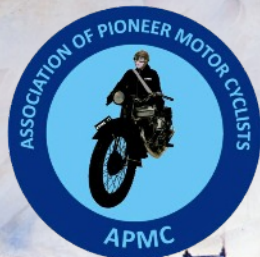


# THE PIONEER MOTOR CYCLIST

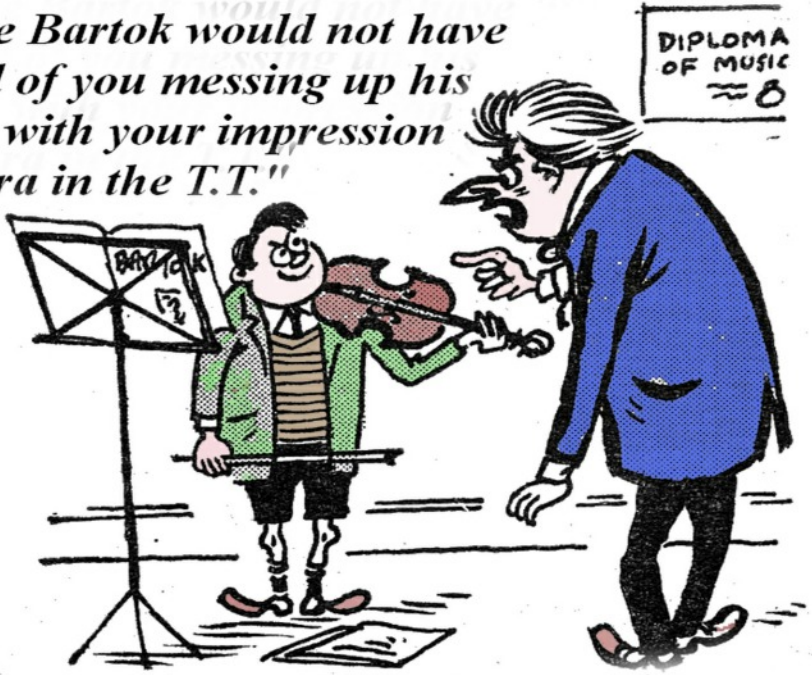


*Association of Pioneer Motor Cyclists. Founded in 1928  
Incorporating the Pre 1914 TT Riders Re-union*



*Autumn Email Supplement 2020*

*"I'm sure Bartok would not have approved of you messing up his concerto with your impression of a Gilera in the T.T."*



*"To what do you attribute your Terrific Lap Record to, Mr. Wain?" "EPSOM SALTS mate!"*



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*A pic. from my 1961 European tour.. It was somewhere in Switzerland. We found plenty of challenging road surfaces by taking to the side roads.. When going over the St Gothard pass we were scraping our fairings on the hairpin bends. We enjoyed it that much, that we went back down, and had a second go. There was a lot less traffic in those days.*

*The French camping sites in those days were not of a very high standard. This one at Le Touquet one of the better ones. They had doors on the toilets.*

*Geoff*



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[bonhams.com/autumnsale](http://bonhams.com/autumnsale)

## The Andy Tiernan Classics motorcycle Calendar is here once again.

Mike Harbar is once again the artist & has done 6 pieces of artwork for our 2021 calendar

Proceeds from the sale of our calendars go to the East Anglian Air Ambulance.

Our last calendar raised £2,022 to help keep them flying!



Postage price is :

United Kingdom - 1 calendar including 2nd class postage is £11.00

European Union - 1 calendar including European postage is £17.00

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For further details please go to our website calendars page  
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 (this will updated for the 2021 calendar shortly).

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## **An Irish Incident**

*The Motor Car Journal, March 2nd, 1901*

A certain young gentleman, who is the owner of a motor-tricycle and trailing car, and who is notorious for travelling through the streets of Dublin at excessive speeds, was recently motoring down one of the principal thoroughfares of the suburbs of Dublin, namely, Rathmines Road, without a passenger in the trailer. A constable stepped out from the pavement when the said gentleman was within some fifty or sixty yards of him, put up his hand and motioned him to stop.

The constable, who, by the way, was a "Fine Broth of a Boy" standing some 6 ft. 3 in. in his stocking feet, said, in the richest of brogues, " Now, my foine young jintleman, you can't be racing through the streets at thirty miles an hour, frightening ladies, children, and horses."

The motorist stated that he was not going at a pace which exceeded the legal limit (which in Ireland is six miles an hour within the Dublin Metropolitan Police district), but the constable insisted that he must have the motorist's name and address, which, when given, showed that the offender belonged to Her Majesty's forces. The Constable seemed rather taken aback and was all apologies, and, calling the motorist by his rank, stated that he was very sorry to have stopped him, but he would have to be very careful for the future. The motorist in his turn insisted that the constable should report the matter, and that if he did not he would report the constable for having stopped him without any cause. Further, he (the motorist) was of opinion that the constable had no idea as to what speed he was travelling, and the best thing the constable could do was to get into the trailer to see how fast the motor could go.

