



The Oz Vincent Review

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The Oz Vincent Review is a totally independent, non-profit, e-Zine about the classic British motorcycling scene with a focus all things Vincent. OVR, distributed free of charge to its readers, may be contacted by email at OzVinReview@Gmail.com



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What's It All About?

Welcome to the latest edition of The Oz Vincent Review, an independent, not for profit, e-zine that provides a forum and voice for all folks with an interest in Classic British Bikes and Vincent motorcycles in particular. This edition sees the introduction of a new column "Buy, Swap n Sell", read more about it later in the edition.

I encourage all readers to submit items on any related subject for inclusion; this could be ride reports, humorous or otherwise incidents, technical information, details of your bike(s) or even reprints of historical material. Given the electronic format of OVR there is little restriction of the inclusion of photographs and such like.

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Front Cover: *The last Vincent across the block was Lot 661 that 28th day Jan 1978 at the Butterfields auction being a 1952 Vincent Black Shadow had a lot of holes drilled in it and was bought by Arlen Ness of Custom chopper fame for a little under \$2000. Another source states \$1450 tend to believe later source as condition rated at fair. It's featured in the book Vincent's in a Barn and a photo on page 140. It was meant to have been restored in early 80's by famous Vincent restorer Dick Busby. It was then sold to long time Vincent enthusiast Mark Allen who kept it in his workshop until sold to Stephen Carson in Dec 2010, on examining the internals doubt it was restored by Dick as his signature stamp was not found. It was only restored as a static display as was not run. The bike was completely stripped by VOC Member & Restorer Greg Brillus in Worengary Qld Australia and is undergoing a full restoration. Read all about this bike and its history in the contribution "VENDETTA" later in this edition.*

Letters to the Editor:

Dear Martyn,

Having read through your article (in OVR #11) about sorting out the Amal Mk 1 carburettor, I must take issue with you on one aspect of the tuning sequence. This concerns the main jet used whilst setting the needle which was increased to 240 and then dropped back to 220 on completion. I am firmly of the opinion that the main jet affects the whole range of carburettor operation and not just the final 3/4 to fully open range. Otherwise why do Amal require the main jet size to be ascertained, after setting the idle speed and prior to tuning the mid range?

The area of the annulus between needle and needle jet is greater than the area of the main jet thus the needle acts as a proportional flow regulator, which is dependant on the main jet area. The effect of the additional 20 cc jet size will be least at the 1/4 open position and greatest at the 3/4 open position, but it must weaken the mid range a little from the strengths which you reached whilst using the larger main jet.

Best wishes, Glyn Baxter

Good point Glyn, seems I may have got the sequence a tad out of kilter. Also makes it clear that if you change the main jet then you must then recheck the rest of the carb settings. Martyn



Vincent HRD Owners Club



The Italian International Rally 2015

On behalf of the **VOC Italia Section**, I would like to invite all VOC members to attend your Club's International VOC Rally in Italy later this year.

I think that this event will be able to show to all the attending Vincenteers the many beauties of culture and landscape of our extraordinary country.

We promise, fantastic motorcycle rides and interesting cultural tours, that, joined to the considerable Italian wine and food tradition, will offer to the participants an amazing and unforgettable experience.

We will travel from the Venice bridges to the ancient Siena walls, looking at historical places, full of memories of the past, as the cities of Verona, Ravenna, Urbino and Pisa, with the help of tour guides able to tell to the visitors the story of these magnificent places.

The Vincenteers will remain extremely satisfied with hundreds of kilometers of roads surrounded by breathtaking landscapes, and routes winding as much fascinating and different. We recommend to the interested Vincenteers either to look at the regular Italia Section Reviews in *MPH* and to browse the special webpage of the Italian Rally by clicking [HERE](#)

We are hoping for a large and friendly participation to the Rally in our gorgeous country, and I greet you warmly.

Yours sincerely

Giovanni Cabassi

Giovanni Cabassi and The Italia Section of the VOC

Click [HERE](#) to e-mail Giovanni and the rest of the International Rally Organising Committee.

VENDETTA

A contribution from Stephen Carson, the present custodian of Crazy Georges lot 661



George Disteel could have been just another of the many down-and-out souls who meet their ends every day in the streets of San Francisco. But George was not just another bum. Though a recluse, he was one of Marin County's most celebrated eccentrics, and the lead character in one of motor cycling's most unbelievable yet true legends. Twenty years ago Disteel's son was killed highballing a Vincent, then the fastest production motorcycle in the world. In rage and revenge George, himself a hotshoe biker, began buying up motorcycles, in particular Vincent's, and squirreling them away so others would not have the chance to be killed riding them. Rumours about "Crazy" George circulated for years, but they seemed just that rumours, until I ran across a story in the San Francisco Chronicle, "Mystery of the Motorcycle Man," reporting the death of a 74-year-old derelict along the City's skid row one chilly November day. All that was known about him was that, unaccountably, he was the owner of perhaps dozens of old motorcycles. Intrigued, I put on my gumshoes and did some Sam Spade work. The saga I unearthed has kept me enthralled for the last year.

Little is known about George Disteel's youth except that he was born in 1904 in Pennsylvania and later joined the Marines to serve 12 years in China during the "Sand Pebble" gunboat diplomacy days. It wasn't until the 1940s that he discovered the rustic hills of Marin County, just north of the Golden Gate. During the next 30 years George became a familiar yet strange apparition roaming the county as a motorcyclist, bicyclist and, in his later years, hiker. Rain or shine he was to be seen from Mill Valley to the Russian River riding bare chested, his belly-length whiskers flowing in the breeze. He was addicted to a strange diet of "natural" foods and practiced an extreme regimen of fitness activities, including as much as 15 miles of hiking or bicycling, hundreds of pushups and a thousand sit-ups every day.

A master carpenter, George came to be put in charge of a 3 man construction gang. Ever aloof, he was known to warm up only to kids and apprentices in his charge. Apprentice Jim Long knew he had arrived as a confidant the day George finally spilled out his classic tale of woe. As he told

it, his wife had died giving birth and his only son was killed in his twentieth year during a wild ride on his mighty Vincent. Perhaps birthed by Long, the legend of Crazy George grew. It told of his lifelong dedication to hunt down the "deadly" Vincent's and other vintage Superbikes .. so that others wouldn't be killed."

Mill Valley neighbours recall George as the recluse who lived in an old shanty and smelled "like low tide." Encircling his home was a veranda on which he displayed his Indians, BSAs, a Brough and several other motorcycles. Outstanding was his road machine, a shiny new Vincent twin dubbed "Sad Sack." Other than a short-lived affair many years ago, his early neighbours report that "Nature Boy" lived alone; raising still unanswered questions about the reality of his legendary "son," although I have learned that later on he seems to have had a liaison with another Marin character, the Goat Lady, who haunted the streets of Sausalito.

In any event, after the loss of his real or "adopted" son in the late Fifties, George seemed to snap. He moved out of his shack, ceased displaying his motorcycles and began imprisoning them in chicken coops, crates, old vans, barns and other bizarre locations. No more was he to enjoy the excursions which took him as far away as Mexico on Sad Sack. But try as hard as he could, he still couldn't kick bikes out of his blood and dreams. Countless Marinites still recall the specter of Crazy George daily pedalling his heavy Schwinn bicycle far out into the country. He had found a "gentler" way of staying on two wheels. He often carried a dog strapped to his back in a rucksack as he careened wild-eyed down Corte Madera Grade "hands off," or challenged, and often beat, other bikers down Mount Tamalpais' treacherous hairpins.

George scrounged, lived like a hermit and added to his carpenter's income by making shrewd land deals. His growing fortune provided the key to launch his Vincent Vendetta. Before it was over, nearly half the Vincent's in upper California were to fall into his clutches. To help flush out Vincent's, Disteel recruited the Bay Area's three Vincent specialists, Vaughn Greene, Phil Titus, and Pete Adams-an expatriate from England who founded the famous Inverness Sunday Morning Ride. When asked about the legend. Greene said, "Old George would only tell me that he wanted to 'invest' in Vincent's. About his 'son,' I still have my doubts." But Titus has no doubts. "George's boy loved to push his Vincent, outrun the cops and do anything to be King of the Road." Both described Disteel's growing collection of Vincent twins: at one time there were 13 dovetailed into Adam's San Rafael shop.

In the early Sixties Jim Luchini, one of his apprentice carpenters, convinced George the thefts, stripping and joy riding that were plaguing his collection could be avoided by moving his bikes north to a brick chicken house near Cotati. Except for a brief interlude when deputies confiscated the machines (they were returned when George gave up an early property tax revolt), the menagerie remained secure in the chicken house until Disteel's death. According to the legend that grew up around the collection George had ordered the motorcycles burned in a fiery climax to his Vendetta upon his demise, but Luchini's father recently insisted there were no destruction orders, while Jim asserted that George had indeed wanted them destroyed.

Whatever the case may be, George often underscored his Possession Obsession by declaring. "I never sell anything once I own it!" Only once was he ever known to part with something without destroying it first. In 1968 he called on Jim Long to help load a new Royal Enfield into a truck and deliver it to his "Death Row" in Cotati. (By now George had lost his driver's license because of severe cataracts. In order to get better visual images, he wore a patch he switched from one eye to the other.) When Jim casually inquired about his collection, George hesitated, then signed the Enfield's pink slip, which he handed over as he blurted out, "Here you take the RE and forget about the trip." Jim was floored, but gratefully accepted George's show of generosity. Disteel seemed to have suddenly taken the notion that even Long couldn't be trusted to keep the location a secret.

A few years later, George retired from contracting and became a caretaker and watchman for several auto wreckers near Novato. He was never happier than when surrounded by relics on wheels. One wrecker named J. Terry described him: "He was shrewd but had some intolerable habits. He'd ride one of the cycles-Vincent's, Nortons, BSAs-a few days and then stuff it into a van and pile old rags and paper around the bike until it was hidden... The last straw was when

he built a doorless shed around a '54 Dodge van and a pedal bike... I asked him why he was building something no one could get into and he gave me this cold stare and told me, 'I got my reasons.' One time he brought in about a hundred old rifles and began to conceal them like me bikes." That did it. George was soon given his walking papers.

Undaunted, he managed to get another caretaker job in 1972 at the Boyd Museum in San Rafael in exchange for free lodging. Surrounded by wild critters, more relics and understanding friends, George seemed to come out of his shell. Museum director Bruce Blake had strange tales to tell about the sagacious old man. "We used to have our daily pre-work chats. One time a cyclist pulled up wearing a helmet. George commented that he wouldn't have lost 'someone' long ago had he likewise worn one. "George was a wizard at real estate, politics, kinematics ... he used to bring in armloads of books from the library and read them with a strong magnifying glass one word at a time." During one of the chats George commented excitedly about a new Kawasaki that road tested at 160 mph. He couldn't resist boasting that his Black Shadows were the fastest in their day.

