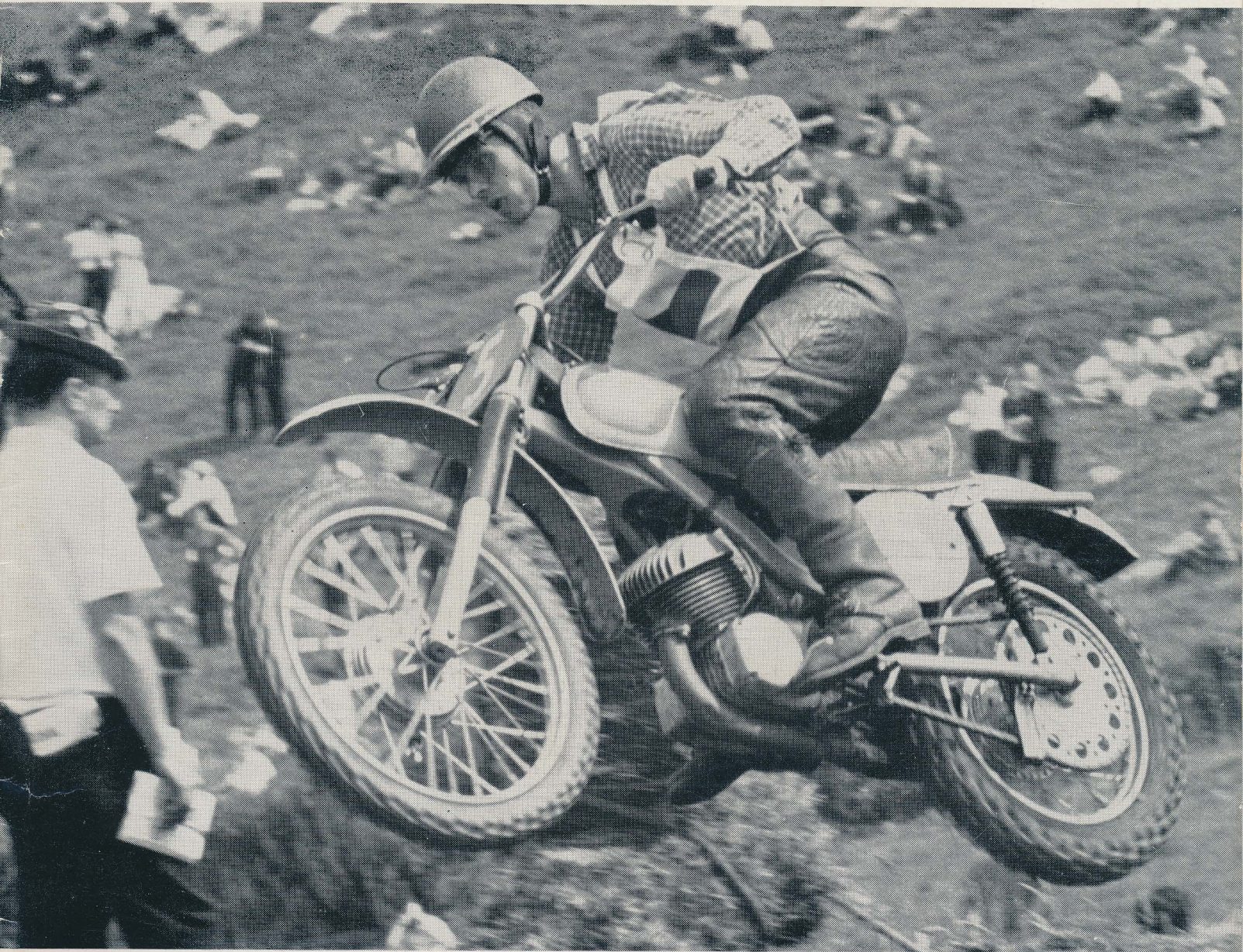


Motorcycle Sport

VOLUME 6 NUMBER 9

SEPTEMBER 1965

TWO SHILLINGS



500-Mile Race ★

The Wooler Flat Four ★

AJS Impressions

Three Grands Prix ★

Moto-Cross ★

Two-Stroke or Four?

