

Friends

Significant acquisition

Museum Curator Steve Bagley writes:

The Singer 'Courier' bicycle we have just acquired is probably the only one of its type known to exist. Historically important, it's part of the ongoing development of the safety machine that was taking place in the city during the 1880s. The Singer therefore has local, regional, national and international significance.

During this period, manufacturers were experimenting with different components and layouts attempting to optimise a design. Patented by a Frederick Warner Jones, it has many of the features we would recognise on a modern cycle, but has not arrived at the final design solution, achieved a couple of years later.

Cycle historians didn't know the 'Courier' existed. Until this bicycle came to light, the only way we could establish it had been manufactured was through a Singer sales catalogue of 1886 and various other contemporary publications.

How grateful we at the Museum are for the help of Friends in raising the money to purchase the machine.



Chairman John Viggars writes:

The announcement that the Museum has acquired a Singer 'Courier' helped by a donation from Friends is great news. It does not tell of the excitement and tensions of the past few weeks or, in respect of our donation, what happens next. The story began in September when the Museum learnt that what was believed to be a complete and original Singer 'Courier' cycle had been discovered.

By mid-October, the machine had been authenticated and the Museum was given an option to purchase up to the end of November. After that date, it would be put up for auction with a considerably higher reserve than the price offered to the Museum and would probably leave the country.

At this point, we had the opportunity to make one of the significant additions to the collection in recent years, with very little money left in the Museum budget and six weeks to find a substantial sum. We could apply for a PRISM grant but not before being able to guarantee 50% of the purchase price. This was the easy part. Set up to support the work of the Museum, having the money to hand, Friends were ready to help.

But would we get a grant and would it come through in time? Full marks to PRISM for processing our application so quickly!

What happens next? Friends' funds consist of money raised specifically for our vehicle restoration/conservation projects plus anything left over from subscriptions after running costs. The money for the cycle has been borrowed from that part of our funds not needed to be spent in the next twelve months. This now needs to be replaced through fundraising and a Singer 'Courier' Fund has been set up. When the amount donated to the Museum is reached, the fund will be closed and the money returned to vehicle projects.

December 2011

Chairman's Chat

Welcome to the season of good cheer! I'm not sure that Chancellor George Osborne's announcement that fuel duty will not be increased from January 1 warrants wild cheering, rather a resigned "Thank goodness." At least, it slows our gradual impoverishment a little.

The big news this month is that we have helped the Museum to get a bike for Christmas. You can also read how we have organised some retrospective fundraising to get back what we paid towards it. I'm happy to report that one member has already raised £200 from raffles. Donations, further ideas, organising or helping with fundraising activities all welcome! The bike is due to arrive on December 7 and will be upstairs for your inspection on clubnight.

Membership subscriptions are due for renewal on January 1. If you would like to use the occasion of paying us money as an opportunity to make a donation towards the bike, this would be welcome. Either write "Bike donation" and the amount on your renewal slip or just leave it to our treasurer to do the maths.

Every good wish
for Christmas and the New Year
from the Friends' committee.

Contacts

Chairman: John Viggars
tel: 024 7667 9967 email: john.viggars@talktalk.net
Vice Chairman: Dave Stansfield
Secretary: Lesley Viggars
tel: 024 7667 9967 email: ljviggars@talktalk.net
Treasurer: Brian Jackson
Membership Secretary Dave Green
Outside events: Dave Stansfield
Health & Safety: Terry Baimbridge
Committee: Stan Wilcox, Julie Kendall, Jenny Penfold, Brian Bromwich, Jean Wilcox, Peter Goult
Email us at: friends.ctm@gmail.com
Follow us at: <http://friendsofctm.blogspot.com>
Museum: tel: 024 7623 4270
email: enquiries@transport-museum.com
Newsletter: Keith Draper Tel: 024 7640 2030
or email: dandelion@ntlworld.com



Next meeting:
The Annual Wilcox Quiz

Thursday, December 15 at 7.30pm

Background to the Singer Courier Bicycle

During the second half of the 19th century Coventry became the centre of cycle production in Britain, with 77 factories producing bicycles. During the 1870s the Penny Farthing or High Wheel bicycle was the 'ordinary' bicycle of its day. Obviously a machine with such a large front wheel was inherently unsafe, but soon manufacturers began to experiment with smaller bicycles that became known as 'safety' bicycles. The name indicated they were safer than a Penny Farthing. This experimentation led to the development of the 1888/89 Rover Safety Cycle, which had a design that all other cycle makers followed. The development of the Rover in Coventry means the city is the birthplace of the modern bicycle, a fact not celebrated enough. The bicycle we are purchasing is a step in the development of the safety bicycle made by the Singer Company, one of the city's largest cycle manufacturers.

