

Motor Cycle Design and Social Change

Wednesday 27th January 2016

On a cold and wet morning our group met in Erica's lounge in comfort with a cheerful log fire, to hear our speaker, Dennis Treble, tell us about the development of the motor bike.

The motor bike was first invented by the Victorians who were brilliant engineers. Unfortunately their expertise was with steam engines, bridges, ships etc – all heavy industry and using skills not suited to bikes. In fact the first motor bike was steam powered, based on a penny farthing and built by a blacksmith. Brakes and the clutch were unknown and the drive was by a belt. When petrol engines were invented they experimented as to where to place the engine. Eventually they placed it at the position of the pedals as this gave the machine more stability (low centre of gravity). They were also based on a diamond frame of the pedal cycle. In 1910 a gear box and chain drive were added.

Motor bikes at this time were expensive and were largely used by the well off and gentry. At the time of WW1 a cheap and reliable means of communication was required. Triumph produced a motor bike for the dispatch riders. At the end of the War these bikes were sold off in their 1000's and became the means of transport for the working man. From this time there were bikes for the enthusiast, highly expensive, and simpler cheaper bikes such as the BSA Bantam.

The Japanese then became the innovators and the Superbike was born. Machines capable of high speeds and comfort were pushing the boundaries of bike engineering. At the same time the Italians had brought the scooter onto the market. The age of 'mods and rockers' was born.

Dennis gave us details of the engineering involved and also the way that the changing styles of life influenced the design of the motor bike.

Our thanks go to Dennis for a highly informative talk and Erica, once again, for her hospitality.

[An interesting link](#)