At first the constable refused, but the persuasive powers of the motorist prevailed, and the two went careering along at something like fourteen miles an hour, to the great surprise of the constable and to the delight of the passers-by at seeing a " Limb of the Law " being towed along in a trailer, the experience being funny in the extreme.

But where the joke comes in was when they arrived at the Phoenix Park, which was some five miles from the starting point, the motorist politely asking the constable to get out as he had a call to make, and when he went away he unfortunately forgot to come back. What happened to the constable after we cannot say, but we fancy that he returned to his beat a sadder and, perhaps, a wiser man.

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## DON'T DRINK AV-GAS

Dave and Jim were a couple of drinking buddies who worked as aircraft mechanics in Melbourne, Australia.

One day the airport was fogged in and they were stuck in the hangar with nothing to do.

Dave said, 'Man, I wish we had something to drink!'

Jim says, 'Me too. Y'know, I've heard you can drink jet fuel and get abuzz. You wanna try it?'

So they pour themselves a couple of glasses of high octane booze and get completely smashed.

The next morning Dave wakes up and is surprised at how good he feels.

In fact he feels GREAT! NO hangover! NO bad side effects.

Nothing!

Then the phone rings. It's Jim. Jim says, 'Hey, how do you feel this morning?'

Dave says, 'I feel great, how about you?'

Jim says, 'I feel great, too. You don't have a hangover?'

Dave says, 'No that jet fuel is great stuff -- no hangover, nothing. We ought to do this more often..'

' Yeah, well there's just one thing.'

'What's that?'

'Have you broke wind yet?'

'No.'

'Well, DON'T - cause I'm in New Zealand '



## MIXING DOPE FUEL FOR SPRINTING

Methanol 95% Ammonia 4% and Castrol R 2% was what I mixed for my fuel. Ammonia helped cold starting and the Castrol R stopped the carb slide from sticking. I always mixed it outside because of the fumes (Not good for you.). One day the weayher was not good so I mixed it just inside the workshop doors, No side effects. Next day I had a slitting headache. I went to work in my car, but my head became worse. I decided to go back home. Half way home it got worse. I pulled into a side-street and parked up. I then passed out. I was close to a chip shop but nobody seemed to notice. Probably for the best for they might of reported me for being drunk. I woke up three hours later, and feeling slightly better, I drove home and went to bed. The effects were similar but worse than the Hangovers I had experienced in my past. It must have been the Methanol. I never mixed it indoors again. **It's lethal!**





*They both died young but not on motorcycles.*

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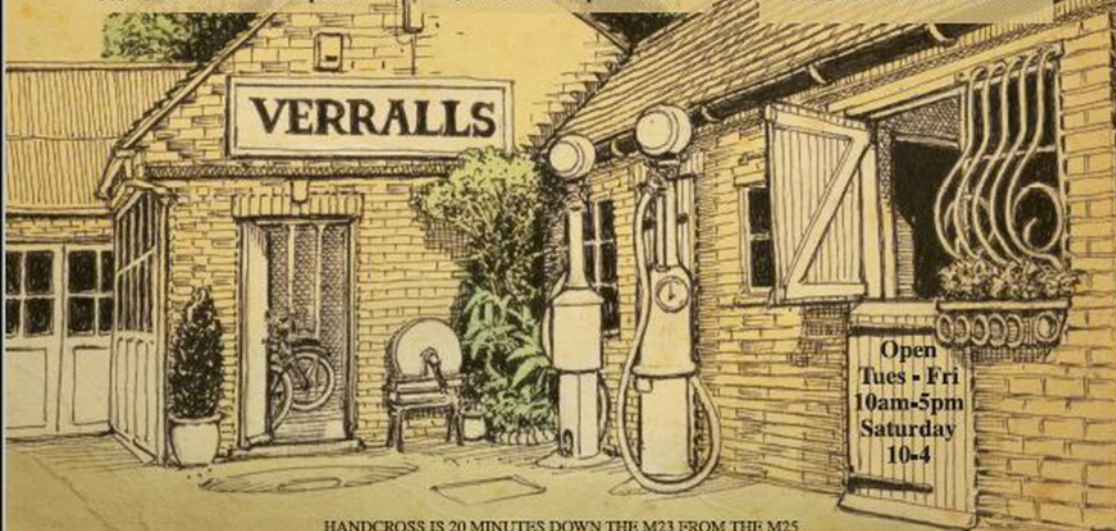
1959 750cc Norton Manx Special



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## INDIANS IN TOWN

### Courtesy of the Irish VVMC

Indians were the most advanced motorcycles of their era, as with chain drive, automatic oiling and multispeed gearboxes all in use prior to the First World War, they were streets ahead of most European manufacturers.

