

Alfred Angus Scott. An engineering explorer.

Having now travelled a good few miles along life's way and witnessed some of the variety of human motivation, I recently fell into a whimsical contemplation of the character and life of A A Scott.

The inspired concept of the original Scott and the rapid early development of the designs fascinate me. We then see such bold and innovative advancement virtually cease, to be replaced by a regime of sound but bland updates of details. I speculated the following.

Alfred Angus decided to design a motorcycle, but his unusually valiant and questing spirit had no time for the conventional approach of copying the accepted norms and adding a few peripheral features to give some identity.

He defined his design objectives, then constructed his solution from first principles. Where there was a perfectly good solution already existing, he did not let false pride fetter him from applying it.

Having arrived at his first complete design, it needed to be manufactured. This needed the extensive and expensive facilities of a manufactory with skilled craftsmen, so the Jowett brothers were commissioned to manufacture the first machines. The machines must have functioned successfully so the next logical step was to arrange for quantity production.

The outlay to underwrite the premises, plant, tools, equipment, work in progress, start up funding and day to day cashflow was well beyond the means of Alfred and his immediate family. In order to achieve production, outside venture capital was needed. Enter the businessmen!

The bikes were demonstrated and compared with other machines of the day. It was clearly seen that there was a market opportunity for this innovative commodity and that the paramount objective of the prospective investors, being that of employing capital to create greater wealth, showed every likelihood of being achievable. The capital was invested

We now have the situation where, although the name over the door says "SCOTT" the reality is that Alfred was a minority shareholder and his freedom of action was subject to the approval of the main shareholders.

The setting up and starting of manufacture of the first production design, must have been heady and challenging times. The bikes roll off the production lines, but Alfred already has ideas for advancement and improvement of the design. The ideas are eagerly explained, but the motivation of the investors is very different to that of Alfred. They point out that the factory is operating at near capacity and they are selling all they can make. Why should they then invest

further capital into new tools and equipment in order to produce the proposed new design unless there was a prospect of making more profit? Was the new design cheaper to produce, so that if the current selling price was maintained, there would be a bigger profit margin? no, well then there is no financial logic and Alfred's desire to just make a more advanced product was thwarted.

What Alfred would be allowed to do, now that the factory was ticking along nicely, was to occupy himself with the design, production and development of machines for racing. This would keep him occupied and hopefully gain publicity that would offset the costs, without disrupting the established production of the factory "Cash Cow". Expensive retooling would be strictly controlled and implemented only when problems effected sales, or changes were necessary to maintain market share. Given Alfred's fertile creative mind, then these constraints must have been frustrating. The innovation he demonstrated in the early racer design was not paralleled in the development of the contemporary production models. When Alfred could bear the bondage no more, he left and soon produced the Sociable, with an engine showing considerable technical advance over the production Scott.

If one considers the reasons for one's allegiance to the marque, it soon becomes evident that there are great contradictions in the history of the Scott. Are you inspired by the innovative designs of Alfred, or do you hold in respect those who continued to produce a design that was practically in suspended animation for a further half century. Surely Alfred would have turned in his grave if he had realised what would be done in his name! My own respect is unconditionally reserved for Alfred as a questing engineering explorer of the highest calibre. I understand the needs of financiers to make a profit and can understand that the meeting of the two philosophies must have made a very dysfunctional marriage. Perhaps divorce was inevitable and best for all concerned.

One must accept, however, that even given the restrictions that would have been imposed on Alfred's burning ambitions to constantly improve and develop the machine that bore his name, then after his departure from the company, the only thing that was not diminished was the name. We can only morn the loss of what might have been.

My objective in designing and implementing improvements on my machine was to retain the original design parameters and to try and release the full latent potential within the limitations of a deflector piston design, in a way that could readily have been produced with the available manufacturing technology of the late 1920's. (Titanium rods excepted)

It has been done as my humble tribute to an outstanding engineer, to whom the exhilaration and fulfilment of designing "a better mousetrap" was his greatest motivation in life

With far less effort, I could have put a Scott wrapper round a Yamaha and achieved immeasurably greater results, but it would hardly have been decent!

I have been told many times, that my bike is not a Scott and that there is a body of opinion that would prefer that I did not bring the machine to rallies lest it causes offence. I strongly uphold the rights of every person to their opinion and have mostly refrained from taking the machine to other than race meetings, unless I am sure that it will be acceptable.

I had a most enjoyable time recently when I took the bike to the "Beezumph Rally" which is a track day on Cadwell long circuit, primarily for the owners of Triumph and BSA triples of the 1970's but all British bikes are welcome.

My trusty steed and I had a great time prevailing over these machines and ended by having a hilarious romp with a new 135bhp Daytona 595. I was clocked at over 105 mph along the slightly uphill straight but had an advantage through the corners. The onlookers were so enthusiastic at the spectacle of this very unequal "David and Goliath" battle, that we were awarded "Best Competition" and "Man of the meeting". I received our awards from Doug Hele and said a silent thanks to Alfred for the splendid day we had enjoyed and the most friendly reception I had received from those whose resplendent and powerful modern machines had been vanquished by the machine bearing Alfred's name.