



Berkshire Section
of
The Vintage Motor Cycle Club Ltd.

A Compilation of Events in 2021

Officers

Chairman: Bill Barnes
Secretary: Malcolm White
Treasurer: David Bryant

Committee: Mike Allaway
Derek Carter
Lorraine Carter
Paul Digweed
Bruce Spiller

Berkshire Section Yearbook 2021

January

Club Night – Annual General Meeting Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and Government imposed lockdown restrictions, the Berkshire Section Annual General Meeting was held on 5th January 2021 using the Zoom meeting platform.

17 members joined the meeting, including officers and committee members, thus there were a sufficient number present to conduct the business of the Section. The minutes of the 2020 meeting, a summary of last year's events and a provisional calendar of events in 2021 were available online.

The officers and committee were duly elected as follows:

Chairman: Bill Barnes*

Secretary: Malcolm White*

Treasurer: David Bryant

Committee: Mike Allaway, Derek & Lorraine Carter, Paul Digweed and Bruce Spiller.

* As noted in the minutes of the meeting, Bill Barnes and Malcolm White, both of whom had signalled their intention to step down from the committee, agreed to hold their respective posts for an interim period until replacement officers could be found and appointed.

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

Covid-19 and Further Restrictions

Disappointingly, the Government re-introduced restrictions on workplace and leisure activities that made it difficult to organise events and these, along with a reluctance of members to meet, meant that Section activities effectively ceased from the beginning of March to the middle of July. However, a few members did get out and about. Notably, the Grumpy Club – whose names shall remain anonymous – who rode out to lunch at various establishments around the area and those who took part in the socially distanced, Bikeathon event.

Bikeathon Challenge 2021

Following the success of the Bikeathon Challenge in 2020, the Challenge was repeated in 2021 with Paul Digweed at the handlebars and a new set of 32 destinations to reach between April and October.

Bikeathon – 2nd July 2021

We had planned our ride for 25th June, but as is often the case with the best laid plans of mice and men this was scuppered – almost literally – by the torrential downpour forecast and duly experienced on the day. Thus it was on the 2nd July that we set out to reach a few of the Bikeathon destinations chosen by Paul Digweed for this year's event.

There were to be four of us from the Binfield & Wokingham area, but, unfortunately, Bill Barnes had to pull out because of an unexpected clash of activity and Roger Prew aggravated something in his back the previous weekend that would not have been conducive to riding a rigid Triumph for any kind of distance. It was therefore just Tony Heyworth and myself who started out. And even that didn't begin well for Tony, as he discovered that the carburettor slide on his 6T was jamming open when he went to get it running – after having fuelled it up the day before, of course – and chased around to get his T100C fired up. Given all that he did very well to get to the meeting point before the appointed time with a splash of fuel from the local Esso station.

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Our plan was to ride to the Cart Shed Cafe located a smidgeon off the A4074 at Benson and meet with Paul Digweed for coffee and Danish at 10.30. All of which were duly accomplished. The cafe is worthy of future consideration as a meeting place, as it's a little quieter than the Waterfront Cafe a few miles up the road. Though it doesn't have a view of the Thames.

Paul had worked out the route to take us to Dorchester (on Thames) Abbey, Rycote Chapel and the windmill at Brill. I would likely have taken a more direct route, but Paul, living in Benson, knew the back ways around the area, so we enjoyed new vistas as we threaded our way between the fields to reach our check points. Finally, arriving at the Brill Windmill a little after 12.30 and on time for the reservation made at the Pheasant pub for lunch.



After lunch, Paul led us back on an equally scenic route, missing out the main roads and crossing country where possible, that brought us down to the roundabout at Crowmarsh Gifford where we parted company and made our respective ways home. I clocked 98 miles for the round trip and accumulated a useful 216 Bikeathon points in the process.

End of Lockdown – 19th July 2021 – Hooray!

Dorset Section – Giant's Run – 25th July 2021

There being little that we as a section had been able to organise in the Berkshire area, a small contingent from the Section made the trip down to the Dorset Section's Giants 3 Run at Sturminster Newton on 25th July.

