

I would think it all started at boarding school near Chertsey, in Surrey, and I was sixteen. I was booked in, during midsummer holidays, to meet up with other lads in the School's Air Training Corps, back at the school premises. We were organised to go on a Gliding experience course at some nearby RAF Station.

What actually happened was that a mate said he knew someone who was selling an old Norton in Onslow Village, where I lived. There had been a slight fire and the rubber sides of the petrol tank were a bit melty. There was other minor damage. We went there and looked at the old motorbike and had it running.

I went home and whispered in my younger sister's ear : could I borrow a bit of cash from her post office savings account. We snuck off to the Village Post Office and did the deed. I met up with some mates from the village and went round to Lance "Ginger" Capon's place, to get the bike for £20, and I can't even remember how we got it home. Maybe "Ginger" delivered it to my house ? So there I was with a 1953 Norton 500 cc Model 7.



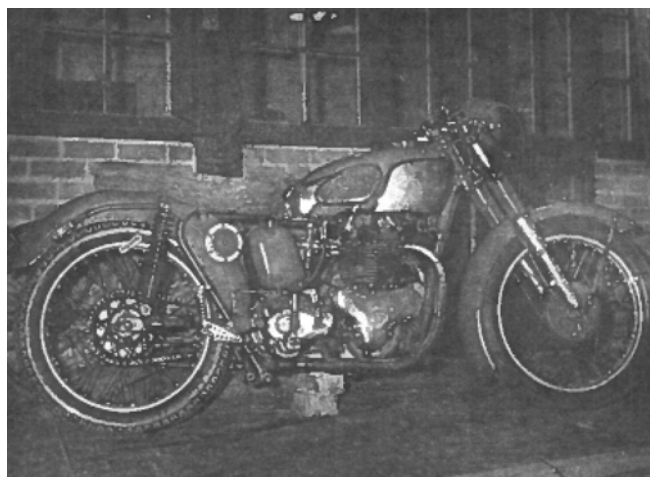
That is me, sitting astride the 'bike, with Dave Stenning, Gordon Lambley and Jay Gregson behind

"You bought WHAT !!" Said my mother. "You wait 'til I tell your Dad. Boy, was I in trouble ! For a start, I had failed to turn up for the ATC Camp at school. Furthermore, I had badgered my baby sister, who couldn't really argue, into giving me money she never should have. Still, my Dad had had a motorbike when he was in his twenties. I've seen the photo's. I got away with it.



I think that this picture is my Dad & Mum in Bangalore, India, during WWII, where he was a Liberator Bomber pilot

Back at school, I got permission to go to Woking each Sunday, and enrolled on the RAC / ACU Rider Training Scheme. We got Triumph Tiger Cubs or BSA Bantams and were taught to ride properly. I booked a test to coincide with the end of my course. From a mate in Onslow Village, I borrowed a BSA C-15 and at the end of the course, took and passed my test.



My Norton Model 7, in School Workshops. My first attempt at Parallelogram action backsets visible

Since I was now in the Sixth Form and was studying Maths and Physics for A-level, rather than the 8 subjects I had taken at O-level, I had quite a few free periods at school and got permission to keep the bike in the School Workshops. The Workshop Master taught me to use the lathe and to do riveting by hand and a few other tricks and I started work on the old bike. The condition was that I never got to ride it, just to work on it.

Heavens ! I think I spent more time in the Workshops than other boys who were actually on Workshop courses!

It was at this time I turned up the brass geometric clip that holds on the petrol tank. Isn't it chromed, now ?



YES ! The Tank-Steady Strap, with Geometric Lock at the bottom of image

This was all at Ottershaw, a typical English Public School that closed in 1981 and the mansion was sold off to a developer. It was directly adjacent to Fairoaks Aerodrome.

So back to 1963 : down in the village, a mile or so down the Chobham road, in the opposite direction to Fairoaks, there was a grumpy old man who broke up motorbikes for a living. I was always down there, looking for bits. A very useful source. I usually went there on my bicycle.

One day, there was this amazing Tribsa parked outside. There was this guy inside, at the bottom of the garden, beside the old codger's sheds, in blue jeans, a double breasted leather jacket. Floppy blond hair and Hank Marvin spectacles. A couple of years at least older than me. And, of course, the fur-lined Biker Boots. I've still got mine. To a posh Public Schoolboy, he looked very cool ! He was Pete Cooke, a Print Setter in Woking.

I chatted to him a bit, and he told me how very special his bike was. Balanced Crankshaft, bored out head, with Jaguar XK-150 valves in it, etc., etc..

Business complete, he said, "Do you want a lift up the road ?" Quick as a flash, I lifted my bike off the pavement, over the garden wall and said, "Yes !"

He kicked it into life, and said, "Sling your leg over, then and hold on tight." He pulled out of the Addlestone Road, and onto to the Woking Road. In about three seconds, the countryside was a blur as this superb Tribsa howled down the road. He slowed up and dropped me off at the top of the hill, by the church where there was a back road back to my school grounds.

"How fast were we going", I asked. "Only about 80", he said. "This'll do 120, no bother".

Christ, I didn't know life existed at that speed ! After all, cars of that era : Morris Minors and Austin Cambridges and so on surely only did about fifty in those days. I walked back for my bike later.

Thus my ambition was born. I had to have a bike like that, one day.

So, I set about getting some ali' mudguards and actually braised a metal collar onto my sawn-off handlebars to make home-made clip-ons.

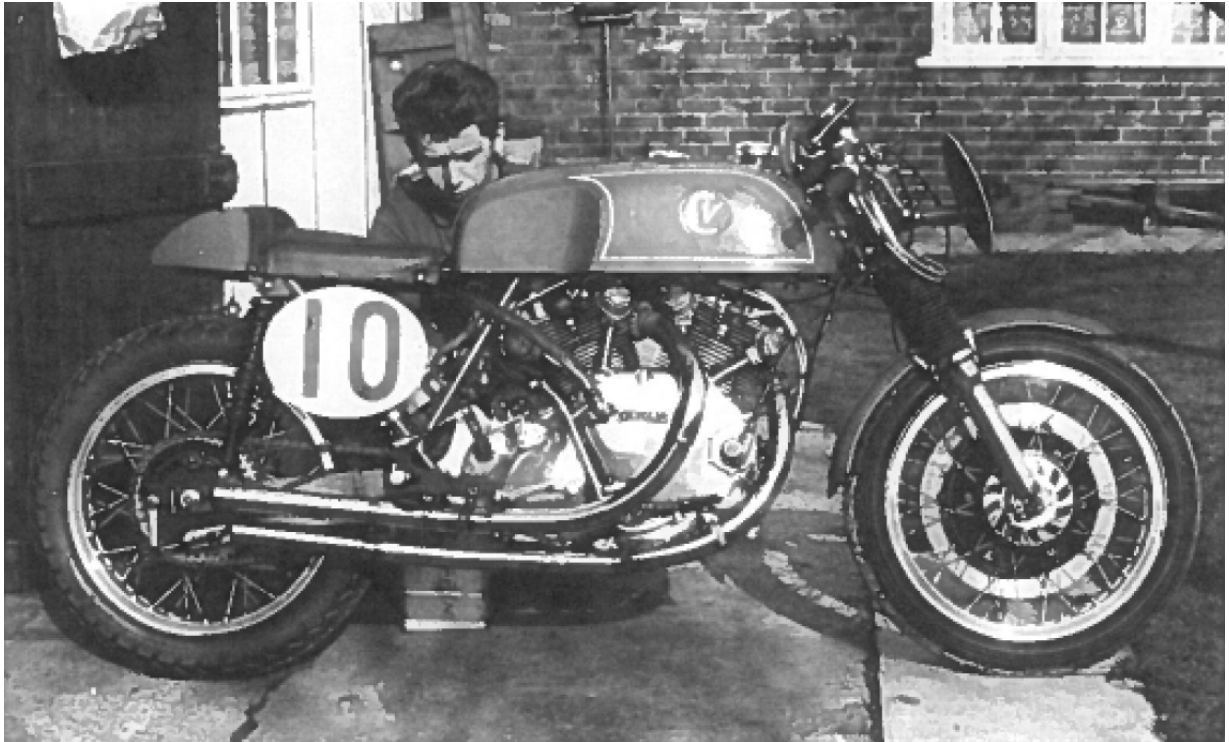
We did have access to a phone in those days. I think it was in the Bursar's office. He was a good old sport. I had lists of all the good motorbike shops and soon knew all the phone numbers off by heart. It was a learned skill, and in those days, numbers were a place name, followed by a four figure number. So, I used to pretend that the numbers were dates. I.E. Pride & Clarkes, in Brixton was Brixton 1673 (or something like that.) So, I would say to myself ; sixteen seventy three. To this day, I have a facility for numbers and can remember the sixteen digit numbers on several of my credit cards.

Anyway, I soon scooted up to Pride & Clarkes and got myself a five gallon "AJS 7R" pattern Racing Petrol Tank, which is the one on your Bike.

Around that time, I started going to Motorbike Races, spectating with my mate Lance Capon, which was very exciting for me. I travelled as a pillion on his Vincent Black Shadow. (I think – though it could have been a Lightning)

The next year, this became accompanying him as he raced his 350 cc AJS. He had Norton Roadholder Forks engineered onto his Racer. That was where I got the idea, for my next two bikes. It was good to be based in the paddock. I can remember being at Crystal Palace and all the bellowing of the Manx Nortons.

Later, he took the engine out of his HRD Road Bike and put Norton Roadholder Forks on the front end. And made a Swinging-Arm sub-frame for the back end and very successfully raced it. We were supposed to be racing together at Brands - I had Regulations for the event - but I cancelled, as my best mate, Mick, was getting married in Compton that weekend. Sadly, Ginger was killed in that race, so I am glad I was not there. I would have been a bit upset.



Lance Capon and his amazing 1,000 cc "Capon Vincent" (C V on the tank) Racing Special

Essentially, my bike as I had bought it ; the Norton Model 7 ; had an aluminium manifold, covering both Inlet Ports and housing a single Amal Carb, of the separate float chamber type. It had an aluminium crankcase and the cast iron barrels and head. The same engine as the later Dominator 88, except they had an aluminium head. Maybe even Ali' barrels, later yet.

