

Dick Aldous aboard his Gold Star. The BSA served him well for 13 years.

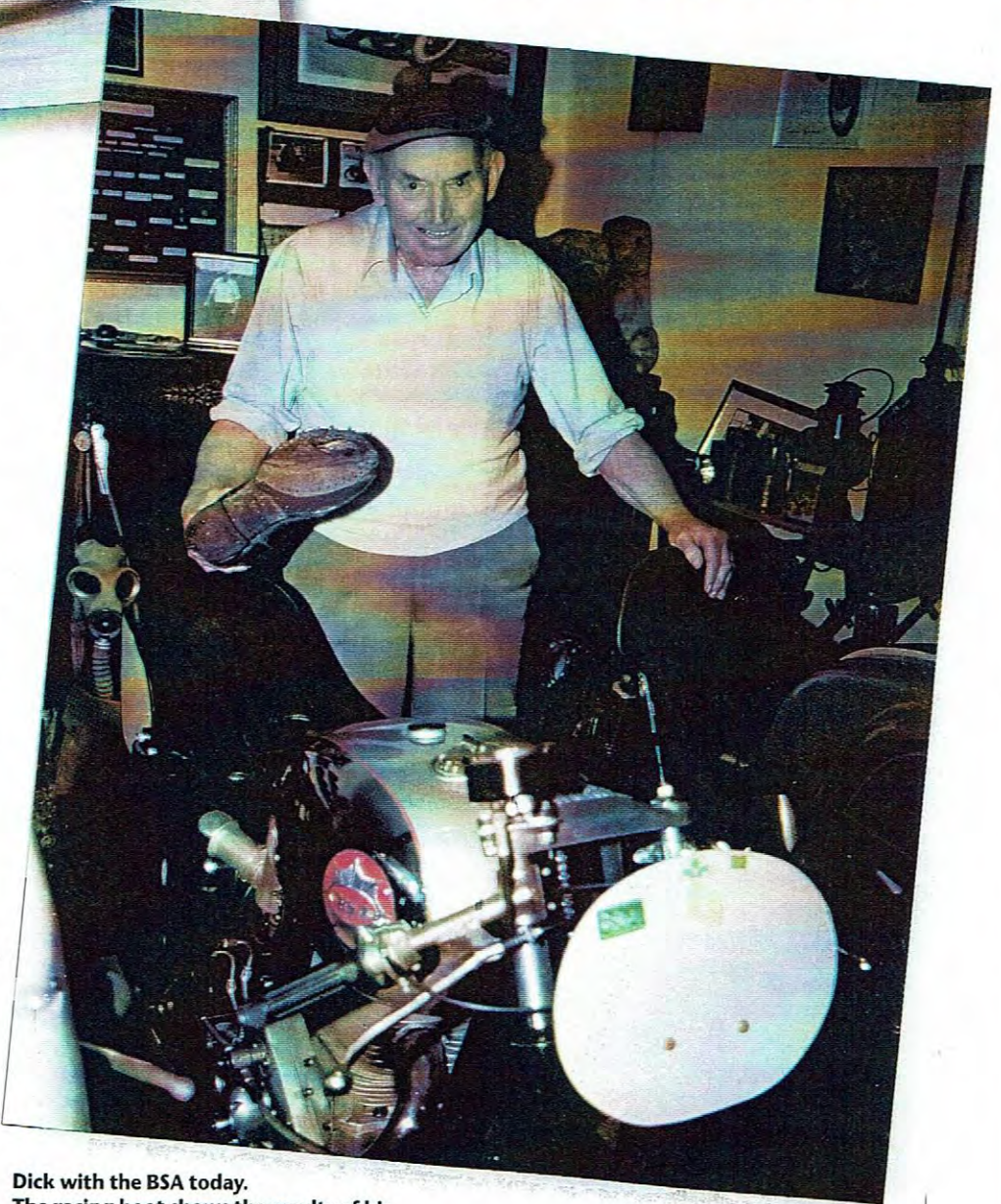
# TAKING PART

*For Norfolk farmer Dick Aldous, road racing had to play second fiddle to farming. However, he still managed to line up on the grid alongside the best for almost three decades.*