It may have been obvious to some, but I didn't twig until a friend, unconnected with the event, said that with that title we'd most likely be going past the Cerne Abbas Giant sculptured in chalk – and so it transpired.

The day was overcast with drizzle in the air, as we unloaded the bikes and munched on bacon baps

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in preparation for the start. Light rain had begun to fall as we were waved off, but thankfully ceased not long thereafter and although the roads were damp in places conditions were excellent for riding. Much better than would probably have been the case a week previous with temperatures in the mid 80s (F).

There were two routes; one of 35 miles and one of 60 miles. Chris & Rose Green (New Imperial) decided to do the shorter route, but Paul Digweed (Ariel W/NG), Roger & Fiona Prew (Triumph Speed Twin) Tony Heyworth (Rex-Acme Sports) and Malcolm White (Rex-Acme Impy C9) opted for the longer one. Chris later told me that he now wished he'd done the longer route, as on the shorter one they were presented with an extremely steep climb out of Cerne Abbas and were brought to a halt with clutch slip about a third the way up. To save the clutch they decided to push the New Imp. up the rest with the consequent expenditure of many thousands of ergs. Looking back, it was worth it, as they were able to continue from the top and made it around the rest of the route and back to the finish without further issue, but, most likely, not what they were thinking at the time.

It wasn't too long before we descended a long hill and pulled into the viewing area some distance from the eponymous giant that was just visible above the trees on the far side of the valley. Then, on down to Maiden Newton, Wynford Eagle and Loders, just north of Bridport, and then back up to Beaminster and across below Yeovil to the start. At that point I had an episode of déjà vu, thinking that we'd ridden along that road at the beginning. Only to realise that I had indeed driven along that road with the bike on the trailer in the morning having visited with friends in East Coker the day before. Duh!

Arriving back a little after one o'clock, two and half hours after the start, we were ready to consume the pre-ordered lunch provided by the Thyme after Time Cafe for our enjoyment and thus it was a wrap around 2.00 pm and we made our respective ways home.

Thanks go to the Dorset Section and the run's organisers and supporters for such an enjoyable event. It will be on my calendar for next year.



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August

Bikeathon – 6th August 2021

As is so often the case when riding in the UK, weather is most always a consideration. At least for those of us who enjoy an outing without the masochistic desire to ride in the pouring rain and then spend several subsequent hours cleaning the crud from the machine. That said, if one were to wait for the best of days one might not get to ride at all – especially since the recent forecasts have been somewhat mixed. It was almost to the point where one selected the one most suitable, as the chance of that happening was on a par with others that were seemingly less so.

And so it was, that Bill Barnes (Tiger 100), Tony Heyworth (Thunderbird), Roger Prew (Tiger 100) and Malcolm White (Speed Twin) joined run leader Paul Digweed (A65) at the Rosebourne Garden Centre at Aldermaston to trek west in search of five destinations from the Bikeathon 2021 list. These being the Combe Gibbet, Wilton Windmill, Pewsey White Horse, Woodborough Cafe and Chopper's Cafe.

The weather for the most part was kind and we made our way along scenic back roads to take in the various destinations. The lunch stop at the Sticks and Stones cafe at Woodborough was very welcome after several hours riding and taking in the sights. When we had finished Bill advised that the radar picture on his smartphone indicated rain coming in from the west, so we set out quickly for Chopper's Cafe, the last destination of the day, before heading for home. Not quickly enough it turned out and we were caught in a deluge arriving at the cafe looking like drowned rats. Naturally, there was little inclination to linger and we returned over much of the same route. Fortunately, the rain stopped and it was evident that we had missed the worst of it judging by the water flowing down the roads past the Gibbet.



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At the end of the day, the east Berkshire group had covered approximately 135 miles, but Paul a whole lot more, since he'd ridden down from Benson and had already checked out the route a few days before. Many thanks to Paul for organising the run.

As an aside, it is interesting to mention the variety of suspension systems in use on the machines; girder fork and rigid on the Speed Twin, teledraulic forks and rigid on the Tiger 100, teledraulic and sprung hub on the Thunderbird, early teledraulic and swinging arm on the Tiger 100 and more modern teledraulic and swinging arm on the A65.

