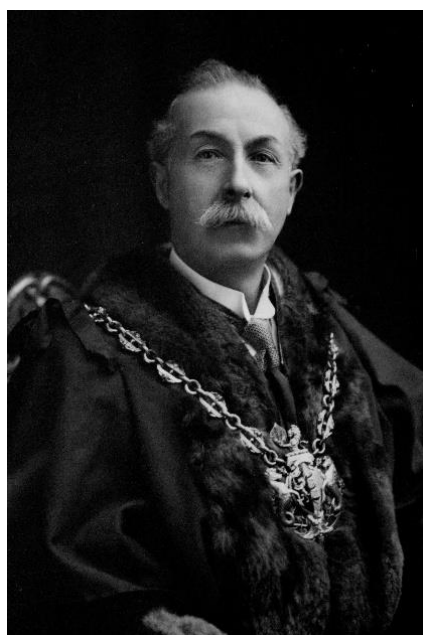


Two giants of the British motorcycle industry occupied houses opposite each other in Cotton Road, Moseley, Birmingham, Jack Sangster at No 76 and Val Page at No 77. This year, 2026, is the Centenary of Val Page designing what would be the basis of Ariel Motor's single cylinder engine motorcycle that remained in production until 1958. They had worked on and off together from 1925 but is the closeness of their addresses reflected in their personal lives?

Superintendent Registrar's District <i>Hackney</i>									
Registrar's Sub-District <i>Hackney</i>									
18.91. BIRTHS in the Sub-District of <i>Hackney</i> in the County of <i>London</i>									
Column :-	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
No.	When and Where Born.	Name, if any.	Sex.	Name and Surname of Father.	Name and Maiden Surname of Mother.	Rank or Profession of Father.	Signature, Description, and Residence of Informant.	When Registered.	Signature of Registrar.
364	<i>Fourth March 1891</i> <i>19 Weyland Avenue</i>	<i>Valentine Boy</i>	<i>Boy</i>		<i>Bessie Page</i> <i>Book</i> <i>a Domestic Servant</i>		<i>Bessie Page</i> <i>Mother</i> <i>19 Weyland Avenue</i> <i>Dalston</i>	<i>Seventeenth April 1891</i>	<i>J. Coates</i> <i>Registrar</i>

Valentine Page, known as Val, was born on 4th March 1891, and his elder brother Charles on 6th July 1889. They lived at 19 Weyland Avenue, Dalston, in the borough of Hackney, London with their mother Bessie Page, a cook and domestic servant.ⁱ The identity of their father, Valentine Desborough Colchester, a widower, was a well-kept family secret, as in the Victorian Age, illegitimacy carried an immense social stigma.ⁱⁱ



Valentine Desborough Colchester
Courtesy of Ipswich Borough Council

Valentine senior's six times great-grandmother on his maternal line, Jane Cromwell was the sister to Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector of England. Valentine took a prominent part in public life as a councillor, a committee member of the Ipswich Dock Commission, Deputy Chairman of the Ipswich Chamber of Commerce, Commissioner of the Boy Scouts of Suffolk, a Justice of the Peace and ultimately Mayor of Ipswich from 1916/17. He died in 1921. His business 'Colchester and Christopherson', later 'Fisons', dealt in fertiliser and coal.ⁱⁱⁱ

On 26th October 1870, Valentine Colchester married Charlotte Allen, a widow, at St George's church, Hanover Square, Westminster.