**Malcolm Wheeler**

*finds out how he managed it.*

Running a family farm is a full time, twenty four hour a day job, but somehow Dick Aldous managed to combine his agricultural activities with a road racing career spanning 28 years, between 1955 and 1984. Of course it was an advantage to live within earshot of Snetterton race circuit, and apart from turning Dick into a local hero, it allowed him to return home, still dressed in racing leathers, between practice and racing to tend to the farm animals. "Not only did I manage to go racing, but Margaret also drove the circuit recovery vehicle, which was our farm pick up", laughed Dick in his distinctive Norfolk drawl. In fact wife Margaret played a major part in keeping Dick racing and, at the same time, combining the demanding

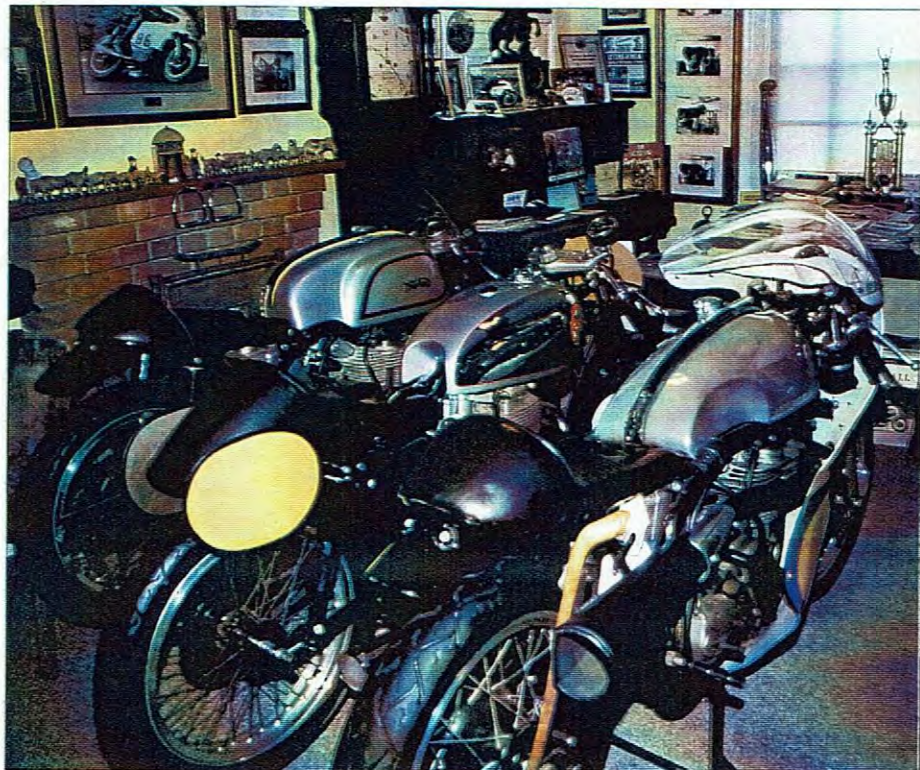


**Dick with the BSA today.**  
The racing boot shows the results of his effort to remain competitive aboard outdated British machines.

role of farmer's wife and later rearing the two Aldous offspring.

Until Dick came on the scene, motorcycling didn't run in the family. However for some unexplained reason, the young Aldous was smitten with the motorcycling bug from a very early age,

much to his father's dismay, and his first machine was an ex-WD Indian, no doubt in plentiful supply in the airfield riddled Norfolk of the period. By this time, Margaret was already on the scene and with her shared interest in two wheels, a quick fix pillion seat had to be



The front room of Dick's farm house has been turned into a private museum for his racing machines and associated memorabilia.