Graham Walker Memorial Run – 15th August 2021

A contingent from the Berkshire Section (Doug & Liz Ellis, Chris & Rose Green, Tony Heyworth, Roger & Fiona Prew and Malcolm White) joined 85 or so others, similarly mounted on veteran, vintage or post vintage machines at the 58th Graham Walker Memorial Run, National Motor Museum, Beaulieu, on Sunday, 15th August.

The event began with a static display of machines that enabled all entrants to arrive in good time and peruse the collection of machines before setting off after lunch on either of two routes. The first loop of the figure of eight course being 23 miles and the other loop bringing the total to 47 miles.

The first loop ran easterly from the museum, just reaching Brockenhurst before veering off south towards Boldre and onwards with a brief flirtation with Lymington. Then across to St Leonards Grange, Bucklers Hard and back into Beaulieu. The second loop, unsurprisingly, initially ran westward and then down through Exbury to Lepe, across to Calshot and up past Fawley before turning back to the Museum.



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A very nice run and some great machines. One of which was Sammy Miller's 682cc four cylinder in line AJS. Thanks go to the Sunbeam MCC, the Southampton & District MCC and the National Motor Museum for putting it on.

Girder Fork & Rigid Run – 24th August 2021

After several false starts, we finally managed to run our Girder Fork & Rigid event from the West Berkshire Brewery in Yattenden. This being the first Berkshire organised outing of the Section in 18 months, it wasn't known how many would show up, but for a few of us it was the 3rd girder fork event in almost as many weeks. Which, some might argue, is appropriate for those of us in the VMCC who cut their teeth on pre-war iron.

On the way to the Brewery, I converged at a junction outside Arborfield with two others on vintage machines who seemed to be going my way. Stopping at a set of traffic lights they asked if I was going to the run. I acknowledged that I was. At which point they indicated they'd follow me. I set off as the lights turned green and hoped that the event I was riding to was also the run they were intending to join. Fortunately, it was. When we reached the West Berkshire Brewery, I found that I was somewhat acquainted with Stuart and his Sunbeam Lion through the Marston Sunbeam Southern Section and Brooklands. Graham and his very original and untouched Matchless G80 are now new acquaintances, since his recent move from Middlesex to Finchampstead.

Of the nine entrants there were seven in keeping with the theme and one contraption – meant in the nicest possible way – comprised of a 1920 Indian frame with a 1975 Honda 90 engine and Bantam forks to complement the leaf spring at the front.



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There were two routes. The main one being 44 miles and the shorter being 28 miles. Doug & Liz and Chris & Rose chose the shorter of the runs in deference to their respective pillion passengers and unsprung seating. We were also pleased to see Keith join us on four wheels, as he so often did with Muriel a couple of years ago, with son, Ian, acting as chauffeur. Andrew Smith with his Honda Cub came along to have a look at the bikes and by joining this group proved instrumental in guiding them back on course – through his local knowledge of the area – after an errant turn took them off the route around Boxford.

The main route followed the short one through Hampstead Norreys, Beedon and Stanmore before diverging at Lilley towards Catmore, West Ilsley and Farnborough. Thence a dog leg through Great Shefford to Eastbury, south-westerly over the ridge to Woodlands St Mary and across the A338 to Wickham and Boxford. At which point it caught up with the short route and travelled along fairly familiar roads through Curridge and Hermitage back to the Brewery. All in all a trouble free run and devoid of precipitation. Which is always a good thing.

Danielle at the West Berkshire Brewery had arranged seating outside under the gazebo which was ideal and I believe everyone was more than happy with the service received and the food consumed. Thanks to all who came out to ride and support the event.

September

Mid-Week Run – Newlands Corner – 8th September 2021

I (Brian Magee) volunteered to organise the September midweek run. Although some members had done other runs this year, this would be the first midweek run by our section since November 2019 – 22 months!! I initially had plans to visit a museum in Hampshire, but could not make contact with the necessary person. The start was going to be from the renamed Pathfinder cafe at Blackbushe Airfield, so I just changed the destination to Newlands Corner, a starting point for many of the Brooklands section runs. Seven bikes lined up for the run of 21 miles on one of the hottest days we had enjoyed for some time with forecast temperatures of 25 celsius. Some of the section members were away as this was still the school holiday period so the turnout was pleasing.

