



New Zealand Velocette Register

Newsletter October 2022

Welcome to the latest edition of the NZ Velocette Register Newsletter. We have an interesting selection of articles for this edition that we are sure you will enjoy reading.

### **Next Velocette Rally**

Peter and Linda Hutton have very kindly offered to run the next Velocette Rally in New Plymouth. This will be from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> of February 2023. Entry form will be sent out with this newsletter.

Some of you who are attending the Rally from Auckland have intimated that you would like to ride down to New Plymouth. If you are interested in forming a Group please phone GARY MITCHELL on 027 698 8002

### **Velocette Rally 2024**

Steve Carrington from Motueka has kindly put his hand up to organize the 2024 Rally, which will be based at the SEAVIEW LODGE on the shoreline at HOKITIKA. This is an opportunity for our South Island friends to attend. Hope you will support Steve.

### **Other upcoming Rallies**

From the Tauranga Classic Club

Just a reminder for the rally entries for our event in November. There is a steady flow of entries coming through but as usual, we prefer to see them sooner than later so it assists the planning.

We are in the process of defining the run across some interesting country.

We'll have two options for you on the day of the run. One will be shorter and suited to those riders (or bikes!) who prefer a less strenuous trip. The alternate route will cater for those who feel like something a little longer and more likely to appeal to riders that have bikes that can maintain highway speeds comfortably. Both rides will meet at the luncheon stop.

If you have misplaced your entry, here is a copy.

Otherwise, we look forward to hosting you again at Epworth from Friday 4<sup>th</sup> November to Sunday 6<sup>th</sup>.

Cheers

Bruce

0272260204 for any questions

Rally entry will be sent out with this newsletter.

Auckland VCC Rally 4,5 & 6 November

It is the 42<sup>nd</sup> Motorcycle Rally of the Motorcycle section of the Auckland Veteran & Vintage Car Club Inc.

The rally this year is a live-in rally similar to our Orewa rallies except that this year we have booked the PORT WAIKATO SCHOOL CAMP, 68 Port Waikato-Waikaretu Road, Port Waikato as the rally HQ. This is a school camp with sufficient accommodation for all attendees.

The rally begins on Friday at 6pm at the rally HQ. with a pie and pud evening.

### **Social Ride**

Warwick Darrow

Velo riders in Auckland.....would you like to to have a pleasant ride through the back roads of

South Auckland, i.e. Whitford, Clevedon, Hunua finally arriving at the Irish Pub at Mercer for Lunch.

So I can gauge your interest please ring me on 09 520 2882 so I can get a gauge on lunch numbers. I already have a number who wish to attend. We will work a date and time and advise when you ring me. Mid Nov to Mid Dec. Veloists from the Waikato are most welcome to attend.

### **Finances**

As you are aware we only ask for a donation or sell clothing to raise funds for the Register. If you would like to donate so we can still operate please make an ONLINE donation to Kiwibank account no 38. 9012. 0036650. 00. Please add your name. Non online people, those who don't have a computer may Bank at Kiwibank in person.

### **Dave Crone**

Did you buy a Mac from the Dave Crone (Gisborne) estate? If so I may have unearthed the original ownership papers. Contact Greg Pawson with your bikes engine number ph 0220570988

