

## Monthly Newsletter October 2020

We have a bit of a bumper edition for you this month, reading time could be extended to five minutes instead of the usual two although as I'm a slow reader I could easily extend it to ten. There seems to be a two steps forward and three back approach to our pastime, last month I mentioned possible light at the end of the tunnel, this turned out to be a pool of water giving reflection to the torch. Don't get me wrong there are a few things happening in motorsport which are of a positive nature but generally speaking it's not getting any easier. Perhaps we should all be looking at it as a chance to get that vehicle properly ready for an event as opposed to in some cases treating the event as a "work in progress"

Our Chairman Pete Cooper has been busy so I will now hand you over to him.....

*.....I hope that everybody is keeping safe and well. Just had reports that there are some cases of Covid-19 in the Launceston area today.*

*It does seem that this Covid – 19 has put a stop to almost all events. I have attended two hill climbs at Wiscombe Park for Torbay Motor Club. It's very strange not to have any public. The rules were very strict, only two persons at each point. These two events were run before the face mask requirements. The events were very well supported by competitors which was surprising as the cost of entry with less than 4 minutes on the hill had been raised to help pay for all the additional paperwork that was required.*

*A couple of weeks ago I attended an Autocross at Kilmington for Torbay Motor Club which was run on the new face mask regulations. The two day event was excellent and well supported by the competitors. The only problem was the dust. By lunch time they reduced it only two cars on the track as we could not see the cars at the finish line. Even with only two cars on the track with the speed of the specials they were catching up their own dust.*

*With the dust it was a good excuse for a few beers in the evening to wash it down.*

*The Sunday morning began with plenty of sunshine but a very sharp frost on the ground. The Clerk of the Course, Nick Fielding, and the Motorsport Steward decided to move the track at the Finish and one other corner. This did help for a*

*short while as only two cars were on the track at any one time. The dust soon appeared and with a light wind did not disperse very quickly. The Doctor took pity on me as I was on the Finish Flag. She said that I kept disappearing in the dust cloud. She then presented me with a special NHS face mask, much better.*

*Torbay Motor Club have the last Autocross of the season on the 17<sup>th</sup> / 18<sup>th</sup> October. This time it will be the mud I expect with the present weather conditions.*

*A few clubs have run limited trials on a single venue basis, with only cars. The single venues have given rise to driver only competitor's which may be helping the entries.*

*All the classic trials have been cancelled. The MCC Exeter Trial is running but through the night only to deter the public!!!!*

*I think that we must be looking to run the Launceston Trial in March. As it is a single venue then we should not have problems as long as we can get marshals all signed on electronically well before the event. We will have time to prepare all the other paperwork. I am against the trial becoming a Classic as this would lower the standards of the true Classic. I would look at the idea that if ACTC setup a single venue Classic Trials Championship, just a subject to think about?*

*We will have to look at all our other events later in the year. May be we could run some evening trials in 2021 especially sporting trials, say four hills run 5 times.*

*I am afraid that our sport like all other events will be still under the control of the Government for 2021 and we can only be guided by them as to how we run our events. Let's hope we can make 2021 better for sport.*

*As I am involved with Agricultural Shows things are not looking good for these events. Already two big events have been cancelled one in September 2021 as they are afraid that they may have to cancel at the last moment with very high outlays.*

*We have managed to take a five day holiday in the New Forest. Whilst we were there the big boat show at Southampton was cancelled by the council the night before it was due to open. The cost to Princess Yachts was millions. Such a shame as it stopped me buying a new cabin cruiser for my retirement.*

*A large fairground was also stopped just prior to opening. I think these cancellations will continue at least into the first part 2021.*

*I have been out with Phil Tucker MCC today looking at Hills as they are preparing to run a three day event on the last week of June to celebrate 120 years on the MCC. We may have four hills in our area. When more details become available I will let you know.*

*Please all keep safe and well.*

*Pete Cooper    Chairman*

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Our Richard Simpson has kindly done an article for the newsletter and I would like to congratulate him and better half Kate on recently tying the knot , and although it wasn't their intention getting married with only six in total certainly keeps the costs down.

## Triking

I was a works rider once.

Yes, just the once. And, actually, more of a passenger than a rider. But none-the-less, I took part in a motorsport event in a vehicle entered by the company which made it. And I was paid.

