

ONE MAN'S MEMORIES

Ted Davies

MPH 310

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As an associate of Wharton and Mustill, the newly appointed Vincent Agent in Loughborough, and racing a 1938 T.T. replica 500, I was invited to Stevenage in the summer of 1947 for a "gallop" down the A.1 on the now legendary, Gunga Din. Nearly ten years later, as Chief Development Engineer at Stevenage, I was to partner Gunga's engine in breaking its last record. You will note I refer only to the engine, as I was, in fact, driving the Vincent "Three-Wheeler" now owned by Roy Harper; the venue-Practice Day at Snetterton . . . the record-my own sidecar record!

Yes: Gunga Din's engine had its last glorious appearance, in anger, behind me (in the "Three-Wheeler"). Not its usual position during my solo racing days when George rode it so brilliantly, although I did keep ahead a couple of times at Haddenham and Boreham until I "dropped the plot". Incidentally, due to its closure I can still lay claim to one record - the Boreham sidecar lap record at 88 m.p.h. with my Lightning Watsonian. Now I am wandering again ... I hope to cover at least some of the stories, perhaps new to members, in later articles, but now back to 1947 and one of my first rather amusing encounters with Stevenage and PCV.

The A.1 ran north directly from the Old Works and I was riding what was, as it eventually turned out to be, the first of thousands of Vincent's I would ride up this same stretch of road. The odd things about this bike was that though it was probably far from being the most potent two wheeler on public roads, it was rapidly turning into the most appalling device I had ever had the misfortune to throw a leg over. A quick about turn and a somewhat premature return to the Works brought P.C.V. out to receive the normal glowing words of praise. Gunga clanked and pinked to a standstill amid a cloud of steam rising from beneath the tank which had been topped up, in error, with paraffin!

It was later that year I joined the Vincent HR -D. Co. (the first new employee to arrive on his own Series "B" Twin) and it is this period through till 1959, when I transferred to Borg-Warner Ltd. (of automatic transmission fame) where I reside as Chief Executive Engineer, that I would like to share with old and new V.O.C. members. My association with Borg-Warner might explain the odd torque converter appearing in the sprinting world - Angus McPhail's cyclecar and Dennis Norton's double Norton, as examples.

In order that members might visualise me now as the traditionally retired sportsman writing his memoirs I should, perhaps, mention my serious motor-cycling start-up in 1938, when aged 16, I rode a Manx Norton against Ginger Woods on the Works' Series "A" Rapide at Donington. I remember having quite a good write-up by Titch Allen (of Vintage fame), the Leicester Evening News reporter at that time. An exciting road racing career was interrupted by a certain B.M.W. fan but a fair amount of illicit motor-cycling continued around the world under the sponsorship of the Royal Navy until the end of it all and the beginning of my story in 1947.

However, just to prove I haven't really retired at all, a couple of English bikes and two V.O.C. ashtrays are still in weekly use and nothing fetches me out quicker than the arrival of a two wheeler ESPECIALLY if it's not Japanese. With you again soon.