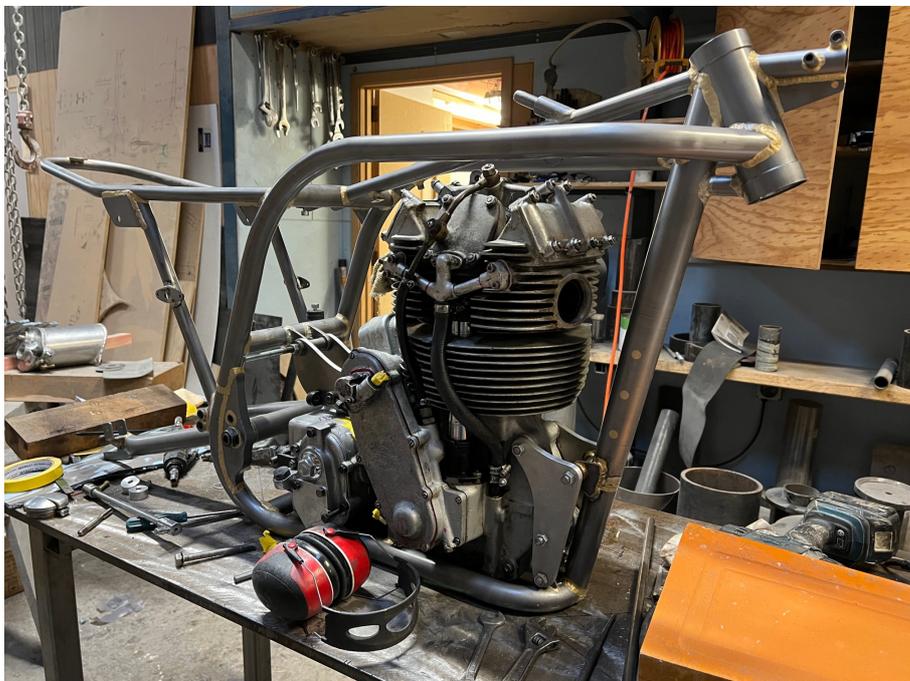
### **DUKE VELO**

Phil Price

A few years ago I bought from a Bonhams auction in the UK a lot that contained two bikes, one I wanted and one I could take or leave. What I wanted was a mocked up MK8 KTT sporting none other than SF7. Students of early Velo racing history will know that SF1-6 were essentially what we would call today factory racers, twin cam 350's for 1936 and those beautiful big finned 'huntly and palmer' 500's built for the likes of Stanley Woods, Ted Mellors, and Ernie Thomas. SF7 was reputedly a spare that never got sold and never got used. My good friend Ivan Rhodes says that he recalls SF7 chained to the verandah posts of Simon Goodman's house for many years. Anyway, my interest in the twin cam engines from 1936 had me determined to get the rolling chassis with the view to building as genuine a twin cam as possible and what better starting point that a genuine frame from the time.

This musing is however not about SF7 but the other bike in the lot, this was offered as the Geoff Duke replica. Now this bike sat for a few years in my mate the famous veritable Bishop of Velocettery Pat Clancy's hallway. Now however it is in New Zealand and on the slab as it were getting attention to be used on the track with some kind of mild anger.

Those of you who are also members of the UK Velo club might recall a few recent articles about these bikes, it appears three were built in the day, being perhaps around 1952 or 3 with the design being a collaboration



between Duke himself and Ken Sprayson. One of these was written off and the other two exist, one in Germany which I saw at the 2018 classic TT on display sporting a factory five speed box. The other is with Ivan, and mine the third was made locally in Derbyshire using one of the original frames as a guide jig. Ivan has been involved with them all and while he of course claims his one to be the most correct I'm not sure that any really are 'the one'

At the time in the early fifties plenty was new and going on, velos were on their last song with no money and not able to keep up with trends, one of which was to lower the frontal area of the

whole machine meaning less of an object to push through the air, they were all at it, the 7R and porcupine were good examples, and the new manx complete with featherbed and its short roadholders another. New frames duplex in nature and importantly welded or brazed were being put to the actual test. The Duke velo has a single downtube reputedly made from a tapered Velo swing arm tube, this to cope with the exhaust port exit, and the rest a good duplex item fully brazed.

With the demise of Velo racing as a factory there would have been a few tasty bits around for those still keen, everyone knew the engine was easily as good as the 350 manx and 7R. The original Duke bike apparently had KTT930 which was Bill Lomas's KTT and my assumption is that Lomas got offered one of the special twin cam engines which made his original engine surplus. In fact it was the Australian Hinton brothers who ended up using the Duke special the most campaigning it a lot on the continent, and by the time they got their hands on the bike there would have been twin cam engines as well available. It reputedly sported a twin cam at times too. Interestingly KTT930 came with my bike, so who lays claim to the most original Duke special becomes more complex!

The point of difference with this one that it will be put out there on the track to see what it is actually capable of, and I at least am optimistic as it seems like a nice package. I do intend at some stage to bring it to Australia to show it off in use.

