

VIBRATIONS!



November 2020



Triumph Owners M.C.C.

Northants Branch



Scribblings

I write this just after the 5th November lockdown was announced, so until further notice all official branch events remain in limbo. Assuming that the Crown is open on the night of Wednesday 4th November there is nothing to stop people paying a visit as individuals but, as always, you are asked to follow the pub's rules on social distancing.

For a number of reasons there have been some changes to the committee since the 2019 AGM. To keep you up to date with those...

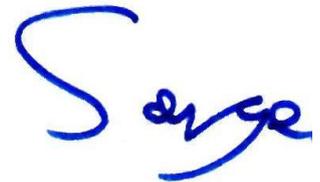
Treasurer: Bob Swann has been co-opted onto the committee after Keith Day stepped down for health reasons.

PRO: Henry Richards has taken over this job, with Phill Short remaining on the committee as a GPO.

Wrinklies Runs: Chris Dickens and Barry Gambrill took over the running of these from Norman Waples, with Norman staying on the committee as a GPO.

Scribe: This position has been vacant for a few years, with me filling in. Henry has recently taken on the responsibility for writing the branch report in Nacelle. The other half of the Scribe's job is to compile this newsletter every two months (with an events list update in the intervening months). If anybody wants to take that off my hands you are more than welcome!

The attempt to hold the delayed AGM in September got overtaken by events. The standing committee will then remain in place until such time as we can hold the 2021 meeting. That should be in March but it would be rash to guarantee that it will happen then.



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New Members

Welcome to the following new Branch members, who have joined the branch in the last couple of months.

David Lefever of Corby

Richard Hoare of Rugby

Membership Renewals

If your club membership is due for renewal here are the best ways of dealing with it...

- 1) Renew on-line via tomcc.org/Home/Membership with a credit card, debit card or PayPal account. You can also get a £2 discount using this method.
- 2) Fill in the membership form that was sent to you, then post it direct to the HQ Membership address at Horley, as shown on the form. Include a cheque made payable to Triumph Owners MCC.
- 3) Fill in the membership form and hand it to the Branch Membership Secretary at a club night. Payment by cheque or cash. Memberships renewed this way are only sent to HQ a couple of times a month, so will take longer to process than 1 or 2 above.

Don't worry about the money as the Branch receives the same amount per member regardless of the method used to renew.

Northants Branch Info and News

	Events List
All Northants Branch events cancelled until further notice. Those shown below for 2021 are provisional.	
December	East Northants Classic Club's "Stuff the Turkey" dinner is cancelled.
January	The "Chilly Willy" charity ride is cancelled.
Sat 8 th March	Branch Dinner
Wed 17 th March	Branch AGM
Wed 31 st March	5 th Wednesday meeting at Melchbourne
Sun 4 th April	Triumph Owners National AGM
1 st -3 rd May	Trifest Somerset
15 th -16 th May	MCN Show at Peterborough
23 rd May	BSA Open Day
Wed 16 th June	Branch Concours d'Elegance
Sun 5 th September	Milton Keynes Triumph Owners motorcycle show

Should the Covid restrictions change keep an eye on the Branch's Facebook group for any short-notice rideouts, etc.

Branch HQ:

The Crown, High Street, Hardingsstone, Northampton, NN4 6BZ.

The main access to Hardingsstone village is from the roundabout at the junction of the A45, A508 and A5076 (ring road). Other access from the Newport Pagnell Road (B526).

1st and 3rd Wednesdays of each month, starting at 8pm.

Pure Triumph:

Our local Triumph dealer is based at The Embankment, Wellingborough, NN8 1LD. The company's website can be found at www.puretriumph.co.uk.

On production of a current Triumph Owners membership card, Pure Triumph at Wellingborough will give a 10% discount on the following items: Clothing, Oxford Products, Helmets, Oil products, Labour on Servicing.

The Branch on the Internet:

Our website can be found at: www.northantstomcc.org.uk. Most pages are public but there is one small section that is restricted to branch members only, accessed via the password that is advised separately.