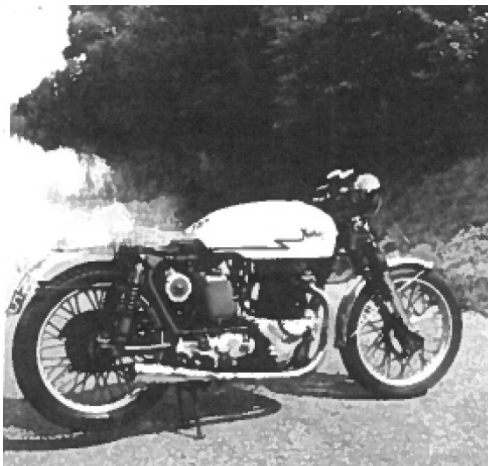
Some other of the things I did was making an individual steel flange for each inlet port. Then braising on curved copper pipe ; 1" diameter, corresponding to the inlet size. Then another flange a couple of inches out, so that I could ditch the old single carb and bolt on two Amal Monobloc Carbs, thus slightly splayed.



My creation in the school workshop, for my fist "amateurish" Special.

One day I visited the famous Francis Beart Racing Stable in Guildford and had a chat with him. There I was in my school uniform and there he was in his sports jacket and cords, giving orders to two mechanics as they prepared Manx Nortons for racing. I asked lots of questions and had a good look around.

By the time I finished my A-levels, and it was time to leave school for good and ride home on my bike, after working on my bike in the school workshop for my 2 years in the 6th Form, my old Model 7 Norton had developed into something having the look of a "Café Racer". A bit sad, really with its old fashioned frame. But I had an inkling to work towards a fabulous machine like Pete Cook's ; the first Café Racer Special I had seen.



My bike, in the school grounds, just before I left school for good.



Me, outside my mum's house in High View Road, Guildford, thinking I looked cool !

I needed money for these projects. I had my first job at 15 years of age, during the school holidays in a nearby garage, cleaning cars in the showroom. I blacked car tyres, Decosolled the leather upholstery, amongst other things. I think maybe someone else drove the cars outside to wash and wax them and I just did the finishing items. With the money earned I started by getting a shed, which I erected beside the house, where other folk had garages and then built into it, a bench and in that, setting in a large vice. Then I started my new project.

I was addicted to working in every school holiday and it was great to have cash. Even after I left school, I later worked a cement mixer on a building site. I did routing jobs on elaborate woodwork in a Wood Yard, down Walnut Tree Close in Guildford, to be used in repairs on Farnham Castle. Usually, in the summer hol's, I did pick & shovel work with a small road gang ; Pawlyns. Always enjoyed that. I worked on a farm (shovelling shit from Pigs & Chickens and pushed cow-dung into a dam) I worked in Dennis, the Fire Engine Factory. That was in the office – I hated that ! My mate, Mike Stead stayed on when I left and worked till he retired recently, as Stores and Spares Manager. How about that ? One of the best jobs was in Friary Meux Brewery, where Guildford Bus Station is now. I worked in the delivery section, loading bottles into wooden crates, which went down a run for the Lorry Drivers to load up for deliveries. I did a bit of time in the bottle washing section. This was manned by girls, all except for me. It was very embarrassing. They used to shout rude things at me. For instance, “Show us your dick, you posh little git – let’s see what you’ve got !” Then they would all shriek with laughter. We used to get an hour off at lunch and were given two pints of bottled “Light” a day, so me and another school mate use to sit outside in the sun and drink beer and eat the cheese sandwiches we’d brought.

The last working day before Christmas, there was a works “Do” and there was nibbles laid on and free drinks, after the morning’s work. It was pretty much a tradition that we would have bully old snogs

with as many of the girls as possible. Now me and Mick Stead, at one time were both working here. We were quite matey with one of the lorry drivers, a good looking guy, who was a few years older than us. He was very well-built. He used to wear a singlet and we could see his massive chest and huge biceps. We would struggle to lift a crate with both hands onto the lorry, but he would heft one in each hand, as if they weighed nothing.

When we were at the Christmas hop, he fixed us with a steely eye, and said, "No snogging my baby sister." Now little Christine was a peach and only sixteen. Later, I was coming out of the bogs and bumped into her. "You gonna give me a kiss, Mac?" She said. "Can't, Christine – sorry" I replied. "Don't be so wet", she said. Oh, well, here we go then !! She was very enthusiastic.

Bumped into Alby, back in the hall. "I hope you haven't been pestering my little sister, Mac?" "Course not, Alby", I said. Lovely Christine.

I also did casual labouring jobs quite a long time after I left school, and before I joined the RAF, for Siemens Engineering, on the Railways. I did about six months as a labourer, and then when the Site Manager heard I had "O" levels and "A" levels, I was chosen with two other lads to train as a "Wireman". That was a sort of apprentice Electrician. We used to work supervised. Good number, that. I wired up all the new Traffic Light control systems from Godalming to Effingham Junction.

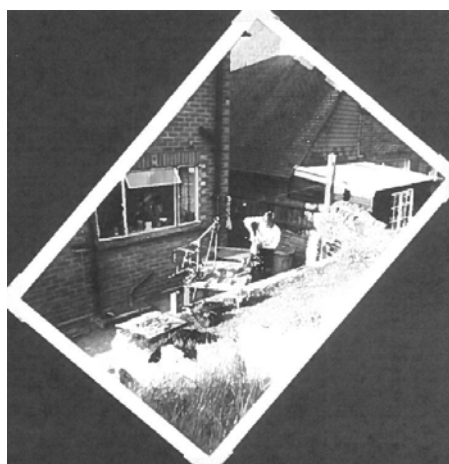
Actually, it was when I was on a Building Site, that I got my first leather Jacket. The Foreman said, "Just choose yourself a coat from that box over there. I went home, sewed it all up properly, scrubbed it to get the cement dust off, and went over it with Black Leather Dye, finally a good polish with boot polish.. Brand new !

I began by getting a BSA B-31 frame had some lugs welded on for Back-set Footrests. I slung the old Norton frame, with its angle-

iron holders for the engine and gearbox. I now had a Duplex frame. In newspaper adverts and scrap yards I got all the parts that were used for the Gold Star, except I used aluminium Mudguards, making my own stays out of aluminium tube.



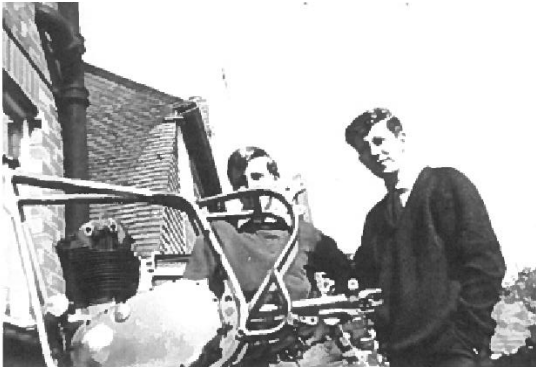
Me, hand cutting Engine-plates



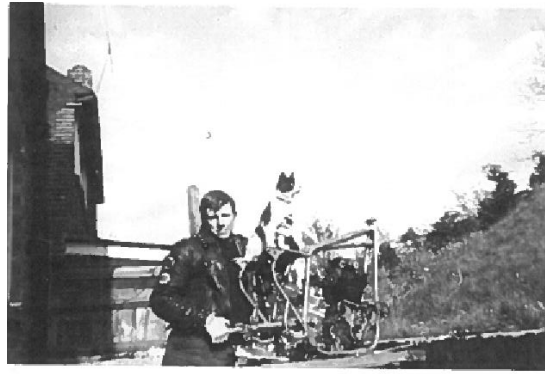
Working in the garden, new frame on show

The aim was to finish up with a machine that looked like my mate Pete Cooke's and very similar to the Rocket Gold Star. I sent away my Norton Roadholder forks and had them turned up to fit the BSA Top Yoke. This was quite a common mod'. I ditched the spring shields and cowls and substituted the Rubber Gaiters (as in the Rocket Gold Star. The Top Cowl had extensions to mount the headlamp, but I got a chrome headlight and chromed clips that went between the upper and lower fork yokes. I mounted the obligatory twin clocks, for mph and rev's. I made parallelogram action transfer mechanisms for the back brake and the gear lever. I know you could buy these things but I enjoyed making my own, turning Clevis Forks on the lathe and later having them chromed. Back in those days, there were a great many

places to get stuff chromed. I ditched all the covers on the rear springs and got chrome springs for them.



