

# Golden Oldies

Yowl: "To howl, a long, mournful cry" says my dictionary and that aptly describes one of the most distinctive exhaust notes in the business. If you have never heard the "yowl" of a Scott then I beg you to go out and find one, for to hear a Scott, of almost any age, go by with its exhaust emitting that distinctive, even thrilling note is to make a valuable addition to your motorcycle experience.

The Scott in our story is a 1930 Flying Squirrel, the oldest bike that we have yet used in the *Golden Oldies* series, and it was worth it just to stand in a garage in West London and gaze at the superb lines of what must have been one of the most esteemed motorcycles made in this country.

The Scott, as we consider it here is a 2-stroke twin, water-cooled and "positive" oiled, showing once again

A 1930 Scott Flying Squirrel brings a certain kind of music to *Bruce Preston's* ears.

that modern racing bikes have no exclusive rights to good ideas. It came in 500cc and 600cc guises and was basically unchanged, in concept at least, from 1909 until the company was liquidated in 1951, even beyond then a handful of Scotts were made, on and off, right up to this day, currently appearing in the form of the much-acclaimed Silk Scotts, still with the 2-stroke water-cooled engine and still giving me a chill up the spine whenever I hear one.

Scott recorded a number of TT wins before the war but alas, as the years went by the impetus given the company by its legendary founder, Alfred Scott was eroded by Norton, Velocette and Douglas. So by the 1930s its competition successes were fewer. But perhaps you have

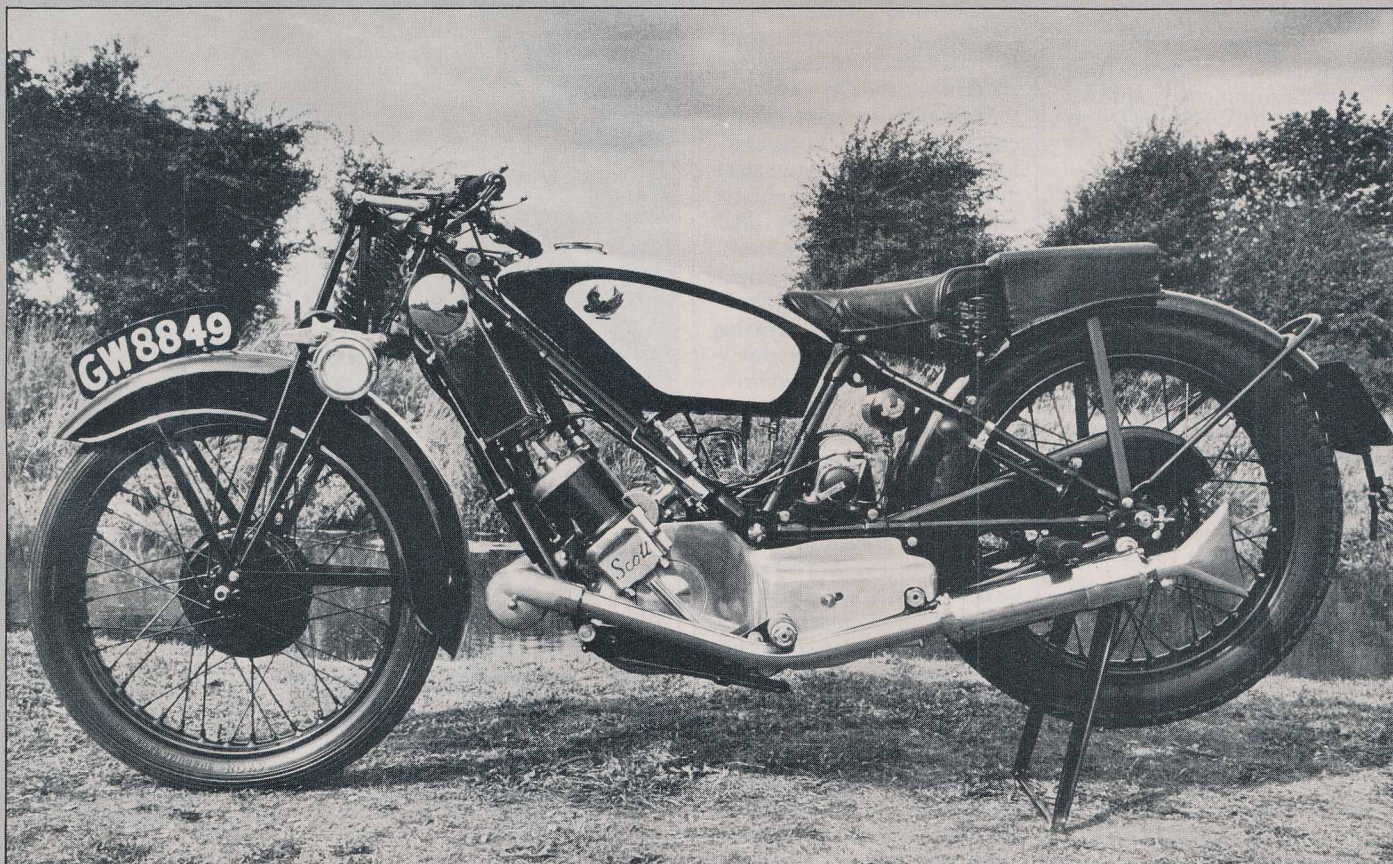
heard of the present day Scott Trial, generally considered to be just about the toughest trial in the sporting calendar? Did you know that it was started by Alfred Scott as a works outing for company employees and remained thus until 1930? But it must be many a year since a Scott went round the gruelling course.

