



**Southern Sporting  
Motor Cycle Club**

**CONTACT**

FEBRUARY

2014

# Contents

Editor's piece .....	1
President's piece.....	2
Dates for your diary .....	2
Ice-skating at Hampton Court .....	3
Classic bike investments .....	5
Bits and bobs .....	7
Farewell to motorcycling .....	8
Caption competition .....	10

## Editor's piece

Christmas seems a long time ago now, although the weather still shows no signs of brightening up. So still no Club Runs to report on, but at least the social side of the SSMCC is keeping active. Thanks to Doug for organising the (now) annual shindig (hopefully, not literally!) at the ice-skating rink, and thanks to Mick for taking most of the photos!

This month we've got another great article penned by Bill Casling – makes me realise what a complete newby I am to this whole motorcycling lark, and how much I have to learn! I've also included an article on investing in classic bikes – prompted by the recent purchase of a garage and a co-habitee who happens to be rather handy with a spanner!

Looking forward to seeing many of our members at the AGM, and hopefully the next few issues of Contact will include some two-wheeled (rather than two-bladed) action. Please keep sending in your articles, pictures and biking news!

**Amoret Whitaker – Editor**

## President's piece

Christmas has been and gone and I am typing this from my new tablet but I am still not sure how it works! Gizmos and gadgets are hard for me in my old age.

I do hope you have a prosperous New Year. Remember that you are the people who are going to keep the club going. Please try to come along to the AGM at the Adelaide pub on Wednesday 19th February at 8:00pm. Also, if you won an award at the last AGM please try and return them to me as soon as possible.

Will not be able to go to Belgium this year as I had to use my leftover holiday when my mother broke her leg; also it is too near the end of the month, I find it difficult to have time off then if it is odd days.

We are slowly getting new members for the club but a concerted effort in 2014 would be good. Where in the past we would collect a lot from the Scheme, with only 50 pupils a year passing through we only collect one or two. So show your nice side!

I know the Scheme has very little money but it would be nice to look into new year bars for the instructors they receive very little in recognition.

Not sure who, if anyone, is stepping down this year from their post on the committee.

I have heard rumours of a wind of change but this could be the beans from Sam's Café!

I think with the weather as it is we will soon be called S.S.B.C. Southern Sporting Boat Club! I think Steve Pearce will not mind. Or just turn our machines into bike boats.

I would just like to reiterate my comments on competitions. That is if you wish to run a trial in September the club will need in place a competitions secretary. People willing to help run sections. Making sure Chris Frazer can manage clerk of the course. Bob Brown can do secretary of the meeting. We have the land in place. As I have said before, I cannot help this year as I will be on holiday. So it is up to you, the members, to stand up and be counted.

**John Mason – President and Chairperson**

## Dates for your diary

- |  |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
| <b>19<sup>th</sup> February</b>              | AGM, The Adelaide       |
| <b>13<sup>th</sup> April</b>                 | Pioneer Run to Brighton |
| <b>27<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> April</b> | Club trip to Ypres      |
| <b>6<sup>th</sup> July</b>                   | Seaford BBQ             |

## Ice-skating at Hampton Court



This activity has now become an annual event on the SSMCC social calendar – to call it a sporting event would perhaps be stretching the imagination a bit!

I have to admit that I was hoping it would be a washout, due to all the recent rain, but as long as there is ice underfoot – it still goes ahead. However, it has to be said that

the bad weather had put people off, so there were no queues for boots and fewer people on the ice to crash into.

The usual suspects were there – Heather skating, with Mick watching on the sidelines (although he does make himself useful guarding bags and taking photos). Spanner surprised us all by giving the ice-skating a go – he showed a marked improvement during his performance, although he decided to finish before the time was up, just in case his luck changed. Dave and Heather had shown remarkable foresight by bringing their fully-armoured bike gear – or perhaps they just have less faith and more brittle



bones than the rest of us. Us girls had to make do with relying on our natural padding to protect us, should we take a tumble on the ice.





