

CHAPTER 3

Until the summer after Michael was born, we had taken our summer holiday in various ways, mainly following the scouting way of taking a tent. Our first holiday after we were married was our honeymoon which was very conventional with a train to the seaside and a room in a boarding house. At that time we only had bicycles for personal transport. That first winter I frequently got bad colds due to cycling many miles to evening class and so we decided to improve on just the bicycle. At that time, BSA had decided to try and better the French type of motor-assisted-bicycle (an engine with a driven roller resting on a front or rear tyre) by producing what they called the Winged Wheel. This was an engine mounted in a bicycle wheel which could simply replace the normal wheel on any bicycle. We bought one of these on HP from the local dealer (an electrical appliance shop!) and carried it back to our first floor room where it was quickly fitted. As the Winged Wheel replaced the standard back wheel, the chain and pedals still worked so my first attempt on the road could be unpowered. Then the petrol and oil mix was poured into the tank, L plates fitted and off I went, not literally I am glad to say. This little 35cc engine made my journeys to and fro a great deal easier and my health improved. However, now I had a problem if we wanted to go out together as Myrtle could not keep up with me on her bicycle. We solved that problem by also buying a tandem and as part of our youth work, even took a cycling proficiency test on it. Although we passed, it was deemed by everyone else to have given us an unfair advantage, so we did not actually get awarded a certificate!

Approaching our next summer holiday, while we were still in our first floor room, we tried out the idea of fitting the Winged Wheel on to the tandem. BSA actually listed extra length cables as an accessory, so we ordered those. As I had not yet, at that time, taken my motorcycle driving test, that idea really got the officials in a lather! I was a learner on a motorcycle - learners were not allowed to carry "pillion" passengers unless that passenger had a full licence - Myrtle did not have any licence so could not travel with me. BUT, we argued, on a tandem the rear seat is NOT a passenger but part of the motive power so the pillion rule could not apply. An honourable compromise was reached whereby Myrtle also took out a provisional licence and the dual driver/motive power combination was declared legal! Try getting that sort of official agreement nowadays! Some years later, after two changes of frame, the Winged Wheel eventually ended up on Myrtles bicycle, the tandem having been sold with its original wheel restored to it.

Now we were ready for our first two-up summer holiday. Richard was duly taken to be looked after by the vet and we loaded up a cousins light-weight tent and all our clothes and utensils with the object of riding down to Cornwall where we would meet up with the scout group who went by train, and camp on the same field. Another shock to the establishment! A man and a woman in the same tent at a scout camp! Again, an honourable compromise - we had to pitch our tent at the other side of the field from the scouts tents and all was sweetness and light again! By the way, when we unpacked, we then found the puncture outfit that we thought, in the middle of Exmoor on a Sunday, that we must have left behind. We

never did redo that very temporary patch - must have been very strong insulation tape (the new-fangled plastic variety)!

To come home, we decided that the weight of tandem, two people, a tent and all the rest was really a bit too much for a 35cc engine, even though pedal-assisted and so sent most of the luggage back on the train with the scouts while we came back bed and breakfast all along the south coast to Brighton. What a holiday that was.

In the winter of that year, we moved, tandem and all, to the ground floor flat with our small bundles of possessions carried on the tandems rear carrier, in the front basket, or by the help of Myrtles father with his (very) old car. As an aside, I actually took my motorcycle driving test on that tandem which caused quite a stir amongst the examiners who duly failed me (for being a trouble maker?). I did pass on the second attempt however, so perhaps it was really my fault the first time.

Obviously, with growing possessions and a dog to cart around, the tandem was being outgrown, so by the time that we got Tina, we had decided to buy a motorcycle combination - another BSA but 500cc this time with a very smart single seater tourer sidecar. This had ample space for holiday luggage, and by dint of leaving its boot hinged open, we managed to make a nice little nest for Tina to travel as if in a dickey seat, thus keeping Myrtle from having to cuddle her on all our trips. This was even more important once we had Michael to travel on his mothers lap. We eventually spent almost four years in that flat and when we left it, we were still only Myrtle, Richard, Susan, Tina, Michael and me.

[Link to Chapter 4](#)

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