Intolerable habits and forgetfulness again got George the gate in 1975. Despite repeated warnings from Blake, he had persisted in stuffing every nook and cranny of the museum with rags and papers. It wasn't until later that Blake realized an expensive collection of woven Indian baskets had been flattened under the burden of packrat pickings. Still, George continued to hang around the museum getting into mischief. A skinny-dipping episode led to a visit to the local police station. Unable to put a rap on him, the officers let George go with a switch-hit warning that he could no longer sleep in his litter-filled '52 Hudson parked near the Boyd Museum. Enraged, George held back his 150 pounds of fury until he returned "home." Then with a heavy sledgehammer he savagely destroyed the old Hudson and hauled it to the wrecking yard in Novato for compression and recycling.

Having worn out his welcome at the Boyd, George settled into a flophouse called the Rose Hotel in San Francisco. He still could not resist the call of the open road and continued to trek almost daily across the Golden Gate Bridge to Marin County. Motorcycle salesman Jerry Smith of Marin Motor Sports recalls the weekly visits George used to make there. "Crazy George? We used to call him Mr. Natural because of the way he looked stepping along Francisco Boulevard here. He'd pop in and stand there sort of spaced out for about five minutes. One time when he snapped out of it, he tuned on to a Gold Wing and began asking questions you'd expect only from a machinist. He wrote out an odd check for \$643.26 as a deposit and claimed that he was going to "ride it a bit then store it in his warehouse": Disteel's death precluded completion of the down payment and one Gold Wing was saved from a strange destiny. A few weeks after he wrote the check for the Gold Wing George slumped to the sidewalk as he stepped outside the door of his hotel at 6th and Mission. The coroner reported: DOA, John Doe (having no identification). Diagnosis: Heart failure and emphysema. Age: 74.

Public Administrator Norman Baker had a hunch there was something different about George Disteel though. He wasn't just another piece of skid row flotsam. Scouring his fleabag room, Baker turned up papers leading to the motorcycle stash in Cotati and Disteel's remaining real estate, some 24 separate properties. However, Baker's news release in the Chronicle failed to locate the next of kin or the rest of George's hidden motorcycles. When I read the story I knew the legend Vincent cultists had passed among themselves of an "eccentric farmer" who had a trove of Vincent's chained together in a barn awaiting his "revenge" had to have been connected with Disteel, and was based on truth. I volunteered my Vincent contacts and an appraisal of the cache's worth to Baker in exchange for a sneak preview.

Disturbed from their suspended animation, the Superbikes of the Fifties had been hauled down from Cotati and propped up in Butterfield's warehouse in San Francisco Jan 28th 1978. There I beheld them replete with rust, dust, rotten tires and chicken droppings. Included in the line up were six Vincent Black Shadows and two Rapides, a pre-war KSS Velocette, a Norton International next to a Manx frame; two Moto Guzzi thumpers with exposed flywheels, two DKWs, an R51 BMW, a Royal Enfield twin and an S-8 Sunbeam. The authorities decided to sell the bikes at auction. Major TV and newspaper coverage sparked by my casual mention of the historical and monetary worth of the bikes attracted hundreds of old bike buffs and Vincenteers

from as far away as Nevada. The first Vincent C Rapide Lot 643 went for \$875, but the glib-tongued auctioneer soon had the bidders stampeded beyond the \$1500 mark. As my own beer budget was being outstripped I recalled an earlier question by one of the warehouse workers, "Would anyone really pay over a hundred dollars for that piece of junk?" he asked, pointing at one of the rescued machines. In fact, the state reaped \$20,000 in total from the bidders, to be held in trust for seven years awaiting claims from any next of kin George may have living.

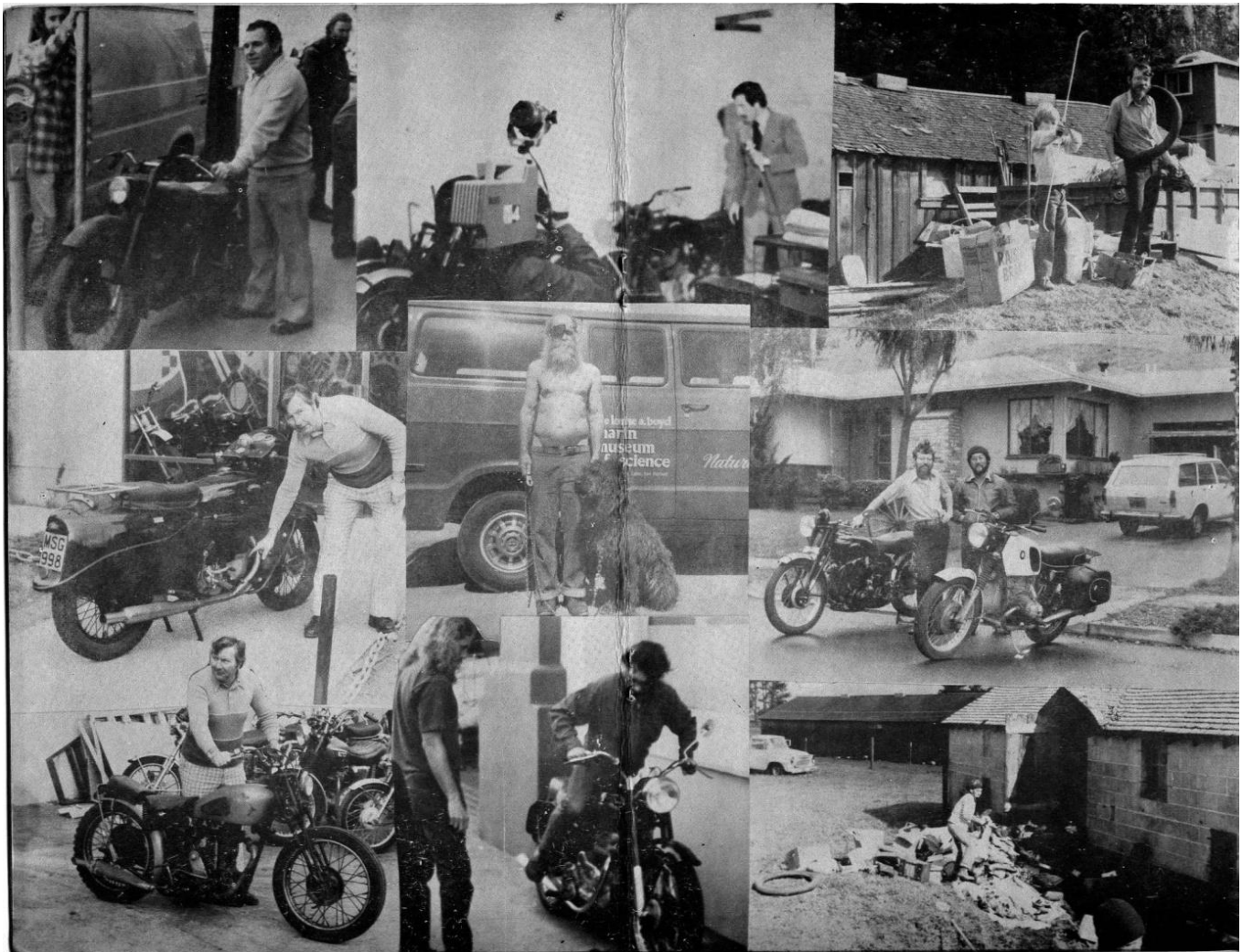


Figure 1 top RH and Mid RH with beard Wilmott White, Center George Distel, Bottom centre standing Mark Allen looking on as somebody kick starts, LHS bottom and centre with snappy pants Alex McClean. Top LHS Al Brookes with the Falcone.

Monday, December 06, 2010 4:07 PM

From Somer Hooker

That's Alex McClean with the snappy pants on in two pictures.

Wilmont White in two pix with beard. he was the California SO for years, even though he wasn't a member of the VOC.

Mon, 6 Dec 2010 14:30:13 -0800

From Paul Zell

The guy with the Falcone in the upper left is Al Brooks I'm told (deceased). Richard Bove and myself have Shadows purchased by Mark Witter at the auction. He's still around and I'm awaiting a phone number on him. Alex Mclean had a C Shadow, Ron Jolliffe has it now in Idaho. I don't know if Alex got it from CG or Kalka, I could find out. Steve Fischer just bought a basket Rapide here in NorCal, prior owner says it's CG, I have his contact info. A friend of mine has 3 Shadows, at least two were purchased at the chicken coup for sure. Molloy has an HRD C Shadow that I

believe is CG from the chicken coup. Another few in Sonoma county that are probably CG that I could run down. Also possibly Gus Veritakis's Shadow, according to Steve Fischer. I'll ask Gus.

Sunday, December 05, 2010 3:35 AM

Dear Paul,

Thanks for the information also please see email from Mark Allen as I sent the Collage photos to him see below. Maybe we should start a CG chapter of the VOC.

Cheers Stephen Carson

Sat, 4 Dec 2010 22:30:17 -0800

From Mark Allen

Stephen I can hardly believe these fotos .That's me bottom center foto looking on as someone I can't put a name to is starting a bike center left foto is a picture of the 1st enclosed Vincent I ever owned bought it from the man standing next to it Alex Mclane? and his brother owned it they had a shop in the bay area I bugged them for years and one day I called and Alex said well you caught me at a good time! I almost shit when he said he'd sell it I drove to the bank emptied my acct \$3500 called my dad told him I was going to San Francisco Id see him in a day or 2 and I left got to Alex's shop early morning went to sleep in my ranchero in there parking lot and Alex woke me up in the morning when he got to work I've never seen these I'm kind of in shock. There's a story for the book, honestly I could probably fill one. Thanks for the memories. Mark

Richard I also replied to a Forum message to Richard Bove on VOC today what a small world below. Do you have Richard Bove email?

I've got one- the state of California didn't have paperwork on any of the bikes, so when they sold at auction they were all registered as '78 uncer's (uncertain). I have copies of 2 newspaper articles from '77 -'78 - they sold 18 motorcycles for a total of \$19,000. Top sellers were a '51 Shadow, a '50 Moto Guzzi Falcone and a '50 Norton International- all going for \$1550 each.

Richard Bove

F10AB/1B/3956

Hi Richard.

I have purchased the last shadow 1953 sold that day to Arlen Ness who had Dick Busby sort it out then sold to Mark Allen {bigbadfarmer on ebay} several years ago. Its mentioned on page 138 "Vincent's in a barn" as the one drilled full of holes and picture on page 140 outside Mark Allens place. Please drop and email to me so i can send you some pictures etc.

Stephen

F10AB/1B/9714

Date: Monday, 6 December, 2010, 15:57

Paul Zell

Story on Crazy George

I'm familiar with that. With no legal heirs, I guess they felt they deserved some dough for their trouble rather than the state getting it all. It was the Lumley story, coincidentally, that got me looking for that old Disteel article again. Two very different people, but both with an odd way of having Vincent's (Lumley's according to the story, being stored in his house, disassembled or not). Not that I'm one to talk, got a few in my house, runners though, I'm just out of room.

