

that all the major parts which were with the machine, e.g. the heavy Webb forks, were those which had been used in the 50s. It was only when I tracked down the previous owner called Arthur Littlewood of Huddersfield, then Leek, that I learned more — and gained a photograph of it in around 1960.

Originally registered VW 9975, in 1953 Arthur re-registered it as MWU 479, having modified the bike to carry a late TT Rep (Power-Plus) engine, bevel-driven magneto on the near side crankcase door, hand change converted to foot change (home-made), whilst the forks and wheels were Matchless. He was friendly with Ken Swallow, using the bike up to 1961 when it was sold to Denis Philip Critchlow, a town hall worker, according to Arthur. Furthermore, regarding the bike's 'lack of use' in the 60s and 70s, Cyril Taylor, of Lower Peover, Cheshire, thinks he owned it at some stage, mentioning other names, Robin Gough and David Marquis, also that the frame was badly bent and straightened in the 60s — hardly a sign of sedentary existence!

Oh well, at least it's another Scott back on the road — with due credit to the little urge given to the project by Cheshire Constabulary.

## SILK SCOTT PROGRESS

Geoffrey Bucknall

I was tempted to add to my previous description of the trials and tribulations of the acquisition of a Silk Scott. Just to remind you, the machine was a 1973 model which had barely finished its running-in period before being stored for quite a few years. It had obviously been stored well and the general appearance was good. The only cosmetic fault was the peeling of the crimson cylinder paint. The previous owner had also had difficulty in keeping the paint on the pots, and my own experiments with the advised prescription of mixing an artist's oil paint with clear varnish gives adequate rather than perfect results. The seat, too, needed to be recovered, but this was simply an *anno domini* problem.

I could really divide deficiencies into two categories, design and mechanical. I was told that recently a Silk Scott owner had appeared in print in the magazine press to deplore the many headaches of his own machine. I could agree with him about the spark department and timing. It may be due to the high compression ratio, but the fixed timing is a beast to get right for both running and starting. I was told that the writer mentioned above solved his problem by converting to the Boyer-Bransen system, though this departs from the original conventional design. At present, I am trying to have fitted a manual advance-retard system operated from a control lever on the handlebar — I have acquired a magnificent double-lever handlebar control for this, and in the timing case there seems to be enough meat on the bone. The case has been sent off to some electrical wizard, and if this does come off, it keeps the machine within its design concept. It's hard to fathom why this facility wasn't built into the original machine, it's a good Scott tradition which jokers used to make their bikes reverse, to watchers' astonishment in days gone by.

The ability to retard ignition for starting should, we hope, avoid the ferocious kick-backs which still happen when the spark is timed at the recommended  $\frac{3}{8}$ " before tdc. You have to bear in mind, though, that

there was no rider's manual supplied with these machines, the production run being too small, I suppose, and information is scanty... I had to track down other friendly owners in the Club, rather thin on the ground, I suspect.

The greatest bugbear, though, was the kickstart operation, for it has a very long swing, at the end of which the foot comes off the kick-start bar and clouts the machine with painful results. It is possible that a 'stop' had broken away from the kick-start housing, but other owners testified to the same problem. I eventually overcame this by having a friend cut an old spanner to shape, which fitted snugly at the base of the housing where it has been firmly brazed. Happily my machine is a very good starter, a dab will often start it singing. So far, this has solved the problem, but as a further safety measure, the pivoted footbar was stiffened up to prevent it folding inwards at the end of the swing.

Now, these problems happen because the four-speed Velo box lies on its side. A minor problem is that, if filled with normal oil, this seeps out messily *via* the clutch spindle. I have overcome this problem by filling the box with grease and, in running, there seems to be no hassle. The clutch is a bit heavy, there's some drag with clutch lever pulled in and the answer is to kick the bike into neutral at most stops. Velo boxes are usually on the heavy side, though, in my experience of having owned a couple.

I mentioned previously that the short, flat bar did not suit me, I found the 'sports' riding position somewhat rough on my ageing vertebrae. A more cow-horny bar gives me a nice position. And a jack plug was fitted to the electrics so that the ignition side panel can be completely removed for working on the bike.

The extraordinary omission, though, is the lack of a centre stand and, if I keep this bike much longer, I plan to consult some welding experts to have one fitted. At first sight — and I may be told different — there seems no reason, other than weight saving, why the frame maker didn't provide one. The convenience in working on tyres, wheels and what-not, especially road-side, is worth a pound or two extra on what is a remarkably light machine.

Undoubtedly, Silk Scott owners have had some engine problems. These are recounted. I have made some preliminary runs on my machine and, touch wood, it seems to sing nicely. We may have a problem if and when EEC rules come in to limit decibels. It seems important for those clubs and owners of both older, traditional cars and bikes to get exemption on noise levels, for after all, collectors' machines are not used every day. If this isn't achieved, then many heads are going to be scratched and some interesting engineering problems will have to be solved. The Silk Scott has a healthy bark, and even Scott yowls may need to be muffled. We shall have to rename the mag the *Stifled Yowl*.

What all of those who have ridden the Silk Scott testify to is the superb handling of the marque. It holds a line like a rock, doesn't waver or snake on bends. A number have actually claimed it to be the best-handling machine they have ridden. It was an unashamed sports specification, and the high gearing makes for uncomfortable riding in suburban streets. I was startled to have 50 on the clock with just a fraction of throttle. The last modification on the agenda is possibly to link the oil-pump control to the throttle *via* a junction box.