Motorcycle Sport

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SEPTEMBER 1965

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FRONT-COVER PICTURE shows the Czech motorcycle rider, Vlastimil Valek, riding the latest Jawa at the British 250 c.c. Moto-Cross Grand Prix at Glastonbury. He displayed plenty of style and speed but fell back to fifth place; and at the moment is ranked sixth in the world championship



Beauty by repute residing in the eye of the beholder, we should be cautious in condemning the zig-zag styling on the tanks of the latest A.M.C. singles. Nevertheless we must go on record as deploring it: and invite you to turn to page 345 for our impressions of the 1965 model 16

Another debt to the USA

HUMMING with activity, British factories are building bigger bangers for our American cousins as fast as they can while we have to wait for delivery. Frustrating for people with money burning holes in their pockets, but a good thing for the future of the industry and the country's economy. Without the export market there would soon be no big sports machines anyway; it would just not be economic to make them. Design would stagnate, factories wilt and fade away and in time the big machine would become as extinct as the Dodo. Which is what happened in America between the wars. They pioneered really big machines; in the early 20s the Harley, Indian and Henderson were technically superior to anything else in their class. In a land of vast distances and cheap petrol the motor car finally triumphed and the once-proud makes of motorcycles withered and died. You can blame the motor car but it could also be that the motorcycle became extinct in America for the same reason that the dinosaur became extinct . . . it just grew too big and clumsy. It is to be hoped that with the Americans calling the designer's tune in this country we shall not make the same mistake and produce dinosaurs on two wheels. The danger is real. Remember that the American motorcycle boom started when they discovered our speedy, agile three-fifties and five hundreds but with their "bigger and better" complex they soon talked us into six-fifties and now the seven-fifties.

Just why a country which has a two or three car per family economy should want motorcycles at all is a problem for psychologists. The motorcycle has perhaps become a symbol of virility. After you have made your pile and got two Pontiacs in the driveway you need something to demonstrate to yourself and others that you are still a young man at heart. . . .