Much of the Indian factory's reputation stems from the sharp lesson they gave British manufacturers when they dominated the twin-cylinder class at the 1911 TT. After the disqualification of Charlie Collier's Matchless the factory team filled the first three places, but company president George Hendee did not let triumph induce complacency, and looked for fresh engineering skills from out-side the United States to keep the Indian name ahead.

One person to catch Hendee's eye was a Dubliner by the name of Charles Franklin. Franklin had ridden in Indian's victorious 1911 TT team, and such was his enthusiasm for the marque that he abandoned a secure career with the Civil Service and emigrated to Springfield, Massachusetts, when offered a post by Hendee.

For all their comparative sophistication, Indian's designs had their faults, for no one at the factory had any formal engineering qualifications until Franklin arrived in 1914. As well as developing the uninspiring and unreliable two-stroke Lightweight model, he turned his attention to the existing twin-cylinder machine, sales of which had passed the 100,000 mark earlier that year. Franklin found that slight variations in cam profile and valve timing, together with the replacement of designer Oscar Hedstrom's carburettor with a cheap-er proprietary Schebler unit, resulted in increased power and reliability.

The result of Franklin's work was bikes like the 1915 Little Twin, which produced 7hp from its 680cc inlet-over-exhaust-valve engine. This was fitted into a rigid bicycle-type frame with leaf-sprung front fork. The machine shown is believed to have been used as a sand-racer in Cornwall before it was res-cued. Theories about the machine's competition career were supported when the engine was stripped and found to be full of finest Cornish sand. This had had a devastating effect on the engine's internals, with only the pistons being salvageable, but a spare power unit turned up at an autojumble in Cheshire.

The Little Twin engine was to form the basis of the side-valve Powerplus, which was designed by Franklin to be interchangeable with earlier motors and keep Indian ahead of deadly rivals Harley-Davidson. It was introduced for the 1916 sales season in characteristic Indian fashion. Rider Erwin 'Cannonball' Baker completed the Three Flags run from Vancouver, Canada, to Tijuana, Mexico, a distance of 1,655 miles, in three days, nine hours and

15 minutes on a machine equipped with the new engine. Indian themselves were faced with an even stiffer test, for with America's en-try to the First World War the company had committed itself to government contract work, and was the major supplier of motorcycles to the US Army. However, no allowance had been made for the inevitable war-time inflation when the contracts had been drawn up, and almost the entire Indian production capacity was devoted to what rapidly became unprofitable military orders.

With the end of the war and the contract, Indian were forced to rethink their approach to designing and selling motorcycles. General Manager Frank Weschler sent Franklin and sales and service expert Thomas Butler on a tour of the eastern states to talk to dealers and ordinary motorcyclists and discover what the public, as opposed to government bodies, wanted from their machines.

Franklin incorporated his findings into a design that he had been working on since 1912. Although on first appearance it was just a scaled-down Powerplus with a capacity of 37cu-in (600cc) the Scout, as it was called, took Indian fur-ther into the future by having geared primary drive and a three-speed gearbox in unit with the engine.

The Scout was lighter and more manageable than earlier American models, but was still capable of over 50mph in solo form. It soon excelled in the long-distance events beloved by Indian, one winning the 24-hour endurance record in Australia by covering 1,114 miles in the time allowed.



### ***1915 680cc Little Twin***

***All-chain drive is a feature of the 1915 Little Twin; operation of hand clutch and gearchange requires considerable manual dexterity; manual tank-mounted plunger supplements the engine-driven oil pump in arduous conditions; rod-operated controls avoided the use of Bowden cables; oil level sight glass was an Indian feature even in 1915.***

The Scout shown is reputed to be the machine used by a Mr J Harrison in the 1924 London to Exeter trial, at which time it had a sidecar attached. In 1943, Harrison compared his Indian to more modern machines in an article in *The Motor Cycle*, and said that the Scout had been twenty years ahead of its time.

At some time, the Scout lost its chair, and the bike worked for a living on the Wall of Death at Corrigan's Fair in Scarborough for many years. Scouts were a favourite Wall of Death bike, for their uncluttered handlebar layout and leaf-sprung front fork made them ideal for such stunts as carrying passengers standing on the bars. When acquired, the Scout was in quite good cosmetic condition, for the mud-guards and some other items had been removed and stored during the machine's fairground career. Mechanically it was in very poor order, but it has now been rebuilt to a condition that guarantees that it and its 1915 stablemate are the centre of attention wherever they go.

Whatever your feelings are about old motorcycles being used for show rather than go, you have to admire the quality of the work on these bikes. Some authentic items, such as the spark plugs with wooden insulators fitted to the 1915 bike, would have to go if the bike was used as the designer intended. This small tribe of redskins are a tribute to pioneer motorcyclists and designers like Charles Franklin.



