

MB Stories – Victoria Cross ride out 2021

Out and about on an old Army bike for Remembrance Sunday 2021

I've been meaning to do this for years, but it's always a case of – hung over, farm work or the grandkids are coming round. This year, as Alice was away on holiday I was at a loose end. Perfect to get the BSA B40 ex Army bike out for a little trip and show some respect. Yes I know it's a modern one but haven't found time to put my 43 Ariel on the road.

I roped my oldest riding mate of 40 years 'Ian Belk' to change his plans and come along on his Lambretta.

Remembrance Sunday comes round once a year it's only a mile to Mexborough from my house across the valley. The war memorial is in Castle Hills park just at the back of my old house, a mound of earth that was a castle in Norman times dating back to 1066 and is the most perfect setting for peace and quiet and reflection – apart from the road which is like a motorway! The place was packed, nice to see it so busy. The Police did stop the road for the silence.

As it was finishing, I'd worked out a route. Seen as Acker has a strange obsession with visiting grave yards and Commonwealth graves and memorials scattered around the UK I thought it would be good to tick off the 4 Victoria Cross memorials within a few miles, the commonwealth graves and pit disaster memorials then finally end up in Rotherham for the vintage vehicle museum whose doors were open.

It's only a 2 mile country road ride to the little village of Cadeby to visit George Wyatt VC who was one of the first 10 men to be awarded the honour on the very first day of the WW1 in August 1914! And we weren't the only ones, a few cars came by to visit the grave and the church yard.

From here it was my old race track to work on more country roads to Sprotborough, bypassing Douglas Barders old house. Passing the little house on the bridge where Walter Scott wrote the book Ivanhoe, then up the hair pins for a change of plan to visit Edlington where I had my business for 20 years. It was only by chance my daughter in law told me of a locked memorial in Edlington that I didn't know about, so that was worth a visit.

From New Edlington a mile to Old Edlington to the memorial for the crashed Lancaster bomber in WW2. Only to find the plaque had been changed with an apology saying 'oops we got it wrong, the Lanc didn't crash in this wood it crashed in another wood 50 miles away' god who does the research!

I still remember the day the original plaque was unveiled. I was driving up the A1 going under a bridge heading to Doncaster when there was a noise like the car door had popped open, after trying the doors I looked up to see the under carriage of a Lancaster following the A1 – flying low and seemed so

slow. I floored the car to keep up and realised opps I need to back off before I got a speeding ticket. As we neared Doncaster it banked off over Edlo woods for the opening of the crashed Lanc which was 50 miles away!

Theres now a plaque telling the story why the area was called the White Greyhound the name of the old pub, now long gone! A pub where one of my oldest mates 'Rex' lived in for a bit and a pub Doncaster hunters Scooter club once met. As the story goes 'the dog alerted the the lord of the manor in the 1700's when an assassin came by' There's still a plaque for the air men who lost their lives in 1943 – opps that will be the other wood some miles away!

A quick off road ride for a photo and we're off againskirting Clifton the home of Billy Bremmer and Percy Sugden to Conisborough castle memorial with vets and people still talking. And onto see the 2nd Victoria cross memorial of Laurence Calvert from 1918 the 1st of 2 miners from the area to get the VC.

You can't help admire the little park below Conisborough castle, it's well done and again with out the road it would be so peaceful. Then a short ride around the castle into the old village of Conisborough which should be so nice but let down by the low lifes!

A miles ride and we were at Denaby memorial just round the corner to work. A quick photo with no one around then a quick cross through the housing estate to the cemetery to see the Common wealth graves and also the Mining disaster memorial for Cadeby and Denaby.

Another mile back to Mexborough to Castle Hills now everyone had gone to see our 3rd VC memorial, William Hackett another miner from the area.

Heading out of Mexborough we bypassed William Hacketts old house, Ted Hughes the poets old house and Mike Hawthorn old house the first F1 champion! We quickly stopped at the Railway station to see the Mexborough railway workers memorial who lost their lives in WW1. And theres another plaque as you leave Mexborough for WW1 next to two brewerys.

In Swinton we passed Julie Andrews old house – you know the 'Hills are Alive' one! Here we stopped at the church for VC number 4 Norman Jackson. I thought this is strange how different villages only a mile apart do different things for the dead. You only know there'sa VC grave by a single poppy, until Acker notice over the wall was rows of White crosses and a memorial garden again for the fallen – including dogs used in WW2, worth a read of the photo!

