

February 2009

North Birmingham News

NEWSLETTER

A Review of 2008 showing some of the places where we have visited



New years day run passing through Worfield



At the Lichfield start of Josie's Jaunt



The Spring Run Coffee Stop at Norbury Junction



At the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway



The Relay Rally Checkpoint at the Pavillions



At the Trent Valley Run from Lichfield



The Start of the Girder Fork Run



The Concours judging at Dudmaston Hall



From the Archives Binks Carburettors



Charles Binks with his first two jet carburettor in 1910.

Say “Binks” to today’s motorcyclist and chances are he won’t have a clue what you’re talking about. But ask someone with an interest in motorcycle history and he’ll reply: “carburettors”. And if he’s a dedicated veteran or vintage enthusiast, to “carburettors” he may add “Mousetrap”, “Rat-trap”, or even “Three Jet”.

The name Binks is synonymous with motorcycle carburettors, and it is with their design and manufacture that their creator, Charles Binks, made his reputation. However, he once dreamed far more expansively. Carburettors were merely a sideline. Producing complete engines, motorcycles and cars was his ambition. There has to be more to a man who in 1903 produced the world’s first four cylinder motorcycle engine.

Born in 1864 at Bootle near Liverpool, Charles Binks was the son a Quaker family of reputedly Huguenot ancestry. His education was completed at Bootham, the highly respected Quaker school near York, which has produced a formidable number of distinguished scholars, many of them scientists. Following school he was apprenticed to a cycle manufacturer in Birkenhead, where he gained experience of engineering. Charles then embarked on what would turn out to be 25 restless years of trying to establish a reputation in automotive engineering.

Initially he went into partnership in Birkenhead making bicycles and tricycles, but this was a short lived venture and dissolved the following year. Charles then moved to York and formed another partnership, again making bicycles. The manufacturing premises were at Micklegate and a shop at Davy Gate sold the products of the partnership under the name Binks and Lloyd. The business prospered, enabling Charles to marry in 1890. His hobby was the steam launch and he owned several—Gitana, Kittiwake and Pandora to name but three. Steam launches were very popular at the time, being both fast, elegant and almost silent. It was from this hobby that the Binks family believe Charles acquired his interest in engines and fascination with ‘inspirators’ as he referred to his early carburettor designs.

Cycle makers had to make a huge leap from the simplicity of bicycles to the additional complication of engines and transmissions.

Many took the easy way out and simply grafted on proprietary engines. More enterprising men took up the challenge, embraced the new technology, and made their own engines and complete machines. Charles Binks was one of the latter.

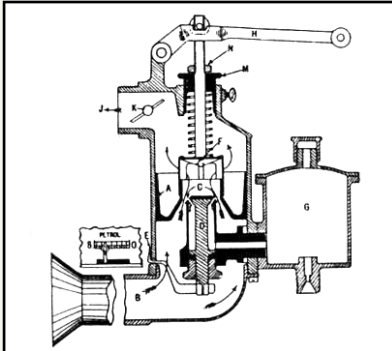
In 1899 the Binks and Lloyd partnership was dissolved and Charles took his family to Nottingham. He moved into premises at Bobber’s Mill, where he demonstrated his larger ambitions by producing, for the 1903 Stanley show, a four cylinder motorcycle.

Well ahead of its time, the design was described in the *Motorcycle* as hardly a bicycle— it was more a single-track car. The Binks had a four cylinder engine that could be mounted either in-line, or across the frame. Both versions were on display, complete with a luxurious wickerwork seat with bright red upholstery instead of a saddle, drive by enclosed chain, and trembler coil ignition powered by batteries housed in the back of the seat. Unusually, the Binks had no pedals. These were unnecessary, it was claimed. A rider started the four simply by pushing it along in gear. There were two engine sizes—412cc and 804cc with cylinder dimensions of 2in x 2in (50.8 x 50.8mm) and 2 1/2 in x 2 1/2 in (63.5 x 63.5mm). The power output was claimed to be 6hp at 2000rpm. Both show models had French Longuemare carburettors.

Some sources claim that the fours were fitted with the first Binks carburettor, but there is no direct evidence to support this claim. Yet these two machines were the first four cylinder motorcycles to be made, rather than the Belgian FN, which the Binks pre-dates. To promote his new fours, Charles hired Coventry race tract at The Butts in October 1904 to demonstrate their performance. Journalists were prominent among the firm’s guests, for Binks had a flair for free publicity. Unfortunately, conditions were wet and windy. The Press although impressed, decided to let the buying public weigh the merits of the multis—with their additional cost and complication—against the relatively simple single. Many journalists noted that the engine would probably suit a light car. Charles took their advice to heart.

