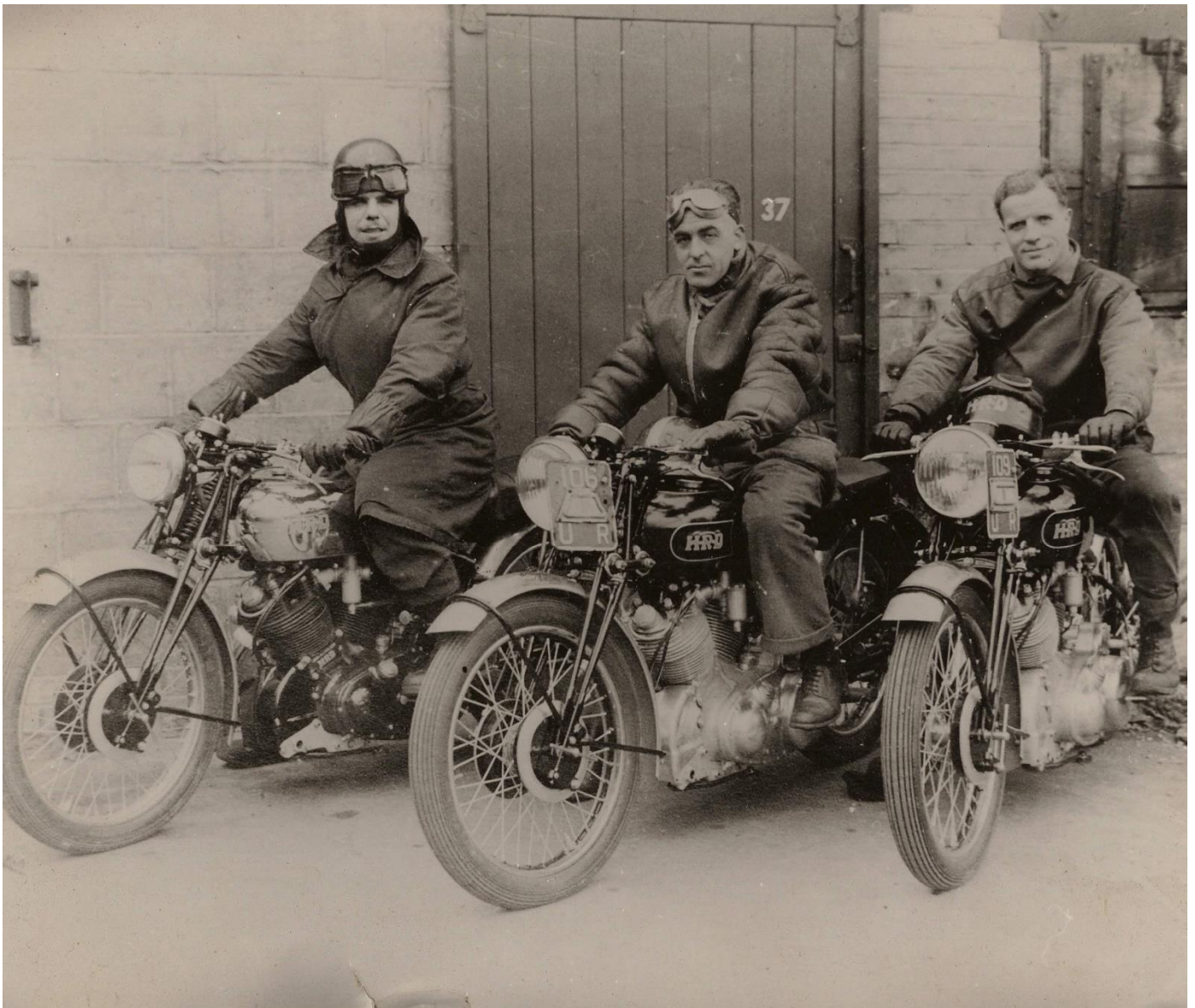




The Oz Vincent Review

Edition #35, February 2017

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 OVR@optusnet.com.au



Vincent H.R.D Road Testers Joe Harmer, Jim Sugg and Harry Pennington outside the Bowling Green Works in 1948

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Welcome

Welcome to this latest edition of The Oz Vincent Review. The OVR archive has just been updated and now includes ALL OVR editions, up to December 2016. In addition, within the archive there is a section on Maintenance Aids that provides templates to help you make your own paper gaskets and timing disks plus 2 free calculators to assist in setting up Girdraulic suspensions.

From the OVR web site ([Click Here To Visit](#)) you may request a free OVR subscription, visit the OVR archives or initiate contact with the editor.

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Letters To The Editor

Martyn

Thanks for a years worth of excellent OVR I always enjoy reading it as it reminds me of great times in OZ. As I have family out there, I have a daughter who lives in the Blue Mountains, and I'm related to Arthur G Chipperfield the Australian cricketer, so know most of that family, plus , of course, I have many friends dotted around the country, I feel I have an affinity with all you shackle draggers.

In 1996 I did a Greyhound bus tour of the country and had a whale of a time and made many friends. Then in 1996 I got my Shadow out there but sadly, before I got very far, the original bottom end having done 114,000 miles by then, decided it had had enough. I think it must have been a Friday machine. It was returned home and rebuilt during the winter 2000/1. In 2006 I shipped it out again and did the tour I had intended, which was just outstanding. There are so many tales from my visits that are stirred up when I get OVR so thanks again. A Happy and healthy New Year to you and all the OZ Vincenteers ,

Mike Chipperfield

Martyn,

In the July 2016 edition of OVR you described a way of adjusting the front brake on a Vincent. Where did you get that idea from as it is the same method used in the Vincent Works but as far as I know, never before published?

Back then when I was working at the Vincent factory in Stevenage we used modified 'callipers', called Vice-Grips today, with the jaws ground down exactly like you described. We each had our own set of those 'special' brake adjuster callipers.

David Bowen, Australia

Hi Martyn,

In the January issue, Colin Manning mentioned the necessity of an understanding wife, for those using heated 'Linklyfe' molten chain grease. It brought to mind words of wisdom on the topic from a long ago issue of 'Motorcycle Sport', which advised: 'For a motorcyclist choosing a life partner, dispensation to carry a tin of hot black grease over a white carpet is of much greater importance in the long run, to any amount of cleavage'.

Thanks for the latest edition and best wishes for 2017,

David Wright, IOM



Australian Vincent Riders' Dinner; November 2016.

This year the Australian Vincent Riders' Dinner was in Jindabyne and the ride had an Alpine theme. Numbers were down due to a

spate of injuries and ailments. Martyn Goodwin was out due to very recent back surgery, Burger Drake just had a knee replacement, Bob Allen was hit by a truck three days before the ride and had bad whiplash and Dave Hulston didn't manage to get his bike ready.

So we were down to just five starters. Brian Hale ("C" Rapide), Chris Wier ("C" Shadow), Wally Walsh ("C" Shadow) and Vince Rogers (Norvin) and Ken Phelps (Norvin) who made his own way to the dinner. Burger Drake and Bob Satterly followed along in Vince Rogers Ford utility, loaded with Bob's entire kitchen and garage on board. The weather was forecast was for sunny conditions with temperatures in the mid 20's for the whole four-day ride and the weather gods were true to their word.

