



**Berkshire Section
of
The Vintage Motor Cycle Club Ltd.**

A Compilation of Events in 2019

Officers

Chairman: Bill Barnes

Secretary: Malcolm White

Treasurer: David Bryant

Committee: Mike Allaway

Vic Blake (part year)

Derek Carter

Lorraine Carter

Paul Digweed (part year)

Bruce Spiller

Berkshire Section Yearbook 2019

January

Club Night Venue 2019 did not begin on an auspicious note when we found out – more or less via the grapevine – that the board operating the Englefield Social Club had decided to cease operations from 1st January without any apparent consultation with clubs using the facility. This left the committee midway through January with the task of finding an alternative location.

Fortunately, we were able to secure another location for our regular section meetings in a similar geographic area within a few days – not that there was an abundance of choice. This is the Burghfield Social Club, James Lane, Burghfield, Reading RG30 3RS.

Unfortunately, we needed to change the meeting date and, out of the options available, selected the first Tuesday of the month, as this was closer to the original and didn't clash with peripheral section meetings for Brooklands, Chiltern, Oxford or Stonehenge with whom we also hold the Inter-Section quizzes. Sadly, however, this has conflicted with several regular members' activities in other realms and means that we see them less frequently.

The room available to us is approximately twice as large as the one we had in Englefield. It is well lit and has direct access to the bar. There is plenty of parking. There's also access to a 9-pin bowling alley should we decide to re-introduce this previously popular social event.

They are motorcycle friendly, as the Triumph Owners Club meet there every Thursday and the Mortimer & District MCC – also displaced by the Englefield closure – are now about to hold their meetings at the same location.

The first meeting of the Section in this new location was a slightly delayed Annual General Meeting on 5th February.

Mid-week Lunch Meeting There was a wonderful turnout for the carvery roast at the Swan in East Ilsey for our first function of the year. 30 in total and two on bikes, despite the less than balmy conditions.

Mind you there was a bit of mild cheating going on with Bill Barnes riding over on his very nice, gleaming white BMW armchair with full screen, heated grips and horizontally opposed toe warmers and Ray Prior – a new member among us – who only lives a short distance away and had to take a slightly circuitous route to warm up his 1957 IMZ (Irbitskiy Mototsikletniy Zavod, 'Irbit Motorcycle Factory'). A Russian copy of the BMW R71 in 1941 (info courtesy of Wikipedia).

Vic Blake had organised the venue and the carvery, but unfortunately wasn't able to attend due to a previous commitment. Laura, however, ably filled in for him and oversaw proceedings.

The carvery, as on previous occasions, was excellent with mountains of pork and turkey with all the trimmings, followed by sumptuous desserts. Just perfect for keeping the cold out even though the vast majority were making their way home in four wheeled conveyances.

Thanks to Vic and Laura for arranging it and the staff at the Swan for putting on such a great spread.

Peter Hopkins – In Memoriam Peter Hopkins, an inveterate Triumph owner and long standing member of the Berkshire Section, passed away in his sleep on 2nd January. It was therefore appropriate that he should be conveyed on his last ride to the Slough Crematorium in a sidecar hearse powered by a Triumph on 27th January.

The Berkshire Section were invited to ride bikes in the procession, but the somewhat miserable weather conditions earlier in the week meant that only east Berkshire locals, Bill Barnes and Malcolm White on their pre-war Tiger 80 and Tiger 90, rode over. The choice of machinery was, however, quite special as Peter's own Tiger 80 was a firm favorite of his.

After a very nice service, we were all invited to the Farnham Royal Cricket Club's club house to celebrate Peter's life.

Berkshire Section Yearbook 2019

February

Annual General Meeting The AGM, postponed from 30th January to 5th February due to the closure of the Englefield Social Club, was held at our new location at the Burghfield Social Club in Burghfield where we have been made most welcome.

The officers and committee were duly elected as follows:

Chairman: Bill Barnes

Secretary: Malcolm White

Treasurer: David Bryant

Committee: Mike Allaway, Vic Blake, Derek & Lorraine Carter and Bruce Spiller.

The full minutes of the meeting are available on the website.

Cyclomotor Quiz Evening The Cyclomotor Section kindly invited us to their quiz evening at The England's Rose public house in Postcombe along with the Chiltern and Oxford Sections.

Lorraine Carter was the quiz mistress – no PC proprieties here. Taking note of the questions involving dates at the Oxford Section Quiz last autumn and noting that many a quizzier was frustrated at often being just 1 year in error, Lorraine allowed a latitude of 12 months either side of the year required in the first two sections. This was an undoubted boon to Chiltern – to which I was seconded for the evening – and, perhaps, to several others for we scored a number of half points on this basis to return a somewhat acceptable score.

The first 15 questions of a motorcycling nature were for dates when something began. The next 15 were a little macabre and often denoted an end to the cycle of life. Not something that one would necessarily wish to dwell upon, which was, perhaps, reflected in the lower scores for that particular round.

The following task was for the teams to match up descriptions of 5 types of pedestrian crossings with their names. Did you know that a Toucan crossing is one where cyclists are allowed to ride while pedestrians walk across? Easy to remember as 'two can cross'. Probably cost hundreds of thousands of pounds for a Government oik to come up with that one.

I have to admit that I was only aware of two types, Zebra and Pelican, so must make a note to brush up on the highway code more frequently. What are the others you ask? Pegasus for horses, though I've not seen a horse use one and Puffin, where one looks down at a small screen for guidance instead of remaining aware of what's going on around you. It's safety on a budget, as they're less expensive to install than Pelican crossings. OK, minor rant over.

The quiz format then followed the more traditional pattern of motorcycle and motor related questions, interspersed with some general knowledge to add variety.

At the break for mounds of thick cut sandwiches and freshly cooked chips there was just a point or so between the top three teams – sadly with the host team trailing by some margin. It was therefore all to play for in the concluding 45 questions.

At the close, the Berkshire team of Bill Barnes, Malcolm and Michael Bryant and Robin Strange pipped Chiltern by one and one half marks, 65 to 63 1/2 and took home the trophy. Oxford were third on 59 and Cyclomotor weren't able to catch up on 48 1/2.

Many thanks to Lorraine and Derek for organising the quiz and to the Cyclomotor Section for arranging it. Also thanks to the staff at the pub for putting on such a lovely spread.

Mid-week Lunch Meeting A dry and an unseasonably warm day was forecast for our February mid-week lunch meeting at the Fox & Hounds at Theale. So it was a favourable opportunity to get one of the bikes out for a gentle saunter to the pub. I had planned to ride my Triumph T160 to accompany Tony Heyworth on his triple, but the battery, despite having been on charge overnight, was as unresponsive as the proverbial dead parrot.

Berkshire Section Yearbook 2019

Switch to the Tiger 90, no problem, except that it stalled after starting every time throttle was applied. Odd, because it was running a couple of weeks ago. Third try lucky, the '38 Speed Twin burst into life, even though it hadn't turned a wheel for several months and we were soon on our way in time to meet up with Tony. There's a lot to be said for having a choice of steed to meet these challenges.

By happenstance, on the way we met up with David Peterson on his Velocette and Graham Denton on his somewhat younger KTM and rode the last few miles together – arriving just as noon time struck. Bill Barnes arrived a little later on his Honda CB900. Thus making an eclectic mix of bikes from across the world and several decades.

Lorraine and Derek had arranged the booking for 30 and the pub had prepared seating in a large spacious area to accommodate us. It wasn't long before all the seats were full with one extra being found for Rob Lane who brought the number to 31. An excellent turnout for a mid-week lunch.

It wasn't long before our orders had been taken and plates full of food were appearing into which we tucked with enthusiasm. All the while chatting about projects on the go and forthcoming events on the calendar.