It was a nice surprise to have Andy join us as well, and he certainly made up for in speed what he lacked in finesse, as he raced around the rink like a whirling dervish (albeit in black). Flossy did his usual annoying thing of gliding around like a pond-skater on water as if he had been skating since birth. And Lorna was lucky

enough to have him give her a helping hand, so she was pretty nifty by the end.

Chilli turned up with her son and a couple of friends, so we were quite a large group. And last but not least, Doug



and Anne watched on the side-lines looking after

the guest appearance of Doug's husky, who definitely added to the Christmassy, snowy theme.



Finally, after an hour on the ice (which seemed much longer!) we finished the evening in a local pub, downing a few much needed pints.

## Amoret – Editor



## Classic bike investments

Investing in a classic bike? Prices are “set to keep on rising”.

Remember the days when you thought £10,000 was a bit steep for an old Ducati, and £5,000 could buy a half-decent BSA Gold Star? Well, they've well and truly gone now that classic motorcycles have attained the status of rolling artworks beloved of the super-rich.

During the past decade, and particularly since the stock market crash of 2008, ploughing your spare cash into tangible assets that you can enjoy looking at and having fun with has become the sensible thing to do - with the result that values of classic bikes have rocketed across the board.

The latest evidence that the market is in rude health was seen at Bonhams annual Las Vegas bike auction staged yesterday (January 9) at Bally's Hotel and Casino where, out of 206 machines offered, just 26 failed to find buyers.

Including 120 lots of motorcycling memorabilia, the sale grossed a stellar US\$3.3 million, with the top lot being a 1978 Ducati 900 NCR racer just like the one on which Mike Hailwood won the F1 race at that year's Isle of Man TT. The bike offered by Bonhams, however, was an un-raced version offered in mint condition from the Silverman Museum collection - and it fetched \$175,000, almost double its low estimate.



The biggest surprise of the sale, however, saw a 1940 Harley-Davidson EL which was tipped to fetch up to \$46,000 but ended up selling for \$159,000 after a drawn-out bidding battle.

As well as being a quintessential example of the classic Knucklehead, the bike was also covetable because it was in largely original, nicely patinated

condition - a state that Americans have only recently come to appreciate after decades of over-restoring classics. The bike was among 40 Harleys and seven Triumphs consigned from the estate of lifelong collector Wayne 'Pappy' Pierce which made a total of more than \$700,000.

Elsewhere in the sale, a 1973 Ducati 750SS - the model famously raced to victory at the Imola 200 by Paul Smart - drew \$137,000, while a 1976 Moto Guzzi Le Mans with just 114 miles on the clock changed hands for \$21,850 and a Vincent D series Black shadow made \$103,500.

According to Larry Preston-Smith, who runs the Unit 56 classic bike shop in Blockley, Gloucestershire, such high prices have become the norm - and look set to keep on rising.



*"We're at a time when classic bikes from the 1950s to the 1980s, in particular, are enjoying huge popularity because the people who used to lust after them when they were youngsters now have the wherewithal to own them,"* says Preston-Smith.

*"There has also been a realisation that, as well as being more affordable than many classic cars, they are far easier to store and maintain. Also, they don't seem to suffer quite so badly from only being used occasionally and, with bank interest rates so low and values rising, they represent a sensible place to stash your cash.*

*"But one slightly sad aspect of the business,"* adds Preston-Smith, *"is that a lot of these bikes are being bought purely for investment rather than to be ridden. I think any true enthusiast would much prefer to see a classic covered in road grime as a result of being well used rather than look at a gleaming trailer queen that spends its life in a hermetically-sealed garage. "*

Other lots of note from the Bonhams auction included a 1976 Moto Guzzi 850cc Le Mans with only 114 miles on the clock (sold for \$21,850) and a 1935 Indian Chief which used to belong to Steve McQueen (sold for \$80,500)