### *1925 600cc Scout*

*The Scout, built in 1925, has a 600cc en-gine and three-speed hand gearchange; compact lines of the unit construction side-valve twin engine are a big part of the Indian's appeal; foot clutch and gear pri-mary drive are Scout features; flat tank also carried the engine oil — valve lifter to aid starting is on right; unorthodox front suspension springing formed an ideal platform for wall of death*



*When I was a teenager, I followed a Bantam for a few miles, on which the passenger had a similar problem. They were members of our local club, but I never told her about it. Never embarrass a lady.*

## Book Review September 2020

### **And the Wheels Went Around**

I have always firmly believed that even the most exotic bikes or factory specials are just inanimate objects that require human interaction to come alive, as do your standard production machines, or even home-built specials. It is the person or persons associated with them that make the story and create the history of motorcycling obviously worldwide - the history involving hundreds of thousands of people, some famous and some not so.

However, everyone has their own story and many deserve it to be told to wider audience, but the reality is that, in most cases, it tends to be the big names that attract the media and publisher's attention. Often there are riders, designers, engineers et al, that play a massive part in the history of two wheels and do not always get the credit and accolades that they deserve.

John Chisnall is one such person who, up till now, to many has just been a name on the results sheets of races both here and abroad, no doubt largely ignored because he was often the co-pilot to some of the world's best sidecar racers. Thankfully - in conjunction with another co-pilot and friend Anthony Davis - his story is now published in a well-produced soft-bound book entitled 'And the Wheels Went Round'.

Born just before the second world war and coming from humble beginnings, he started motorcycling on a Velocette GTP of 1932 vintage (after the obligatory pushbike), before becoming one of the most sought-after passengers for those riders on the Continental Circus after starting out on solos, grass track racing, and then the Isle of Man TT. (John - like former World Champion Stan Dibben - also believes the title 'passenger' is a total misnomer, as they are integral to steering the outfit, but try as you might, you end up using it!)

Romanticised by many over the recent past, John tells the real story of constant travelling, living an almost hand-to-mouth existence, fights with organisers to get decent money for riding on dangerous circuits despite tens of thousands of spectators paying to watch. Worse still - as a passenger - he often did not get paid even for a win, or had to take a smaller fee with the rider getting the lion's share of the purse, relying on a day job to pay the bills.

As you work your way through the 150 pages - spread with period black and white images - you learn about racing with the greats such as Florian Camathias, Max Duebel as well as home-grown talent like Bill Beevers and John Tickle. He tells of the loss of many friends like Dickie Dale, and Dave

Chadwick to name just a few over the years, making you realise racing at that time was not as glamorous as some would have you believe.

Racing at the TT is also well documented as is the occasional brush with the law, amongst some amusing anecdotes contained in the easily read pages, before he goes on to recount life after racing, or should be passengering on the tarmac?

Moving on, he went back to racing solos, building a Bantam race bike, he designed and built the monocoque-framed Yamaha racer for Ted Broad that was ridden by Barry Ditchburn. He also set up a motorcycle business with fellow sidecar racer Derek Yorke, eventually selling Jawa and CZ motorcycles and then Kawasakis. While this was happening he was back on the grass and riding trials. Given that he also had a spell in scrambling, he was the complete all-rounder!

Despite being into his eighties he is still riding on the road, restoring motorcycles, and is active in many clubs like the VMCC and Velocette Owners Club, proving that once motorcycling gets into your blood it is there forever.

I have to say that having lost two afternoons in this well-written book I was left just wanting to know more about the man, because it is obvious he has many more stories to tell and is just plain modest about his achievements. It is truly a great read, written truthfully about a life on two wheels by someone who has really been there and done it. Credit also to his friend and author Anthony Davis who - from the little snippets that crept in - also has a good story to tell!

Published by Bear Alley Books it costs a modest £15.00 and can also be obtained from [www.sidecarbooks.com](http://www.sidecarbooks.com)

## **Burkitts Book of Bad Motorcycle Poetry**

An interesting title for a surprisingly good set of short poems about motorcycling written by Norma Birkitt and published by London based Old King Cole publishing. Just under 100 short poems about riding, the bikes the culture covering mainly the fifties and sixties, none lasting more than two pages.

The interesting thing about this book is that you can easily fit a mental picture of somebody you know into your mind when reading a particular poem as it tends to describe them very well. In many cases you cannot help but smile as



you dip in and out of this softback book, especially when a skit is illustrated with an amusing small ink drawing.

By the time you reach the end you realise that it is actually full of really good skits, but if they said that would you have even open the cover? Comparing to an American book of motorcycle poetry I have sitting on the bookshelf, this stands head and shoulders above it as it is relevant to motorcycling in the UK, and the individual items are not long and wordy - and all about Harleys!