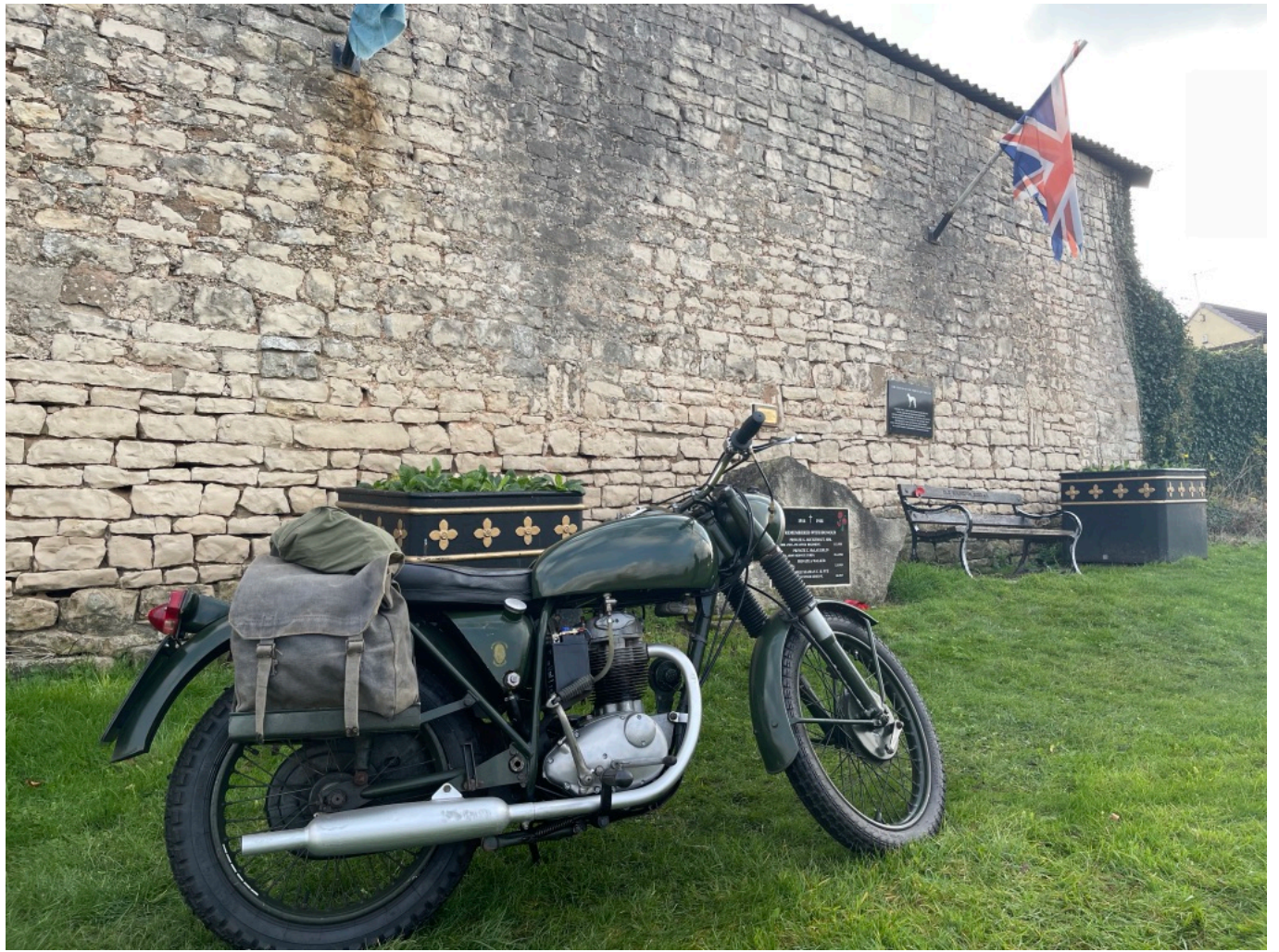
Heading out of Swinton we stopped to see the remaining Kiln from Swinton potteries dating back to 1700's. Then a thrash down Warren Vale another old race test track for us Scooterists and Bikers in the 80's, just as I went onto reserve! So filled up and realised Ive not filled up for 100 miles, now I like this little bike it's better on fuel than the Scooter!

In a few miles we're at Rotherham transport museum open again which is well worth the visit. Here we went for Sunday lunch or a fry up only to find its

prepacked sandwiches and cake – Oh well, it was nice to inspect the new addition – a 1950's London Hackney Austin FL1 just like the one I've got in my collection – fancy that two FL1's within 4 miles and so rare!

After coffees and a walk round we were off home, in time for an hours work in the farm. And oh what a beautiful day no wind, the sun was out, it was warm and I got to wear a piss pot helmet for the first time in 41 years without a fly in my mouth but did get a lady bird inside my goggles!













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Landscape
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Doncaster
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Mexborough Castle: Conquest and Control

Castle Hills Park gets its name from the remains of Mexborough Castle. The earthworks are amongst the best examples in the country to show the 11th century motte and bailey style castle. They were built throughout England by the Normans after their successful invasion of 1066.

The castle is thought to have consisted of a timber fortress, surrounded by a deep ditch and embankment with a wooden fence, known as a palisade. The castle controlled the important crossing of the River Don at Strafford Sands. It is likely that the castle occupied the site of an earlier defensive earthwork.

The motte, which overlooked the bailey, acted as a watchtower while the bailey itself provided accommodation. A fortified gatehouse protected the castle from the western side.

Mexborough was one of the holdings of Roger de Busli, a prominent Norman baron who came to England with William the Conqueror. Mexborough Castle has been listed as a Scheduled Ancient Monument of national importance since 1938.

Castle Hills was presented to the town for use as a recreation ground by Captain F J O Montagu in 1908 in celebration of the birth of his heir. The memorial was erected in November 1922 and unveiled by General Sir Alington Bewick-Copley who resided at the now lost Sprotborough Hall.