The run was made up of Bill B. on his Honda GB250, Graham D.- T20 Cub, Paul F.- Thunderbird, Keith B. – R80st, John Wheeler – R100RS, Mike Greenfield (Brooklands section) – 350 Bullet and myself on my 200 Honda engined Francis Barnett.

The route included 20 roundabouts, as well as various junctions, so the chance of staying together seemed fairly remote. We used the “watch for the rider behind” method and arrived at Newlands Corner fifty minutes later still all together so seven bikes was about right. Bill had been riding behind me and I apologised for being a bit slow in cancelling my indicators a couple of times. Bill replied “what indicators?”. I had checked the evening before and they were working fine so he was second guessing where I was turning.

After some nourishment and putting the world to rights for about an hour we each made our way home by our own various routes. A nice short midweek run to get us going again so hopefully things are now back to normal.

Thanks go to Brian for organising the run.

Brooklands' Section – Pre-War & Classic Run – 26th September 2021

The Brooklands Section Pre-War & Classic Run – I believe the third such event – started from the British Legion car park in Normandy. The ladies of the Section plied us with cakes and biscuits that were washed down with tea and coffee to ward off any hunger pangs in preparation for the start at

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11.00am.

There were two routes; one for pre-war machines with route sheets and the other for classic bikes that was to be run leader led. Thereby allowing the vintage and post-vintage entrants to ride at their own pace and in smaller groups, while the classics could be ridden at, perhaps, a more vigorous pace in keeping with their increased performance.

Graham Denton (Tiger Cub), Chris Maybury (Ariel) and Malcolm White (Rex-Acme JAP) were the participants from Berkshire. I tagged on behind Phil Winks (Sunbeam) and Stuart Osborne (Sunbeam Lion), as I knew that Phil had mapped the route and was therefore reasonably sure that we wouldn't end up going astray.

The day started quite overcast, but by 11.30 the sun was starting to break through and it was beginning to warm up – not that it was particularly cold for early autumn, but the body seems to feel it a bit these days. The pre-war route was of a clockwise nature looping down through Surrey, crossing the county line into Hampshire at Churt, across to Holybourne and then into familiar territory for Berkshire riders, as we touched on Lasham and Odiham on our return to Normandy. Stopping for much needed refreshment at the Jolly Farmer on the way.

Thanks go to the Brooklands Section and Tony Baxter for organising the event. Also the ladies who provided refreshments both before the start and at the finish.

October

Mystery Run – 24th October 2021

Another fortuitous day weatherwise for the annual Mystery Run. Although a little chilly – as was to be expected in late October – day broke with high cloud cover and small patches of blue peeping through. These increased in dimension as the morning wore on and by the time we stopped for lunch it was almost balmy. But I'm getting ahead of myself....

The start was at the Burghfield Sports and Social Club. A first for any of our runs, but most likely not the last, as it was discovered that teas and coffees – in addition to more substantial offerings – were available from the kitchen in support of local footballing activities. By 10.30 a good gathering of eleven machines had assembled and after a short briefing by Paul Digweed, we set off for the mystery destination. All we knew was that the route was approximately 36 miles in length and along relatively narrow lanes with a pub and lunch at the end of it. Always a good thing.

It was soon clear that Paul had taken the literal meaning of 'mystery' and embedded it in the route plan. Road signs with familiar place names appeared, but few were reached, as the route veered off down another country lane towards another place to add to the disorientation. Meanwhile, the sun shone and red kites soared overhead on this pleasant autumnal morning with only a couple of encounters with particularly skittish horses to approach and pass with due courtesy. The leaves were on the turn, but had not yet fallen in great quantity to impede our travel over mostly dry roads with the usual gravel and dust in places to keep us honest.



