

# My first 100 000 km

## Part 2

In the previous issue of our Club Magazine, member Michael Burkert told us about his life with his Vincent Rapide.

His story is divided into four parts:

- 1) The Brainwash
- 2) The Learning Years
- 3) The Riding
- 4) The People

We left him in chapter The Riding.

Here below comes the rest of his interesting story.

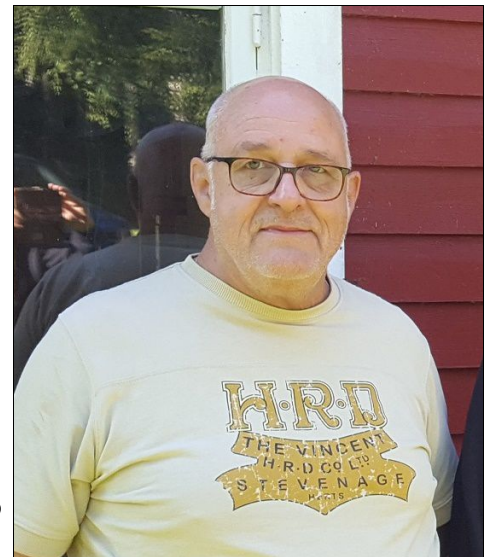
With a bike that was becoming more and more predictable (reliable...) his confidence grew and the trips became longer and longer. Michael was on his way home from a 2000km trip, when gear shifting started to become an issue.

I used the motorway because I had learned that if I wanted to cover long distances, highway is best. The shifting became worse and worse and if I needed to go from 4th to 3rd I needed a long distance to get it done. After half the mileage the clutch started slipping; because of this gearbox problem I had to actuate the clutch too many times. I stopped in a parking lot, called the rescue service who helped me with a big socket wrench to screw the clutch home again and on I went. Without further problems I reached finally my home. The shifting was still a mess, and so I decided to take the gearbox out. The problem was quite obvious: There was hardly any oil left in the gearbox sump and therefore the bushes of the G4 final drive shaft assembly had seized, causing the drive shaft to split. A friend of mine had a new one in stock and after a long discussion and the promise to order one from England and replace it he came to help me with the assembly. My friend has died in the meantime, but every gearshift makes memories of him ...

## Still learning

Mishaps like this marked my way in the following years countless times.

I can't remember how many times I took the (original) clutch out and put it back in again. On the way to my first rally in Wangels at the Baltic Sea, I stopped for refueling and when I wanted to kick the bike again, the clutch slipped and the lever had no resistance anymore. I took the clutch cover off and the primary clutch plate, which was a one-piece



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plate and not steel bonded, fell to the ground like a heap of powder.

Luckily the gas station had a trailer rental service attached so I could bring the bike back home and collect my Horex to attend the rally.

On another occasion I was riding with some friends in the evening towards home, when I felt the clutch once more moved to the outside and didn't separate. When switching on the headlight I learned that the old battery had become weak so I only had light by the dynamo when revving the engine, but having already installed a modern BTH magneto the ignition was not affected.

At the last stop over, about 20 km away from my home I told my companions to push start me in 2nd gear and I will stay in 2nd until reaching home. So we did, and as they didn't know the way I had to take the lead. I knew on the way there will be a 90° bend with no streetlight and with a ditch beside. I had to run slower and slower and the headlight became more and more dim. I estimated approximately the location of the bend and turned to the right. If I'm lucky I'll stay on the paved road. If not, I'll land in the ditch. My estimation was right. I did not land in the ditch ...

### **Bought a Multiplate clutch**

Eventually I bought a multiplate clutch which does its service since then. Everybody's gotta learn sometimes ...

There were times when I had learned the phone number of the ADAC rescue service by heart. Yellow trucks with friendly guys brought me back home, sometimes in the middle of the night with the big yellow flashlight on, making sure that everybody in our street knew: Aha, Michael's back home.

"But not one moment I thought of giving up  
as it was in both ways fun, learning and keeping  
company with my friends."

With the time an interesting collection of damaged pistons and liners occupied my shelves in the workshop, as well as one seized and one broken crank pin, and the spare parts invoices had filled up an entire box file.

But not one moment I thought of giving up as it was in both ways fun, learning and keeping company with my friends.

For some years I rode with a friend of mine in autumn to the east of Germany, crossing the former border between the two Germans. We did delightful trips around the lakes of Müritz, riding on hidden roads we will never find again, not even on a map!



