owners Day	Crown Corner	10.00A
23rd– 27th	JAMPOT RALLY KELSO SCOTLAND		
23rdAugust	Thursday Club Night	Squadron	7.30 PM
13th September	Thursday Club Night	Squadron	7.30 PM
19th September	Wednesday Mid week run	Crown Corner	11.00AM
27th September	Thursday Club Night	Squadron	7.30 PM
26th September	Section run to Battles Bridge	Crown Corner	10.00 AM
5th-7th October	Alternative Rally	Oxford	
11th October	Thursday Club Night	Squadron	7.30 PM
14th October	Sunday Run To Ardingly West Sussex	TBA	10.00 AM
17th October	Mid Week Run	Crown Corner	11.00AM
25ndOctober	Thursday Club Night	Squadron	7.30 PM
28th October	Change of Clocks Run	Crown Corner	10.00AM
8th November	Thursday Club Night	Squadron	7.30 PM
11th November	Sunday Remembrance Sunday	Squadron	10.00 AM
14th November	Mid Week Run	Crown Corner	11.00AM
22nd November	Thursday Club Night	Squadron	7.30 PM
27th November	Saturday End of Season Dinner	TBA	7.00 PM
5th December	Mid Week Run	Crown Corner	11.00AM
13th December	Thursday Club Night	Squadron	7.30 PM
27th December	Thursday Club Night	Squadron	7.30 PM

The Next Quarter

4th January	Wed Mid week Run	Crown corner	11.00AM
12th January	Thursday Club Night.	Squadron	7.30 PM
22nd January	Sunday Jumble	Witham	10.00 AM
26th January	Thursday Club Night.	Squadron	7.30 PM
29th January	Sunday Ace Cafe	Crown corner	9.30 AM
9th February	Thursday Club Night. Bits in a Bag	Squadron	7.30 PM
15th February	Wed Mid week Run	Crown corner	11.00AM
23rd February	Thursday Club Night	Squadron	7.30 PM
24th-26th	Ally Pally Show		11.00 AM
8th March	Thursday Club Night.	Squadron	7.30 PM
11th March	Sunday Run To Ardingly	J28M25	9.00 AM
14th March	Wed Mid week Run	Crown corner	11.00AM
22nd March	Thursday Club Night	Squadron	7.30 PM

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