

Shetland Classic Motorcycle Club Newsletter

Voar 2021



From Behind the Bars

The “Voar” is upon us, with signs of warmer times ahead and the plants starting to grow. With the longer days, we would normally be thinking of the motorcycling calendar ahead of us, but alas with the ongoing global pandemic, all we can do is think.

However, as the saying goes, every cloud has silver lining! For me, Covid restrictions have given me time to catch up with one or two projects in the garage, which I know some others have been doing as well. I have been working on an Ariel 350, and the time finally came for the big start up. I had meticulously cleaned the carburettor, an Amal 276, with new remote float bowl and plastic float. I tickled the carb to get fuel through, only for it to continue dribbling from around the large nut on the bottom. A quick look on the internet revealed they all do that! Not good, as I don't like petrol leaking so much while trying to start a bike. One back-fire and it's goodbye. It also reminded me why I fitted a Mikuni carburettor to my other Ariel 350.

Rare Bikes in Shetland No. 36

I hope I haven't featured this one before, but no matter, it's an interesting one for several reasons. Firstly, as far as I am aware, it is the oldest bike with a PS registration that is still to the fore in Shetland. Secondly it is a, now quite rare, 3 ½ HP (500cc), BSA, with a two-speed

This brings me on to a debate about restoring old motorcycles, as a decision has to be made as to what will be done with said motorcycles when finished. I am all for originality, but I do like to use my bikes, so a leaky carb is not good, especially when the rider behind you is getting covered in your motion lotion because the banjo bolt holding the float bowl to the carburettor has come loose!

I am still unsure as to when we as a club will be able to meet, but when we can, I am sure the first meeting will be well attended and there will be much to talk about, such as how your vaccine jab affected you! As I have said before, one of the first meetings will have to be an AGM so that the Office Bearers and Committee members can be elected, so please keep this in mind. Also, please have a think of anyone who may be able or willing to be club treasurer, as at the moment, we do not have an elected treasurer.

Keep safe, Dean.

hub in the back wheel. It was first registered in 1915, although I suspect it might be a little older, and the first owner was John N Hunter, who was the teacher in the Twatt School. In the front of the sidecar is his son Albert Hunter, who was later a well-known local doctor in Shetland.



I first discovered this bike about 1956, when it was lying in a garage on the Hillhead, Lerwick, and you could see it in a ventilator in the wall that ran down along Bank Lane. Mind, to see it, you had to prop your push bike along the wall and stand up on da pedals, as the vent was quite high. My dad knew that the bike then belonged to old John Sutherland who had been the County Road Surveyor here in the 1920s/30s. I pleaded with dad to see if he could acquire it for me, but that never happened, and eventually, about 1959, it was acquired by our technical teacher at the Institute, Alfie H Marcus. Alfie kept it in the end of the wooden hut in Twageos Road, where we did metal and wood work. When the first Hamefarin of Shetland expatriates, and their descendants was held in 1960, it was decided that the bike would be displayed in the showroom of Thomson's Garage, along with an old Ford Model T truck.

I would have been in fifth year at the time, and Alfie set me and my cousin Billy Johnson, on to titivate it up a bit. We stripped it all and gave the cycle bits a coat of black paint. The petrol tank still had most of the original paint on it so was just cleaned up. I recall that in the tank was some kind of gunge from the dried-out petrol and, when we tried to clean it out it made Alfie sick, so we were banned to the outside of the hut.

We didn't do much with the engine, but I remember that the valve cap on the cylinder head that held the sparking plug was missing and I turned one up out of a bit of wood. I took the large Bosch Magneto home and cleaned it up, painted the large horseshoe magnet on it, and actually got it to spark! The original BSA carburettor was missing, but, if I mind right, we managed to locate a suitable period replacement of another make. There was no gearbox, just the two-speed hub gear in the rear hub, and I do remember having the internals out of it to see how it worked.