Gear box issues at SVC rally in 2014

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Once we decided to go around Berlin on the eastern side down to visit the famous Spree Forest. As we did a lot of sightseeing on the route, we wouldn't reach that forest the same day, so we stopped at a hotel in a little beautiful village South east of Berlin and asked for a room. The outside facade of the hotel was looking renovated and quite modern, but crossing the doorstep was a trip back in time about thirty years! All the equipment, chairs and tables, curtains and even the electric wiring was still GDR-made! We could get two very tiny rooms under the roof and went down to the restaurant for dinner. Not expecting too much I had one of the best calf livers Berlin style (with roasted onions, apple slices and mash potatoes) ever! Next morning, we took the bikes out to continue our trip.

After fixing all the luggage bags I kicked. And I kicked. And I kicked! Not a single ignition! This was strange as we were perfectly reaching the hotel the night before and I switched off the engine by the cut-off button. The entry to the backyard of the hotel was a little slope, so we pushed the bike up there and down again and again. Nothing! Not a single ignition. I had already mounted my modern BTH Magneto so it could not be a battery or wiring fault. We took the spark plugs out and indeed, not any spark, neither on front nor rear cylinder.

At noon time we were still at the hotel and my friend decided to go back home as he had a quite long trip ahead. I waved him Good Bye and called my beloved rescue service. Just a little hour later a yellow car arrived; an elderly man approached me, and I told him the problem. He shook his head and wanted first to check all the electrical system. I told him that this is useless as I have an independently working magneto which is not connected in any way to the system. He wouldn't believe me and connected some apparatus to the ignition wires and asked me to kick. I did and he told me he couldn't find any spark coming. I told him that this is what I tried to explain to him for the last half hour and therefore I would need a lift for me and the bike to Hamburg! Well, he said, then I must call the center in Munich. After the call he returned and told me that he arranged everything for the transport, just, as we are here in the Southeast of Berlin and the rescue car has to come from the Northwest, that may take a while and I should be a little patient. And he left.

The hotel was kind enough to give me a little place where I could stow my luggage and change my motorcycling gear into normal outfit. And, noticing my misery, they offered me free coffee and soft drinks until I would be picked up.

After another three or so hours the rescue car eventually arrived and brought me to

Neuruppin northwest of Berlin, where we had Relaxation in the work shop.

to change the car again and I finally reached home way after midnight! Next morning, I took the timing side cover off and found the reason: a row of three teeth of the timed breather's sprocket had come off and therefore the magneto sprocket wasn't turning



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anymore! You live, you learn ...

### Longer and longer rides

With the years riding distances became longer and longer, and my confidence grew stronger.



With a little help from my friend Nigel.

In 2019 I had already covered some 90,000 KM, when on a beautiful autumn Sunday morning I suddenly heard a deep clonk-clonk coming from the heart of the engine. Experience from the past told me that these were the famous last words of a crank pin. I was rescued by my wife who had organized the neighbor's trailer; back home I took the engine completely apart and brought it to my famous repair man. I asked him to make a new crank pin and to exchange all the bearings inside the casings. They were still ok, but as they had covered this long mileage and having split the cases, it seemed to be a good occasion. In January 2020 I got the crankshaft and the casings back.

In February 2020 we went to New Zealand for a month to travel around the two islands and to attend the VOC rally there.

It was a most interesting and beautiful trip, and we just enjoyed the enormous hospitality of the local VOC members.

When coming back, the Covid pandemic had taken the rule over the world and the first lock down was imposed over Germany. I wasn't too angry about that, because it would give me plenty of time to get the engine back together again and into the frame.

I slowly worked my way, ordered some new parts again and by end of April the job was done. The bike was running nicely with good compression, less mechanical noise and not so many oil leaks.

### Restoring front fork

The last problem left was the ball races of the headstock, which were completely worn and, as the Girdraulic was a too complicated miracle for me, I again asked for a little help. I had a set of taper roller bearings left and one of our section members offered me to exchange them in his garage. I loaded the bike on a trailer and went to his home.

The changing of the bearings was not a big issue for him as he had some special tool for fixing the Girdraulic onto the work bench.

When mounting the fork back to the bike we found that the front mudguard was touching the ignition cowl because a distance shim was missing in the headstock. But we had no such shim ... Going through his stock of parts we found a shim used for his Hayabusa which we could modify on a little lathe to make it fit. We mounted the fork back,

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everything fitted nicely and snug, but no, the shim did not make the bike go any faster ... Later we also exchanged the lower link and the spindles of the fork, and then the Girdraulic was working perfectly!

