

WHO'S WHO IN CYCLE AND MOTOR CYCLE INDUSTRY

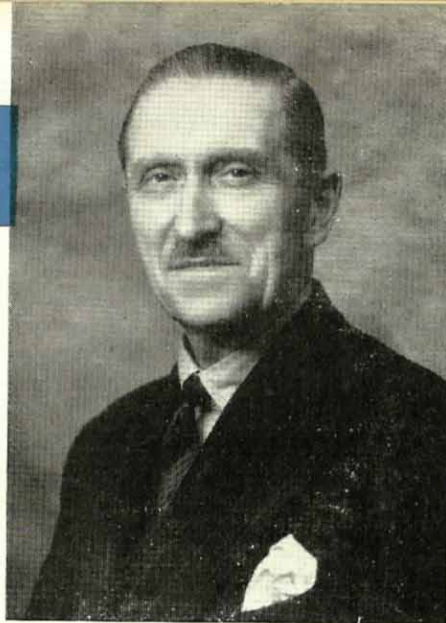
13.—R. Eric Walker, M.B.E.

IN a small office in King's Road, Tyseley, Birmingham, I sat talking to R. Eric Walker, M.B.E., chairman and managing director of the Excelsior Motor Co. Ltd. To talk to Eric Walker, as he is best known, is to go back to the very first days of the motor cycle industry, for both he and his firm are pioneers of motor cycling in the strictest sense of the word.

Fifty years ago, Eric Walker joined his father in the firm of R. Walker and Son, who were then concentrating on the manufacture of component parts for motor cycles. In later years their largest customer was the firm of Bayliss Thomas and Co., Coventry, who eventually became the Excelsior Motor Co., and were acquired in 1917 by R. Walker and Son. During 1919, the firm was moved to Tyseley, and the present company, Excelsior Motor Co. Ltd., was formed in the following year.

This fusion was most important, for the combined roots of the firm go back to 1874, the year of the founding of Bayliss Thomas & Co., possibly the first people to consider the manufacture of cycles commercially and who, it is claimed, were the first firm to be engaged solely on the manufacture of bicycles. In 1896, Bayliss Thomas manufactured and marketed a motor cycle known as the Excelsior, the machine first being exhibited at Crystal Palace in 1896 at the Stanley Cycle Show, the forerunner of the present Cycle and Motor Cycle exhibition.

These machines enjoyed a brilliant racing career, sweeping the board in the International race meeting in 1903 when all events were won on a 2½ h.p. Excelsior, the mile, flying start, being achieved in 1 min 5 secs.



With the acquisition of this firm by R. Walker and Son, Eric Walker inherited a tradition of pioneering and racing which he has developed with notable success throughout the years.

Quite early, his love of mechanical transport manifested itself and while still at school he built his first motor cycle and constructed a four-seater car complete.

By R. H. THOMAS

Throughout his life, Eric Walker has pioneered motor cycle design as a

means of transport, recreation and sport. Amongst his most treasured possessions—a reminder of his earlier career as a trials rider—is an A.C.U. first-class certificate for a non-stop run on a Monarch machine at one of the first one-day trials ever held—October 26, 1912.

Keen on motor cycle club life, he participated in many events organized by the A.C.U., the Birmingham Motor Cycle Club, S.U.N.B.A.C., and other clubs, during which time he won a goodly collection of gold and silver medals, etc.

Mr. Walker has always been interested in the pursuit of speed, the development of engines and in racing, and these led eventually to the production of the famous Manxman in 1935. This 250 c.c. machine had a renowned racing history, winning the Lightweight T.T. twice and on all

occasions finishing amongst the prize-winners. The model also won, and still holds, the Manufacturers' Team Prize.

Eric Walker is proud of the fact that his machine was the first 250-c.c. motor cycle to lap Brooklands at over 100 m.p.h. and this in the hands of a private owner.

Not only has he developed the motor cycle for such events, but his keen understanding of the requirements of the public and his research and development of the small engine were responsible for his designing the Autobyk to meet the demand of those members of the public who, not desiring to join the ranks of the motor cyclists, wanted power assistance. The popularity of this type of transport is tribute enough to this sphere of his activities.

Most of the firm's designs have been Mr. Walker's own, and during the war he

carried out a great deal of development for the services on small two-stroke engines and motor cycles for airborne use. In recognition of his efforts he was awarded the M.B.E.

His father, R. Walker, retired from the chairmanship of the firm two years ago, but is still an active member of the board. Following R. Eric Walker are his two sons, G. E. Walker, who is on the commercial side, and D. A. Walker, who is devoting his energies to the technical aspect of the company. So the third generation of the family is preparing to shoulder the responsibility of the firm in due course.

Motor boating and fishing on the Thames and photography occupy some of Eric Walker's leisure moments, but his chief interest is in research in engineering, for he is an enthusiast as well as a manufacturer.

Change of Contents

A LARGE packing-case, one of many that have been sent to Australia containing Matchless and A.J.S. motor cycles, returned to the works last month. It had been despatched by A. P. North, distributors for Associated Motor Cycles in Sydney, but we hasten to assure our readers that it did not contain a rejected motor cycle, nor was it empty.

The contents were revealed at the A.M.C. annual employees' party at the Woolwich Town Hall, where in the presence of the Mayor of Woolwich the case was opened, and found to be full of gift food parcels for A.M.C. workers. The Mayor conducted a ballot and the Mayoress distributed parcels to the winners.

This very pleasant incident shows how strong are the ties of friendship between Australia and the homeland, ties which have been strengthened by mutual trade between the countries.

The highlight of the A.M.C. employees' party. Mayoress of Woolwich ready to hand one of the Australian gift parcels to the person whose name is being drawn out of the ballot box by the Mayor

Coventry-Eagle Motor Cycles

IT is unlikely that the manufacture of Coventry Eagle motor cycles will be re-started for some little time to come, stated A. Douglas Mayo, managing director of the concern recently. He added that it is a matter of constant regret to the company to have to send negative replies to enquiries for their machines, which continue to arrive in large numbers.

The position is that while the new factory at Tile Hill is now in full operation, export business in bicycles has developed to such an extent that no capacity is available for motor cycle production. A good deal of experimental work has, however, been carried out by the Coventry Eagle Cycle & Motor Co. Ltd. on its future models, and more than one interesting prototype has been under test.



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