Day 1 - (Yea to Dinner Plain). We meet in Yea, fuelled up and made our way across to Mansfield, up over the divide to Whitfield (a lovely rider's road) where we stopped for a coffee and cake. Some riders took on some fuel and we then made our way across to Myrtleford for a pleasant lunch at one of the local café's.

As is usually the case there was a constant gaggle of Vincent enthusiasts photographing and prodding the machine's as we looked on from inside the café'. Typically each and everyone at some stage knew of someone who has or had a Black Shadow. There must have been thousands of those things made! This is why I settled for the much rarer cooking model, the humble Rapide! So rare that nobody has ever heard of one. Lucky me!

After lunch we made our way across to Bright for some fuel and then wound our way up the Great Alpine road and across to Dinner plain where we settled in for the night. The High Plains Hotel has fantastic meals and plenty wine to lubricate the steady flow of lies, tall tales and bullshit that persisted late into the evening.

Day 2 - (Dinner plain to Jindabyne). We woke to a chilly 1 degrees C. Packed the bikes up and wound our way down to Omeo (love this road) for breakfast. Again there was a steady flow of admirers enthusing around the bikes while we enjoyed our breakfast.

The road up to Tallangatta which has a great sealed surface but it is super twisty and mostly narrow; we stopped to catch our breath beside the river near Mitta Mitta where we also had some lunch. Vince made it very clear at this point, as he lay recovering in the shade beside his bike, that he didn't care if he never saw another corner. There were a lot of hairpins, but it really is a beautiful road on a bike, with a consistent surface and great scenery. That's if you can look away from the road long enough to see it.

We turned right at Tallangatta and made our way across to Corryong for fuel although Wally and Brian needed to top up 5 km's short of the town. Luckily we were carrying some spare fuel.

We then rode to Khancoban where we stopped for an ice cream before we ascended the Alpine Way to Jindabyne arriving at the Lake Jindabyne Hotel, the venue for this years rider's dinner. Ken was waiting for us in the bar and we met him soon afterwards for some refreshments.

Vince made an early exit to bed (Omeo highway took its toll) and the remainder of us weren't far behind. It was a long, challenging, but enjoyable day in the saddle.

Day 3 – (Jindabyne to Yackandandah). We had a gentleman's start after demolishing a huge breakfast and then rode down to Berridale where we turned left and took the back roads across to the Snowy Mountain Highway and rode up to Adaminaby for a coffee. We continued up the Highway where we turned left towards Cabrumurra and made our way down to the Tintalra pub for some refreshments. We then followed the Murray River road along to Walwa for a long lunch and Brian attempted to clear a blocked idle jet.

We then continued along to the Granya Gap road where we took the opportunity to educate some modern sport bike riders on the poise and prowess of the Vincent motorcycle. Ending the day, following the lovely back roads onto Yackandandah to the Yackandandah Motel. Some minor maintenance was carried out and then out for a final social dinner for the trip.



Day 4 – (Yackandandah to home). For the final day we retraced our steps back to Whitfield for coffee and back over the divide again to Mansfield, lunch in Yark and then on separately to our homes. All was going to plan until Wally misjudged a mountain corner and ended over the edge and 10 meters down a cliff. Fortunately rider and bike sustained no major injuries. With some great teamwork and a little ingenuity we hauled the bike up the cliff face and back onto the road using the Ute. as an improvised winch. Wally and the bike were loaded onto the Ute and Bob Satterly rode pillion with Brian back to Melbourne. It was Bobs first pillion ride for some 40 -50 years. He obviously felt comfortable as he had a couple of naps along the way.

Apart from Wally's small indiscretion it was another fantastic ride and good fun had by all. A mere 1,700km's travelled in 4 days this year on some of the best roads bike roads Australia has to offer.

Till next year.

Brian Hale, Australia

H.R.D.s AND VINCENTS IN CEYLON

A OVR Contribution from David Bowen

In the 1980's I spent a very enjoyable three years in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) and apart from making good use of its ideal motor cycling climate I managed to discover that H.R.D.s had a very long history there.

Among the jungle on the enclosed photograph is Mr. H. S. Perera, sole H.R.D. agent, with what appears to be a 1926 350 c.c. "60" model. Mr. Perera owned a motor cycle business in Parsons Road in a once-flourishing part of the capital, Colombo, known as Slave Island. He died many years ago, and the site of his business has subsequently been built over, but purely by chance I met his son through another Vincent tangent—the Indian motor cycle.

Mr. Perera junior, then well into his seventies, still rode both a Chief and a Scout, and became well-known in the local motor cycle trade through the job-lot of 200 Indians, all of 1942 manufacture, which he bought through a successful army surplus tender at the end of the war. A friend bought one of his few remaining Indians, and in September 1980, we spent a couple of hours together browsing through his garage full of Indian spares and chatting about the pioneer motor cycle days in Ceylon.

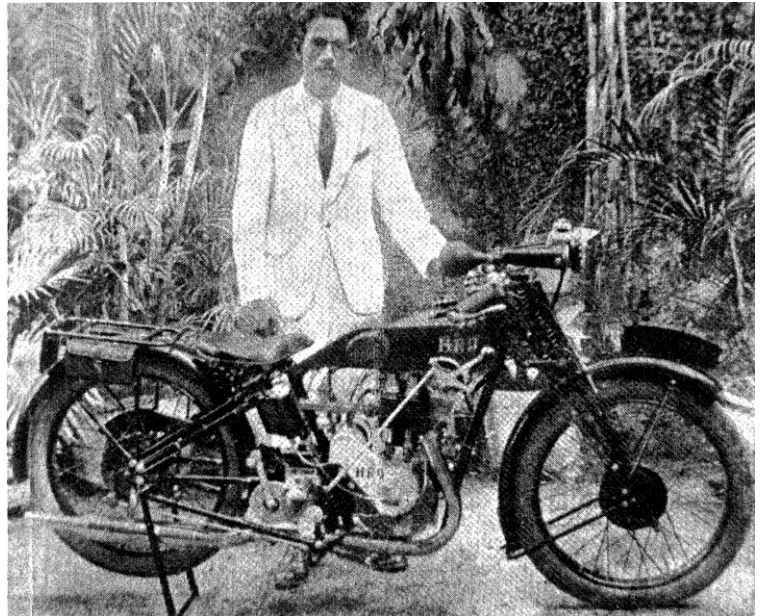
It was then that his father's connection with H.R.D.s came to light. The conversation, by now lively, switched to H.R.D.s and the fortunes of that small Slave Island business. Inevitably Mr. Perera's memory had grown hazy on dates and figures, but a successful search in the depths of an old desk for one of his father's visiting cards brought back a few facts and figures.

The "card" was sophisticated for its day, bearing the photograph of proprietor and 350 c.c. H.R.D. on one side, and on the reverse the legend that 31 h.p. and 500 c.c. 70s models were in stock, with details of the specification.

I had initially thought that the photograph showed a 500 c.c. 70s, but the Webb forks seem to identify it as a 350 c.c. 60 model. The specification also seems to refer to the 350 c.c., since the Binks carburettor only became an optional extra in 1926. The claimed maximum of 70 m.p.h. may, though, have been a trifle optimistic.