With riding more miles my confidence in the bike grew even bigger. When, after all these pandemic lockdowns, we had our first meeting in Holland. I decided to go there alone with the bike, and my wife went by car with the widow of one of our members and our dog (and the luggage). I started very relaxed, the first time not having my ears round the engine to detect any strange noises, and said well, if you make it you make it.

If not, call the rescue service, go back home and that's it. And I reached the meeting place with clean hands. And came back home again with clean hands. And ever since that trip, I never faced any severe problems...



Cafe racer – Vincent style

### **The Lucky Bastard Award**

The last bigger mishap was at the Scandinavian rally in 2022 when the circlip holding the kickstart ratchet to the driving shaft broke on the last refueling stop and my riding companions had to push start me to get to the motel. And, like a little miracle, one of the guys there pulled a new circlip out of his pocket so I could replace it on the site and go back home again. And on this occasion, I earned the first and last award I was ever given: The “Lucky Bastard” award, consisting of a wine bottle with this label and which still stands proudly on my shelf!

The same year after the rally I concluded my first 100,000 km. By the time of writing this story I have covered another 10,000, but given my age I'm not sure if I will make the mileage counter turning around again...

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Lake Garda in Italy. International Rally 2015

### **THE PEOPLE**

Riding a Vincent challenges your emotions to the biggest extensions, from deepest despair to exceptional joy. In a way it's going through a steel bath, and you learn a lot. Accuracy in working, how to do and not to do things, allocating funds for the spares, keeping the wife happy, and, most of all, patience. In the Vincent world there is this saying: Whatever price you paid for a Vincent it is only yours after every screw has run three times through your hands. And true that is!

Maybe because of all these complications, a Vincent creates, by its sheer existence, a unique social life, because all this cannot be managed without the help of others. Most of them have had the same problems before and at a point when you almost start crying, they come with a grin and tell you how to do it. This is welding a bunch of people together.

Additionally, there's this social life created by memberships in the various clubs like the Vincent Owner's Club and the Scandinavian Vincent club, and other clubs mainly overseas (as far as I know Australia and New Zealand have their own clubs for example). Meetings and rallies have to be organized, from locally to even international, bringing people together from various parts of the world, and all with the same interest.

Many times, the phrase of "The Vincent family" is mentioned and leading to think, how can a motorcycle club be a family, but indeed this is describing the relation between the members quite correctly. Like in every family, of course there's also sometimes bumpy roads ahead, but in the core we all stick together.

Our VOC section Germany NorthWest was found approximately 25 years ago, after splitting from the German section, and is very active since then. During the years we were organizing our own rallies with international participation, visiting other rallies, holding our meetings frequently and helping each other with bright knowledge and technical capabilities.

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**Stammtisch 2007**

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Our wives are also actively involved in the section's life and without them many of our events would not have turned out the way they have!

Then, within a rather short period of time, several of our members died, leaving big blank spaces, both from the technical point of view as well as in our social life.

None of them died by accidents, but all of sickness like different cancers etc. When our section organizer died in 2013, I was elected as his successor, I am organizing the section ever since.

### Looking forward

Like most of the marque-bound motorcycle clubs, we are also suffering from a lack of new members for various reasons. One of them maybe the high prices Vincents are achieving in the market, and, as I have turned out before, this is just the "entrance fee". Another reason maybe that people, now in their thirties or forties, are more attracted by motorcycles of the seventies and eighties, as those were their parent's motorcycles when they were young. And most of them have families and jobs and not so much time to invest in learning how to ride and maintain a Vincent.

This is leading to the fact that a lot of experience and knowledge gets lost with time as the present generation of riders is getting older and the chance of transferring their heritage is diminishing. It is indeed very difficult to explain all what comprises the ownership of a Vincent to a newbie in just a sales talk.

There is a book which describes very accurately the changes in the Vincent world from generation to generation, starting when Vincents were just cheap heaps of scrap to the times when they became most valuable collector's items. During all these years there were always people caring for their motorcycles, even to continue with a spare parts production to keep them on the road. I just hope that somehow a new generation will show up on the horizon.

I for my part will try whatever I can to make this happen!



**Text and Photo provided by member Michael Burkert**

**NOTE!** Don't forget to check out information for the **Tonenburg rally** organised by **VOC section Germany Northwest!**

Location: **Tonenburg**

Date: **7 – 9 of June**

For full information on how to apply, rally programme, meeting fee, living quarters and such, please check out Calendar at **[vincenthrd.se](http://vincenthrd.se)**