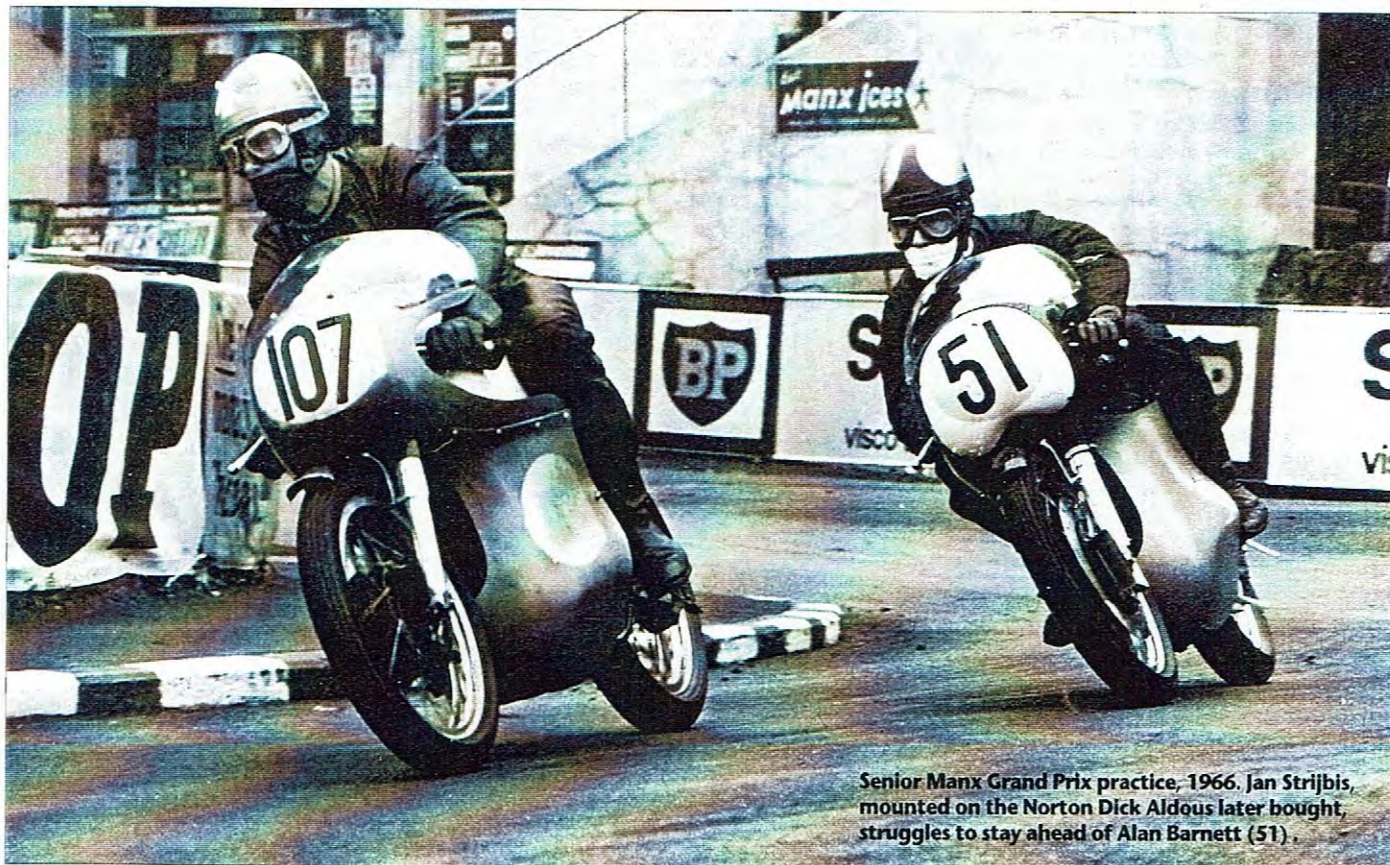
improvised. However, the cushion tied to the rear mudguard proved less than ideal when a spirited attack on one of Norfolk's few hills left the bewildered pillion passenger with a walk to the summit! In very short time the Indian was superseded by a Vincent twin, and Dick and Margaret embarked on some serious touring – when farming

pressures allowed, of course. Dick recalls one particular marathon journey, "We decided to tour Scotland and rode from home to Stirling in one go, apart from stopping for fuel that is. In the end I had to stop because Margaret was so saddle sore she was in tears. By the time we arrived back at the farm we had covered 1900 miles in nine days,

although I did ride around the lanes of Norfolk to round the mileage up," he added with a cheeky grin.

Early in 1955 the big Vincent carried Dick on his first track outing, a one hour high speed trial at Silverstone. It was to prove quite an illustrious debut as he remembers well. "We rode across to Northamptonshire, fixed the numbers on and I finished second in the race before we loaded up and rode home again. That is the only meeting I raced at for which I don't have the programme, although I still have the trophy." By now the bug had firmly bitten and a more sporting mount was sought. The Vincent had to go of course, although an offer of £90 trade-in didn't excite too much. It was sold later for £112 cash!