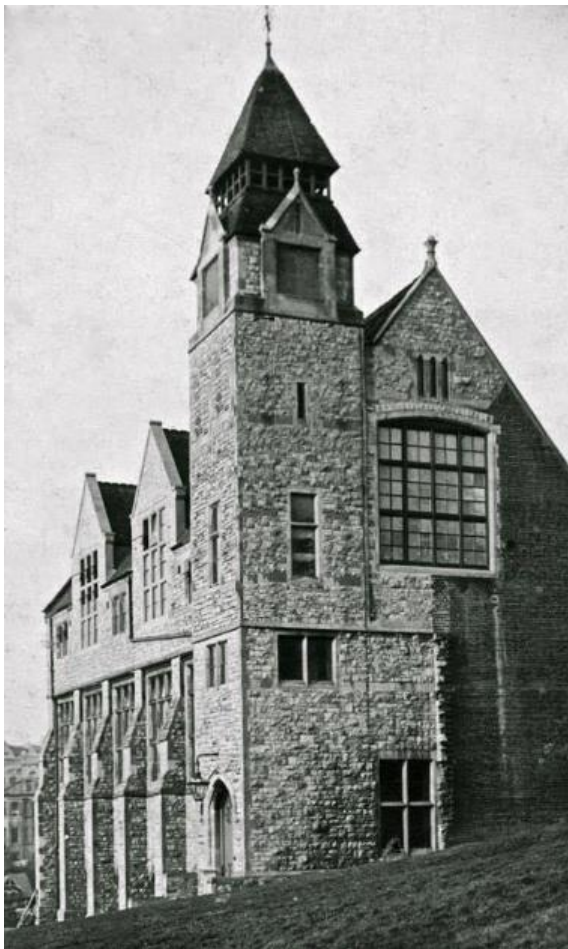
COLCHESTER—ALLEN.—On the 26th inst., at St. George's Church, Hanover Square, Valentine Desborough Colchester, son of William Colchester, Esq., of Grundisburgh Hall, Suffolk, to Charlotte, widow of the late Henry A. Allen, M.D., of Springfield, Singapore, and second son of Samuel Boucher Allen, LL.D., F.R.S.A.

Charlotte, late of Belize Square died just over three years later on 15th January 1874 at 43 Rue Billault, Paris.

DEATHS.

COLCHESTER—On the 15th Jan., at Paris, Charlotte, the beloved wife of Valentine D. Colchester, and widow of the late Henry A. Allen, M.D., of Singapore.

After the death of his wife, Valentine formed a relationship with Bessie Page, but, at her insistence they did not marry and when their sons were born, took their mother's surname.^{iv} This was probably because she was aware and sensitive to the wide difference in social status between herself and Valentine.



In 1901 Bessie was recorded as a 'widow' living at 37, Milward Road, Hastings where she was living 'on her own means and letting an apartment'. The move to this seaside resort was to enable Charles and Valentine to attend Hastings Grammar School, see left.^v Even before leaving school, Val showed a propensity for motorised vehicles, building his own motorcycle from scratch using available parts. It is hardly surprising that on leaving school in 1906, Val became an articled apprentice to an Eastbourne company Messieurs Caffyn Brothers Ltd. The company's first garage was enlarged in 1904 to hold 16 cars.^{vi}