**Source:**

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Bennetts.co.uk / bikesocial

**Full web address:**

[http://www.bennetts.co.uk/bikesocial/news-and-views/news/2012/2014/january/investing-in-a-classic-bike-prices-are-set-to-keep-on-rising/?utm\\_source=twfb&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_content=classicbikes&utm\\_campaign=bikesocial#.UtPTeX5FDcs](http://www.bennetts.co.uk/bikesocial/news-and-views/news/2012/2014/january/investing-in-a-classic-bike-prices-are-set-to-keep-on-rising/?utm_source=twfb&utm_medium=social&utm_content=classicbikes&utm_campaign=bikesocial#.UtPTeX5FDcs)

## Bits and bobs



Top Gear presenter James May completed a lap of the Isle of Man 37-mile TT course on an electric-powered motorbike (and sidecar, with part-time passenger TV presenter Oz Clarke) made from thousands of pieces of Meccano, and shown over Christmas on the BBC 2 programme *Toy Stories: The Motorcycle Diary*. If you missed it the first time, it's well worth catching up on YouTube:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=abvAEM7ehNg>



### Russell's new scooter!

SSMCC Secretary Russell Sommer describes his new scooter ....

The Bike is a Honda NCC300 Forza Scooter, 'Forza' being Italian for Strength or Power apparently. It's the bigger sibling of the PCX125 which the dealership told me they are selling bucket loads of at the moment. This is physically quite a bit larger with a 280cc motor putting it in the middle of the 'super-commuter' bracket.



It's amazingly comfortable and while I can get a bit tied up in very heavy traffic, it makes very easy work of the A4 at rush hour. It's very comfortable and has masses of storage (two full crash helmets+) under the seat, so much so that I've not felt the need to get a top box, which more than compensates for its longer wheelbase.

The motor and transmission are tuned for effortless acceleration on urban roads and with slightly larger wheels than I'm used to on a scooter it actually corners at speed without it feeling like a near-death experience.

All in all, it's been a god-send for commuting into West London in heavy traffic and bad weather and while not a replacement or alternative to motor-cycles, it is actually quite a lot of fun to ride...