I met George once, when he was the caretaker at a Novato auto wrecking yard. I was still a teenager, and came in one early evening for some Chevy bits. He was sitting outside in a car seat, cooking his dinner in a hub cap over an open fire. My friend peered in and said "that looks like a rat". George replied "I don't eat rats, that cat". Yummy.

pz

Monday, December 06, 2010 5:31 AM

Mike Lewin [m](#)

Story of the Auction .

I went to that auction hoping to pick up a chicken shit covered Vincent for myself. Unfortunately for me, the rest of California showed up with the same idea. Being young and unemployed at the time the bidding soon zoomed past my meager means. There was, however, a 1944 DKW. On the auction brochure it was listed as a 150 cc single cylinder 2 stroke and everybody was there for the 1000 cc 4 stroke Vins. It was incorrectly listed and is actually 350cc. The bidding was not feverish for the Deek and I got it for \$600. I still have it today.

At the time I didn't know about Crazy George's trick of removing some key part from the bikes to keep them from ever running again. He took out a clutch actuating worm gear that I eventually paid almost as much to have machined as I did for the whole bike. Years later I found one that fit even better than the machined one. It was from a Harley Hummer .

When I moved to NY I took the DKW apart and packed it in cardboard boxes which I brought as excess luggage, except the motor which i crated and shipped by rail freight. I paid \$50 excess luggage fee. Today I have to pay that much for my regular luggage!

Mike Lewin

Monday, December 06, 2010 7:59 AM

Great story Michael. You must have eventually gotten a Vin, otherwise you'd be on the DKW forum :) I have been recently contacted by, and already knew of, about half of the 19 CG Vin owners (about half those bikes being sold out of the chicken coop before the auction). We are thinking about starting a CG section..

Paul Zell

Saturday, December 04, 2010 7:25 PM

Hi Stephen,

Thanks for the photos and info on the auction. I remember hearing that Ness bought one. My C Shadow also came from the auction. Also another guy I know, Richard Bove, got a Shadow. Maybe we should start a CG chapter of the Vin club!

Cheers,

Paul Zell

5 December 2010

Dear friend

JOE WILMIT WHITE

Joe died about 15 years ago he was a friend of mine and was a real character .He had about 10 Vincent's when no one else wanted them..He also built self powered gravity cars..His best friend was Vaughn Green. One of the old school Vincent owners and very active in the North American Vincent owners club. I think he is still alive and has a least one Vincent left. He has to be pushing 90 they both live in California.

Popa jack

7 December 2010

Dear PopaJack

Fascinating all the Crazy GD reading. Did you actually meet him? Be good to get a Crazy GD chapter of the VOC club going. Bet you are missing your baby but she is safe and sound down under. Still need to send me some photos of you on The OMU816

cheers

Stephen

7 December 2010

HI FROM SNOWEY OHIO

Dear friend

Yes I met Crazy George was trying to buy a prince from him he said he would sell it and buy the time I got there her had already sold it. for 650 dollars. About crazy George I knew him well he

had 21 Vincent's none of them run and were in a big barn with about 50 other bikes lots of Norton's, remember you could buy a nice running Norton for 100 dollars. One thing he did have was a lot of rare bikes and would sell anything including his girlfriend ha ha. He told me he just picked up a lot of bikes for nothing off the street and guys called him to come and get them free. There used to be three guys who had a lot of Vincent's. I will tell you about them at another time
Popajack

Just before Disteel's death, he boasted he still had 19 Vincent's. As I left the auction empty-handed, I had a feeling 11 Vincents were still locked up somewhere out there in chicken land. I called Baker, told him of my hunch, and he invited me to help open three more of George's storage sites. Shortly I was aiding a salvage crew sifting through tons of oddities George had collected over a 30 year period. Besides the hope of finding almost a dozen more Vincent's, I was driven to root through the trash by a conversation with an old caretaker who had known George and once offered to buy a BSA Gold Star from his collection. "I never sell any of my stuff," George told him. The caretaker was sure that in addition to the Vincent's George still had several Goldies, Indians, a Brough and a number of other machines still undiscovered.

Next to the chicken coop where the auctioned bikes had been stored was another room which contained tons of oddities-old clothes, cameras, radios and appliances, unopened mail, pornography, magazines, left-handed implements, photographs, including 20 copies of our photo of shaggy George with a shaggy sheep dog, and so on. The same type of floor that had supported about five tons of motorcycles had collapsed under the weight of all this junk. The collection was piled in complete disorder from the floor to the roof. We spent a week sorting this junk-or so it was to us, but to Crazy George it must have been a treasured hoard.

The real find for me was several Vincent pieces and a Velocette that came out of the heap in instalments. First a transmission, then a head, next a cylinder, lower end, frame and so on until about 80 percent of a shaft driven OHC rigid frame KSS Velo was exposed. I marvelled over the remnants of the hopped-up motor (cylinder bored till it was eggshell thin, drilled connecting rod, recessed piston).

Then there were the bicycle transmissions. Crazy George was fascinated by molorless two-wheelers as well. Out of the debris came many unopened boxes of exotic bicycle transmissions that were developed at great expense using novel principles. George must have been the talk of Tokheim, as he had bought 16 of the gas pump firm's single plane gear clusters. They had written him letters inquiring about his application of their product to which he never replied, let alone ever opened. The company might well have wondered, as one bike distributor told me the device never did work. In addition to the Tokheim units were ten Hagan All Speeds, a forward sprocket substitute with a 2:1 range using spiral and slot satellite sprockets on roller ramp bearings. There were also eight Dana three-speeds.

At the two other stashes Baker turned up I eagerly joined in the fray in search of more revelations, now for those which told about Disteel's character as much as those which might shed light on the location of the still missing motorcycles. 'Crazy' George had me under his spell. One storage yard in San Rafael was apparently George's last packrat effort. He had only begun to pile up the types of goods found at Cotati. We found an early sixties Cadillac and two beat-up old Stepvans. He had at one time used the vans to store some of his Vincents in; their discovery empty must mean he had found some other place to secret them.

More spectacular than the finds in San Rafael were the treasures he had neatly ensconced at the Admiral Storage Company in San Francisco. Beginning in the Forties, Disteel had began carefully preserving a strange assortment of things neatly wrapped in 30 year old newspapers, puzzled together in huge wooden storage boxes: an old Victorian era doctor's exam table, a gynecologist's spreader, sexology books, antique hardback books, a huge prewar German caricature depicting doctors and scientists with lovely cadavers, bullet proof glass panels, a bomb sight, and about a hundred rifles, including a number of 1917 Springfields, many still in the cosmoline and boxes in which they had been shipped.

Lloyd Smalley of the Boyd Museum in San Rafael told me that George had become a subject of the FBI's suspicions as a result of his "gun-a-month-plan" with Sears. The local PD called him in for an interview with the Feds. As Disteel was about to be interrogated, he asked, "It's legal for Sears to sell rifles to me, isn't it? Then how can it be illegal for me to buy them?" The befuddled agents turned George loose.

Disteel seems to have been fascinated with the way sophisticated mechanical devices were put together, but not with the way they were used. He had a hundred rifles, but never bought any ammunition. A great assortment of cameras never received a roll of film. And then there were the motorcycles. He would buy them, ride them a day or two, then incarcerate them in one of his secret hide-outs.

Among the items turned up at the three sites we exhumed, we found among bundles of unopened mail and piles of documents, tax liens on dozens of pieces of property George owned. He could not have been poor, despite his eccentricity and his choice of lodgings on skid row in his final years. Just before his death he was as busy as ever, still visiting the San Rafael area and wandering the hills. He was still adding to his ratpack collection, and was in the process of painting his two vans silver from stem to stem (windows, tires and all!). The day before his death he bought a '67 VW beetle, drove it off the lot despite severe cataracts and no driver's license, and declared that he was going to paint the whole car orange.

Was Disteel insane? Without doubt he was as eccentric as a Black Lightning cam. His nature cycled from detached to lucid daily, and he had a selective hearing impairment that conveniently tuned out probing questions. Like his packrat collecting urge, held in common with many who have tasted poverty, his obsessions can make sense after a certain amount of reflection. Insane? You decide.

In any case, 18 ancient motorcycles have been released from Disteel's destructive spell. One auction buyer recently wrote me: "My 'new' Vincent touring Rapide, purchased at the auction, rose from the dead. All it took was oil and gas. It started on the second kick and idled right down to a steady beat. Of course it took some time for the dust and chicken feathers that shot out of the exhaust to settle." Another purchaser reports he's put over 2000 miles on his Disteel Vincent without a hint of trouble. The bike runs as if it were new, which, in a way, it is.

I suspect numbers of other "new" Vincents are still out there somewhere in Marin County, languishing in secret hideaways Disteel made sure it was unlikely anyone would ever find. If you're out riding through the brown hills some summer day and come across a small building with no windows and no door.....



Italy International

September 6 – 20, 2015

Currency Hedge Opportunity!

With the volatile state of some currencies around the globe, the VOC is now providing those folks from non-Euro currency countries attending the International in Italy with the facility to pre-pay part or all of their expected rally costs. This facility has only just become available.

The VOC have added an extra button at the bottom of the International Rally web page that will allow you to specify how much you would like to pay. That amount will then be held in the VOC Euro account to avoid any currency fluctuations. Go to www.voc.uk.com and click on the International rally logo. Then log in and it will be at the bottom left.

Who said it's too cold to ride?

Austrian OVR reader Michi Schartner has contributed some photos he has taken that disprove the concept of it being too cold to enjoy your Vincent.



If you get stuck in snow, just swop your gear and carry on!



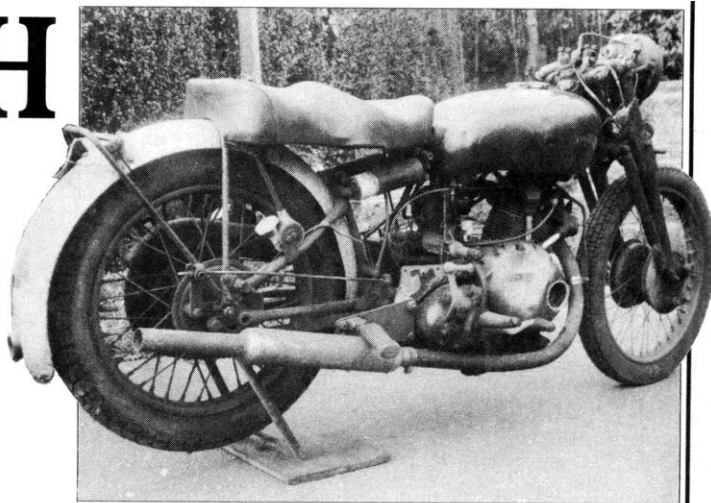
Interestingly Michi has found a way to “winterize” his Rapide, improving traction in ice and snow; and the fitting of wooden protectors ensures that the wheel rims are not damaged in the process.