An untiring publicist, Charles Binks never let an opportunity pass him by. At Nottingham, his works were near the law courts, so he sent a tester out on a smoky machine just as the judges were assembling for a new court term. This had precisely the desired effect, with the police forced to take action and the local Press reporting that the Binks motorcycle had roared past at 60mph. Charles ordered reprints for advertising purposes. The true top speed of his four was 35mph, so the exaggeration was welcome.

There is no record of how many Binks fours were made and not one seems to have survived.



A Choke tube
B Air inlet
C Petrol nozzle holes.
(seven)
D Adjustable petrol valve
E Petrol valve indicator
F Baffle
G Float chamber
H Lever actuating choke tube
K Throttle
J To engine
L Petrol inlet
M Adjusting nut to spring
N Stop nut

Early days: the improved Binks carburettor launched in May 1905.

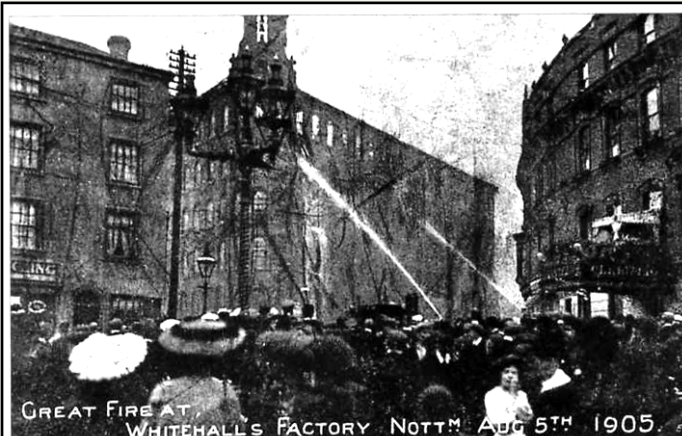
An example was offered for sale in the late Twenties, and an enquiry as to where the 1903 show exhibits were in the Motorcycle dated 16 December 1926 prompted a reply from Eric Walford, a well known patent agent best remembered for his book *Early Days in the British Motor Cycle Industry*, first published in 1931. Walford had owned one of each of the fours, and had known

the (by 1926) late Charles Binks well. He commented favourably on the in-line version, though both fours were equipped with a single plate clutch that either slipped or would not disengage.

“When the machine ran it ran very smoothly compared to the rough running machines of those days; but, seeing that it had battery ignition and the necessary four coils (and trembler coils at that) reliability was not its strong point,” wrote Walford of the in-line Binks four. He dismissed the across the frame layout without hesitation. Its outside flywheel was about a foot off centre and ran close to the road, so that almost any left hand turn resulted in the flywheel grounding, which was quite exciting as rider control was limited by the wicker basket seat. Walford had lost track of his Binks fours, and suspected that they had been broken up and their engines put to alternative uses.

Charles Binks took the hint and turned his hand to car design. His first effort was a true light car—The Leader—which no doubt benefited from the experience gained with motorcycles. The car’s engine had four separate cylinders, was rated at 10/12hp and had shaft drive to the rear wheels. Later, a 14hp tourer and a Motor Hansom were also made.

Ever the salesman, when a customer came to look at a car, he would signal an assistant to start up a noisy Darracq. Then, feigning annoyance, he would order the deafening noise to be stopped. Binks would then start up his own four-cylinder car, which was almost inaudible by comparison.



GREAT FIRE AT WHITEHALL'S FACTORY NOTT. AUG 5TH 1905

Crowds gather to watch the fire in Nottingham that destroyed The Leader works on 5 August 1905 and ruined Charles Binks. But he wasn't daunted and moved on.

At the time there was a public outcry against motor cars, particularly their offensive smell, so Charles mixed perfume with the fuel in three cars, had them painted red, which and blue, and then driven around Nottingham. He silenced the critics. In addition, he made a boat engine and a range of boats. These are listed as having Binks carburetors.

In 1905 there was a disastrous fire in Nottingham that destroyed The Leader works. Production was moved to a new location. Subsequent cars were called The New Leader, and were still designed by Charles Binks. However, the fire had ruined Binks and he was no longer employed as works manager. The range consisted of 1020hp and 2030hp four-cylinder models as well as an intriguing 60hp V8. All were fitted with Binks carburetors.