Drive was by belt from the crankshaft direct to the rear wheel. The bike was originally fitted with pedal gear driving the rear wheel for starting purposes, but these had been removed and footboards fitted. We eventually got the bike presentable enough and it was displayed, along with the old Ford for the duration of the Hamefarin. Unfortunately, as far as I am aware, there are no photos available of the bike from this era of its history.

Sadly, Alfie passed away quite suddenly the following year, just before I left school. The bike then lay around in various school buildings for several years before being acquired by George Black, Russell's dad, who was by then a lab technician at the school. Before George got it, it had suffered a bit of neglect and damage, presumably at the hands of uncaring pupils, but George did get the tank repainted and eventually made it, once more, presentable enough to appear at one of our early Classic Shows.

When George left Shetland, he passed the bike on to Frank Johnson who, as far as I know still has it and still intends to do it up some time. The original registration, PS 245, was transferred to a car by George,

so cannot be returned to this historic bike. I understand however, that Frank has managed to get a number very close to the original allocated by the DVLA to the bike.



Tailpiece: about 30 years ago I had a visit from Bertie Ratter and his brother-in-law, John Johnson, two contemporaries of my late dad. They had come to see my old bikes and other memorabilia, and to have a yarn about their time in the Zetland Motor Cycle Club with my dad in the 1930s. They had brought along several old photos to show me, or give me, but Bertie had brought me, as shown in the photo above, the original rear number plate off this bike. I have promised to give it to Frank when he gets the bike finished, although he will have to modify it a little!

Joe

AJS CSR 650 re-build by Ivor Scollay



My latest part-restoration came about by chance, when I met Davie Graham one day when I was delivering goods to the SVT Power Station. I asked if he was making any progress with the planned restoration on his AJS CSR 650. Davie's answer was "no", but asked if I wanted to buy her. One thing led to another, and a few weeks later, at the end of January 2020, Davie delivered the bike to me in his van. Excellent service indeed!

Work started immediately with a good clean up. I then brush painted the frame with Smoothrite. Although horrendous to apply, it actually came up pretty good. The wheel rims were cleaned up and painted. New tyres, mudguards and exhaust were bought and fitted. Various bits and pieces were painted, and I put new foam in the seat. The clutch was stripped and cleaned, as was the magneto and the carburettor.

She wasn't very keen to start but eventually fired up, sounded good and ran fine, although quite a bit of time was spent getting the dynamo to charge. Many

thanks to Joe for sorting that problem for me.

Eventually when COVID restrictions allowed it was time for a test run, which went well. A lot of time has been spent adjusting and fettling to get things to my liking.

Over the summer I covered 1,000 very enjoyable miles, and was very impressed with the bike's 60mph cruising speed, vibration free!

So, I decided over this past winter to improve her condition further. I overhauled the front forks, painting various bits, and also repainted the fuel tank and fitted new side panels. I also fitted 2 stainless rims and spokes.

The bike is road-ready once more. Roll on the fine weather, so I can take to the highways once again!

Ivor



The first “BIG” one! By Dean Mitchell



It was pure desire! Lust at first sight. It was big, Maroon and the text on the side panel badges said, “Z1000”. A fellow from out the “sooth mooth” had come to Shetland to work on the construction phase of Sullom Voe Terminal. He had brought the bike with him and kept it parked in a driveway in South Lochside. It was a Kawasaki Z1000 mk11, and at the time I was seventeen and a half and riding a Kawasaki Z250 twin. Prior to seeing this beast, I had set my heart on a Triumph Bonneville 750, but alas my mother wouldn't let my father sign the HP papers to be my guarantor.

Things all changed when I turned eighteen, and I found out I could sign my own papers, so I ordered a new Kawasaki 650 custom in silver. My work colleague and best friend Jimmy Sinclair bought a red Z650 B1, not new, but in very good condition in. That was when I thought to myself that I didn't want the same bike as

him, so I upped my order to the bike of my dreams, a big, maroon Z1000 mk11.

