

# Scott Flying Squirrel

Purple Paint and Pilgrim Pump; a Most Peculiar Motorcycle

by Henry N. Manney III

**H**ere we have another one of our celebrated Barnyard Salons especially photographed for those readers who say don't we ever get anything but sparkling new wonders? They will also say what in Tophet is a Scott, to which we reply a Scott is the motorcycle that made two-strokes respectable. Before their time, and even well after it, two-strokes were thought of as noisy, smelly, tichy, messy little devices usually limited to small sizes in the interests of extremely cheap transportation and usually ridden, in semi-autocycle form, by the District Nurse. In this form, and also in larger ones when technology became more advanced, millions of people got around on two-strokes simply because they were cheaper to build and thus cheaper to sell. Scotts were not cheap to build nor to buy; they were built for enthusiasts and pretty much of an enthusiast too as Scotts were Very Peculiar Indeed.

Alfred Angas Scott was born in Bradford, Yorkshire in 1874, Bradford being a part of England which was already becoming heavily industrialized and 1874, motorcyclingwise, being just about the time when Eve did her thing with the snake. In due course he was apprenticed to a marine engineering firm (which gave much of his later work a steam-engine flavor) and while there became caught up in the bicycle craze that struck Europe about that time. There was plenty of room for improvement and Scott was an inventor, apparently as half the population of the North Country was of that era. Anyway he soon turned his attention to the two-stroke engine, possibly as an alternative to pushing his bike up hills, and in time produced a vertical twin of the type with spines on top of the pistons for make-and-break ignition which did double duty propelling his fishing skiff of all things. The usual development followed and in 1904 approx

he patented a variant of this engine which set a pattern he forever after followed, i.e., what amounted to a pair of Singles sharing a common 180 deg. crank. As the flywheel and primary sprocket were in the middle, each crankcase was naturally sealed on both sides. A little later he also patented his "in-house" frame, an open triangulated structure of straight tubing rather like a ladies' bicycle which made Scotts quite popular with early (and intrepid) female motorcyclists and also for gents in skirts; there exists a marvelous photo of the sporting curate of St Loony-in-the-Cream-Bun, complete with cassock and extraordinary clerical beanie, sitting happily on his machine. The appearance of these Scotts, even in those days, was rather unusual as the fuel tank lay against the saddle pillar, the handlebar grips were in the rider's lap, each crankcase was adorned with little doors with which one could inspect the big ends or clean up any extra oil if the Twin >







loaded up, and by the time Scott got into proper production with a 450cc engine, he had gone to water cooling with a proper radiator on the front down-tube. Even at this time, undoubtedly influenced by steam-engine practice, the machine was fitted with horrid little drip-feeds which doled out oil to the mains and rods. No petrol for Alfred Scott.

The four-stroke motorcycles of the day, what with their belt-drive, single speeds, and atmospheric inlet valves were not exactly the easiest thing to handle and the two speed light-weight Scotts with abundant torque at low rpm not to mention kickstarters, made quite a name for themselves in hillclimbs and the then-popular reliability trials. In fact, what commenced as a friendly Works outing grew into the famous (or infamous) Scott Trial across the moors which has probably driven more sporting motorcyclists away from off-road work than there is tea in China. In England at any rate it was ranked to be considerably more significant than the ISDT, say, is today and there is even a book about it. Speaking of books, if you want to know all about Scotts, you could do worse than obtain a copy of Jeff Clew's "The Scott Motorcycle" (\$11.75 + p) from Motorsport, 6115 Gravois, St. Louis, Mo. 63116 as we don't have room for all the details. Part of the fun is reading, in our era of technical prowess, what developments turned up as Scott went racing, experimenting with air-cooled heads with water

cooled cylinders or vice versa, the great step forward from two speeds to three, experimental rotary valves, the fitting of the diabolical Pilgrim oil pumps with their sight feeds and the curious bypaths that Scott himself, and later after he passed away, the factory explored to avoid spending money on anything that would make the motorcycle itself more up to date! However they even won a TT once or twice in spite of an obvious lack of brakes but eventually, as the Thirties drew on, the more accelerated program of Velocette and Norton (not to mention the rather whippy open frame), caught up with what was still a small-volume family business. What they did have was the support of a loyal coterie of customers who wanted, like Alfred Scott, to have it done his way.