The Scott, like the Velocette and Vincent, attracted a devotion that few other bikes have ever managed. Owners of all three marques suffer from constant mickey taking from outsiders who cannot imagine why they get so enthusiastic about what, to them, is just another motorcycle. I don't own a Scott and I have never even ridden one but I own a Velo and I know why they feel like they do, and, after

looking at Jim Best's Scott I could even get as keen as he is. Well, almost.

## THE OWNER JIM BEST

It was destined that Jim would be a Scott man before he could even utter the word 'motorcycle', for his father was fanatical about them and rode one, not without success, at Booklands and Donnington before the war. Given the infant Best's diet is not surprising that by the time he was 16 he had his own Scott and was sprinting it. In those days ordinary people could still afford to buy them and a sixteener could ride it on the road. That is the essence of Jim's thinking, instilled by his father, that the bike should be ridden to and from events that one bike should serve all needs, and that early parental influence remains to this day, although to be practical Jim uses a Velocette



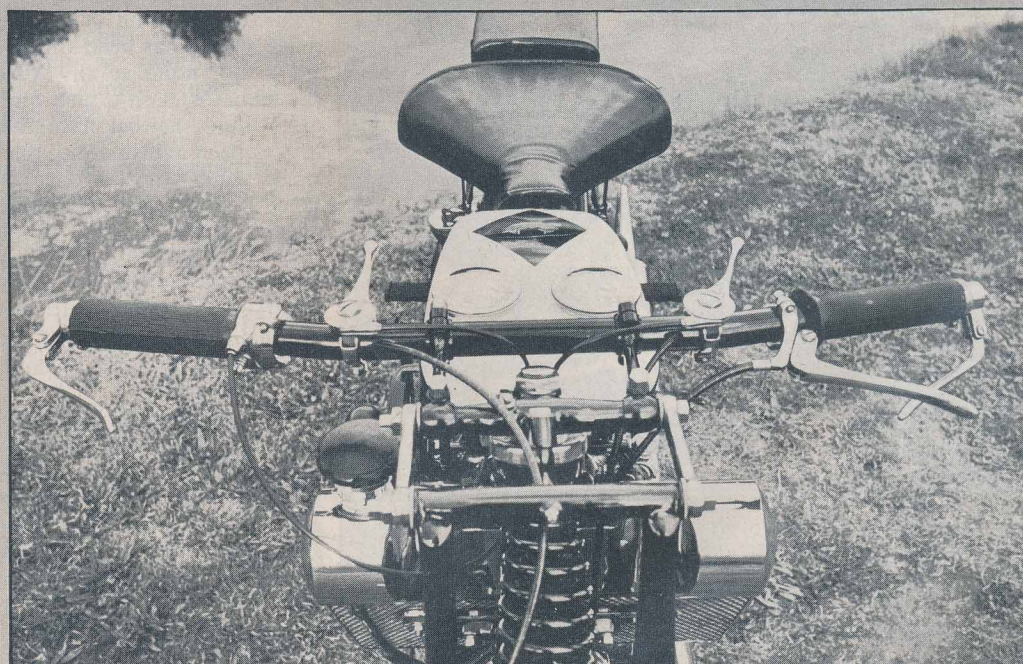
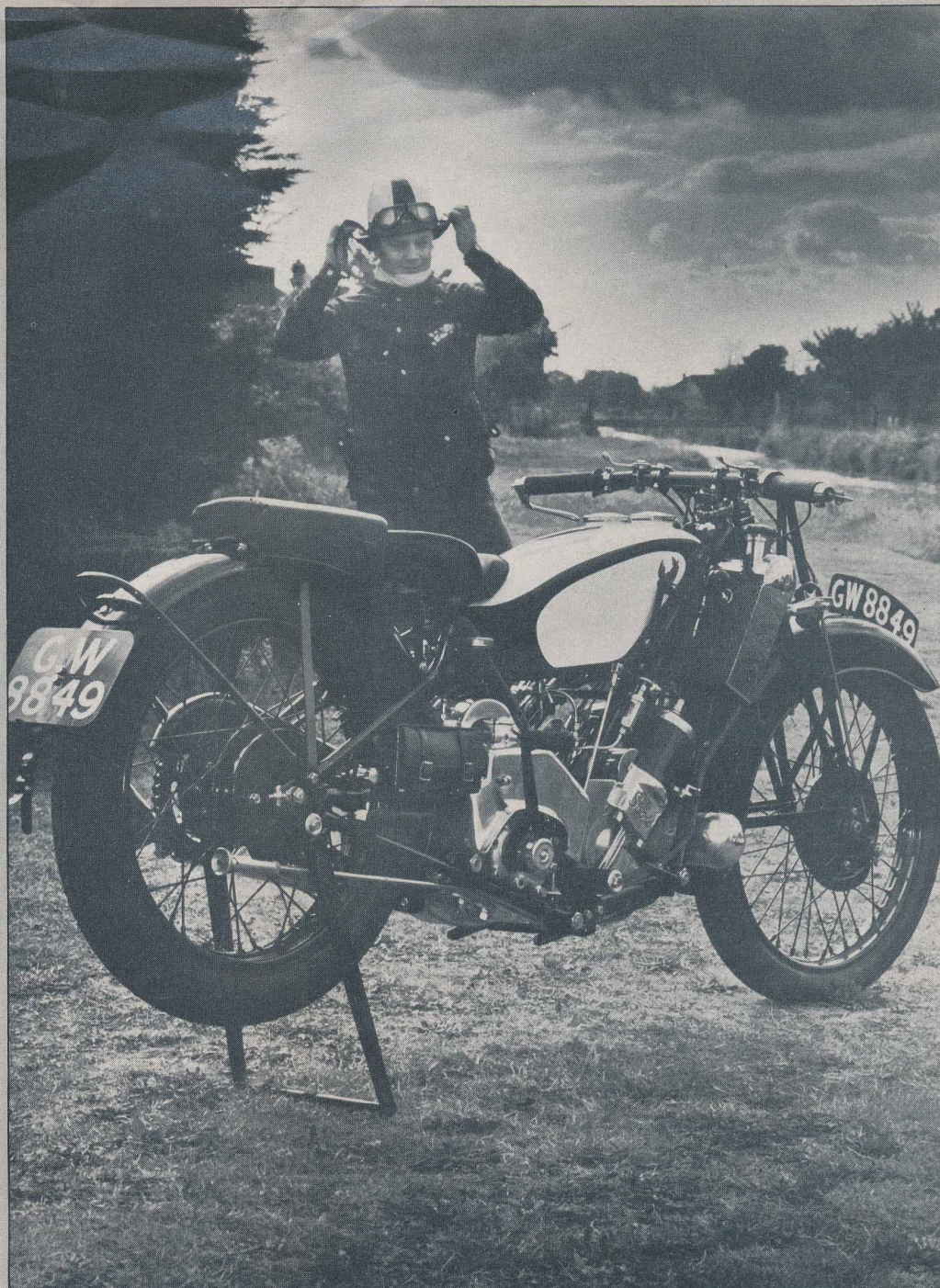


and an MZ for his everyday motorcycling.

