

The Red Staggers

Introduction

I believe that in order to understand the underlying reasons for my approach to my hobby, you should know what led me to Scotts. It was, in short, chicanery! We should not be devious, I was, and have paid a heavy penalty for it!

In the beginning

I had my first motorbike at 16. The ubiquitous DI Bantam, I was full of youthful exuberance, and precious little else. The accidents came thick and fast. Mr mother who feared she had borne a human lemming, conveyed her disquiet to my father who was 'MASTER' in the household. Although the accidents did not appear to be my fault, they never are, are they?, the bike was sold. I was banished to the wilderness of



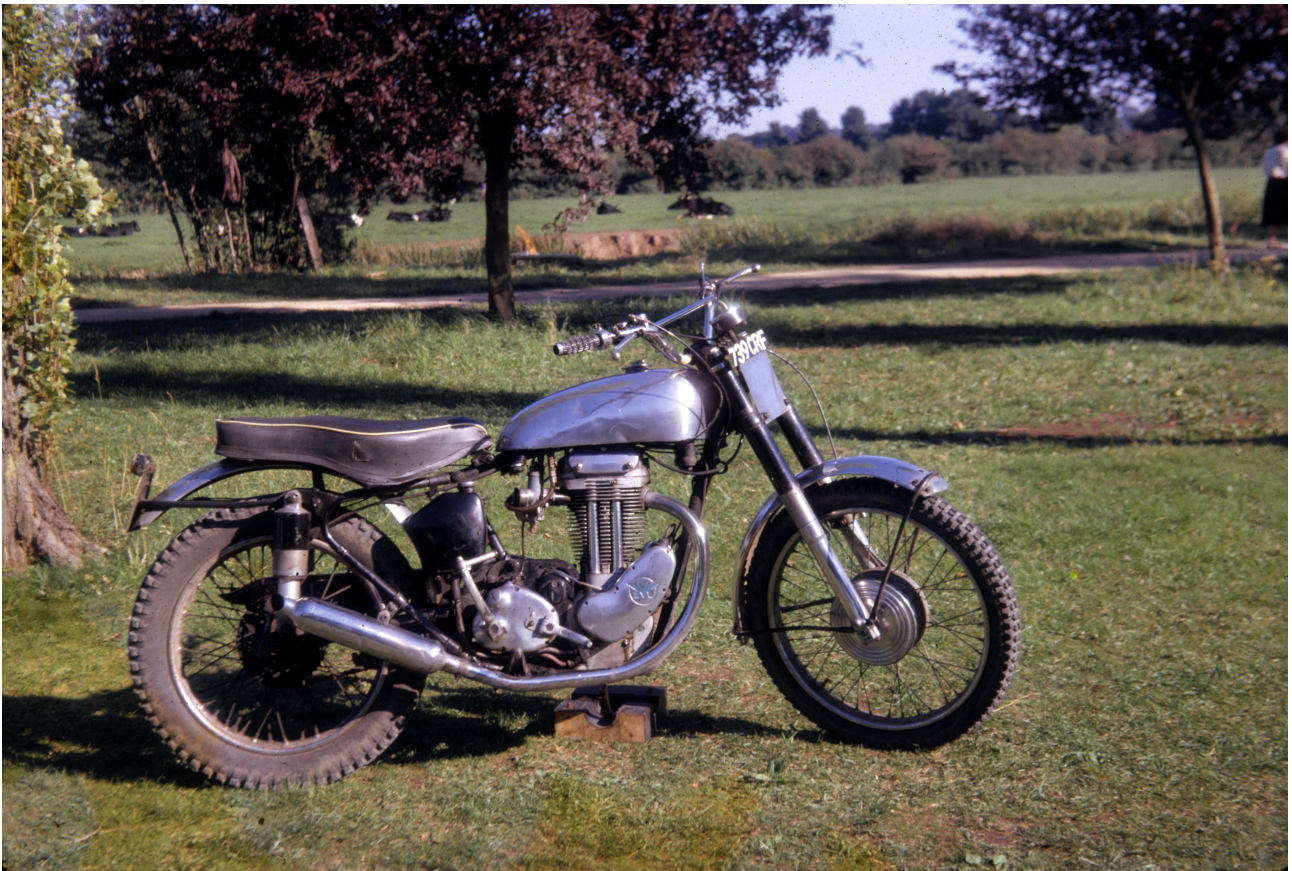
some mechanical quadruped that had first seen the light of day in Oxford, at a period quite beyond the memory of man. I was quietly unappreciative of this elevation and resolved to return to two wheels as soon as was possible. I believed this to be spiritually correct; after all, the Good Lord bestowed on us two legs, not four. It therefore seems singularly inappropriate that we should consider any other quantity of supportive elements in higher regard.

