



Despite all this, George Silk not only retained his faith in the Scott engine, but also set about proving a few doubters wrong. The result, an increasingly long list of buyers wanting first competition machines and later, road bikes. Initially the idea was to use much of the old Scott running gear which had been purchased by Matt Holder when the original factory shut down in 1950. Holder's agenda (if he had one) and Silk's were clearly at odds, so much so that the latter decided to go it alone. The Scott 2-stroke design was undoubtedly an excellent blueprint from which a very good engine could be developed, all that had to be done was bring the whole concept into the 20th century. In that respect, undoubtedly one of Silk's great attributes was his ability to recognise not only his limitations, but also how to use and co-ordinate the skills of others. On that basis he gathered together a group, all experts in their own field, and set about construction a true British thoroughbred.

So let's dissect this bike and see what makes it tick. The initial impression is that the engine, despite the so called cooling fins (they are in fact cosmetic rather than functional), clearly projects it's Scott heritage. Climb aboard and it feels light (it is, weighing only 307 lbs), low (seat height about 28") and very narrow. Viewed side on, the lines are not as convincing as a Scott. Take a look at a Scott Flying Squirrel for example, the bike has unity;

the individual bits all designed with the whole in mind. Few, very few motorcycles, have ever achieved that. The Silk on the other hand is composed of a series of elements which to some extent sit in isolation - the alloy tank and seat, solid and horizontal topping off the tuned geometry of a delicate, triangulated frame and forward sloping alloy cylinders. Comparison with Scott aesthetics are OK, however, with respect to the Silk and how it stacks up, we have to examine it as the product form the periphery of a failing British motorcycles industry. In that regard it was, and still is a very good bike.

Keith's 1979 700s was one of the last to be produced. A 653cc, water-cooled, 2-stroke twin, producing 52 bhp at 6000rpm. As I've indicated, George Silk recognised and recruited the best British engineering talent to help design and construct his dream.

The Silk's reputation for handling is second to none and credit for this rests squarely with Spondon Engineering. In the early 70s, that company had developed a light, rigid, double-loop cradle frame for GP 125 Yamahas. Enlarge the whole deal a bit, add Spondon forks, brakes and swing arm and the chassis part of the Silk equation is complete. As I looked the bike over, Keith pointed out another Spondon innovation, an eccentric adjuster for the rear chain - designed to shift the swing-arm as a unit; no fiddling with long

sticks and axle alignment, simple and effective. Additionally the incredibly light alloy tank, fibreglass side panels and rear-light surround were all British, manufactured under subcontract.

By stressing Scott engines on the race track, George developed a second to none

Silk had knowledge

with respect to both positive and negative aspects of that engine. To a large extent the commonly held belief they were 'soft' could be traced to the overhung crankshaft and to the fact that under heavy load, crank flex and inadequate big-end bearings often led to failure. In contrast the mains were almost bullet proof, 100,000 worry free kilometres being anticipated by many a Scott owner. Silk's answer was an almost complete redesign of the crankcase, a shaft with increased web strength and 4 roller bearings and two ball races externally. Retained were the Scott central flywheel and primary drive, and the deflector type pistons each with a massive E-W ridge to help improve power and economy by reducing fuel-charge losses through the exhaust port. Piston porting was also modified to improve gas flow to the transfer ports. It was now time to consult with the real experts, boffins, but not eggheads, with ideas from another dimension! Two university academics whose laboratory work had had proven results in the real world, were chosen to help with porting and exhaust design. The result, a patented velocity contoured scavenge cycle for gas flow, an exhaust siamezed further from the port (when compared to a Scott) for better gas flow and, an efficient, superb looking silencer. Now that the power was available, it was simply a matter of somehow transferring same to the rear wheel without losing too many horses.

The gearbox housing is pure Silk, but inside many of the components are