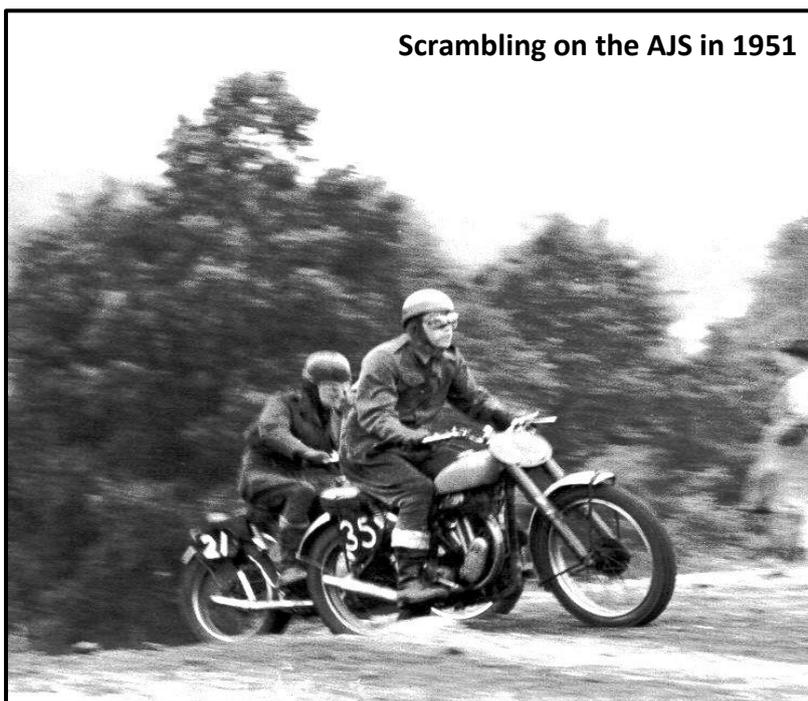


**Biker Thought for the Month ... *Midnight bugs taste best.***

## Farewell to motorcycling

Hello! My name is Bill Casling. Not many of the newer members will know me, but a few old-timers might remember me. I can claim to be the oldest member of Southern Sporting, both in terms of age and length of membership. I've just celebrated my 88<sup>th</sup> birthday and have reluctantly decided not to renew my driving licence due to deteriorating eyesight. It was an agonising decision but a sensible one. I never wanted to hear myself having to utter those dreaded words "Sorry mate, I didn't see you".

I joined SSMCC in 1947 together with my pal, Ken Stone. Ken is still a member, but he had a few "gap years" in the Sixties. A couple of years later I was persuaded to join the Committee as Publicity Officer and I remained a Committee member for the next 25 years. During that time I filled many posts, including Editor of Contact, Competition Secretary, Star Group Delegate and was Treasurer for many years. I was also heavily involved in virtually every sporting event the Club ran, often as Secretary of the Meeting or Clerk of the Course. The Club ran three trials and a scramble (moto-cross) each year in those days, plus a few closed-to-club events. My close liaison with the Club came to a halt in 1980 when my job required a move to the Bristol area. I was made an honorary life member in the Eighties, and although no longer able to take an active part in Club matters, I have kept in touch ever since through the appropriately named "Contact".



I actually started motorcycling in 1945 when petrol became available after the war. It was severely rationed to 1½ gallons a month (enough for about 100 miles) and cost just under two shillings a gallon (10p, or 2p a litre!) – I was earning about 35 shillings a week at the time. My first bike was a 1934 350cc Sheffield Dunelt – no, I hadn't heard of them either at the time. I subsequently found out that Dunelt was an off-shoot of Sheffield steelmakers Dunsford and Elliott which made two-strokes with unique "top-hat"

pistons in Birmingham in the late Twenties. They moved back to Sheffield (hence the name) in the early Thirties and made four-strokes, but only a small number were made before production ceased entirely in 1935. The bikes were quite up-to-date with Sturmev-Archer ohv engines (yes, the bicycle hub people) and 4-speed foot-change gearboxes. The gearbox was the Achilles heel of the bike – it was a lightweight model and not up to the job. I was constantly having to bodge-repair it as no spares were available due to its rarity. I later saw the bike in a dealers where someone had shoe-horned in an Albion gearbox. I resolved that henceforth all my bikes would be from main-stream manufacturers to ensure a supply of spare parts. I actually ever owned a dozen bikes from Velocette, BSA, Matchless, AJS, Norton, Sunbeam

and Honda, but I managed to scrounge rides on most models from nearly all the manufacturers of the time, ranging from 50cc step-thru's to an 1150cc Brough Superior sidecar outfit (an awesome brute!). One regret I have is that I never managed to get a ride on a 1000cc Vincent Rapide although I did manage a ride on the 500cc Comet version which I found rather slow and sluggish.