When time had cleansed the memories of my parents somewhat, I considered what means I should employ to achieve my desired ends. I had long since discovered that as in Judo, one should apply a minimum of effort for the maximum return. This means clearly identifying weaknesses and exploiting them.

My father had it his youth, been a successful athlete. His son however, had been a notable

disappointment in this regard. I had on several occasions, mentally noted, whilst looking in a mirror, the inequality with which nature bestows her physical boons. When your ankles are in a similar position to the kneecaps of others, then athletics become an exercise in misplaced endeavour! I was never inclined to waste effort - and so didn't.

I reasoned that my interest in "SPORT" aided by a two wheeled mechanically propelled device, could receive approval. It was suggested, ingested, digested, and finally with some suspicion - received the Royal Assent. The machine, for prosecuting these "trials" was selected. The fact that it was a Scrambles, or Motor Cross machine, namely a Matchless G3LCS, was unnoticed by my parents, although not by me.



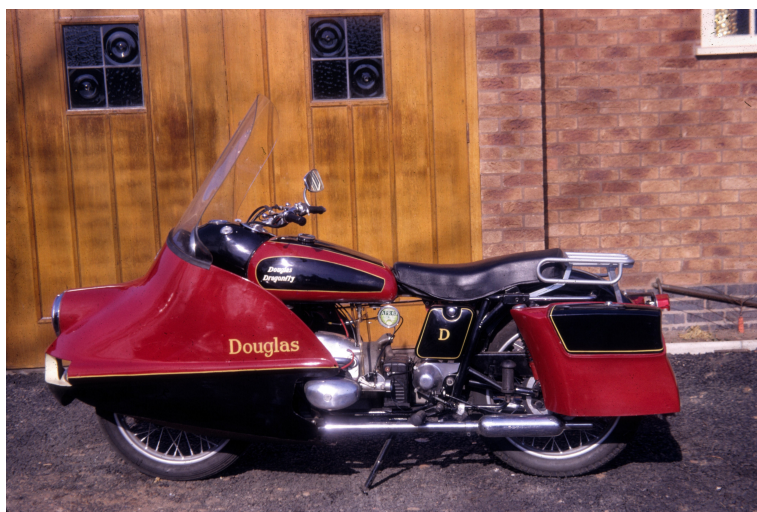
The very first time I rode this machine off-road, I was reminded of nature's little joke somewhat painfully. I discovered that when riding along the side of a hill, that should one lose one's balance, and need to put a foot down - on the downhill side, then a telescopic foot is much to be desired. It will need precious little mental acuity to appreciate the terminal stages of inclination that had been arrived at, before my abbreviated appendage attempted to recoup the hopeless situation. I am sure many of you will remember the halcyon days, when motor bicycles were honestly constructed. Their frames featured ample forged lugs, they were a "proper job", not like

nowadays when machines are so insubstantial, that the purchaser wonders whether he has really got his monies worth. I got my monies worth - I felt every pound of my monies worth.

Like some diminutive Atlas being driven into the ground, by a machine which, moment by moment, assumed the proportions of an Aveling Barford Road Roller, - I savoured every ounce.

Having decided that off-road riding was for others, preferably supermen with telescopic legs, I concentrated on road riding. The sight of the large tread blocks being torn from the rear tyre during lurid cornering, caused dismay, or delight, according to the onlooker, but never, I am assured, indifference.

There followed a dalliance with a Douglas and finally, (literally) a BMW.



I had believed that there was no longer real enmity between the Germans and the British.