Many thanks to Lorraine and Derek for arranging the lunch and to Jane and the staff at the Fox and Hounds.

March

Club Night Our guest speaker for the evening was our very own Vic Blake, who kindly brought along his most current project, a 1910 Humber 'V' twin 2 3/4 HP (350cc), for us to gaze upon.

Ken Cobbing and Vic had been friends for many years and when Ken died his wife, Joyce, contacted Vic about a couple of tea chests full of bits of a motorcycle, thinking that it would be something he would find interesting.

On investigation – a task made especially difficult since there seems to be no more than a single page illustration of that model – it appears that there are only three, may be four, known in the country or, perhaps, the world.

As might be imagined over the intervening years from its manufacture, the bike and later its component parts had suffered the ravages of time and some, such as the exhaust pipe nuts and mudguards, were shadows of their former selves. Fortunately, although some parts were in a poor way, it was virtually complete, so at least patterns existed from which replacement items could be made. You wouldn't know it to see it now though, as it's looking great, resplendent in new paint and alive with nickel plate.

As part of the renovation, Vic has fitted an unobtrusive starter motor under the frame in front of the rear wheel. Naturally, this is not original equipment given its age, but it means that the Humber can be started and ridden, as was intended, rather than parked as a stationary exhibit at the odd show.

There are still a few things to tidy up, so it hasn't yet turned a crankshaft under its own power, but hopefully in the next month or two there will be the bark of a twin emanating from Rose Cottage.

Many thanks to Vic for taking the time to bring along the bike and show it to us.

Mid-week Lunch Meeting Twenty members turned out for the mid-week lunch at the Jack O'Newbury in Binfield. Two members took advantage of the dry, but blustery, conditions to ride over on their bikes of choice. Bill Barnes on his 1955 Triumph T100 and Tony Heyworth on his Triumph T160 triple.

I had considered riding, but as I only live a mile from the venue, it was certainly as quick to walk as it was to get all the gear on and ride over. Besides, I had a pair of handlebars to return to a parts supplier, as they weren't quite what was wanted, and the Hermes drop-off point was on the way.

The food for the majority had been pre-ordered, so it wasn't long before it arrived en bloc and everyone got stuck in, amid breaks for conversation on many subjects. A pleasant way to while away a couple of hours and fend off the chill wind with a good number of calories.

Berkshire Section Yearbook 2019

Many thanks to Bill Barnes for organising it and to the staff at the Jack O'Newbury for looking after us.

April

Club Night – Bring & Buy Books At the beginning of the meeting, Bill imparted the very sad news that Vic Blake had passed away at lunchtime the day before. He had, apparently, been feeling unwell and had been in bed for a couple of days. Everyone present passed on their sincere condolences and best wishes to Laura for her loss. The Berkshire Section has lost a staunch supporter and committee member. He will be missed.

After a moment of reflection and almost certainly as Vic would have wished the evening's proceedings got under way. Doug Ellis was kind enough to miss out on his music evening with which our new date now clashes and took up the auctioneer's gavel to auction off the books and sundry items donated by members.

Every year there seem to be fewer and fewer items to move along, but for all of that the vast majority found new homes and the section benefited to the tune of around £40. Many thanks to Doug for extracting what cash was willing to be offered, the members who brought stuff and those who coughed up the dosh.

Mid-week Run Our first organised run of 2019 started at the Holiday Inn at Padworth. The weather gods looked favourably upon us and despite it being a bit chilly – it was early April after all – 15 riders set out under a blue sky for a 15 mile circuitous run over to Headley.

The run had been initiated by Vic Blake, who we were sad to reflect was no longer with us. Vic had organised the previous visit back in September 2018 at the time of the Section holiday, so this was the first time many of our gathering had had the opportunity to take a look over Andy Beswick's wonderful collection of bikes and stationary engines. A number of which were panting away in his yard.

With the complexity surrounding today's computer controlled internal combustion engines, it's a wonder to see how simple mechanisms were adapted to regulate speed and operation in the early days. The actual mechanisms used may have evolved enormously over the last century, but the basic principles remain the same.

Cups of tea and cake were quaffed in the large building which housed the collection. Most were undoubtedly envious of the large amount of space in which Andy gets to work and the wood burning stove that I'm sure would tempt one into sitting comfortably in the armchairs provided while contemplating the solution to a current challenge.

After a delightful hour it was time to depart in order to make it to the Traveller's Friend on Crookham Common Road, Thatcham, where our pre-ordered lunches had been arranged. The landlord placed us in the conservatory with seating for 24 and with partners and friends it was spot on. The food was plentiful and excellent, as it has been on previous occasions, so definitely worthy of future visits.

Many thanks to Andy for showing us around and for providing refreshments and to Pam Magee for assisting in their distribution.

Vincent Ronald Blake – In Memoriam As reported earlier, Vic sadly passed away on Monday, 1st April 2019 aged 76.

His funeral at the Bracan Chapel, Easthampstead Park Crematorium in Wokingham was held on St. George's Day, 23rd April 2019. The service and subsequent committal was attended by a large gathering of friends and relatives who had come from far and wide in recognition of his passing.

As a member of the VMCC for 50 years and having held various posts in the club, including President and more latterly as a committee member for the Berkshire Section, he was known to many around the country and on the continent to which he made frequent trips with Laura by his side. We will miss his knowledge, good humour, contribution and willingness to help out anyone where he could.

Calleva Gallop The early warmth of Spring had all but disappeared since the splendid Easter weekend just seven days ago. The blustery north wind was chill as Roger Prew and I set out from

Berkshire Section Yearbook 2019

Bracknell to the start at the Calleva Arms in Silchester. I was pleased I'd put on an extra layer to thwart it. At least it seemed the day was set to be fair with the minor possibility of a shower later in the afternoon. By which time it was anticipated that the round trip would have been accomplished and I'd be back at Chez Blanc.

Mike Allaway was busy organising the sign on and route sheets as we arrived and it wasn't long before others began to appear from their various geographic locations. By the time of the briefing there were sixteen solos and Bert and Tricia Appleford in their Triumph combination ready for the off with Keith & Muriel in attendance. The route Mike had scoped out was of the order of 45 miles and ran down to the east of Basingstoke, across the bottom, up the western side and back to the Calleva Arms. It was expected to take around 90 minutes. Plenty of time for the ride and back in time for lunch.

As normal, riders set off individually or in small groups. Perhaps a little uncharacteristically I was somewhat slow in getting started and we tagged on behind Michael Bryant who was running at a comfortable pace on his T110 with Denise on the pillion. This continued for about five miles, but, while negotiating a right hand bend on the way to Bramley, Michael's bike suddenly became squirrely and it became immediately apparent that the rear tyre was quite devoid of the requisite quantity of pneumatic substance. Murphy's Law naturally came into force at this point since the spare tube was on Malcolm's bike which was back at home. Time to call the AA recovery service.

Having checked that he was able to initiate said recovery, we pushed on and caught up with another group and seeing that Mike was at the front it was a no brainer to pull in behind and lap up the scenery. While some roads were familiar there were quite a number which weren't – not that I'd necessarily remember from one year to the next – so it was nice to hang back and enjoy the sweeping curves with which we were presented.

Arriving back at the Calleva Arms, we were pleased to hear that Michael, Denise and the deflated T110 were back in Tilehurst and none the worse for wear. At which point we made ourselves comfortable inside the pub and enjoyed the large helpings of food that were on offer.

While it's always nice to see the usual suspects on our runs, it was also good to note a few unfamiliar faces taking part today. Peter Burkwood on a Norton 850 Commando, Alan Atkinson on a Royal Enfield and Keith Welch on a Triumph Hurricane, who I'm sure we saw at the Chairman's BBQ last year. Also Chris Maybury on his wonderfully unrestored 1926 Ariel 550 cc Model A that, if I recollect correctly, he purchased in 1964.

