

Daily (sometimes) Blogg – Part 5

Thursday 27th August

The VMCC club run deferred from Sunday due to heavy rain was re-scheduled for today and initially it looked very promising with sunshine and only light clouds. The forecast suggested the odd shower later in the day but that was about it. One of our regulars was late arriving so I hung around at the start in Lacock till Chris turned up. Reg the run leader had given me a brief outline of his route and I knew where both the coffee stop and the lunch stop were to be so I was not overly concerned. I tried cutting the corner of the first part of their route in the hope of getting ahead of them. However, after waiting at Colerne for about 10 minutes with no sign of the others I concluded I was either on the wrong road or they were still in front. I had to get the map up on my phone to figure out a route to Nailsworth. We were doing quite well until we got to Westonbirt where the state of the roads indicated recent heavy rain and sure enough it started as we got into Tetbury. Fortunately the coffee stop was only a couple of miles further on and we arrived only minutes after the others. From then on it rained on and off all the way to the lunch stop and very heavily while we were eating. Fortunately the sun was out when we set off home though it started again just as I was parking the bike. This was the last run for the Revere for now as its going on SORN whilst I decide its future. The CB400A is road legal so it will be my 'modern' bike for now. In the evening I rode the Red TS250 to Chippenham Rugby Club for the VMCC meeting. It went fine and the lights are brilliant but it still will not tick over properly. Must look into that some time.

This will be the final entry in Part 5 of my blogg as it will not upload to the website if it gets any bigger. Tomorrow I am off the Spaxton to look at the ES175/1 so part 6 will start with the results of that visit.

Wednesday 26th August 2015

Had a test ride on a 1953 Matchless G3 rigid today. Its owned by a friend in the VMCC, Richard Kinsey and I have admired it for some time. Yesterday he emailed to say he was going to sell it and as promised, I had first refusal. It's a very original bike never having been repainted or messed around and went very well during the 5 miles or so that I completed. I was very tempted, even at the £3850 he was hoping for. However, when I thought more deeply I realised that it did not give me that immediate satisfaction nor in truth was it as smooth in engine and gearbox as the MAC. If I had not already bought the Velo I would almost certainly have ripped Richards hands off for this bike but in truth it does nothing better than the MAC and its only other real attraction is the cachet of a rigid rear end. Sitting in my shed is a concours pre-war AJS with exactly those attributes. So reluctantly I have passed over the opportunity.

To get to Richard's house I rode the red (ex Dennis P) TS250. Forgot to replace the wings mirrors which I had removed (for reasons that now escape me) and this quickly reminded me how essential such items are. It went well enough and there were no problems. At first I thought it was incredibly quick as 70+ came up on the speedo effortlessly. However a glance at the bicycle speedo showed what felt more like the correct speed of about 55mph. Nonetheless it pulled up my test hill in fine style confirming my earlier impression that this was a strong engine. Not so encouraging was an inability to set a reliable tickover (I suspect the crank seals need attention) and a strange rattle most evident at a slow tickover which only became evident when it was ht. Seemed to me to be from the

piston or small end area. I know that John had stripped the top end because he was concerned about a noise and that he had fitted a new small end bearing as well as cleaning a setting everything to book. Not sure what it is at present; mostly likely piston slap.

Tuesday 25th August 2015

I had an inspiration yesterday and found an old s/arm with chain adjusters and a brake torque arm. They were all pretty rusty but have cleaned up well enough to do the job for now. I also found the



leather straps from an old dog harness and these are now in place to secure the petrol tank. Today the rain finally stopped long enough for me to get the bike into the orchard for a photo session and a test ride. Everything seemed to work fine. The handling with the l/link forks felt a bit odd initially but I soon got used to it. The engine is very quiet mechanically and in the exhaust, most of the noise comes

from the induction side. I managed to get it into 3rd gear very briefly and it didn't make any horrible noises or jump but this was hardly a real test of that particular condition. In any event, the main purpose of today's ride was to check out the cycle parts and ancillaries like ignition and carb. In that respect it was very successful and I did not find any other immediate tasks. It's a real ugly bug as the pictures show but seems very functional and I am tempted to search the other missing bits to make it road legal.



Sunday 23rd August 2015

Carburettor and ignition system fitted and the test bike is now a runner. I used the new BVF clone that was fitted to the outfit. I removed it because I could not get the tickover lower than 2k rpm. However, whilst fitting to the test bike I found a possible cause. There is a rubber O ring inside the screw cap and this is easily displaced which would allow air to be drawn in through the top of the carb. The carb now allows tickover settings right down to stall. For the ignition I used the Powerdynamo which has been sitting on the shelf for months waiting to be fitted to the outfit. The benefit is that it's self energising so I don't need to worry about a battery. I did fit an on-off switch using an MZ indicator switch as it fits neatly on the clutch lever. I found a new 126 link 428 chain in my spares which fitted perfectly but unless set murderously tight, the bottom run fouls the frame

around the brake lever tunnel. I also realise that I had not fitted any chain adjusters so I had yet another search of the spares boxes. I know I have a couple of old ones somewhere but could not locate them so that's something else on the 'to buy' list. I did find an old rubber chain guide which I cut in half and fitted to the lower chain run. This lifts the chain over the brake lever tunnel nicely so no more metal-metal contact. I fitted the other end into the top run of the chain to stop the chain rubbing on the engine casing.

The engine started easily enough and sounds mechanically quiet – there is a rasp from the inlet so I fitted a rubber airbox connector with a piece of fine gauge wire as a filter. It did not make any difference to the noise but at least it stops any large bits being sucked in. All 5 gears select but it's impossible to tell on the bench if it still jumps out of 3rd gear. I think I have probably got as far as I can on the garage side. Next step is try it round the orchard but first I need the chain adjusters and probably an air box. Still I am pretty happy with the progress in less than one weekend.

Saturday 22nd August 2015

As all the runs for the weekend had been cancelled due to forecast heavy rain and thunder I decided to have a go at building the engine test TS250. Friday evening was spent going through the boxes of bits sorting out the parts I would likely need. Of course I overlooked a lot of the smaller bits so more



time had to be spent on Saturday as the missing items became obvious. Quite pleased with the way it went as by Saturday evening I had most of a mongrel TS250 assembled as can be seen in the pictures. The front forks were originally built by the late Mark Dicker for his TS250 outfit. He kindly bequeathed them to me several years ago when I consulted him about developing a set of L/L forks for a sidecar project I was working on at the time but subsequently abandoned. I have been look

for a use for them ever since and this project was ideal. I had intended to use a drum brake wheel but it proved easier to go for the disk option as everything lined up better that way. One pleasant surprise was how well the master cylinder and caliper performed. All my previous testing after I rebuilt these items suggested that I had an air leak as they went soggy if left for a few days. However, after fittings they worked perfectly with no sponginess even though I had not bled the system – most odd. The front mudguard is the chrome item I recently removed from the TS250 outfit though looking at the picture I can see I have not lined it up properly so that will need attention.