When the BSA Gold Star DBD34 – number 14 off the production line – was spotted in Revett's showroom it was love at first sight. A deal was quickly concluded, and a relationship, which was to continue for the whole of Dick's racing career, was formed with the Stowmarket dealer. Finally the day for collection arrived, the couple rode over on the Vincent to collect the Goldie, money changed hands, and Margaret headed for home on the Vincent. That first ride on his new pride and joy found Dick in a brush with the law. When struggling to come to terms with the high first gear and battling with the town centre traffic, a local policeman pulled him over for making too much noise. Although purchased with serious competition in mind, the BSA carried



Senior Manx Grand Prix practice, 1966. Jan Strijbis, mounted on the Norton Dick Aldous later bought, struggles to stay ahead of Alan Barnett (51).

# Revetts International RACE OF ACES SNETTERTON

Sunday, July 11th, 1976

Organised by Snetterton Combine for  
Snetterton Circuit Ltd.

PROGRAMME 25p

SHELLSPORT 500cc Race.			
1. 7. Barry Sheene	500 Suzuki	16.05.6	102.1
2. 23. Steve Parrish	499 Suzuki	16.16.6	99.9
3. 8. Paul Smart	500 RIGP.BS. Suzuki	16.19.6	99.59
4. 5. John Howbold	498 Suzuki	16.20.8	99.47
5. 2. Mick Grant	500 Kawasaki	16.29.2	98.68
6. 20. Mick Patrick	500 Coppock Suzuki	16.45.8	97.
7. 38. Chris Revett	500 Suzuki	17.01.2	95.53
8. 22. Charlie Sanby	500 Bryant Suzuki	17.06.4	95.05
9. 12. Roger Nichols	352 Beale Yamaha	17.10.4	94.68
10. 41. Clive Hall	351 Yamal	17.13.4	94.40.
11. 31. Patrick Laporte	500 Yamaha	17.25.6	93.31
12. 30. Franz Rau	500 RG Suzuki	17.32.8	92.65
13. 27. John Cowie	351 Premier Yamaha	17.35.8	92.56
14. 40. Dennis Casement	375 Yamaha TZC.	17.54.2	92.53
15. 96. Erwin Christek	351 Yamaha	16.06.8	
16. 94. Ron Moller	352 Yamaha	16.12.6	
17. 09. Dave Featherstone	352 Yamaha	16.24.	
18. 47. Doug Ransel	351 Yamaha	16.41.4	
19. 97. John Chappell	352 Yamaha	16.41.6	
20. 87. Bob Tate	352 Yamaha	16.41.8	
22. 88. David Stocks	351 Yamaha	16.45.8	
23. 52. Richard Aldous	500 Norton	17.33.6	
M/L. HO. 7. Barry Sheene 1.30.6 105.13.			

Some of the race programmes Dick has assiduously collected throughout his racing career. He would dearly love a programme from his debut race meeting at Silverstone early in 1955.

Dick and Margaret over to the Isle of Man in June 1956 for a TT holiday, and it saw its first track action in August the same year.

That first serious race outing took place at Snetterton. The 500cc grid on August 5, 1956 boasted such star names as Bob McIntyre, Bob Anderson and Michael O'Rourke, all mounted on Bracebridge Street singles. These three took top honours in the final - in fact Mac' cleaned up all three solo classes on the day. Dick doesn't remember exactly where he finished, but what is clear in his mind is the elation he felt lining up alongside such star names, an experience he was to repeat many times during his racing career. However, despite the glamour of the occasion, Dick still had to fulfil his commitments on the farm with a quick dash home following practice. As you can tell from the quality of the opposition, this part-time racer set his sights high. During the Fifties, many relative newcomers joined the sport at National level, which may explain the fact that it was a full 10 years before Dick's elusive first win

