

Did you know that the dissatisfaction of the two Collier brothers at the conduct of an Austrian motor cycle Racing promoters, finally led to the start of the T.T.Races in the Isle of Man? That was a bit of history I had missed myself, and it was left to Bert Colver to put me wise to it at the last meeting. We had a splendid attendance to welcome him at the Hall, accompanied by his son, Mr. J.H. Colver, who was born at Redditch when his Dad was with Royal Enfields for a few years. The reason for Bert's sojourn to Enfields was a mystery to many of our members, and the matter came up at question time. The explanation was quite simple, and was due to a local slump in the Woolwich area due to shortage of work in the local arsenal there, that in turn affected every luxury product in the neighbourhood, including that of motor cycles. The Matchless Factory were obliged to lay off most of their staff, who had then to go further afield to find similar occupations. Fortunately, Mr. Colver and the others were able to return in time for him to ride a Matchless in the 1914 T.T., and he came in fourth in the Senior Race.

The founder of the Matchless concern was a turner in Woolwich Arsenal, before he started up in business, and prior to that had worked in the Railway shops at Brighton, and Bert Colver was one of his apprentices in the early days despite the fact that he was already past the usual age for taking such a step, and for some time he actually lived with the Collier family. He and the two sons, Charlie and Harry started as pedal cycle racers, before having engines to assist their muscles. In fact it was the unwillingness of one of the Guv'nors sons to exert himself at the pedals that hurried on the transition from pedals to footrests. It was the great influx of pedal cycle experts that held up the adoption and development of spring forks, and it is extraordinary that spring forks have made no progress on pedal cycles right up to the present. These chaps with the bulging biceps demanded pedals, and in turn they had to have fairly high frames to use these pedals to full advantage, and it produced a type of machine of little use to the ordinary "Man in the Street". In this way about ten years of progress was halted before we could have bikes with low riding positions, and no pedals. Still many Brooklands Racing men persisted with rigid front forks, in the belief that any form of springing meant some loss of control or even speed. This is surprising when it is recalled that Brooklands was never a smooth track by any means.

For some weeks before the meeting, I had been cudgelling my brains to solve the problem of giving the audience a proper introduction to this wonderful veteran rider. I felt that I was scarcely qualified to do this, as the person would have to be a rider of note, who could speak from his own first hand knowledge. You can imagine my joy, when Graham Walker unexpectedly turned up just prior to the start. He had been busy all day recording some more racing records, and instead of hurrying home to a well deserved rest, he came along to pay his respects to someone he admired as much for his qualities as a man, as well as that of a first class rider. There was a happy re-union between the two famous Riders, before the start of the meeting, and I was privileged to hear them recall many incidents of the past, in which they had both shared. With these preliminaries over, Graham left the platform to join the audience, but I had the full support of the crowd in demanding his return to introduce our Guest of the evening. In his own inimitable way, he covered a lot of ground in a few minutes, and so broke the ice between platform and audience, to ensure a successful time for all of us. In a less spectacular way, Mr. Colver was greatly assisted by the voice amplifying outfit provided and operated by Eric Thompson, and after the interval, his unique pictures and prints were shown to us by Mr. Clare. Whilst handing out the bouquets, we must not forget the good work of Alex. Brett in securing the Colver family interest in our club. He is hopeful of getting other personalities to spare an evening for us, and as this club is not a one man band, I suggest other members ought to do the same, with any other famous men they know. I am most anxious to pay homage to all our great men of the past, whilst they are still spared in health and strength to be able to re-live the triumphs of their youth for a couple of hours on a Thursday evening.

I wonder how many noticed how both Graham and Bert agreed that modern machines were too heavy. Not that we should go back to stripped big twins, with frames only fit for pedal cycles, and direct belt drive from engine to rear wheel, but a planned approach to Scientific weight reduction is about thirtyfive years overdue. For instance, I have a frame of a 1928 model of a good British make with a 500 c.c. Engine, the design is excellent, with a straight top tube enclosed in the two separate halves of the tank, but it is one of the heaviest frames I have handled. I have not put it on a scale, but it appears to be heavier than a Harley Big Twin loop frame of much larger size. We can only blame the sidecar enthusiast who insists upon hitching family sidecars to anything with enough engine power. The engine of this bike of mine is not all that heavy, but with every increase in engine power additional