In the distance is highest point in the Triglav national park of Slovenia, Mount Mangart 2,677 m. The road up there is the highest road of Slovenia with the saddle at 2,072 m. Michi told OVR that he couldn't reach the saddle as the last part of the road was still covered with meters of snow and the digging machines were still struggling to clear it – and this is in the middle of the European Summer!

Well done Michi and thank you for your great contribution to the content of this edition of OVR.

**WORTH
A 30
YEAR
WAIT?**



You bet it was! Read all about this Comet in the next edition of OVR.

Event Calendar

An overview of some upcoming rides and events that may be of interest.

If you are planning any rides or are aware of events that readers may be interested in, you may invite others to participate via the “OVR Event Calendar” column in OVR. Just drop the editor a line at OzVinReview@Gmail.com.

January 8, 2015	Bonhams Las Vegas Motorcycle Auction at Bally’s Hotel & Casino on The Strip. More information can be found at Bonhams.com/Vegas .
January 17-18 <i>Let your hair down</i>	‘High Speed Regularity @ Wakefield Park, Goulburn, NSW. Here is the chance to get your Classic Bike on a race track at any speed you like. Real casual affair. A club licence can be issued on the day. Contact Dave Large on 03- 97441111 or bjdj79@icloud if interested in being there or taking part.
January 18	RACV Great Australian Rally, Melbourne to Mornington – for all vehicles and bikes over 25 years old. Contact colin.brown@hotkey.com.au for additional information
February 6 - 8	Nulli Secundus Rally, Nug-Nug, Vic., Australia.
February 8	All British Day, Echungra, South Australia. More info at www.allbritishday.com
February 20-22	New Zealand National Motorcycle Rally @ Cromwell. contact amandastuf@vodaphone.co.nz for more info
March 8 <i>Massive</i>	Yarra Glen Swap Meet, Yarra Glen Racecourse, Victoria. Gates open @ 8am.
March 22 <i>Simply mind-blowing</i>	Williamstown Motorcycle Club will host the 18 th Annual ‘BIKES BY THE BAY’ at Seaworks, 82 Nelson Place, Williamstown. This event provides an opportunity for clubs and motorcycle enthusiasts to display their bikes and participate in this celebration of motorcycling
April 25-26 <i>Outstanding</i>	All British Rally at Newstead, Vic., Australia. More info at www.bsa.asn.au
May 9	Vintage Car Club of New Zealand: Waimea Motor Cycle Rally; contact amandastuf@vodaphone.co.nz for more info
May 23-24	The 21st NSW Vincent/Velo Rally @ the Moss Vale Caravan Park, 43-53 Willow Drive, Moss Vale NSW (02) 4868 1099. Attendees are responsible for making their own booking at the park. There is no entry form or formal stuff, but an email to Dennis Quinlan, vegavoxbanjo@gmail.com would assist if you intend coming and have made a booking..
September 6 – 20	VOC International Rally, Italy; <i>for VOC members only.</i>
Remember	If you are planning any rides or are aware of events that readers may be interested in, you may invite others to participate via the “OVR NewsFlash” service and also the “Events Calendar” column in OVR. Just drop the editor a line at OzVinReview@Gmail.com .

Wanted! Your ideas about format or content of OVR. What about submitting your constructive suggestions or better still your contributions in the form of Ride Reports, Original Stories, Your Technical Experiences and such like to the OVR editor? You do not need to be a literary wizard as the editor will, only if essential, tidy things up for you.

Likewise, if you are thinking of arranging any rides or events, again drop a line with details to the editor who can then publicise them through OVR newsflashes and/or entry in the “Event Calendar” section of OVR.

Contact the editor by email OzVinReview@gmail.com.

FRESH AIR ON THE D-STRING

Variations on a Theme by Vincent

by "RAB" COOK



(Above) Approaching-driver's-eye-view of the "Black Prince" and (right) the "unclothed" Vincent—the latest of a line of "Black Shadows" springs to life.



FOR the very good and simple reason that I was the first person ever to order one, Vincents were good enough to accept a number of pound notes from me, via an agent, in exchange for the first production "Black Prince." And for exactly the same reasons, my friend Eric Ballantine is the proud and happy owner of the first production Series "D" "Black Shadow." Bring the two together, and you have a very interesting day indeed, and come to think of it, we haven't had such fun since the time your Uncle Rabby made goulash in the pressure cooker!

But let us leave the goulash adhering to the kitchen ceiling and get around to these modern examples of the two-wheeled express—starting with Eric's "Shadow." Starting—that's the operative word there, because these latest Vincents get tick-tocking at the first prod, provided you've remembered to switch on the coil ignition, that is. Ah—those years of magneto! Very nice, though, to have a "thousand" twin which will answer right away to the commencer on a morning when the puddles are icing over and a down-gradient would have been the only practical method of starting a Series "C." Good point number one, then, and with the clutch home and the machine whuttering up the road, points two to umpteen become very, very obvious.

For one thing, she doesn't roll at low speeds like the Vincents of yore; the clutch feeds in as smooth as silk, with none of that

"he-was-here-a-minute-ago" stuff, and the transmission is as smooth as a second-hand car dealer. A whole heap of modifications contribute to this—amongst them, the coil ignition, with fatter sparks and bigger plug gaps, "Monobloc" carburettors, an engine-shaft shock absorber with softer and longer movement and a laminated primary-chain tensioner. As well as this, there is a lot more "poke" at these low revs, so that where second gear was previously required, third does quite happily, and the bike will tick-tock through traffic in top gear at 25 m.p.h. without protest.

But whang the grip open and you know you're on a Vinc! You surge off along the highway just as rapidly as ever, and maybe more so, because the power which roars in from 50 in top seems better than before. Can't tell you more than that, because Eric is my friend, the bike wasn't run-in, and I want Eric to stay my friend! A point not possibly, generally realized is that a big Vincent is a much better machine if you progressively run-in for at least 2,000 miles, but as you start this process at 50 m.p.h., life isn't so bad.

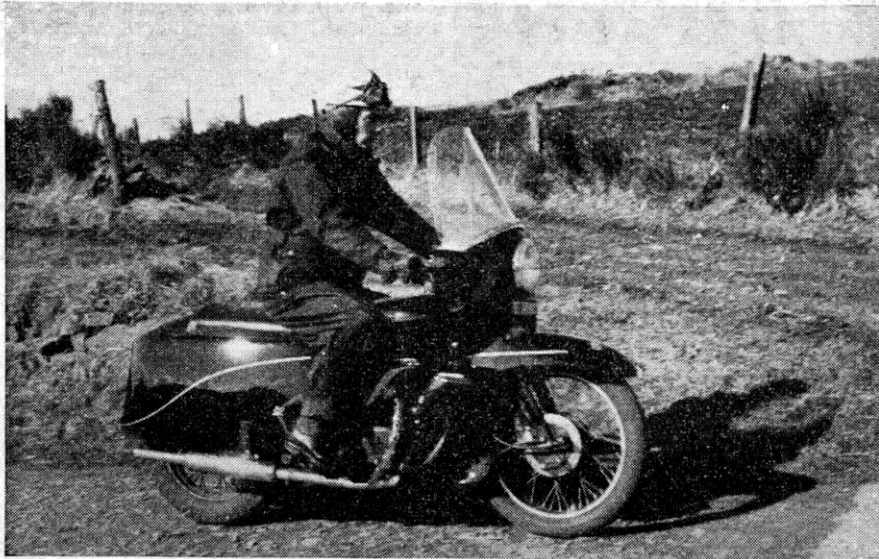
With six inches of travel at the rear and softer front springs, road-holding is a delight. The Armstrong dampers are set to give heavy damping, so that if the rear of the machine is pressed down by hand (which you can quite easily do), it comes back to its original position s-l-o-w-l-y. An interesting point is that, if the rider bounces up and

down on the seat, both front and rear suspensions deflect equally with no dip in favour of either end. Obviously, a lot of research there. It all adds up to the greatest comfort I've known on any fast machine, absolutely no pitching on bumpy bends, and a bicycle which is much faster through any given bend than its ancestors.

Made from spring steel strips with a felt and rubber overlay, the new seat, which is nearly four inches longer than the "C" type, locates the rider positively wherever he chooses to sit, and should be very, very comfortable no matter how long the journey. There was no opportunity to try the lights on the "Shadow," but Eric said they were good, and experience since then on the "Prince" has shown there to be good length of beam, and sufficient side spread to prevent that feeling of hurtling into the black unknown.

The new handle-operated stand can be worked with one finger (as I keep on demonstrating to the natives), but might be better with some form of lock because, sure as fate, some small boy will eventually want to know "What happens when I pull this thing?"—and he'll find out!

Summing-up, the "D" "Shadow" is a "C" with the corners smoothed off, as a result of the makers having listened to riders and taken careful note of their desires. As a vice-president of the Vincent Owners Club, I have contact with over a thousand people who ride these machines, and know all their



"The speedometer, and the grass beside your feet provide the only evidence of high-speed travel. . . ."

criticisms by heart. Suffice to say that I cannot think of any "if only" which is not now met by the Series "D."

And now to the "Black Prince"—my very own "Glass Mountain"! Several items have been altered on these machines since the last Show, and right away one notices the finish, which is now impossible to fault in any way. Your cutie can leave her mirror at home and use the panels on your "Prince" as a panoramic substitute.

A re-styling has taken place in a subtle manner which transforms the appearance of the whole machine, but yet it is difficult to notice right away what has actually been done. I'll tell you (I'm like that). The tail cowl is now deeper, and when the machine is ridden the lower edge is parallel to the road. The foot-shield "beaks" are a bit deeper, the instrument panel has been re-styled and now looks "right," and the hand-muffs no longer point upwards like the ears of an eager pussy. Poking around, you find that the panels are thicker, well finished on the inside, and well-rounded edges show that jig-trimming is well worth while. Even so, the "Prince" will never appear so good in a photograph as he does "in the plastic"—he just has to be seen in three dimensions to be appreciated. During my first week of ownership, three non-motorcyclists whipped out handkerchiefs to remove a speck of dust from the cowlings, and in all three cases these kind people admitted that the action had been subconscious until I pointed it out to them. The "Prince" is like that—he "gets" you.

On the road, the handling is naturally similar to that of the new "Shadow," although the "Prince" has a little less unsprung weight on each wheel.

Sitting on the machine with the road vanishing under the dash is a very pleasant experience indeed. With the "D," comfort and a complete lack of any sound from the motor, other than a faint exhaust burble behind you, the feeling is that, whilst we are just sitting there doing nothing, we might as well be reading *The "Motor Cycling" Year Book* (plug)! The speedometer and the grass beside your feet provide the only evidence

of high-speed travel, and somehow you want to go faster and faster all the time.

We had quite an argument, Eric and I. Cook reckons the "Prince," complete with screen, will be faster than the "Shadow" with its rider lying flat. Naturally, Eric doesn't agree, but I was travelling over roads which I know very well indeed, and speeds from "this corner" to "that fence post" were noted. We shall see.