We also have Facebook page: www.facebook.com/groups/northantstomcc/

Northants Branch Info and News

Other Internet Links:

Triumph Owners MCC national website: www.tomcc.org

Triumph Owners MCC events website: www.tomccevents.co.uk

Triumph Owners Clothing: www.tomccmerchandise.com

The club also has a page on Facebook: www.facebook.com/groups/4526704577/.

British Motorcyclists Federation: www.bmf.co.uk

Triumph Motorcycles: www.triumphmotorcycles.co.uk

Northants Branch Clothing Range

The range of Northants Branch clothing: T-Shirt, Polo Shirt, Sweatshirt, Hoodie, Fleece, Business Shirt and Baseball Cap; can be purchased on-line.

Some items can also be done with a large back-print for an additional fee.

To order click on this link:

www.customkit.co.uk/northants-triumph-owners-club-52-c.asp

Club Night Ordering: If you would prefer not to go on-line you can place an order with Les Barras at one of our club nights. Your selection should then be ready for collection at the next club night.

Tiger 90 Help Required

Hi there! I have recently joined the club having recently purchased a Tiger 90 (1968 model) that although very complete and original, needs a complete rebuild/restoration.

I have just started work on the engine and am asking if any of the special tools needed are available to borrow/hire?

I have made some progress with the engine and have been able to remove the primary side ok (I purchased the clutch hub puller from Monty's Classic Motorcycles and could not do it without that tool...).

I do still need to use a puller to extract the crankshaft pinion, this is the type that screws onto the pinion (part No. Z89), a friend of mine says he knows someone in Northampton who may have such a puller and will let me know in the next few days. In the meantime, it would be good to meet someone in the area who has a good knowledge of these engines.

Chris Duffy, Towcester

If anybody would like to offer help to Chris regarding tools and general expertise with T90s, please e-mail via kitandjo@tiscali.co.uk

Motorcycling's Biggest Scoundrel

Written by John Naish and published in the July 2020 issue of "Bike" magazine. Thanks go to "Bike" for permission to reproduce it here.

Major Albert 'Dougie' Masters, equestrian hero of the Indian Raj, had been eaten by a tiger, for all that his grieving wife and daughters knew. But Masters was very much alive. Instead of being inside a big tiger, he was riding a little Tiger Cub prototype from John O'Groats to Land's End in 1953. His mission was to accompany the legendary Triumph supremo, Edward Turner, in a publicity stunt.

Long before the television series, Masters had done a classic Reggie Perrin. He'd bolted from his previous life, donned a fake identity and reinvented himself. Not one to do things by halves, he had then become a bestselling author and snagged the enviable job of chief service manager at Triumph's HQ.

Motorcycling has an odd habit of attracting con-artists and sleight-of-hand merchants. But Masters holds the title of Biking's Biggest Blagger (so far, anyway). History remembers Masters' marathon ride as The Gaffers' Gallop. The 1008-mile trip took five days and gained near-mythical status, forging a repute for dependability that sold hundreds of thousands of little four-stroke singles.

Yet if the press had discovered Masters' true identity and exposed him to the straitlaced Fifties public as a faker, a conman, an embezzler and bigamist, it would have dragged Triumph's name through deep and murky mud. Masters managed to take his guilty secrets to the grave when he died in Kenilworth in 1963. Only recently did the truth emerge.

The oddness of his story is matched in eccentricity by Triumph's plan to have their bosses ride the company's latest tiddlers the length of Britain, in all weathers. It sounds like the silly stuff of Top Gear. But reliability trials were the rage among British manufacturers eager to prove their bikes would survive beyond the first oil change.

The Gaffers' Gallop launched Turner's latest brainchild, the 149cc Terrier. This promptly grew into the 200cc Tiger Cub. The engine was stretched still further to spawn the 500cc BSA B50. No wonder its big ends fell out.