A correct TS250 tank was something I did not have in stock so I used the tank from a TS150 (formerly on the trail bike). I had to cut out the centre web to allow it to fit over the frame tube and cobble up some front mountings. I know I have some proper TS250 tank rubbers somewhere but they failed to emerge yesterday. The rear sits on a piece of car radiator hose and is held on by a bungee rubber quite securely. I know I



have some leather straps somewhere which I plan to use – just like the ISDT bike. On reflection, I actually prefer this tank arrangement over the stock item. A TS250 rear mudguard was something else which I did not have in stock but an old ETZ250 guard fitted the wrong way round went on ok with a tail piece from a TS150. Not overly satisfied with that arrangement but it will do for now.

There are a few other things which I didn't seem to have in stock any more like an air cleaner box and a battery tray but I don't think I really need either for this purpose. The most annoying item I could not find was the plastic chain cover for the rear sprocket. I found two new ones for the ETZ range and a good spare for the ES250 but nowt for a TS250. I will get one with my next order from OST2RAD as I want to use the chassis to experiment with speedo drive gearing for the ES250 Trophy.

The engine fitted for now is 'Jumpy' the one with the ill fated gearbox which I hope to prove is now fixed. Overall I think it went quite well for a day's work. Tomorrow I will get on with the carb, cables and electrics.

Friday 21st August 2015

The good news is that grandson finally screwed up his courage to have another go on the ETZ125 and though he is still nervous, he does seem to have mastered the art of pulling away and doing some laps of the garden. He only stopped when the bike ran out of petrol and by the time we had got some more, it was raining hard. Next stop is for him to earn the bike by getting a part time job to help pay for the insurance CBT and provisional licence. Sensibly his dad will not let me deliver the bike until these things are in place.



I have now refitted the rear carrier to the Red Supa5 and a matching top box which has done the rounds on many of my bikes. It's the QD type which is essential so that you can get at the tool box in



the seat. The other thing bugging me is the state of the rear wheel – my fetish over rusty spokes is well known. The bike is now on the lift and the wheel on the bench where it's getting some attention. The hub has been cleaned up reasonably well and the spokes have been rubbed down and painted silver for now. It won't get the s/s spoke treatment until I am sure of its role in the longer term. Overall the bike looks quite purposeful and I look forward to another ride. My VMCC run on Sunday has

been cancelled due to the forecast heavy rain. There is an MZ run also scheduled for the same day and I have asked for details since if the rain is not too bad, I might well do that instead.

On Thursday I had my second ride on the Velo to the Crown at Bishops Cannings for lunch time meeting with my VMCC friends. The bike went well and I even used the electric starter. It was much admired by Richard Kinsey who has an MAC project bike in his garage which he will be restoring next

winter. Having seen his achievements with the Panther M100 and his Scott, it will no doubt make mine look like a scruffy heap.

Once the Red Supa5 is back together, I plan to start building the engine test bike based around the frame I bought from Alison Cattle a couple of weeks ago. I have looked out a selection of bits which I think should be enough to get it to rolling chassis stage. Then I will have a better idea of what is still missing.

Tuesday 18th August 2015.

Our visitors all went out for the day so I got a few hours in the garage. The electrics on the Dennis TS250 are now sorted to my satisfaction at least. Some very odd things had been done for reasons which are unclear and a lot of redundant wire had been left in place. The bike is now wired correctly as a Supa5 with the Powerdynamo modification and everything works as it should. At least now I stand a chance of successfully trouble shooting at the side of the road should I get a problem. I washed a lot of muck off the engine and it now looks tidier and seems to be free of leaks. The rack has been removed and welded where necessary (practically everywhere in the event) and has been painted silver. Choice of colour dictated by what I had on the shelf.

The front brake lever has been broken in the past but the repair is beginning to flex, hence the insulation tape. I guess it really wants replacing but it's a Grimeca and I don't have any bits for these (loads of levers for the MZ master cylinder but the design is wholly different of course). Nor do I have access to ally welding at present even if the lever would support this. For now I have splinted the lever and replaced the insulating tape. Still a bodge but at least it's now firm and to be honest the lever could safely be used even if the broken end came off completely.

One sad piece of news is that my grandson has not got on well with riding the ETZ125. He just does not seem to have the knack of balancing throttle and clutch for smooth start. Mostly he just stalls the engine. The one time he did get away he took a fistful of throttle and nearly rammed the fence before he regained control and stalled the engine anyway. Frightened himself I think and now makes excuses rather than have another go. Neither his dad nor I are sure how to work round this. They live in Shrewsbury and are due to go home on Thursday so not much more time to resolve it on this visit especially as heavy rain is forecast for Wednesday

Monday 17th August 2015

Not too much time for garage therapy as we have had the whole family visiting in fits/starts over the past few days. I did have one small success with the outfit. It has had a small oil leak ever since I bought it but it was never bad enough to warrant serious investigation. However, it has been standing in the same spot for a couple of weeks so the oil pool was big enough to spur me into action. I did the usual thing of cleaning the bottom end thoroughly then checking regularly to detect traces of oil. It turned out to be the bottom screw on the primary drive cover. These are hard to reach with a decent sized screwdriver, due to the proximity of the sidecar, so I replaced it with an Allen bolt fitted with the correct alloy washer. Three days later still not a drip in sight. Less satisfying was the fact that the top screw seems to have a stripped thread as I can neither get it out nor tighten it up. However, there is no sign of oil weeping from the gasket in that area so it will have to wait until the engine needs to come out of the frame – hopefully not for some considerable time. I

also decided it was time to prep and paint a new mudguard in green to match the paintwork of the rest of the outfit. This is now in the greenhouse to harden prior to giving it a finishing coat of clear lacquer.

Last night I finally got the ex Dennis Poulter Supa5 out of the van and gave it preliminary checkover. Obvious things needing attention were the odd location of the horn, (sticking out sideways), various bits of wire which seemed to be superfluous and a non existent charge control light. The homemade rear rack felt decidedly wobbly – Dennis's welding never seems to last long so it will be checked over as well. Oh and the front brake lever appears to be held together with insulating tape. Obviously none of these can be serious as it does have a valid MoT but I am not riding it again until these items and the others I will doubtless find have been attended to.

Perhaps the most worrying thing is the actual provenance of the bike. The V5C dates it as a 1974 model and it shows that Dennis bought the bike in 1982. However, the diaries which he kept notionally for this bike actually mention him running several other Supa5s as well during the period 1982 to 2013. I somehow doubt that the frame now on this bike is the original. Certainly from its design it dates from a later period; post 1975 at the very least I would have said. The engine/frame numbers recorded in the diaries suggest it was originally a 4 spd model. The frame has had the steering lock spigot cut off. I thought originally to allow the fitting of ETZ fork yokes though now I am not so sure this was the only reason. The spigot would have shown the frame number. The Vin plate is correct to the log book but is only screwed on and the engine number is different to both V5C and the diary entry. The diaries mention purchase, running and sale of several Supa5's and much mixing and matching of parts yet somehow what emerged the other end was the bike now in my possession. I suspect that the only part from the original 1974 bike is the Vin plate. However, what remains is a usable legally registered and shortly to be tax exempt Supa5 so I doubt I am going to rock the boat by doing anything about the anomalies.