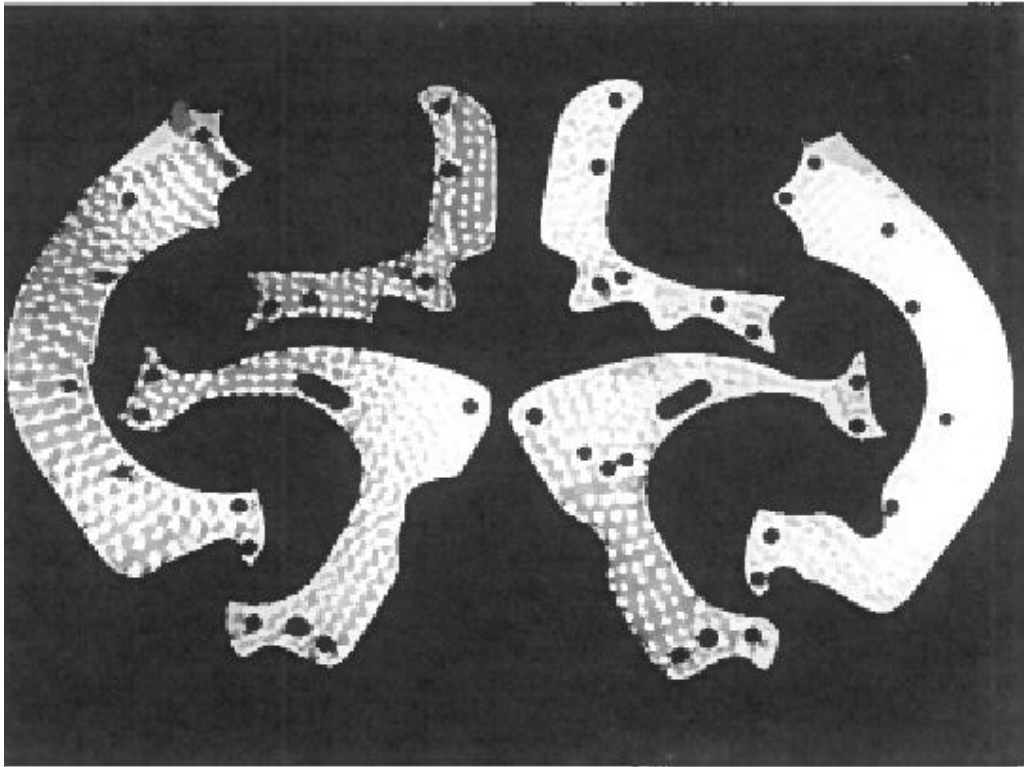
Norton Engine, BSA frame, BSA Chaincase



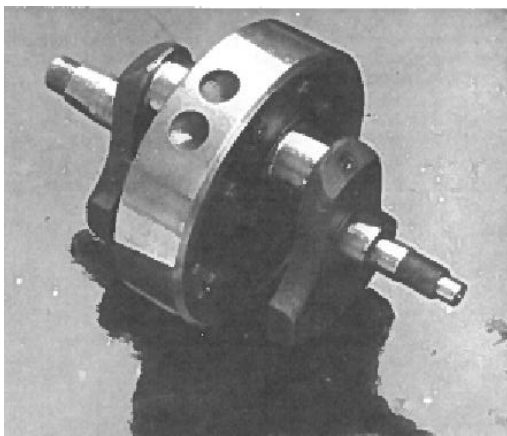
Me, Frame and Engine Mock-Up, plus cat

I hand painted everything, but used cutting compound and multiple coats to get a more even finish. I went to a Sign-Writer to have Logo's put on the Toolbox and Petrol tank.

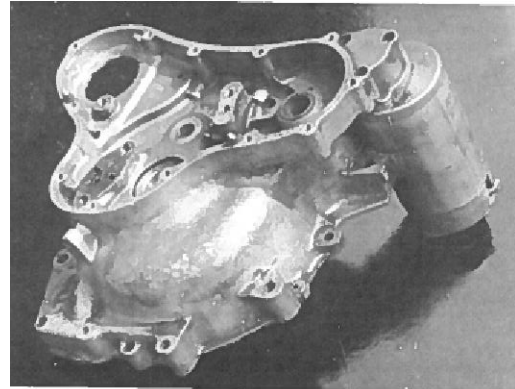
I went to a local engineering works to have a central hub turned up and this was two Front Brakes back to back, and then I had Dural Disks shrunk onto the drums, as Cooling rings. I drilled holes in the brake-drums and beat out air scoops from Aluminium sheets and riveted them over the holes, with fine brass gauze as a dust guard. I had seen all these things in the paddocks at various race tracks. In retrospect, it is a shame I did not go the whole hog and get double side twin-leading shoe set-up. Perhaps when I do a final rebuild. You'll have to read to the end to hear about that.



Finished, polished Engine-Plates, in 5/16" Dural Plate.



Polished & Balanced Crankshaft



Polished Timing-side, Half-Crankcase

Naturally, I had my Crank balanced by Fred Hartley in London and bought High Compression Pistons, from Paul Dunstall's shop. I took my Cylinder head to a place in Cattershall Lane, Godalming, where they prepared formula 1 cars and got them to bore out my inlet ports and open out the valve seats for bigger valves.

I got on the train to Wimbledon, where there was a wheel builder, who put Spokes and Racing Rims on my wheel centres. I particularly

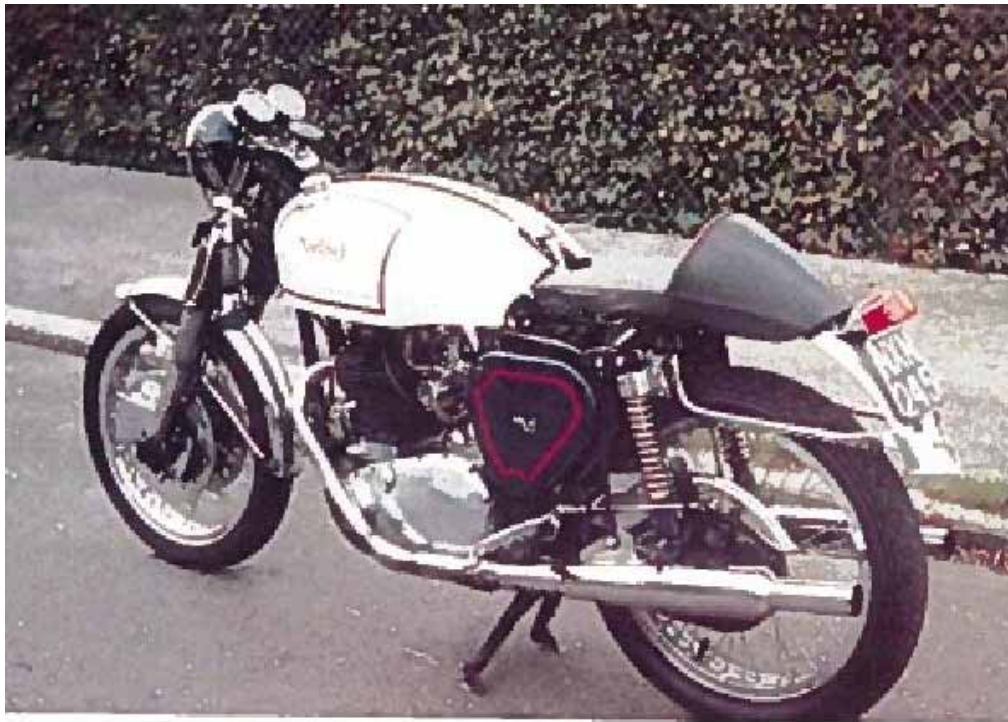
liked the rear hub, where you could pull out the long axle, pull out the spacer and the wheel dropped out, leaving the rear Chain Sprocket intact.

I have to say, my memory is a bit shaky about all these things. However, in Wimbledon, where went to get Racing Rims built onto my wheel-centres, I bumped into an old classmate, which was nice. You will begin to see why I am telling you the story from the very beginning. Already, these wheels were used on the final Racing Tribsa. Quite possibly, some of the cycle parts remained of my very first bike, though in all probability, these would be the Aluminium Front Fork Sliders.

When I finished, in Spring 1963, it was a really lovely looking Special. I enjoyed riding out to various cafés and hanging about with other bikers. Yes, I went to the Manor Café, in Camberley. Now there were dozens of bikes there ! More often, I would go down Watermill Lane, at the bottom of Guildford High Street, beside the River Wey, where there was a Bikers Café.



And here we have the finished product, This time, a really cool Café Racer



The front end and tank, plus the gearbox, later retained for the Racer.



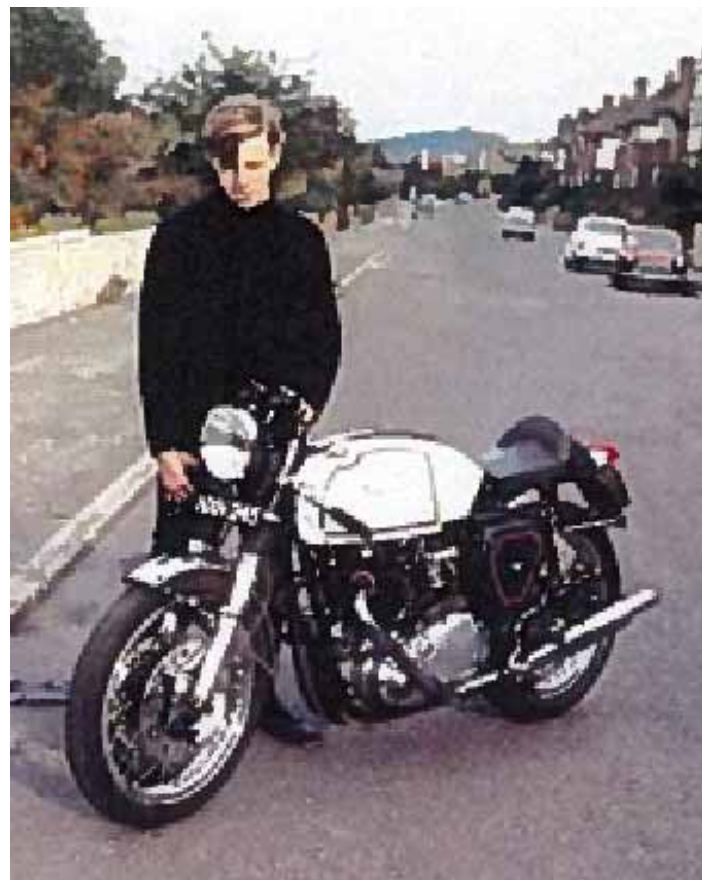
Another view - all very smart & shiny



And another view



Looking down double Front-Brake Air-Scoops



Very Shiny, Very new - I'm well pleased

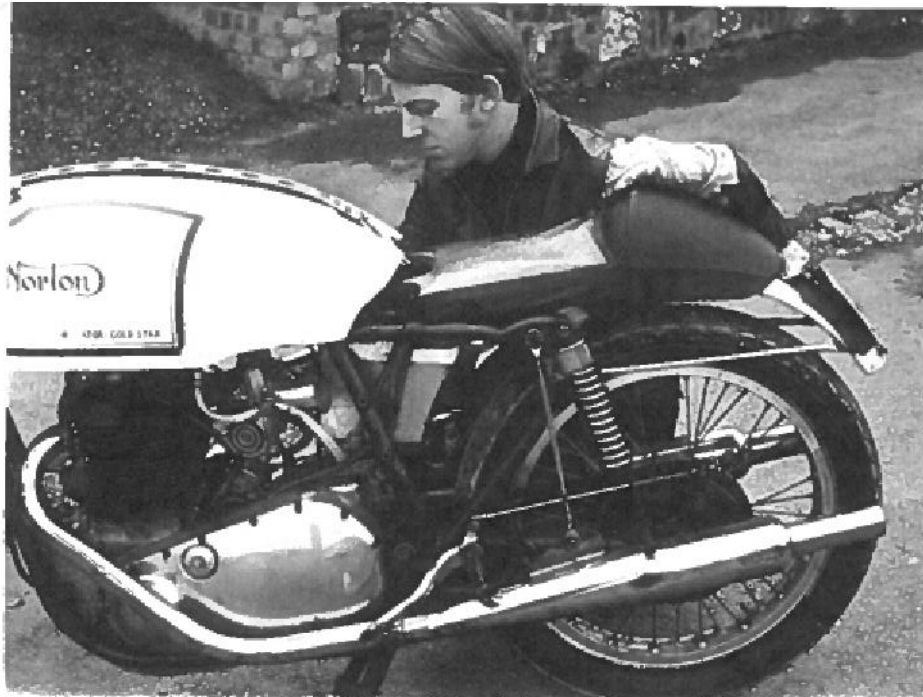
When I joined the Air Force, in 1966, I rode my Norbsa from Onslow Village, to Cirencester. My goodness, my wrists and shoulders ached after all that way on low-set Clip-ons.