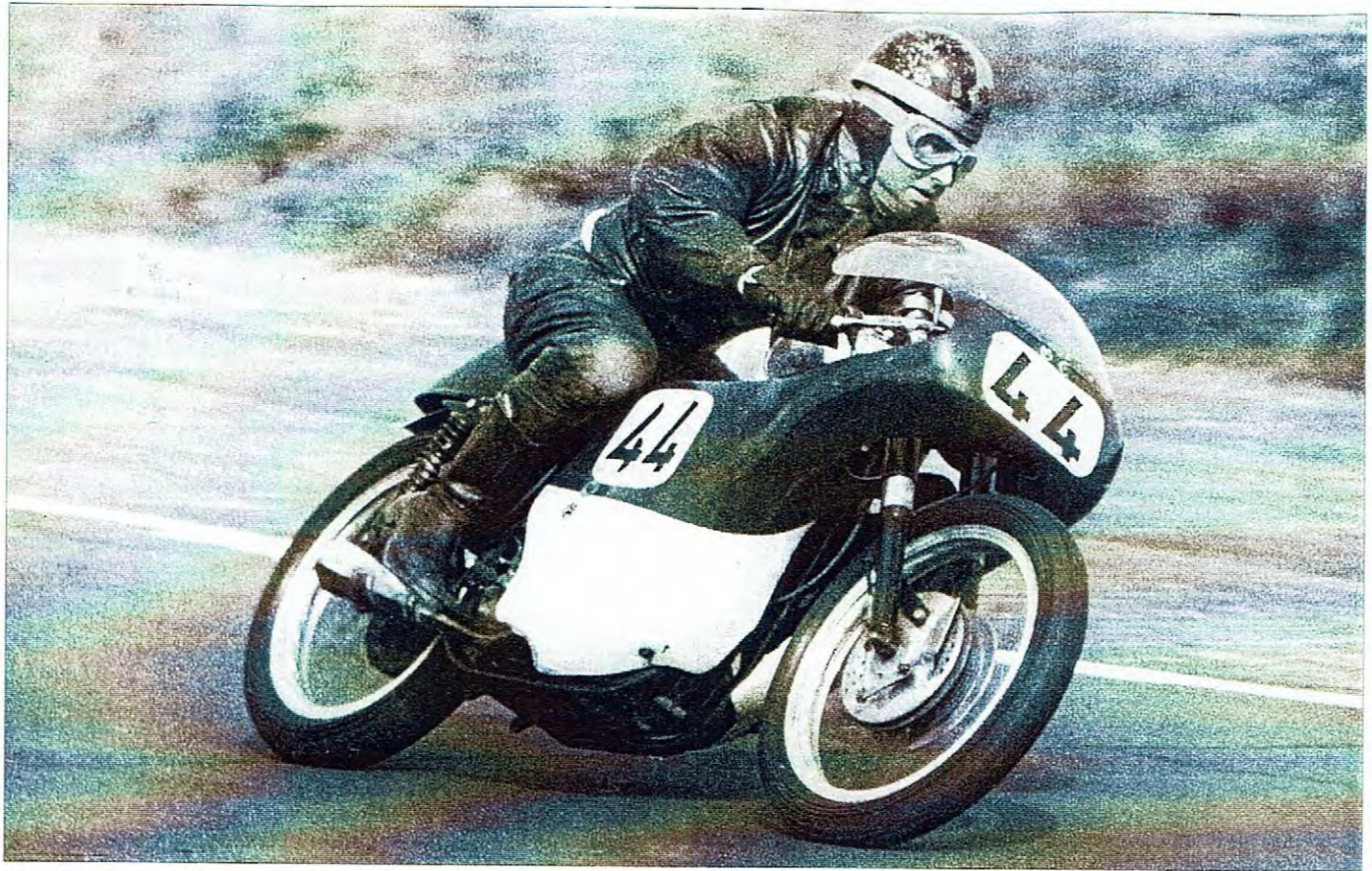
came, in a 1000cc event at Snetterton. The Gold Star proved to be an ideal tool on which to start. The bullet proof motor carried Dick to further success until, in 1968, the time came for a change of mount. During 12 years of hard race track use, it only suffered one major mechanical failure. When a replacement arrived, Dick decided to hang onto the faithful Goldie, and stored it in the back of the workshop.