Saturday 15th August 2015

Whoops, more than a week since I last wrote up the blog and quite a lot has happened; just hope I can remember it all. From 5th to 9th



I was in Ireland with a group of friends spectating at the Ulster Grand Prix. This was my first visit and to the UGP it was an interesting contrast to the North West 200 which I attended last year. The main difference is the location and layout of the circuit which is in a very rural area with just a few houses and no real

facilities around the course. There are no footpaths on these country lanes so having parked the hire car, you have to walk round the circuit itself to get to a spectating spot. This of course is only possible for brief periods between sessions so severely limits how far you can get. The NW200 circuit is almost entirely in urban areas so it's possible even during racing to change venues and there are far more facilities available. At the UGP we had to stock up with food and drinks at the supermarket

close to the hotel prior to driving to the circuit as you cannot get out again until the roads re-open between 8:30 and 9:30pm. The spot we chose was between the Quarry bends and the start/finish where they had erected a temporary grandstand. Main benefit of this was the huge screen opposite onto which the helicopter relayed real time video of the racing. In reality we watched this all the time only watching the bikes passing on the road when the leaders went past. Apparently this is a new feature and if I go again, I would want to choose a spectating point which had one of these screens (there were 3 around the course).

The picture shows our spot with Lough Neagh in the far background and the screen which is just showing blue at that time. In the background you can see the pits and the start/finish area. Sadly the practise day and the racing day were marred with incidents so that few sessions or races went full distance. Anyway we had a great time.

While I was away I made up my mind to dispose of the BMW R26 so getting back to reality on Sunday I put an advert on Gumtree. Had a number of responses and the first chap to view the bike on Tuesday evening bought it. I delivered it on Thursday morning and found that he already has 4 airhead boxer twins and 6 early Landrovers so the bike will be in good company. I still feel a bit guilty about not persisting with it since it has served me well on VMCC road trials this season. However, I have never really been comfortable with it and better to move it on with fond memories and before I spent serious money restoring the cycle parts.

In between times during one of the rare dry days in August, I turned out the boxes of spares in both the workshop and the rear garage to sort and re-box my existing stuff and the new stuff donated by Ray Cattle. This has to be done regularly as its amazing how much stuff I had forgotten about. The other reason was to assess what parts I had to build my engine test rolling chassis. The frame is now slightly less bare and I am sure I have enough bits to get it on its wheels. Not so sure about some of the tinware items but they are not critical at this point. Funnily enough I did not find a TS250 a tank though I am pretty sure I have one somewhere; did find a TS150 tank and this can be adapted to fit easily enough if necessary.

On Friday I drove down to Exeter to visit John Hill. He has just bought a very nice Guzzi V75SP something he has always lusted after and intends to sell his V35 and police V50. I was quite taken by the pictures I saw of latter and the main reason for my visit was to have a ride and see if it was as



comfortable as it appeared. When I sat on it in the garage it appeared to be the perfect armchair riding position. Sadly for some reason the bike just did not appeal to me when I rode it. It felt lumpy and I could not get used to the linked rear brake. Bizarrely the riding position also made my right arm ache within minutes. I think it's largely because John has never used it since he recommissioned it and it just needs some final tweaking but I was not enthusiastic enough to want to take on the challenge especially as the

cosmetics were mediocre. I was quite disappointed as my plan had been to make the V50 my modern machine and sell the Revere and probably the CB400 but this is not going to happen.

Over lunch, John mentioned that he was also going to sell the TS250 that he bought from Dennis Poulter's estate last. In fact I delivered the bike to him at the same time as I collected the R26. His experience with the TS250 mirrored mine with the 500R I bought from Dennis's estate. Lots of bodes most of which were poorly executed and in many cases totally unnecessary. John finally sorted it sufficiently well to get it MoT'd .

However, on a run a few days later it blew out the back tyre and threw John down the road putting John in hospital and the bike back into the workshop. Fortunately both are now fully recovered. On a whim I asked if I could ride the TS250 and was pleasantly surprised at how well it went and how quickly I felt at home on it compared to the



V50. The fact that it had a Powerdynamo kit, full s/s exhaust and an ETZ front end convinced me I should buy it so I came home with SJF 270N. The picture severely flatters the bike but I think it has a lot of potential especially if I decide to try a spot of camping next year. One benefit is that it is a 1974 model which makes it eligible for historic tax status. It is still MoT'd but I have no immediate plans to use the bike. Given John's experience, I plan to go right through it again to make sure there are no other Dennis bodes lurking. In the meantime I have some interesting bedtime reading in the form of Dennis's diary(s) which he kept on this bike.

Tuesday 4th August 2015

Quite a lot done over the last few days and tomorrow afternoon we fly to Belfast for the Ulster Grand Prix so no chance to update the blog till I get back on Sunday.

The ETZ125 now has a nice shiny front wheel, so does the Blue Supa5 as I decided to swap the



wheels over so that I retained the one with s/s spokes. Nothing wrong with the old Supa5 wheel but it was rebuilt about 9 years ago with chrome spokes and eventually they will start to rust again. By the time they do my grandson will either have moved on to bigger bikes or more likely four wheels. While the Supa5 wheel was out I fitted a newly painted front mudguard as well.

The wheel bug continued and I have now stripped the front end of the TS250 outfit and fitted disk brake forks, the 16" disk brake front wheel plus master cylinder and caliper. The old front mudguard from the Blue Supa5 was tidied up a little and fitted to the outfit in place of the chrome one which I never liked. Fitting the disk brake assembly to the outfit threw up a couple of wobbles. The first was that it still wears the original fork yokes. These are 5mm narrower than the ETZ yokes so the wheel is offset to the nearside. Usual trick is to swap the yokes but that creates other problems with the steering lock. Another option is to adjust the wheel lacing to centralise it in the forks. In this case I opted to do nothing as on an outfit having the front and rear wheels not in line is not really much of an issue (I hope). The bigger problem was that the tyre was very close to the nearside fork leg but it

does clear as does the mudguard after a little discreet adjustment with a length of wood. This problem was an own goal as I was keen to use a new 3.50 x 16" tyre I had in stock. The front end was designed for a 2.75 x 18" tyre. I think I have a good 3.25 x 16" tyre somewhere in the shed so will try that some time.

On Sunday I rode the R26 on the VMCC White Horse Trial which and covered over 100 miles including 9 green lanes some quite long. Rode in company with Reg Cox on a 750cc Triumph twin in off-road trim but apart from a very rough and steep uphill section where I had to drop to 1st gear, the R26 kept up well and Reg was quite impressed. Just got the



results and more by luck than judgement (there were only 5 in the class) we won the Post War Trophy. Since then the R26 has been cleaned and stripped of some surplus gear (tin box, wing mirrors and indicators). I also fitted its original speedo which Ian Clarke has repaired and brought with him to the trial on Sunday. This is in preparation for selling the bike should I finally decide to get rid of it. At present I still cannot make up my mind whether to restore it or sell it. Though it is pretty gutless, it has been incredibly reliable, and it is quite nice to ride provided you are not trying to keep up with someone else. I wonder if I should hang on to it for a bit.

Friday 31st July 2015

It's been a few days of wheels, wheels wheels. I rebuilt the drum brake front wheel now in the ETZ125 with some nice shiny s/s spokes then had to transfer the tyre from the disk brake wheel as it was new and the old one most certainly was not. I found a good spare tyre to fit on the disk brake Just in case it was needed. This got me to thinking about the brakes on the Outfit. Whilst the Honda TLS drum brake does provide effective stopping I prefer the TS250 in sidecar form to have a 16" wheel and it just so happens that I still have the 16" disk brake wheel from my previous outfit. The other parts necessary for this conversion were also in stock – master cylinder and caliper, the correct fork sliders and a suitable tyre. This afternoon I fitted the tyre and polished up the rim and painted the sliders black as their silver finish did not really look right and was a bit scabby.