Which is rather beside the point. The screen suits me fine, and would suit a smaller rider as well. For the taller mortals of this world, a deflector is available for clamping to the top, and that item works very well indeed.

Naturally, everyone wants to know how a "Prince" handles in a gusty side-wind at speed. Previous writers have stated that there is no noticeable wind effect, and I would hereby confirm that and also amplify it a bit. With this question in every mind, it is only to be expected that the rider is more than usually critical of wind effect, and the twitch which would throw him half over the roadway on a "naked" machine and be ignored might be condemned on the "Prince." We are but human. But here was I, able to indulge in direct comparisons, and the carefully considered verdict is this: the "Prince" is *NOT* swung from the chosen line any more than a non-enclosed machine without a screen, and, comparing it with an open bicycle fitted with an ordinary windscreen, it is very much steadier. This at moderate speeds. At high speeds, the "Prince" is definitely, repeat *definitely*, steadier in a bad side-wind than any other machine I have ridden, and that adds up to quite a few now.

Just why this should be, when we hear of racing machines which twitch around, is something I cannot readily answer, but it may be worth pointing out that the front cowl moves with the wheel, and that the windscreen has a rudder effect on the front wheel, but not the complete bicycle. And there is the additional point that Vincents started out with a machine which would already steer exceedingly well, and they made an astronomical number of modifications to

the front mudguard and screen until Ted Davis eventually told Mr. Vincent: "We're there!"

There is one thing about the "Prince" which is new to me. Fitted with slightly longer handlebars than the "Shadow" (suitable, in my opinion, for high-speed side-car work as well as solo), it does *NOT* like you to grip these tightly, otherwise there is a slight—very slight—deviation from the straight and narrow. And, of course, you shouldn't grasp the bars tightly, but habit initially makes one forget that a relaxed grip will not result in the rider being swept off by the gale.

As a crowd-stopper, the clothed Vincent is unequalled. Riding through a busy street makes one think of a small whirlwind passing over autumn leaves, such is the manner in which the heads whip round, be they on the shoulders of old ladies or Giles-type schoolboys.

But, you know, enclosure isn't just a "gimmick"—it keeps you dry and warm, and that front mudguard keeps the motor clean, so that, with the aid of the improved breathing and consequent oil-tightness, the inquirer who peers inside the cowlings finds a lack of dirt which keeps him quiet!

There is another aspect, too. The evening after our romps, I wiped the dust from my machine in a matter of five minutes. Eric had to get up early the next morning to clean his!

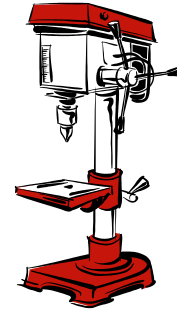
We got to discussing things, Eric and I—why had he purchased a "Shadow" instead of a "Prince"? Well—he uses a car for business and is purely a sporting rider. If it is raining, the bike can stay in the garage and the Riley comes out instead. But he might fit cowlings to it later on, and all the mounting points are there in any case.

And why did I have a "Prince" instead of a "Shadow"? I, too, have a car, but use it only for town work, carrying heavy loads and relatives. When I point my front wheel at London, I have 600 miles in front of me—miles thick with Diesel fumes, rain probably, but always the face-blackening fumes, and a day in which to do the journey. With enclosure, I can now arrive looking like me instead of like uncooked tripe. I can walk into a hotel without first having to wash myself in "Gunk"—and I am sure that my physical condition will be good and my mental reactions almost as rapid as when I set out. Best of all, no matter what the weather may be, I can whip a wet sponge from a plastic bag in the tool tray and rapidly have a clean motorcycle.

Criticisms? My somewhat non-issue right hand finds the air levers a bit tricky to operate, but with generous flooding the machine will start without these being closed, so I'll excuse that one. I detest right-hand horn buttons for the same reason, and although there were some minute ripples on the screen when the machine was new, these have rapidly answered to two polishings with "Silvo." One thing I must do is to fit rubber or alloy patches to the sides of the tail cowl where a pillion rider's feet might damage that beautiful stove enamel. And maybe I can fit a lock to the seat-cum-toolbox-lid sometime.

There it is, then. Thank you, Eric, for the use of your "Shadow," but, when the man Ballantine had to borrow a pullover and a pair of my slacks to combat the cold on the way home . . . die? I nearly laughed!

Workshop Wisdom



REJUVENATING A BATTERY

a contribution by Jack Weaver

Despite wide held views to the contrary, it is possible to bring some failed lead-acid batteries back to life. I've had a pretty good success rate (80%) with the methods below, which are based on those in "EMERS". "EMERS" is a colloquial name given to the vast collection of general maintenance and servicing notes used by the Commonwealth Army's Mechanical and Electrical Engineers units, eg RAEME in Australia

The two major causes of battery failure are internal short circuits and sulphation.

Internal Shorts cause "dead cells" and are due to conductive material flaking off the plates and building up in the sediment space until it forms an electrical bridge between the positive and negative plates. Sometimes, evidence of this build-up can be seen as rising plate separators.

Sulphation is due to the reaction of sulphate from the lead plates, producing lead sulphate, which resists normal charging. It is caused by old age, insufficient fluid or standing in a discharged condition.

While these problems can be treated separately, both are age related and likely to occur together. A combined treatment procedure is therefore advocated, as below.

1. Fill the battery with deionised tap water, distilled water, rainwater or refrigerator defrost water, and add $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of Glaubers Salt (Sodium Sulphate from your pharmacist) to each cell. For a car battery add 1 to $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons per cell.
2. Charge up your motorcycle battery at 1 amp for 24 hours. (Car batteries at 5 amp)
3. Discharge the battery by leaving a 5-watt globe (approximately) connected across the terminals. (15W maximum globe for car batteries)
4. Shake the battery to dislodge and suspend any sediment present and pour out the Glaubers solution.
5. Repeat steps 1 through 4 until no sediment appears in the drained water.
6. Flush once more with deionised water, drain then fill the cells with new battery acid of 1.2 specific gravity (35%) from a service station or auto parts store.
7. Add $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon Glaubers Salt to each cell, charge the battery and put in service. ($\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 teaspoon full for a car battery)

300 to 400 gs (1 pound) of Glaubers Salt should be sufficient for a number of motorcycle batteries or just one 12-volt car battery. The most recent battery I "restored" with this method was an 11-year-old 6 volt motor bike type, which had packed up and stood for 3 — 4 years. Its revival was, I must admit, a great surprise.

Stevenage – A Decade of Delight

Reminisces of Ted Davies from the early 1980's

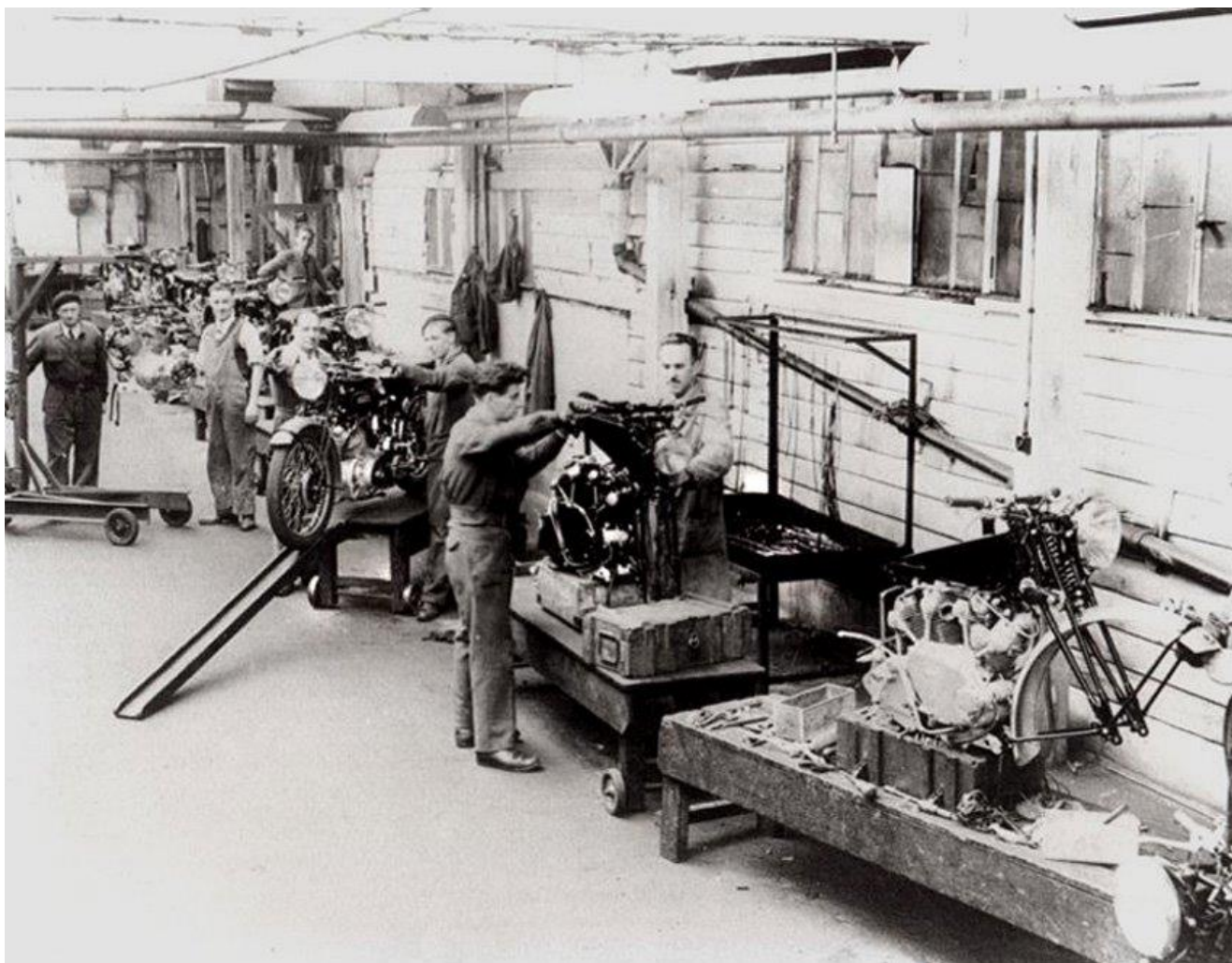
TO work at one of the famous factories was the ambition of many motorcyclists after the Second World War. The factories were scattered from Kent to Yorkshire, and the choice was very largely yours. Names like Norton, AJS, Panther, Ariel, Vincent, Triumph, BSA,. Velocette and Matchless were on the tanks of bikes and, in both road and off-road competition results, appeared worldwide. Every name conjured up a mystic magic in the minds of bike-starved returning servicemen, myself included.

