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WIN! A Handmade
Ally Tank



VETERAN VICTORIA
Restored to Ride



AV OR NOT AV
Triumph
without Tingles



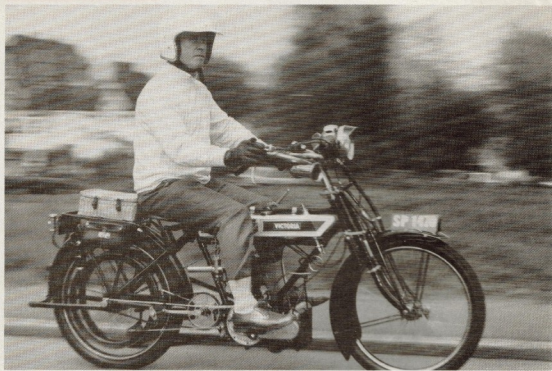
BUILDING
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QUEEN OF THE ROAD

*The Victoria has an engine very similar to its Triumph contemporaries yet it is one of the rarest machines which **David Hawtin** has come across*

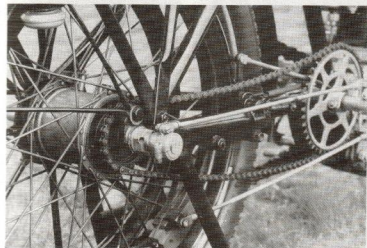
Of all the machines assembled on Brighton's Madeira Drive at the finish of the 1990 Pioneer Run, one was to remain in my memory longer than all the rest. Compared with your average "veteran", there was something untypically racy about its stylish, squared-off cylinder finning, and carburettor "ram-stack". But above all, my eye was drawn to the magnificent cast-alloy magneto drive cover, boldly stating the machine's name: "The Victoria". When, a year later,

I found myself admiring the same bike for a second time, I knew I had to find out more about it.

Founded in 1902, the Victoria company of Dennistoun, Glasgow, was Scotland's biggest motorcycle manufacturer, and by the outbreak of war in 1914, had developed a wide range of machines fitted with Precision engines made by FE Baker. After the war, production continued using mainly Villiers, JAP, and Blackburne engines, until the company's demise in 1926. The

Victoria featured here belongs to technical illustrator Brian Hatton, and is a 500cc, a 3 3/4hp model manufactured in 1914, when it was priced at £48.

Knowing the rarity of the marque I asked Brian how he had come by this unique machine. "I had got to know Tiny Ayres of the Sunbeam Club — through owning a flat-tank 350 AJS — and he suggested that I should try and find a veteran, because of the special events I could then enter", he explained. "The first bike I found was a machine called a



OPPOSITE: Brian Hatton enjoys a spin on his 1914 Victoria, a unique machine

TOP: Typical veteran handlebar layout incorporates a lovely Covey speedometer
ABOVE: Business end of the hub gear

Torpedo, which was made by a firm called Hopper, of Barton-on-Humber. However, I decided after a couple of events, that a 292cc single-speeder was not something that I could cope with — there was far too much "light pedal assistance" required! So I started looking for a larger capacity machine, preferably with hub gears.

"Then one day in 1979, I saw an advertisement in a classic car magazine, for two cars and two motorcycles for sale, and the Victoria was one of the bikes. I telephoned the vendor, who told me he lived in the Black Isle — which turned out to be thirty miles north of Inverness! As I lived in Kent, that seemed to put the

kybosh on the idea, but I contacted Tiny for advice, and he found a Victoria brochure in his collection. He also suggested I contact Geoff Morris, the then Pioneer Registrar, who had a list of engine numbers which would establish whether the bike was a veteran or not. My interest was sufficiently aroused for me to contemplate the 1,000 mile round trip, so I bought myself an overnight ticket to Inverness and arranged for the owner to collect me and run me out to his farm.

"The Victoria was virtually complete — I could see that practically all of it was there. The magneto and carb were obviously original, and so too were the mudguards, which is unusual for a

machine of that age. The front brake had been removed because the wheel rim was dented — probably as the result of someone riding it around a field — and the handlebars had been turned down. The clutch mechanism had lost its quick-start worm, and had been modified to accept a lever arm which was supposed to push the clutch in and out. This just wouldn't work as the leverage was too great, and the arm would bend, so you couldn't select any of the gears. We agreed a price over a dram, and after lunch the owner ran me back to Inverness — pausing only to cash my banker's draft! I put the bike in the guard's van of the overnight train, and brought it home.

Having first taken a few photographs as a guide to reassembly, Brian stripped the Victoria down completely, and despatched the motor to engine-builder Ron Lewis of Peckham. The 85 x 88mm side-valve single proved to be in remarkably good condition, merely requiring a set of new (roller) main bearings, and was reassembled using its original barrel and piston. After twelve years of use, the engine is now in need of a rebore, and Brian is hopeful that a new Triumph piston in his possession will be suitable for the Victoria.

"Some parts are common to Precision and Triumph engines of the period," he explained. "The reason I believe that the engines are very similar, is that they both have the same unusual method of valve-gear operation, with the cam being an asymmetrical cavity cut into the back of the cam-wheel, and operating the valve via a roller-ended rocker. One of the Victoria's cam-wheels was broken when I bought it, and it was then that I discovered that the Triumph ones are identical.

"The original Bosch magneto was left alone apart from putting it in the airing cupboard for a couple of months to make sure it was dry and the Brown and Barlow carburettor was simply replated. The float-chamber is rather elaborate — it has two bob-weights resting on the float, and as the float rises, the bob-weights raise the needle up. These little bob-weights had flats worn on them, and I tried turning them upside down, but that just made the carburation worse. The lengthened inlet pipe was on the bike when I bought it, and because I knew that B&B carbs never had anything like that fitted, I took it off, and that totally ruined the running! Obviously, at some stage somebody had discovered that if you lengthened the inlet tract you got an improved response."