Once that task is completed I will fit the Honda front wheel to the Blue Supa5 to improve its braking ahead of the Colombres trip. At that point I hit a slight snag in that the ideal brake lever for this conversion is the type fitted to the drum brake ETZ and the only one of these I had is now on the ETZ125. However, this provided a perfect excuse to order a few more bits from Germany which will include the correct spokes for the ETZ's original front disk brake wheel and a 57mm piston for the barrel which came from the spare ETZ125 engine – plus the inevitable gaskets.

In between times we had a really good run yesterday to visit the Metisse workshops near Faringdon. Very interesting chap who is clearly very enthusiastic about the product. Their bread & butter line is replicas of the Steve McQueen desert racers for which they have a licence from Steve's estate. They also do special's and have developed their own 1000cc engine which in current production form

gives out 97bhp though they have a version which gives out 140+bhp. Deep pockets are needed though, the desert racer replicas are £13k plus VAT and the 1000cc jobbies £25k+.

Today I took the Blue Supa5 for its MoT. Not sure yet whether to tax it or put it on sorn for a couple of months as August promises to be a very expensive month and I have 9 other bikes all taxed and tested.

Wednesday 29th July 2015

I took the ETZ125 out for a test run today, did about 40 miles altogether and the bike ran splendidly. The drum front brake worked well and was more than adequate for the size/weight of the bike. I did a couple of green lanes during the run to try them out before Sundays White Horse Trial. These were ones I have not previously ridden and I was curious to see what they were like. Both were level with a mainly firm surface and no potholes or deep puddles despite the rain over the past few days. The R26 should cope with both lanes ok. I was impressed with the way the little 125 pulled even at low revs in a high gear. Possibly not quite as much torque as the TS trail but that of course is a 150. Having 5 gears to choose from is a bonus and I may experiment with fitting an ETZ engine into a TS150 frame.

Back home the only thing spoiling the appearance of the ETZ125 was the tatty appearance of the front wheel. I have a set of stainless spokes in stock so I plan to rebuild it over the next couple of days. One other thing I did yesterday and forgot to record was replacing the broken throttle cable with the one I repaired. This worked very well and the bike now performs pretty much as I had always hoped. Now I have the methodology, I will repair the broken one just removed from the ETZ125 so I have a spare in stock. I have been looking on Ebay and on the German websites and none seem to be available new or second-hand so they have clearly gone into the hen's teeth category.

Tuesday 28th July 2015

Monday evening I got the urge to investigate the 4 spd engine which I rebuilt a couple of months ago. During the gearbox assembly stage everything seemed fine and I managed to find the timing marks to set the gear selection up correctly. Everything also seemed fine after I had replaced the RH crankcase with the gears spinning freely in neutral. However, after final tightening the whole gearbox was stiff even in neutral, selection was very difficult and action when successful also stiff. Anyway I found that by slacking off all the crankcase screws by 1.5 turns each and then tapping the cases to ease them apart the stiffness went away. Selection was still not good (it never is with the 4 spd box) but with patience I could get gears to select though on 3 and a neutral. Lots of false neutrals as well but gain that is normal for this box. No option other than to split the crankcases though I did cheat and leave the whole primary drive side fully assembled as I was pretty sure the problem had to be on the RH side somewhere. Indeed this proved to be the case, the bearing which supports the input gear shaft was not fully engaged in its blind hole; tapping this into place was easy enough. Looking at the rest of the gear assembly I could find nothing else wrong. The selector timing was spot on and all the relevant bits were in the correct positions. So I put it all back together again. Did I mention previously that my workshop oven had packed up and I had ordered a hot plate as an alternative – not being able to find a suitable second-hand oven. Murphy's law struck and the oven suddenly repaired itself and is functioning fine again so the hot plate remains untested. Anyway with the engine fully

assembled I found everything was spinning freely so at least one issue had been resolved. Repeated attempts at gear changing still only produced 3 gears and a neutral. As neutral selection is positive and in the right place, I presume I have got 1st, 2nd & 3rd gears. I am rather hoping 4th is still in there but actually needs the engine spinning to get the selectors and engagement to work. Not sure how I am going to test this but no doubt an opportunity will arise in due course. I only stripped it in the first place to assess its condition.

While I was in 4spd mode I remembered that I had a 4spd TS250 cylinder head which was scheduled to be fitted to the Supa5 motor in my Es250 Trophy. This motor had been modified to use the short studs and sleeve nuts so that the head can be removed whilst the engine is in the frame. This means boring the drillings in the head to 12mm to fit the sleeve nuts. Quite a tedious job as complete accuracy is needed otherwise the modified head won't line up with the studs. I bolted the head to a piece of wood and then clamped the wood to the lathe under the milling head. I used a 9mm drill to centre it then swapped it for the 12mm (actually 12.24mm as I used an imperial drill to give a little clearance). With everything lined up the 12mm drill was too long to fit into the chuck so I had to cut about 2cm from the shank. Once this was done the actual drilling was quite easy. I tested the modified head on the 4spd engine and thankfully it lined up perfectly. Modified head is now back on the shelf awaiting an opportunity to fit it to the Trophy.

Domestic chores then took over and to get the mower out of the greenhouse I had to move the ETZ125. With the grass cut I looked over the bike and found that the front barke was very spongy again. I have repeatedly bled the system but air seems to creep back in if left unused for a more than a week or so. I decided that perhaps the way forward was to dispense with the disk brake setup and revert to a drum brake – perfectly adequate for such a light bike and less to go wrong for when my grandson takes ownership. Hunting through the spares I found enough bits to make the conversion (or so I thought) so the ETZ125 was brought up to the workshop. The first snag was that the wheel assembly was too wide to fit between the forks. This turned out to be the decorative plate on the LH side which was clearly from a different model and the boss was much too wide. After some fun and games on the lathe I managed to trim off enough to make a good fit. Then the wheel was off centre. Should have remembered this as the ETZ forks are about 5mm wider than TS forks. The brake plates on the drum brake ETZs have a wider boss to compensate. My brake plate was from a TS model but a 2.5mm spacer did the trick. As luck would have it amongst my spares was the correct ETZ front brake lever so everything was looking good except that once assembled the lever action was very stiff and making a nasty grating noise. I spent ages investigating without success then decided to swap the cable; instant cure. Weird as both cables were brand new and looked identical. Anyway job is now done and tomorrow I will take the bike for a test ride.

Monday 28th July 2015

Saturday was Calne Bike day so I rode over for a looksee around noon. Stayed for a couple of hours and enjoyed a couple of slices of Mary Thornton's delicious bread and butter pudding on our section pitch kindly set up by Peter Thornton (Pedro). The trend towards modern stuff continues and Harleys were by far the largest single make. Not really that much of interest though I did drool over an early 20's Indian and a similar period Douglas. Finding anyone in the crowds was hard as well so I was quite glad to go home. I rode over on the CB400 Hondamatic and it attracted quite a lot of interest strangely enough.