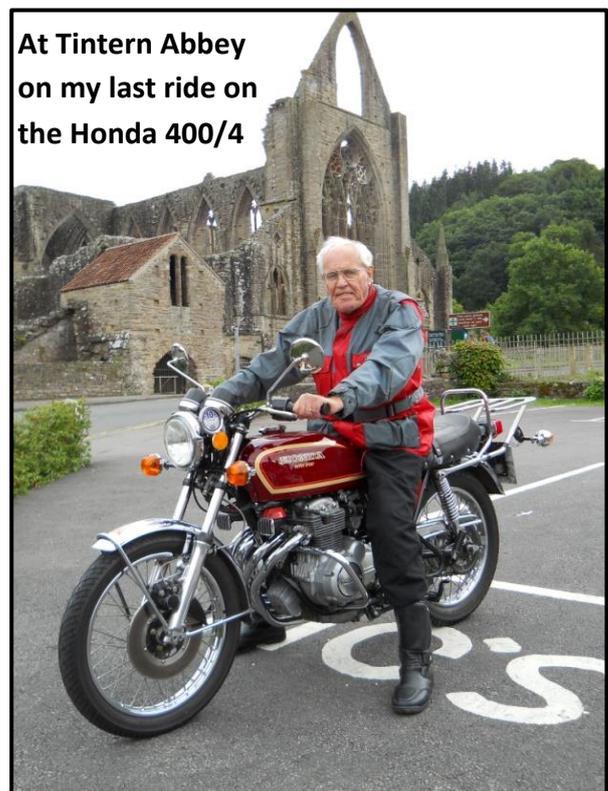
It was my proud boast that although I had fallen off many times, both on and off-road and suffered many bruises and grazes, I had never broken any bones – that is until three years ago when I overbalanced doing a U-turn in a deserted country lane at 2mph and fell heavily, fracturing two ribs and cracking two others. Also, I was never involved in an accident with another vehicle, unless you count the time I rode over Ron Rennie's bike when he dropped it on sheet ice right in front of me! Somehow I managed to stay upright (more or less!).

The bike which gave me most pleasure and excitement was undoubtedly my 350cc trials AJS. On it I competed in numerous trials and occasional scramble ranging from club "Pritch" trials up to open National events. I qualified as an "Expert" but loss of my "Novice" status might be a truer description. The best all-rounder has to be the 1950 500cc BSA A7 twin. It didn't excel at anything but it did everything competently. It went and stopped well; it handled smoothly and was very comfortable. It was extremely reliable – I covered 73,000 miles on it, both solo and sidecar, without any major problems. I took the head off at 50,000 miles, more out of curiosity than necessity – all was well inside. The least reliable bike was a 500T trials Norton which I bought new in 1953\*. It wore out its piston rings within the first 1000 miles. It went back to the works three times altogether, but they just fitted a new barrel and piston each time and never found the cause of the trouble. I eventually found Wellworthy racing rings lasted the whole season.

My last ride was on a glorious Autumn day on my Honda 400/4 which I have owned from new. Up the edge of the Cotswolds to Gloucester, across the sweeping curves and dips to Monmouth, then down through the Wye Valley and the Forest of Dean to a brief stop at Tintern Abbey, then across the Severn Bridge to home. Beautiful weather, lovely scenery, good roads (and a decent bike!) – a ride to remember. So ended my 68 years of twisting the grip. But maybe it's not quite the end of motorcycling for me. I've still got my riding gear and hope to put in a few more miles on the pillion of one of my son Peter's three Hondas.

## Bill Casling

\* Remarkably, I saw this bike exactly 50 years later in 2003 in the auto-jumble at the Stafford Classic Bike Show. It was in a very sorry state, filthy and had been painted dark green with a tar brush. It had the wrong front wheel and forks, an iron engine (not the original troublesome alloy one) and incorrect rear end. I didn't realise it was my old bike at the time – I couldn't remember the registration number.



# Caption competition

## Winning caption:

Dave nil, umbrella one.

## Best of the rest:

Dave's having a BAD HAIR DAY

Dave was embarrassed about his enormous boil so hid under the brolly ... strange as it was on his bum.

9, 10, 11, 12 .... 99, 100 .... COMING!!

Dave was struggling with the props he had to use in his leading role as Mary Poppins in the local panto.

Dave was having trouble with his new steam powered camera, Katie just wanted chips!

"I know it's in here somewhere ..."



## February's picture

Taken at the SSMCC Christmas Party

Send your suggested captions to me at: [a.whitaker@nhm.ac.uk](mailto:a.whitaker@nhm.ac.uk)