After a couple of years in training, I was posted to Singapore, so apart from me buying a very old banger of a 350 cc Triumph, which leaked oil terribly, that was a gap in my motorbiking.

When I returned to the UK, I fiddled around with my Norbsa. I dumped the Chromed Headlamp. I acquired an aluminium Central Oil Tank from somewhere, so set aside my Oil Tank and Toolbox and removed the rubber Fork Gaiters to make visible the chromed Fork Springs that I put in. I also remember that I ditched BSA Ali' Chaincase, and fitted a Racing Top Chain Guard. So I was running the chain dry and the clutch open. So a sort of "Racy" Special !



And there is the aforementioned "Shed". This is a couple of years later, with the BSA parts gone and a central oil-tank



The first Central Oil-tank – in about 1970

To be quite honest, I think the bike now looked a bit scrappy. When it looked almost exactly like the factory produced Rocket Gold Star, that was at its best. That is why I want, (as a final project, in my old age) to restore it to that, but with Stove Enamel and Powder Coating and so on, instead of my hand-held brush. Re-chroming etc., you know !



Me, on the scruffy special

So, a year and a half after returning to the UK, I was posted to the V-force and settled to RAF Stations around Lincoln. I had just bought a 1958 Volvo Amazon, and tinkered with that in the Station Car Club.

But once I got to RAF Waddington, I decided to build a Racer. I applied for a garage at the back of the Officers Mess, as availability was limited and when my number came up, I got going Carpentry wise and built in a Workshop. I also commenced Night school at the local Technical College and learnt Welding, Braising and so on. I attended there for two years and was ultimately highly competent.

At RAF Waddington was a Jamaican guy, Dez, who was a Flight Sergeant Technician. He used to work on the Heritage Lancaster, in his spare time. He was a lovely friendly guy and he used to do the Ali-welding for me, which remained beyond my capability.



Mild steel, hand-cut parts, highly polished, ready for welding together & then chroming

So, off went the frame for Nickel Plating at Wenlock Platers, in Hull. While that was going on, with hacksaw and files I fashioned the Rear Brake Lever and Actions and the Backset Footrest Lever and Action. The grooves on the Back Brake are ...

not from a Milling Machine, but hand cut by me, with a file. Finally, all these are polished with Emery Cloth, down to Wet & Dry. Then off to collect the Frame and hand in these parts for chroming.

I had a Brown Overcoat for working, so I looked a bit professional ! Probably two, so as I could turn them around for laundry purposes.

When I was posted to a squadron north of Lincoln, I got permission to remain in accommodation at Waddington and keep my workshop. This was granted and so I had to drive to work every morning, in my 1958 Volvo Amazon.

The Spraying on the Tank and Seat was done by me, purchasing a number of Spray Cans ! Amateurish, but effective. I had a Full Face Helmet to match but that was done by a WRAF lassie.

I bought the Head from an address in Birmingham. It was an American Export Bonneville Head, with big ports and valves. It came in waxed paper and was pristine, so I am not quite sure how "second-hand" it was ... Moving swiftly on !!

There was a Company in Wales, A.R.E. Racing, who made the 750cc Barrels and pistons. The bore was wider, so the nuts that held the Barrels onto the Crankcase were reduced in size.

I bought Rocker Oil cooler parts, which provided extra flow and a bit of extra cooling to standard.

When I first assembled the machine, I used the standard enclosed Ali' Chaincase. I seem to recall that I had to put a "flat section" into the rear of it, which I covered with a flat plate. Also, I had to use a Dural Plate to allow more room for the fat Racing Clutch. Dez, in Station Workshop, did the Ali' Welding.



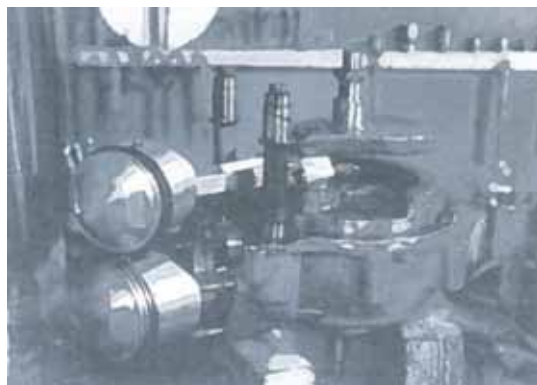
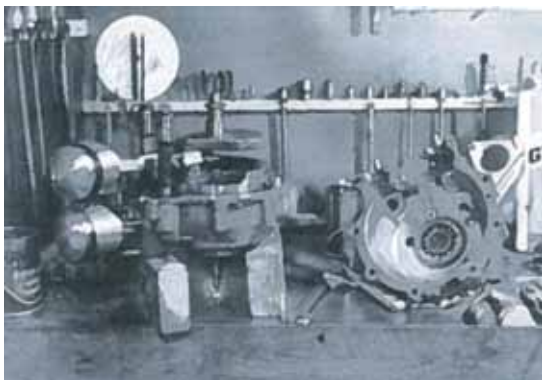
A Duralumin Spacer-plate, to carry out the Chaincase cover to make room for the Chunky Racing Clutch



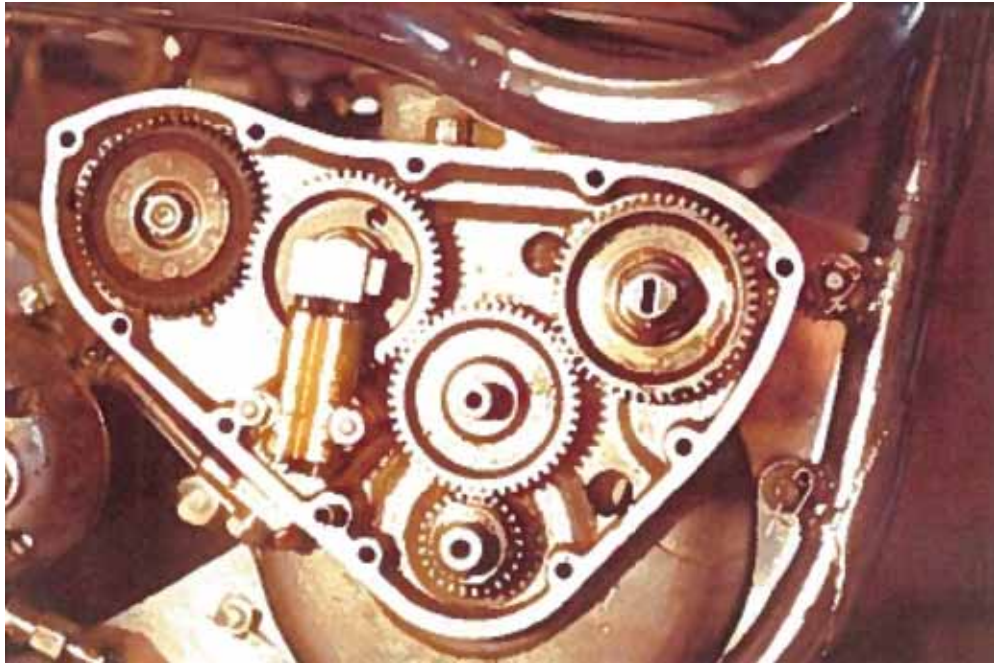
Triumph Chaincase Spacer piece.

Naturally, I made the Engine Plates. The first time, I had used 5/16th Duralumin Plate and did the “polished circles” finish, by gluing fine emery cloth disks onto a carborundum polishing end. This time, I used 3/8 th” Dural’ Plate and left it highly polished. I was also able to scrounge “Terry Clips” from the Engineering section, which are a very cool alternative to lock-wiring everything.

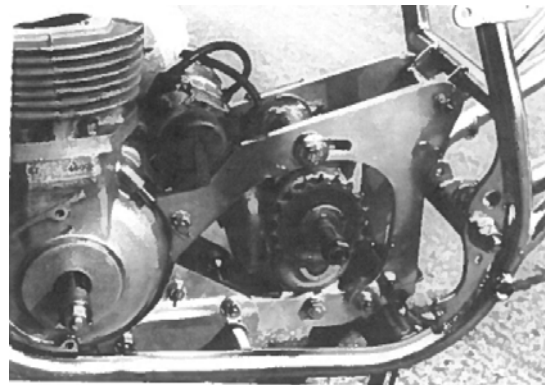
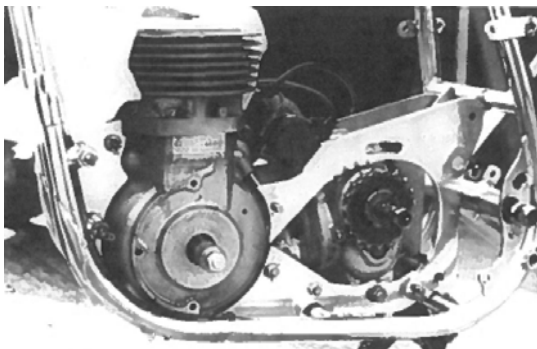
I chipped and filed the rubber shock Swinging Arm bushes away and replaced them with a Phosphor Bronze Bushes, which I line reamed for a rigid fit. I also replaced the Valve Guides with Phosphor Bronze ones. The guides I put in the fridge and the head in the oven. I had to use Welder’s gloves to hold the hot metal, and they had to be lined up and driven in quickly and accurately, before the temperatures equalised.