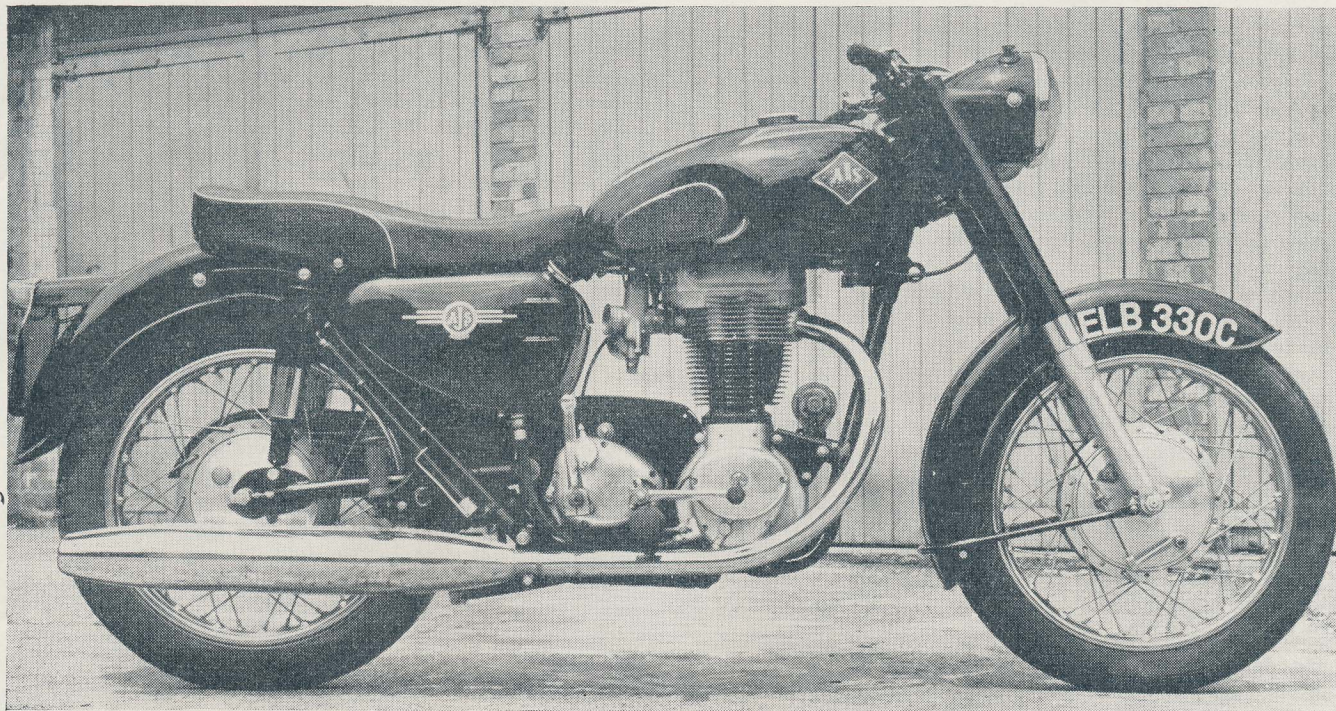
British factory entries in road racing

TWO, closely connected, factors were the most significant features of this year's 500 Miles Race at Castle Combe. For the first time British manufacturers officially entered the meeting . . . Cottons and Royal Enfields. Having put their head in the noose, so to speak, Cottons then provided the sensation of the meeting when Derek Minter and his co-rider, Peter Inchley, circulated at indecent speed to finish third overall, in the process winning the 250 c.c. class.

Enfields were not so impressive; their pair, Gordon Keith and John Rudge, finished fourth in their class, beaten by a 175 c.c. factory-entered Montesa and the privately owned and splendidly managed CB72 Honda of Brian Davis and Bill Scott. This can only make Enfields keener than ever to avenge defeat—and to salvage their slogan of "Britain's fastest 250."

Further factory support was evident in the very efficiently prepared Triumph Bonneville, one of which—entered by Syd Lawton—won outright. At least five, perhaps six, of these Bonneville were specially prepared by the factory in an all-out bid to win the event and then were entered through selected dealers. The same applies to a couple of B.S.A. Lightnings. Officially the B.S.A.-Triumph group does not support racing but next year the position may alter. Certainly, these Bonneville were the fastest machines present and the steering problems of recent years were, mercifully, a relic of the past—thanks to intensive work by development engineer Doug Hele. It was he who was in charge of racing in the last years of Norton's participation in racing, and he has transferred something of Norton's legendary roadholding to Triumphs—not a bad thing, either! The speed and reliability of the Bonneville were most impressive. The only one which failed through breakage was the other

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The Model 16 has "Norton" brakes, which are first-class, and a mediocre riding position caused chiefly by the too-low dualseat

Impressions of a modern three-fifty: the AJS 16

THE three-fifty these days is the odd man out in motorcycling. Nobody wants a three-fifty.* This is not an entirely new situation. Thirteen years ago Vic Willoughby was writing in *The Motor Cycle*: "But while each type [of motor cycle] has its own particular appeal, there can be little doubt that many present-day motor cyclists have 'over bought'. In paying for the potential performance which they may never use, they are apt to sacrifice qualities which would be appropriate to their everyday needs. Is the modern three-fifty standard capable of meeting the requirements of a large proportion of motor cyclists . . . ? If so, does it offer any advantages over its contemporaries of larger engine capacity? Has it any drawbacks?" And concluding with the evidence (top speed of 75 m.p.h. and "distinctly snappy" acceleration) provided by a hard-working three-fifty Ariel that ". . . the requirements of large numbers of motor cyclists fall within scope of the three-fifty . . . a good modern three-fifty will meet the needs of those riders in an economical manner provided it incorporates such desirable features as an absence of excessive weight, correct gearing, good engine balance with adequate flywheel effect, tireless engine performance and robust engine bearings in the interest of long life." All true in 1952, when those words were written, but only true in part today.

The odd thing is that 13 years ago, when a considerable proportion of the motorcycling population rode far and reasonably hard, the three-fifty would have been adequate for only say 90 per cent of riders; and now when nobody apart from the old men of the Vintage Club covers more than 25 miles non-stop . . . the average distance between cafés, as revealed in an exhaustive survey conducted by this journal . . . the three-fifty would be eminently suitable for 99.9 per cent of us. Yet it has sunk to new depths of unpopularity. I am certain that an interview with

* This is not strictly true. Fewer people want five-hundreds, according to the latest returns.

any of the keen owners who congregate of a night at the hot dog establishment on the southern end of Chelsea Bridge would reveal a profound indifference to (possibly ignorance of?) the desirability of correct gearing, good engine balance, adequate flywheel effect and robust engine bearings. They couldn't care less. Rather, I think, would they emphasize the desirability of a plenitude of chromium plating and polished light-alloy, a racing position, and a deafening exhaust note. Times change; motorcyclists change. Three-fifty motorcycles haven't changed. At least—not much.

