

MEET HERE

A tour of the clubs and societies of Norwich and district

Heart and soul in their bikes



RINGO Carleton Smith with his lovingly restored A65 Lightning. Clive Scarfe is also pictured.

BSA THE BEST OF BRITISH SAY DEVOTED FANS

EAT your hearts out Orientals . . . here come the Great British Bikers.

Not that the purchasing efforts of Dominic Harding and his colleagues are likely to go any way towards stemming the tide of Japanese imports.

Their interest, instead, harks back to a time when Britain ruled the world as far as two-wheeled motoring was concerned.

As members of the Norfolk branch of the national BSA Owners' Club, they have nurtured an interest in all that was economical, reliable and stolidly magnificent in British motor cycle production.

Between them the 30-strong membership has been known to scour the country in search of one of those bikes which went out of production, finally, 10 years ago.

The search can cost them a fortune, to say nothing of the problems of keeping such increasingly rare machines on the road.

For the likes of Dominic Harding, however, senior technician at the Norwich mortuary, it's all worthwhile.

"They're great bikes, easy to maintain and cheap to run, and there is always someone with another BSA willing to help you," he points out.

Key figure

The 31-year-old biker can often be seen using his "everyday" machine, a 1963 A65, to get him from his home to his work.

It has been known to transport him to the international rallies which dot the BSA enthusiasts' calendar. "I went to Germany last year and am going to Holland this year. If you turn up at one of those in a car you just won't be allowed on the site."

Branch secretary, Clive Scarfe, is a key figure in the activities of the club, which was started locally over two years ago and now meets regularly at the Rose public-house, on Queens Road, Norwich. Also 31, this sheet metal worker and welder, epitomises the

lengths to which some enthusiasts will go to get a particular bike.

He owns a Rocket Three and a C12 — the latter bought in Devon after he had secured lifts with BSA branches all along the route down there when he went to pick it up.

One of the prized Gold Stars can set a collector back £3500, although a tiny old bantam can fetch little over £100. Even then, the smaller versions of Japanese mopeds have been known to leave the BSA 125ccs

standing in their tracks.

On top of that there are the added problems of breakdown and oil leaks, inherent in older machines.

So what is the attraction? Clive Scarfe explains: "There is just something about them. When you get on a Japanese bike it starts up and you're away, but you are just one of the many thousands."

"On a British bike you go everywhere and people will stop and look. Everyone from the policeman to the general public will stop and look."

"I don't know how many times I've had things go on me, though. You've got to be mechanically-minded to run one, either that or the other members will help you out. You never hear of anyone taking their BSA in for a garage strip-down. They do it themselves."

Stable

Branch chairman, Ringo Carleton Smith 31, certainly have his hands full if he wasn't mechanically minded.

A sheet metal worker for Air UK, his "stable" consists of five BSAs, including a 1960 super rocket A10, a 1963 A50 and a 1965 A65 L, a rare 750 cc with five-speed box.

Like other members, he grew up around British bikes and wouldn't want anything different.

"Call it nostalgia, if you like, but we think the BSA had absolutely everything."

James Ruddy



MEMBERS of the BSA Owners Club at a branch meeting.