So over the last couple of months my friend and partner in Velo crime, guru Nick Thomson have been through the bike, and I've made the call to put to one side the hummingtop brake and velo forks for Maxton/Cerrianni and a Fontana stopper. We've fitted the nova 6 speed which has performed well for us and it will begin life in the next month or so on methanol.

I'll report back after that for those interested in such things.

## **Castrol 6 Hour Race 1976 Robbie Thomson**

### Castrol 6 Hour

The morning Manfield sun cast our shadows across the front straight towards our bikes being held ready for us. 80 riders, leatherclad, helmeted and gloved, tensed ready for the starters gun.

Bang! We sprinted across to take over the bikes. As I eased the Thruxton over compression all around me starters whined and chains snatched as bikes were kicked into gear, and the boys were off!

The Velo started first kick. Thank you BTH magneto!

I paused a few seconds and peered through the dust and two stroke smoke, watching the mass of riders bunch to get through Firestone Corner. They were clear. I clonked the Thruxton into gear and we were off.

The previous year, the mass start of the Castrol Six Hour became a mass pileup, and lots of dreams and hard work stopped right there. We were there for the long haul, not the short fall. It was the Velo's and our last and only chance.

So how did we get to this? Three penniless students campaigning an obsolete motorbike in the 1976 Castrol Six Hour? Chris Tait, fellow tramper, fearless mountaineer and motorcyclist was my co-rider.

My brother Nick was the backup-pit crew and mechanic, already showing disturbing signs of the innovative, pedantic engineer he was to become. And myself, 20yrs old, with a dream to put up a good show in this long distance race on a Velocette Thruxton. Wasn't that why they made the bike? We were only three years into our Lifetime Velocette Apprenticeships, and as it turned out, we had an awful lot to learn! And that is the long story. This is the short one.

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Nick and I were just 6 and 5 respectively at the start of the 1960's. Second and third youngest in a large family. Not much spare anything except time and innovation once the weekend chores were done. Ngaio, one of Wellingtons western suburbs was conveniently located between two rubbish tips.

One in Karori 4 miles south or 3 miles north to Johnsonville. We could travel together on a push scooter or pull a homemade trolley up the hills and ride down. It depended on what we thought we needed to carry home!

Rubbish tips were scarcely supervised in those days, especially weekends.

But you needed to be careful! Mostly they were left to burn, so you had to be a bit thoughtful of where you stood. And the treasures we found! Pram wheels, scrap metal, old radios, even a bicycle. Back then pushbikes were rare and costly, our first being donated by older brother John. A gents 28 inch, full mudguards, chaincases, carrier and sprung saddle and bell. We were too short to ride it over the bar, so adapted a technique whereby the bike was leaned at an angle and you pedalled through the diamond frame! Single speed, but with such long pedal cranks that it could conquer almost any hill. They have reinvented these again recently.

And so our love of two wheels started early, then bicycles to Onslow College, where we saw students riding motorscooters and motorbikes to school!

A Vespa Sportique 150cc came up for sale at \$90. I had \$15 and borrowed the rest from my father. It was a great scooter, Piaggio made, reliable, economical, but prone to disappearing down potholes! Licensed on my 15th birthday I was off!

My horizons opened out.

Nick bought a Vespa too, a year earlier, but a Douglas Vespa, made under licence by the Brits.

What a dog! Unreliable, prone to exploding its clutch. No wonder that the Italians were not happy with Mr Douglas, and that Nick went on to become an engineer!

The only faults with my Vespa were its tiny 8inch wheels and the steering lock.

The ignition and steering lock were separate. When you locked the steering you had to make sure you flicked it to full opposite lock, otherwise it was possible to start the bike and ride off with the steering still locked. It took a sharp lefthand corner to lock the steering and luckily the only one I found was coming around the back of the house, when, pleased to be home, you were suddenly catapulted into the ponga ferns!

With our love of tramping we needed to get to some remote road ends. The Vespa could carry one person and a pack only. I needed a bigger bike!

One of our sister's boyfriends Mike Garland (recently deceased) was always filling our heads with tales of his Velocette Venom.