Mr. Perera dated the photograph to late 1926 or early 1927. The agency terminated shortly afterwards with the liquidation of H.R.D. by Howard Davies.

Mr. Perera recalled that half a dozen of the side-valve "60" and "70s" models were imported in that era. Almost as a footnote, he mentioned that two 500 c.c. T.T. replicas were also brought in and sold locally (could be post 1924 "90", but the dates and his stress on "T.T. replica" make them more likely to be the 1926 Super 90!). I wonder what happened to those?





David, with a H.R.D. frame he rescued from the Jungle

Conversation hovered for a while on the prestigious machines of the early period that had been imported: 4-cylinder Hendersons, A.J.S. V-twins, Scotts and what he described as a 16 h.p. Williamson Douglas. Ceylon must have been an ideal location for the import of exotic machinery—the strong British community with more money than they knew what to do with, the extensive system of surfaced roads, and a hot climate. Being an island it was also difficult to remove anything that had been bought in . . . I left Mr. Perera, still wondering where those Super 90s might be.

Needless to say, subsequent enquiries drew a blank. On a later visit to Mr. Perera, to return the photograph of his father with the H.R.D. which he had kindly allowed me to copy, I showed him some shots of Series A machinery, but he was certain that none had been imported. Post-war Vincents certainly did ring a bell though—some six Twins and several singles had been imported, all by private arrangement since there was no official agent.

Conversation with other local riders who had been enthusiasts in the early 1950s helped to put the picture together, but it remains fragmentary. I think it is worth sketching out the details with names, places and dates, in case some readers can add a few more pieces to the jigsaw.

My "best estimate" is that two "C" Black Shadows, one White Shadow engine and three "C" Rapides were imported.

One of the Black Shadows was brought in from new and re-exported in the 1960;; by Arthur Magill; similarly with a Rapide owned by a John Mockett. The White Shadow engine was bought from new by Wally de Silva— who in the 1980's was still running a prominent motor cycle agency in Colombo.

"I seem to have let my Enthusiasm Run Riot..."

in this letter, but it is genuine, I can assure you. One could not speak too highly of the 'Rapide.'"

This is an extract from a letter recently received from a Rapide owner, now a Captain in the R.E.M.E. stationed in India. Other extracts from his letter read:—

"The 'Rap' gave me the finest motorcycling experience I have had over a period of 14 years, and I have owned 18 machines during that time . . . I would back its navigation against anything on two wheels. It was the safest thing I had ever ridden, and one could cover phenomenal mileages without fatigue. Performance by speedo was:—2nd, 80 m.p.h., 3rd, 97 m.p.h., top, 112 m.p.h., and on one occasion 108 m.p.h. on pool petrol, all this wearing Stormgard, etc., this last speed was against a watch over a flying 4-mile. Doubters may be inclined to grin at the possibility of reading a speedo at 112, but the bike was like that, you could go for a walk on it."

A Sergeant in the U.S. Army Air Force stationed in England writes to us:—

"I need no selling on the H.R.D.—I've owned one!—it was a beautiful machine. Personally I have every intention of owning a 'Rapide' after the war."

To experience the ultimate thrill and joy of possession obtainable from motorcycling you MUST own

★ THE WORLD'S FASTEST STANDARD MOTORCYCLE

YOU will then be as happy and enthusiastic as these two typical Vincent-H.R.D. owners. A "Rapide" MUST BE

Your Choice for the Post War Era!

★ This is a fact NOT a Slogan

Vincent-H.R.D. Co., Ltd., Stevenage, Herts. Telephone: Stevenage 375

Saga of a Touring Screen

A contribution from Michael Lewin. USA



September 2016 I completed a 5000 mile ride on my Vincent (1952 Rapide engine in a 1952 Shadow frame) returning from the North American VOC rally in Missoula, Montana by way of Canada. I was joined on my adventure by my friend Anders Lofqvist of the Scandinavian VOC chapter. I shipped my Vincent and my BMW R1150GS to Billings, Mt. Anders, Tom Newman (who also shipped his Rapide to Billings) and I flew there, picked up the bikes and rode southwest through Yellowstone National Park and then north to Missoula. After the rally Tom headed west to Idaho with another friend of his while Anders and I rode north through Glacier National Park to Canada for the post rally BBQ at Sasha Montague's ranch in Twin Butte. From there we headed back to the US and zig-zaged east across North and South Dakota, Wisconsin, Minnesota and Michigan before crossing again into Canada at Sault Ste. Marie.

We took the Trans Canada Highway east across the Great Lakes, then crossed back into the US at Cape Vincent, NY (where else would you consider crossing the border riding one of our marquee ?) Aside from a few mechanical issues, to be expected on a bike just 2 years younger than me, a bit of rain and some rather strong crosswinds in Eastern Montana and the Dakotas, it was a beautiful ride and not overly physically taxing. One reason for that was the amazing little, but highly effective windscreen I have installed on my Vincent. The screen was designed by Tom Newman who was inspired by one pictured in Sid Bieberman's book "Vincents with Big Sid". You would not expect something so small to have that much of an effect but I can tell you it really does. It breaks the wind so you don't get buffeted around. At the end of a 300 to 350 mile day you can definitely feel the difference.

Not having access to a ready supply of curved Lexan, a generic windscreen was purchased from Dennis Kirk Motorcycle Supply. The smaller footprint of our windscreen was cut from this with a band saw, and the edges sanded and polished. Four stainless steel angle brackets were attached through the lexan, two to a stainless band across the front of the screen and two lower down. The holes were drilled slightly oversized and bolts





through grommets were used to attach the angle brackets, being sure not to tighten them too firmly which would result in the lexan crazing around the holes over time and use.

The black powder coated upright brackets were created to emulate the standard Vincent headlight brackets. A special die, created by Tom, was used to press the ends of the brackets/stays in the same way the headlight brackets are formed. If the end of the tube is just flattened straight across, the juncture between the flat end and the round tube will become stressed and will ultimately fail.

The upright brackets are attached through each end of the Top Headlamp Bracket (F85/1). The one at the front goes up from the headlamp and connects to the angle bracket thru the stainless steel cross bar on the front of the windscreen. The other attaches to the fork girder through the back end of F85/1. It then gets bolted to the angle bracket toward the bottom of the windscreen.