The survival of the Flying Squirrel in our story is one of the classic stories. Jim owned a Scott 16 years ago and while having a pint on one of his regular visits to the Isle of Man, he heard of a Scott in some chap's garden shed. Now in those days you could still get bikes such as this quite cheaply so there was no point in dragging a heap all the way back home so they took the parts they needed and left the rest there. Ten years later it was a different story. Jim no longer had his Scott but longed for another one. So did a million others and they were nowhere to be found. So he went back to the Island, looked up the old boy who he'd seen before and asked what had happened to the bike under the lobster pots in his shed. "It's right where you left it" he replied. A delighted Jim offered him £2 but he said it was too much and gave £1 back!

So now he was a Scott owner again but the bike had been lying there since 1932 and suffered accordingly, but at least it was a start. Now the rebuild began. Some parts were corroded beyond redemption and he had to scratch around for replacements. Other parts he made himself. Spares *are* available but are not cheap. You can still get a new radiator for the Scott but it has over 1,000 tubes in it and it's hand made so at £160 it is not *really* expensive. This is made by Marston Radiators of Coventry. Pistons are 'one-offs' made by Pearsons of Birmingham and cost £46 a pair including a spare set of rings. Given that as a base, the 3-year rebuild cost quite a bit but the end product is almost priceless. A chap pestered its owner to sell him the bike at whatever price he cared to name and still can't understand how he could refuse £2,000. I can.

The finished product is quite superb. I don't profess to be an expert on the marque but it is difficult to imagine a more original or perfect example elsewhere. More important, true to his upbringing, the bike is ridden to events and used as a serious motorcycle. It is the 498cc model, denoted by the FZ engine marking, and is the bread and butter version of