As is traditional on the Calleva Gallop, the John Moore Cup is awarded to the rider who is perceived to have the nicest bike of the bunch. The worthy recipient for 2019 is new member Alan Atkinson with his 1964 Royal Enfield 250 Crusader Sports. Well done Alan.

Many thanks to Mike for organising the event and route and to the landlord and staff at the Calleva Arms for looking after us so well.

May

Fleet Lions Run The Lions Club of Fleet's 36th Classic Motorcycle Run and Concours is a nice run to ease oneself into the riding season. It was a few degrees lower than normal, but it remained dry throughout with the sun just peaking through gaps in the dark grey clouds as they made their way briskly across the sky in a southerly direction.

It was a well attended event with riders from many clubs – and none – mounted on all sorts of iron from early vintage to the latest superbike. The run started at 11.00 am from Elvetham Heath and followed a pleasantly winding 46 mile route through Hampshire and Berkshire with instruction to return to the car park for judging by 2.00pm. This left plenty of time to grab a burger from either of two pubs, the White Hart or The Four Horseshoes, in Sherfield on Loddon and catch up with those who you may not have seen since last year.

Club Night – Video Evening Michael Bryant once again pulled together a very interesting mix of clips for our May video evening. Starting with John Surtee's 25 year reunion meeting held at Brands

Berkshire Section Yearbook 2019

Hatch in 1981. What it must have been like to have many of the greats of yesteryear in one place for such an event.

How different then to jump to a clip of Buster Keaton sitting on the 'bars of a Harley Davidson in Sherlock Jr (1924) when the driver is depicted to have fallen off and the antics and near collisions that ensued thereafter. Little sign of health and safety in those days – or CGI.

Other clips included Stan Woods winning the Senior TT on a Norton in 1926; No ordinary passenger – a brief recount by Stan Dibben, Eric Oliver's passenger, in the pivotal 1953 Belgian Sidecar GP leading to World Championship honours; the rather cold and snowy 2018 Pioneer Run from Pease Pottage in which our very own Lorraine Carter successfully went the distance; and Mike Hailwood triumphant in the Formula One race at Mallory in 1978 on a Ducati after a real tussle with Phil Read (Honda) and John Cowie (Kawasaki).

Many thanks to Michael for a great show.

Stonehenge Inter-Section Quiz Evening Five members of the Section travelled down to the Redlynch Sports and Social Club in the northern reaches of the New Forest for an earlier round than usual of inter-section quizzing. The idea, I understand, being that there were more hours of daylight and thus less chance of inadvertently encountering four footed friends bumbling along the roadway. No equine encounters, but we did see a badger scurrying across the tarmac on the way home. I think this is a first for me to have seen one alive in the wild and not as carrion in the kerbside.

Rob Unsworth was quiz master and adjudicator for the proceedings, that took the form of six rounds of ten questions. all of which were motor or motorcycling related. Seven teams took up the challenge coming from Stonehenge, Isle of Wight, Wessex V & V, South Hants and Berkshire.

Our team comprised Michael Bryant, Roger Prew, Robin Strange and Malcolm White. Malcolm Bryant chose to be the odd man out and sat on the sidelines. And due to his sense of fair play couldn't be persuaded to volunteer an answer when we were dithering – or just plain wrong – when he clearly knew the answer. Yes, I now know that Reynolds made nails before they made tubes.

In deference to the IoW Section and their need to catch a ferry back across the Solent, Rob kept up a good pace and the 60 questions were soon asked. Not so the case with answers that originated from knowledge, sheer guesswork and let's have a punt.

At the conclusion, two teams, Stonehenge A and Wessex V & V B, were tied on 35 apiece – another first in my experience. There was then a series of sudden death ad hoc questions that both teams successfully answered until the fifth question when Stonehenge prevailed by knowing the name of the current MD of Norton and Wessex did not.

Final results were Stonehenge A 36, Wessex B 35, South Hants 33, Isle of Wight 32 1/2, Berkshire 30, Wessex A 29 and Stonehenge B 26.

Many thanks to Rob and the Stonehenge Section for hosting the quiz and for providing the refreshments afterwards.

The Owen Tyler Cup Run Our Owen Tyler Run was again blessed with dry conditions as we assembled at the Air Scout facility in Hurst for the 2019 run. There were fewer machines this year, as I believe some members had signed up for the inaugural Dorset Section's girder fork Giants event in the West Country. Nevertheless there were 18 riders ready to take in the delights of middle Berkshire, southeast Oxfordshire and topped off with a brief excursion into southwest Buckinghamshire.

There were two routes to the Rising Sun at Witheridge Hill, Stoke Row for lunch. The longest approximating 51 miles and the shorter 35 miles. In both cases, there were a couple of sections where steeply inclined single track roads were strewn with gravel making it interesting to say the least, but everyone successfully negotiated these hazards and made it through to the end.

It's perhaps worthy of comment that we might consider these a hazard today, yet gravel roads were the norm when a number of the machines we were riding would have been subject to these conditions in pre-war times.

Berkshire Section Yearbook 2019

This year I decided to ride my newly restored 1937 250 Cotton JAP and, as it had only done 87 miles since the engine rebuild, I decided to act as tail end Charlie on the short route. While Bruce performed the same task on the longer route.

Riding with my own back up crew of Roger Prew on his 1939 Speed Twin and Tony Heyworth on his 1927 Rex-Acme Blackburne, we made good progress over the aforementioned gravelly section through Rotten Row. However, when reaching the apex of a hill, Tony's Rex-Acme appeared to pick up a stone in the chain that threw it off the rear sprocket. When refitting the chain, inspection revealed that the back of the spring link had suffered as a consequence and was now in one too many pieces. As a matter of course, I carry a spare spring link for my bike and as the sizes were identical it didn't take much – apart from a pair of very greasy fingers (Tony's) – to refit the chain, check adjustment and continue.

All was well until the last run down to Witheridge Hill, when on looking around I saw that Tony was there, but Roger and Robin Strange (who had caught up with us at the impromptu earlier stop) were not to be seen. Popping back up the route – after all it was he who should have been watching for them – Tony found the pair in the Stoke Row high street recovering one of Roger's Speed Twin silencers that had sheared off from the bracket and hurtled down the road with the apparent intention of skittling pedestrians far and wide. Fortunately, it stopped short and the family directly in its path are reported to have smiled and waved as though this were a normal occurrence in the village.

Arriving at the pub we found that the shorter route contingent ahead of us were already tucking into their meals, but none on the longer route had as yet made it. We were therefore pleased to hear the sound of bikes 15 minutes or so later, as they arrived in a gaggle having missed a turning and then struggled to regroup.

Lunch having been eaten, intertwined with convivial chatter, we were starting to depart when up rolled a rather nice 1929 chain gang Frazer Nash with a 1,496 cc OHV 4-cylinder Meadows engine. We soon got chatting with the owner and his wife and he was kind enough to lift the wraps and show us the engine and transmission. A very pleasant interlude in which we learnt that the Vintage Sports Car Club has very similar classifications and periods to those in use by the VMCC.

The 22 mile route back to Hurst was accomplished with little drama and riders were soon fortifying themselves with cake and pastries washed down with copious amounts of tea in preparation for the task of judging.