Simple but effective, you will be amazed at how much energy you have left at the end of a long riding day

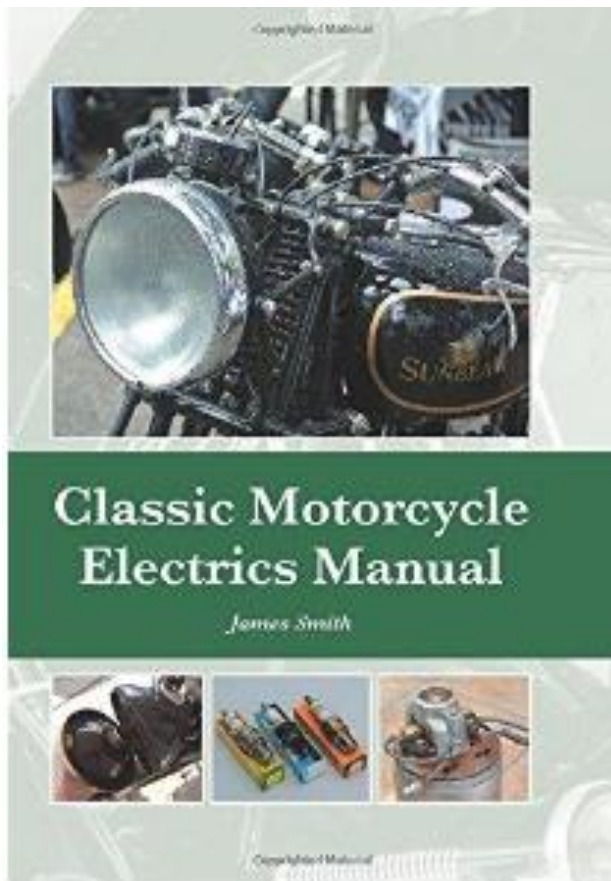
Event Calendar

2017	
March 19-30	Tassie Tour 2017 (Australia), open to pre 1970 British bikes – for more info contact tassietour2017@hotmail.com . This fantastic 10 day tour is limited to just 100 bikes so if you are interested, act now.
July 2	Classic Motorcycle Event at the Tramway Museum in Derbyshire, UK . More details on their website www.tramway.co.uk
2018	
August	Australian National VOC Rally, to be held in Queensland; start your planning now.

The Front Cover

Henry Pennington was killed on road test on the Watford by-pass but when asked what Henry was doing there, Norman Peach said "you could go where you liked as a Vincent test rider, as long as you did 50 MPH on a single and 100 on a twin. Most of us preferred the A1 Great North Road."

Norman also told that each tester had his own speedo, battery, fuel tank and exhaust system because the dealers did not want machines with "miles on the clock, acid in the battery, marks on the tank or blue pipes". When asked who got the best bikes, without hesitation he said "Jack Surtees, he would send them straight back if they had a speck of dust on them !!!" When asked "Who got the clattery ones", again without hesitation, he said "the Argentinians !!!"



Dr James Smith has been a classic bike enthusiast for a while and is the author of the 'Matchless Clueless' website. He holds a Master's degree in automotive engineering and owns two Matchless G3Ls, so has extensive knowledge of his subject. **He has recently released his new book 'Classic Motorcycle Electrics Manual'**. It is a large format, hardbound volume of 272 pages with 17 well-illustrated chapters, covering all aspects of theory and practice, finishing with wiring diagrams. The book contains 420 colour photos and 167 CAD diagrams.

The book looks at the theory underpinning electrical work, and at the components of a bike's electrical system; he includes modern additions like relays. James then looks at the tools for electrical testing and their use – going much further than the 'does the bulb light?' method! He shows how to fix faults using the essential technique of soldering, and making connections (including modern alternatives to the dreaded Lucas bullet connections).

He addresses wiring looms: wire thickness selection, sleeving, connections – and those all-important fuses. One omission here is that of running separate earth wires to each component/assembly though this is mentioned elsewhere in the book. I always do this, terminating them where the battery is earthed to the frame. Relying on a poor frame connections is just asking for trouble!

Lighting is examined in detail, with a good explanation of the different bulb types and Lucas headlights. However, table 10.5, which lists headlamp wattages for 6V and 12V converted systems, gives the maximum wattage for the E3N short dynamo at 12V as 35 watts (as for the 6V version). Interestingly, James does not recommend LED headlights (neither does Paul Goff, the 'go to' classic electrics supplier), claiming that dip/main beam focussing is not yet good enough.

The coverage of switches and batteries is good, with suggestions for modern alternatives. Moving on to dynamos, James explains how to test them and gives a few specialists. He explains tests for Lucas voltage regulators, but also covers modern electronic boxes. The section on 12V conversion is excellent and, with his background, he knows his stuff. He then looks at the dynamo's replacement, the alternator. He takes an extensive look at ignition systems, including modern coil ignition upgrades, and explains plugs in detail. He concludes with some generic wiring diagrams.

In summary, the book is comprehensive and well written. I particularly like coverage of improvements such as LEDs and 12V conversions, and the use of modern components. I recommend the book, and it would make a good present for a classic bike enthusiast! My only quibble is with the publishers' eye watering cover price, but you can get it on line for half that!

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“Overland to Australia”

Part 2: Through India

By E.W. (Ding) Bell

THE road to Beirut was good and the scenery pleasant; sea one side and hills and mountains on the other. Our rear springs were bottoming too often for my liking, so on entering Beirut I looked for a Norton dealer. I was delighted to see the police were riding Dominators and I hoped to get some new springs. A friendly fellow on an ex-W.D. 16H showed us the way to the motorcycle shop but I was informed that the best they could do there was to lengthen and retemper my own springs. This they did very cheaply—but not successfully because before we'd reached Damascus they were bottoming again just as badly.



Post-prang picture of Val and the Dominator

It was a really fine run from Beirut to Damascus—a well-paved road, good surface and nice and wide. There was a steep climb over the mountains out of Beirut and a long swoop down into Damascus, which is back in Syria again. In Damascus we discovered a huge international trade fair with exhibits from practically every country of the world except the U.S.A. and British Commonwealth, which disappointed us no end. Nevertheless, we had a pleasant stay in that ancient city, and only left when we realized how quickly money could run away there. Just before the Syrian-Jordan frontier, Val and I stopped in Deraa to get the mudguard stays welded once more, plus two new struts fitted so as to carry us without trouble across the desert to Baghdad for there would be few facilities in between. This little job done we were riding along towards the Customs when a friendly voice alongside said "Hi! We've heard about you, and have been trying to locate you this past week or so." I pulled over to the newcomers and we shook hands. Like us, they were a twosome on a motor-cycle. Their bike was a brand new B.S.A. Shooting Star. He was Bill, an American from Copenhagen, and his girlfriend was Lisa, a Norwegian. Did we mind if they travelled with us? "Only too pleased to have you," we said, and that was the beginning of a wonderful friendship. At the Customs, we found Ronnie and Warren were packing up ready to go on and didn't seem to be very enthusiastic about our new-found friends. So they left, saying they'd see us at Mafraq.

During the days that followed, across the Jordan and Iraqi desert via Rutbah, Ramadi and Habbaniya to Baghdad, Val and I became very fond of Bill and Lisa. They were rather crazy but very like-able. With the worst of the Iraqi desert behind us and 50 miles from Baghdad, we came to the R.A.F. station at Habbaniya, a pukka oasis so far as we were concerned. There for five days we were the guests of the sergeants' mess, who treated us like heroes, and to round it off the mess president very kindly scrubbed the whole of our bill. We swam and sunbathed, we wrote home and we lazed and drank and ate good food, all in the friendly atmosphere of the R.A.F. A vastly different state of affairs to that obtaining when last I reached Habbaniya in 1941.

The only welcome we got then was from the hostile guns of the rebel Iraqis, plus German Messerschmitts, and I was pleased to think I was one of those who helped relieve Habbaniya in those days.