Back home the major task was to fix the Velo starter motor and in this I was quite successful in the end. In theory it was a simple matter of making up a triangular plate and a couple of spacers. Getting the stud holes spaced correctly was a headache as I could not find a compass to mark out the holes. Spacers turned out to be a bad idea and had to be replaced by threaded bar. I then found that the fixing bolts had to be very slim else they fouled the outer cover. However I finally got a design that ticked all the boxes and the starter motor now functions and fits neatly behind its cover.

As Sunday turned into yet another wet Summer's day I decided to check and replace as many as possible of the Velo's remaining nuts and bolts with s/s items. As luck would have it most are (or should be) BSF form and I have a large tin of assorted S/S BSF bolts as source material. I was surprised to find how many of the existing bolts were not correct either in thread form or in type (threaded over the whole length rather than shouldered for example). Took quite a while as many had to be cut to length and in some cases the threads extended. Not a whole lot of visual difference but now I know that all most of the bolts are correct in length, form and thread type and most importantly, they will not rust.

This left the rear brake rod was one of the few remaining rusty items on the bike. Digging in my spares box I found a suitable piece of s/s ¼" rod threaded 26tpi (cycle) at both ends. I bought this at least 20 years ago (I think for my MSS Velo) but never got round to fitting for reasons which now escape me. Anyway after a little surgery, it is now fitted to the MAC and looks much better even though it is about 1.5" too long. I have used a spacer tube for now. When I can find or purchase a ¼" cycle thread die I will adjust it to correct length.

On Sunday evening the final instructions for the White Horse trial arrived so my energies are now devoted to sorting out a route for next Sunday.

Friday 24th July 2015

On Wednesday I stripped and rebuilt the spare ETZ125 engine belonging to John Hill. Though the bigend was toast, the rest of the bottom end of the engine was ok. All it needed was a good clean and some new seals. It's now back together again including the oil pump. However, I am a bit suspicious of this device as the engine has all the hallmarks of running short of oil. Since I don't know any reliable way to test the pump, I fancy it would be prudent to run the engine on petrol if it does get used. I have retained the barrel and piston separately for now, the former needs to be checked carefully to confirm if it can be sued with just a hone or needs a rebore. The latter has suffered badly due to the swarf coming from the bigend failure and is unlikely to be salvaged.

On Thursday the three musketeers rode to the Castle of Comfort near Cheddar to meet with the Bristol section. It was an unusual All British bike day for use, Mike and me on Velos and Terry on his 500 Triumph. The MAC went really well and the contrast with the R26 in terms of pulling power

uphill or into wind was marked. In terms of my preferred cruising speed there is not a lot in it as both are comfortable at circa 50mph. However, the Velo has plenty in hand and will easily run up to 60 (have not bothered to find out how much more it would do) whereas the R26 has little oir nothing in hand. To re-inforce my impressions I rode the R26 to our VMCC meeting that evening. The main thing the R26 scores on is front wheel braking and the smoother front fork action. What would be great would be the MAC engine in the R26 chassis.

On Friday it poured which made it a good day to be in the workshop. Don brought over his recently acquired Supa5 which I had worked ona couple of weeks ago. The one thing I had not been able to fix was a tendency for the revs to die back very slowly if the throttle was blipped. This is typical of an air leak and my diagnosis was the crankshaft oil seals. Don had bought a new set of seals and gaskets so we got the bike on the lift and started work. Both seals can be replaced with the engine in the frame but the dynamo side seal is easiest as it requires little dismantling. My method of seal extraction is to drill small holes near the periphery of the old seal and screw in self tappers. Sometimes these will push the seal out when the abut the bearing plate, in this case I had to use pliers and pull quite hard to remove it. Inspecting the seal showed clear signs of distortion though it was less obvious what had caused it. Anyway it took only moments to put in a new seal and reassemble everything. Before starting the clutch side I decided to test the engine and it performed perfectly with none of the previous slow rev die-back. Checking the gearbox oil there was no indication of petrol contamination (which you invariably get if the crank seal is worn) so we decided to not to disturb the clutch side seal.

Less good news from John Hill, my trip to Exeter on Sunday has been deferred yet again as he is still having problems with the Guzzi V50 cylinder head. He replaced the inlet valve guide after skimming its outside diameter to correct dimension (the spare supplied was significantly oversize). However, when it cooled down the inlet valve was still overly tight so will need to be in reamed. My visit is provisionally scheduled for Wednesday but this does depend on John finding a suitable small reamer (5.5mm)

Tuesday 21st July 2015

On Saturday Bill Little had an open day so I rode the CB400A, on the way back I rode in company with Mike and Terry on their Triumphs. About 10miles from home the bike started making a strange sort of noise whilst accelerating in high gear. It was only momentary and once beyond that speed (around 40mph in high gear) did not recur. Checked the oil level when I giot home but it was well above the mark. On Sunday we had a club run of about 90 miles and I took the CB400 on that as well but the noise did not occur this time. Very odd but the good news was that a quick check on fule consumption indicates it will do over 60mpg so no issues on that front.

On Monday I switched attention to the Velo and removed the rear wheel. This was so I could replace the rusty nuts and bolts holding the mudguard and so that I could get the number plate repaired as it had a couple of splits and was very wobbly. Friend Mick sorted the number plate with his mig welder and it's now back on the bike all fixed with new s/s bolts. Removing the wheel was hard as the spindle was seized in the speedo drive housing. This is an alloy item and gets crushed over time when the spindle is tightened. Some attention with a fine file soon sorted that problem. Just as well I did this as getting it out at the side of the road would have been difficult. I also discovered that you need a long tube spanner to get at the wheel nuts (qd wheel). Found one that does the job nicely

and it is now in the toolbox. Quite a productive morning. Later I took the Velo for a 10 mile ride and it went well. On Thursday we are planning a trip to the Mendips to meet up for lunch with the Bristol section.

Later on Tuesday I decided it was time to look at the Supa5 engine I bought back from Steve Hook. This is the engine has been the bane of my life and has been rebuilt twice by me and it still gave problems even after I thought I had found the source of the problem. Once apart it was showing clear evidence of 3rd gear selector wear yet again. Anyway I had a complete gear cluster including the drum and selector forks from an ETZ250 engine which seems to be in perfect condition with no wear on any of the selectors to suggest 3rd gear problems. The Supa5 engine is now rebuilt with this complete assembly and perhaps 3rd time round it will be fixed. To make sure that I never use the gear cluster again I stripped it down and threw away all the components associated with third gear selection.

Friday 17th July 2015

I rode the ETZ125 to the VMCC meeting at the Thameshead pub near Cirencester on Thursday to give a longer run – about 75 miles round trip. On the way up it was smooth and perky in the lower gears but just did not want to pull top gear on anything but a flat or downhill stretch. Initially I put it down to a strong headwind but it was not much better on the way home. Later I checked the bike over; plug was a little bit rich but not enough to worry about and the timing when checked with a strobe (electronic ignition) proved to be spot on. However I did find the back brake was over adjusted so eased that off and took it for another 20 mile ride. A bit better and it would run up to 50-55 at times but on the test hill just before I got home it was 40mph in 4th gear. Then while I was putting it away, the penny dropped; the twist grip was rotating on the handlebar as the clamp is broken and does not grip firmly. I lashed it up with some cable ties and took it for a ride this morning and it flew up the test hill in top so I reckon most of the performance issues were due to the fact that the throttle was rarely if ever more than half open. Flushed with success I decided to tackle the side stand which allowed the bike to lean much too far. It turned out that the shaft was bent near the pivot so I put it in the large vice which sits on a table in the garden (too big to put it anywhere else) and walloped it with my largest hammer. Eventually it decided to give in and straighten up; works fine now but needs some paint where the hammer removed the powder coating. With luck the ETZ125 is now proven sufficiently to pass it over to my Grandson (if he decides he wants it – fickle bunch kids).