Always a peculiarly British "in-between," the three-fifty had been made to feel unwelcome long before the 1960s. But in recent years its existence, never mind popularity, has been put in jeopardy by the 250 c.c. limit for learners; the vastly accelerated development of the two-fifty, both four and two-stroke, by British factories; the disinterest shown by the Japanese saviours of our sport and pastime in anything bigger than 250 c.c. (and, of course, the "500 c.c." standards they have set with their delectable two-fifties); and the superior performance of the British six-fifties. . . . No manufacturer has displayed zeal in developing the three-fifty. With perhaps the exception of B.S.A., it has not been subjected to any major facelift in 15 years. In most cases the engine has remained basically unchanged since the early '50s, with the frame receiving the fruits of any rethinking in the design department—and any change in that direction has invariably meant a heavier (possibly stronger) frame to depress still further the already moderate performance of the conventional three-fifty.

This is not a fitting place for a diatribe on the three-fifty, its decline and possible fall. I make these comments merely to put the 350 c.c. class in perspective. The Model 16 A.J.S. I have been using in recent weeks has an engine outwardly very similar to that of the G3/L I rode in '49 and '50. The flywheels and the bottom half generally are, I understand, more robust than in those days, having now a close affinity with the scrambles engines, but in the main you can take it that the present-day A.M.C. single traces its pedigree in a very direct line through at least 25 years. Nothing wrong in having a long pedigree, of course. With a straightforward proposition such as the large-capacity, single-cylinder i.c. engine, it can be assumed that the really big

strides in development were made over 25 years ago; the years since have been given to gilding this rumbustious lily. The G3/L, I remember, had a single downtube frame, no rear springing (though rear springing had recently become available), hairpin valve springs, light-alloy cylinder head, separate magneto and dynamo. The engine was quiet—much more so than contemporary B.S.A.s and Royal Enfields, for example—vibration was negligible and top speed nearly 75 m.p.h. The 1965 version (taking the A.J.S. as twin to a Matchless) is heavier, a little noisier, more vibratory—and, yes, a little faster.

Starting the 1965 Model 16 was simple. Turn the ignition switch to IGN, flood the Monobloc, close the air lever . . . kick. Usually one kick was enough. With the automatic ignition control at full retard the tickover was slow, even and reliable. The exhaust note was flat at tickover (because of the retarded spark) and remained so even when the A.J.S. was moving away through the gears, until decent r.p.m. were attained: it was the sort of note once referred to—in days when such antiques were manufactured and accorded some following—as typically “side-valve.” Which is another way of saying the exhaust note was pretty unimpressive.