Two decades earlier Major Albert Masters had pulled off his Houdini act, reappearing as Alec St John Masters, a world expert on motorcycle maintenance and author. But Masters had begun adult life as an oily oik mechanic in the British Army. Posted to North East India, he reinvented himself as an upper-class officer in the Assam Valley Light Horse Infantry, married an Englishwoman and had three daughters.

Social-climbing Masters lived far beyond his means, renting an opulent colonial home with more than 20 servants and 14 polo horses. He greased his way into the local Masonic Lodge and was elected secretary of the horse racing committee at the Jorhat Gymkhana. Yet his flashy life sank into misery as debts mounted. Masters' surviving daughter describes her mother as, 'a career headmistress and a domineering woman'.

In 1932 Masters galloped away into thin air. Friends found his padlocked bungalow empty. Along with him went the contents of the race committee's bank account - nearly £40,000. He had already sent his family back to England to await him. But he never showed. The Jorhat committee hushed up the embezzlement. His grieving family kept searching for him. They eventually came to believe him dead, scoffed by a tiger.

The truth of the matter was Masters had fled to Calcutta, changed his name, bigamistically married a British nurse and returned to England, where he embarked upon a meteoric career at Triumph. The Gaffers' Gallop stunt got Masters' smiling face published across national newsprint. But he didn't fret. He was already a public figure.

Masters' bestsellers included practical guides for fixing contemporary Triumphs, along with repair guides for dealers, motorbike sports titles and popular D1Y books on home spray-painting - plus the unputdownable: Economy Motoring: How to Fit and Adjust the Duo-Vaporator with Notes on Maximum Efficiency at Minimum Cost.

Motorcycling's Biggest Scoundrel

The Gaffers' Gallop ended triumphantly. The Terriers reached their final destination sans breakdown. The trip was officially observed by monitors from the ACU. But another great biking con was afoot. The great Edward Turner didn't properly do the ride. Nigel Winter, a lawyer and author who recreated the ride a decade ago, explains:

'Turner liked to enjoy a good lunch in a decent hotel every day of the ride. After lunch, he'd climb onto the back seat of his Talbot Sunbeam saloon to snooze it off, and send his driver, Frank Griffith, out into the wind and rain to do the afternoon's riding.'

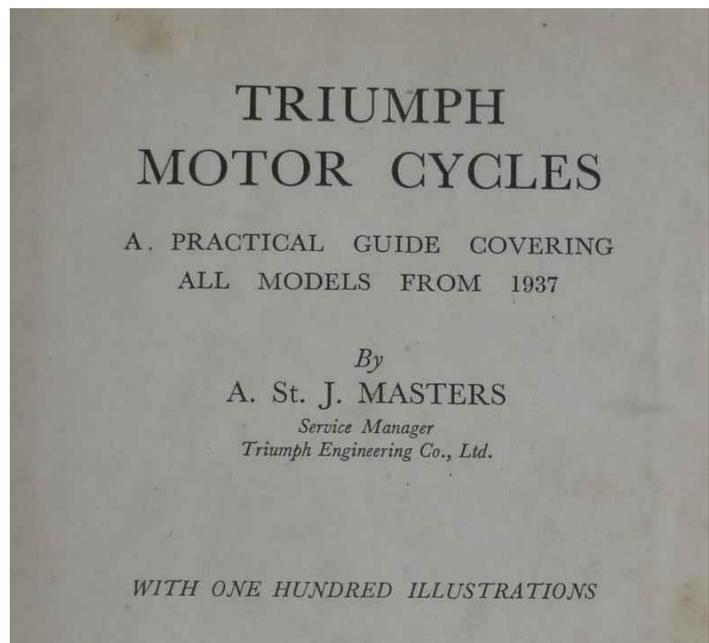
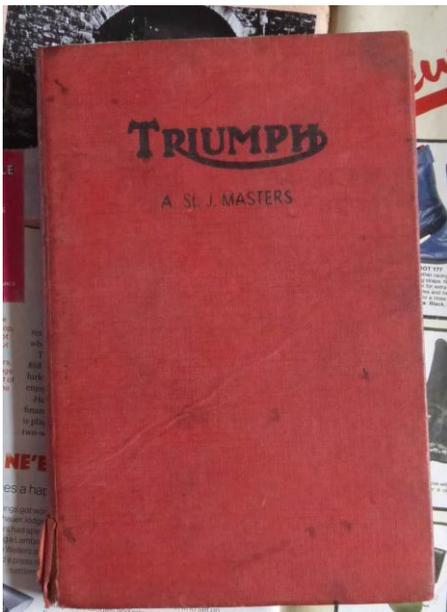
Winter adds: 'Another support rider would drive Turner on to dinner in the next good hotel, where he would spend all evening holding court.'

