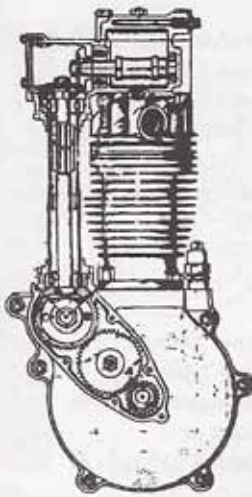


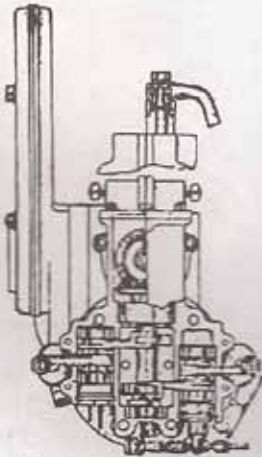
A real HEAD TURNER



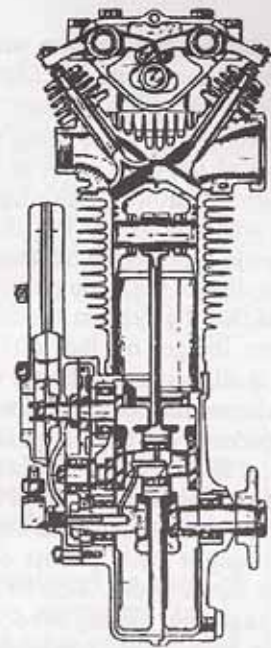
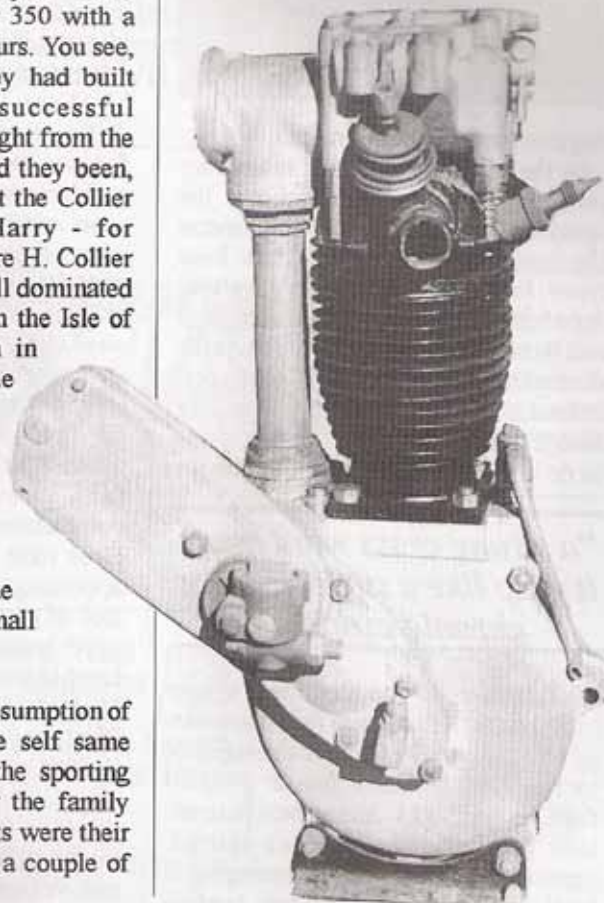
No matter which way you twist your neck to look at this engine, you'll still finish up confused. Has someone slotted its head on sideways, are you suffering from a giant hangover, or what? East is East and West is West as the old song goes, but where inlets and exhausts on single cylinder motorcycle engines are concerned, it surely should always be North is North and South is South.

Not though if you were a designer at Matchless motorcycles in the early nineteen twenties and you were mapping out a brand new 350 with a view to taking racing honours. You see, down Plumstead way they had built their reputation on successful competition motorcycles right from the word go. So successful had they been, that it could be argued that the Collier brothers Charlie and Harry - for Matchless motorcycles were H. Collier & Sons Ltd - had pretty well dominated the Tourist Trophy races in the Isle of Man from their inception in 1907 until 1914 and the Great War. Now, Tourist Trophy racing they did say, improved the breed of everyday bikes the man in the street was being offered; so not unnaturally Matchless machines of the veteran years enjoyed no small reputation with Joe Public.