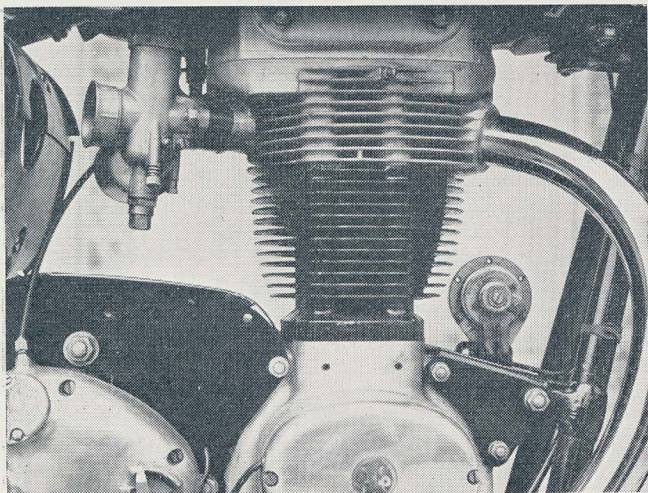
If I may return to talk of my “G3/L days,” I feel it pertinent to mention that at that time the A.M.C. riding position was considered rather good. The saddle was high—about 31in from the ground—the footrests were wide apart but not too far forward, the handlebar was slightly raised and gave a relaxed position for the hands. Later A.M.C. productions, in the '50s, maintained a reasonable standard—possibly not quite so well balanced as before, because the twin seat was a little lower than the saddle and, riding solo, effort was called for not to slide back at speed . . . but, generally, the position was acceptable. Now there is a deterioration: at least, so far as the three-fifties are concerned. The seat is low at 28in, the footrests are 4in forward of the nose of the seat, and the handlebar is wide and flat. The result is that one sits with a decided curve to the spine, the arms at fair stretch to the handlebar, the feet high and forward. At 60 to 70 m.p.h., with wind pressure exerting its effect, this curved-back posture is pronounced and finally becomes uncomfortable, giving rise to what I believe are known as pains in the lumbar region. And slumped, with little balance between rests, seat and handlebar, it became an effort not to let one's knees flap wide from the unslender tank; and so keeping them in became an additional strain. These complaints may seem to have undue weight in this short report, but I believe that riding position is vitally important if there is any intention of covering more than 50 miles in the day. (Something of the sort goes for cars but to less degree because cars are not, in the same way, an

extension of the driver's physique.) The A.J.S. encouraged what I used to hear described as a “sack of spuds” riding position: an inelegant way of putting it but remarkably descriptive. With relatively little of the rider's weight forward, the hard action of the Norton Roadholder fork was emphasized and the impression given was of light contact between front tyre and tarmac; which is not the most reassuring impression to have when you are out and about on wet and winding roads. Titch Allen, after a brief ride on the Model 16, described the steering as “remote,” but in a not particularly denigratory tone; he also found the riding position “just right.” Which proves something or other, I expect. The fork action, hard with plenty of damping control, was not responsive at moderate speeds and was obviously intended to give of its best at high speed; as the fork comes from the Norton side of the business its race heritage can be appreciated, but the value of that to a three-fifty ordinarily cruised at no more than 60 m.p.h. is open to doubt. The rear springing, conversely, provided plenty of movement and was sensitive to minor bumps and hollows in road surfaces.

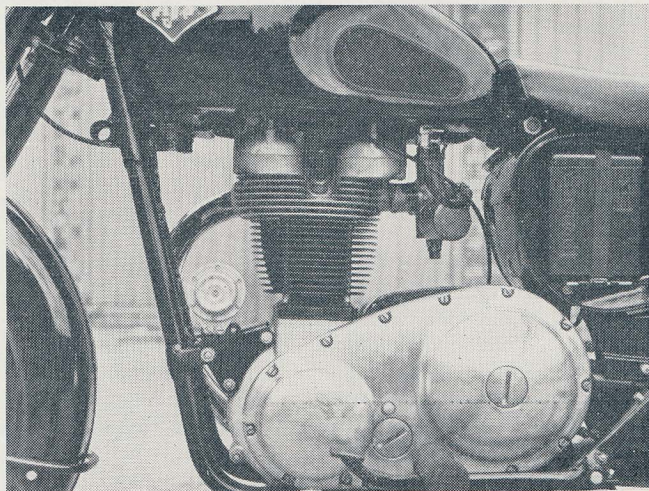
Cruising speed was usually about 60 m.p.h. when the engine was working easily and the exhaust note, though pronounced, was not deafening. Throttle opening at this speed was half to two-thirds; further opening did not produce much in the way of acceleration, which is to be expected with a relatively low-power engine, but increased exhaust noise to an irritating level. Near the end of the test, and after an hour's riding at almost full throttle, “blowing” began to occur between the cylinder head and barrel and worsened over the course of the following 100 (slow) miles to an audible bleep-bleep. Though the gasket appeared intact, from external examination, escaping compression could be clearly felt; possibly the cylinder head nuts had slackened. Cruising at above 60 m.p.h. showed up an unpleasing characteristic of the Model 16—vibration at the handlebar and footrests. A secondary effect of this vibration was a tendency for nuts and bolts and some other vital components to loosen—notably the retaining screw for the cover for the combined tool and battery compartment, which allowed the cover to fall off (and pass unnoticed by the rider, eardrums a-tingle from the exhaust's cacaphony), and the chrome-plated extensions in the front fork which unthreaded and danced free to expose the inner stanchions. A sympathetic resonance, not felt but quite audible, in the region of the headlamp gave clear indication of high revs.