Masters' own deception was only uncovered a few years ago when his youngest daughter, Veronica Jeen Masters, then in her eighties, asked a professional investigator named David Lomas to discover what happened to her father after he vanished in 1932. Lomas visited India, interviewed witnesses and followed an international paper trail that eventually revealed the Raj fraudster and Triumph's spanner-wielding boss to be the same man.

Even though the story of Masters' deception has been resolved, one mystery remains about the Gaffers' Gallop – whether any of the doughty Terriers they rode still survive. The bikes, with registration numbers: NWD 867, NWD 868 and NWD 869, have disappeared. Are any out there lurking under canvas? Or indeed might one of them be enjoying a new life somewhere, under an assumed identity?

However, that's definitely not the only outlandish tale of financial irregularity to afflict motorcycling, one of which is playing out right now. Maybe there's something about two-wheeled thrills that attracts shady characters.

Reading this article in *Bike* sparked a memory in me so I scurried to my bookcase. Lo and behold, I have one of Mr Masters' books – picked up at an auto-jumble many years ago:



This is the second edition, updated in 1949 to "include necessary maintenance information for the 1949 models."

Skegfest 2020

With events being cancelled left, right and centre; one of the few that did go ahead was this year's Skegfest weekend over 9th-11th October. Branch Chairman Phil Barton provided this report:

"Only 6 members went on bikes to this year's Skegfest event, with 4 going by car or van. Phil Short had a damaged shoulder and could not ride his bike, so with Chris and myself staying in the same caravan it made sense to go together. The restrictions on site made things a little difficult at times but every one made the best of it and we all had a great time.

With numbers well down on last year we still had the best branch turn out, no concours this year so our trophies will be used in 2021 (8th-11th October). Some of Northants members have already booked for next year. A big thank you to Paul and Pippa Golding for organizing this year's event".

This message was also received, post-event, from Paul Golding:

"Thank you for the support! Great to see so many Northants members on site, of course this year was all to do with Richmond making it happen. Recent times have been very difficult and Richmond did their best in working with changing rules etc.

2021 shall see some improvements and will shall plan early in the New Year. The Northants Bike Show shall finally happen, in Skegness, "Skegfest will be back on track".

Best regards to all; give Sarge our regards too, great to see them both next time. Maybe he can sort a 4-carriage train from Skegness to Batemans and back?"

(Between 1980-1984 I did work in a British Rail department that arranged special trains. However, it's outside of my sphere of influence in the rail industry these days! Sarge)



Photos by Paul Humphreys and Alan Sanders.

The Silverstone Experience

Back in February I took a trip down to Silverstone Circuit for a visit to the new “Experience” visitor centre. In through the main entrance and you can see the building on the left. Beyond the ticket counter is the café and from there a door allows you outside to part of the old circuit between Bridge and Luffield; which you can walk along. Boards at intervals describing where you are and how that part of the circuit has changed over the years.



Back inside, you join the starting grid before entering the first-floor exhibits. The history of Silverstone Village, Luffield Priory and the surrounding farmland is described – including a tale of an elephant. Next up is the building of the airfield in World War 2 as a bomber training base.

The rest of the Experience is given over to how the airfield perimeter roads came to be used for racing, and the gradual development of the modern-day circuit from those rather basic beginnings.

Down on the ground floor it's the vehicles that are the main attraction. Mostly cars but there are a few motorcycles, including Barry Sheene's 1976 championship winning Suzuki.



Sarge.