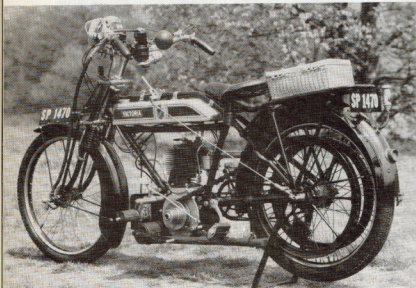
The Victoria's three-speed Sturmey Archer hub gear is just like an enlarged version of the well-known bicycle hub, and was rebuilt for Brian by Alan Doughty, of Nottingham. "The only significant problem I've had with it the bike since it was rebuilt was with the

hub", Brian recalled. "When Alan rebuilt it, the only component he didn't touch was the centre spindle — which is drilled and slotted — and in 1987 it broke. Fortunately Bill Healing, of Dartford, managed to make another one for me, as Alan Doughty had also supplied me with all the information he had about the design of Sturmev Archer hubs.

"The one major drawback of the hub gear, is that the belt pulley has to be fitted on the side where you would normally have the rear brake, so the brake linkage has to go across the frame to a dummy pulley on the other side. I had to make up a complete new linkage, but because of the limited space between the pedals and

the Cowey speedometer, and the bulb horn was purchased from the bike's previous owner. Brian's father donated the acetylene headlamp, although the lighting system is decorative rather than functioning. The wicker lunch-box was acquired in the South of France, and is used to hold tools and a puncture repair kit.

Brian had assumed that, like many machines of the period, the Victoria would have been finished in silver and black, but discovered a description of the petrol tank's colour scheme in a contemporary issue of *The Motorcycle*. The tank was painted in cellulose, and lined by Brian, and the Victoria factory



other running gear it's very difficult to get a reasonable leverage. Some years ago I fitted a second brake, so one presses on the inside, and one on the outside of the rim. It's increased the area of friction surface, but it hasn't improved the braking very much!"

Brian had the frame stove-enamelled, and renewed the cup-and-cone steering-head bearings. The Druid front forks were re-bushed, and a new front wheel rim obtained from the late Ken Cobbing of the VMCC's tyre scheme. The non-original, down-turned handlebars were discarded, and a new version bent up by "Mike the Pipe", Brian having first made a bent wire template for the new bars, using the factory brochure as a guide to the shape. Replacements for some missing control levers were found at autojumbles, as was

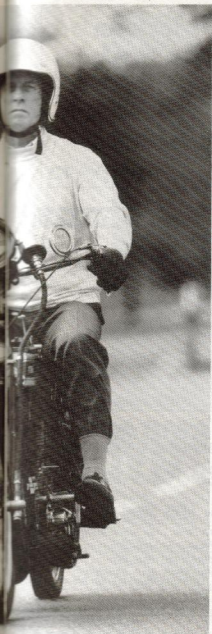
ABOVE: Wickerwork basket came from the South of France

crest was obtained from the VMCC's transfer scheme. Unfortunately, the soft-soldered tank was damaged in a garage fire a few years ago, and despite an application of sealer, a petrol leak is now bubbling the paintwork.

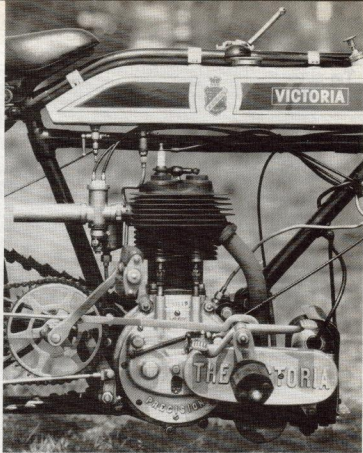
Like the mopeds of not-so-long-ago, the Victoria is started on its stand by pedalling with the machine in gear, as Brian explained. "Once it's on the stand you put it into top gear, half advance the ignition lever, close the air lever, and set the throttle slightly open. Then using the



valve-lifter, you pedal away, and it should fire up. Next, you push the over-centre clutch pedal down to disengage the drive to the hub, put the bike into bottom gear, take it off the stand, and then ease yourself away. One of the operating problems is that the bike has a left-hand-side foot brake, and a right-hand-side clutch pedal, so when you're pulling away on a hill, you have to use the front brake on the handlebar to stop yourself rolling backwards, because your right foot is needed for the clutch. The clutch has



ABOVE: Bought to ride, owner Hutton has done just that, taking part in the Pioneer Run regularly



ABOVE: Engine is still using the original barrel and piston; after 12 years of use, it now needs a rebore



RIGHT: As it came from the farm in Northern Scotland, almost complete but in need of attention

around sixty thin plates, and seems to work quite well. Although it's only the same diameter as the hub itself, they still managed to pull sidecars with it."

Another feature worthy of note, is the foot-operated exhaust "power-valve" on the left-hand end of the transverse silencer box (and you thought EXUP was a new idea!). However, with a maximum power output of around 5bhp, the Victoria has a modest performance, which is probably just as well considering the inadequacy of its brakes. "I've used it on the Pioneer and the Graham Walker Runs, and other events which are suitable for bikes of this age", Brian told me. "On a good clear

road, I suppose its comfortable cruising speed is around 35mph. It will go faster, but it vibrates and feels under stress.

"My son followed me on the Pioneer Run once, and timed me accurately at 39mph on the flat stretch past Gatwick Airport. Its speed is effectively governed by how far ahead you can see, as you have to plan your deceleration well in advance!

"It's obviously very well made, and I think it was worthwhile putting it back together", he concluded.

I'm sure *British Bike's* readers will heartily concur with Brian's understated summing-up of his rare and handsome veteran.