



Quarterly Quest

July 2009 Vol.13



G15/45

East London & Essex Section
News Letter

Kicking Up A Storm(er)

During the final years of the Associated Motor Cycles empire the company became part of the group involving Manganese Bronze Holdings. Exactly who took over who I am not really sure, but it so happened that Manganese Bronze already owned the Villiers Engineering Company, who for many years had provided engines for a lot of motorcycle companies as well as making a huge range of stationary and industrial engines. AMC also inherited several talented designers with the Villiers concern, including one Bernard Hooper, who had designed the successful Villiers Starmaker engine and who together with Bob Trigg, went on to design the Isolastic Norton Commando frame in the AMC section headed up by Dr Stephan Bauer. At the same time the new AMC heirarchy decided that they needed to introduce a lightweight scrambles bike to compete with other manufacturers as their heavy four stroke competition models were no longer competitive. Another AMC employee, Fluff Brown, had been successfully competing on a new design Cotton scrambler with the Starmaker engine in a lightweight frame using a strong large diameter top tube and thought that this would be a good basis for the new AMC scrambler. At the same time they conveniently managed to reduce the amount of opposition in both scrambles and trials by immediately stopping engine supply to all other manufacturers and keeping the Starmaker engine, now renamed the Stormer, exclusively for their own models.

They decided to market this competition model as an AJS, which immediately caused a foaming at the mouth of many “crusty old timers” as not only was it a two-stroke, but it was built at Coventry and Andover rather than Woolwich. They conveniently forgot that the only really true AJS motor cycles had not been built in Woolwich either, but in Wolverhampton many years earlier. Not that it really mattered as the AJS Stormer was quite successful and they sold quite well. Well enough in fact for Fluff Brown to take the big step of buying all the rights and tooling to continue making the models after the final collapse of the AMC concern. Since then he has continued to build and sell limited numbers of the Stormer in both 250cc, 370cc and 410cc forms to competitors in the classic scrambles as well as providing spares to keep them running, from his small premises near Andover. His son now does most of the work these days, combined with their current marketing of the new Chinese built AJS road models such as Karen Bellett’s one which I tested a year or so ago. It could be said therefore that the Stormer has now had a 40 year production run, which is quite a heritage in itself. The late Dave Rice, a member of our section who, like myself, was also a member of the British Two Stroke Club and, unlike myself, was also a fan of “off road” style machines. Primarily a Greeves enthusiast he had also taken a liking to a Matchless G80CS (now owned by Alan Jennings), which is how he had come to join our club. Wishing to get a motorcycle which would be applicable to both the AMOC and BTSC clubs he had bought a 1975 version of the AJS Stormer which he had taken down to the AJS premises to have overhauled completely for him to use on the road, at great expense I might add. Dave’s Stormer was unusual in that it was equipped with lights and road equipment and AJS were able to tell him from their records that they

Not content with that, he also acquired yet another “non running” Stormer which was intended as a future project (this one has now been recommissioned by Dave Nichols’ brother in law). Unfortunately, Dave Rice never got to ride his newest bike more than a couple of times before his death and after the first intended buyer had backed out of the deal I ended up buying it myself, even though it was not at all my type of bike in the usual way of things. However with memories of many years ago when as a 17 year old I really fancied the road going version of the Starmaker powered Cotton Conquest racer (which had managed 105mph in the Motorcycle Mechanics road test of 1965) I had always since then quite fancied the idea of owning a Starmaker powered road bike – and this was one, even if the “road” bit was rather tenuous, as I soon found out and which was the reason the intending buyer had backed out previously.