To some poetry and motorcycling are not good bedfellows, but in this case they are a perfect fit, and this book is well worth the £8.99 cover price.

ISBN 978 0 9934496 5 9

Available from [www.oldkingcolepublishing.com](http://www.oldkingcolepublishing.com)

Ian Kerr MBE

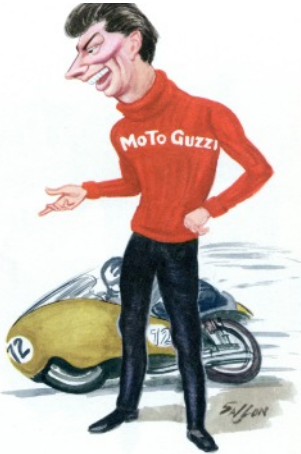
## **A SIMPLE QUIZ TO TEST YOUR BRAIN**

**First email with all 12 correct will win a prize**

**One clue - The surnames are all in  
alphabetical order.**

**I think our older members will get more right.  
Email me if you want the answers.**





*Apologies; but I have lost all trace of where this Saga came from; but it's very interesting.*

## **Odd-essay or Saga MMVII**

With our Motorbike and Sidecar, plus camping kit, Olé!

We set off across the Channel on the 29th of May.

It had been our intention to bumble around in France,

To enjoy scenery and nature (especially the plants.)

Just inland from Surtainville, at Bricquebec, we stayed that night.

The castle faces a small hotel, which suited us all right.

Though I practised carefully, my French, upon the waiter,

A bigger dictionary would have been handy, (then and later.)

To study local wildlife, we'd planned to stop in The Brenne --

There's plenty of rare things there, (Paul Weston had given us 'gen').

The weather decreed otherwise, the heavens chucked down rain:

Lots of things got rather wet: (the intercom didn't work again.)

Thundering down into my seat, the deluge poured without a check;

Then, very slowly, seeped along 'til it reached both feet and neck.

Luckily, at Chef Boutonne, to dry it all we were enabled

With clothes and seat by heaters, in our room (for the disabled!!)

In Rouillac's Roman Theatre, last year, we weren't allowed

They were setting up a concert and preparing for a crowd.

This time we went around the hill, and knew we'd got it right,

"Wear hard hats," said a notice on the fence, "keep out, building site"

We passed amongst the famous vineyards of St. Emilion,

With Chateaux that look very small, and grapevines by the billion,

Then into the Gascony region's huge, old, "Forest of Landes",

Hot and seemingly endless, with its trees in marshes and sand

We were the only guests at Brocas; Chef couldn't have a break;

So, determined to show off his skills, produced Morels and Steak.

Small, elegant helpings, posies of flowering herbs on the fish,

(What waste to trail those sauces, in arty designs round the dish!)

We headed south for sunnier climes; the bike, it knew its way

Over the Larrau pass to Spain, on a lovely balmy day

Cliffs sprouted white flowers, like ready-made bride's bouquets,

We found eight different orchids - it was one of those special days.

At Ochagavia, in Navarre, is a very old Hotel;  
 After several visits, we get on with its lady well.  
 She talked about interesting places that were not very far  
 And she wanted to ride, "Like a Duchess", in our sidecar.  
 She liked my flowery shirt and my wild orchid book;  
 I picked two common orchids, so she could have a look.  
 At home I wouldn't do it, but I thought, "for goodness sake,  
 There must be a thousand orchids drowned under their new lake"  
 It does give the impression that no-one seems to care  
 So I made her up a posy, (of flowers that are not rare)  
 As I gave them to her, I said "Just one little thing,  
 I think to pick them is illegal; Please, don't tell the King",  
 Next day we spotted, on the map, a peak with all-round view  
 TV mast marked on top (there must be a road for the crew)  
 "Right", said Dave, "let's go take a look, and have a wilderness play"  
 So up, up on the poor-surfaced road, rare flowers by the way.  
 Lake and gorge, we saw from the top, Vultures wheeling below.  
 Two young Germans, with parachute, watching, judging time to go  
 The vultures found a thermal; he threw himself into space;  
 When he was a dot, his girl drove off to find his landing place.  
 The Ebro valley's hot and dry, we called at a café  
 As soon as he'd taken our order, the owner rushed away,  
 Brought classic-bike mags with our drinks, and, while we wet our lips,  
 He drooled all over our outfit whilst kissing his fingertips.  
 He photographed it (open and shut) said, "Fantastico!"  
 Those I will show my friends when I go to my "Club Moto".  
 Southwards we journeyed, across the plain and over the hills  
 Past hundreds of wind turbines --- "Quixotes" amongst the mills  
 An old friend called the resorts of Spain the "Costa del Cemento."  
 We avoid them, but the Mountains - they're the reason we go.  
 Canyons with Vultures and Eagles, circling the cliffs above,  
 Sparkling rivers, with Dragonflies and flowery banks we love.  
 Baking, treeless country with thin, stony soil, called garrigue  
 Although it looks so barren, it's full of plants that intrigue:  
 Aromatic shrublets, rosemary, juniper and pines  
 Mingle their perfumes with lavender, curry and thymes.

