



# JAWA Motorcyclist



## ***The JAWA CLUB - The Early Days!***

**O**f course it was never *"The Jawa Club"* - it was actually the *Jawa / CZ / MZ* and any other motley bike you care to think of; the only stipulation was that your two or three-wheeled mode of transport couldn't be "Jap Crap"!!

Back in the dying years of the 1970's 'Cousin Phil' got himself a bike! He was living in Dublin and travelling to Waterford every weekend so, in those pre Celtic Tiger days when public transport was scarce and expensive and no young person could afford car insurance, never mind a car, a bike seemed to make perfect sense. Phil was influenced in this decision by two people. His dad Larry, who had traversed the highways and byways of Ireland in a tuxedo on a Bantam in the 1950s (I kid you not, full story some other time!) gave Phil the go-ahead. A much more important influence on Phil was a colleague in the Department of Agriculture - a bearded, shadowy figure called Pat Brennan who had a penchant for all things Czech - even to the point of learning the language!! (I can still hear the scratchy 'Teach Yourself Czech' records: "To je staré auto" or something that sounded like that!). At any rate Phil took the plunge and bought himself a shiny new CZ 175 and a new era in his - and my- life was begun! Every Friday we would saddle up and head home to Waterford to train for or play in a hurling game. Phil obviously was the pilot while my role was that of mule i.e. balancing precariously behind carrying at least two hurley sticks, two gear bags and two bags of dirty washing for the mummies to take care of before the return trip late on Sunday or, sometimes, pre-dawn on Monday. Oh the good life!

*(What blessed relief and joy there was when Phil had amassed enough money to equip the CZ with panniers!!)*

After a year or two of great service from the CZ Phil, again under the malign influence of the Bearded One, hit the big time and splurged on the Jawa 350 - joy unconfined! The trips to Waterford were now even better and faster (well, everything is relative!) with the trail of blue smoke probably visible from the moon and were the cutting edge of comfort as the 350 came with a giant-sized fairing!

I suppose it had to happen but I caught the bug and wanted my very own JAWA. At about this time some dealer in Cork imported a consignment of 350s in what, if I remember correctly was a tax scam which went wrong. He was looking to dispose of the bikes in a hurry and I remember the price was £500 (that's about €600) which I suppose would equate to about €3,000 in today's terms. Ah but you should see these bikes!! - they were orange not sludge maroon colour and, wait for this, had an oil pump! Yes indeed, no more mixing two stroke with the petrol on a frosty morning in the petrol station! State of the art technology that was -( technology which I bitterly came to resent not so long afterwards, details later); I was smitten; my days as pillion passenger were over, a loan from the Credit Union was secured and the bike was bought! I remember the day I took delivery - not merely because I was now a biker but because it was the day the Pope arrived in Ireland! While one million Irish people were on the way to pay their respects in the Phoenix Park, I was pouring thick smoke into the blue skies over Drumcondra; while I was burning the tyre rubber the Papal plane passed overhead; I could swear I saw John-Paul looking down and I lip read him saying something like "You poor stupid bastard" but I might have been mistaken!

My first time on the bike was nearly my last! How was I to know the gears were the opposite of those on Phil's older machine?! ( One up, three down vs one down, three up!)

The bike (214SZJ) opened up a new chapter in my life, brought travel, fun, frustration but above-all friendship.

Memories from those years include the weekly Jawa Club meetings - Wednesday night **'roast joints'** (*pints of porter*) in the Breffney in Blackrock, the Jawa Club even winning the annual pub quiz on a couple of occasions! Indeed, I remember the night my first child was born: we won the Breffney quiz and I arrived at the maternity hospital, on the bike and 'under the influence' to present my wife and newly born daughter with the trophy! (That Emer and I are still together after that is probably amazing!).

One of the highlights of the early years of the JAWA club was the trip to Clare when we rented a couple of cottages and in a cloud of choking smoke headed for what turned out to be a fantastic few days in the West where we 'bonded' and cemented friendships which have endured to this day. To add to the mystique we were refused admission to a pub because "We don't serve the likes of you!"!!!

Another highlight was a trip to the JAWA Rally in King's Lynn in England - a wonderful occasion, meeting, drinking and singing with JAWA lovers from all over Britain, and beyond. Pat Brennan even made us eat in an Indian restaurant which, in those simpler days, was a first for many of us! I brought a beautiful present home to my wife - a Velorex sidecar! Joy unconfined!

A lowlight, which is funny now with the benefit of hindsight but which was anything but funny at the time, concerned the trip to Kerry. Lovely sunny Summer's day; bike and sidecar piled high with everything needed for holiday in Kerry - tent, sleeping bags, camping cooker, clothes, bucket and spade etc; wife squeezed in to sidecar, every cubic centimeter of space filled with what would be needed for two weeks down south. Drive down the road, waving to the neighbours, "see you in a fortnight", slán agaibh!

Twenty-five minutes later the engine seizes on the Naas dual-carriageway (pre-cursor to today's M7). Frantic call to Mick Doran; Mick arrived on his outfit, said the Last Rites over the now deceased engine, unveiled a tow rope and brought us al home. (The wonderful, high-tech oil pump had stopped pumping resulting in a seized engine!!) The neighbours were out in force, sniggering, I think, as the holiday-makers were back three hours after leaving for two weeks!! Thankfully, at least, this was before the advent of mobile-phone cameras or the homecoming would have been posted on You Tube for the whole world to see!

The years moved on, the children arrived and, with the best will in the world the JAWA / Velorex couldn't cater for two adults and five kids! A car had to be purchased, the chair sold and the bike put into storage in the shed - where it still languishes.

However, with many more years behind me that lie ahead of me, I feel a late-life crisis coming on. I hear there is - shout it from the rooftops - a JAWA dealer in town. (What would we have given thirty years ago for a local JAWA dealer, all parts had to be posted from England). A new JAWA , at my age?? Why not? Do they do Velorex as well? !! Mick, what's the address?!!!!

To Mick, Pat, Gerry, Phil, Brendan, Brian, Peadar and all the others, thanks for the memories. What's that film that comes to mind? "Wild Hogs", I think ! I feel a re-union coming on....with one stipulation, everybody must be on a JAWA!! - No Jap Crap allowed

Pádraig Ó Fainín

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