From Baghdad to Teheran the route runs over very barren and inhospitable country. There are several largish towns by the way, but between them very little. The road, on the whole, is mostly poor, and in places downright lousy. Gradients and steep slopes never worried me, but loose surfaces with corrugations, washouts and pot-holes did. My machine, unlike the other two, didn't have swinging-arm suspension, so I had a rougher ride. As I was doing my best to make good speed, one day, we hit a very sharp dip which caused us to aviate like the T.T. riders at Ballaugh. Unlike them, though, we had a gross weight of 1,090 lb., plus some three or four inches of loose sand and stones to land in. Three times I righted her on landing, but we finally came down in a heap on that unkind surface. Val's leg and foot were bleeding badly and I couldn't get to her as quickly as I would have liked because my back was killing me. When I did reach her, I found that she was shaken and her leg and foot were cut, but no bones were broken. I was very stiff, too, but still in one piece. My patched-up right arm hurt, and I couldn't afford to have that broken again. It was...only a month before we left England that the surgeon had finally given me the O.K. Then Bill and Lisa came along. They helped us up and I lit a cigarette, then we righted the bike. What a sorry sight it looked—left handlebar completely broken off, no left footrest and a tangled, twisted mass of metal for a pipe and silencer. But it could have been worse, much worse.

We tied the broken handlebar together with string so that I could use the clutch, kicked her over and rode a most unsafe 60 miles to the next village. Bill had gone on ahead and had a welder all lined up ready for us, so in a few minutes the handlebars were together again, the pipe straightened and replaced and the footrest back on. About 20 miles outside Teheran we met two Indians on bicycles. Written on the back of one machine was "Round the World from India." They very kindly gave us the address of a man in Teheran who, they said, would give us any help we needed. They had cycled all the way from Delhi, where they were students at the University. So, armed with the address, Bill and Lisa, Val and I entered the city. Warren and Ronnie were a day ahead of us. They had got tired of camping (they had had a month longer at it than us) and as their finances were better than ours they had decided to stay at hotels. We were well satisfied with the "hotel" shown us by the newly found friend introduced to us by our cycling Indians. He turned out to be the president of the Shah's Sporting Club and our "hotel" was the Shah's balcony of the huge and ornate Sports Stadium! They set up four iron beds for us and gave us the run of the place—and took us out to all the best places to eat, including the Ritz. For five days we stayed there sightseeing and dining with generals and weight-lifters. We located Warren and Ronnie, who said they preferred to travel alone; then we said "Au revoir" to Teheran and headed East for Afghanistan via Meshed.



A Hindu temple in the park at Calcutta.

The Norton continued to roll along with no mechanical trouble. I changed the oil regularly, always using the correct grades and plenty of Redex. I cleaned the plugs and points religiously and kept the correct pressure in both tyres. I had to keep everything in tip-top condition, because from now on there would be nothing even remotely resembling a garage till we reached Pakistan. Nor would there be any roads, as we know them, and, as it turned out, we never struck any more sealed road between Teheran and Pakistan except two miles in Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan. Those roads will remain in my memory for ever. Day after day, there were the bumps of the corrugations, the slipping and sliding in loose sand and gravel, the falling-off, the heat and eternal dust, and the barrenness every-where—truly a wilderness. And through it all, Val was wonderful. She never grumbled when we couldn't find water to wash, nor did she complain about the daily bashing we got from the saddle or the countless other things that were so unpleasant. Sometimes we would break camp at dawn, and still be travelling at dusk when our total mileage for the day had only been 120 miles or less--but 120 painful, patience-trying, bumpy, dusty miles.



Bayonets for Two: Bill could make better time than us, and the day we were to reach Meshed he was in front. He had given directions for us to meet him and Lisa at the S.A.S. Airport, where there would be accommodation for all four of us. Unfortunately, it was night before Val and I reached the city. We didn't know the civilian airport was right next to the military aerodrome, and in the dark we rode into the Persian Air Force! This was quite an event for the unseen sentry. His shouts brought out the whole guard with fixed bayonets. I could hear the familiar clicking of rifle-bolts pushing a round up the breach. Alarm bells were ringing everywhere, and I expected a shot any minute. Best thing to cut the motor, I thought, so I did. We were surrounded by about a dozen armed men, looking very threatening, who poked us along in the

direction they wanted us to go with their bayonets. It was hard work footing us and the machine along, but no sooner had I stopped to kick her over than another jab persuaded me that it was better to foot. Eventually we reached a guard-room and after we'd been more or less pushed off (we certainly didn't dismount) and set the bike up, we were ushered inside. One sentry took us up to a neatly dressed officer. Unfortunately he didn't speak English, neither did any of his fellow officers who drifted in; but huge smiles from us and our comical sign language eased the tension and presently we were being served with cups of tea and melon. It was two hours before we made them understand we wanted the civilian airstrip. Then we were allowed to leave, with handshakes all round. I'm sure they thought we were crazy, but we'd rather enjoyed the little episode. A few minutes later we found Bill and Lisa. Lisa exclaimed, "Nothing ever happens to us except punctures! "

After we left Meshed, we knew that the worst part of the journey lay ahead through Afghanistan. To start with we lost the tent which Ronnie and Warren had given us after deciding not to camp any more. Then the road got worse and worse' and we fell off consistently. Val always managed to burn a leg on the pipes. The countryside became even more barren and waterless. And we had been filled with the Persians' tales of wild, fierce, barbaric Afghans. I had hopefully

dismissed these as gossip, but Val had visions of bandits and thieves waylaying us. These fears proved entirely unfounded. At the Afghan customs, we were treated very courteously by a friendly English-speaking officer with whom we stayed the night. After a breakfast of porridge and eggs, cooked on our compact pressure stove, we packed the bikes and bade adieu to our host. We travelled all morning in that wild and barren land, and met not a soul. Then we saw a group of horsemen approaching. They rode very fine horses and each man had a rifle slung across his back. And they all wore black beards. But in spite of appearances they were not fierce at all, and returned Val's wave in a friendly fashion.

As the days passed, the roads got steadily worse and our top speed was sometimes only 15 m.p.h. At frequent intervals, the "road" would stop to let a stream go through and Val would dismount and off-shoes to see how deep it was. We always managed to get through these unbridged rivers and, once on the other side, would put the bike on its stand and have a strip-off wash. We stayed in Kandahar for three days with the personnel of an American construction company and then moved on towards Kabul. As we neared the capital city, the naked grandeur of mountains, hills and valleys impressed us, but I was becoming depressed by the terrible roads and the machine's performance. It just would not fire "on two" at the right time, and this had me baffled. To add to our troubles, the spring heel no longer sprang; the water we had gone through and the eternal dust had seized the job.

Collapse at the Rear: At this time, we had our one and only puncture of the whole trip. It was in the rear, too, and I don't think we would have had that, had our Carlton tyre-saver stayed put. (I never had a "flat" in the front the whole trip, thanks I'm sure to the Carlton and the Firestone tyres.) We struggled to within 12 miles of Kabul, and an extra vile piece of road, plus our almost rigid rear end, caused the whole of the rear mudguard and baggage to descend on the wheel. String and wire failed to keep the mudguard free of the tyre and within five miles of the city centre two very weary, dusty and tired-out travellers had to push the equally tired and loaded Dommie. It had done well and it was amazing to me that it had given so little trouble, considering such undreamed-of conditions and the fact that it had done 23,000 miles before we left England.'