The brakes were excellent. I am almost prepared to say they were better than in 1950 but recall that the front brake at that

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Appearance of the engine, apart from enclosure of the push rod tubes, has altered little in recent years



Leak-free chaincase is a great improvement on the old pattern. Casing for the compartment vibrated loose at speed and was never seen again

IMPRESSIONS OF THE MODEL 16

Continued from page 346

time, just modified to take a torque arm in place of the bolt-through arrangement from fork leg to brake plate, was good enough to squeal the front tyre when applied hard. The 8in "Norton" front brake in the Model 16, bigger than in earlier years, would do no more—but might, I suspect, continue to do so for a longer period without "fading." The rear brake, of similar size and like the front contained in a full-width hub, was sensitive and powerful; all that an efficient rear brake should be. Using it, I realized that a one-time mentor, Torrens of *The Motor Cycle*, had been a little off beam in suggesting in one of his weekly columns that a tiny foot lever could be matched in sensitivity and ultimate power with the conventional, big lever. He made a case for two levers sized in strict proportion—one say 6in long with the vertical measuring 1½in, the other 18in × 4½in—being capable of equal performance. In theory, yes . . . but not so in practice, for I found that the A.J.S. brake lever, conventionally big, allowed much more sensitive control than the mini arrangement fitted to my fearless old Vincent.

All other controls of the Model 16 were similarly satisfying to use. The clutch was light, cut the transmission absolutely cleanly, and never slipped. The gearbox was quiet and the lever moved in a tiny arc with the lightest action in the world. The stop light gave up lighting early on, but the headlight gave a reasonable beam which was entirely adequate at 55 m.p.h. The horn, proud product of Joseph Lucas, looked as if it was designed to bleep unseen, being of miniature size, undistinguished styling, and having a note in harmony with its appearance.

Petrol consumption, with quite hard driving, at 60/65 m.p.h., and revving briskly in the gears, worked out almost precisely to 65 m.p.g., the figure we have long held to be inevitable with most motorcycles driven near their limit. (And if that sounds far fetched, let any Bantam owner try pushing his two-stroke along at 50 m.p.h. . . .) At 45/55 m.p.h. consumption improved to about 80 m.p.g. Maximum speed, with some help from the wind, was 85 m.p.h.—"against," just over 70; mean speed, 78 m.p.h.

A few months back I wrote: "These A.M.C. singles . . . are made for somebody who does not exist. He was alive, of course, just a few years back, and he liked a design with the time-honoured decencies . . . but he died in the late 1950s, unnoticed, apparently by Associated Motor Cycles. . . ." At the time I had not ridden one of the machines thus airily dismissed for a number of years; now that I have, I see no reason to change that judgement. I liked the Model 16 well enough because it was well made and nicely finished—if you overlooked (how?) the execrable zig zag gold lining on the otherwise decently sombre tank—but nobody, surely, would advance it as any sort of champion to stem the Japanese tide? To attract a sophisticated market such as exists in this country? (It may of course be a woe in Zanzibar but we have only two readers in Zanzibar and are prepared to risk their displeasure.)

Incorporating the sum of modifications made to the basic product over many years, each change advertised as a significant improvement over last year's standards and faithfully echoed as such in Bowling Green Lane and other points further south, the latest A.J.S. is disappointingly akin to its forerunner of (let us say) 1950. In 1950 it was a beautiful motorcycle and second to none. Fifteen years on it shows its age too much for comfort. C.A.

THE Basingstoke Motorcycle Club and the British Drag Racing Association recently announced that the Second International Drag Festival at Blackbushe Airport has been restricted to Saturday, September 25 instead of September 25/26 to avoid clashing with the Sunbeam Club's meeting on the Sunday. A similar drag meeting will be held at R.A.F. Woodvale, Ainsdale, near Southport, Lancashire on Sunday, October 3, when the British public will have another chance to see the British and American quarter mile sprint kings.

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shall we
go?"

"let's go
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