Although Pa Norton's products loomed large in my thoughts, having raced a 350 Manx (or an International as the bike was known pre-war) at Donington and Cadwell, it was the Vincent HRD Company down in Stevenage that was to prove irresistible. Resumption of my racing activities in 1946 was with a 1938 Series A IT-replica Vincent, and no doubt this experience, coupled with my use at the time of one of the first Series B twins as a road bike, influenced my decision the following year to present myself for inspection by Jack Williams, who was manager at Stevenage at that time. Jack, who was to go on to greater things with AMC, had been a pre-war Vincent works rider and was a perfect gentleman at all times. He was only one of the great team of enthusiasts I met during my all-too-brief initial visit, all of whom were to become life-long friends. Money, or the company's lack of it, was slightly embarrassing for Jack, so such a distasteful topic was quickly disposed of and my first half an hour was Spent discussing bikes and racing in particular. Then we went on a circular tour of the Old North Road factory, a section of which is still preserved under the Ancient Monuments Act.



So began a decade of delight; rarely did one have that Monday morning feeling, and never once was the word 'strike' even mentioned, although I must confess it passed through my mind when we made the Firefly, the bicycle with clip-on motor, especially when it came to the durability test programme. However, they say necessity is the mother of invention, and ways more amenable than riding them were found to test the wretched little things.

The V-twin that emerged in 1947 (of which 11,000 were eventually made) from such small beginnings nearly 20 years earlier was quite sensational for those days. Faster than most racing bikes on 'pool' (72 octane) petrol, it surely stole the Lucas slogan, 'King of the Road'. It was a different story from today's situation — in 1947 you got off your racer and on to a road bike if you wanted to go really quickly, and with deserted roads and no speed limits you could do, and did, just that! Averages on public roads equivalent to racing speeds were put up by Vincent testers with frequent monotony, but perhaps this was not so surprising when it is remembered that many of the riders were successful racers in their own right in Ireland, the Isle of Man and on mainland circuits. Yes, not only did Stevenage attract racers, it produced them and, regrettably, killed a few off.



But I'm rambling on too fast — this is a reminiscence of what it was really like to work behind that magic-sounding name (painted in gold, of course) on the end wall of the old factory, which today still butts onto the now-defunct Great North Road. Those walls which resounded to the off-beat exhaust throb of every Vincent ever made now imprison a class of reluctant schoolboys, two of whom are my own grandsons, both schoolboy scramblers. Working hours of eight till five, with overtime available most nights and on Saturday mornings, was not as dreary as it sounds, In fact for me and many others in the early days you only knew you had worked overtime when you got your pay packet.

Perhaps in retrospect I am seeing everything through rose-coloured specs, but then I was more fortunate than many, for after a relatively short spell in engine assembly and other sections, I was involved in test and development, with my own racing activities nicely filling in the weekends and holidays. (My wife is still putting up with something similar over 30 years later, albeit on a much milder note these days.)

The Vincent HRD Co existed primarily to make motorcycles for motorcyclists. And it wasn't too difficult a task when matters were guided by such people as Phil Irving, at 76 still happily and

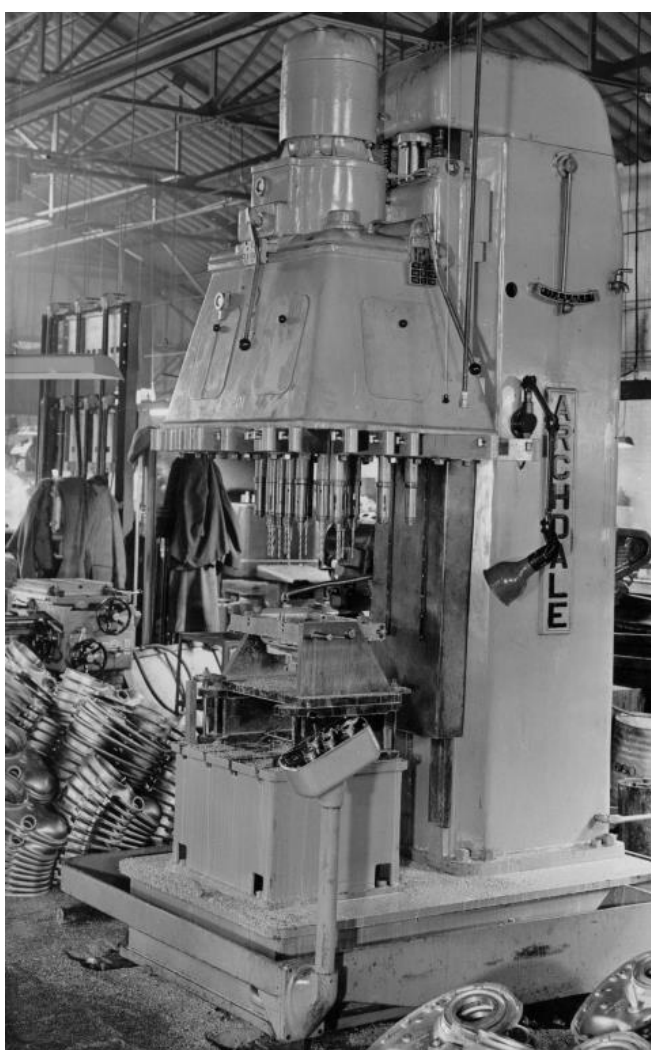
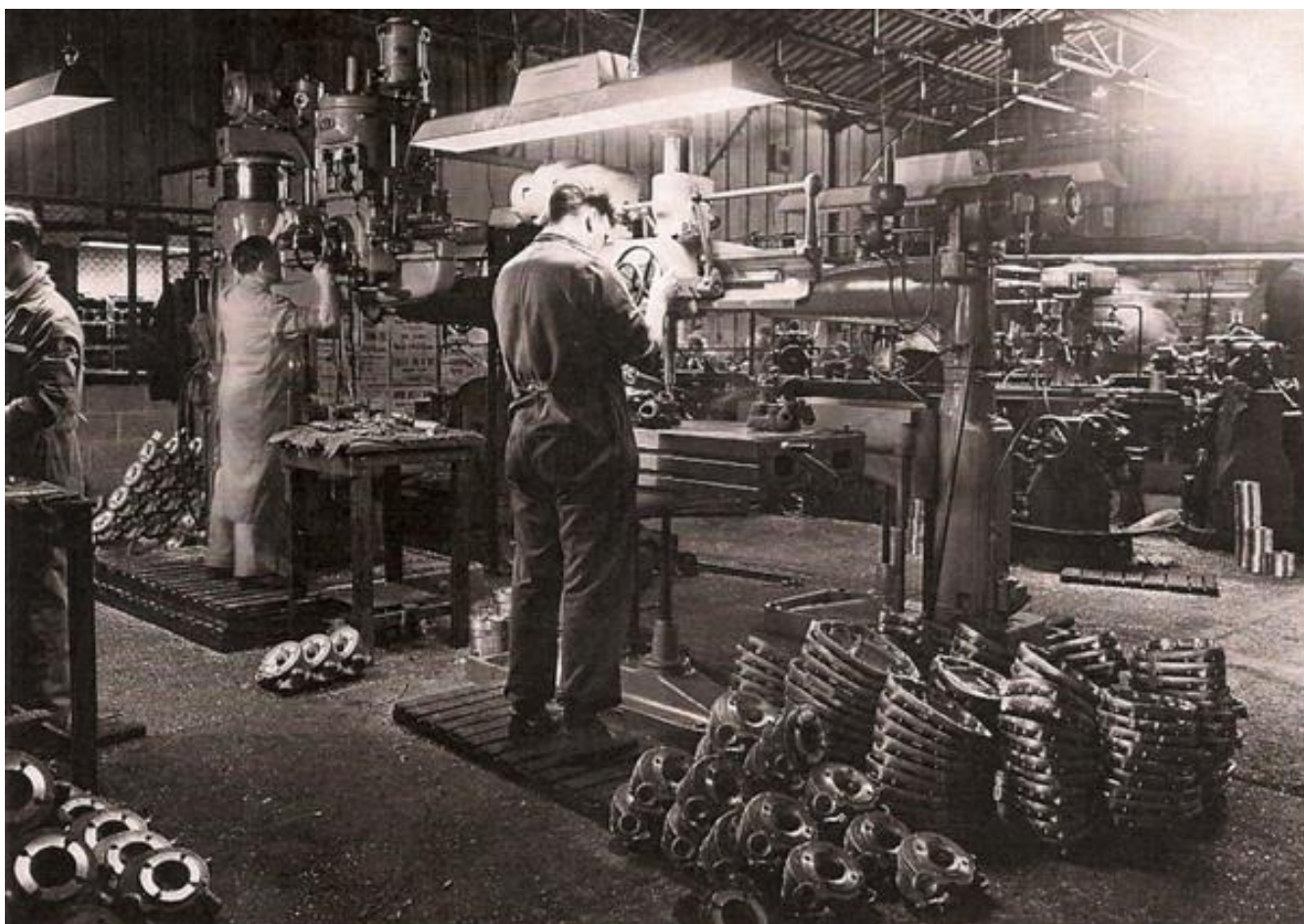
very actively with us, Ted Hampshire, George and Cliff Brown, Norman Brewster, Matt Wright, Dennis Minett, Jim Sugg, Paul Richardson and Jack Williams. Phil Vincent himself, who was to go down as one of the greats in motorcycling history, was not, as many may imagine, an all-powerful, domineering figure who demanded total dedication from us all. Dedication seemed to, and seems still, to come from within each individual once he or she becomes involved with the Stevenage product. It was more of a family spirit. For example, in a recent letter to MPH, the club magazine, Elfrida Vincent described the scene very well when she wrote how much comfort Phil had received from the huge Vincent 'family' who gathered round during his long illness, and how the 'family' had comforted her after his death.



With such a team, making the bikes was easy — but making money was not. Had the acquisition of money been the prime motive behind all who worked at Vincent's we would rapidly have given Stevenage a wide berth.

Just half a mile away from the Great North Road was the No 2 factory at Fishers Green where all the machining, plating and enamelling took place. Vincent's made or processed a very high percentage of their entire machine, including the hydraulic dampers and the stove enamelling (Carly colour you like as long as it's black'), George (Met, who still lives in Stevenage, was in control of the latter department, and was put in the enamelling shop 'temporarily' long before the war and left when he was 65. Using Pinching and Johnson paint, George did an unbeatable job unequalled anywhere today on a production basis.

With this conviction that eventually hundreds of Vincents would roll off the production lines weekly, Phil Vincent had tooled up the plant to do just that. The fact was that bike production ran at such low levels that we had the capacity to machine all of the Standard-Triumph car company's brake drums in addition to the bikes' requirements, as well as make or machine many other components for De-Havilland, the Coal Board, and other concerns. These additional activities, plus the fuel injection Picador (a radio-controlled aircraft engine) and the airborne lifeboat engine (both Ministry contracts) helped keep the wolf from the door.



