

KINDRED SPIRITS article, 6 February 2001

At an [Ipswich Society Flickr collection] meeting last year I believe it was I who identified a car I knew rather well in Upper Orwell Street. Here is the same car and a pic of Len Askew by David Kindred in the *Evening Star* on 6th February 2001.

It has another interesting point being the motorcycle and sidecar below the pic of the car. I grew up near David Kindred and indeed we went to school together but never talked as he was a few years younger than me.

There used to be a Gold Flash outfit parked outside his house but I have never asked him about this photograph. I think this is probably the same one with a very young David Kindred at the handlebars.

Peter Turtill, January 2016.



MATCHLESS: Above left, Len Askew; above right, his "limousine" parked outside the General Gordon in Upper Brook Street around 1960. Left, the picture Diane Buckenham sent with her memories of the Queen's visit to Ipswich 40 years ago this year. Right, A BSA Gold Flash outfit loaded with luggage, a picture taken in 1955.



UNTIL around 1960, relatively few families had a car. More affordable was a motorcycle, or for family outings, a motorcycle and sidecar.

Today, it is only enthusiasts who will travel the busy roads on an "outfit".

The cost of purchasing a bike and "chair" was in the price-range of many in the 1920s to the '50s. Famous British bikes made by the likes of BSA, Aerial, Norton, AJS, Triumph, Royal Enfield, and Matchless ruled the roads.

Outings to the coast, a picnic in the country, or a visit to an event usually saw dad at the handlebars, with either older child or mum on the pillion and the rest of the family squeezed into the sidecar.

There was no communication between sidecar and bike other than hand-signs, and it could take miles to attract the rider's attention over the roar of the engine and with the lid of the sidecar clipped shut.

I recall travelling on holiday with my parents and sister to destinations on the south coast at a time when there were few bypasses or dual-carriageways. Where did the luggage for a family of four go on a week's holiday? But we got there and back.

There was a ritual when stopping for a picnic. A Primus stove was assembled to boil a tiny kettle of water to make tea. It was always a work of art to light this strange brass contraption that burned methylated spirit under pressure.

Once the procedure of finding the wind direction, building a windshield, cleaning a tiny jet-hole with a special piece of wire, building up pressure with a built-in pump, etc., had taken place, it took what seemed like hours to boil water.

There were only transport cafes on the main routes, which catered very well for drivers, with huge plates of sausages, eggs and chips, and a giant enamel mug of tea, but which were not geared for families. The concept of Little Chefs and the like did not exist, probably because most folk would not have been able to afford it. So picnic it was, sandwiches, Scotch eggs, etc., followed by a game to run off a bit of energy.

There was a character in Ipswich who will be remembered by those who maintained their bikes themselves. Len Askew ran a business at 44 Upper Orwell Street,



that almost defied description. His tiny shop was packed with spares for bikes of all makes. Every space, including the floors, was smothered with grease and oil covered parts for bikes. Somehow Len knew what was there. A gearbox for a 1951 250cc AJS? Front forks for a 500cc Triumph? No problem, they would be there somewhere.

The main difficulty in dealing with Len was that whenever you called there would be a sign on the door saying, back in five minutes. Len would either be in the Hambro cafe or in the Duke of Kent public house.

Once, when Len's car was parked outside the pub, a couple of his customers put a Stieptoe and Son sign on his car (see picture).

Len was one of those businessmen who would not survive today. Rules and regulations would have closed him down, but this great little man kept machines on the road for many years.

The solo machine was the pride and joy of the younger rider and dedicated enthusiast (as it is now). Years ago riders did not have the slick smart leather outfits that riders wear today. An oilskin coat and leggings, a pair of Army surplus goggles and gauntlets would be the rather unfetching look. Crash helmets were not a legal requirement. Many a girl has ridden pillion wearing only a headscarf to protect her hair!

Beginners' machines in the '60s and '60s would be a BSA, Bantam or a Triumph Cub.

Foreign bikes were rare. The early Japanese bikes were wrongly looked upon with scorn. The German BMW with its

lay-down cylinders were a dream machine but true class was a Vincent Black Shadow. Crowds of riders would gather round to admire such machines.

My father, Noel, was a keen member of the Triangle (Ipswich) motorcycle club, and proud of his BSA Gold Flash and sidecar. I wish I still had it! I am not sure what my family would think of an outing, on a dark February night, in driving rain. On second thoughts I am certain of what they would think!

Do you have memories of the heydays of family motorcycling, solo or sidecar? Drop a line, with some photos if possible, to me, Dave Kindred, Evening Star, 30 Lower Brook Street, Ipswich, IP4 1AN, or e-mail to david.kindred@dnr.nrl.com

I received a letter from Ursula Smith, of Helstead Avenue, Ipswich, after we featured memories of the St Helen's Street area.

She wrote: "My husband used to live in Regent Street. All the houses were demolished when the Suffolk College was built. His father, Walter Smith, used to sell vegetables. Their garden backed on to Alexandra Park. They moved from there to Tanners Lane. If any readers have photos of either Regent Street or Tanners Lane and The Mount before the houses were demolished I would love to see them."

If you have any photos for Ursula send them to me and I will publish them.

We were recalling a couple of wrecks back the day the Queen came to Ipswich. It prompted memories for a couple of Star readers. Via our website came this e-mail from John Pearson in Newport on the Isle of Wight.

He said: "Yes, I remember the Queen's

visit to Ipswich in 1961 and her trip around Portman Road. It was a particularly hot day and I recall waiting ages in my school uniform (including black and red cap, which I still have somewhere!) for her to appear.

"I was in my last year at Britannia Road School and our head, a great man named Walter Poulter, had asked all those who had a full school uniform, to report to him. A group was chosen to represent the school on that day in July. As a staunch fan of Ipswich Town FC then and now, it was the closest I was to get to appearing on the hallowed turf!

"I have lived on the Isle of Wight for the past 30 years. About 15 years ago, I discovered that a friend, Rupert Besley, on the island, was also at Portman Road on that same day. He was representing Bretenham Hall, near Stowmarket. We did not know each other then.

"He is now a cartoonist and illustrator and contributes to our local paper. As I said my memories were of the heat, the long wait and a deadpan speech by a posh girl from the Convent! Happy days!"

John Pearson's email address is john.pearson@rydebe.jsnet

I am sure he would love to hear from his friends in Ipswich.

From Diane Buckenham (formerly Noble) of Burnham Close, Trimley St Mary, came a photograph taken outside the Employers' Liability Assurance Corporation office at 34 Princes Street, where Diane worked as a junior clerk.

Diane said: "It was my 17th birthday that month and the girls in the office bought a copy of the special book published A Suffolk Garland for the Queen, which I still treasure."

Here is a transcript of the text:-

Until around 1960, relatively few families had a car. More affordable was a motorcycle or, for family outings, a motorcycle and sidecar.

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The cost of purchasing a bike and “chair” was in the price-range of many in the 1920s to the 50s. Famous British bikes made by the likes of BSA, Aerial, Norton, AJS, Triumph, Royal Enfield and Matchless ruled the roads.

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Right, A BSA Gold Flash outfit loaded with luggage, a picture taken in 1955.

An enlargement of the group outside the Employers Liability Assurance Corporation office in 1961 and captions.