Although I knew that dogs could be trained for warfare, I was totally unprepared for a motorcycle, which could not only be so treacherous as to cast one off, but would then exhibit such ill breeding, as to fall upon the

stricken rider with such maniacal fervour. I was lucky, the doctors said that "they had the technology" and miles of plastic tubing. They split the crankcases and surveyed the carnage, courage almost failed them, but maybe with new cranks, big ends and pistons they may yet succeed.

With numerous spares and liberal use of Hematite, the job was done.

It was from a position of inequality that, between plastic pipes, I saw my Father's grim countenance and still worse - the outstretched index finger. 'O unhappy youth!' I was banished yet again to those unspeakable transport modules. I examined my predicament. I had discovered why the Germans had lost the war. If they couldn't make a better bike than that, to ride that is, not just admire as a mechanism, then they jolly well deserved to lose; If I had inherited anything from my father, it was the inability to accept defeat. I knew that a considerable period was to elapse whilst I traversed the wilderness. I resolved to accept

this with good heart and await the new coming, which was to be of unsuspected significance.

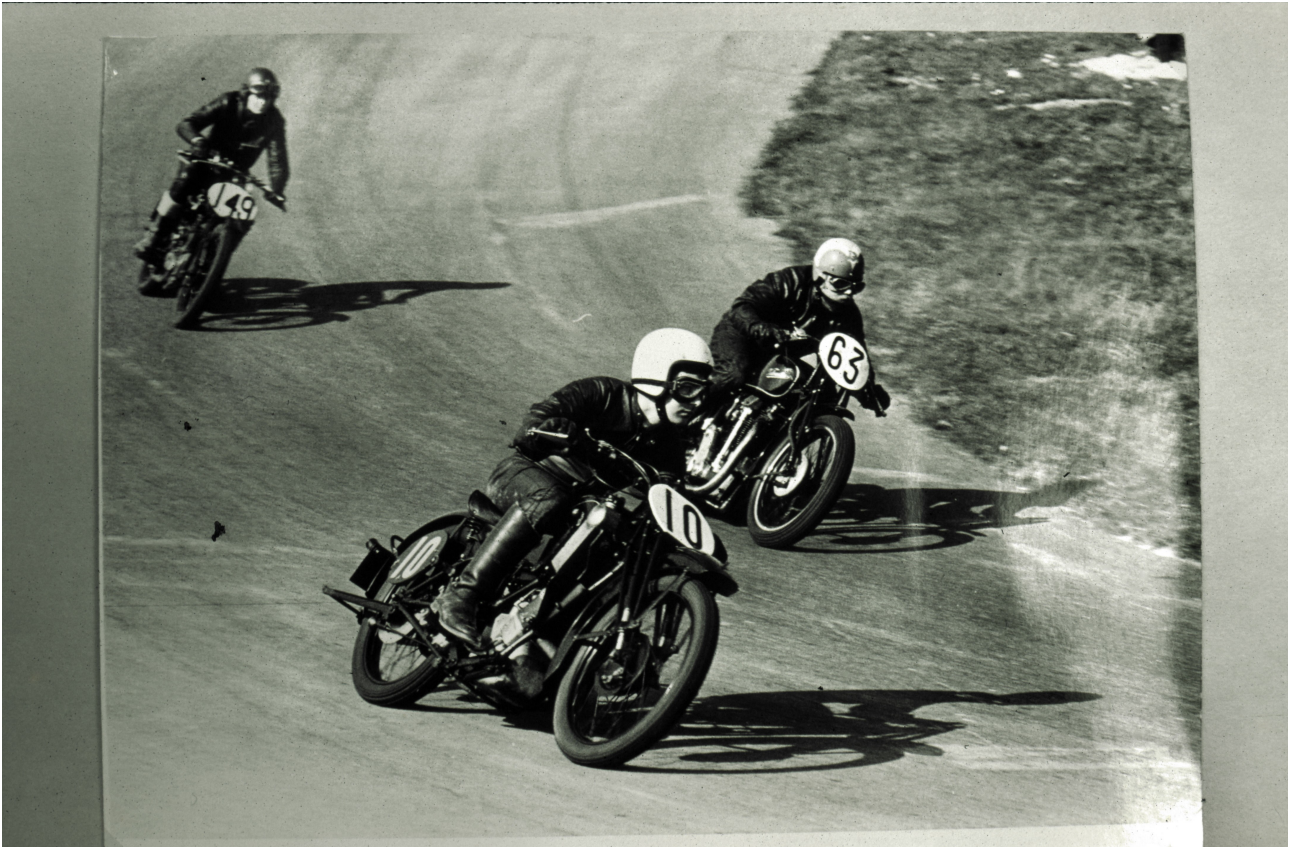
REGENESIS

Many and bleak were the years in exile, salvation seemed to retreat in concert with the march of time. Although there were times when ones sanity seemed at risk, yet the instinctive relentless pursuit of the goal was continued. At last the clouds thinned and finally fell away. I felt that the most important event to happen in my life was at hand, the portents were favourable at last.