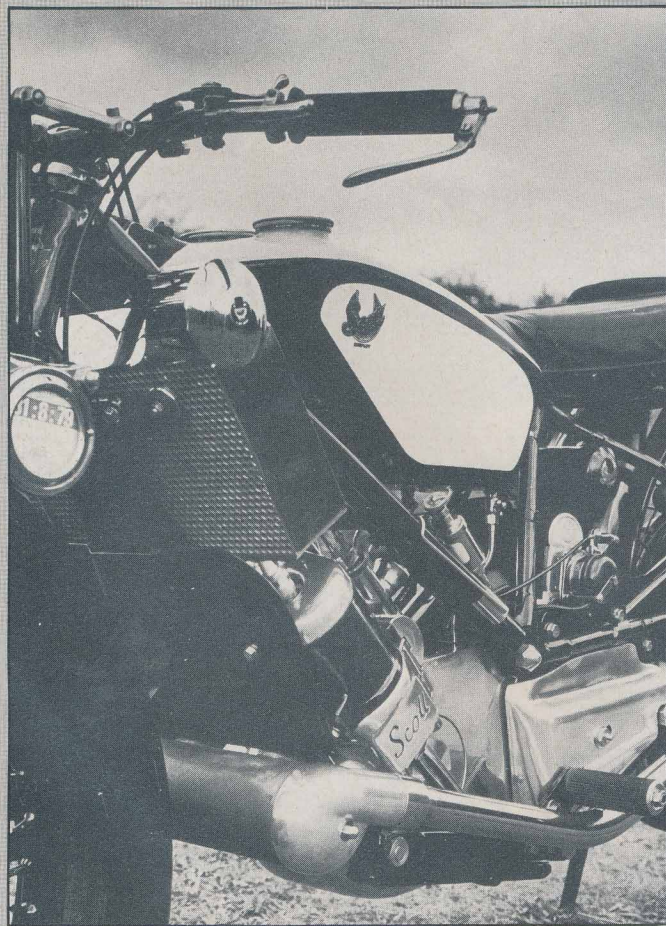


the time, the Flying Squirrel Tourer. When it was first made it cost £66 (the 600 was £2 extra) and for another £7 you could have had the De Luxe model with deeply valanced mudguards and a number of other refinements. That did not include a headlight, of course. *That* would cost extra and could be either magdyno by Lucas, BTH magneto or acetylene, depending upon how much you wanted to pay. Our model did not have any of them. You had to pay extra for other things, too. The chain oiler from a reservoir behind the engine and serving the primary and magneto chain, air cleaner, steering damper, Scott silencer as opposed to the Gold Medal version fitted as standard, speedometer, horn (bulb type) and a host of other parts that did not come as standard could add 50% to the cost of the bike. The version as built had few of these but it did have the most superb road tax disc holder, nickel plated. A work of art.

The end result as restored by Jim Best is a bike fit for

a king. It was no startling performer, managing a honest 70mph, but not much more without tuning, but it was the manner of its going that gave it such majesty. Finished in black frame with cream tank and black inset it will go down in history as one of the classic motorcycles of all time. Not, as I have said, because of what it did but because of the way it did it and the way its maker, Alfred Scott, sold the idea.

Lest we be considered to be wearing rose tinted spectacles let me conclude by mentioning one or two of its less-than-perfect parts. The oiling system was positive by a Pilgrim pump, but the plain fact is it was a lousy system and Jim's Scott uses a petroil mixture and a hand pump to give the occasional squirt to the big end. Then there is the Amal-Binks three jet carburettor. Jim professes to have got his working acceptably but most who have them throw them away and fit something more efficient. It is not all perfection but it really is an attractive motorcycle, isn't it?



*Jim Best's pristine Scott is a fine example of what a dedicated preservationist can achieve, although the bike is not actually factory stock. Spares are still available for most Scotts, but the complex radiator has to be hand-made and would set you back £160!*

# THE PROOF OF THE POUNDING MOTO GUZZI V50

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## HONDA CX500

*Charlie Harris and Eric Silberman assess the performance of two little shafties during a year of ownership.*

### HONDA

Unlike my friend's V50 which has a good thrashing on the continent, the CX500 can offer no exciting fables of high-speed jaunts from Marseilles' red-light district back home to where the Mafia hold court in darkest Bedfordshire. All, or rather most of its progress has been from the depths of rural Reigate to (gay?) debonair Rathbone Place and *Which Bike?*'s West End headquarters, a daily trip of some sixty miles. That's meant a total of 6,000 miles spread over nine months and there follows a nail-biting, breath-taking report on how the bike's coped with such an arduous task.

Firstly, with hand on heart, I can say that my commuter express has not used a drop of oil in all the miles that it has been thrashed — no, none at all! Also the radiator hasn't seen any extra fluid, neither have the brakes been adjusted, not one single bulb or switch has failed, either. But what has amazed me most, that in all these months the machine has been used, is that I have constantly ridden with the headlight on and it is as bright today as it was when it was brand new.

The engine is really loose now and performs magnificently except for slight vibration around 65mph which affects the mirrors with annoying regularity. (This could be something to do with the tappets which, it seems, open up after adjust-

ment). The only real luxury I have allowed myself is a pair of Avon tubeless tyres and what a difference they make, especially in the wet. The original Bridgestone "grip-less specials" sent the fear of God into me every time it rained, but that could be a little unfair, has anyone else been skating in Trafalgar Square, homeward bound on a wet Friday night? I'm sure that all those that know that particular piece of evil will understand!

Those that ride a CX in slowish traffic usually remark on how heavy the steering is and how white lines and ridges effect the handling of the bike. But when I changed to the Avons the handling was transformed, the steering was so much lighter than before and this, of course, made for easier manouevring and greater safety. So much so in fact that I hardly regard even the thickest of white lines as a hazard any more.

Braking distance has been improved in the wet, with the rear wheel hanging on where before it would have locked up, but grabbing a hand-full of twin discs up front can now be done with great confidence.

Whilst on holiday, various riders used my personal smoker, including former Editor John Nutting, who can be very hard on test bikes but even he failed to burn out the clutch after pulling continual standing ¼ miles at Santa Pod; other bikes might not have been so robust!

Over the last 18 months,