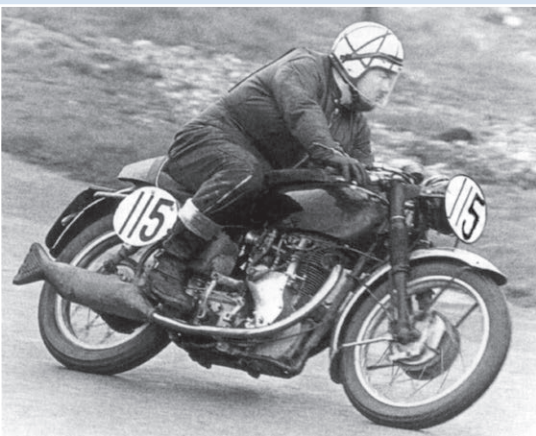
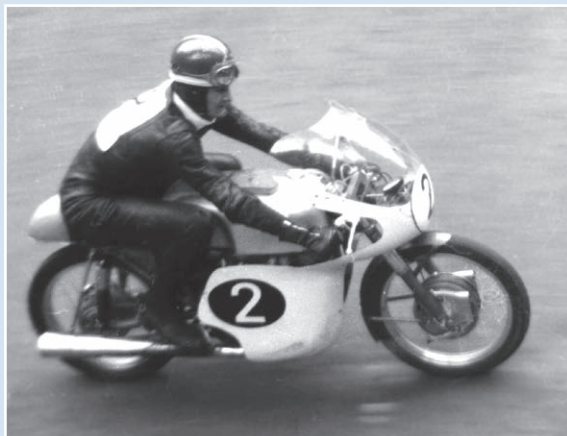




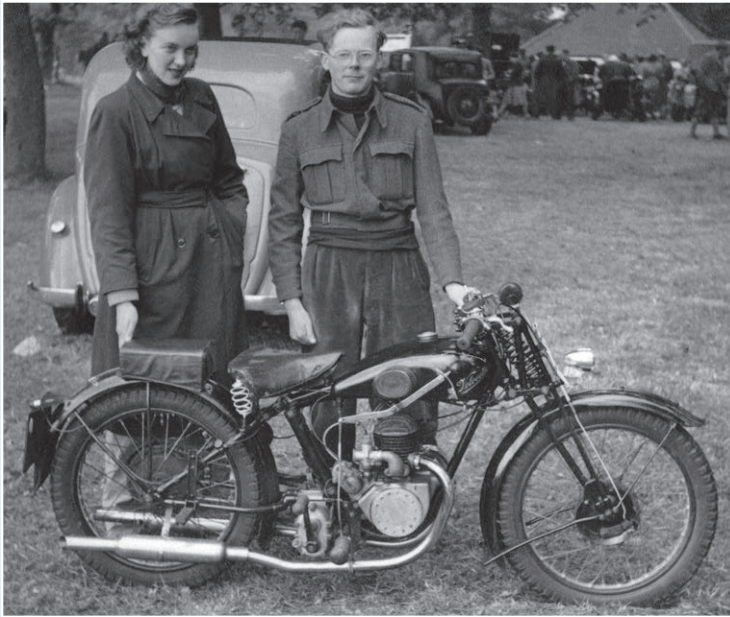
E B Christian's North Quay depot, my first workplace on the Island. The garage housed the turntable.



Mansfield Corner at a very wet Cadwell Park! The 100-miler meeting, 1972. I scored my only race victory at that meeting, beating all the 500s on my Viper.



Mike Hailwood (Ducati) riding back to the pits after remounting following a fall at Glen Helen, 1960 Ultra Lightweight TT.



Jeff and Audrey Clew, Velo fans through and through, with one of Jeff's many two-stroke Velos.



Terry Moore awaits to start the Manx Scooter Rally. The starter is J Graham Oates, whose motorcycle exploits (trans-Canada, first person to reach Hudson Bay on a rubber-tyred vehicle, TT rider etc) I chronicled in *Aurora to Ariel; The Motorcycling Life of J Graham Oates, a Pioneering Manx Motorcyclist*.



My 1980 MGP mount, as bought and raced on the Jurby Road circuit.

Parliament Square shot of yours truly in the 1980 Senior Manx Grand Prix. The TZ fairing had to be raised around the Ducati lump.



In the 1980 Senior Manx Grand Prix, wearing the changed helmet that fooled my friends on the first lap.



MCC TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS

THE FLINTSTONE

Arthur Lavington rode the MCC trials for many years, it was following these that gave me a taste to compete.