I reasoned that I must discover some new approach if I were to succeed. I could not again advocate an appeal to my Fathers sporting instincts. 'Where 0 Where was the inspiration!. Like a lightening bolt, with crystal clarity, the knowledge came. Like all such enlightenments, the moment is brief, but the meaning full. The mundane details I will set down thus. Father had an old school friend, one Arthur Tyler, who had achieved fame in his younger days as a TT works rider for Raleigh. In later life he had developed an interest in veteran cars and had a rare model of which he was justifiably proud. Father had, at that time, accompanied Arthur Tyler to some rallies. Here the cars were displayed in memories brilliant sunshine, while the gurus meditated on such profound matters as whether your hub caps should be bright or dull nickel plated. Father even contemplated purchasing an historic car himself. In hindsight I see that this would have been for too placid a pastime for his questing spirit. The stage was set, the players ready, I knew my part. A vintage motorcycle Father? The minds eye fills with sunlit meadows, with rows of cherished machines, the subdued respectfully voices, reminiscent of the vicarage tea party, the assent came, gently borne by this blissful serenity which was never to be the same again. The deed was done:

I will not bore you with the quest for machines, you have all experienced the anticipation, the reconciliation with reality, but finally it is yours. You wonder whether you have been wise, and hope. Yes', I would say that word! is very dear to all Scott owners, for myself HOPE AND RESOLVE have been my only comfort during some devastating mechanical calamities.

The TT Replica was taken to events, but these rallies were less restrained than the rallies that had figured in the minds eye of my father. They were in fact Vintage Race Meetings, A new era had indeed dawned. The thrill was electric, 1 had never experienced anything so utterly enthralling. What a figure I must have cut as I strove to rob someone of last place!