Strange then, that on the resumption of civvy matters in 1920 the self same company totally ignored the sporting game and went 100% for the family man, big twin sidecar outfits were their sole offering. We revealed a couple of



347cc ohc
Matchless
peculiarity
dissected
by Ken
Hallworth



issues back the stillborn flat-twin they had designed during the war years and, what did come out of the works in the end was certainly closely identified with that line of thinking.

But moving on a couple of years, the thinking must have been along different lines, widening the appeal of the range and looking once more at the market for sporting singles; perhaps as a safe haven away from the serious threat of the Austin Seven upon the future potential for motorcycle and sidecar sales. It was in the run up to the June 1923 T.T. races that the Matchless involvement with racing again first came to notice, they were to enter a three man team in the Junior class on bikes powered by the factory's own new engine if - and it was to be a big IF - the motors were readied in time. By late May details of the engine were available and an advanced layout it was too, an overhead camshaft job of 69mm x 92.8mm bore and stroke with shaft and bevel drive to the camshaft and all-roller or ball bearing bottom end. The only plain bush in the engine was for the gudgeon pin; there were large valves, polished ports and mechanical lubrication by Best & Lloyd pump directly to the camshaft with drainage back down the drive shaft for eventual splash lubrication of the bottom end and cylinder walls.

Remember, at this early date, overhead cam motorcycle engine designs were *The 1926/27 Matchless LR engine from Stanford Hall and general arrangement drawings from the works.*

advert from the specialist press gave the address as 21-23 Market Street and we took a snap of the premises to record the visit. Today the Britannic Assurance Society offices occupy the old Tornado workshops and a less likely place for manufacturing you would find hard to imagine. Hudson's Motors were the proprietors, later to become Hudson & Matthews before fading into obscurity by 1930.

Stan then hurried me along Manchester Road to look at the Jackson & Edwards garage where an Altrincham historian had recorded them as being makers of motorcycles and cars from the beginning of the century. I didn't take a photo there, simply because the premises had been dramatically uprated fairly recently and there was little to commend the site to me as having an historic connection with motorcycling - but, I was wrong!

Back at the office, thinking I might be able to get some confirmation on the possible use of Oakfield House as the old Eagle works, I dropped a note to the archivist at Altrincham Library, more in hope than expectation. Back came a very helpful and comprehensive reply with a copy street plan and page from Slater's Trade Directory of the time, showing that sadly the actual Eagle

works were not where I had hoped, they had now long gone under the demolition man's hammer. But, the street map showed where they had been and, more importantly the archivist provided me with copies of an article written back in 1963 regarding the exploits of one Ralph Jackson who began a cycle

... I must put that photo oversight right - what a mug!

business in 1885 and by 1899 was in partnership with Arthur Firth building the motorised Century Tandem from works on Oakfield Road. Yes, the same premises from which Eagle Tandems would emerge a couple of years later. The story of what happened in the meantime is lengthy and absorbing but too long to tell here; suffice it to add, that in 1910 Jackson went into partnership with a Mr. P. Edwards and therein lies the connection with the trading style of the firm in 1996. The 1963 article was compiled by R.J. Wyatt who had the good fortune to talk with a then aged Mr. Edwards (Jackson having departed this globe many years before) and has left us

with an excellent record for posterity. Next time I go up to the Altrincham area I must put that photo oversight right - what a mug!

An interesting day then and all from a brief comment and concerning a location which is little known for its motorcycling past. I will go so far as to say UNKNOWN to the majority, even amongst enthusiasts. What it suggests however is that perhaps in your town, village or city, there might be a motorcycle manufacturing past to record, to still be discovered and to be told. Birmingham, Coventry, London, Bristol, Wolverhampton even Manchester, Bradford and Cleckheaton are familiar to most as centres of the industry. What about your locality, have you thought of looking and discovering the names of those involved, if any? I hope Stan's mention to me, might give some of you the impetus to start digging, it would be great to hear of your successes or disappointments.

Archive Note:

The Eagle Engineering & Motor Co.Ltd., the history of Ralph Jackson's inventions and enterprises, by R.J. Wyatt, appeared in "Old Motor & Vintage Commercial" magazine of October 1963. □

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