It was early in 1987, and as staff writer on Classic Bike magazine, one of my duties was to pick up the phone when it rang. You could never be sure what you were going to get on the other end: calls ranged from a guy wanting you to talk him through resetting the valve-timing on a BSA M20, to a very drunk New Zealander who launched into a racist tirade because we were carrying advertising from Kawasaki. How could we, after what 'The Japs' had done in WWII?

We had some fun with that one, passing him around the office from extension to extension to 'escalate his complaint to the highest level' (same people putting on progressively posher voices until he thought he was speaking to the managing director). His phone bill must have been enormous!

This time, the caller introduced himself as "Tony Divey" and asked if anyone would be interested in passengering a Triking in the Lands End Trial that Easter.

I knew what a Triking was. Almost 10 years previously I'd been working at Moto Guzzi dealer Three Cross Motorcycles when a customer came in brandishing a copy of Motorcycle Mechanics, featuring an article on what looked like a replica of a Morgan three-wheeler, but with the driveline from a Moto Guzzi Le Mans. This was the first prototype Triking.

He thought it would be great because he could drive it wearing a WWII flying helmet...but to be honest I thought it was a bit of a waste of a good motorcycle. I assured him that, if he got one, we could help him with parts and servicing, but I don't think that he ever did.

The Guzzi connection was enough to make Tony's invitation attractive for me though. Tony invited me over to the Triking works in rural Norfolk to familiarise myself with the product the next weekend.

What a man he was; an impatient visionary. What was important was very important, and anything else was an irritating detail.

Before inventing the Triking (designing doesn't really seem to be an adequate verb) he had worked for Colin Chapman at Lotus. He described Chapman as "Very annoying, because he could always do anything better than anyone else," which I realised was a compliment of the highest order in Tony's rather unusual world view.

I was introduced to the mount we would use in the trial: registration CNG415T, which rang a bell. Yes, this was the original Triking as featured in Motorcycle Mechanics. But little was left of the original vehicle. The 850 Le Mans engine was replaced with one from a 1000cc Spada, and the Guzzi gearbox had been ditched in favour of a five-speed unit from a Toyota car, which had wider ratios and the convenience of a reverse. Undergoing trial in the Trial would be some lightweight front mudguards and Hagon shock-absorbers.

Tony asked for my help in checking speed calibration. In vain, I pointed out that the speedo on my personal Moto Morini 500 wasn't renowned for its accuracy, but I soon ascertained that what was really being checked was my courage. Self-styled "middle-aged hooligan" Tony took off in the Triking down Norfolk roads that he knew well and I knew not at all. My Morini was not a powerful bike, but handled exceptionally well for a motorcycle of its time. I was scraping footrests through bends as Tony kept up to what he estimated was 60 mph. I began to realise that, just maybe, the Triking wasn't a complete waste of a good engine. That induction over, Tony then let me loosen my own in a customer's vehicle. It was a hilarious experience which must have been about as close as you could get to piloting a First World War fighter plane without leaving the ground. The hilarity came to an abrupt end when the clutch went soggy. Investigation revealed that correct clutch cable adjustment was one of Tony's irritating details. There was so much free-play on the thing that the nipple had fallen out of the pedal. Putting it back involved a roadside head-first dive into the narrow confines of the Triking's footwell.

Returning to the 'factory' in Marlingford, I agreed to meet Tony at what seemed to be a suspiciously early time on Good Friday morning. We are due to start from an airfield near Basingstoke at 10 pm. Surely, it won't take us all day to get there?

It will, in Tony time. First, we stop at Snetterton race circuit to have a coffee with his girlfriend...if I recall correctly, her family actually owned the circuit! Then, Tony revealed, we needed to visit a customer in Surrey who was having problems with his Triking before making our way to the start..

Getting there involved a character-testing drive on the M25. Tony maintained that the best way to avoid being stopped for speeding was to keep in the nearside lane until the last minute, then swerve out and back in again. Oh, what fun, with what seemed to be an endless succession of 22.5 inch truck wheels whistling past my left ear.

Eventually, we arrived at a splendid property in the heart of the stockbroker belt, to a friendly greeting from the Triking owner and his wife. We attended to a minor issue with the Guzzi engine (my Three Cross Motorcycles experience coming in handy), and prior to departure the stockbroker gent took me to one side and said: "You know, Tony really is a lovely chap but he really shouldn't be allowed to sell anything to anyone."

Indeed.

Conscious that time was passing and daylight fading, we press on for the start. Darkness falls. The Triking has close-mounted Cibé Oscar headlamps which cast a searing light down the M3. It also has a new, slight misfire, which rapidly develops via some coughing and banging, into an engine stop.