Stories of "cracking the ton" on the back roads of the Manawatu. Shooting deer and ferrying them out of the hills across the carrier of the Velo. These tales made a big impression on the Thomson boys.

A Velo sounded like the bike I needed!

Funnily enough I had seen a Velo on my route to Uni. I can still picture the scene; a typical pedestrian right-of-way heading up away from Kelburn Parade, with the standard white painted post and rail fence. And behind the fence a long low black motorcycle, with a carrier and panniers! The long grass obscured the lower part of the bike, but the tank pads said Velocette.

Parting the grass, the side of the engine said, Made in Velocette England, so I was onto it.

I made enquiries of the nearby student flats. No, the guy who owned it was away, but they could contact him by phone.

Several days later I was \$50 poorer and the proud owner of a non running Velocette.

The Vespa towed it home, and I doubt I went tramping for 6 months! There was a lot to learn.

Mike looked quizzically at the bike when he first saw it on the back lawn.

"Hmmm, it seems to be a springframe Mac, but maybe someone blew up the motor and gearbox, because that motor and gearbox are prewar. Still, it should still work". And we set to work timing the ignition and getting it running. Year one of the Lifetime Velocette Apprenticeship!

My first long trip was memorable! My girlfriend had invited me to stay with her at her Grandmothers' place in Shannon, 130kms north. I was keen! The Velo, not so keen.

On the first major hill, I could feel the Velo tensing up beneath me. Then the cylinder head would lift and bang, bang, bang, all that compression would escape.

I stopped to examine things. Tightened the spindly cylinder head nuts (easy on an early Mac).

Then noticed the rear chain had loosened right off. What? I had carefully adjusted both chains before leaving. I checked the primary chain. It was like a steel bar!

The gearbox had been pulled backward. The two large nuts that bolted the gearbox at the top

must have moved. A trip to a nearby firewood pile collected a selection of tapered mill slabs. Driving the right one between the rear downtube and the gearbox fixed that, then why not another slimmer wedge between the top tube and the rocker cover? Sorted.

A good weekend, mainly spent sorting Grannies overgrown garden, but with compensations, and a good trip home!

The verdict? Much work to do to get a reliable Velo.

Nick could see how much fun I was getting out of an old bike, so he decided to get one too!

We found a rigid Mac leaning against the bank behind a block of flats in Khandallah. Couldn't raise the owner on the first visit, and on the next visit found that recent rains had brought the bank down and buried the Velo! For \$45 we got to excavate a 1948 rigid Mac and tow it home with another Velo.

The Dowty forks seemed to work(full of valve springs),but soon after getting it running the gearbox seized up and split, someone having brazed up the double 2nd/third gear.

Nick was disgusted. We had to upgrade these bikes! And we did.My gearbox ,which turned out to be an early KTT box with part of its frame sandwiched between the Mac engine plates went to a delighted Stan Bird for his KTT restoration, replaced by a later MSS box from a wrecker.Nick found an alloy Mac motor and gearbox and fitted these to a later frame.

Both bikes were reasonably sound and as reliable as the magneto of the day.

Older brother Alastair had started the motorscooter theme with an NSU Prima 3KL.

As a student teacher he had a salary and he proceeded to fill all the sheds and chookhouses at home with NSU scooters,Quickly mopeds,Prima 3KIs, 5s, Ds, Maxes, SuperMaxes, Maxis and Luxes.NSUs were cheap, and Alo cornered the market!

Younger brother Julian (Buzzo) was the smart one. Only Hondas for him! Often he would ask if anyone would come for a ride with him, but mostly we were too busy fixing our bikes. Father would call our bikes"a hundred and one mechanical imperfections".

I suspect he was a hundred short.He also liked to say of our bikes that now filled the backyard,"At least they keep you boys off the streets!" How true.Buzzo was probably the best rider of the four brothers (possibly because he got more riding time!)

Certainly he was unbeatable around the garden TT circuit.

Ours was a long narrow section, one and a half acres, running steeply uphill through tall macrocarpas and pine trees.The TT circuit started at the lower fowl house.climbed gently at first past the back vege terraces, then into the bush and steeply up the mountain!