It was just on 12.30 when we reached the destination; The Ibex Inn, a picturesque 18th Century pub in the heart of Chaddleworth village. Paul and Pam had eaten there before and were confident we would be looked after. We were not disappointed. The menu was varied, the food was good and the company excellent. So much so that when we came to leave it was getting late in the afternoon and there was a distinct chill in the air.

The route back to Burghfield was a relatively straight 20 miles during which the group divested itself of riders as they dropped off on their way home.

Thanks to Paul for organising the routes and for arranging lunch at the pub.

Bikeathon Conclusion – 31st October 2021

The last day of October saw the close of the Berkshire VMCC Bikeathon 2021 Challenge, which had been running since the start of April 2021. This year I was the organiser, volunteering to draw up the list of 32 destinations after winning the challenge with the most points last year. This year's winner is Doug Ellis, also last year's runner-up, with 23 destinations visited, mainly on his 1957 350cc Norton International, earning both machine Age & Capacity points as a result.



The great advantage of the Bikeathon is that you can take it as formally as you like, to visit as many or as few of the destinations as you wish, whenever you wish. You can treat a ride as an individual quest, plan an interesting route to take in a number of destinations, pack your flask & sarnies, then just go forth OR you can arrange to meet up with a few friends to ride an interesting route taking in a nice pub or café along the way. Personally, I had a great day roaming around the North Wessex Downs on my BSA A65 with four like minded souls, all Triumph mounted incidentally (so I took a BSA to a Triumph party..!). We had a lovely day riding around the lanes in the Summer sunshine, at least until we got to Choppers Café, when the heavens opened & a veritable deluge began. Lots of cleaning to be done by everyone after the return home.

Apart from physically finding the destinations, one of the factors is finding a suitable location to position the bike near enough to the destination to allow an attractive photo to be taken for the Bikeathon Gallery. This can be a real challenge at some destinations, requiring some imagination. Check out this year's Gallery to see the different & often artful approaches adopted.

Then of course there are the destinations themselves, some of which I doubt that we would make the effort to visit were they not part of the Bikeathon quest. I particularly remember visiting the (closed for COVID) Boarstall Tower with Bill & Malcolm by way of an invitation from their next door neighbour, who then also proceeded to show us his very impressive collection of stationary & traction steam engines.

I drew up the list of 32 destinations for this year's Bikeathon, relying on previous visits, online research & sometimes a physical visit to those locations new to me. Although I must say that Google Maps & Street view are also invaluable. Accessibility by motorcycle can be an issue at some locations. I had

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originally planned to include a stone circle at Stanton Harcourt, but a physical visit there showed that it was located on a gravel extraction site & could only be reached by walking for over a mile. With hindsight perhaps I should have kept it on the list to add some spice to the challenge...!

Anyway, I hope that those who took part, enjoyed visiting the destinations on the list.

Paul Digweed

[Many thanks to Paul for organising the event.]

November

Berkshire Triumph Owners Club Quiz – 11th November 2021

We were kindly invited to the TOMCC quiz at Burghfield (they also meet at the Sports & Social Club). Bill Barnes, Robin Strange, Paul Digweed and Malcolm White made up the team for the Section and found themselves pitted against several teams from the local chapter. Details are sketchy now, but suffice to say that we were successful in demonstrating that we had their measure and came home with the beer. A bit embarrassing, since we also won it the last time. They may not invite us again.

Oxford Section Quiz – 17th November 2021

With some semblance of a return to normality we were invited to participate in the Oxford Section's quiz evening at the Royal British Legion in Littlemore. This year we were only able to rustle up a single team of four to represent the Section and one of those, Paul Digweed, fell under the weather and was not able to attend. Roger Prew, however, stepped up at very short notice, so we were able to field a full team of Bill Barnes, Roger, Robin Strange and Malcolm White.

Stacked against us were Oxford's Ladies and Mens teams, Grasstrack, AJS & Matchless Owners, the local Triumph chapter and Newbury.