I look at Tony.

“We’ve run out of petrol,” he says. “I didn’t bother to connect the fuel gauge,” he adds.

Obviously an irritating detail.

I’m speechless

“Not to worry” he adds. “There’s a tin of petrol behind your seat.”

Indeed there is. It’s a tin that once held a whole litre of brake fluid. It gets us as far as the next exit where we just make it onto the hard shoulder. What happens next is one of those bizarre incidents that happen on the road at night. A convoy of big black Mercedes cars come flying down the off ramp, stop amid much screeching and shouting at the roundabout at its foot, then reverse back onto the motorway. I notice they have CD diplomatic plates.

Weird!

All this is very interesting, but won’t get us to the start. I can see the yellow light of a Shell station in the far distance, so clamber down the embankment and start running towards it, clutching the petrol tin.

A car pulls up beside me and a Glaswegian voice asks “Are ye OK there, son?”

Inside the car are three of the toughest looking blokes I’ve ever seen, all bare muscled arms, tattoos and lived-in faces.

Gangster hit men? No, paratroopers, and bless them, they drop me off at the petrol station, where I squeeze 48p worth of four-star into Tony’s tin and run back to the Triking. One lung-bursting ascent of the embankment later, and we’ve got just enough fuel to get us to the Shell station, where we fill up and head off for the start point.

By now we are rather more than fashionably late, rush through scrutineering, and Tony tells me that we are not just competitors, but he is also a travelling marshal.

This means that we are the last ‘motorcycle’ away (the Triking is a motorcycle as it has fewer than four wheels), and we have to try to shepherd any waifs and strays from the two and three-wheel entry that we may encounter during the drive. We are also both knackered and already short of sleep.

The actual event has been mostly obscured from my memory. Lack of sleep does that to you! It runs through the night, taking competitors across Wiltshire, Somerset, Devon and Cornwall before ending not at Lands End, but in a tacky resort in Penzance on Easter Saturday, taking in a number of observed sections along the way, the earliest of which are done at night. Snapshots remain in my memory: passing Stonehenge by moonlight, helping a sidecar crew with a puncture by the light of a phone box, a giant sheep on a wet Exmoor road (a hallucination, I think), and being launched from the passenger compartment of the Triking when Tony simultaneously advised me to shift my handholds and dropped the clutch at 6000 rpm during a restart test on the first section.

A rutted track revealed two serious deficiencies in the Triking as a cross-country vehicle.

One is a lack of ground clearance and the other is that for all Tony’s efforts with the steering, the back wheel will inevitably fall into one rut or another and stop the trike in its tracks. Fuelled by the desperation of the situation I dismount and find the strength to lift the back of the 780 lb Triking and its inventor up by the exhaust-pipes, like a giant wheelbarrow. I can only push so far though, and we end up extricating it by both dismounting and turning the front wheels by hand!

Daylight made things a little easier, but dawn coincided with the notorious one-in-three incline Beggars Roost section, where a constant stream of pea-gravel rolling under the rear Avon Mudpluggger motorcycle trials tyre created a traction-free zone for the compulsory restart.

As the morning progressed, we had a front-wheel puncture which put us out of time for a trophy, but we were actually cleaning sections without mishap. Our greatest triumph was Blue Hills Mine, a path up a Cornish cliff, which is so tough that a winch is installed at the top to drag failed competitors up and out of the way. And that was the final section of the trial, conquered in fine style with the cheers of a crowd echoing in our ears.

With that moment of unearned glory, my career as a works rider was at an end. We made our way to the finish, signed off, and...

What then followed was another ordeal. Prebooking somewhere to stay in Cornwall on the Easter holiday had been another one of Tony's irritating details. There was no room at the inn, not the Jamacia Inn, or any other inn. We headed off for my parent's place in Dorset, but fortunately found a pub with rooms and dinner on the way. Another hilarious high-speed drive back to Norfolk followed the next morning, then I mounted my faithful Morini and headed back west to Peterborough, home and bed.

I met up with Tony a week later to 'fake' some pictures for the Classic Bike feature, then we lost touch. I saw him race the Triking a few times at tarmac hill climbs, although we never really spoke again. But when I read his obituary in October 2013, I still felt a sense of loss. Middle-aged hooligan, inventor, engineer and so much more.