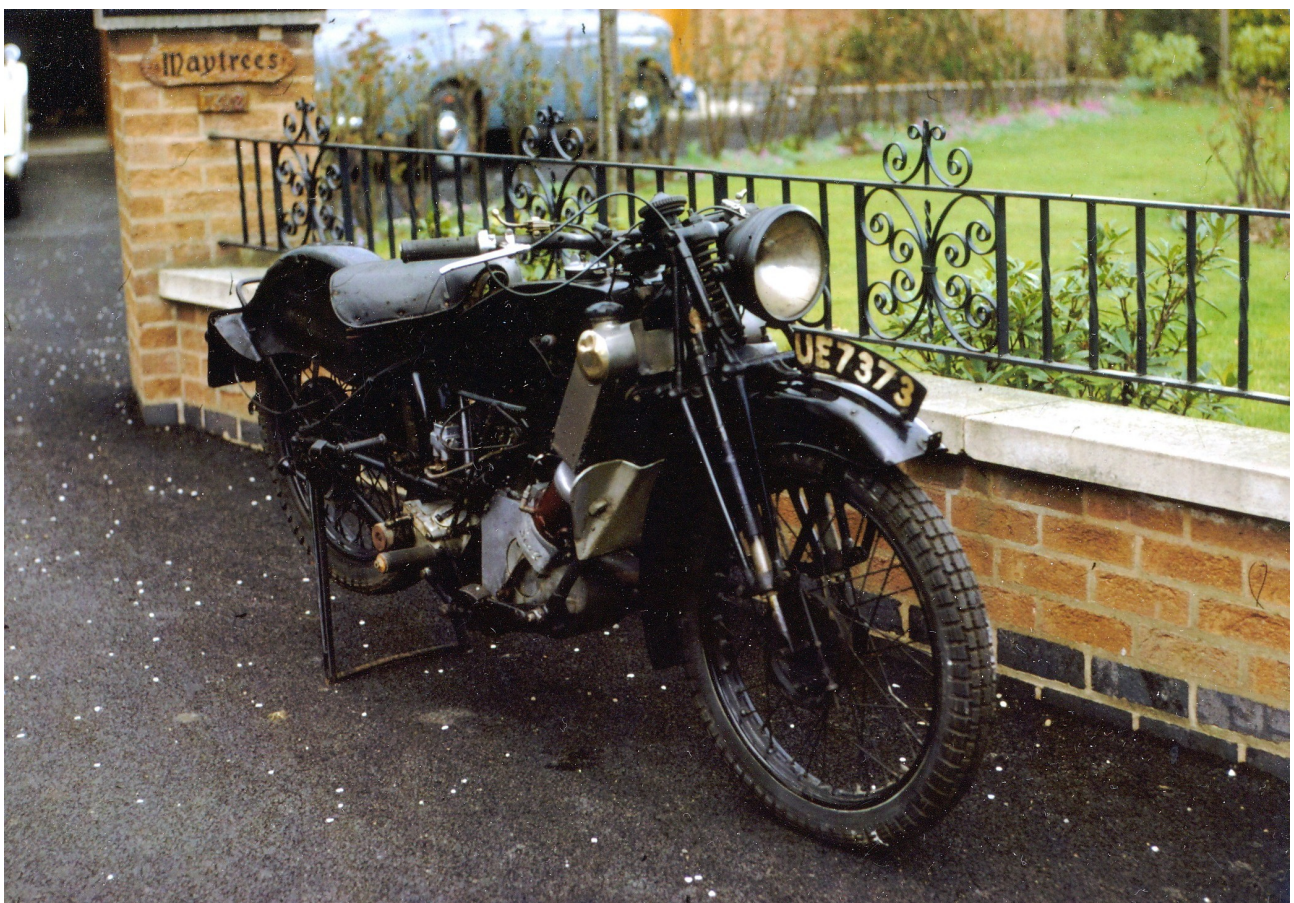
I was fortunate in that a kind person had lent we some racing leathers and together with my thick fleecy lined high road riding boots and gauntlet gloves, completed the main items of clothing.

It is entirely bad form to complain of trivialities when a person does you a kindness. It was unthinkable to point out to my benefactor that our physiques each represented the opposite extremes of arrangement of the human frame, When I was obliged to walk, 1 would gather up my leather robes, which otherwise resembled a long skirt, as the onlooker could not see. separate legs. This was because the crutch, if you'll pardon the expression, was in close communion with Mother Earth. I am here almost ashamed to admit that when these leathers were gathered up for walking, or more correctly shuffling, then the wrinkled

appearance was grotesque. Some persons bent on uplifting my spirit, suggested that I resembled a decaying concertina, whilst other friends gave freely of their valuable time to make, especially for me, funny red noses. Look! when you have legs like mine, you almost grow to expect it, at least if it brings some brightness to someone's day, if not mine:

The rapture of these times was added to by my first experiences of those endearing little Scott happenings, which eventually do so much to mould the character of the owner.

The auxiliary oil pump that supplied the extra cylinder wall oiling for use when racing on the Replica, unknown to its naive owner, leaked oil into the cylinders. This made it impossible to start until one had pushed it almost a mile. A friend, I still have some, amused me with graphic description of that state. He calls that twilight zone between consciousness and unconsciousness, mixed with what seems like terminal fatigue, the "Red Stagers". You pushed the Replica until you got the "Red Stagers" and then it would start. You lay on it like a dead man when it fired, and hardly even able to think, you made your way homeward, pursued by a concentrated pollution zone, or ecological disaster area, if you prefer. I think we started global warming single handed! It had to happen, of course, reasoning that the motor was drowning in oil, I switched off the oil tap, so as not to compound it's misery.



Please understand that due to a certain mischievous tendency, the engine would always start easily at home.

It was only when you had stopped at some remote place, that if playfully required pushing. Unfortunately I had forgotten that when one experiences the onset of the afore mentioned "Red Staggers", with everything looking red through bloodshot eyes, and one is about to pass out, that one's memory, in addition to every other faculty, suffers. When the engine fired, I collapsed on the machine and by some miracle made my way home, Beneath the tank the knee Binks 3 jet Carb winked solemnly at the closed oil tap. "By ECK we've got im this time, it were time e saw inside - E knows NOWT yet!"