The original owner might have ordered this bike as a trail bike, however it was a scrambler with lights and although it might have made quite a good enduro bike, something for taking a casual and unobtrusive amble down local green lanes it certainly wasn’t. Once you had got it started (no choke, only a tickler button which you have to keep operating until the engine warmed on a cold day) the noise from its expansion system exhaust was enough to waken the dead and cause apoplexy among any ramblers encountered. The engine characteristics of this fairly highly tuned motor are also not very conducive to careful path picking along a green lane – it wants to get going, quite rapidly. This possibly explains the fairly low mileage shown on the speedometer. First gear of the fairly close ratio gearbox is quite high and the diaphragm clutch needs a bone crushing grip to operate. However, once under way I found that at 60mph the engine was revving hard and was very much undergeared for the road. I could look at getting a much smaller rear sprocket but if I go down by six teeth the chain will almost be running on the spokes and it would still be undergeared. There is an alternative front sprocket which was made for the Cotton road racer but these, if they can still be found, are likely to be very expensive as they also have a ground section which runs on an oil seal and they would also raise the gearing too much so I would then have to get a larger rear sprocket made, increasing the cost even more. In any case I am also not sure that with top gear right for maximum road speed that first gear would then not be far too high for anything like an unobtrusive getaway from road junctions and traffic lights. I have worked out that with the engine’s power rating and correct gearing about 85mph should be possible, but then again I am not sure that this sort of speed on such a light bike with 6 inch brakes (even though they are better than I expected – at least from 60mph they are) is too wise in any case. The probable real downside of its current undergearing though is the effect it has on fuel consumption, which is only 50mpg when running at about 50mph instead of the 70mpg or so that I would normally expect. Even that I could probably live with if it wasn’t for the fact that the stylish polished alloy fuel tank holds only just over one gallon of fuel, so with such a small range I need to carry a spare can of fuel with me as I do not come across too many garages these days on the sort of roads I like to ride.

It had been nearly six years since I first got the bike and during that time it has been kept in my garage while I agonised over what to do with it. I am always complaining that I do not have enough space in my garage and Pam would say to me, “what are you keeping it for if you are not going to use it, sell it and give yourself some more space.” I know she was right, but somehow, every time I hauled it out to give it a clean and polish, once I stood back and looked at all that polished metal gleaming in the sunshine I changed my mind and wanted to use it – next year perhaps. So back into the garage it went every time. Once I had decided to buy myself one of the new Enfield Bullet models for general use I decided that I would have to be firm with myself and resolved to get rid of three bikes before I bought my Bullet, one of which was intended to be the Stormer. However, after already parting with two other bikes I thought that I had suffered enough trauma and reasoned that as I had already parted with those two and was only getting one new one then I could justify to myself that even with keeping the Stormer as well as buying the Enfield I would still have improved the space situation a little bit. I also decided that 2009 was definitely going to be the year that I would use the Stormer now that I was going to be keeping it.

When I checked it out I found that despite the expensive rebuild which AJS had carried out for Dave Rice there seemed considerable play in the swinging arm bearings. AJS might have considered this OK by scrambles standards, but I didn't think that Jim down at Swifts Motorcycles, where I go for my MOTs would approve. So, after parting with a considerable amount of cash for two plastic bushes and a ground tube to AJS Motorcycles (at least the service and delivery was very quick) I set about replacing the worn ones. I then came across the reason I think that the originals wore out so quickly. The frame had been powder coated by an owner at some time in the past and as I removed the swinging arm I found that it had been done with the arm still fitted in the frame. Powder coating was over all the external nuts, adjusters and washers as well as the frame, while those areas which were masked by the swinging arm still being attached to the frame had missed out on the coating – even the chain tensioners and chain-guard fittings had not been removed. I suppose that whatever solvent bath the frame had been dumped in first had done the bushes a power of no good, resulting in the play I had noticed. As all the parts I mentioned were so easy to remove I cannot understand why on earth anyone would bother to do things the way they had. I am hardly the person to advise on restoration techniques, but even I have limits below which I will not go. Anyway, it is all done now and it all went back together with only a few bloodied fingers. Provided that I can do something with the exhaust in order to quieten it enough to be acceptable then Spring 2009 should see it back on the road. I shall keep its low gearing for the time being until I decide the best way to tackle the matter. I have now found out that AJS might also be able to supply a 15 tooth gearbox sprocket as well as the standard 13 tooth and one of these should improve matters considerably.