Perhaps the most fitting tribute to him was Morgan relaunching its own three-wheeled 'cyclecar', complete with a 'not a Harley-Davidson' motorcycle engine from S&S Performance. If you can't beat 'em, join 'em!

Richard Simpson

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So now over to our Club President Robin Moore

### **Alvis and the other lady in my life, Part 5**

*Our own involvement in the Golden Jubilee event added an additional 500 miles to the 2,000 mile tour, as we of course had to drive to London for the start and return home from the Midlands at the end. And so it was that we set forth from Camelford the day before in order to stay with friends at Walton-on-Thames and be near the city and have an easy run to the start venue the following morning, - The National Science Museum in South Kensington. It was here that we first met up with the other Alvis crews, who like us were in it for the whole tour, the majority of whom we had never met before. It was a privilege to meet the legendary pre-war racing driver SCH (Sammy Davis) who was the start marshal and flagged us away when it was our turn to leave.*

*So we headed North on the first day, I think it fair to say that we felt truly excited in being part of this historic occasion,- a one off never to be repeated. It's what memories are made of and lasting friendships made. The full story is too much to recount in an article such as this, so I'll just highlight some of the anecdotal and amusing incidents that took place.*

*I remember we were blessed with beautiful weather throughout, the only time we experienced any moisture for a very short while was in the Borders, which is quite usual in that area of Scotland. Many places of interest were detailed in our route instructions, which one was free to visit or not. It was all very flexible except for where special arrangements had been made, not that these were in any way compulsory.*

*I recall the first special gathering was the day we were scheduled to arrive in Keighley, Yorkshire, where the mayor had arranged a civic reception and we received a very warm welcome from the large crowd that turned out to greet us.*

*Marjorie and I in our Alvis Grey Lady entered Scotland at Canter Bar and made on towards Edinburgh. It was here that provision had been made for us to park together in a reserved area near Princess Street and in view of the Castle. We were scheduled to have a couple of hours here and savour its fabled thoroughfare and the wonderful municipal flower gardens. It was a memorable day for many reasons, and as we arrived and parked up, - and it was purely coincidental, a 21 gun salute was fired from the Castle in honour of the Queen's Birthday.*

*I don't recall how many of us were together at this stage , but about a couple of dozen or so Alvis arrived more or less together at the toll bridge to cross the Firth of Forth, and faced with the queue our chaps in the Speed 20 Alvis who were responsible for keeping everything running smoothly throughout the tour sprung into action and did a special deal with the man in the toll booth which allowed us all to cross in convoy without stopping,- a magic moment , never to be repeated,- a historical moment for sure.*

RHTM

to be continued

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And finally ..... I am currently reading the book by Roy Calley titled The World Water Speed Record. I used to think that motorsport could be dangerous enough until I read this, achieving great speeds on water is evidently much more dangerous, the lives lost are quite staggering. The name Campbell is synonymous with both land and water speed records, but I didn't know that Malcolm Campbell (father of Donald) was an MCC member, in 1906 he entered the Lands End Trial and won a Gold award three years in a row. ( However, according to the MCC website the first L E was 1908, whatever ?) So this could be a case of throwing down the gauntlet to many a multiple Gold award winners and certainly those winners of Triple's . Are there any members out there fancying their hand at becoming holders of both Land and Water speed records at the same time. To say you need deep pockets is an under statement, the money spent on winning these coveted trophies is eye watering Along with in many cases the shortened life expectancy.

I have had to rule myself out of ever joining this elite band, the housekeeping budget would need to be severely stretched, although I can't complain too much regarding medals won (and stupidly lost) but it also brings to mind the happenings of events some 20 or more years ago when it was decided that three of us from LNCCMC would enter a team in the Lands End Trial. A catchy name was dreamt up , "All Bent and " . The other two members of the team being Warin Kelly and Joe Caudle, two Austin Sevens and a class 8 Torum. The kiss of death was firmly blown our way, I don't think we ever managed to get all three cars to the actual start line, at one point I only made it to the end of my lane, Joe's car developed an array of both mechanical and electrical faults , Warin from memory spent a considerable time doing battle with windscreen wipers in heavy rain to no avail, there was even talk of my car being exorcised, even that would have had to be carried out in the garage in case it didn't turn up for the ceremony. And to be honest nothing has really changed. Hey ho.

All for this month J.T.

Please send your contributions to [billjan299@gmail.com](mailto:billjan299@gmail.com)

This publication comes with the usual disclaimer.