There's a limestone plateau, near Cuenca, thousands of feet high;  
 Water has worn, over eons, sculpted shapes to trick the eye.  
 The pavement's known as the "Sea of Stone" and rising from its floor  
 Are gigantic eroded rocks - (think, "Stonehenge meets Henry Moore".)

Made by watercourses, now vanished down to depths below,  
 The cracks and fissures in the rock are sites for plants to grow.  
 Pine trees, lilies and gladioli, plus orchids galore,  
 Snapdragons and sapphire-blue peas I'd never seen before.

While paused to "suss" out flowers, at a likely looking spot,  
 A couple from Germany came by and asked, "What have you got?  
 We saw you earlier on today, (We photographed your bike),  
 And we guessed that, as we do, it's the flowers that you most like".

We led them, in dappled shade, to the golden Wintergreens,  
 Showed them the spotted orchid and two different Helleborines.  
 They spoke to us in English; with our finds they were delighted;  
 Rare Wintergreens and Spanish orchids made them quite excited.

Whilst he lay upon the ground, with his camera close-up kit  
 I took a photo of him, suffering, like David doing his bit.  
 The most exciting flowers are always in prickles or marsh.  
 The way we treat our husbands, you must agree, is harsh.

Dainty purple orchids dotted a grassy, pine-forest glade  
 Then, on a slope above us, pink peonies glowed in the shade  
 And flowering amongst them, frilly, tall, pale, graceful and rare  
 The special "Orchis of Cazorla", - we'd never seen it there.

Tragacete's Hostal Serrania's a place that we know well  
 It's nice to be greeted by name, "Suzanne and PAPA NOEL!"  
 The granddad explained to us where the best flowers grow  
 And told about the butterflies, many years ago.

High above the village, where the Rio Jucar rises,  
 There, in a rocky valley, are botanical surprises.  
 Just see beside the water, pouring through the "Narrows of Hell",  
 Barbary, Monkshoods, Golden Garlic and great white Asphodel

I saw the source, when I was ten, of the Yeo at Milborne Wick.  
 Seeing the birthplace of some great river still gives me a kick.  
 Jump across the Loire, step over the Tagus, sixty years on,  
 Or gaze upon orchids in the bogs at the head of the Garonne.

The many wild orchids of Europe have their roots in the ground:  
 "Frog" and "Butterfly", "Monkey" and "Lizard", are types that we have  
 found.

In some of these, named for creatures, resemblance may be slight,  
 But in the "Bee" and "Spider" sorts, the name's absolutely right.

The main parts of their flowers can be ivory, pink or green,  
 But one big petal's brown and velvety, shaped round, like a bean.  
 They look so much like insects; the real ones are misled;  
 Attempting to find a mate, they pollinate orchids instead.

I've got quite good at spotting them at fifty miles an hour  
 (They often stand out as a perky, different, kind of flower)  
 But one uphill tramp, on a hot day, when I'd begged Dave to stop,  
 Revealed creamy flowers with a huge, real, bumble bee on top.

We found thirty different orchids, in marsh, garrigue and forest,  
 Including a freak plant, with two "spiders" on one floret.  
 You may think from these details, that by orchids I am obsessed;  
 But, I do assure you; they are not my only interest!

Leaving Tragacete, heading (North) for Nuevalos,  
 The inviting end of a gravelly track we happened across.  
 Ready highlighted on our map, (we'd seen it years ago)  
 Surface now improved, it went (South East) by the Rio Tajo.

The track, thirty kilometres long, has some picnic sites  
 Midweek, we'd seen not a soul to share its scenic delights.  
 Halfway along, a police car arrived, coming from behind.  
 Two British tourists on three wheels they were surprised to find.

"WHERE are you going?" they asked, "To Molina, Senor", I called.  
 The driver rolled his eyes to heaven, looking quite appalled.  
 "You must go back," he counselled. "Molina's THAT way, you're wrong!"  
 I scrambled from the sidecar and took our battered map along

"We are not LOST, Senor", I said, "We know just where we are  
 We continue on this track until we meet the road with tar.  
 There we'll go left for Molina; here we study flowers and birds".  
 He shook his head in disbelief, the English are surely absurd?

I tried to buy cherries, from a lady at Nuevalos,  
 She said, "No, these are my present, safe journey, Adios!"  
 The bag was as big as my helmet, I can well recall,  
 It weighed about two kilos. (We took four days to eat them all.)