Sometimes, in the dead of night, when my wife has complained of my strange activities in my sleep, I realise I have been mentally stripping a Scott engine hardly erotic - erratic yes, erotic never!

The Replica and I became firmly attached, rather like having a favourite wart, and with increasing respect, came a more benevolent attitude from UE 7373.

There was the time when I was pondering on my increasing weight. This followed giving up cigarettes, as the doctor had told me that it would ease my ulcers. I realise now, that I did not have ulcers before I had the Scott!

I decided to visit an old school friend who was also afflicted with motorbikes, but not so seriously, as he had not contracted Scott disease. I should have known better, it was an idyllic summer day. Nowadays I would cast one suspicious eye at such a day, chalk a circle round my bed, and retire there until normality returned. It is my particular cross that I am trusting, so off I set. I admit that I was beginning to show signs of doubt in some ways, like the arsenal of tools I carried in my Barbour jacket. When I walked, I clanked and if I had have the misfortune to fall into water, I would have sunk like a stone. I suppose the seriousness of my position was becoming apparent, but my feeble precautions were as straw before a storm, as I was about to discover.

I admit to an ability to do stupid things occasionally and the stage was set for a gala performance!

My friend lives hard by a motorway, I sense you rolling about in mirth already yes, I admit, I took a Scott on a motorway, well I admitted I am not perfect. The sun beat down, the bike purred like a cat, I should have turned back! However I must continue lest my courage fail

me and I cannot finish the tale.

From the bosom of this bliss came the impatient postmen rapping on the letterbox - 1 awake from reverie, I must stop and look quickly. I pulled onto the hard shoulder and with (misplaced) quiet confidence took out my tools. Some short time later, 1 was again examining my tools, but no, there wasn't one to deal with a broken crank. Have you ever seen a long stroke Scott motor smirk?

You will no doubt be aware of the peculiar physiological phenomenon which effects motorcyclists who break down. They become invisible to all mankind on four wheels. The AA and RAC, the Police, not to mention the hordes of your fellow homo sapiens rushing past you pell-mell, as if each were on some life or death errand. I have now taken to packing a large roll of bandage and sachets of tomato sauce. We Learn!

I had pushed that machine for several miles when I spied a turn off. I was becoming quite wretched and the "Red Staggers" were not far off, but the sight of this turn off gave me new hope and finding new strength, I pressed onwards. When 1 eventually arrived at this turn off, you can imagine my distress on finding it to be that particular abomination, a motorway fork where both are motorways. I looked ahead in a daze, and saw a punishing incline and knew that regardless of will power, the body wouldn't make it. 1 looked to my left and There tantalizingly, about a mile away, was the house of my friend.

My father always said that a true Englishman never admits defeat, so I reviewed my situation. The Motorway had been perched on a substantial embankment for the course of my journey on foot and was bounded at low level by a very stout wooden fence. I had surveyed this several times, but decided that 1 could not dismantle it with the tools I had and most certainly could not lift the bike over it. But now, halfway up the incline I was approaching and beneath it, ran a road leading to my friends village. The wooden fence also gave way to a heavy wire link fence at this point and I determined to make my final assault there. At this position, alone and neglected by humanity, I attacked that fence. In truth I believe I would have bitten my way through that fence if I had no pliers. In a short time, I surveyed the ruined fence, with not one shred of remorse. The bike had to be slid down the steep bank on its side, but I managed it. Through the wire fence, on the road and I felt like a prisoner who had escaped.

The last mile I remember little of, as the red clouds were beginning to roll in, but I remember exactly my arrival. My friends house had a short drive with an uphill slope, to me a mountain, but this human wreck proceeded to push the bike into a small courtyard.

My friends father was repairing his car and called "Hello". I felt the strength draining from me and sank to my knees still holding the Scott upright. I tried to ask him to take the bike, but the words would not come. After what seemed an age, he saw my predicament and took the Scott from me.

I had lost 5 kg in weight in three hours. That round definitely went to the Scott!