The second test ride was to go and look at a Honda XBR500 a friend was selling at what seemed a bargain price. However though it started easily and sounded very good, the cosmetics were quite poor. In addition it has a very sporty riding position with footrests back around the s/a spindle and low, forward set bars. None of this is adjustable and I could not see it being a comfortable bike to ride any great distance. Perhaps the clincher was the fact that it had not been on the road since 2001 so undoubtedly there would be other recommissioning issues. Overall I decided the low price was not enough to overcome the disadvantages so the XBR will not be gracing my table.

Back in the garage I hunted for a replacement twistgrip for the ETZ125 but sure enough the only one I could find with the twin cable outlet was broken in exactly the same place. However, after some thought and quite a lot of sawing, drilling and hammering, I managed to make a repair which I think will do the job. Whilst in fixing mode I decided to have a quick look at the spare ETZ125 engine given

to me by John Hill from which I had 'borrowed the gearbox sprocket nut. The seizure turned out to be the big-end rather than piston. However, the pleasant surprise was that it has been bored out to 56.96mm which is 2nd oversize for a 150. This could be very useful for a future project. I have a spare ETZ125/150 crankshaft so when the time is right, I will strip and rebuild this engine.

While I was at GM Stephens buying some spare fuses for the Velo, I decided to get some s/s bolts to make a start on replacing the worst of the rusty ones. Price is a bit eye watering at 50p each for the 1/4" by 1/2" cycle thread so I only had enough cash on me to buy 8 for now. I fitted these on the front mudguard and it does look much better so I will get another batch for the rear mudguard. Not so much hurry here as the wheel will have to come out to be able to access them. I do like shiny things.

Wednesday 15th July 2015

The Cotswold Weekend trial on Sunday went quite well Mike and I decided to ride up to Chedworth rather than load up the van. In fact it was a good decision as despite the dire weather forecast we had only a couple of brief showers during the event and a little more rain a few miles from home. The R26 performed well though it still refuses to do more than 50-55. Since the average speed for the road trial was 20mph this was not really a problem. Monday was taken up with a trip to Exeter to attend the funeral of John Hill's wife Gwyneth. A lovely lady who will be much missed. I finally managed to deliver the compressed air cylinders I obtained for John about 6 months ago along with the MZ spares I bought for him and Andrew Long recently. I only had a brief chat with Andrew as it



was quite a busy occasion but did get to meet his wife Alison who seems very nice. John certainly thinks very highly of her. While I was there I took some pictures of a V35 Guzzi and an ex Italian police V50 Guzzi which John wants to sell – having bought himself a V75 which he had long wanted. Much to my surprise I was very taken with the Polizia V50 and my heart is very tempted to buy it. My head says otherwise as I have enough projects at the moment. It was the comfortable looking seat and riding position that did it for me.

The parts for the ETZ125 arrived on Tuesday so I set to and rebuilt the engine as I don't like having things in bits in my garage for too long. I was a bit nervous as I have only done one of these engines before and I have no memory of how I did it. The gearbox is really the only tricky bit. The Haynes manual was a bit vague but in the end I figured out what it was trying to describe and managed to get it reassembled. The major hiccup was the lack of an oven, the one I have kept in the garage for at least 15 years died yesterday so I had to resort to the hot air gun to heat up the crankcases. It worked ok but I would not be happy doing the bigger engines this way so the hunt for a replacement oven is now on.

On Wednesday morning I put the ETZ125 engine back into the bike. Fired first kick much to my delight thought it needed two more to actually get it running. To my relief the road test proved that we did have a working clutch and 5 gears. I did a couple of laps of my test circuit with no problems so I plan to take it on a VMCC run on Thursday. I had not realised just how noisy the bottom end had been; its very quiet mechanically now.

The ETZ125 was replaced on the bike lift by the ETS150 Trophy Sport which broke its chain case a



couple of weeks ago. Getting it apart was easy enough though I did find that both chain rubbers were perished. Fortunately I have a spare set in stock. When I removed the ignition side engine cover I found lying in the grease below the gearbox sprocket a chain link. The chain itself was complete with its link so this is a surplus one which must have been lurking around for a while. As I was the last person to rebuild this bike I guess I have to take ownership though I have no recollection of losing a spring link. Not sure if it was this bit that broke the chaincase or other parts of the link which are now missing. Certainly this bit was bent and

mangled so had obviously got tangled with the chain or sprocket. You can see how little of the chaincase survived the explosion. Anyway the bike is now reassembled with new chaincase and rubber chain guides ready for a road test.

Saturday 11th July 2015

The ETZ125 engine is now in bits in the workshop and its looks like both my previous guesses were correct. The engine has not been apart before (at least not the bottom end) and in the main is in perfect condition. However, the main bearings are quite rusty and the balls are pitted which I think explains the noisiness. I don't think the seals have blown, the expelled oil may have been because I overfilled it a tad. The rings are quite pitted as well, the bore itself is ok and there is no wear ridge at the top so my guess is that the bike did indeed stand unused from 1997 until very recently; overall supporting the 8k miles on the speedo. I have now cleaned everything up ready for the rebuild and a bearings & seals are on order from Simply Bearings. Having it apart gave me a chance to clean up the outer covers properly and spray them mat black as per original spec. The remainder of the afternoon was spent checking over the R26 and taking it for a test ride. Not a lot to do in fact the only thing needed was a top up for the rear tyre. What did surprise me was that the BMW is actually heavier than the MAC Velo or at least feels like it when wheeling it round. No wonder its struggles in the performance stakes. I was almost tempted to take the Velo to the trial tomorrow but I need a bit more commissioning time with it to be sure its reliable enough for longer distance events. Once it is I think the BMWs days may be numbered.

Friday 10th July 2015

A few positive developments over the last couple of days. An encouraging reply from Alton about repairing the Velo electric starter; they say they will get back to me next week once they have decided the best way to proceed.

The CB400A was ridden to our VMCC club night Thursday evening and a few things were noted none of which are serious and some of which were attended to today. Most worrying initially was that the oil pressure warning light did not come on when the ignition switch was operated. Something pointed out to me that I had not previously noticed. However delving into the innards of the instrument binnacle this morning I replaced the bulb and all is now well. It now lights up when the ignition is switched on and goes out immediately the engine is turned over even on the kickstarter. I found the gear lever was uncomfortably high but this is on splines so it has now been lowered a couple of notches ready for another test ride. The other thing was the wipers which flashed far too quickly. I found another relay in my spares box and this fixed the problem easily. This relay also has buzzer incorporated which is a bit irritating but should stop me forgetting to cancel. The only other thing I want to investigate is the rattle at tickover which gets slightly better when in gear. Not overly worrying as on the move its smooth and quiet enough but better to investigate now just in case. Thinking back my previous CB400A also rattled on tickover and it had only done 10k so perhaps its something they all do. Anyway I have posed a question on the Forum.