After a suitable period of deliberation, votes were counted and Laura Blake was kind enough to hand out the awards as follows:

Best Vintage – Tony Heyworth 1927 350 Rex-Acme Blackburne
Best Post Vintage – Malcolm White 1937 250 Cotton JAP
Best Post War (up to 1960) – Lorraine Carter 1951 Ariel Red Hunter
Best Post War (1961 on) – Keith Barnet BSA Hornet
Best Non-British – Roy Alexander 1973 MZ 250
Best up to 250 – Graham Denton 1961 Triumph Tiger Cub
Most Original – Oily Rag Cup – Chris Maybury 1926 Ariel 'A' Sports
Highest Combined Age – Chris Maybury 1926 Ariel 'A' Sports
Owen Tyler Cup (organisers choice) – David Knott 1973 Triumph TR7

Many thanks to Bruce Spiller for organising the venue and sorting out the route. Also a special mention to Laura Blake, Muriel Smith and Maryan Hunter for dishing out refreshments and to all those who contributed cakes and sundries for our enjoyment and waistlines.

Thanks also to the Hurst Air Scouts for the use of their facility.

North Hants Old Tyme Run Following on from the pleasing performance of the Cotton the previous weekend in the Owen Tyler, it seemed silly not to take the opportunity to put a few more miles on her on the North Hants Old Tyme Run. Especially, as the start in Crookham Village was only 16 miles away from me in Binfield.

Berkshire Section Yearbook 2019

All was well until I was forced to stop at a set of temporary traffic lights 1/4 mile from the Village hall. Suddenly, the motor went completely flat and stopped. Now, I'd had a similar problem during early test runs when the timing had slipped and had expected that the subsequent reseating of the timing pulleys on the tapers had solved the issue. Especially, since it was faultless during the Owen Tyler. Inspection, however, revealed that the timing was no longer in alignment with the timing marks I'd applied to the crankshaft nut and chaincase with Tippex – typists will know to what I refer. Fortunately, it takes only a screwdriver to unlock the rotor on the Thorspark ignition system I'm using, so I was quickly able to re-adjust the timing to the marks and 'hey presto' we were back in business.

Arriving at the hall I was faced with a dilemma. Did I sign on for the 40 mile run while keeping my fingers crossed? Or return home? Graham Denton was on hand to bounce ideas around, one of which was to take a look inside the timing cover. The toothed belt was a bit slack and it was surmised that the timing had slipped by a tooth thus causing the problem. We, therefore, felt that the run was worth a punt, as the solution was relatively straightforward provided it didn't happen too often. (I was, at that time, loathe to play with the belt tension having readjusted Lucas magdynos on pre-war Triumphs and had a view of how difficult it would be to get at the fixing bolts to loosen and tighten them up.)

Starting off, Graham very kindly volunteered to act as wing man and we covered five or so miles before it happened again. Looking under the points cover showed exactly the same displacement from the timing marks, as before, so it was clearly jumping a tooth, but I couldn't relate it to an action on the road that I might be able to ride around. The next interruption was at 9.6 miles and then at 12. It wasn't getting any better, but we gamely pressed on for another 12 or so miles with more stops until it failed immediately after starting. Something more permanent had to be done.

I hadn't wished to attempt the tension adjustment because of my fear that it would be extremely difficult. However, for whatever reason, my perception was completely wrong on the Cotton and the three fixing bolts were easily accessible from either side of the bike. Though, in mitigation, that wouldn't have been the case if I'd used the standard bulbous primary chain case rather than the reduced aluminium cover fitted. Oh well. C'est la moto vintage. Obviously, adjustment at the village hall would have saved many unnecessary stops, but at least it wasn't tipping with rain. Despite all that the run and route were excellent and we made it back in adequate time for the judging.

Other Berkshire members seen around were Robin Strange and Ian Bowdich. Ian receiving the honours again for the British Classic 1976+ award with his 850 Commando. Congratulations Ian.

June

Club Night – Car Park Concours Some may have been put off by the weather, but a few members rode over on their machines to take part in the Car Park Concours evening.

At the end of the evening John Campbell and his BSA Firebird were deemed to be the winners.

Chairman's Ride-In & Barbecue (Report: Bill Barnes) Another Superb Chairman's BBQ, many thanks to everyone who helped to make it such a success. Fantastic range of bikes, people, good food and magnificent weather. Lots of photos on the Berkshire VMCC Facebook page.

Mid-week Run – Dauntsey Lock Sadly, the weather forecast for the day was one more suitable for ducks than it was for motorcyclists who enjoy a ride, but not simply for the sake of it. And since Nigel and his cadre of model railway enthusiasts had spent some considerable effort in getting the system operational, it was decided to make our way there on four wheels rather than two.

Meeting at the newly renovated Peterborough Arms owned by the Wiltshire & Berkshire Canal Trust a little before midday – our venue for lunch – we made our way across the road to Nigel's purpose built extension housing the model railway. The exhibit had been more than just a little extended since our visit last year with much of the landscaping completed on one side with tracks and several locos running all around. The attention to detail and visual perspective, as noted from last year, is wonderful to see.

After a good hour and half during which time Nigel kindly explained how they'd built the backdrop for the railway and the work they'd done in creating the grass, trees, fields, hedgerows, etc. – clearly a

Berkshire Section Yearbook 2019

huge amount of painstaking work going into each element. – we made our way across to the Peterborough Arms for an excellent selection of lunches.

Banbury Run Sunshine and showers were forecast for the day. So when we arrived at 08.15 under leaden skies and a slight drizzle we weren't too convinced that the Met. Office had got it right. It did, however, brighten up for the start, as Roger Prew, Tony Heyworth and I, each mounted on a 350 Rex-Acme Blackburne (Roger's Rex-Acme once again masquerading as a 1926 Raleigh 'V' twin that is nearing completion), set off on the Class 'C' route.

The run naturally used much of the route from last year – after all there can't be too many ways to get to Sunrising Hill from Gaydon – but I'm sure the clerk of the course also threw in a couple of long distance trial sections to keep us on our toes and up on the pegs, as we bounced over portions of what appeared to be unmade road. This was then accompanied by a couple of heavy showers that made it even better going. Still none of our steeds skipped a beat and we looked forward to being able to stop for a bite of lunch.

Sadly, while it appears that the 'A' route passed by a few hostelryes, the 'C' (temperance) route did not, requiring us to deviate slightly from the indicated path to the Butcher's Arms in Priors Hardwick in search of sustenance. Disappointingly, even though encouraged to stay, we thought it too upmarket for the likes of three bedraggled motorcyclists and we pressed on to the finish. The toilets were OK though.

You would think with everyone starting from the same place it would be difficult to miss others in the section, but while I bumped into Chris Green, I missed seeing Malcolm & Michael Bryant and Bill & Jim Martin who were also waving the Berkshire section flag. Well done for getting out there.

Thatcham Court Care Home Last year we were invited to take a few bikes over to the Thatcham Court Care Home, as a couple of the residents had expressed a desire to see some of the machines that would have been around in their youth. It was apparently quite successful in sparking memories among the residents, so we were invited back this year to do the same.

The rain over the weekend and through Monday night was pretty horrendous, but fortunately, although a bit cloudy and overcast, the weather was kind to us as we met up at the Holiday Inn for the short run down to Thatcham.

On arrival, we were met by Peter and Jo, who kindly wheeled out a trolley loaded with tea, coffee and strawberry and cream scones which was very much appreciated. This was followed by a number of the residents and their carers all of whom seemed to enjoy the show as they were guided around.

Many thanks to the staff at the care home for their hospitality and to Allan, Bill, Brian, Doug, Graham, Mike and Roger for coming out and supporting the Section in this activity.

Mystery Run The Mystery Run this year was perhaps less of a mystery than most years, since the destination was to be the Crofton Beam Engine museum to which we'd been invited on a steaming day when it would be in operation. This was sort of on my bucket list, but due to an unfortunate clash of dates I needed to be elsewhere. And since Bill Barnes wasn't able to make it either, Michael Bryant was kind enough to be run leader for the day.