The British Embassy did not welcome us at all. Just two more broken-down, crazy motorcyclists; why the hell didn't we stay at home? Two very good Samaritans came to our aid, though, in the form of Curly and Topsy, an Australian couple living in Kabul, who put us up in the lap of luxury for five wonderful days. Bill and Lisa had also found a kind host, and Bill and I got together in the British Embassy's garage on my bike. We had the mag. to bits and discovered the oil retainer washer had worn, letting in the oil and smothering the spark. The rear springs I dismantled and freed and reassembled in bags of grease, and the rear mudguard stays, which were also the supports for our luggage and for the dual seat, were welded by the Embassy mechanic. And so we were set to tackle the Lattaband and Khyber Passes—with a mag. that was liable to fill with oil any old time.

Facing the Khyber: From Kabul to Peshawar is roughly 200 miles. It takes 12 to 14 hours in a jeep, the mountain goat of four-wheeled vehicles. That gives some idea of the road conditions; and the prospect of doing it on a laden motorcycle weighing half a ton filled me with apprehension. But I consoled myself with the thought that we were in for some rugged and beautiful scenery en-route, plus the fact that once over that 200 miles we had sealed roads all the way to Calcutta. The motor ticked over nicely as we posed for Curly and Topsy to take our pictures before departure. They had been wonderful hosts, and we were sorry to leave them. The road was worse than had been described, very loose most of the way, but with a nice hard surface here and there in the form of protruding rocks! It was one vehicle wide too, so trying to dodge the rocks was a limited business. Sharp rises and sharper dips, right-angle corners and dried-up river beds, all went to increase the thrills and relieve monotony! In front of us we saw

a tribe of Koochi, a nomadic people making their way to winter in Pakistan. They covered the track with their camels, sheep, donkeys, goats, children and everything they possessed, including hens and chickens perched on the top of camels (on closer inspection, we saw that their feet were tied). To ride the machine, was bad enough, but to weave through that mass was quite a feat. We eventually accomplished it, but not before we'd created havoc among the animals, which were scattered everywhere. Their owners shouted and brandished sticks at us and we were glad to get through.

Four or five miles farther on, the engine missed and spluttered, then stopped altogether. As we got off, I asked Val if I was seeing things or was that the road some thousands of feet above us. She said yes, it was the road all right. It was obvious we needed a machine in 100 per cent condition to make it, and ours was not. There was nothing for it but to dry the oil out of the mag. Then Val's lucky star shone more brightly. Away below and in the distance, we heard a vehicle approaching, and when it hove in sight we could see it was a lorry, and ambling in front of it were some of the Koochi herd that wouldn't disperse. As the truck neared us, the driver stuck his head out with an inquiring look on his face and then stopped. We didn't look a gift horse in the mouth, and in a matter of minutes we had the bike strapped on to the tailboard of the truck. As we moved off, the irate Koochi hurled threats at us and I felt sorry that our modern traffic had disrupted their placid animal convoy.

Perched on top of crates of grapes, we ground our way up the Lattaband Pass. I felt a cheat. I should not be able to relate truth-fully that I had ridden through the Lattaband and Khyber Passes on my motorcycle. However, thoughts like that were dominated by the wild and uncivilized beauty I could now look at properly. At 14,000 feet it was like being on the roof of the world, but in the distance I could see the snow-capped peaks of the Hindu Kush, the foothills of the Himalayas, and knew that somewhere in that direction lay Everest. And I caught something of that feeling that must be ever present in mountaineers—the feeling that makes them talk and live mountains much as a true motorcyclist talks motorcycling.



Val sat in the cab of the lorry in reasonable comfort. Occasionally I'd have to scamper over the boxes of grapes to miss an overhang of rock and when we drove through Jallalabad I had to lie flat to avoid being swept off by overhanging trees. It was a relief to get us and the machine off in Peshawar, Pakistan, after 24 hours on top of that truck. And it was also a gift from heaven to be on a sealed road. I dried the oil out of the mag., cleaned the points, put in two new plugs and away we

went. It was bliss to sail along at 45 to 50 m.p.h., with no bumps. We were pleased to be in Pakistan.

On entering Rawalpindi, we asked the way of two men in European dress. Without hesitation, they bade us stay with them. When the dust of travel had gone down the plughole they fed us royally and we learned that one, Aslam, came from Lahore and his friend owned a garage in 'Pindi. Next morning, they insisted that we should take the bike to the garage for a spruce-up, and to fit a new oil retainer washer to the mag. Our friend's next-door neighbour did this (he was an electrical engineer), and although he and Aslam's friend worked all morning on the mag. and the bike, they wouldn't take a penny. They even filled us up with petrol, free! And Aslam

asked us to call and see him in Lahore, as he was going there that day by bus. So we did, and the hospitality and generosity were repeated all over again to such an extent that we didn't want to leave. This was just one of the many times we received hospitality and help right across Pakistan and India, and I'm only sorry I haven't the space to relate them all. There were the Sikhs and Muslims, the Raja and the Indian M.O. all of whom we stayed with for as many days as we could spare, learning about their country and its problems, their religions and way of life. The Raja, whom we met at the Taj Mahal, invited us to his home in Cawnpore and took us for a visit to Lucknow. Our M.O. friend we met along the road in his M.G.; he insisted that we should go with him to the shrine of Buddha at Bhod-Gaya. There was the young Hindu in Delhi, who seemed to make a hobby of showing world tourists his fine city and its temples. And so it was all the way through Benares to Calcutta, where the Automobile Association of Bengal handed over to us a room in which to live for the duration of our stay. To all these good people very, very sincere thanks.

Large-scale Diversion: We reached Calcutta three months after leaving London, with half of our gross wealth still intact. We were strongly advised against going through Burma and Malaya to Singapore, as was our original intention, nor could we get a ship to Australia. So we decided to ride the 2,000 miles south, via Madras to the tip of India, and cross over to Ceylon in the hope of getting a ship from Colombo. On Indian roads, we found, it was asking for trouble ever to do more than 45 to 50 m.p.h. because of the many animals wandering at random. And in the remote villages, and even in some towns, the thousands of pedestrians were not at all road-conscious, which was quite alarming. One very good feature of the majority of the roads, however, was the big bushy-topped trees which lined each side, keeping off the heat of the sun.

Next edition: the final lap

Vincent Support Gets a Boost Down Under

It is reported that James Culver, son of Bob, Vincent re-engineering specialist with years of service and support and a respected engineer who was at one time a leading light in the engineering team at Lotus and has restored and prepared Vincents for the likes of John Surtees will be emigrating from the UK to Australia later this year. He has already started packing up his workshop, his tools, a small mountain of spares, extensive reference material – the bloom'n lot!

With family already located in Canberra, Australia, we can expect to see him set up shop in that region before the end of the year.

Given the paucity of reliable and quality service providers in the local Vincent world this must be good news to those Vincent fans residing 'down under'.