When I first joined the AMOC I think that I had the only running lightweight model in our section, but now that they are almost becoming common I obviously must feel the need to switch to something more individual again – at least for a time.



I fitted slightly more of a silencer attached to that expansion chamber when it took to the road in my hands as that AJS provided tail piece seemed to do absolutely nothing to quieten the exhaust “crackle” the current one, although still louder than I would like was at least good enough for the MOT tester.

MISS JAMPOT ITALY 2009

In 1985, my husband Alan joined the AJS & Matchless Club, and I found that if you can't beat them join them so my love of Rallies began. As a consequent of this, many, many long-standing friends have been made. We have been to ten Internationals my first being Saffron Walden. One loo and



one cold tap was all that was on the site. The entertainment was 1st class and this was where I experienced the comradeship of the club. I can still hear all the Dutch members singing. Each Rally has got better and this year was laughs from start to finish. I do not know quite how I become Miss Jampot 2009 but it is a nice honour that some people felt that I was a worthy contender. This

year will be my 21st home Jampot Rally. I have made many cups of tea in that time and numerous cakes have been eaten.

Thank you Essex Section for your company and see you in Kimbolton and Ireland.

Miss Jampot

(Margaret, Peg, Rosemary)

Dave Pratt

Dave Pratt a long time motorcycle enthusiast and restorer, finally lost his fight with cancer on Tuesday 7th April. I had known Dave for about 14 years and in that time he had become a great friend and we spent many happy hours at bike jumbles looking for those elusive parts to finish off one of his many projects.

Dave was a great mechanic of the old school and nothing mechanical be it car, bike, mower or digger ever seemed to stop him. If he could not find the parts he would often make them or adapt them in his own workshop.

He was always there with free advice and his trusty transit van for the members of the many clubs to which he belonged and ALL those in need of help.

Our thoughts go to his wife Gayle and daughter Erika at this time of sadness.

I for one will miss him greatly.

David Nicholls



I first meet Dave back in 1996 when I was looking for a 50s AJS and obviously the word had reached him as one Sunday morning my wife called me to say that there was a Grumpy Old Man on the Phone about a motor cycle. On speaking to Dave he informed me that he had a 1952 500 Aj and if I wanted it to be at his house in one hour or he may change his mind. So off I went and bought the bike.

Dave was never happier than being in his workshop or at an auto jumble and always complaining that these old bikes either leak oil or you cant start them but he new that with his engineering skills he always had the upper hand and could fix them. He was always on the other end of the phone if I was having a problem trying to sort out some thing or at the drop of his Captains hat he would just appear.

He built, fixed and restored many bikes for me over the 13 years that we knew each other. All these bikes are still in my collection and not for sale, he often would try to buy back the Aj and a BSA that also came from him but to no avail.

Dave was a long time member of many Clubs, The AJS & Matchless Owners Club, The British Owners Club, The Maldon British Owners Club, The VMCC and others. He will be sadly miss buy all and especially by ME. Roy

Ron Mathers – Rocket Ron

When Ronnie first became involved with the club he was the owner of a Rudge and a BSA Gold Flash, although he desperately wanted an AJS 1954 model 20, which he took several years to find. He will be remembered in those early ‘club’ days riding with his son Keith on the pillion.

Ron had to undergo major surgery in recent years by way of a triple heart bypass. He was however desperate to attend the Jampot Rally in Suffolk which was shortly after, but due to



his health at the time was only able to manage the trip in the car with Pete Bearman. He was entrusted the most valuable job of looking after Karen’s dog ‘Bella’ whilst the run was going on. There was only one problem, he let the dog out of the back of the car which promptly run off so he then spent sometime looking for it!