Malcolm Bryant reports that there were 5 motorcycles and a car that met at Little Nellie's Diner for the run to the Crofton Pumping Station, Crofton nr. Marlborough for their Motorcycle Festival. As this was a steaming day it made it very interesting to see and smell the engines working. In the afternoon the group went the short distance to Wilton Windmill.

Brooklands (Report: Lorraine Carter) We were blessed with fine weather again this year for the Section display at the Brooklands Motorcycle Day event, which resulted in a steady stream of interest in our machines and activities, and possibly attracting new members.

The machines on our stand, brought by both regular Berkshire folk, and some guests, were:

1952 197cc Sun Challenger

1939 MOV- MAC based 390cc Velocette

Berkshire Section Yearbook 2019

1968 250cc Mk3 Ducati single
1913 350cc Douglas Model P
1964 50cc Honda C114
1972 350B-based MV Agusta
1949 BSA C11
1967 Tiger 100 Daytona
1961 Tiger Cub

All went well, other than Derek not being able to take the MV up the test hill, as we'd forgotten to take his driving license for signing on – a lesson to be learned to read the entry instructions more carefully next time. But he did attract attention when it was started up for a quick trip round the paddock area later in the day. There was a plethora of interesting machinery scattered around the site, with other club stands, bikes using the test hill and demonstration arena, and some trade stands to keep the enthusiasm up until close of the event.

Many thanks to Brooklands for inviting us to be part of this great happening.

Ed: And thanks to Lorraine, Derek and Mike for setting up and manning the stand.

July

Club Night – Girder Fork Evening There was a good turnout on our girder fork evening with some 31 attending on a range of bikes from old to new. Quite a few new people had come along to see what we are about, so we might get some new members.

Mid-week Run – Bignor Roman Villa Having spoken to Lorraine and Derek the weekend before the run, they were somewhat apprehensive regarding the road traffic conditions they'd encountered while on the recce they'd done on the Friday just past. Needless to say their apprehension didn't lessen, as more and more bikes turned up at the Shack Cafe for the start at 10.30.

I'm sure they had visions of one or several of the 17 riders being strung out along the route in a state of bewilderment, even though maps and directions were available to assist in finding one's own way in such an eventuality. The key ingredient being, of course, that if one gets disconnected from the group, at least one person has a copy of the map.

In actuality, as things turned out, their fears were not to transpire and we had a trouble free ride all the way from Hook to Odiham, Crondall, Wrecclesham and Rowledge. Then on to the A287 through Churt and Hindhead; switching on to the A286 at Haslemere through Fernhurst; turning left at Easebourne on to the A272 before taking a right turn at Halfway Bridge to Selham. Finally arriving at Bignor not long after 12 noon.

Inevitably, there was the occasional split due to traffic lights or intervening other road users – how dare they – but all should be congratulated on being aware when such a break occurred and to remain present at the change of direction until the following pack hove into view. Well done everyone.

The Villa at Bignor dates from Roman times, but no records exist of its actual origins or ownership. After slipping into obscurity it was discovered by a farmer who hit part of it with his plough in 1811. It was a good point of interest for the run and allowed us to stretch our legs for an hour or so before heading off to The Limeburners pub in Billingshurst, where we had an excellent lunch.

After lunch we headed in a northerly direction through Loxwood, Alfold and Bramley and then towards Compton and Puttenham bypassing Guildford. All the while shedding riders as they made their separate ways home.

Many thanks to Lorraine and Derek for organising the run and for the several recces that they made in order to be sure that the route would be suitable for all.

Girder Fork & Low Power Run I believe we are able to claim that it was a successful gathering of machines appropriate to the above genre when eleven of the fifteen entrants were shod with girder forks. Machines ranging from Derek Carter's 1913 veteran Douglas to Michael Bryant's 1928 vintage New Imperial to various post vintage models from Triumph, New Imperial, Rudge and BSA.

Berkshire Section Yearbook 2019

The venue for this year's event was the West Berkshire Brewery in Yattendon. There was plenty of space for parking and time to grab a coffee or tea before setting off in individual groups on either the short or longer routes. The idea being that each route would likely take 90 minutes or so, returning the riders to the Taproom & Kitchen at the brewery in time for lunch. All of which was successfully accomplished. This will likely be the venue for next year's event.

August

Club Night – Ride a Bike Night I left home in Binfield in the hope that the rain showers promised for early evening had passed us by. Disappointingly, that wasn't the case as a few drops of rain appeared on the visor a few miles down the road. It's clearer over there to the West I thought, but that was a false hope as a heavy rain shower came up from the south and suddenly I was drenched. Thank heavens for decent rain gear.

I was the first to arrive thinking that I'd be one of the few, but I was followed by a steady trickle – both literally and figuratively – of damp riders who had had similar expectations – seven being the final number. It would have been eight if Bert Appleby already wet to the skin hadn't turned around and swapped his bike for a towel and four wheels.

Popham Bike Mega Meet Ten Berkshire members enjoyed the dry and decidedly less windy conditions in the ride down to the Motorcycle Megameet 2019 at Popham airfield. Allan Herbert and Roy Alexander also brought along their mounts of a post veteran Sunbeam and a racing Velocette, respectively. As did Malcolm and Michael Bryant who were the sole occupants of the New Imperial stand this year.

I haven't been to a large number of these events, but it seemed much busier this year with a high footfall through the marquee – one that would normally be attributed to rain outside, but there was none. For me it was also a win win. Not only did I enjoy the run there and back and convivial chatter, but managed to pick up a Lucas MDB magdyno body from a jumbler's table that I needed for my latest project.

The purpose of our presence of course was to advertise the Section and judging from various conversations that were had we may see a few more participants in our meetings henceforth. Time will tell. Thanks to all who came along and supported the Section.

Brooklands Lightweight Run In keeping, perhaps, with other sections, John Gentleman of the Brooklands Section organised an inaugural lightweight run for bikes of capacity up to 250cc to gauge the level of interest among the members of their section. And since the run was to start at the Bushe Cafe at Blackbushe Airport it seemed only reasonable that a number of Berkshire Section members should go along in support.

The timing was somewhat fortuitous for those of us who were hoping to take part in the Berkshire mid-week run on the morrow, as this had been postponed due to an anticipated low pressure system that promised to douse the southern half of the country with cats and maybe a few dogs. We therefore got to enjoy a ride on a warm summer's day under a sky peppered with puffy white clouds that offset any possible disappointment.

John's choice of the 30 mile route – which mirrored the first half of that used by the Fleet Lions Club for their charity run in May – was in keeping with the capabilities of the lower powered machines we were riding and it was little more than an hour before we arrived at The Four Feathers in Sherfield-on-Loddon for lunch, the dispatch rider drop-off system having worked well for the cadre of 15 riders.

Many thanks to John and the Brooklands Section for organising the run. Berkshire members taking part: Lorraine & Derek Carter, Brian Magee, Graham Denton and Malcolm White.

August Amble (Report: Bill Barnes) Some 18 bikes and riders plus Allan and Jean in their MG and Keith and Muriel also on 4 wheels gathered at the Holiday Inn Padworth in brilliant sunshine for this annual run. This was a real contrast to 2018 when the event was rained off.

The first leg of the run was some 38 miles in total heading north towards Bucklebury and then on to

Berkshire Section Yearbook 2019

Hermitage before bearing westwards towards Boxford and turning south for Inkpen, up to Combe Gibbet and then to the Hatchet Pub in Lower Chute for lunch. Some of the vistas and roads en route were just sublime. The Landlord was there to greet us and most enjoyed a hearty roast lunch which was served extremely promptly, top marks go to the pub for such a welcoming service.

The return trip was some 30 miles across country to Hurstpoint Tarrant, Kingsclere and then to Roger and Maryan's pad for tea, cakes, biccies and time to relax while putting the world to rights.

