

My first Bike – Gary Phillips (Treasurer / Membership Sec.)

My first bike was a Ducati Monza Junior 160. I bought it brand new in 1972 from Mounts.



Apparently they were on special offer as a result of a shipment being caught up on the Suez Canal on their way to America. Two engine sizes were available, the 160cc for £190 and the 350cc for £225. Unfortunately I hadn't passed my test and I had to make do with the 160. The on the road price of my bike including 12 months insurance, road tax and a Stadium open faced helmet, which I used to tuck my



long hair underneath, was £225. I sold it a year later for £90 because I couldn't afford the £29 to insure it. It sounds a pittance now but as an apprentice brickie on £5 a week the bike had to go. The bloke I sold it to brought it back and asked for a refund because the oil filler plug had vibrated loose and was lost. I saw nothing wrong as a sixteen year old riding around with a wine cork stuck firmly in the hole, so I refused. Incidentally, if anyone knows about the whereabouts of FTX 82K I am quite willing to buy it back for £90 because I recently found two for sale on the Internet, one for 3500 Dollars in America and another for 2600 Euros in Italy.

After losing such an enormous amount of money on a bike I switched to four wheels until I got married in 1977 and found I needed transport to commute to Neath daily. I purchased a 'previously enjoyed' (I've been advised recently never to describe a vehicle as second hand) Suzuki TS125 which was economical to run. All was well until a motorist knocked me off it in Baglan in his Morris Marina. I can remember his caring words he said to the police who attended, "I feel as sick as a pig, I only had it resprayed a fortnight ago". **B****rd.**



This bike was replaced by another TS125 and later a Yamaha FS1E which I paid £40 for. The fizzie, as they are commonly referred to were not restricted, had disc brakes, 5 gears and could do 70mph. Old specimens are now in high demand because they are classed as a moped and don't have



the restrictions that modern mopeds have. I recently found two on the web for sale, both with asking prices in excess of £700. It has possibly occurred to you by now that I'm probably the only person who has constantly traded down for a smaller engine size. The reason – I never bothered to do my motorcycle test until 2001. I was effectively a learner for 29 years.



I had promised myself for years that I would take my test on a bike but had never got around to doing it until I saw a bike which I thought looked the dog's dangly bits, a Yamaha Dragstar 650V. I bought the bike and paid for a Direct Access Course. I was a typical over forty 'Born Again Biker', attracted by the acres of chrome and the leather saddle bags I was going to cruise the highways with my open face helmet and sunglasses – **Wrong**. These laid back, comfortable looking cruisers are not meant for riding any great distances. The twin cylinder air cooled engine produces more vibration in your hand than a jack

hammer, the leather wrap around seat is no more than a device to give your bum pins and needles and the laid back riding position leaves you wishing for an epidural after any ride longer than 150 miles. They're a dry weather posing bike (4 hours to clean the chrome and the spokes) only suitable for a ride

along the prom in Porthcawl or Mumbles on a sunny Sunday morning – Ah, that’s where you’ve seen one. The handling was atrocious, unless you counter steered it wouldn’t go around bends and even on the motorway it struggled to reach 80mph and was more comfortable if you kept it to 60mph. After clocking up 7000 miles on this boneshaker I decided to buy a tourer and opted for a BMW K75RT. Here’s a tip. If you’re looking for a bargain search the Internet very early in the morning and look for the adverts which have appeared that day and be prepared to travel with cash at short notice. I did and found a bloke in Birmingham who was emigrating ten days later. I had been looking for a Beamer for several weeks and had come across several in the bike shops for extortionate money, e.g. 1991 ex RAF police for £3500. The one I found in Birmingham was a 1996 K75 RT SE Ultima with 17500 miles on the clock and after a bit of haggling I had it for £2000. The book value was close to £5000. I had two years use out of it and covered about 16000 miles before selling it for £3000. The K75 was a very comfortable bike for long distances but it didn’t have enough grunt when pulling away and was therefore inadequate for ‘observing’.



However, the riding position was effortless and if I’m honest probably more comfortable than my current ST1100. The finish to the Beamer was far superior to that of the Japanese bikes I’ve owned and the electric screen, which completely eliminated helmet noise, heated grips and the ABS were all standard equipment on this model. The only advantage the ST1100 has over the K75 is the acceleration and the lower centre of gravity. The odds are that when I change the Pan I will probably go back to another BMW.