Figure 1: Hastings Grammar School

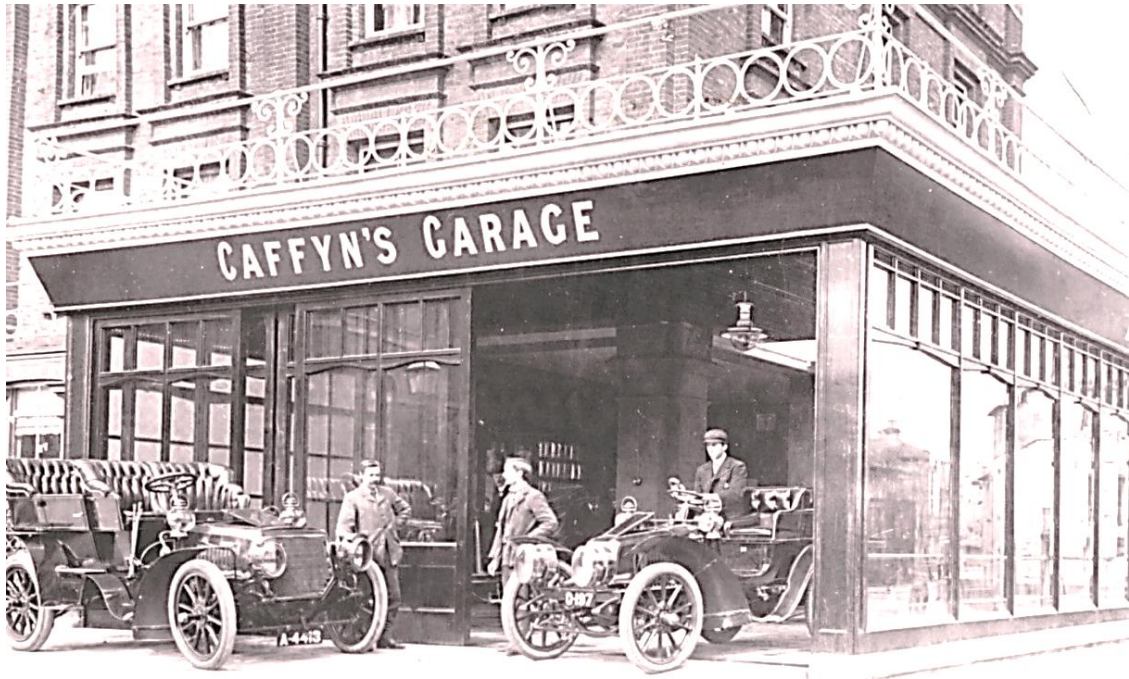


Figure 2: The first Caffyn's garage at 12, The Colonnade, Eastbourne in 1904

The business rapidly took off and new premises were found to enable the repair departments; accumulator charging plant; painting and varnishing shop together with a glass covered washing yard for cars to be housed under the same roof. The business dealt with several agencies including, Argyll, Clement-Talbot, Siddeley and Wolseley.