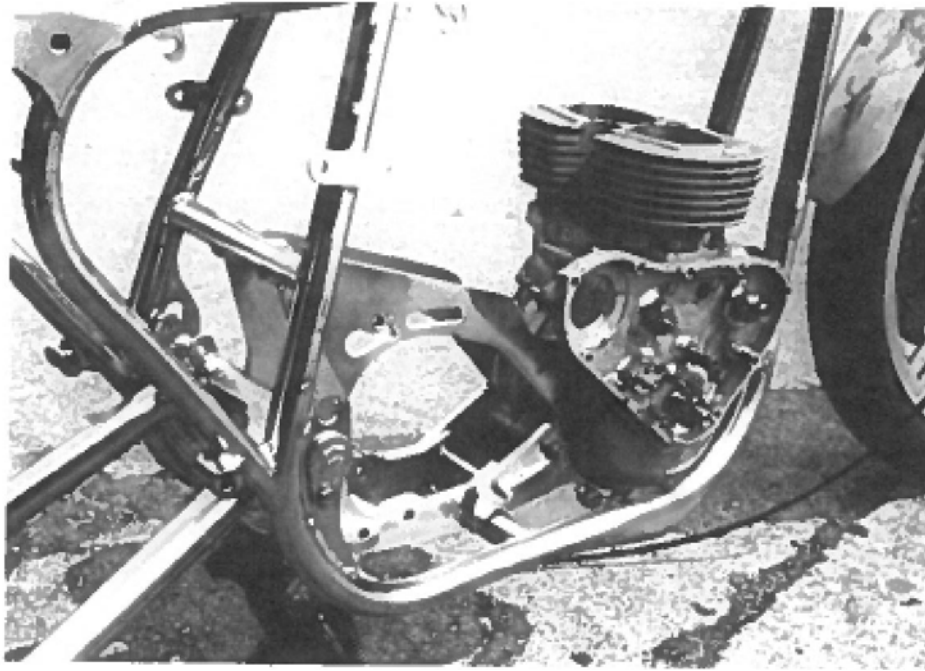
Views of Crank, Pistons & Pistons sitting in half-case, on my workshop bench



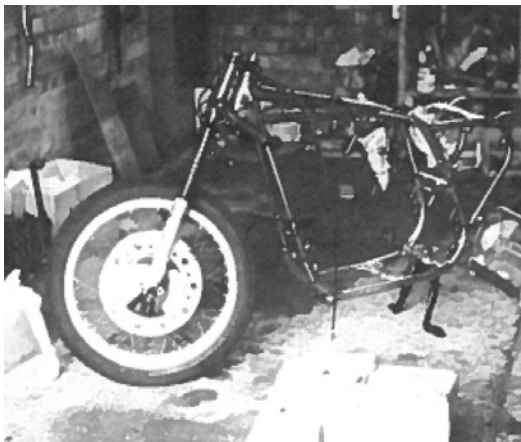
Triumph Timing-case



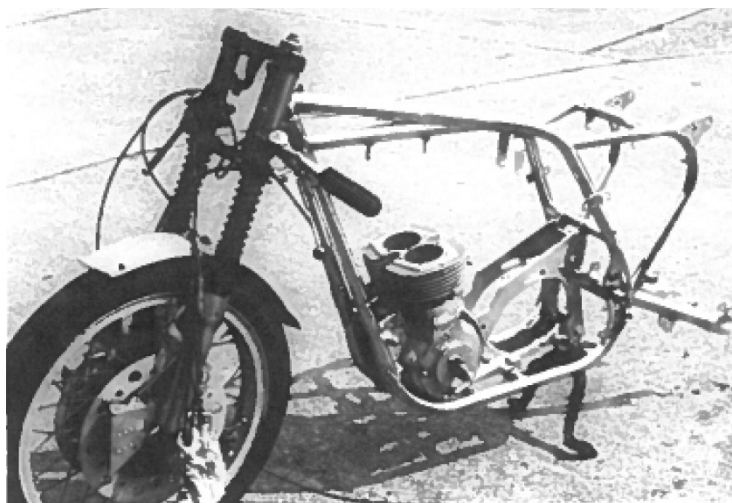
Now with views of the newly Nickel-Plated Frame and checking the Engine & Gearbox for positioning, in the plates. (left-hand view)



(right-hand view)

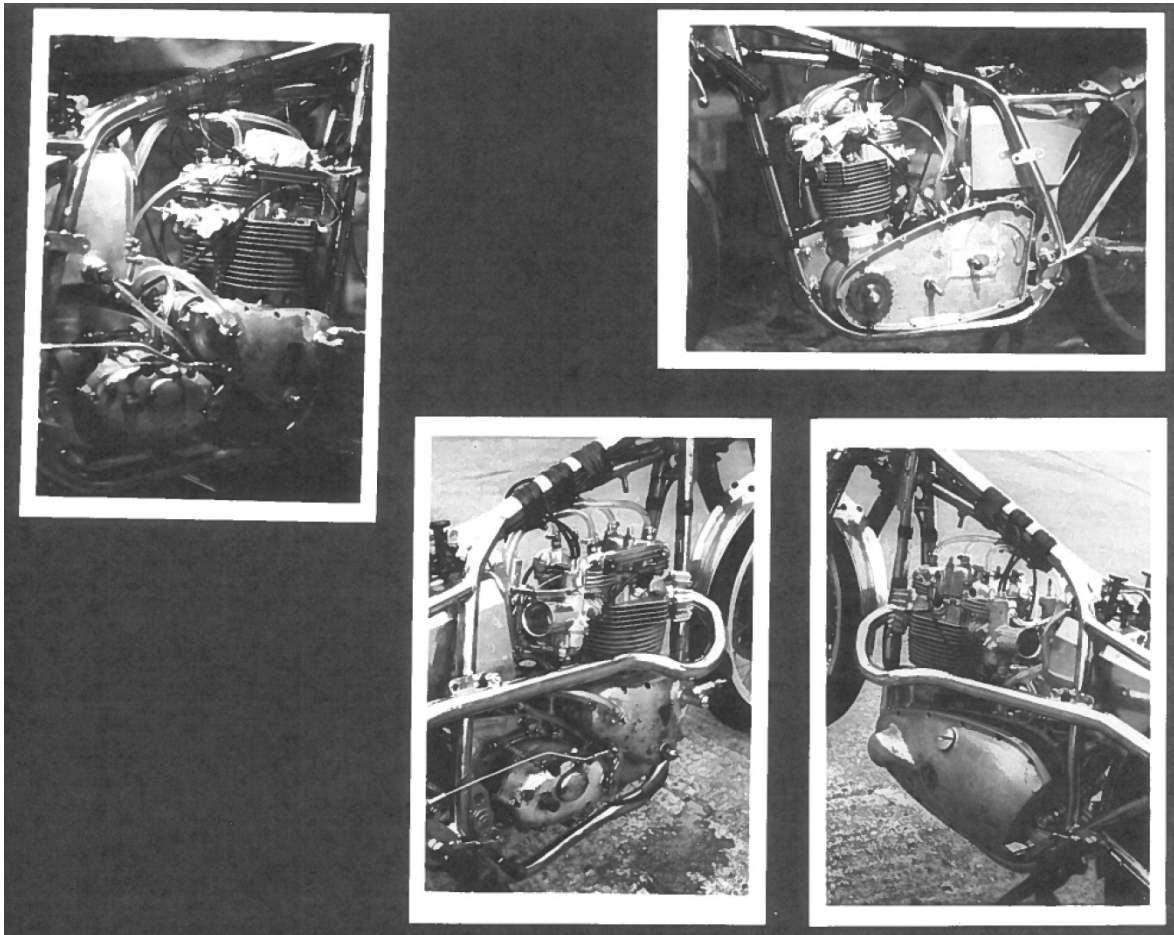


More Partial Assembly views



Another Partial Assembly view

The Exhaust Pipes, I made by taking standard bought pipes and hacksawing them through, at intervals, leaving about a quarter inch of metal holding the pipe. I would then run a neat weld around and file it a bit when everything fitted the engine and the frame, I would take it to get polished and chromed.



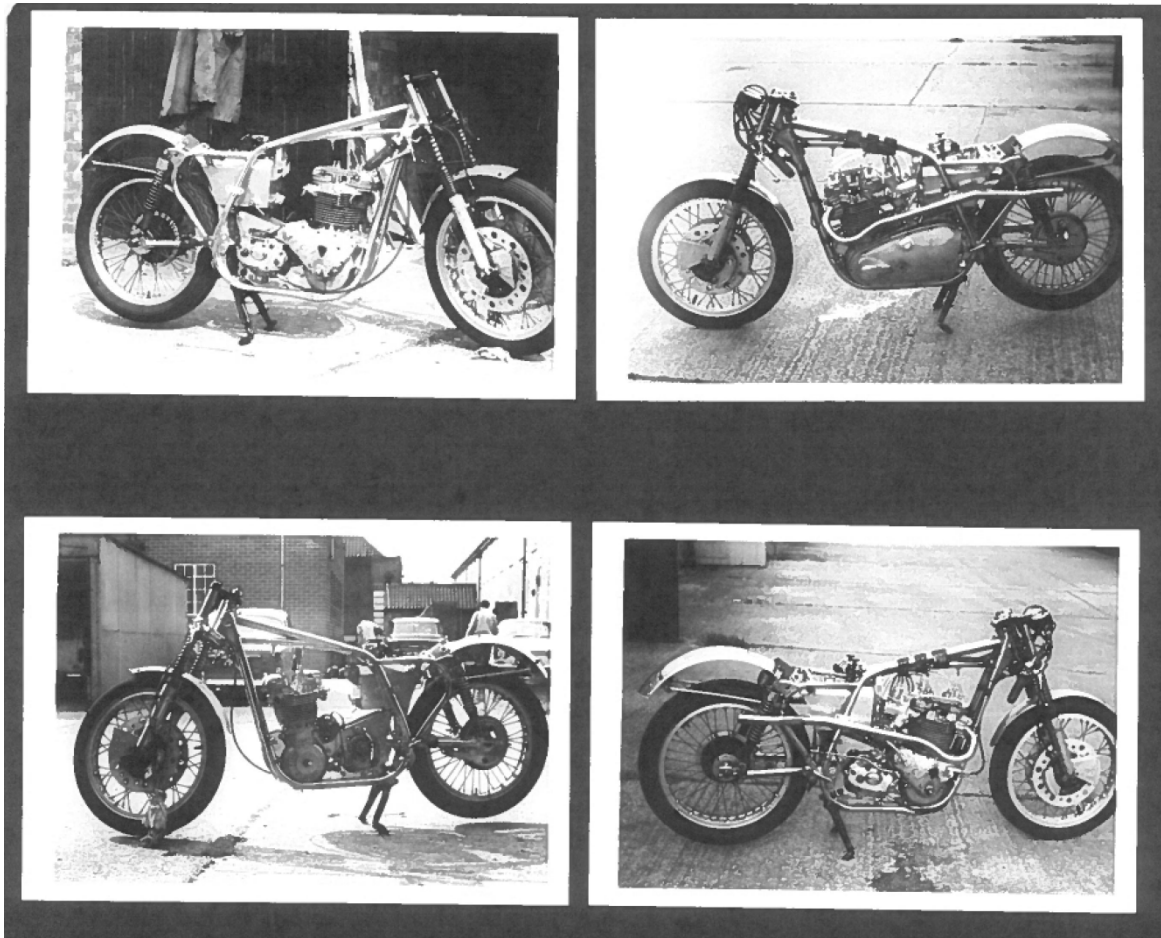
Assembly continues, step by step - everything immaculately clean

When finished, I had Number Plates on it and rode it on the road. Probably in the Spring in 1972.