I took the ETZ125 for its MoT this morning which it passed without any advisories or suchlike. It was taxed at the Holt Post Office on the way home so is now fully road legal. It went ok but felt a bit flat and sluggish to me and the engine was noisier than I felt it should be. It was also blowing oil out of the gearbox breather. My guess is that the crank seals and probably the main bearings need replacing. In all other respects it felt fine gears selected ok, even neutral, and the noise was constant in every gear so it's clearly engine rather than gearbox related. Cannot let my grandson have it in this state so a full strip will be needed. Finding a time slot will be a problem given the long list of other bikes needing attention. Priority for today and possibly Saturday is to get the R26 ready for the Cotswold Trial on Sunday.

Wednesday 8th July 2015

On Tuesday I drove to the other side of Northampton to look at and buy a 1979 Honda CB400A Hondamatic. An unusual bike which has a torque converter and a 2 speed gearbox with no clutch.

You just select a gear open the throttle and away you go. First gear is good for about 45 but you can pull away easily enough if a bit pedestrian in 2nd gear. Takes a little getting used to but makes for a pleasant easy riding especially in stop-go traffic. The oddest thing is the free-wheel effect on the overrun meaning there is no engine braking. I took it for a 20 mile ride today and was very pleased with the way it went once I had settled to its peculiarities. The riding position is very armchair and comfortable and the whole bike feels much lighter than the Revere especially wheeling it around the drive. I taxed and insured it today and will run it for a month or so before deciding if it is the long term successor to the Revere.



I have continued tidying up the MAC including striping the front brake. I could not find anything obvious wrong though there was a lot of greasy looking dust in the drum. The lining themselves were clearly well bedded to the drum and looked quite tick but the rivets were very close to being exposed. I washed it all out with cellulose thinners and took the bike for a test ride today. The brake was much improved but seems less sharp by the time I got back. I have contacted a local company who reline brake shoes at a good price (£7.50 per shoe). Moreover, if you take the complete wheel they will measure everything up and where necessary fit oversize lining which are then ground to size. If the brake continues to worry me, I will take it to Keynsham for their attention.

I added the ETZ125 to my insurance policy along with the Honda and Velocette and it is now booked in for an Mot on Friday. If everything goes well I intend to offer the bike to my Grandson as his first bike. However, as he lives in Shrewsbury I want to make sure everything is topline before handing it over. Don't want to spend the next few months going backwards and forwards doing 'warranty' work.

Sunday 5th July 2015

Last night I had a very interesting chat with Ron, the previous owner of the MAC and gleaned some very useful information. It seems that the electric starter kit fitted was a prototype developed by Alton in cooperation with Ron Pratt specifically for this MAC. It took a number of iterations and several months to get everything right and the kit as fitted is exactly how Alton designed & made it. Clearly at that time the need for a spindle support plate (now so obvious) had not emerged at that time and though this was over 10 years ago, the MAC has covered less than a 1000 miles in that period. I hope that armed with this background, Alton will be supportive in supplying the bits needed to refurbish the starter system. However, even if they are not thanks to a visit by friend Terry this morning, we are very close to a home brewed solution. He is convinced we (meaning he) can make a new support plate and spacers and more to the point he has straightened the spindle so that there is virtually no eccentricity.

As it has been raining most of the afternoon I decided to clean up the black painted strip in the centre of the front wheel and this is now painted silver. Not a big deal but I think it look better. The other interesting comment from Ron was that he regarded the brake as pretty good by British bike standards for the period and was surprised when I mentioned that it seemed very feeble to me. The next job, once the paint is dry, will be to remove the front wheel and examine the brake.

Saturday 4th July 2015



Quite a bit to report this week. I did look at the AIS Model 16 on Wednesday. It was certainly substantially original and does not look as though it has turned a wheel for many a year. No attempt by the vendor to facilitate the sale. The bike was chained up in garage so getting a good look at it was impossible and though he has (allegedly) bought a new battery he has not attempted

to connect nor could I even reach the kickstart to see if it would turn over. He is asking £2500, the same price as the Model 16 I looked at Slough a couple of weeks ago which was a very smart and running so that I was able to make a test ride. No comparison really so I made my excuses and left. At the right money it would be an interesting bike to own but not a good buy in my judgement. I hope he gets buyer but I would be very surprised if he got anywhere close to his asking price. The picture makes it look rather better than it does in the flesh and it's not just superficial dust & grime.

On Thursday I decided to tackle the rebuild of the ETZ125 front wheel. I was making good progress until I came to offer up the first of the replacement spokes. The new one was way too short – disaster. The spokes I had ordered were 163mm in length which was correct according to my ETZ125 spares book (1985 edition). However, my bike is a 94 model and the front hub and disk arrangement is different and requires 177mm spokes. As I had damaged one spoke getting out and had no

suitable spares things were looking bleak. However, a search of the sheds and garage produced a tidy front wheel and the correct disk so I married the two up and fitted a new tyre. Not quite what I had intended, but the ETZ125 front end is now presentable. At some point I shall have to buy a set of the correct spokes but that is now a back burner job. For the first time I



was able to take the bike on a test run. It went ok but seemed to be struggling a bit coming up the test hill – 45mph was about all it would give. It is of course only a 125 and the engine seems to thrive on revs so perhaps I should be making more use of the 5 speed box.

On Friday evening the MAC Velo was delivered and this has dominated my time this weekend as you might expect. Major job was to investigate the electrics to find out why the lights, horn and brakelight would only work with the engine running. This turned out to be a blown fuse buried under the saddle. What confused me was that there was a visible fuse (which was fine) but this only protected the ignition circuit. Next job was to trace the ignition circuit and install a warning light when it was turned on; otherwise it would be all too easy to leave it switched on particularly if the engine had been stopped by the valve lifter. The bike has been fitted with Boyer-Brandsen battery powered electronic ignition fitted in a special housing. This seems to work well as it starts easily with no kickback. The bike had been wired to the British convention where lights, horn and brakelight were wired direct to the battery (albeit with their own fuse). As the wiring was not overly clever, I

decided to reconfigure it so that everything was controlled through the ignition switch which is a pretty robust Lucas car type device with a proper key (which I must get copied !). In the paperwork I found wiring diagrams for the electric start kit and the Boyer ignition system so I was able to follow this through quite easily; in the process finding a disconnected wire to the regulator. With these tasks completed the engine still started ok and the ammeter shows a healthy charge even with full headlights. Overall this was very reassuring; no serious problems found and a good working knowledge of the bikes electrics has been acquired. Still a lot to do but as it's not insured yet I am not in any hurry.

This afternoon I went through the service checks and again found no cause for concern. The gearbox level was slightly down but only by a few fl ozs, the oil tank was reasonably full and I checked that oil was returning correctly when the engine was running. I did not top it up for two reasons; firstly it may have wet sumped in which case the tank will quickly fill up and secondly, after a decent run to get the oil warm, I will do an oil change. Even the chaincase was filled to the correct level – never had a Velo that could do keep oil in its tin chaincase before. After this I went round cleaning up various things like the wheels and spokes and touching up any chips and rust spots. The spokes are in quite good condition, The galvanising is dull but they are free from rust. The rims however needed a rub down with the pot scourer and then touching up with aluminium paint. They look fine for now.