A few members including Roger headed off from the pub before being briefed by yours truly and in doing so took the wrong direction and managed to get just a little lost turning up some time after we had all tucked into the cakes!! In future I will be more specific in the route instructions, but the motto is to check with the run leader before departing. Well that is my excuse and I am sticking to it!!

Many thanks to Roger and Maryan for hosting us and to everyone who supplied the cakes and biscuits.

September

Club Night Club night was just a noggin and natter, but we were joined by four members of the Triumph Owners club which meets at the social club on Thursdays. One of them had brought along a very tastefully modified Triumph Trident with Vetter styled seat and tank, new triple clamps, three into one exhaust and nicely finished alloy bezels for the clocks. They stayed until it wrapped up, so we hope that they enjoyed the visit. Bill was riding his BMW and Malcolm decided to give his Ducati 851 an airing.

Mid-week Run Nine Berkshire riders were joined at the Bushe Cafe, Blackbushe Airport, by four of the Triumph Owners MCC members, who had come along to our club night the previous week. The purpose being to accompany us on our September mid-week run to the Flower Pots Inn in Cheriton. A run that had been postponed due to inclement weather the previous month.

The route was one that had been used a couple of years ago, so it was reasonable to assume that it or at least portions of it would appear unfamiliar to those of us with flagging memories. It was designed to keep us off major roads, yet ensured that we avoided grass riven country roads more suitable for 'green laning', while, perhaps, introducing participants to parts of Hampshire's vistas not seen before.

The duration of the run was also important, as it was known that there could be a long wait for food if we were to arrive at the Inn much after 12 noon. As, I'm afraid, a few of our group toward the back of the queue were to find out. Though I think it more likely that, in this instance, their orders were possibly mixed up and lost with others arriving later. In any event, they were belatedly served with their baps and all was well.

The run itself was uneventful, though having only conducted a virtual re-run of the route on Google Maps, rather than riding it recently, one is always faced with the possibility of encountering a sign reading 'Road Ahead Closed' followed by an unintended diversion. In actuality, there were several such signs, causing my adrenaline to spike, but fortunately they were always in our favour, so heartbeat back to normal.

As we arrived darkening clouds to the south west looked a bit threatening, so we quickly made ourselves comfortable in the marquee where we found Mike Allaway, Roy Headon and Roger Hunter who had made their way to the pub separately and were well stuck into their menu choices.

There wasn't a specific route to follow on the way back, so riders were free to choose their own way home. Our group of four; Bill, Paul, Tony and I, seemed to be going well up the A32 towards Alton, when Tony was left a bit behind when his T100C chose not to accelerate past a large lorry having suddenly lost 50% of its capacity. Apprised of his passing dilemma (not knowing the cause) we waited a while in Farringdon to see the lorry pass and then Tony gamely struggle up.

He explained the apparent problem and sure enough the number one cylinder's exhaust was cooler than the other. Popping the plug out confirmed that it hadn't been firing much, if at all. A quick change

Berkshire Section Yearbook 2019

of plug and – nothing. Not the hint of life from either cylinder.

Unexpectedly, a guy pulled up in a VW asking if we needed some help. He is originally from Poland. He is known as Bob or Bobski – his Polish name being unpronounceable by the likes of us. He has a Royal Enfield and loves British bikes. Not only that, but he installs alarm systems and had a multimeter in his car. The digital display pronouncing 6.89 volts at the battery terminals tells us all we need to know.

Now that the engine has stopped but with a clean plug is it possible to get it to run on the alternator? Bob produces a 12 volt battery that he uses for testing circuits. Jumping the battery and a few kicks on the kickstart and it bursts into life. Problems over? Well not quite. An intermittent flooding issue with the concentric carburettor re-emerges and fuel pours out. The vibration from the engine is often a cure for this malaise, but not this time. Dropping and refitting the float bowl has also been effective in the past, but also not this time. Nothing for it, but to try to start it again with Bob's battery – that he'd carefully put away – to see if a running engine solved the problem. It did. Bob, understandably, hurriedly packed up and departed. Then just as we were about to leave the engine died. Clearly, the alternator/charging circuit was not putting out any electrical energy and the slight input from jumping the battery had been used up.

As it happens there is a BMW dealership in Farringdon just a hundred yards up the road from where we were stopped. A good place to send for recovery and, perhaps, some help with the battery. I left Tony in their good hands and made my way home after circumnavigating the whole town of Alton because of a pesky 'Road Closed Ahead' sign and an observation of 'All Other Route' signs that inevitably pointed to all other routes except the one that I wanted to Odiham.

Tony called later to advise that the BMW dealer was fantastic and that the pint in the local pub was equally so. Especially, since a lot of time was spent waiting for the RAC to first send someone out to check that recovery was required and then to initiate the recovery process.

October

Club Night – Inter Section Quiz The club room was already buzzing with activity as Bill Barnes and I arrived at 7.30 – the Stonehenge Section having made excellent time in the run up from their part of the world. They were soon joined by members of our squad and members from Oxford, Cyclemotor, Chiltern and the local Triumph Owners club group, who had come along to some of our most recent runs. Michael Bryant, therefore, had seven teams to challenge with 80 questions from the compendium of motorcycling trivia he has built up over the years.

When the scores were totaled up at the end it was slightly embarrassing to find that the Berkshire 'A' team (Bill Barnes, Paul Digweed, Doug Ellis and Robin Strange) had again run away with the trophy with a score of 60. Stonehenge were runners up with 49 and the combined Chiltern and Cyclemotor team took the bronze with 46. These were followed by Berkshire 'B' (Keith & Sue Bloxham, Allan Herbert and Malcolm White) on 37, Oxford on 34 1/2 and TOMCC with a very creditable 24 1/2 given that the majority of questions were specific to our particular genre of interest.

Many thanks to Michael for compiling the questions and acting as question master. Thanks also to Bill for arranging the sandwiches and other members who toiled over hot stoves to cater for the rest of the goodies.

Brooklands Section – Girder Fork Run The Section was invited to participate in this the second running of the Girder Fork run from the British Legion Hall in Normandy. The intent being to host an event that encourages the use of girder fork machines while still catering for the classics. This being achieved by having a tulip diagram style route sheet for the former and a run leader led ride over a predominantly different route for the latter.

This year there were nine girder fork runners, which was a bit down on last year, but the heavy rain overnight and wet roads may well have contributed to the reduction in numbers. Bill Barnes (Tiger 80), Malcolm White (Tiger 90) and Roger Prew (Tiger 100) comprised the Berkshire girder fork contingent with Graham Denton (Tiger Cub) fitting in neatly with the classic riders. Four Tigers out and about. We

Berkshire Section Yearbook 2019

just needed a Tiger 70 to create a full set. Jim Martin – where were you?

The run was very enjoyable despite the odd misinterpretation of the tulip diagrams and all girder fork riders made it back to the start without incident. Bill, Roger and Malcolm having stopped off midway for Sunday roasts and a burger at the Jolly Farmer in Blacknest nr. Alton.

Many thanks to Tony Baxter and the Brooklands' Section for organising the event and the ladies and gents at the start and finish for plying us with teas, coffees, pastries and cakes.

Mid-week Run – Donnington Castle October's mid-week run was a short hop, skip and a jump from the high street car park in Pangbourne to Donnington Castle and then over to Doug and Liz's for a lunchtime snack.

As has been the case of late, the weather forecast was variable with the chance of a heavy shower after overnight rain. Thus the appearance of a rainbow, as I made my way westwards along the M4, did not seem to augur well for the day. However, it was quickly blown away by the brisk wind and did no more than sprinkle my visor with a few drops. Doug was slightly less fortunate in that it was raining when he left Burghclere, but it had stopped by the time he and daughter Lucy reached Pangbourne.