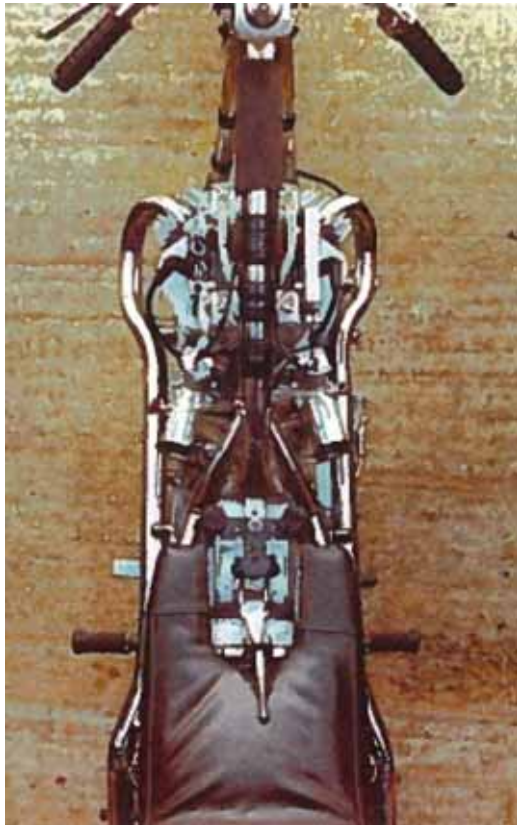
At some point, I had to travel to Pride and Clarkes again, where I had bought the ace AJS 7-R Tank. This next, was a Gold Star pattern 5 gallon tank. The seat is for an Ariel Arrow Racer, The Chrome Brake and Clutch Lever went to the Norbsa, along with the Goldie Tank. I bought Ali' Racing Levers for the Tribsa. I bought

a Lucas Racing Magneto, second hand and sent it off to Lucas, for overhaul. And as I built the Tribsa up I bought

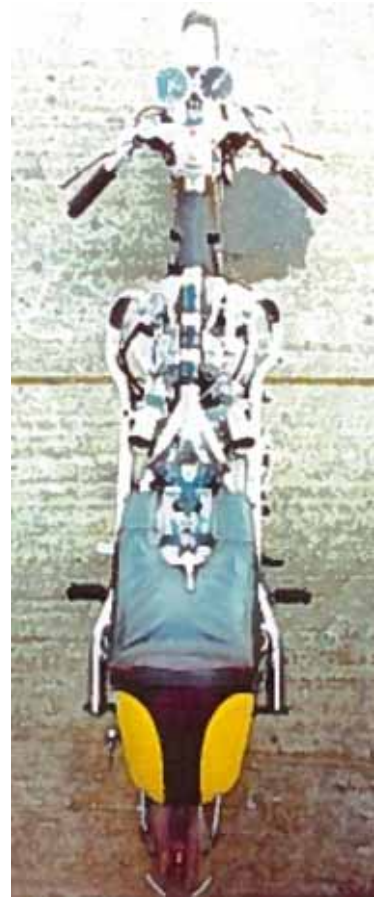
another B-31 Frame, locally in Lincoln and as I put new lightweight cycle parts on my new Tribsa, I used such as was no longer required, to build back my Norbsa, so as I finished up with two bikes.



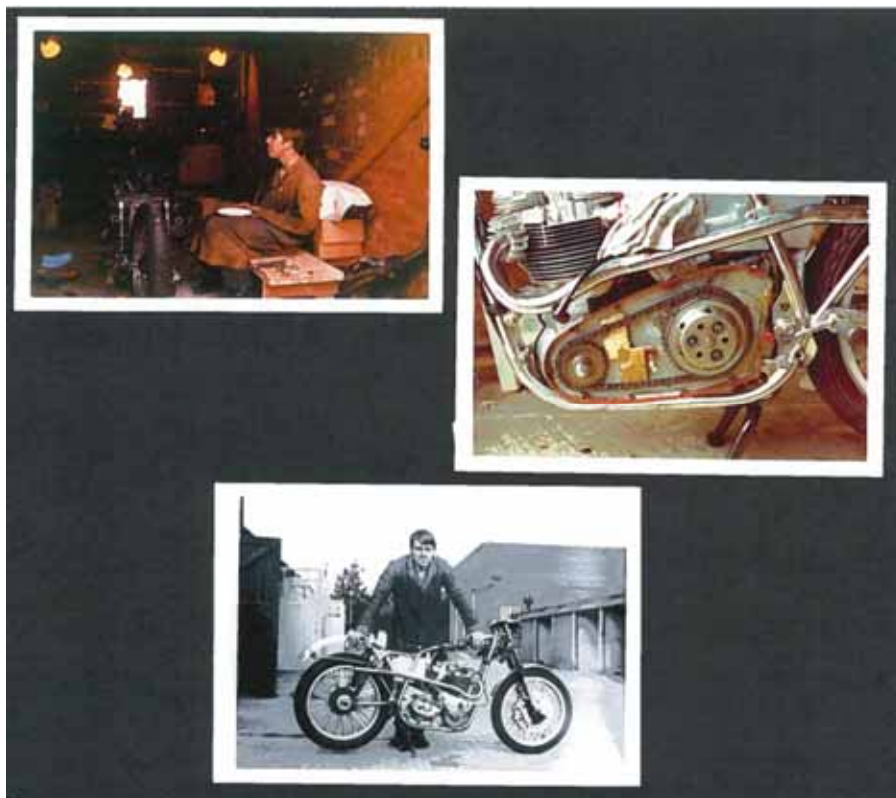
Various views of the assembly process, the bike looking somewhat skeletal, but the arrangements are well visible



Top view



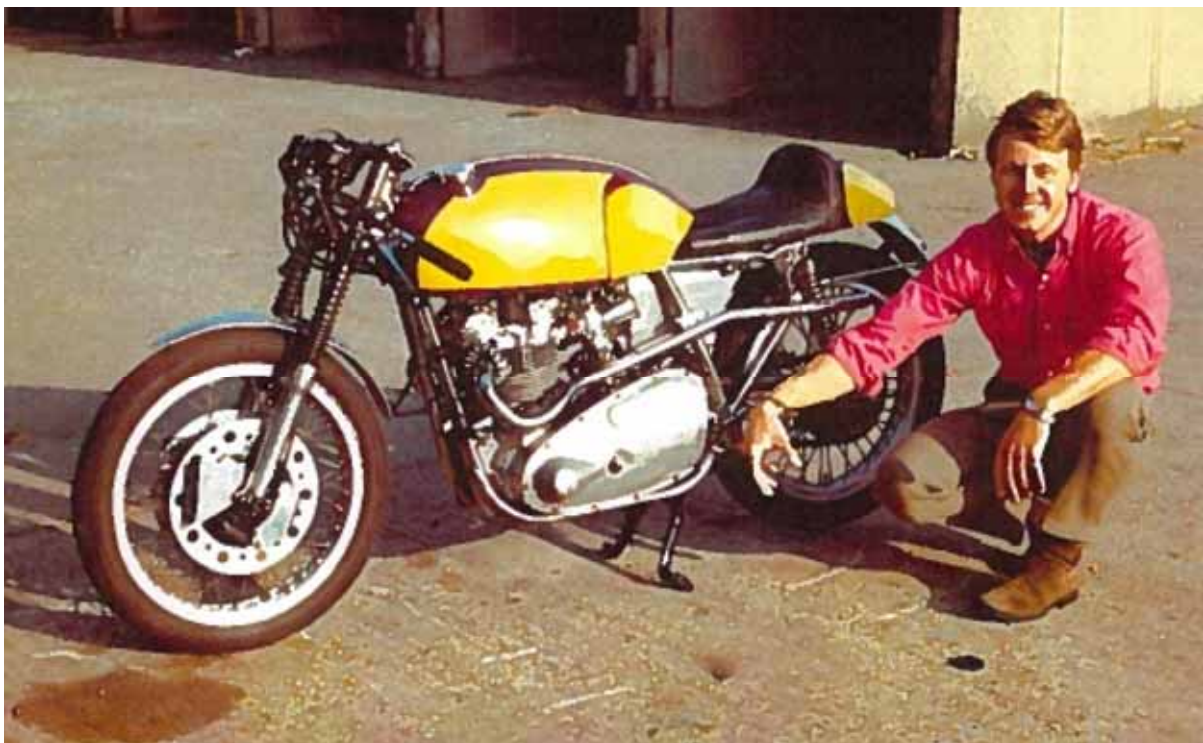
and a close - up



A good view, above of me in my "Engineering Coat" - very greasy. And above, me eating my dinner, passed out to me by a Steward, from the back of the Kitchens. I put in many hours, in those days !



And there she is !



The finished bike and the proud builder, clean and tidy, for a change ! (Sign-Writing yet to come)

In 1973, I had teamed up with my girlfriend (now my wife) and bought a house between us and no longer lived in the Officers Mess. I had a garage and obviously built in the full workshop, as I had at the back of the Mess. In the early days in the house I was tinkering with my old Volvo.