Last summer the section had a run to Pat and Mary Gill’s for a BBQ. Ron was most adamant that he wasn’t going to stop to long or eat too much as he had to eat a full blown roast dinner when he got home. Well after 3 burgers and a couple of sausages we still wonder how he managed the roast!

Ron attended the 2008 Alternative Rally in October (last year), riding down to Berkshire, through the centre of London with the East London & Essex boys. He also rode out on both runs on Friday and Saturday. At the presentation evening he was surprised to be given the best AJS award, of

which he was justifiably very proud

Ron was known for his ‘happy go lucky’ way and always having a humorous tale to tell. Despite his health in recent years he would turn up on club nights with his infectious smile and it would not be very long before you would hear his laughter.

Ron – you will be fondly missed.....

Daphne

International Jampot Rally

For some the Italian rally started very early: Dudley was appointed unofficial interpreter two years ago in Germany when Sergio first agreed to host the rally. For others it started a little later (September 08) when Roy and Past President Malcolm Arnold, accompanied by Dudley, helped select the site at La Torretta in Borgo Priolo. For most of us however it did not start until we loaded the bikes onto Pat's van a couple of days before the off. However for Vic it involved travelling across France on his model 20 with two friends, Brian & Jim on more modern bikes. Meanwhile Roy's "Trusty Rusty" was also being ridden to Italy in the capable hands of Classic Bike journalist Brian Crichton. Pat & Dudley set off on Tuesday evening, picking up friend Tony en route to the ferry. Come very early Wednesday morning, Dave & Linda, Roy & Karen, Jackie & I were boarding a flight to Italy. We collected our hire cars and set off towards Lake Garda where we were staying for the first night

On Thursday we travelled to the rally site as we had agreed to help with setting up and manning the reception. When we arrived the rally had already started as many, especially the Dutch and Germans had arrived a day early. The van arrived with the bikes, after taking a detour through the



Mont Blanc tunnel as the passes were still closed by snow. Graham (Postman Pat in his Red Panda) had also arrived by plane, and we all set about unloading the bikes. Due to a shortage of rooms onsite it had been arranged that Alan & Margaret from Kent, Dave, Roy and I, with our respective partners would be staying in a local hotel that had previously been a nunnery. We were greeted by two old

ladies who spoke no English, but it didn't concern us as we were accompanied by one of the Italian section, on his bike. However he also spoke no English.

That evening Sergio had arranged a restaurant for some thirty people, using our hire cars to transport many of the guests. After driving for what seemed ages we arrived in this tiny hamlet of maybe six houses and an enormous restaurant that was already heaving. We were treated to an all inclusive meal that had I am told 18 courses, but most had stopped counting after ten.

On Friday the reception area was very busy with the majority of participants arriving during the morning.

We set up under the trees with the ladies selling the shirts and Malcolm and I handing out the badges and programs. Roy and Dudley were busy all day dealing with minor admin hiccups, and room allocation. Margret kept us all supplied with tea and coffee from her camping stove. Vic arrived about mid morning having travelled for three days, camping en



route. His brand new dynamo had stopped charging soon after leaving England, so he had no lights for most of the journey. Perhaps the biggest surprise was the arrival of Brian "Badger" Crichton on Roy's old bike. He had accompanied the Heart of England section for the long ride from the East Midlands, with absolutely no trouble from probably the tattiest looking Matchless ever seen in Italy. The East London and Essex contingent was complete by mid afternoon when Mary was collected from the airport by PRO Roger Limb. Dinner was included in the rally price and was served, eventually, in the dining area. The meal was typically Italian with many small courses but plenty of wine from the sites own vines.