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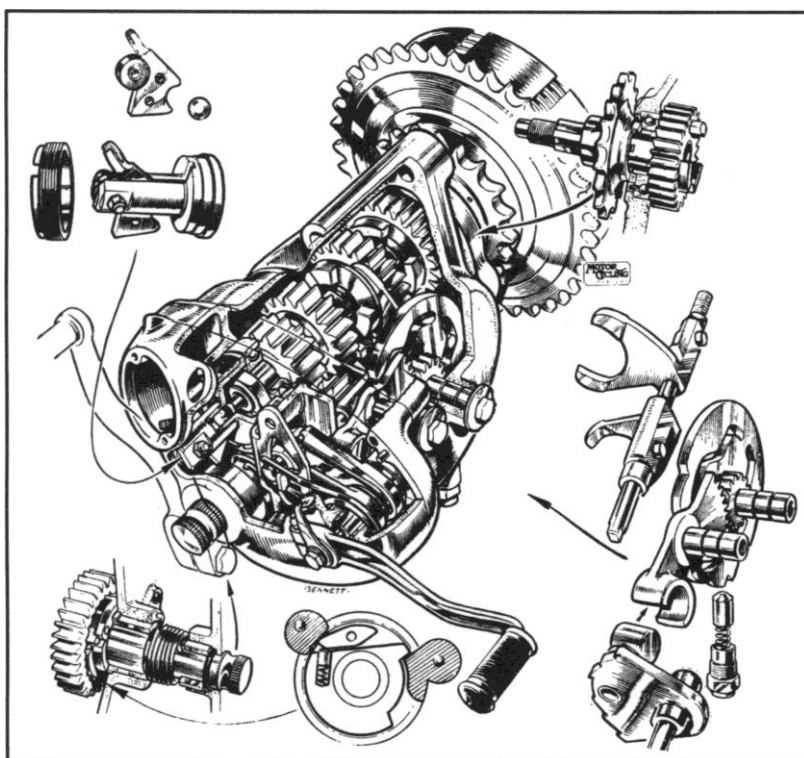
AMC's Box of Tricks

First printed in Classic Bike, March 1986

UBIQUITOUS is definitely the word for the AMC gearbox. Fitted as standard equipment to many a Norton, Matchless and AJS for more than 20 years, it's also the special builder's ideal. The unit's reputation as the best gearbox ever built in these islands seems unassailable. Yet in its final role as part of the Norton Commando's transmission its inherent weaknesses were pitilessly exposed. It is called 'the AMC box' because the decision to produce it came from Associated Motor Cycles, in whose Plumstead works it was made. But the original Norton-AMC is really nearer the mark, for the design was closely modelled on the gearbox fitted at Bracebridge Street up to 1956.

In the early 1930s Nortons were supplied with Sturmey-Archer three- and four-speed hand and foot change units produced by Raleigh in Nottingham. But when Raleigh ceased motorcycle manufacture in 1934 Norton failed to do the obvious and opt for standard Burman designs.

Burman and Sons' Birmingham factory already supplied much of the British industry — including AJS and Matchless — with clutches and gearboxes. The design of the Sturmey-Archer was cleaned up a little and Burman got the job of constructing the result. It served Norton well — with a number of modifications — for the next 20 years.



Today (**1986!**) we would cite the decision to produce one gearbox for all the larger models of AMC's Norton, AJS and Matchless marques as an example of corporate machismo. It was paralleled by a move to manufacture a range of AMC two-stroke engines for the conglomerate's James and Francis-Barnett models in preference to Villiers units. Standardisation was a laudable objective within such a diverse grouping of companies, but not at the expense of profitability. The tooling for the gearbox was expensive and AMC units proved to be always more costly to manufacture in London than alternatives available off the shelf from Burman.

Given the experience of the past, it should have been obvious that this separate unit would see service with a number of different engines and for many years to come. It would have been safe to predict that power outputs — and therefore loadings on gearbox components — would increase considerably over a period of ten to twenty years. In fact they were to double.

Thus the most powerful road machine fitted with the new design in '56 was Norton's Dominator 99, a 600cc vertical twin claimed to produce 31bhp. Its descendant the 750 Commando was

rated at 56bhp in 1967, the first 850 at 60bhp. This is to ignore racing applications — in the AJS 7R, Matchless G50, Manx Norton and later twins — as well as hefty increases in torque.

'The basic problem is the fact that it was only designed to cope with 30 brake horsepower,' says Commando racer and Norton parts supplier Mick Hemmings. Installed in a Norton Model 50, whose 350cc pushrod single engine was generously credited with 20bhp, the AMC gearbox will last until the crack of doom with an absolute minimum of maintenance. Owners of 850cc Commandos with a spirited riding style can expect trouble long before that.

Externally the shell and its two covers were slightly more compact than those of the Norton laydown' design it replaced. But internally, remarkably little changed. The tried and trusted layout of camplate, hardened steel selector forks and gears survived unchanged. New were more oil seals. There were rubber 'O' rings behind the gear pedal and kickstart shaft bushes in the outer cover. The sleeve gear was supported by plain bushes rather than rollers. Inside the outer cover you could now find the kickstart spring — anchored in the alloy of the cover itself rather than in the support bush. The layout of the positive-stop mechanism was rejigged within the outer cover, while a circular inspection plate gave access to the cable end of a new clutch withdrawal arm.

In place of the old worm arrangement there was a floating lever, shaped on one side to accept a ½" ball bearing which rode upon the clutch pushrod and on the other to work against a ¾" diameter roller. Less friction and increased mechanical advantage were the improvements claimed for this alteration. The clutch itself was a unit with five friction plates and three individually adjustable springs, the latter another novelty. In its centre was a rubber vane-type cush drive which made the older spring-loaded engine shaft shock absorber redundant.



Instead of being taken by a bronze thrust washer sandwiched between the mainshaft and sleeve gear, clutch loadings were transferred to the mainshaft tail bearing.

Located above the layshaft, the mainshaft runs in two ball bearings, the lower shaft in a ball bearing on the drive side and a bronze bush inside the kick-start shaft. Curiously, in view of AMC's policy of standardisation, Norton and AJS/Matchless gearbox shells are neither identical nor interchangeable. Norton items are stamped N or NA before the number, the others M. Primary chains are tensioned by pivoting the gearbox about the lower mounting bolt, which must obviously be slackened off first. There are differences between the Norton and AJS/Matchless threaded adjusters above.

In use, the AMC box is a delight. The gearchange pattern is one-up-three-down and the action superbly light and positive. The earlier Norton design was similarly pleasant, but baulked if rushed through a change. However, lever travel was excessive even by 1956/7 standards when the gearbox was introduced on the three AMC marques. Identification of whole gearboxes is relatively easy. At a glance you can spot the N or M prefix, while the lack of a cable-adjuster thread in the outer cover denotes a Commando item. If you don't see a gear pedal shaft protruding from the outer cover, the unit belongs to the final Mk III Commando which featured a left-foot change.

There are four different lengths of mainshaft. The ones you're likely to encounter are the Norton/AJS/Matchless road single and twin item, which measures 7.447in, and the longer 7.955in Commando shaft. Other lengths relate to the 7R — with 'short' and 'long shaft' engines

— Manx and G50. Commando shafts need not be measured, for a circlip groove gives them away. The diaphragm spring clutch locates against a circlip.

Major modifications are few, leading to a wide range of interchange across the years. An NA prefix on a Norton box indicates that this has the larger and better located kickstart spring fitted. The original small spring is rather weak and has a tendency to rip out of its hole in the outer cover. Because the later spring is longer, the kickstart shaft bush in the outer cover is correspondingly shorter.