Fifty cars were destroyed in the blaze, one of them ordered by Mr. Learoyd of Trafalgar Mills, Huddersfield, a wealthy manufacturer of fine worsted cloth with a worldwide reputation. In 1906 he invited Charles to make another car for him. Binks accepted the challenge and moved his family to Huddersfield.

Charles visited the Paris Salon with his eldest son Harold—who was to work with him—in order to study other cars and the automobile market. Workshops were set aside at Trafalgar Mills for the project, and Charles, inspired by the freedom from financial restraint produced the Roydale, its name an anagram of Learoyd.

The first Roydale appeared in 1907 and was received very favourably by the Press. The Autocar took four pages to describe it in some detail, praising the work of Charles Binks, and features such as the clean chassis, unusual amount of steering lock, amply proportioned radiator, nickel steel front axle, quickly detachable water pump, and the cast crankcase mounting flanges resting on the chassis frame. There was no fan for the radiator. Instead, air was drawn through the engine compartment by vanes on the flywheel. The cylinders were cast in one block with its attendant advantages for machining. This was the first time that his monoblock design had been attempted in England, and was another first for Charles Binks. There were also dual ignition systems, an ingenious lubrication system and—of course—a Binks carburetor.

The bodies of these magnificent cars were made by Huddersfield coachbuilders Rippon, and luxuriously upholstered in leather. For fashion they competed favourably with any car of the day, but production ran to perhaps a dozen examples. Harold Binks recalled one ordered by a man in London. He was sent south with the Roydale for a month to teach its buyer how to drive. As a reward he received a pair of gold cufflinks from a satisfied customer.

Charles Binks wanted to increase production, but Mr. Learoyd was a perfectionist and looked on the venture as a hobby. He had all the wealth he wanted from Trafalgar Mills. So although a boat was also fitted with a Roydale engine and delivered to York via canal and river, Charles became restive. He parted company with Learoyd in 1909.

Charles had interested the company owned by Sir W H Bailey in making an engine and travelled over the Pennines to work in Salford, near Manchester. That meant another house move, this time to Eccles, a short distance from the Salford works. *Continued next month*

PROVISIONAL FORTHCOMING
ATTRACTI ONS FOR 2009

CLUB NIGHTS	
JANUARY 28TH	AGM and Presentation of Annual Awards
FEBRUARY 25TH	A talk by John Fox Ariel Tester
MARCH 25TH	A talk by Chris Harper on Ancient Aviation
APRIL 29TH	A talk by Peter Dawson on the History of the RAC
MAY 27TH	Film Night
JUNE 24TH	Ride A Bike Night
JULY 29TH	Fish and Chip Supper
AUGUST 26TH	Arrive on Your Bike Night
SEPTEMBER 30TH	James Hewing VMCC CEO
OCTOBER 28TH	An Evening with Bill
NOVEMBER 25TH	Bring and Buy evening
DECEMBER	No Meeting

DATE	RUN	ORGANISER	Tel No
MARCH 29TH	Spring Run	Josie Stanley	01902-607293
MAY 3RD	Anchor Garage Run	John Aston	01543-452695
MAY 17TH	Girder Fork Run	Martyn Round	0121-550-1547
MAY 29TH-31ST	Welsh Weekend	Josie Stanley	01902-607293
JUNE 3RD	Wrinkly Run	Roger Greening	01562-730464
JUNE 7TH	Josie's Jaunt	Josie Stanley	01902-607293
JUNE 24TH	Ride A Bike Night	Paul Harris	01902-842732
JUNE 28TH	Roger's Run	Roger Greening	01562-730464
JULY 5TH	Trent Valley Run	Brian Empsall	01543-264968
JULY 19TH	Long Mynd Run	Colin Lloyd	01384-371835
JULY 22ND	Wrinkly Run	Ian Harris	01952-299118
AUGUST 2ND	Breakfast Run	Rob Pell	0121-624-7674
AUGUST 16TH	Anniversary / Concours	Peter Ashen	01562-882854
SEPTEMBER 6TH	Flight of Fantasy Run	Trevor Bull	01905-778917
SEPTEMBER 20TH	Severn Valley Run	Bill Danks	01562-67103
OCTOBER 4TH	Levis Cup Road Trial	Paul Harris	01902-842732
OCTOBER 11TH	Autumn Run	Andy Briggs	0121-544-5938
NOVEMBER 1ST	Winter Wander	Josie Stanley	01902-607293