Bike production ran at around 15 per week for the first year I was with the company, rising to a maximum of 60 a week, by which time the quality was beginning to suffer and the cream of the initial assembly team had moved on to greener pastures, such as BRM, Jaguar, Rover, Rolls-Royce and Vauxhall, where many still work today. Among the apprentices was one J Surtees, who was to become world champion after making a brilliant showing early in his career with a home-built Grey Flash. They came from far and wide to work at Vincent's — Australia, the Continent, the USA — and few failed to better themselves after they left, and even fewer would not admit to feeling just a little proud at having worked there.

In no way resembling the modern factories that exist today in Japan, the original Vincent works consisted of buildings, relatively ramshackle, that were not averse to admitting the odd downpour through the roof or even beneath the doors as the rain water ran down the sloping yard. Amenities were conspicuous by their absence — canteen tea had its uniquely distinctive flavour. The process of melting the resin out of the exhaust pipes after bending was suspected as the cause, as the welding and pipe bending shop run by Bill Munsen was under the same roof as the tiny canteen! Out of these premises that outwardly — and inwardly for that matter — looked like a

blacksmith's shop, came thousands of triangulated, cantilever, monoshock frames which were eventually to be copied some thirty years later on the super-automated, computer-controlled, MIG-welding Yamaha production lines. More corrugated roofing sheltered Dennis Minett's race shop, from which emerged such devices as the Burns and Wright world record-breaking Black Lightning, works Grey Flashes, and other projects.

At the top of the yard stood the substantial brick-fault test and dynamometer house which was used predominantly in later years to develop the Picador engine, plus the odd blown twin as a 'twilighter'. Further tumbledown areas housed the drawing office, Archie Feast's stores, Ted Hampshire's engine and cycle assembly section, Jim Sugg's production road test department, and Norman Brewster's service department, it was all very homely and sufficiently disjointed to defy any form of efficiency, and yet it all ran like clockwork, due in no small measure to the people who controlled and operated it all, who were in turn prompted by their pride and faith in the product.

New models came and went — the Meteor, the Comet, Series Cs and Ds, a host of two-stroke power plants and the devices they drove, the three-wheeler and the infamous Firefly. Always Philip Vincent was in the picture, a brilliant mind fettered with mundane day-to-day business matters, until those very mundane matters were to call a halt to all that happiness at Stevenage and eventually close the doors for good.



Now, with the eighties upon us and a quarter of a century having passed since bike production stopped, Phil Vincent, Ted Hampshire, Jack Williams, Paul Richardson, Norman Brewster, Archie Feast, George Brown and many others are gone for ever.

It is left to the Vincent owners new and old to keep the flag flying — a task they do superbly with the same dedicated enthusiasm that started the whole story 50 years ago.

(Remember , this item was written in the early 1980's – editor)

An Open and Shut Case.

a contribution from *The Black Sheep*

When tuning our Vincents we all seem to do the same sort of things. We check the ignition, we check the valve clearances, we check the spark plug and we check the carburettor. There is one thing however that, while it only needs to be done just once¹, it is vitally important – and I refer to valve timing – and I bet you have never *really* checked it.

Valve timing is usually set up as part of a major engine overhaul and in many cases the timing marks on the various timing case components are relied on. There are timing marks on ET49, the half time pinion, on ET50, the idler gear and on ET157 the camshaft pinions. In addition there may also be timing marks on ET141 the breather pinion. With the passage of time, random often undocumented replacement of parts and sometimes the creation of additional marks to these components, the timing marks on them cannot always be relied on. I discovered this the hard way when I rebuilt my motor and assembled the timing case, relying in the timing marks.

For quite a while following acquisition, my bike seemed to lack that “edge” in performance and also to run rather hot as evidenced by the blue of the exhaust pipe. After I (eventually) checked the valve timing I found that it was out by a whopping 10 degrees. The valves were opening and closing 10 degrees earlier than designed – that’s almost 2 teeth on the camshaft pinion. In “*Tuning For Speed*” Phil Irving explains just how to check the valve timing,

“ For the valves, methods vary: some cams are ground with "quietening curves" at the start and finish of lift, which give a very slow take-up, making the actual "lift" and "close" points difficult to determine.

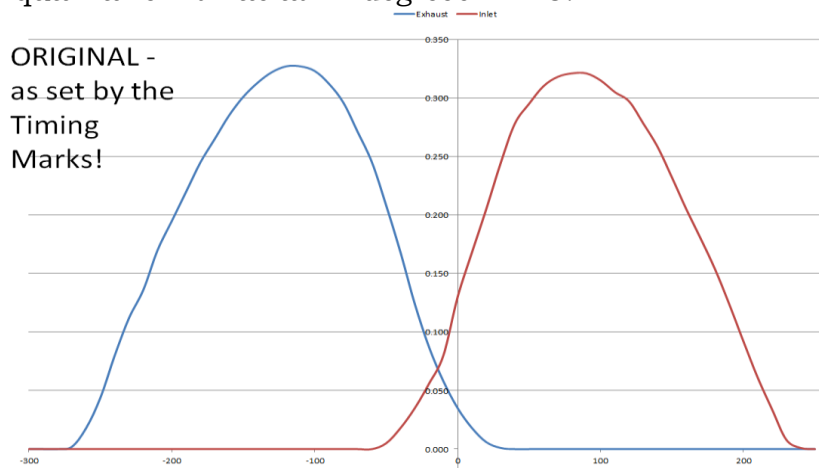
On Vincent engines, it is not possible to measure the clearances with feelers; the method adopted is to set up a dial gauge in contact with the valve stem, and to adjust (tighten) the tappets so that the valve is lifted 1 to 2 thou., making sure, of course, that the follower is on the base circle of the cam and not just at the start of lift. Then turn the engine until the valve lifts a further 0.005 in., and read off the timing at that point. This method is the one which should be used on any engine to get a really accurate reading of the valve timing. The crank angle at which each valve reaches full lift, too, should be measured, and also the full height of lift of both valves and the amount each is open at both bottom and top dead centres with correct running clearances. You will then have a fairly complete picture of the valve-timing diagram, though to do the job properly, readings should be taken at, say, 2° intervals: the lift curve can then be plotted on squared paper and the effect of any subsequent cam modifications will be shown very clearly by plotting the new lift curves on the same sheet. “

Phil talks about using squared paper but I found the use of my computer and a spreadsheet program like Excel made life very easy. With the UFM removed I first fitted a timing disk (correctly mapped to the crank position) and a dial gauge on top of the inlet valve then starting at Top Dead Centre I slowly rotated the crankshaft in 5 degree increments and noted the lift at each position. While this is not exactly as described by Phil I believe it has provided sufficient accuracy for my purposes.

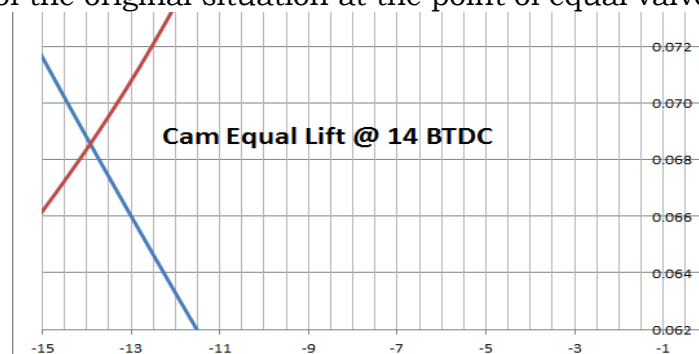
Having completed the data collection on the inlet valve I then moved the dial gauge to the exhaust valve and repeated the data gathering exercise. At the conclusion of data gathering I loaded all of it (over 180 data sets) into Excel and used the inbuilt graphing capability, I could clearly see exactly what I was dealing with. It also allowed my, by manipulation of the raw data, to see the effect of changes to the advance or retard of the valve timing without the need for further laborious measuring. And yes, the use of 2 dial gauges may have made the task easier – but I only had one.

¹ Once with the existing camshafts BUT must be repeated if a different camshaft is subsequently fitted

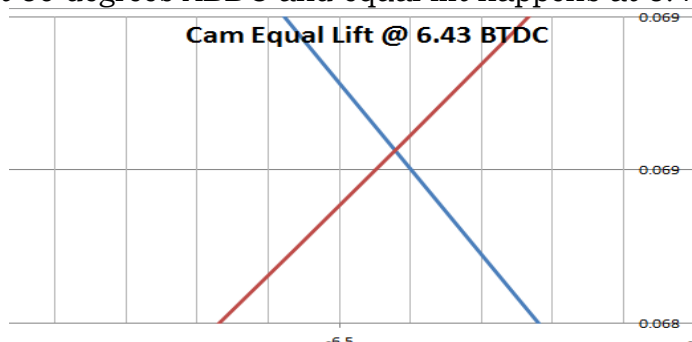
Here was the situation before I took any remedial action. It is significant to note that the inlet valve 0.005" closing point happens at 52.25 degrees ABDC, whereas it should be between 60 to 64 degrees ABDC. Equal valve lift was at 14 degrees BTDC.



And here is a close up of the original situation at the point of equal valve lift



Moving the camshaft sprocket by one tooth changed the situation so that the inlet valve 0.005" closing now happens at 60 degrees ABDC and equal lift happens at 6.4 degrees BTDC



I have settled on this given that in *Tuning For Speed* it is suggested that within 2 degrees of the target setting is acceptable; and I am only 2 ½ degrees away from the optimum position.

By manipulation of the observed data I have been able to see that further tuning of the valve timing by means of the vernier adjustment available through the half time pinion slots could allow me to achieve the inlet valve 0.005" closing happening at 62.5 degrees ABDC which is slap bang in the middle of the suggested range² and equal lift happening 4 degrees BTDC. This is something I may do at some time in the future³.

Having all this data provides an additional benefit. Once the UFM is in place it is impossible to fit a dial gauge to the inlet valve BUT it is still possible to fit one to the exhaust valve – and with the valve timing data recorded I know exactly the relationship between the two valves – so if I want to do further fine tuning of the valve timing, simply by measuring what's happening to the exhaust valve I can extrapolate to exactly what is happening with the inlet valve.