The Motor Cycle Club was formed in 1901, one of the earliest motorcycle clubs to be formed. In 1904 they inaugurated the long-distance event, which was probably called a 'reliability run' in those days, as the vehicles were still quite primitive, and with the state of the 'byways' you could not really call them roads!

The first MCC trial I rode was the 1964 Exeter Trial on a KSS-engined MAC, bought from a mate Jock Hopson. I only got as far as Fingle Bridge, where I gave the clutch a bit of a roasting (even though we had geared down) and then punctured at the top of Fingle's myriad hairpins. I rode it back to the Exeter control, where I snoozed in the car and Dad repaired the puncture – I had no stamina in those days!

A more suitable mount was needed, so we found a Scrambler-framed MSS project down in Southampton. It was clean, tidy, and at the right price. We filled Dad's Mini Countryman with the bike and hauled it back home. It was an unfinished project, it had a BSA-style fibreglass tank fitted, but I found the proper Endurance tank, based on a Valiant tank, and we proceeded to make it fit for purpose. With a red frame, and assembled from Velo bits from all ages, we christened it 'Flintstone,' a name that stuck. As the MCC trials run through the night, it had a full lighting set. In its early days, it was Miller-lit, not the best system ever invented (the lamp manufacturer Joseph Lucas used to be called 'Prince of Darkness,' a name I feel more suited to the Miller). In the later years, I purchased one of the first Criterion alternator sets; what a revelation, you could roll the throttle off on hairpins and still see where you were aiming for. The standard footrest layout puts too much weight on the front wheel, so after much experimentation balancing the bike on bathroom scales, the Flintstone was fitted with rear sets which gave the correct weight bias to the rear wheel. A high pipe was fitted, with a standard fishtail; this looked a bit cumbersome, so a mate from the Saltbox Club, Del Whitton, cut six inches out of the middle and welded it back together again.

The Flintstone was an ideal mount; in 1966 we won the MCC motorcycle championship with two first-class awards and a second, including winning the

Edinburgh-Derbyshire outright. In 1967 we repeated the championship win, the first double-winner (to that date). I could have had a Triple that year, but just dabbled out of the 'free foot' area on the stop-and-restart on Bluehills, the last section of the event. In 1968, I finally gained a Triple, awarded to those who claimed a first class in all three events, the Exeter, Land's End and the Edinburgh, (confusingly now held in Derbyshire). Of the three, I really liked the Edinburgh-Derbyshire, it was an area I only rode once a year. I was pipped for the Club championship for the third time on special test times.

One Boxing Day I decided to visit the Devon and Cornwall branch of the Velo Club's meet at Fingle Bridge, near Exeter. It was snowing hard but the roads didn't seem too bad when I left home. Near Thruxton race circuit, I was following in the wheel tracks of a snow clearer; the visor had become mucky because I was wiping it with a Barbour mitt, so pulled over to clear it. I slid into a ditch, which flicked the gearlever up and disarranged the operating pawl inside the box. I had always carried a good selection of spanners, so I was able to extract the mainshaft, remove the gears and re-install the pawl. I did not carry on with that trip, I retraced my steps to Mitcham.

I was out trail riding one day at Box Hill near Dorking with mates Pete, Beryl and Chris Bryant. Cresting a rise, a protruding tree branch neatly broke my left shoulder blade and held me there as the Flintstone went from between my legs. It stopped, and to add insult to injury, it fell against the tree I was hanging off and severely dented the petrol tank. I got home okay, and got strapped up, but the same week, as I was walking down to the pub (not back from), I tripped over a kerb and re-broke it!

In 1968, my 21st birthday coincided with the Land's End; the Saltbox had taken over a caravan site near Tintagel. I guessed the amber liquid may have flowed that night. After finding the right caravan (they all look the same in a purple haze), someone cracked a funny and I sat and laughed for about 4 hours, in the morning my midriff was sore!

I sold the Flintstone to Adrian Pirson, then Chairman of the Velo Club (for £300). Adrian also won an MCC triple on it, and later came to live here on the Island. In 2017, I got a surprise email from Adrian to say he was selling it, and would I like it back? With leg and hip joint problems and living on a pension, I declined the offer. I would make an educated guess that he would have asked a bit more than the original £300 that I sold it to him for. It had also stood in an unheated garage for over 30 years, so it would have needed a total refurbishment, well out of the scope of this pensioner. I heard in December 2018 that someone had bought all of Adrian's bikes, so it's likely the Flintstone may have a new lease of life.

I later rode the MCC trials on a rigid-frame Velo MAC with an MDD frame and gearbox, this had rear-mounted footrests and a very low first gear, ideal for the sections. It was obviously not competitive, but I enjoyed the ride, managing to pick up a third-class award in the Edinburgh-Derbyshire.