Whether it was the realisation that this would be one of the last runs of the season, the fact that many of us had not visited Donnington Castle before – despite its proximity, the enticement of the Ellis' hospitality or something else is not known, but 14 members gathered in the car park on different types of machine to take part.

The route as indicated above was quite straightforward. Up the A340 to Streatley, turn left along the B4009 to Newbury, turn right into Donnington and thence up a narrow road to the castle ruins and bang went my thoughts of a nice latte in the coffee shop, since a walk around the ruins is all that's on offer. The visit is free after all.

The castle – according to the helpful historical guide provided by Doug – dates from 1386 when Sir Richard Abberbury was granted a licence to 'crenellate and fortify' a castle by Richard II. The fortifications, since strengthened in 1643, proved problematic during the Civil War when its fortunes swung between Parliamentarians, the Crown and back again. The end result being that Parliament voted to demolish the castle in 1646 leaving only the gatehouse standing.

It's perhaps interesting to note that nearly five centuries later Parliament is again taking issue with the Government/Crown, not on behalf of the electorate (were they ever?), but in their own narrow vested interests. One would have thought they would've learned by now that whatever goes around comes around.

The concluding part of the run over to Burghclere was accomplished successfully by all members, despite the fact that the Newbury branch of the Highways Agency conspired to break up the group with traffic signals on the A339 junction that appeared to cycle back to red in milliseconds.

I don't know if Doug and Liz had anticipated the number of participants at the outset, but there were more than enough sandwiches, cake and refreshments to greet us when we arrived. All of which were very much appreciated. Many thanks to them both for an enjoyable run and lunch.

And yes I believe most, if not all, managed to miss those pesky showers on the way home.

Autumn Frolic Inevitably, with our British climate, so much depends on the weather gods smiling down upon us on the days that we have our runs. Some might say that being out on two wheels is good no matter the conditions, but in my view the practicality of riding vintage and classic machinery in the pouring rain is no fun at all. And then at this time of the year there's the need to wash off the road grime and dry the bike off to ensure that one doesn't return to a machine with a dusting of red oxide and seized components some months later.

Fortuitously, the weather gods had dried their tears overnight – after several days of unhappiness – and the day dawned dry and bright, if, perhaps a little cool. But, hey, it's virtually the end of October, so it would be wrong to complain too much.

The start was at the Rosebourne Garden Centre in Aldermaston. It's a place we'd ridden past many

Berkshire Section Yearbook 2019

times, but had not sampled the delights of the cafe. Disappointingly, it was waitress service only and, despite all the technology and handheld devices on display, was seemingly unable to produce individual bills. Not a big deal, but a bit of an unnecessary faff for a few teas and coffees. Interestingly, our waitress recognised some of our group as she had previously served us at the now defunct Little Nellies at Kingsclere.

When 10.30 came around there was a good gathering of 14 bikes with riders and pillion passengers and Keith & Muriel in their Honda.

Bill gave a short briefing of points of note about the route and we set off in convoy towards the aforementioned Kingsclere followed by a straight run to Whitchurch and Hurstbourne Priors and then northwesterly through St Mary Bourne, Vernham Dean, Oxenwood and Great Bedwyn where the route turned northeast in true Google maps fashion – i.e. assumes you know in which compass direction you're travelling – to join the A4 at Froxfield.

At least that was the way we were supposed to go, but Derek alerted me to the fact that we'd lost Doug & Liz and Brian Magee. I therefore returned the way we'd come only to meet them coming in the opposite direction a couple of miles down the road. They having briefly stopped to recover and refit the gear change lever on Brian's Greeves. Turning about face I caught them up, but not having a roller route I was flying blind and missed the turn in Great Bedwyn ending up on the A4 a fair bit further west than what was intended. Doug, however, knew how to get to Lambourn, so led the way to The George pub arriving just a few minutes after the main group.

Lunch at The George was again excellent with more than enough items on the menu to keep everyone fuelled up for the ride home. So after a nice couple of hours of chatter we began preparations to leave the car park when an electrical short in the wiring on Brian's Greeves made itself known by issuing clouds of acrid smoke from all parts of the battery box. This abated with the ignition turned off and the offending wires, now devoid of insulation, were cut away and made safe. Fortunately, the ignition circuit in the Villiers is separate to the battery, so a few kicks, and some fervent entreaties to the man above, fired the engine into life and we made our way back to our various abodes. Many thanks to Bill for organising the day.

November

Club Night – Rider Drop-Off System The November club night is traditionally reserved for a guest speaker and on this occasion it was Bill Barnes, our Chairman. The subject of his audio-visual presentation was the drop-off system employed to guide riders along a route predetermined by the run leader. This is also known as the despatch rider system, as it was used in WWII to lead convoys through foreign landscapes devoid of signposts.

Those of you familiar with leading runs – and indeed those of you taking part – will know that quite a bit of planning takes place before the event in order to ensure that the route is suitable and that all get safely to the desired destination. A key part of this is navigating byways and highways interspersed with roundabouts, traffic signals and roadworks without losing anyone in the process.

The Drop-Off System

There are three essential elements for its correct operation. A run leader, a back marker (sweeper, tail end charlie, etc.) and a group of riders in between. At a bare minimum the rider group must consist of two riders. Ideally, the back marker should have a route card and know the destination. He should also wear a brightly covered vest. Preferably of different colour in order to distinguish him from other riders and road users.

Procedure:

- The run leader gives a briefing before setting off to ensure that all riders are familiar with the drop-off system and to point out the back marker. Also to advise riders of potential hazards and junctions where there may be difficulty in stopping.
- Riders set off in single file behind the run leader, but once on the road they are free to travel at their own comfortable speed that may or may not involve overtaking or being overtaken by

Berkshire Section Yearbook 2019

- others in the group. Naturally, it's bad form to overtake the run leader.
- As the run leader approaches the first junction ('T' junction, crossroads, roundabout, etc.), he indicates the intended direction of travel to the rider behind and points to the kerb or place where it is safe to stop.
 - The rider stops safely and points in the direction to be taken with his hand. Indicators should not be used as these are often inadvertently left on when stopping, so cannot be relied upon to give the correct indication to the rider behind.
 - The riders file past and only when the back marker is in sight does the rider move off in front of him. The rider is now at the tail end of the group.
 - Meanwhile, at the next junction the run leader places the next rider who then circulates to the back of the group. This continues until the destination or intermediate destinations are reached.

The key points to note:

- A rider placed at a junction must not vacate that position until the back marker appears. The time to wait will vary depending on circumstance; the number of riders, the relative speeds of the machines, traffic lights, roadworks, etc. It may be a few seconds or it may be many minutes. Either way, if the rider moves off then those behind will, to all intents and purposes, be lost.
- It should be appreciated that moving off not only results in a group of disgruntled riders, but also puts their safety at risk, as they inevitably coalesce into a bunch and cast about looking for a direction among other road users.
- To keep the flow going the engine should be left running, especially if it requires kick starting. Minutes lost getting the bike going again means that the rider at the next junction waits a little longer and each delay ripples down the group.
- In the event of a breakdown, a designated rider – assuming there's at least one extra person besides the back marker and the person broken down – rides ahead and informs each of the stationary riders of the situation. The stationary riders should still remain at their respective junctions until the back marker arrives.

Advantages:

- All riders reach the anticipated destination.
- Riders are able to ride at their own pace and not be concerned about losing sight of the rider in front or behind.
- No route sheets to interpret or distract one's eyes from the road.
- Riders are free to overtake, but on the understanding that they will be cycled more often through the group.

Disadvantages:

- Two people are involved in the operation of the run. A run leader and a back marker. Both of whom should be familiar with the route before the start.
- Placement of riders at busy or narrow junctions, especially in towns, can be difficult and can lead to unintended obstructions for other road users who won't know what we expect of them. Many seemingly struggle to get by a bicycle parked in the kerb let alone a motorbike.