Naturally enough Scott rang the Oxford Treble Bob on his basic design, putting out Squirrels, Sports Squirrels, Flying Squirrels, TT Replicas, Clubman's Specials etc etc hovering mostly between 486 and 596cc. Twistgrip throttles were fitted early, a positive-stop gearchange under license from Velocette ditto and exploratory forays were made into such subjects as a 250cc approx Single, a three cylinder of 985cc, and a 650 Twin but somehow none of these latter bikes got off the ground for some reason or another. Around 1934, with slumping sales, a decision was made to standardize on only the Flying Squirrels of 498 or 596cc. Basically the design was an old one but then old designs have been

common practice in the British motorcycle industry; the general depression contributed to a general malaise in the marketplace. To show what matters had got to, a Scott actually finished 12th in the 1938 Manx GP and with a fastest lap of 70.03 mph put up the best time ever done there by the marque. The only trouble was that the winner of the '38 TT, the immortal Harold Daniell, won at 89.11 mph with a fastest lap of 91.00 on his Manx Norton. Of course 12th is nothing to be sneezed at on the Island and the modified Sports Scott was ridden by a private owner but it is an interesting comparison. Another contemporary yardstick is that Scott produced more motorcycles in 1929 than they did in the years 1931-1940 inclusive.

At any rate Scott survived the war and even commenced production again in a small way, bringing out at first about 12 prototypes with Webb or Brampton girder forks, dual front brakes connected by a sort of fiddle bar and I think plunger rear springing was optional; in any case that had been offered in 1938 (Show) on the trick Clubman's Sp1 about the time the 498cc model was dropped. Webb went out of business/switched to other work in 1947 so perforce Scott had to go to the air-oil Dowty forks, a return to old times as Alfred had developed teles way in the past. In addition, in spite of the rumblings of enthusiasts who liked things to stay the same but didn't want to buy new motorcycles, for 1949 the magneto with its long>









chain drive was replaced by coil ignition and a car-type distributor plus all the trimmings. It wasn't long after that, as Scotts were still very expensive (more than a 350 International Norton, for example) the factory folded up for about the fourth time. All was not lost, however, as Birmingham industrialist Matt Holder stepped in (as he carried the body of Velocette out on its shield) to save the day for special orders anyway. For subsequent history, read Jeff Clew.

The subject of our Salon, therefore, purports to be a Scott Flying Squirrel of 1947-48 vintage (engine #DPY 5112, frame #5010) belonging to Bob Corwin, Esq of Boulder, Colo. and unlike so many old bikes is in pretty good condition. It has the postwar Dowty air forks, dual miniscule front drums etc fitted and as you can see is pre-1948 show as the magneto is still present. The machine is a three-speeder, has the rh exhaust system which puts it in the proper age bracket. The rod is brass and not chrome which lets out the Clubman's Sp1 and even apparently retains the standard 19 in. wheels shod with 3.00 and 3.50 tyres respectively. The alloy "Replica" engine is water-cooled of course, detachable heads (with 16 studs introduced in '34-'35), stuffed crankcases, a teeney Amal carb, cast external induction passages, deflector pistons (!) and measures 596cc (74.6 x 68.25 mm). A traditional shape tank is

finished in the also traditional Scott purple (Scott's sister-in-law's favorite dress) with limit-gauge trademark transfer and the battery, as always, lives out back where it will contribute to the Dreaded Sideslip besides get broken if you drop the plot. The Pilgrim pump with sight-feed already which does the bottom end is fitted on the right side and on the other side you can see one of the little doors to look into the works. The oil tank lives back behind the gearchange which is early Velo, naturally. Bike weight is 376 lb approx considerably lighter than the springer. Different, isn't it?

Past owner Rob't Seiffert Esq was kind enough to give us his impressions of riding it and his first remarks cleared up the question of why period photographs show Scott racers all wearing funny little leather bags around their waists. The bags are full of spark plugs. Even with dutiful attention to the Pilgrim pumps, not set in the optimum position for viewing or adjusting on the move ("once you get 'em right they are good for an hour or two"), there is a bit of superfluous oil swilling around in the little pockets down there and any really radical maneuver (or a sharp bump for that matter) tends to put out the fire. Lubrication is a trifle marginal, it seems, and the works riders either used to fit another feed for cylinder wall lubrication or else just run mix. Certainly Scotts were set up oily for racing, as every photo of one in motion

shows a great plume of smoke behind it. Of course racing is not touring and with modern oils, modern rings and the lot the problem may not loom so large. Anyway, deflector-top pistons may have gone straight out of use since Herr Doktor Schnürle thought up loop-scavenging but they may not have been such a bad thing at that as not only have several vintage racers in England made Scotts run reliably and quickly but the big Twin gets a lot better mileage than it is supposed to. The big attraction of Scotts to Scott fanatics was the flexibility, good low-speed torque, exceptional handling and the famous "yowl," made yowlier by the standard 23-in. exhaust pipe. With today's mufflers and a longer pipe the yowl is somewhat subdued and also today I personally am up to Here with yowls. The flexibility and good low-speed torque etc still remain but Mr Seiffert reports that driven in anger, the bike can get a bit wallowy on corners. At least there isn't far to fall. Thinwall teles, in any case, have had the finger of suspicion pointed at them long before this. Aside from that, Bob reports, the handling is very nice in spite of the Suffragette frame and he liked it immensely.

Marvelous, isn't it? About as modern as the Monitor but there is more to motorcycling enjoyment than just modernity, as many owners of a plastic Multi could tell you. There'll always be an England . . . ☐