Come Saturday there was plenty of activity around the site as people were preparing their bikes for the run to Pavia, with a lunch time stop in the historic town of Vigevano. It was intended that we all followed Sergio and his nephew but we soon became separated into much smaller groups due to traffic. The Italian section has not long been formed and therefore they did not realise the importance of adequate marshalling. At some junctions after much gesticulating and animated discussion we would eventually set off to the right only to do a U-turn after a few hundred meters. The local motorcycle club escorted us into the Piazza Ducale in Vigevano where it had been arranged for us to park. Unfortunately the local parking warden was not expecting more than 120 bikes and became quite agitated, forcing some to move to another area. Dudley had an unfortunate mishap when the gearbox on his recently acquired 1930 AJS locked solid, forcing him to travel in the break down truck. Later inspection found a broken kick-start shaft and pinion which had jammed first gear.



After lunch and huge ice creams we formed up in the piazza for the ride to Pavia, again escorted by the local club who forced the traffic to a halt to enable us to pass. The run set off at a very brisk pace, encouraging some rather spirited riding, especially by me, but more of that later. Pat had stopped to

help a guy who suffered the dreaded locked speedo drive syndrome, so I also stopped. It was not until Roy arrived that we managed to manhandle the bike to the roadside awaiting recovery. Surprising how much an AMC twin weighs in the heat of the day, after a good lunch.

Some riders stopped to refuel on the outskirts of Pavia but I knew my competition tank was good for 100 miles. Big mistake! We entered the town via the covered bridge but from there onwards chaos reigned supreme. First I ran out of petrol probably due to my excess speed, and was helped by a local family. Then the police took over escort duty, and promptly escorted us straight out of town on the parallel bridge. At one stage there were bikes going in all different directions trying to find the meeting place. Eventually maybe 25 out of more than 120 bikes found the correct spot. Dave and Linda ended up in the Lidl car park with the German contingent, and Karen took to admiring the scantily dressed “strawberry sellers” for their perseverance.

Dinner was served “alfresco” in the large piazza back at the site, with a duo playing some lively music to way beyond midnight.

Some joined in the singing but the biggest surprise was



“Badger” Crichton playing “Riders on the Storm” on the keyboards.

The Sunday run was up into the hills and consisted of many hairpin bends climbing to a height of 1100 meters. Roy and John Lowe persuaded Sergio to adopt the drop off system to marshal the run and we

Sunday run briefing



eventually set of with the proposed marshals at the front of the run, with Dudley and Roy both riding bikes from Sergio's stable. I managed only a few hundred meters before the bike expired and refused to re-start. After waiting for more than 100 riders to pass I bump started the bike downhill, but as soon as I turned uphill it stopped again.

Still it won me the award for the "Least Distance Travelled" at the rally. I must thank Linda Surby for

helping push the bike back to the site.

Jackie, Mary & I took the opportunity to visit Pavia to see what we had missed the day before. Every one returned without mishap although Vic's friend dropped his BMW in a gully. We loaded the bikes back in the van including "Trusty Rusty" as Brian was flying home. Meanwhile we also vacated the ex nunnery as our late night returns were upsetting the old Ladies. Sunday dinner was the time for prize giving and Pat as usual won best pre-war Matchless, with Dudley gaining the best pre-war AJS.

Most were away from the site early on Monday. Vic had the battery from Roy's bike as back-up but still got stopped in France for no daytime lights. Pat left Dudley and Tony to drive the van as he and Mary were



spending a few days at Lake Garda and Venice. Linda & Dave, and Jackie & I also spent a couple of days at Lake Garda including a cable car ride to the top of Monte Baldo where there was still snow in places. All in all a very good rally, even allowing for the various unexpected adventures and getting lost in the paddy fields of Italy.

Roll on next year when we will be in Ireland.

Alan Jennings.