On the MkIII Commando a circlip rather than a hexagon nut secures the ratchet mechanism and circlips also locate the sleeve gear bushes which tend to move around. Grooves on their dog faces also identify a pair of MkIII gears which must be fitted in pairs.

Although the design is fairly oil-tight, leaks can occur along the kickstart, gear pedal and gearchange pawl shafts. On the MkIII Commando the kickstart shaft 'O' ring was replaced by a proper garter-type oil seal. Mick Hemmings modifies outer covers around the gear pedal shaft to fit a similar item.

But these are minor problems. 'The biggest trouble with the gearbox is the fact that the two main bearings are far too close together,' says Mick Hemmings. The unit's major weakness is revealed if you examine a bare shell: the drive-side bearing housings are divided by a mere sliver of alloy. This frequently cracks across.

AMC hardly helped matters on the Commando by fitting an 11 pound (5kg) clutch without a cush drive. A cush drive rear hub didn't make an appearance until 1971. Turning on the power really flexes those shafts, overloading the smaller drive-side ball bearing which supports the layshaft. This bearing can break up, punching a hole through the weakened rear wall of the gearbox shell.



There are ways of preventing such a disaster, well known to most Commando enthusiasts. You can opt for a lipped roller bearing -- usually referred to incorrectly as a 'superblend roller' — or specify an exotic species of ball bearing stocked by Mick Hemmings. This features a Tufnol ring and is almost indestructible. Mick reckons that you must allow a certain amount of shaft flex, for he once modified a shell to accept a pair of ball bearings on the layshaft. 'It snapped like a carrot,' he says.

Commando racers follow the John Player racer route with an outrigger bearing on the mainshaft. You can also ease the load here by fitting an alloy clutch —Mick Hemmings does a six-spring unit — or a belt drive conversion. Ordinary road riders may find that all of this is rather over the top.

However, a straightforward gearbox overhaul is another matter. I asked Mick Hemmings — whom you can contact at 72-74 Overstone Rd., Northampton NN1 3JS, or telephone on 01604 638505 —to draw up a list of items required for a complete rebuild.

Should you discover gears with chipped teeth, it really starts to get expensive.. By and large, however, Norton gears and selectors are very strong. Despite the cost of genuine parts, the usual warning applies about buying supposedly 'original' items at cut price. Unless you're absolutely

certain of their provenance, don't waste your money. Parts availability is good. When I called at Mick Hemmings Motorcycles he assured me that an AMC box could be assembled from new items. Only the MkIII Commando shell is currently in production, but this would require only a couple of washers around the top mounting lug to enable it to be fitted to a 1956 Dominator.

Many people feel a trifle nervous about tackling a gearbox rebuild. The consequences of getting it wrong can be terminal, of course. But there are reliable firms to whom you can entrust the task. One minor irritant is the failure of the hairpin gear pedal return spring, easily remedied by removing the outer cover of the gear-box. But do remember that the straight leg of the wire spring goes uppermost.

Several changes of overall ratio and one internal change on the Commando were solely attributable to Norton attempting to squeeze an ageing design past European noise regulations. A 19 tooth engine sprocket was changed first to 21 and then to 22 teeth. American demands for a Quaife-type five-speeder were resisted because staying with a four-speed gearbox gave Norton a clear advantage in noise tests.

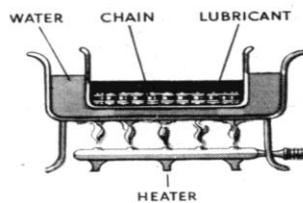
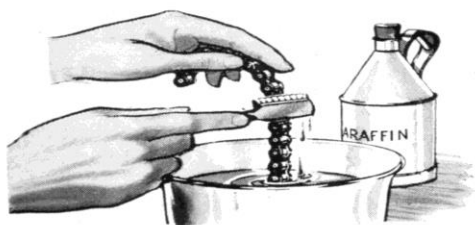
Norton were aware that the Commando really needed a new gearbox, but the 750cc twin was a stop-gap model originally intended to sell for just two seasons. Tim Stevens, who worked for Norton during the Commando period, maintains that the company wouldn't do anything about gearbox failures since the vast majority occurred when the warranty period had expired!

The final 850 Commando featured automatic primary chain adjustment, which probably gave the gearbox an easier life than most owners. A common failing is to over-tighten the chain on all models, which again increases loadings on bearings.

The ultimate tragedy of the AMC gear-box wasn't really its lack of strength in important areas, but the refusal of its manufacturers to admit that it could no longer cope with the demands they were making of it. As a design, it had simply had its day.



MOTORCYCLE CHAIN MAINTENANCE — 1



Other advertisements in this series

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3. Wheel alignment
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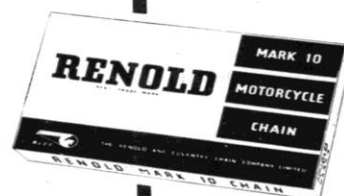
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The Service Providers listed have been used with a degree of satisfaction by OVR readers in the past. Just because they are listed does not imply an endorsement of them by OVR. Service providers are not charged a fee for this service nor can service 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 for twins, oil leak eliminator kits, socket head tappet adjusters, paper element oil filters and lots lots more. Ships worldwide. Email for a price list to nvidean@optusnet.com.au

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>

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

Terry Prince Classic Motorbikes, Australia: 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

Fastline Spokes, based in Broadford, Victoria, can supply Australian made spokes for just about any bike. Owner Bruce Lotherington manufactures spokes to order with a turn around time of less than 1 week. For more info see www.fastlinespokes.com.au or phone (+61) 0411 844 169

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Nuts n Bolts:

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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/>

Precision Shims Australia: All types of shims made to your requirements, ships worldwide. More info at their web site www.precisionshims.com.au

V3 Products (see entry under Spares above) also stocks a large range of Vincent specific nuts n bolts.

Keables, Australia: The original nut n bolt specialists who are able to supply just about anything with threads and bits to match such as taps n dies. Recently have relocated to 11 Braid St, West Footscray, Vic. Ph 03 9321 6400. Web site www.keables.com.au

Restoration Services:

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Ken Phelps, Australia – Qualified aircraft engineer and builder and daily rider of Norvins for over 30 years, who has the skill and experience to carry out overhauls, rebuilds, general repairs and maintenance to Vincent HRD motorcycles. Full machine shop facilities enabling complete engine and chassis rebuilds, Painting, wiring, polishing, aluminium welding and wheel building. Ken Phelps Phone: (61+) 0351760809 E-mail: ogrilp400@hotmail.com . Located in Traralgon, Victoria, Australia

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.

Grant White – Motor Trimmer, Australia: Specialising in Vintage and Classic Cars and Motorcycles. Located in Viewbank, Victoria. ph 03 9458 3479 or email grantwhite11@bigpond.com

Ace Classics Australia is a Torquay Vic. based Restoration business specialising only in British Classic and Vintage Motorcycles. Complementing this service, they provide in-house Vapour Blasting, Electrical Repairs and Upgrades, Magneto and Dynamo Restoration plus Servicing and Repairs to all pre-1975 British Motorcycles. They are also the Australian Distributor and Stockist for Alton Generators and Electric Starters. Phone on 0418350350; or email alan@aceclassics.com.au . Their Web page is www.aceclassics.com.au

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