This evening I turned my attention to the Alton electric starter which was in a very sorry looking state. Two things have emerged so far, firstly the kit was fitted about 10 years ago and is one of their early models. Secondly, Alton only supply starter kits for Viper and Venom derivatives, the MAC is not supported so my kit would have been modified to make it fit. Alton did say that they were aware of a number of successful implementations on MACs but did not elaborate on what changes were necessary. The problem with mine is pretty obvious from the photos. The drive gear is all chewed up and is plain at an angle to the correct plane. This I discovered was because its spindle was only partially screwed into its housing and was bent. This obviously allowed the gear to run at an angle to the starter gear which then chewed it up. As



yet it is unclear exactly why this happened.



It could be bad assembly, poor maintenance or it could be a design fault. The fitting instructions sent by Alton show an outrigger plate that supports the spindle. However, this support plate requires certain other fixtures not present on my starter kit. I have seen a picture of the kit when originally fitted to my MAC and indeed there is no support plate. My guess is that Alton realised this was a weakness and modified later models.

Without the support plate there is nothing to stop the spindle from unscrewing itself from the motor housing and indeed the direction of rotation would facilitate this. I had already asked Alton about a replacement gear/sprocket assembly and they quoted an eyewatering 168Euros plus carriage!

With nothing to lose I decided to try and repair the starter mechanism beginning with the damaged gear. With a fine triangular file I cleaned up the burring and reshaped the teeth. It took some time and several iterations of filing and fitting but eventually I could get the gear to slide onto its spindle and engage with the starter motor gear in any position. I greased it heavily and then ran the starter motor (without the drive chain connected). It span freely without any binding and did not make any desperately worrying noises so it looked like a result. More difficult was getting the spindle into the correct position. It had to be very tight otherwise it would simply unscrew again. But being bent meant that it was eccentric and in its tightest position it was angled towards the starter motor making engagement with the starter gear excessively tight. There is no really satisfactory solution to this. Temporarily I got round it by adjusting the thickness of the Thrust washer which got the spindle in a suitable position. With the chain back on and adjusted I crossed my fingers, pulled in the valve lifter and pressed the button. Success - the engine turned over and when I dropped the valve lifter it burst into life. However, I do not plan to use it like this as more work is required for a satisfactory long term solution. Chief amongst these is a new or repaired spindle to eliminate the eccentricity and fabricating a plate to support the spindle and take any side thrust from the gear when the starter motor is running. I will get a quote for these parts Alton but I suspect that I have a friend closer to home who can make these bits for a lot less.

Monday 29th June 2015

Unbelievable but the parts I ordered from Germany on Friday morning were delivered by courier at 1130 this morning. The ETZ125 is now wearing a smart new exhaust system also the seat has been rebuilt with a new cover and is now back on the bike. The only other thing on my todo list is to respoke and clean up the front wheel. Too busy on other things today to tackle that job so it will have to wait until later in the week. Tomorrow I will be helping Mrs F set up the motorhome at Windsor for the dog show. I plan to come home on Wednesday as she has a friend staying with her for the rest of the week. I am hoping to view an AJS model 16 at Bracknell which is pretty much on my route home. Not sure I want two 350cc bikes of such similar vintage but its been owned by the same guy since 1962 and should be very original and unmolested. Equally, as I have yet to see any pictures and his description of its condition was a laconic 'its is what it is', it could be rubbish. Even if I bought it I am not sure when I could collect it as the van went to the garage this morning to investigate the warning light issue – hope its not too expensive to fix otherwise I may not be buying any more bikes for a bit.

Sunday 28th June 2015

For some reason my website is severely restricting the size of the files I can upload. Seems to be associated with a change of Internet Supplier and so far the only work round I have found is to start a new blog each time the old one 'fills up'. Today is one of those days.

Positive news on the bike front, my intensive search for an AJS or Matchless lightweight 250 or heavyweight 350 has resulted in my buying a 1953 Velocette MAC. Not really planned, it just happened! I was browsing on the internet and recalled fondly the rigid Velos I owned back in the

1970s. Indeed for a while a 1948 350 MAC was my only means of transport. Anyway did a search for Velos and found one at Bill Littles place near Cricklade. On Saturday I rode over and inspected the bike which is a bit scruffy but sound and fairly original. Took it for a ride and was instantly hooked. The riding position was spot on clutch light & smooth, engine smooth and responsive and the gearbox was like a knife through butter. The only downside was a poor front brake; fortunately the rear was excellent. Anyway after a short haggle the deal was struck. Not sure if it's a good thing or not but the bike has an Alton electric starter and 12v alternator. The latter works, the former does not but it's so easy to start thanks to the Boyer electronic ignition that this not really a big deal. It will be interesting to get it working but not a disaster if it never does.

The front number plate some other bits plus a wadge of paperwork comes with the bike which Bill is going to deliver next week when I have sorted out a suitable date. One of the selling points for me was that I know the previous owner, though not well. He is Ron Pratt a chap who used to come on



our section holidays a few years ago. This will be next winter's project with a view to using it on VMCC road trials in 2016. I am already contemplating getting rid of the R26 which though reliable and nice in many ways has proved disappointing in the performance department. Since both bikes are of the same

VMCC era (1945-60 class) I don't really need both.

Moving on to other matters, we had the section Tiddlers and Tortoises run today; though my wife reckoned it should be called the Tiddlers and Turtles run given the fairly heavy rain during the morning. I was disappointed but not really surprised when only 8 people turned up but encourage that three were on 50cc bikes. The other two had been ridden up from Bristol and the third was ridden by an actual teenager – one of the few in captivity in the VMCC. His presence alone made the run worthwhile and I just hope we can build on this for next year. I rode the ETS150 for its first long run. It went well until I got near the start in Devizes when I could hear an odd whining noise. I wasn't sure if it was me or something else in the line of traffic. Suddenly there was a much louder rattling cum clanging noise. I stopped immediately. I could not see anything obvious wrong so I tentatively restarted the engine and resumed my ride to the meeting point only ½ mile down the road without further issue. It was only when I was parking the bike at the Esso garage that I noticed the plastic rear sprocket cover was split and had bits missing.

We checked the bike over but there was no sign of any other damage or indication as to what could have caused it. Immediate thought was an excessively slack chain which had jumped the sprocket but in fact it was correctly tensioned. In the end with some gaffer tape holding it together I decided to carry on with the run and just ride it very gently. This was not a problem as the 3 mopeds dictated a fairly leisurely pace anyway. No further problems were experienced and we had a pleasant ride to the Crofton pumping station which was in steam. Nor did I have any problems on the way home. I have yet to investigate the problem as the bike lift is in use for the ETZ125 and I want to get hold of a

replacement sprocket cover before starting work. Murphy's Law at work again as I found two spares covers for ETZ250s, one for an ES250 but nothing for a TS/ETS150. If only I had waited a couple of days I could have added one to the order I have just placed with Meizwerad. Too late as I already have the confirmation email to say the order is fulfilled and on its way.