Last of the Summer Wine Foggy Compo & Clegg



Saturdays 1st stop Vigevano





Dudley Woods Oldest AJS at the IJR 2009



Pat Gill Oldest Matchless At the IJR 2009



<u>January—June 2009</u>		Venue	Time
8th January	Thursday Club Night.	Squadron	7.30 PM
11th January	Sunday Jumble Witham		10.00 AM
22nd January	Thursday Club Night. Train Restortion	Squadron	7.30 PM
12th February	Thursday Club Night.	Squadron	7.30 PM
22nd February	Sunday Run TBA	TBA	10.00AM
26th February	Thursday Club Night	Squadron	7.30 PM
12th March	Thursday Club Night.	Squadron	7.30 PM
26th March	Thursday Club Night Pat Gill Talk	Squadron	7.30 PM
29th March	Sunday Run To Ardingly West Sussex	J28M25	9.00 AM
5th April	Sunday Eastern Counties Meet	Squadron	10.00AM
9th April	Thursday Club Night	Squadron	7.30 PM
23rd April	Thursday Club Night	Squadron	7.30 PM
26th April	Sunday Run Drive it Day	TBA	10.00AM
14th May	Thursday Club Night. Fish & Chips	Squadron	7.30 PM
17th May	Sunday Jericho Cottage Bike Meet	TBA	10.00AM
24th May	Saturday Open Day Kettering	TBA	9.00 AM
28th May	Thursday Club Night	Squadron	7.30 PM
28th-1st June	Fri- Mon 2007 International Jampot	Italy	
7th June	Sunday 8th Classic bike show Knebworth	TBA	9.00 AM
11th June	Thursday Club Night	Squadron	7.30 PM
14th June	Sunday Section Run	TBA	10.00AM
20/21 June	Sunday North weald Air Britain	TBA	10.00 AM
25th June	Thursday Club Night	Squadron	7.30 PM

July-August 2009		Venue	Time
5th July	Sunday Club Stand Battlesbridge	TBA	10.00AM
9th July	Thursday Club Night BBQ Kent Section visit	Squadron	7.30 PM
19th July	Sun section run Crossing Temple	TBA	10.00AM
23rd July	Thursday Club Night	Squadron	7.30 PM
26th July	Section Run TBA	TBA	10.00 AM
9th August	Section Run Museum Of Power	TBA	9.30AM
13th August	Thursday Club Night	Squadron	7.30 PM
17th August	Monday Evening Run To Kent Section	TBA	6.30 PM
27th August	Thursday Club Night	Squadron	7.30 PM
27th-31st August	Fri - Mon Jampot Rally	Kimbolton	
30th August	Sun/Mon Countess of Warwick Show	TBA	10.30AM
10th September	Thursday Club Night	Squadron	7.30 PM
20th September	Sunday Run TBA		
24th September	Thursday Club Night	Squadron	7.30 PM
27th September	Section run to Battlesbridge	TBA	
2nd-4th October	Alternative Rally	Woodthorp Lincs	
8th October	Thursday Club Night	Squadron	7.30 PM
11th October	Sunday Run TBA	TBA	10.00 AM
22nd October	Thursday Club Night	Squadron	7.30 PM
25th October	Sunday Change of Clocks Run	TBA	10.00 AM
8th November	Sunday Remembrance Sunday	Squadron	10.00 AM
12th November	Thursday Club Night	Squadron	7.30 PM
26th November	Thursday Club Night	Squadron	7.30 PM
28th November	Saturday End of Season Dinner	TBA	7.00 PM
10th December	Thursday Club Night	Squadron	7.30 PM
24th December	Thursday Club Night	Squadron	7.30 PM

The Next Quarter

July 2009

Sun 5th Battlesbridge Section Stand & Show

Thu 9th Club Night BBQ Kent Section Visit

Sun 19th Section Run Crossing Temple

Thu 23rd Club Night

August 2009

Sun 9th Museum Of Power Show And Stand

Thu 13th Club Night

Mon 17th Evening run to Kent Section

Thu 27th Club Night

27th-31st Jamopt Rally Kimbolton

September 2009

Thu 10th Club Night

Sun 20th Section Run TBA

Thu 24th Club Night

Sun 27th Section Run to Battlesbridge Show

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