In 1975, early in the year, I started upgrading it for Road Racing. Number-plates off. Dynamo off. Centre-stand off. Various other parts surplus to race-requirements. Exhaust lengths adjusted and Silencer baffles removed. I was lent a bare girder trailer, for which I made up and welded $\frac{3}{4}$ " box section struts which bolted on to upper attachment points of the Rear Suspension. I had a Tow-Bar put on my trusty Volvo Amazon. I bought Racing Tyres from Avon. I took alot of advice from my old chum Ginger, who had a few years ahead of me in the Club Race scene.

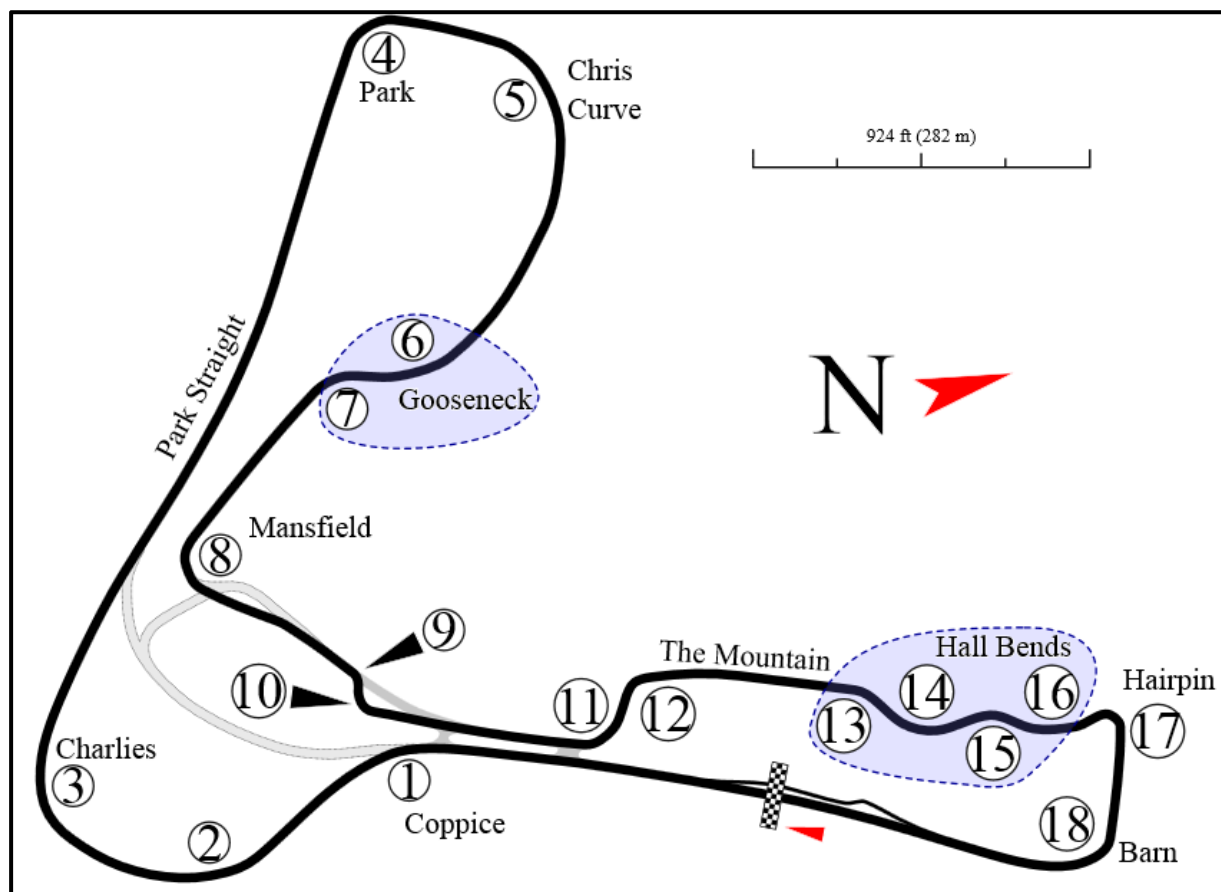
I had to travel to Louth, where I had made to measure and my chosen pattern : Racing Leathers.

I occasionally trailered my machine to a disused airfield; Fulbeck, where I practiced and tested my adjustments. Down the very long runway, I had her up to 130 mph !

I had to put in new twin Front Brake Cables, which meant soldering on the nipple ends. I used to mess up the ends, and bend the last 1/8th" over, so as when I made a solder ball, and the solder went "dry", it could not just pull off smooth wire. But ... in one race, presumably because my soldering was faulty, I was hammering down Park Straight at Cadwell Park, at 120 mph and as I reached the Marker Board for Park Bend, I closed the throttle and braked and "Ping" ... no front brakes ! I braked a bit with the back brake and threw us into the bend ; leaning in mightily ; knee out in traditional fashion, but as the bend tightened up, I slid off, luckily across a big grass run-off. Just coming onto Chris Curve. Broke the little finger on my right hand. It is crooked to this day.

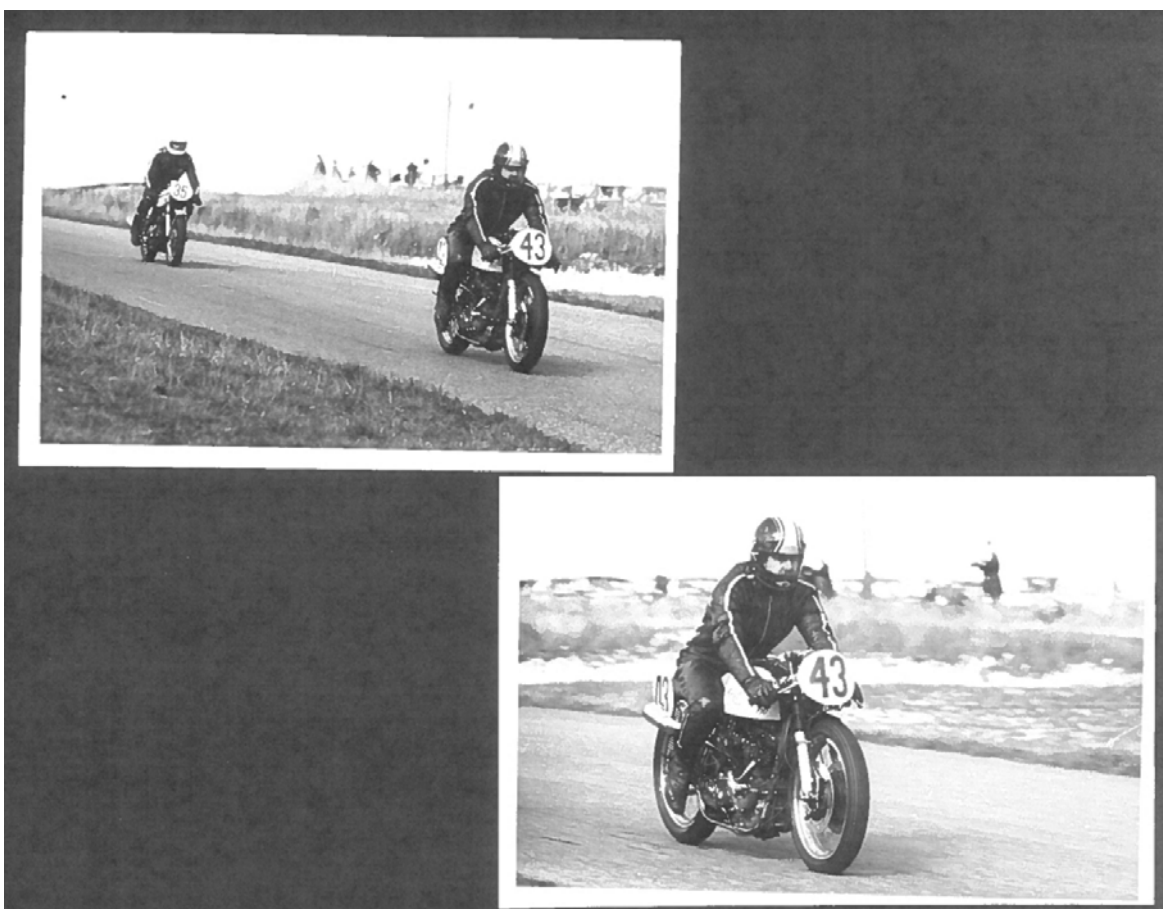
If the damage was on a Saturday, things like this led to burning the midnight oil in the workshop, to get the bike prepared for next day, where there was racing Saturday and Sunday.

Cadwell Park Race Circuit



For the Club Circuit, you hairpin RIGHT at 11. And you are back to 1.

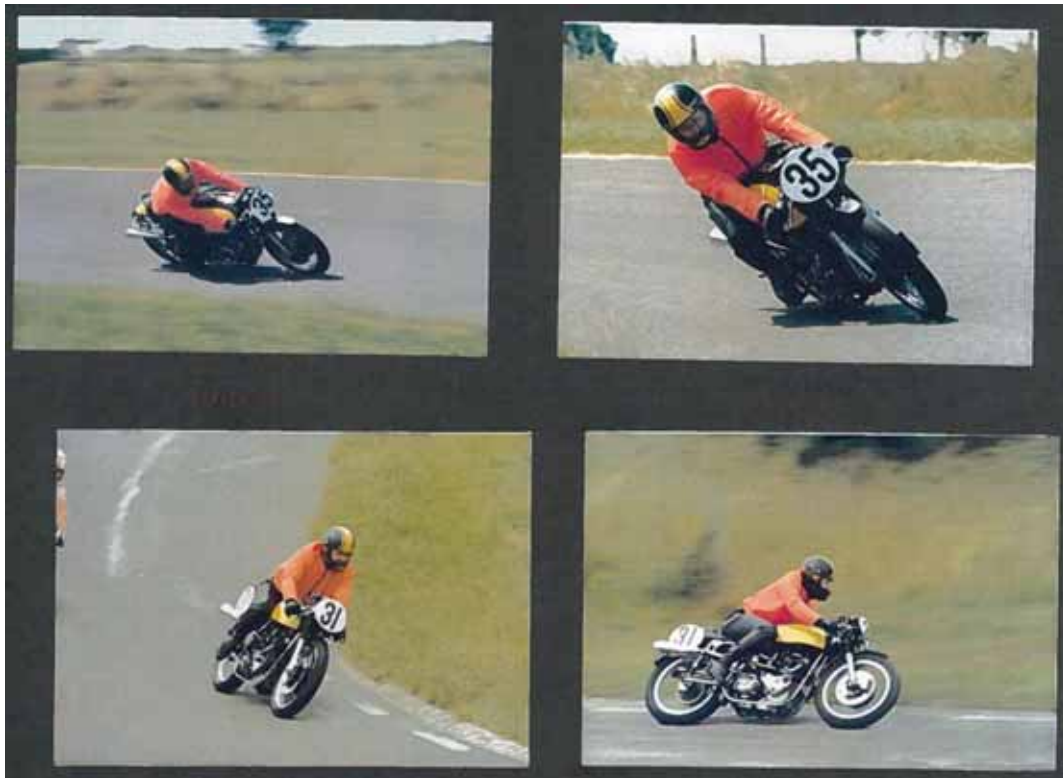
Later in the Racing season, I had a drive down to Leicester to visit the famous Own Greenwood, who was an engineer who installed a hand-made high pressure oil system into a Triumph engine, enabling it to Rev a couple of thousand above the normal range. He also drove a Triumph-engined Morgan, beating the standard sidecar outfits. Anyway, I bought a set of Somerton Polydyne Camshafts from him, giving longer dwell to valve opening. When I had it in and running, I found it had lost all the vivid acceleration of the Thunderbird Cams, on a tight and winding circuit like Cadwell Park.