That same morning we climbed up, just North-East of Calatayud  
 To Roman city Bilbilis, (now looks like a hill of mud.)  
 The “diggers”, to access the top, have bulldozed round and round,  
 Leaving lots of Roman debris lying on the ground.

They have crunched regardless, through buildings of stone and brick  
 There's thin red shards and part of a dish, two centimetres thick.  
 White marble chunks and some small bits, of plaster painted scarlet;  
 I wonder who chose the decor, Centurion or Harlot?

Happy days, on our way home, we spent in the Pyrenees.  
 There was no need to hurry and we'd only ourselves to please.  
 We climbed into France, along a bit, and back down into Spain,  
 Enjoying flowers and scenery, then over to France again.

The sky, most nights, looked threatening; it didn't seem wise to camp,  
 At L' Isle Jourdain, the Lake Hotel kept us from getting damp.  
 It was their restaurant's closing night; we said, ” That doesn't matter,  
 We'll walk to town and dine” – Then the first rain began to splatter.

The proprietor kindly phoned and ordered a takeaway,  
 In double quick time, a Pizza van hurtled round our way.  
 We sat on the terrace and ate a huge, big “Marguerita”,  
 And finished our Spanish cherries; none were ever sweeter.

Not far away, a thunderstorm was an awesome sight;  
 With sheets and forks of lightning lighting up the night.  
 We both enjoyed the spectacle, all mirrored in the lake,  
 And we sat there contented, 'til I could hardly stay awake.

While in Spain we'd met, an English couple, Sally & Len.  
 They have a house in France and invited us there, to meet again.  
 We were shy of ringing them, but concluded that, if they  
 Regretted their invitation, they'd tell us they'd be away.

After plucking up courage, we called them up on the phone,  
 Len said, "You're welcome, but Sal's away and I'm on my own"  
 Two nights we stayed at their lovely home, near the river Tarn,  
 And entertained each other, with many a traveller's yarn.

The nearby town of Cordes-sur-Ciel is truly "in the Sky".  
 The traffic's nearly all one-way -- it's easy to see why.  
 On three levels it's fortified, on a pointed, oval, mound;  
 Climb steep and narrow cobbled streets; you'll get a view all round.

There are many tiny alleys, steps and gateways through the wall,  
 At the summit, a church and ancient, timbered, Market hall.  
 Café tables in that market must be a money-spinner;  
 (Note the beams are netted, so pigeons can't bomb your dinner).

An insect bit my ring finger, which swelled up purple and fat,  
 A French wedding ring is called "Alliance" – (I had not known that.)  
 We went into the city, to find a jeweller, because  
 My ring must be cut off, before my circulation was.

The jeweller in Cahors was certainly a swish one,  
 With diamonds as big as grapes and a bell to gain admission  
 From her manner, I could tell, she was used to different clients,  
 I paid her for a dreadful thing – she severed our alliance.

If you are ever passing near the valley of the Lot  
 I recommend you go and see the wondrous Pech-Merle "Grotte".  
 That Cavern is a marvel of natural formations,  
 Buy post cards and a guidebook to show friends and relations.

There're Stalactites and Stalagmites and Helictites that twist,  
 Like "temples", "curtains", "straws" and "waterfalls", not to be missed  
 It's more than a kilometre to walk around its halls,  
 Known worldwide for the paintings on the ceilings and the walls.

How they must have revered that cave, twenty thousand years ago,  
 When artists from the ice age created their picture show.  
 On its walls and ceiling, between the `stal' formations,  
 In charcoal and red ochre are lively decorations.

Painted using spongy moss, frayed sticks or tufts of hair,  
 Outlined there are Mammoth, Ibex and Bison, Reindeer and Bear.  
 Oxen, fish and women, stencilled hands and rows of dots,  
 Plus two delightful horses, covered in "Rocking-Horse" spots.

Six hundred metres in, within the limestone mountainside  
 The long series of galleries and passages divide.  
 What drove artists to paint in such an inaccessible spot?  
 So far from the daylight, by the glow of fires, or fat in a pot

The shiny, slippery rocks made it so difficult to access,  
 Who ever saw the paintings? Who were they done to impress?  
 Now, chopped through Stalagmites, are steps, handrails, lights and a bridge:  
 I felt, as I followed the crowd, "I'm committing sacrilege".



We met a friendly Dutchman with his charming, happy, wife.  
 Else, who speaks six languages, enjoys her last few months of life.  
 She spoke about her family and how she loved to dance,  
 She and her husband were travelling, knew it may be the last chance.

The fire brigade, or "Pompier", in all French fire stations,  
 Are paramedics, summoned first to trauma situations  
 In the early hours of the morning they were called to our hotel,  
 They rushed Else to a city hospital, she was so unwell

After treatment, she returned to the hotel the next night,  
 "I'd like to take a little walk," she said, "I shall be all right."  
 As the four of us sauntered along, the "Pompier" drove by,  
 They hooted when they saw her; she went and kissed each one goodbye.