Off we went to my Uncle's Kawasaki Dealership, which at the time was up at Rosemount Place across from His Majesty's Theatre. We walked in the door and two Z650s were sitting there. James said, “There are wir bikes.” “No, no.” I replied. He looked at me, dismayed, as his was wheeled out, while from further along in the shop, the “big beast” appeared. I hadn't told James of my changed order!

What a feeling, moving from a light-weight 27 BHP 250 to an 87 BHP heavy-weight monster, I felt like a king.

This was the first Kawasaki that could handle its power. Before that, they had a reputation for hinging in the middle. With twin sintered brake discs up front and a single one the same on the rear, it could also stop. The engine was a four-cylinder, with chain-driven double overhead cams.

Silky smooth and lots of torque from very low down in the revs, it was basically a good all-rounder. Kawasaki also sold a shaft drive version alongside the mk11 called the Z1000ST, which was more touring orientated, but still a very capable bike.

The following year, 1981, myself and Rowland Morewood took the Big Zed to the Isle of Man TT, having never been much further south than Edinburgh before, I saw a sign for Penrith. I roared to Rowlie on the back, "We've ridden clean through England and are now in Wales!" So, out with the AA road atlas which was in the tank bag. Bearing in mind we were still going, Rowlie had quite a job to get the pages open, so we had to give in and take a proper look.

On arriving at Heysham, we were the first ones there, so we went to the movies to watch Superman. When we returned, there were miles of bikes lined-up, among them some highly modified MK11 Z1000s, with fancy swinging arms and performance 4-into-1 exhausts. My one was looking a bit plain Jane, but needless to say, on returning home it got treated to an Alfa 4-into-1. To be honest, other than lots of noise, I don't think it made much difference.

I kept the Big Zed for six years, and happily nothing went wrong with it. It took some serious punishment on the way up and down to Yell at the weekends, on what I called my TT track! Very little traffic back then meant good average speeds were easy to maintain. However, the bike (or perhaps the way it was ridden) was very hard on tyres, especially the rear one. I was lucky if I got 1000 miles out of it. The tyre of choice back then then was the Dunlop TT100.

I remember my late father having a shot of it to go to the Ulsta shop for a dozen eggs.

When he returned and took the helmet off, he was smiling from ear to ear like a Cheshire cat! My mother asked him if he'd got the eggs, to which he replied, "They're on the pillion seat." However, all that was there was a loose bungee cord! From that, I gathered that he'd enjoyed his ride!

The following 2 photos, taken in Ballater with some other Shetland motorcyclists, show the Zed and some of its contemporaries, on a trip to the Mainland. Of the four bikes, the two BMWs still survive in Shetland! The R100RS, originally owned by the late Gordon Davidson, has been in long-term storage in Burra, while Rowlie's Boxer is undergoing a rebuild by a club member, and its debut is eagerly awaited!



I sold the Zed to Rowlie who then sold it to an RAF serviceman on Unst, who took it away with him when he was posted elsewhere. I still look on the DVLA website now and again to check if it ever reappears. HAS 818V, where are you now?

The Zed was intended to be my last big bike, but alas that was not to be! What followed was the Kawasaki 750 Turbo, featured in the previous edition of the club newsletter.



Pictured above, L to R: Gordon Davidson; Rowland Morewood; John Hughson; Dean Mitchell

Dean

Editor's footnote

Once again, our contributors have come up with an interesting and informative collection of stories. Ranging from what is thought to be the earliest "PS" registered bike, to one of the all-time classics from the "superbike" era, there is something here for everyone.

Having asked in the previous newsletter for a restoration article, I am indebted to Ivor for providing his excellent piece on the rebuild of his AJS. I for one can't wait to see (and hear) this capable twin out and about in the months ahead.

As always, my request to our readership is for potential articles for your newsletter. Don't worry about format, content or even spelling, I'm happy to piece it together. It doesn't have to be a restoration: a first bike; an unreliable bike; a memorable bike journey – there must be many good stories just waiting to be told.

In the next issue, we'll have part 3 of **Boe to Bäretswil...and back!** Once more, this entertaining travelogue comes with great photos of unusual machinery, and even an amusingly named wine!

Colin

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