Sitting up and braking hard at the end of Park Straight, for Charlie's Bend + same shot : enlarged

I also put in those long inlet ducts and shortened the exhaust pipes. All this meant that she did not come "on Song" until around 4,000 RPM. Oh, well.

I started off racing in my red Novice Over-jacket, and found myself at the back of the pack, alongside middle aged codgers racing very old machines. However, I soon got the hang of it and quickly got my 6 results within the first six places and no longer had to wear the Novice Jacket. The only time the old codgers saw me was when I roared past, lapping them !



Cadwell Park Club Race Circuit, 1975 - A few pictures - different days : different races, purchased from the professional photographers that worked there



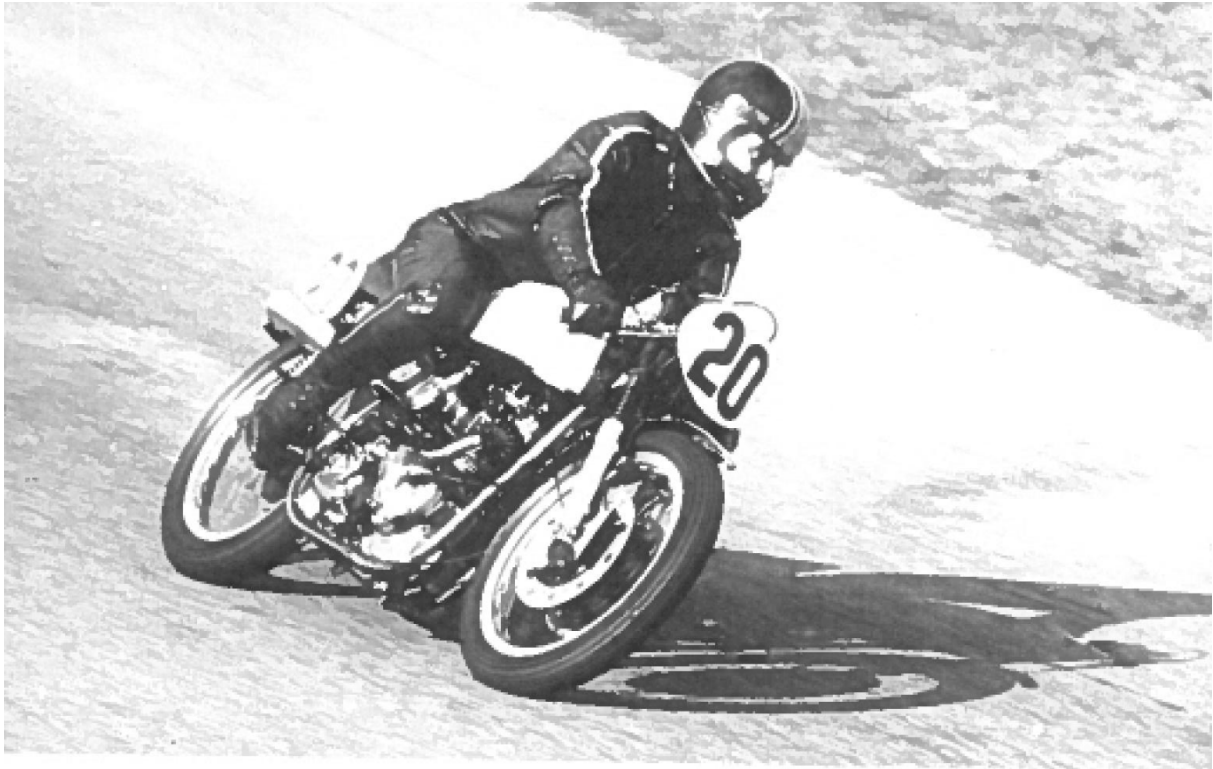
A small group of lads from the RAF station came along with me and helped with between race tasks. Martin Durant and Trev' Turner and a Sgt. Geoff (something ?) who slipped my memory. When she was around, Maggie would change my Spark-plugs from Warm-up plugs to Race Plugs and also position herself near the Race Track and record all my lap times on a sheet. What a hot summer it was ! You must remember it ? It was so hot in the gathering area, in full leathers, near the track, sitting astride the bike, ready for the next race. Once under way, a one hundred mile an hour slipstream was good to cool off in !

A very enjoyable memory was during the Shell 500 Race Day, when we used the whole circuit, like the professional racers did on National Days. As you may know, there were National Days and Club Days. I used to love watching "Rocket Ron" Haslam throw a left and right up on to The Mountain and shoot off into mid-air, to land way further down the track. My effort was not quite like that, as I am sure that my old British bike was alot heavier than his Yamaha, and also significantly less powerful. I think I did get a bit airborne, though.



A Black and White photo, of me at Cadwell Park, after graduating from the Red Novice Jacket and quite honestly, looking more balanced and comfortable around the bends. Eventually, I enjoyed the two wheel drift, through a left and right : "The Goose-Neck", at Cadwell

My hero at Cadwell Club Meetings was one Stuart Armitage, on his Norton 750 cc, Commando Racer. He had the Club Circuit record Lap-time. When not racing I would watch him and as he flew past you could see his eyes through the Helmet-Screen, almost burning through the plastic with concentration as he roared around ahead of the field ; every corner a precision perfect manoeuvre ; always in exactly the right place and the right gear.



Another Race, another number - leaning well, here !

They were great days and I enjoyed them, but in the autumn, I hung up my leathers and got down to studying to leave the RAF and move into Civil Aviation. Once I had a Commercial Helicopter Pilot Pilot's Licence, and got married and had to earn money and forge a future, I decided that Racing was too dangerous a hobby to risk being injured and off work / not earning, so it had to remain a glorious memory. One of many things I have ticked off my Bucket List, never to do again.

Still, I couldn't bear to get rid of the bikes and they rode to Aberdeen with me, in my lovely old Ford Transit, never to be ridden again. When, after three moves, we finished up in a Victorian Villa, the Road Bike ; Norbsa ; went in the Coal-shed and the Tribsa Racer went in an old disused Washroom. (Laundry Room)

In 2010, there was a chum of mine in the Stag Owners Club, who lived nearby, but also built and showed Motorbikes (he had a dozen !) For a few years, he had been pestering me to let him buy the bike from me, as I clearly had no use for it. I was a nostalgic old

sod, though and declined, until in the end I gave in to his tales of how he was going to rebuild it back to its former glory.

I had no contact whatsoever with the bike world by 2010. So, he offered me £1,000, which he described as a good price. Because, and only because he was a friend I took him at his word. And the deed was done. He came to the house and handed over the cash (in cash), and I helped him onto the trailer with the Tribsa and my wife took the "goodbye" photo's.



So, here is the terrible "Scrooge" man, Alan Smith, taking his prize away on his trailer

In the end, I think he kept the bike a year and did absolutely nothing to it, apart from rather daftly, trying to start it. It had a broken Advance / Retard Lever, but he did not even replace that before his attempt to start it. Obviously, it fired once and backfired making the Kickstart throw him over the handlebars !

How incredibly unsuitable, from someone who should have know better. Imagine the Glue that 40 year old Castrol-R had become !

In my biking days, I always used Castrol-R, but naturally, changed it every spring.

I gather he sold the McDougall Tribsa to a man in Manchester, but at a more realistic price of £3,000. However, this man was another Clown who actually managed to start it, doing even more damage.

Happily, Manchester-man soon sold it to a super-star in Winchester, Jason Coombes, for £3,500. MJ treated the bike properly and showed it the respect it was due and restored it from top to bottom, having the Gearbox professionally rebuilt by Quaifes Engineering. Same with the Engine. Stripped right down and rebuilt with some more suitable modern oil for lubricant.



Here is Jason's Tribsa, at his pad, fully restored and refurbished - not quite as shiny as when I first put it together.

At the end of my racing season, I had learnt the skills of going really fast and tended to ride rather too fast on my road bike and had one or two scary moments, with tractors and so on. The advantage of the Race Track is that all the idiots may well be going fast, but at least they are all going in the same direction! Six months later, I began training as a civilian commercial helicopter pilot and decided the wise thing to do was to give up riding motorbikes.

Finally, when we moved from Aberdeen, to St. Andrews, recently and much to my wife's irritation, the remaining bike came with us.

It is my plan to completely refurbish it and then after a few rides, sell it.

"That will never happen", says my wife. I must admit I have slowed down alot since my retirement, but I still potter in my workshop, making and mending - okay – mostly woodwork, these days.

My Racing Leathers are in the Attic – I am not sure I would fit into them, now ! We will see ...



Here is my remaining 500 cc Norton / Gold Star, got out of the Coal Shed, ready for the Removals Man, in Summer 2015.

I hope you have enjoyed my reminiscences.



Malcolm McDougall - *July,*
2016