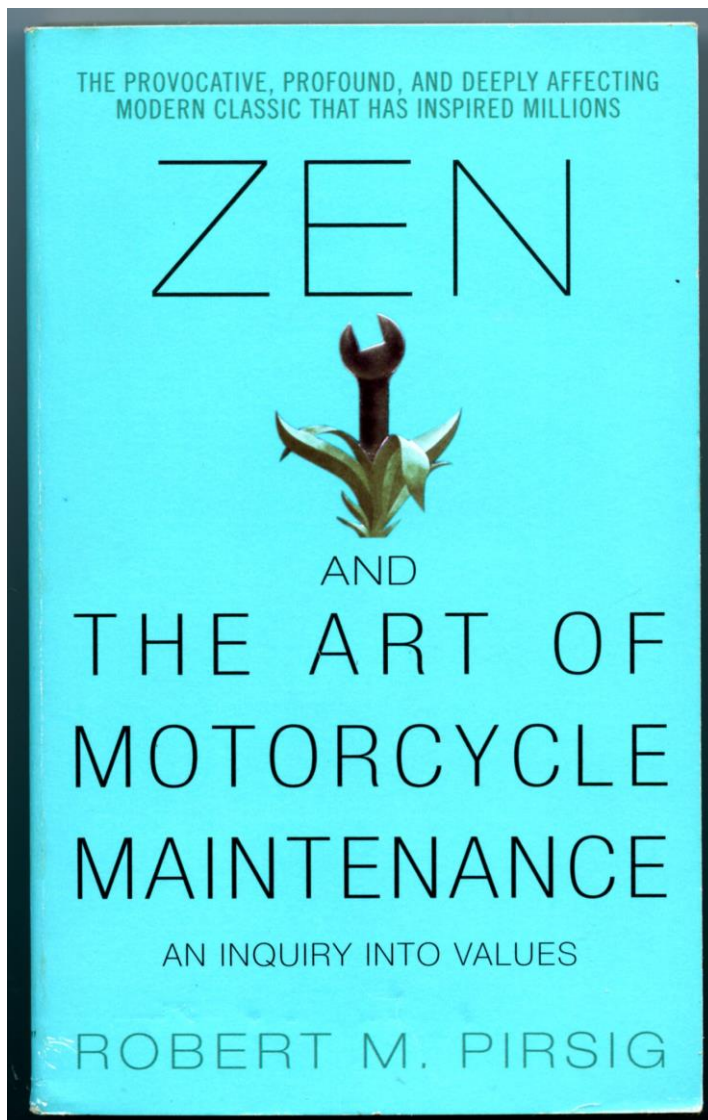
November 2014

² See the Appendix, Table 1, in Richardson, page 201 in my First edition.

³ In "Tuning For Speed" PEI suggests the closing point of the inlet valve is the most important setting for the camshaft.

ZEN And The Art of Motorcycle Maintenance,

an inquiry into values by Robert Pirsig



Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance is the self-told story of a middle-aged man and his son, Chris, who go on a motorcycling trip. They journey from Minnesota to California, taking the back roads and sleeping overnight in motels or camping. The man describes what it is like to hear the wind moving across the plains, to see birds rise up from marshes next to the road, to ride through a ferocious storm, and to breathe the fresh air of a mountain above the tree line. He tells also of the people that they meet, the towns they stop in, and the quarrels and conversations of the journey.

There is nothing particularly remarkable about the narrator (who is never given a name but assumed to be the author), who is now a writer of technical manuals living a normal existence. However, with the miles come snatches of memory of having travelled the same roads before, fragments which alert the reader to a deeper story.

Along with the record of the trip itself come the narrator's philosophical reflections, which are intended to slow the reader down to a pace at which important things can be absorbed and discussed.

Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance is a book to read while on a trip of your own, or when you find yourself at a crossroads in life.

Easy to read, although not always easy to understand, it is inspirational in a no frills way. What is the meaning of the title? Zen is a form of Buddhism that does not look towards great enlightenments or ecstasies, instead suggesting that the soul grows through actively engaging with life as it is. In this case it is the narrator's maintenance of his motorbike that intriguingly expresses his understanding of how to approach life.

Much of the book focuses on a rather surprising topic: quality. The narrator recounts taking his motorcycle to a workshop and reluctantly handing it over to a crew of young men playing loud music. Instead of fixing the machine, they butcher it, and he learns a lesson: it is the attitude towards a technological problem, not simply rational knowledge of how a thing works, that makes all the difference. Merely going by the manual is a clumsy, low-quality approach. Thereafter, he did the work himself.

It's perhaps no surprise to learn that Pirsig studied at Bozeman and struggled with mental illness, himself undergoing electro-convulsive therapy. He also had a son called Chris - the book turns out to be deeply autobiographical and I hadn't appreciated that before sitting down to write this review. Love it or hate it, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* stands as a remarkable work. And yes, I would recommend reading it.

ZEN and the art of motorcycle maintenance is available from a number of sources, including Abebooks.com for under \$10.

MOTORCYCLE SHOW PROUDLY PRESENTED BY WILLIAMSTOWN MOTORCYCLE CLUB

BIKES BY THE BAY



22nd MARCH 2015

22nd March 2015, Seaworks, 82 Nelson Place Williamstown. 10am to 3pm.

'IT'S ALL ABOUT THE BIKES'

This event is a family day out and provides an opportunity for clubs and motorcycle enthusiasts to display their bikes and participate in this celebration of Motorcycling. 'Bikes By the Bay' celebrates Motorcycles of all kinds including Road, Race, Dirt and Custom.

BIKES, FOOD, DRINKS, RAFFLES AND MUSIC - IT DOESN'T GET ANY BETTER!!

\$5 entry fee, kids under 12 free. All funds raised will be donated to local charities that assist the Old and the Young.

For more info email us at info@wmcc.org.au or see www.wmcc.org.au
Melway ref 56 E10. Clubs and Groups by prior arrangement only.

Buy, Swap n' Sell

If you have anything that you want to buy, swap or sell you can now do so, free of cost, in this section of OVR. All you need do is send a email to the editor of OVR with the text of your advertisement. OVR will NOT be providing any editorial or corrections – what you send is what will be published. Of course OVR cannot accept any responsibility for anything to do with the items advertised – that's a buyer/seller matter. Items will be listed in 2 consecutive editions of OVR.

Reader, Dave Hulstone has the following items for sale,

- Conway's Anti-Sumping Valve, brand new, never used; I purchased 4 of these in error. Cost me A\$100 each, will sell for just A\$50 each.
- Brand New, made in India, Vincent Fuel Tank, unpainted, for just A\$400. It fits but you are encouraged to try it on your bike before you buy.

If you are interested call Dave on 0404458470, who will ship worldwide at cost. Items are located in Torquay, Victoria, Australia.

Service Providers

The Service Providers listed have been used with a degree of satisfaction by OVR readers in the past. Just because they are listed does not imply an endorsement of them by OVR. Service providers are not charged a fee for this service nor can service providers themselves request that their information be included, though they may request that an entry referring to them be removed.

Spares:

V3 Products, Australia: (aka Neal Videan) has an extensive range of top quality Vincent Spares including multiplate clutches, oil leak eliminator kits, socket head tappet adjusters, paper element oil filters and lots more. Ships worldwide. Email for a price list to nvidean@optusnet.com.au

Vin-Parts International, UK: (aka Russel & Debbie Kemp) has an extensive range of excellent Vincent Spares. Ships Worldwide. Email for a price list to russell.kemp@btconnect.com and see their web site for additional information: www.vinpartsinternational.co.uk

Coventry Spares Ltd, USA: Fantastic service and deep product knowledge plus extensive range of excellent Vincent Spares and tools. Ships Worldwide. See website for more information <http://www.thevincentparts.com>

Conway Motors Ltd, UK: Anti-Sumping Valves, Comet Multi-Plate clutch conversions plus an extensive range of excellent Vincent Spares. Ships Worldwide. Email for more information steve@conway-motors.co.uk

VOC Spares Company Ltd, UK: Full range of Vincent Spares. Ships Worldwide. Visit their web site for more information <http://www.vincentspares.co.uk>.

Union Jack Motorcycles, Australia: Full range of Triumph, Amal and control cable parts, plus an extensive range of Vincent parts. Ships worldwide. More info at the website www.unionjack.com.au

Paul Goff, UK: A massive range of electrical spares and replacements including 6 and 12V quartz Halogen bulbs, LED lamps, solid state voltage regulators and lots lots more. Ships Worldwide. PayPal accepted. See Paul's website for more information www.norbsa02.freeuk.com

Pablo's Motorcycle Tyres, Australia: Road, Classic, Road Racing, Classic Racing, Enduro, Motocross, Speedway, Trials and Slicks....and if they haven't got it - they'll get it! For more info see their web site www.pablos.com.au

Nuts n Bolts:

Acme Stainless Steel, UK: All stainless steel fasteners are machined to original samples supplied by customers and clubs over the years to enable us to keep your machine looking authentic and rust free! Ships Worldwide. More info at their web site www.acmestainless.co.uk

Peter Barker, UK: Extensive range of nuts, bolts and fittings in Stainless Steel for Vincents and other classic bikes; all sourced in the UK by this enthusiast. Email for a catalogue hrd998@hotmail.com

Classic Fasteners, Australia: Classic Fasteners is a family owned business, established in 1988. Their aim is to supply obsolete and hard to obtain fasteners for your restoration project be it a professional or private venture. The print catalogue, available for download, lists the current complete range. Ships Worldwide. <http://www.classicfasteners.com.au/>

Services :

Woody's Hydroblast, Australia: Woodys Engine Services / Hydroblast is a Melbourne, Australia based business dedicated to helping car and bike restorers repair and detail their componentry to the highest standards. The wet abrasive blasting used to finish jet turbines now provided by him is able to clean the most intricate components without degradation to the original surface. For more information visit their web site www.woodyshydroblast.com or call (03) 9597 0387

Outer Cycles, Australia: Jim Browhly is a master craftsman who manufactures bespoke motorcycle exhaust systems for classic bikes, no job is beyond his capability, so if you do need a new system that will be made to your precise requirements, give Jim a call, telephone 03 9761 9217.

Cylinder Heads, Australia: Cylinder Heads are highly skilled engine experts with 30 years of experience operating from their Box Hill North workshop. Alex has extensive experience in complete reconditioning of motorcycle heads, including Vincents plus installation of hardened valve seats, valve guides and valve stem seals. For more information see <http://www.cylinderheadsvictoria.com.au> or phone (03) 9899 1400

Peter Scott Motorcycles, Australia: Top quality magneto and dynamo services, from simple repairs to complete restorations plus a comprehensive range of associated spares. Provides hi-output coil rewinds with a 5 year warranty. For more info contact Peter on (02) 9624 1262 or email qualmag@optusnet.com.au

Ray Dean, Australia: Precision engineering services including but not restricted to Cylinder honeing, crankshaft rebuilds, aluminium welding and more. Located at 28 Albemarle Street Williamstown, Victoria. Phone 0400 803 226

Ringwood Speedometer Service, Australia: Experts in the repair and restoration of all motorcycle, automotive and marine instruments. Smiths cronometric specialists. Telephone (03) 9874 2260

Rays Custom Spray Painting, Australia: Ray Drever is the consummate perfectionist when it comes to painting bike tanks and frames. Also a craftsman in flame work and airbrushing. Located near Geelong; contact Ray on 03 5251 2458 or 0402 988 284.

Perfect Seal Piston Rings, Australia: piston rings made to order – for more information contact Trevor McGregor, Phone 0412 506 398

Terry Prince Classic Motorbikes, Australia: Classic Motor Bikes, specialises in restoration, manufacture of new parts, and the development and manufacture of high performance components for Vincent motor cycles. For more information visit the web site [Click Here](#) or telephone +61 2 4568 2208