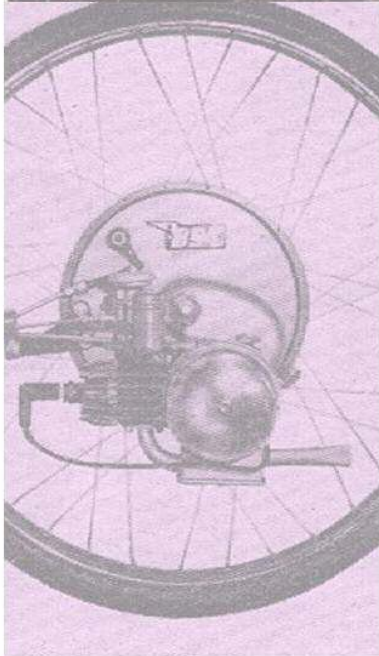


IceniCAM Information Service



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A 98 in New Zealand

by

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LAST year I was fortunate enough to be chosen to go to New Zealand for a year on exchange. After I had arrived in a small North Island coastal town and had settled into my job and "digs" I started to get itchy feet. I had made the journey up from Wellington by long distance bus (if you call it a coach out there they think you mean the sorte Cinderella rode in) but that's all I'd seen of the country. Money was rather tight as I was still being paid my English salary so I was relying upon public transport to get around. I soon discovered that public transport scarcely exists outside the main trunk routes and cities. I went along to the local Travel Agent to book a trip on the Rail Car, only to discover that all the seats had been booked for weeks ahead. There were buses but only on weekdays. I returned to my digs feeling very discouraged. I'd come 12,000 miles to see the world and now I might as well be bed-ridden.

The following week I haunted the motor cycle shops in the town. They had a fine display of machines, including the very first "Moped" to reach those shores, a *N.S.U. Quickly*, but they were all beyond my means. At last I struck a shop which had a 98 c.c. auticycle for sale second-hand. Compared with the streamlined, light weight models now on the market in England it was as ungainly and outdated as a Dodo, but I could just raise the price

demand. I saw it as my magic carpet so I took the plunge and bought it. I arranged to go for my test one evening after work. On the morning of the fatal day I went to work on the bike for the first time. There was nowhere to park it inside the building so I left it up a nearby alley. The machine was a very valuable object in my eyes, apart from my clothes it represented all my worldly wealth and possessions at the time. Therefore it might appear as highly desirable to someone else, so I was dubious at leaving it alone all day unguarded. I therefore, with infinite cunning, took the precautionary measure of disconnecting the plug lead and went into work feeling reassured.

Unfortunately I was kept late that day and dashed out with only a few minutes to get to the test. I sprang on to the machine and began to pedal furiously, but for some unaccountable reason it refused to start. It had never behaved like this before when I had been practising, now when I was in desperate need it had failed me. The first breach in our beautiful relationship had reared its ugly head, the first hole showed through my magic carpet (before the year was out it was to become threadbare, but all that lay in the future.) Zero hour for the test came and passed and still it wouldn't go. Finally, in a state of near exhaustion, I got off and wheeled it into a side street and went to remove the plug. Not that I was very clear what to do to the plug once I had removed it, but that seemed the professional thing to do. It was then that I remembered detaching the lead in the morning!

Later I made my peace with the

Transport Department and persuaded them to give me another test first thing the following morning. I rang the boss and got permission to come in late; I informed him the test would only take ten minutes.

The next morning it was raining, the first wet day since I arrived. I set off complete with raincoat, ready to do or die, arrived in excellent time and practised a few turns in the road, rehearsed the Highway Code in my head and on the stroke of nine went in to report. Out came the Traffic Officer, gave one look at the bike and informed me that he couldn't test me with the old plates on as they weren't "Learners". I took them off hurriedly, breaking my penknife in the process and dashed round to the Post Office to get a new set. Then he came out again and *the bike refused to start*.

Up and down the road I pedalled it, desperately trying to observe the Highway Code though my signals became more and more fragmentary as I rapidly approached a state of complete exhaustion. By now it had ceased raining and the sun had come out. The sweat began to drip off the end of my nose. I abandoned the prescribed route in search of a down gradient, all to no avail. Finally I left the thing against the kerb and staggered back to the office. The long suffering examiner was now busy talking to another man, presumably the next testee.

I volunteered the superfluous information that I had been unable to start the machine. He asked me a few questions about the Code and then said "Well, it's quite clear you can balance on the machine, which is the main thing, so I'll pass you". Clutching the precious licence in my perspiring hand I returned to work, just over an hour late. I was no longer afraid that someone might steal the bike; it would have been a relief. After work I returned to the scene of blood and tears. The bike started easily.