Next Sunday morning we broke camp, set off once more for the Brenne  
 Happily, we did not know, fate had other ideas, again.

The motor missed a beat and later cut out altogether  
 To complicate our problems was a worsening of the weather.

Several times this happened, with difficulty restarted,  
 But we had a sinking feeling; she was somewhat half-hearted.  
 From rain a tourist office saved us; we asked the girls inside  
 To book us a Hotel, which we reached just as the engine died

Dave examined all the wires and junctions underneath the tank,  
 "Phoned a friend" (Who is an expert) did more tests, but drew a blank.  
 Which new "black box" it needed, could not be told at a glance,  
 Such spare parts for our old classic were unlikely in all France.

He rang the breakdown insurers; then re-assembled it all,  
 Reorganised our things and awaited the answering call.  
 Tent and riding kit were packed, in sidecar, out of the rain -  
 Didn't know how long 'twould be before we saw it all again.

We had nearly four days to reach the channel coast,  
 But couldn't take much luggage, so had to choose what we'd need most.  
 There was a carrier bag and top box, into which we had to crush,  
 Clothes, maps, phone and paper work - with just room for each toothbrush

They sent a great big lorry, long enough to take a bus  
 Drove off to La Roche Posay, with sidecar outfit and us.  
 To get the electrics sorted out we knew there was no chance  
 So our lovely sidecar-outfit was left behind, in France!

Spent four hours at the garage, waiting for "rescue" to ring  
 At 7pm the garage closed; we hadn't learnt a thing;  
 A mechanic took pity and booked us an hotel,  
 And through the kindness of his heart, delivered us as well.

Guidebooks say La Roche Posay is a town with ancient walls  
 But we can't go and look, we're stuck, waiting for rescue calls.  
 At 11am they tell us a taxi will be sent,  
 To take us to another town and a car that we can rent.

At 5.15 a taxi arrived, (We had agreed to pay)  
 Then we learnt, to our concern, the car's fifty miles away.  
 We had to give Dave's details, on the fading mobile 'phone  
 To the car rent people, it was time for them to go home.

The French, when listing numbers, do not say "nine, two, seven, one"  
 But want them quoted, paired, like ninety-two, seventy-one,  
 And that's four twenties-twelve and then sixty-eleven (too much!)  
 At school we didn't talk of credit cards, licences and such.

The kindly taxi driver girl sorted questions out all right,  
 "The car key's left at a café" (Hertz had closed for the night).  
 We found the Opel Corsa in the middle of the city  
 I thought, "I've got to navigate; heaven, on me take pity"

How selfish was that thought of mine, though we had no chart,  
 Big cities always frighten me -- a country girl at heart.  
 To navigate will be the same; I ought to manage well,  
 I should think of David only - the driving will be hell!

Evening sun was behind us, where WE were I wished I knew,  
 Must be facing east - EUGH! So many streets in Chateauroux.  
 Several stations on our map, had to guess which one was ours,  
 I thought it very likely we'd be driving around for hours

Dave had to extricate the car from a very small "hole"  
 In front, - a 'Versailles tractor' - behind - a telegraph pole!  
 Well used to driving on the right, of his bike he's now bereft;  
 You can't change gear with the armrest when your seat is on the left.

He eased the cursed Corsa out onto the big ring road,  
 We didn't get honked at often, but our nervousness, it showed.  
 Headed north on the road to Blois, there one could cross the Loire:  
 Crossing there would be no fun in an unfamiliar car.

We reached a hotel at Contres without a contretemps,  
 Then re-designed our journey, many kilometres long.  
 Next day, northwest to Chaumont and we crossed the river there;  
 We, at all costs, avoid Le Mans, so picked our route with care.

I had to explain, that evening, when we'd returned to Bricquebec,  
 That the bike had merely broken down and it was not a wreck!  
 It left us just a short trip to Cherbourg on the morrow;  
 To leave that car, though our salvation, would not be any sorrow.

After five days of hassle, we thankfully boarded the boat,  
 And to hear Dorset accents again brought a lump to my throat.  
 So, with no motorbike and sidecar or camping kit, the Boon  
 At last reached home in a taxi on the twenty second of June.

Grateful thanks must go to my chauffeur, roadie and financier,  
 And after all this, I hope he thinks, "I STILL FANCY HER!!!"

### **Epilogue**

Three weeks after we had left it, at La Roche Posay,  
 Our sidecar outfit reappeared, (Kit and paint intact,) Hooray!  
 The faulty component Dave traced, after much endeavour,  
 Now with a replacement, she's going as well as ever.

*Please let me know who wrote it.*



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