

## WELCOME BACK GEORGE SILK

At the Founders Day event at Stanford Hall recently, I had the great pleasure to meet George Silk again after many years. He told me that he had bought one of his Silk machines and was rejoining the Club.

One aspect of the Douglas Club magazine I like, is the section in each issue which welcomes new members.

I do understand that every new member is very welcome, but George must richly deserve a special welcome, not only for his machines, but for the continuity of the Scott tradition.

I will tell it as I know it and if my memory or understanding has failed in any detail, I most humbly beg forgiveness. If George ever feels disposed to set down his story, it would make a fascinating read.

George's father, also called George Silk, was a passionately dedicated Scott owner and could imagine no greater calling for his son than to serve Scotts. He duly apprenticed his son to Tom Ward, then of Wilfred Street, Derby, to learn the art of maintaining and building Scotts. We should appreciate that Tom Ward had worked with Alfred Scott before the first world war and later had his own business in Hustler Street, Bradford. George was the last true Scott apprentice to the foremost expert whose knowledge was traceable, in significant part, directly to Alfred Scott. When George was 21 years of age, Tom Ward realised that the income from his business would not support another adult wage and asked George to find other employment. George became a crank grinder for an engine reconditioning company in Derby, Allan Cotterill Ltd., but planned to take control of his own destiny. George rented premises in Boars Head Mill, an ancient mill that had originally been water powered, but when George moved in, still had a large gas engine in situ. George started by repairing and rebuilding Scotts, and then conceived the idea of making a modern lightweight Scott. He persuaded Bob Stevenson of Spondon Engineering to stretch a chassis he was making to accommodate Yamaha racing engines for track use, so that he could build in a Scott engine and a four-speed Velo gearbox. The 'Silk Scott' had arrived, but difficulties arose over the use of the name Scott and supply of new engine components.

It is better to say no more about this, as I do not know the details and if I did, then I think it would serve no useful purpose to revisit them. George decided to make his own engine with the help of designer Dave Midgeley which retained certain Scott features, but was considerably updated. To say this was a brave decision is a profound understatement and to many would have been considered financially impossible. The achievement of the whole team to produce a quality machine in such small quantities, must have been like walking a perpetual tightrope. I can claim a very small connection with the Silk machine, as I manufactured the gearsets for the Velo-styled gearboxes.

Eventually, after a heroic battle to keep viable, it was necessary to accept the inevitable and bike production ceased.

At this point, George's great natural talent for appreciating the load bearing capacities of structures came into play. He started to design and make, on site, machining rigs for doing machining work on components that needed machining to in situ. Most engineering designers faced with these problems, would design machinery that was too large and heavy to be used. To rationalise the design to the bare but effective essentials is a true art and similar to Formula One

racing car design requirements. George has retired now, but in regard to the great part Scotts have played in his life, he has rejoined our Club. Welcome home George. May you enjoy very many happy years of retirement with Wendy and the boys.

**R.M.**

### **ROON THA TOON**

“Roon tha Toon”, or round the town for those who don’t speak Ulster Scotch is an event which is run annually in Ballymoney in early August, home of the Famous Dunlop Brothers Joey and Robert. It is an event run by the VJMCC to air old racing bikes and riders. The event is run by riders setting off in pairs around a triangle at the top of the town; it features riders like Irish Legend Raymond McCullough, Johnny Rea, Brian Reid, Alan Irwin and road racers from all parts of Ireland and the UK.

The event is limited to about 80 entries and this year for the first time featured a few vintage cars which received a good reception in what is usually a 100% motor cycle event.

It makes me smile to park a Scott among racing bikes worth tens of thousands and see that people look at the racing bikes and casually walk along chatting, but when they see the Scott they are fascinated and come to a halt, but I guess that’s what attracted us all to Scotts in the first place.

**Trevor Scott.**



**Jim Scott '34 machine chats to Jimmy O’Kane, on the Ryan Norton.**