The drop-off system is something we've discussed in the past, but have lazily fallen back on the less formal buddy system where one is supposed to keep an eye out for the guy behind. Folks, however, get caught up in the moment and forget to look when they make a turn and that's where it all goes wrong. It is, therefore, our intention to use the drop-off system on some of our runs next year to see how it goes.

Many thanks to Bill for putting together the presentation.

Mid-week Run – The Four Points at Aldworth

In recent days, a slow moving low pressure system had centred itself over the UK bringing devastating floods to northern parts of the country and it had been pretty dismal hereabouts in general. So it was that most had their fingers crossed for a

Berkshire Section Yearbook 2019

day without rain on our last official club ride for the 2019 season.

Thankfully, we must have done something right as the skies were clear as we got together at the Holiday Inn at Padworth at the later than usual time of 11.00 am. The delay hopefully allowing the temperature to creep a bit further above 32 degrees – zero degrees for those familiar with the continental system – and to place us in the Four Points Inn at Aldworth shortly after 12 noon.

There was a good turnout of 13 bikes and riders plus Michael, Malcolm and Denise Bryant following along in their car. After a short briefing we set off down the A4. All was well for about a mile when I, as run leader, missed the correct turning thinking that it was a bit further along. Suffice to say that by the time we'd ridden through Woolhampton, it was clear to me that I'd missed the turn, so called for a u-turn and went back the way we'd come.

Murphy's Law then came into play, as a large lorry pulled into the turning as we approached – the one we would've been ahead of had we turned there the first time – and proceeded to crawl up the narrow road. Naturally, it was going where we were going adding to my frustration at making such a silly error. The driver, however, was a decent chap and at a convenient junction pulled over to let us through. There were no further hiccups and after a pleasant, but chilly, 25 mile run we arrived at the Four Points on schedule for an excellent lunch enjoyed by all.

Oxford Inter Section Quiz Berkshire was able to field three teams for the Oxford quiz evening; A ladies' team of Sue Bloxham, Denise Bryant, Lorraine Carter and Liz Ellis; the Berkshire 'A' team of Michael Bryant, Paul Digweed, Doug Ellis and Robin Strange; and the Berkshire 'B' team of Bill Barnes, Keith Bloxham, Malcolm Bryant, Derek Carter and Malcolm White.

Rather than focus all their questions on motorcycles and motorcycle related topics the Oxford quiz is mostly one of general knowledge with a section of the aforesaid thrown in to differentiate between this and a regular pub quiz. It also meant that the Oxford Section also fielded a ladies' team thereby being more inclusive. I'm sure the PC brigade will be more than happy with that.

Mind you, I'm a bit dubious about the definition of 'general' in this context, as that to me means that everyone should have at least have been exposed to the 'knowledge' in some way. Esoteric questions, however, on who sung what cover versions of what song before I was out of short trousers was, I think, taking the Michael. Still, I believe our ladies did pretty well at that so I'm not too unhappy about it. Besides, there were several other sets of questions that were equally baffling to me. Which leads me back to the original question "What is the meaning of general?"

At the close, the Grass Track section took home the beer with a score of 62. Berkshire 'A' was second with 56 and Berkshire 'B' were joint third with Matchless & AJS. Berkshire Ladies were fifth with 49 followed by Oxford Ladies on 42 and Oxford on 41.

December

Geoff Skates - In Memoriam Geoff passed away in November. He was a frequent member of the Section and a compadre of Peter Spicer and Peter Hopkins. He was known for his expertise in oil and lubrication through his association with Comma Oil and was able to give hints and tips on the best type of oil to be used in our machines. His funeral was held on 2nd December with several of our members in attendance.

Club Night - Noggin & Natter I don't believe that there was anything of any particular note, except that Chairman Bill reported that he has purchased a nice 1983 Honda GB250 Clubman Japanese import for rather less than the price one would currently pay for a Bantam. Reassuringly, it only took a battery charge and some fuel in the tank to make it purr like a kitten. Bill's now in the process of obtaining a MoT and UK registration.

Chiltern Inter Section Quiz Six of us popped over to the Chiltern Section quiz evening at the White Hill Centre in Chesham. We were going to split into two teams of three, but Cyclemotor were short, so Derek and Lorraine, who have some affinity for that mode of locomotion, sportingly agreed to make up their numbers. The Berkshire team was consequently made up of Bill Barnes, Paul Digweed, Robin

Berkshire Section Yearbook 2019

Strange and Malcolm White.

Glyn Chambers hosted the proceedings and had formulated questions on motorcycles that were in keeping with VMCC guidelines. i.e All answers related to items that were at least 25 years old. As has become a trademark of Glyn's quizzes there are nine or so themed categories of 10 questions with the opportunity to play a joker for double points. This is usually a bit of a punt as one cannot foresee what questions will come up in any one category. Though one could make a guess at the type of questions from the titles. The categories were: A-Z, N(orth), S(outh), E(ast), W(est), Birds, Animals, K9 and jewel.

As the evening progressed, the Chiltern A team were well ahead with their joker still to play and Berkshire, joker spent, running a useful second. Perhaps it was the refreshments and mince pies that did it, but Chiltern faltered after the break while Berkshire maintained a steady pace that left everything to play for in the last round. If only we had gone with our gut on a couple of the questions we would have won – i.e. if the ball had gone in the net it would have been a goal syndrome – but the host team pipped us by one point to claim the trophy.

Final scores were: Chiltern A – 67 1/2, Berkshire – 66 1/2, Bedfordshire – 60 1/2, Cyclemotor and Chiltern Tea Drinkers – 55 1/2 apiece and East Herts – 45 1/2.

Christmas Dinner (Report: Paul Digweed) It was that time of year again and 30 members and partners assembled at the Wheelright's Arms at St Nicholas Hurst for the annual Christmas bash. This was a number of people down on the original expectation due to various seasonal ailments, of which more later. This year the seating was more flexible with the previously used long table situated along the wall dispensed with, although this did mean that one table was set in the adjacent room, which isolated those on the table somewhat.

The traditional Christmas fare of turkey & sprouts was chief on the menu and enjoyed by many. Although other options such as pheasant, duck leg, monkfish and roasted cauliflower, celeriac & leek gratin were also enjoyed by others. Being a traditionalist I can personally confirm that the turkey was excellent, complemented with plentiful & excellent vegetables. Of particular popularity and comment on our table was the orange and panettone bread and butter pudding, which was full of melting flavour.

During the meal the conversation amongst members inevitably turned to the motorcycles and events aspired to for 2020, often followed by a swift change of subject by their respective partners! Once all of the courses were finished it was time for the traditional short address by the Chairman. However, in a double whammy both Bill & Malcolm were unable to attend due to winter viruses, so it fell to Bruce at very short notice to cover the events of the year and thank all those who had participated in riding, organising events and providing the all important support to enable these events to take place. Finally there was the drawing of a plethora of raffle prizes, with many suspiciously shaped like bottles or boxes of chocolates. The Christmas hamper was won by Pam Digweed.

Many thanks go to Bill for organising the dinner, securing the raffle prizes and to David Bryant for the printed cards to jog fading memories with the menu choices made a number of months earlier, plus for the administering of monies. Thanks also go to the staff at the Wheelright's Arms who helped make it a smooth running and enjoyable evening for all, coping well despite a very enthusiastic 60th birthday celebration taking up the rest of the pub.

In conclusion

Many thanks to everyone who participated and contributed to the Section during the year and best wishes to all for 2020.

Malcolm White

Secretary

For full details of Section activities and the many photos that accompany these notes please visit our website.

www.berkshire-vmcc.org.uk

email: info@berkshire-vmcc.org.uk