The obvious replacement for the BSA was a Manx Norton, and the very thing appeared in a Kings of Luton advertisement. Dutch rider Jan Strijbis had used the 500 in the 1966 Manx Grand Prix and the following year's Senior TT. Specification was top notch, the motorcycle was from the last batch to leave the factory, and the motor had been given the Ray Petty touch with enclosed valve springs and a five speed gearbox. Dick snapped it up for a princely sum of £450, and never looked back. Although the Gold Star had served him well, the performance of the Manx was a revelation. During the period from 1967 through to 1984, the Manx gave venerable service, and could be seen in action at almost every Snetterton event, plus the odd excursion down to Lydden Hill, in Kent, when a stand in could be found for the obligatory farm duties. Although the Norton was outclassed at

top National level meetings, this didn't dampen Dick's enthusiasm for the challenge, and he faced the starter's flag alongside the very best. As a result he has some great memories and some very interesting stories to tell. One such tale involves Mick Grant who dominated the early Seventies aboard his rocketship factory Kawasaki triple - a fact confirmed by his fastest qualifying position for the feature event at the Snetterton Race of Aces meeting. Dick was one of the few riders of British singles to qualify that year, so thought it wise to have a word with the straight talking Yorkshire ace prior to the start of the final. "I thought I should warn Mick that I would try not to get in his way when he lapped me, but he just told me not to worry, he would try to follow me for a while so that he could listen to the noise of the Manx" laughed Dick. "I consider myself to be very lucky to have raced with so many great names, from that first race on the Gold Star alongside Bob Mac', through to the likes of Mick Grant, Barry Sheene and even Mike Hailwood. In the Race of Aces in 1976, Sheene won, I finished 23rd and the Manx was the only British machine in the race." Although Dick hung up his racing boots in 1989, son Richard - who along with sister Catherine spent a happy childhood riding around Snetterton in the recovery pick-up with Margaret - was keen to try his hand at road racing. The Manx was brought out of retirement and Richard started his apprenticeship, at a classic meeting at Brands Hatch, coming away with a sixth place first time out. Richard ended the season with the Classic Racing Motorcycle Club's Newcomer of the Year Award. It proved a good grounding, and Richard still competes at National level with a Yamaha FZR400.

Having now passed three score years and ten, Dick spends many happy hours in what has become a private museum built around his motorcycling life. Both the Norton and Gold Star now reside in the Aldous front room. The machines share the space with a second 500cc Norton which was assembled from what was effectively Dick's spares kit, by friend Bob Gedge, who has restored the other two machines and maintains them all in working order. This second Manx started out as a chassis, bought as a spare by Margaret from Brian Hussey for £40, in the paddock at Snetterton. Bob assembled the motor and topped the whole thing off with the five gallon fuel which Jan Strijbis used during his Isle of Man exploits.

In a room packed with memories of Dick's life, the numerous racing trophies nestle alongside those won by the farm at agricultural shows. Of all the spoils accumulated over the years, one of the



Back in the pudding basin era, Dick and his trusty Gold Star.

most precious is the trophy presented to Dick, by Snetterton circuit in 1979, in honour of 25 continuous years racing at the Norfolk venue. One shelf displays all the crash helmets used during a long career, ranging from pudding basins through to more modern full face styles – many of them showing the scars of battle. A complete collection of race programmes, from all the meetings attended, except that elusive first Silverstone foray on the Vincent, are laid out on what must at one time have been the family kitchen table. A quick glance at any one, and with just a little thought Dick can recall exactly what happened at any given meeting. "I can remember Mike (Hailwood) flying past to lap me at this meeting" said Dick, picking up a Snetterton programme at random. "Mind you he was on the works Honda while I was on the old banger,"

he added with a wry smile.

A modest man at heart, and someone who enjoyed the taking part just as much as any success that came his way, Dick is quick to point out that none of this would have been possible without the support of Margaret and the rest of the family. For years he kept all his old photographs in a box in the attic, but it brings a tear to his eye when he proudly

shows the four large albums put together in secret by daughter Catherine. They now have pride of place in the museum. Even in retirement, Dick is still passionate about his racing, and a pleasant afternoon spent reminiscing comes to an end to allow him to take a call from young Richard, who has phoned in from Donington Park, to report on his race results for the day. ■



Some of the helmets Dick Aldous has worn over the years form part of the display in his private 'museum'.



Still active, Dick Aldous poses with more prosaic machinery on his Norfolk farm.