All features were named appropriately; Clonky Knees, Skin Yer Knuckles, FowlHouse Straight ,and so on.A hairpin bend at the top, a flat out section across beside the potato patch, careful not to clip the edge of the Top Chook house, then a terrifying descent down past the cranberries, around brick garden walls, through a bush tunnel ,across the firewood yard to finish at the Lower Fowl House.

The Man of the Mountain could do it under half a minute. No-one could touch him, and many nearly died trying.

The machines? All NSU Quicklys ,stripped to frame and motor and wheels. The combination of pedal power and a good mixture were key. Rules : gloves must be worn.

Buzzo was smooth and quick and made it look easy! I would have loved to see how he went on the racetrack, but he was the only one not to go on and compete. Clearly a higher IQ than his bros.

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Now Nick and I had bikes that were reliable enough to go places(with a spare fibre gear and magneto). Magnetos then were literally dying. All modern bikes had CDI or coil.

You could still buy armatures for your Lucas mag, but they were old stock and the condenser quickly failed.There didn't seem to be anyone doing them up. A mate ,Dick Huurdeman ,took his box of Lucas mags and threw them off the Wellington wharf, so as to not be tempted to use them! We dreaded dealing with Lucas.They didn't suffer long haired students wanting obsolete bits, so we sent our sister Hilary in. She was a gorgeous brunette, and the fat middle-aged Lucas spares boys couldn't do enough for her! Points mam? Slipping? No problem!

Each summer our eldest brother John would take us on a two week tramp in the Southern Alps. He would work out a route using old guide books and maps, usually across the divide from the West Coast to the east and back by a different route. Our packs at the start were often 30kg or more. You could barely lift them off the ground. They lost weight as the dehy meals were used, as did Nick and I on such a slim diet for teenage boys! Bacon and salami were the only meat that would last a while. Nick and I took turns licking the frying pan!

We would catch the ferry to Picton and ride our bikes to the West Coast, often picking up John from the nearest bus station and taking him down to the start of this years tramp.

The first year we took the bikes we picked John, his pack and iceaxe up from Hokitika and continued down the coast to the river valley we were to go up. The farmer was happy for us to ride to the top of the farm and hide our bikes in the bush.

As it was the Wet Coast, we thought it prudent to fit plastic bags over the carburettors.

The bikes were pushed well under cover of the bush, so hopefully the Keas wouldn't see those lush dual seats and rip them apart. Two weeks later, the bus dropped us at the farm gate. We thanked the farmer and walked up to get our bikes. Yes, the seats were OK, but what were those things inside plastic bags full of clear rainwater? Oh yes, carbs!, not goldfish. Year two, Lifetime Velocette Apprenticeship!

An hour dismantling carbs, cleaning out HT pickups, plugs out, and much kicking saw two Velos splutter into life.

Nick has a pathological loathing of mosquitos, reacting badly to bites. As the West Coast is home to our finest mozzies, we had to get off the coast asap. This often meant a long ride to the Buller Gorge, and a race in the dark with feeble headlights to get to at least 2000ft, off the coast. The Buller Gorge or Kawatiri is one of the best motorcycle rides in NZ. Winding road with forest meeting over the top, glimpses of the river below, and two Velo Macs whose exhausts notes syncopated as they echoed off the banks. Pure magic.

A night camped on the roadside or in whatever free shelter there was, the next day Picton, broke and dirty, then home to bulk up!

We were not long home from one of these summer tramps, when walking to the dairy to get iceblocks on a hot afternoon, Mr Irvine called us over. His son Neil was home for a while and commuting to a night shift job in town on his Dads very original 1953 Mac. We would hear this bike return late at night around the back of Ngaio.

It had a beautiful fluting note to the original round muffler with slice cut tail pipe. (like a Gold Star!) Neil was going back overseas, and Irvine Senior was going to sell the Velo. Were we interested? He knew we had Velos. Hard to miss when they are always being crash started down his hill, or coming back at speed with open pipes or experimental megaphones! He knew at least his Mac would be quieter!