Fortunately, the vast majority of the questions were of general knowledge, so those among us who do not have an encyclopedic archive of motorcycling facts and figures tucked away were able to contribute. The first two 20 question rounds were general knowledge, followed by a sheet of vehicle manufacturer logos for which one needed to provide the manufacturer – oddly the Ford logo was not amongst them. The next was an interesting list of everyday entrees and desserts with just the beginning letter and number of characters associated with it for which one was required to provide the name of the repast. There was the traditional music question from Maurice of the Grasstrack group that required the naming of recording artists with the name of John or Johnny. It was surprising how many there were and how many we weren't able to name. The quiz was wrapped up with a final 20 questions.

The final scores were AJS & Matchless taking home the ale with a score of 97, Berkshire placing 2nd with 94, Oxford Ladies 92 1/2, Newbury 92, Grasstrack 90 1/2, Oxford 85 1/2 and Triumph Owners 79 1/2.

Many thanks to the Oxford Section for hosting the event and for providing half-time nourishment, Dave Cox for the questions and brain teasers and Dave Webster for adjudicating the scores.

December

Chiltern Section Quiz – 1st December 2021

It was at somewhat short notice that we were invited to take part in the Chiltern Inter-Section quiz, but we managed to rustle up (cajole) a team of four, comprising Bill Barnes, Roger Prew, Vic Youel and

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Malcolm White, to represent Berkshire. And, so it was that we drove to the White Hill Centre in Chesham in the neighbouring county of Buckinghamshire to do battle. The other protagonists were a motley bunch made up from Chiltern, East Herts, Tea Drinkers and Kitchen Staff, the latter being slightly hampered having only two in number.

Glyn Chambers was in the chair and the questions followed the now traditional format of 10 sets of 10 with labelled headings, such as: engines, bugs, A-B, two-stroke, birds, etc., the description from which one was expected to chance ones arm by playing a joker for double points.

The Tea Drinkers were the first to play their joker on 'engines' and, as a result, picked up 14 points. Tactically, it was a good move as it gave them a lead that they weren't to relinquish for the remainder of the quiz. That and the fact that they were consistently high scorers in the rest of the rounds. Berkshire were placed a creditable second and while we didn't take home the winning trophy we did each manage to win a prize in the raffle.

Final scores: Tea Drinkers 75, Berkshire 69 1/2, Kitchen Staff 66 1/2, East Herts 62 and Chiltern 55.

Many thanks to all those at the Chiltern Section for hosting the event and providing munchies, mince pies and refreshments at the interval.

Club Night – Social Quiz – 7th December 2021

We hadn't chosen to organise a round of the usual Inter-Section quizzes that take place around this time of year, as we weren't sure how much participation there would be coming from other Sections. We didn't, however, wish to miss out on Michael Bryant's talent for such events and asked him if he would be kind enough to pose questions of a more general nature for a social quiz on club night to which members and partners were invited.

While in keeping with our normal tradition of providing sustenance for the assembled throng, we changed it up a bit from the usual selection of store bought sandwiches and took the opportunity to subsidise freshly prepared items from the Burghfield club kitchen menu. We did, however, break with tradition in ordering and eating the food first, so that we could get that over and done with before the kitchen closed.

Once that was completed we broke up into groups of three or four players to begin the quiz. As a general rule, Michael's questions tend to be esoteric and motorcycling in nature, but he proved himself to be equally versatile in compiling ones of general knowledge with not a mention of motorcycles or transport that I can recall. The questions came fast and furious and soon we'd reached 50 where we might have finished, but as Michael had a few more questions up his sleeve and there was a general clamour for more, we continued for a little longer.

At the finish, Bill's and Bert's teams were found to have scored the same number of points and since there were no passes to take into account, à la Mastermind, a tie break question was posed and successfully answered by Bill's team who received a round of applause.

Many thanks to Michael for an entertaining evening.

Committee News

During the year we were sorry to lose Derek and Lorraine Carter who moved from their cottage in Eversley to a new home in Barton-on-Sea and Bruce and Janet Spiller who re-located to a more spacious property near Ludlow in Shropshire. We thank them all for their contribution to the Section over a good many years and wish them well in their new surroundings.

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In conclusion

Many thanks to everyone who participated and contributed to the Section during what has been another challenging year.

Best wishes to all for 2022.

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