George Singer and the Singer Company

The Singer Cycle Company was founded by George Singer in 1875. Singer, with James Starley and William Hillman, was one of the founders of the Coventry industry, all working at the first factory in the city to build cycles. George Singer became a prominent citizen, active in the United Reform Church and Mayor of the City in 1891, 1892 and 1893. He built a large house on the northern outskirts of the city, Coundon Court, which has since become part of a large comprehensive school.

1886 Singer Courier Safety Bicycle

Technologically the 'Courier' has some interesting features especially the steering directly to the front wheel. This is important as it illustrates the debate manufacturers were having over the type of steering we accept as the basic principle for all of today's bicycles. The double chain drive is also a notable part of the design as it harks back to a previous bicycle, 'The Kangaroo', made by Hillman and Herbert in Coventry. These two features show this bicycle to be both innovative and backward looking at the same time. Factors shared with many similar bicycles of the era, as manufacturers struggled to find the right combinations.

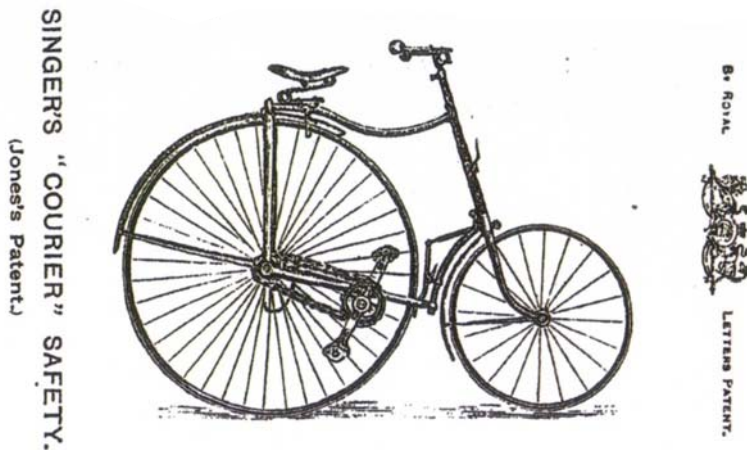


Wartburg 353 also known as the 'Knight'

Behind the



Wartburg Kombi-Wagen



Relevance to the Museum

The origins of the current transport museum began when the cycle collector Sammy Bartleet gifted his historic cycles to the city in the mid 1930s. Since then the museum has been actively collecting bicycles that tell the story of its development and has recently loaned three historically significant bicycles from the Science Museum's collection at Wroughton to bolster our opportunities to interpret. We are also currently creating a new display which highlights this story.

This offer could not have come at a more opportune time as the Singer 'Courier' will be placed on display in this new exhibition immediately after conservation work has been completed.

The Museum's interpretation reflects the involvement of the people of Coventry in both the cycle and motor car industry (Singer went on to become one of the country's largest motorcar manufacturers) and also illustrates the technological development of the bicycle and its place in global transport systems.



British-built Austin 7



German-built BMW Sports



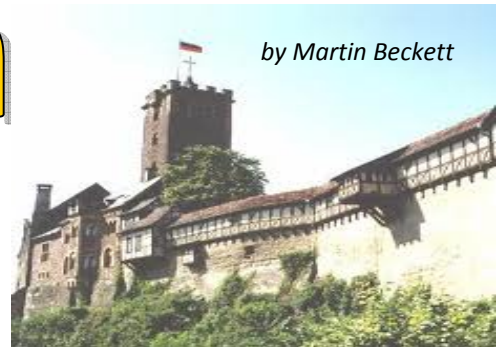
former Iron Curtain

What does a small town in Thuringia in what was Eastern Germany, have in common with a famous Midlands car marque? Well, the answer is the 1928 BMW "Dixi". The town in question is Eisenach, now famous for its historical old centre and the Wartburg castle which stands on a hilltop above the town.