We scratched up \$90 and were the proud co-owners of a completely original alloy Mac with 28,000 miles on the 80mph speedo. What a game changer! Up until now we had cobbled together bikes from bits, but now we knew what a Velo could be. Reliable, good brakes, good handling, excellent carrying ability two up with a load. Even details like the fast idle on the carb.

Start your bike, set on fast idle while you put your gear on, turn it back to idle and you were off. Original, but not so welcome was the 36watt Miller generator. With a 25watt headlamp bulb, a 5 watt tail lamp, and another small bulb in the speedo plus rear brake light, didn't leave anything to be lost in transmission! The paint was original, and interesting to note it was not that flash, small runs in the enamel here and there. We called it the New Mac, as opposed to the bitsers. Its still the New Mac 50 years on with hundreds of thousands of miles on it. You can lend it to anyone to tour NZ, knowing it would bring them thumping back (except for two broken crankpins thanks to Alphas lousy design).

To be continued

### **For Sale**

RS Mac band type primary chaincases, inner, outer and band. No seal. Good order \$100  
Front brake hub, bare. Suit 50s Mac. \$50  
Dynamo belt drive, inner half only. Suit 50s Velo and earlier \$50  
Purchaser will need to pay postage.

Robbie Thomson 03 5211999

Lucas headlight. 7 inch, glass with Lucas name, chrome rim with good clip.

Good overall, \$65.00.

S/arm stand. No through rod, but with spring. \$50.00.

Outside primary chainguard band type \$35.00.

S/a clutch cover. Good but requires repaint. \$35.00.

Late type headlamp nacelle with switch. \$45.00.

Inner dynamo mounting that goes under the strap \$35.00.

Carb alloy finned inlet block 32mm. Between carb and head. \$40.00.

Tele fork lamp brackets good \$50.00 pair

Millar end dynamo cover good \$15.00. Rear brake lever \$35.00 chrome is rough but could be painted.

All plus P.P. compare to overseas prices. Warwick Darrow. 09 520 2882.

[waktrish@gmail.com](mailto:waktrish@gmail.com).

Roo stands. Contact Neville Smith [velo499venom@hotmail.com](mailto:velo499venom@hotmail.com)

BIKES FOR SALE.

S/arm mac, show winner in every respect. Professionally restored at expense. A bike to be proud of. 1955 circa.

Also a 1950 ish rigid mac, tele forks, alloy motor, not super shiney but very original good.

Phone. Colin Bird 027 539 3113. email [colin@modusconstruction.co.nz](mailto:colin@modusconstruction.co.nz).

Numerous parts for sale. John Bryant 09 4456483. see previous news letter on line

Rear Mudguard - Steel - Venom/Viper MSS 1960 onwards. Brand new never used. Powder coated gloss black. \$100. Keith Ballagh email [keith@ballagh.co.nz](mailto:keith@ballagh.co.nz)

## Wanted

For my new Venom swing arm project.

Oil tank

Rear Sprocket guard

Rear chainguard

Clubmans seat complete or just a base.

Anything considered.

Contact Roy, Mobile: 021677952 Email: [rsharvey@xtra.co.nz](mailto:rsharvey@xtra.co.nz)

S/arm frame or a s/a mac project bike condition not that important.

Contact Alice Leney. contact [alice@coolcard.co.nz](mailto:alice@coolcard.co.nz).

R/S oil tank and rear brake lever for my ISDT replica project. Please contact Bill Irwin.

[bill@irwin.gen.nz](mailto:bill@irwin.gen.nz) 03 5488743

Venom rear brake drum with a good sprocket (MAS77/2) and

18 tooth gearbox sprocket (SL95/5) Urgent.. Please phone Steve Carrington. 03 528 4573.

027 2259916.

Speedo, main switch, carby and tail light for 1953 LE200. Peter Hall, Perth Western Australia.

[ozvalves@bigpond.com](mailto:ozvalves@bigpond.com)

Parts Suppliers

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Online Velocette parts store -  
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- 'Clubmanised' Venom bikes
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- Magneto/dynamo repair
- Alloy petrol tanks and seats
- Wheel building and parts

[mark@velocetteclassics.com](mailto:mark@velocetteclassics.com)

Contact:  
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Tanks Classics Ltd  
Cumbria  
07870 762442



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