Car manufacturing started around 1900. The name's familiar from the 1960s—they called it the Wartburg. The "Dixi" was an Austin 7 made under licence of course and the manufacturers were taken over by BMW. The German company went on to build various saloon and sports cars (indeed one was built under licence in England by Frazer Nash). However after World War 2 a number of manufacturers found themselves behind the Iron Curtain and cut off from suppliers of raw material and components. BMW manufactured from Munich and the Eisenach factory produced EMW (Eisenacher Motoren Werke) cars after BMW objected to its name still being used. Actually the emblem was similar but with red enamel in place of blue. The old Audi factory in East Germany made cars called IFA, the manufacture of

which moved to Eisenach (they were effectively the old DKW cars) and eventually the IFA became the Wartburg. Models in the 1960s were imported into Britain but modern environmental standards and an unwillingness by the East German car industry to modernise spelt the end of the marque in 1991, although by then the three cylinder, two stroke engine had been replaced by a more modern VW unit. Since unification Opel has moved into Eisenach although not to the original car works that is close to the town centre. This is now a semi-derelict brown field site ripe for redevelopment but happily the second floor of the original office museum is now the Wartburg Museum. That's where Jane and I went in search of some most interesting vehicles.

Pictures: clockwise from top left: IFA - Audi DKW model built at Eisenach immediately post war; An EMW saloon with a red enamel badge; the 'Dixi' made under licence and dating from the 1920s; An EMW 340 Ambulance.



by Martin Beckett

Some fascinating history
Wartburg Castle was founded by Duke Ludwig of Thuringia in 1067 AD. It once hosted the medieval Minnesinger poets, immortalized by Wagner in *Tannhäuser*. Most famously, the Wartburg is where Martin Luther hid out as "Knight George" upon his return from the Diet of Worms in 1521. Here he completed his translation of the Bible. In 1777, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe spent five weeks in the Wartburg Castle translating the Bible into German. Goethe once said, "The Germans weren't a people until Luther." Today, the castle is a regional museum and was named a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1999 for its association with Luther and for its role as "a powerful symbol of German integration and unity."





This year's Classic Show was spread over seven enormous halls with wall to wall interest—over 1400 cars and motorcycles, trade stalls and pretty promotions girls. TV's Wheeler Dealers, Mike Brewer and Edd China performed a makeover on a Triumph Spitfire while Leeds City College gave informative demonstrations on car restoration techniques.

Special guests included Sir Stirling Moss, four time World Superbike Champion and Isle of Man TT winner, Carl Fogarty and Superbike ace Frankie Chili.

The majority of the exhibitors were enthusiasts with nothing to sell. They like to show off their machinery with the hope of attracting new members. Most of the mainstream clubs were represented including impressive displays by Ferrari, Maserati, Jaguar, Rolls Royce, Bugatti, BMW and Ford, who are celebrating their centenary. But many of the smaller clubs were just as interesting, like the Heinkel Trojan Club, the Borgward Drivers Club and the Wartburg Trabant IFA Club.

Coventry Transport Museum's stand had a prominent position at one of the links between the classic cars and classic bikes. Our display of both motor cycles and cars (pictured above) was

therefore particularly appropriate. Public reaction to the highly successful stand at Silverstone earlier in the year was reflected by the

inclusion of two Victorian pedal cycles. Particular interest was shown in the Triumph Tiger 80 and the Coventry Victor Venus. Visitors to the stand included a former owner of this unique car who was able to fill in some of the gaps in its history.

"A good show. Lots of interest." was Chris van Schaardenburgh, Curator of Vehicles' verdict, adding "A big thank you for all the help Friends provided during the show."

As well as our members providing half the staffing of the Museum stand over the three days, Friends were to be found on various other displays with or without their own vehicles, or simply visiting Friends' vehicles on show.

They included Brian Jackson's 1961 Fairthorpe EM Electron (below centre), Brian Bromwich's Triumph Dolomite on the Pre-1940 stand (below right), Dave Stansfield's 1953 Lanchester Leda and Graham Bosworth's 1958 BSA Bantam Super D5 (below left), both with MVPS.



Found on the Web for a whisker under £6000



1933 Hillman 10 sliding roof model. Original blue leather. Brand new set of carpets. MOT'd and tax free. £5950
01923 268000 Hertfordshire

1974 Triumph Dolomite 1850 with 16,000 verified miles. Dolomite Sprint wheels. Original handbooks, old MOT's etc. £5999
0121 427 4050 West Mids

2002 Jaguar S-Type 3.0 V6 automatic with sports mode Metallic blue, cream leather. FSH. Traction control heated screens, etc. £5995
01423 524 554 Yorkshire

An Appeal from John Taylor: CAMERAS WANTED



Any cameras no longer used and lying in a corner of a cupboard can be of use to a worthy group of people.

They will be gratefully received by John for passing onto the Disabled Photographic Society. Contact John on: 01926 854 456 or at 60 Windy Arbour, Kenilworth CV8 2BB