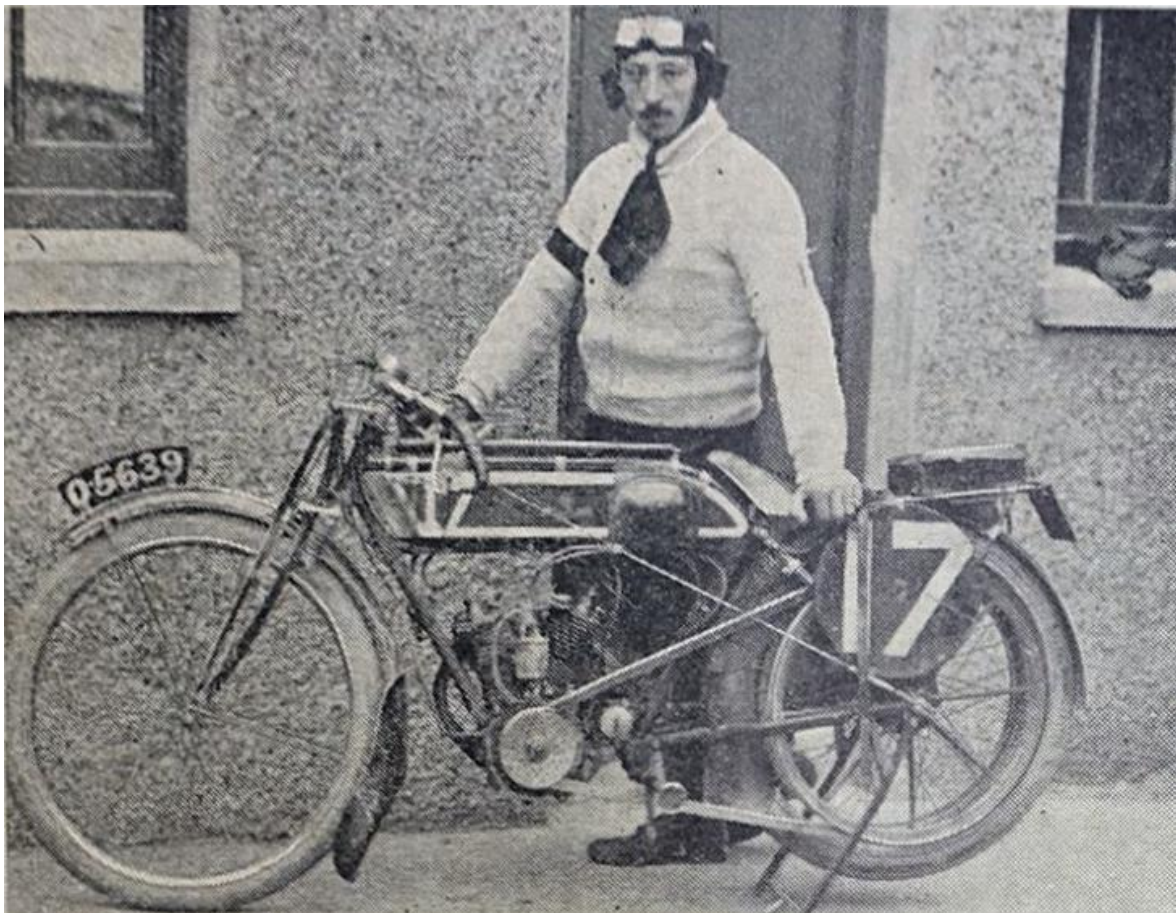


Figure 3: Advertisement for Thames Iron Works, 1910

From 1910 to 1911, Val became an engine fitter in the Motor Section at the Thames Iron Works, Shipbuilding and Engineering Company, Greenwich. It had merged with the engine builder John Penn and Sons in 1899. During its lifetime the yard produced 144 warships and numerous other vessels. In 1911, Winston Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty, was petitioned regarding the lack of new orders. It was unsuccessful, and the yard was forced to shut in 1912 forcing Val to find alternative employment. His availability for work was enhanced by an application to be an Associate Member of the Institution of Automobile Engineers on 14th December 1910. Soon after leaving 114 Lewisham Road, Lewisham where he had been boarding for the past year, Valentine

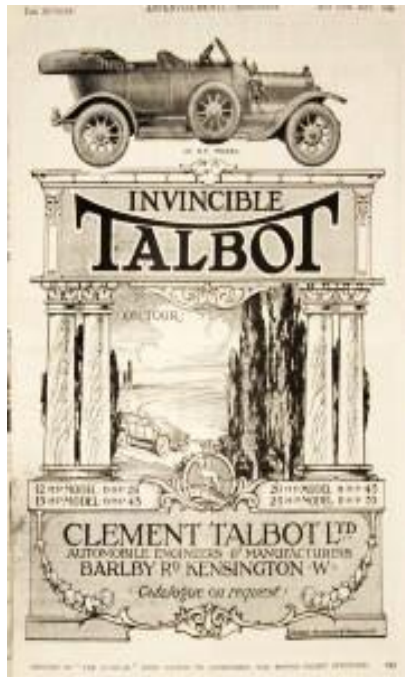
began employment as an engine fitter and general assembler at Humber Ltd., Coventry in 1911.

The Humber Factory opened an expansive new works at Folly Lane in Coventry in March 1908. It spanned 13.5 acres and centralised its production under one roof. Valentine probably worked for its motorcycle sub division where it produced motor cycles from 1909 and where, in 1911, it produced a striking new 2.75 V-twin model of 339cc. The engine was unusual in having a master connecting-rod to which the second rod hinged. The Bosch magneto was gear driven and clamped to the rear of the crankcase, the carburettor by Brown and Barlow, and Druid forks were fitted.^{vii} It performed particularly well on its debut at the Isle of Man TT with all six entries.^{viii} However, Val's employment here was brief and by 1912, he had relocated to Messieurs Clement Talbot Ltd, Kensington, as a junior draughtsman.



Percy Evans, the winner of the Junior TT race in 1911 and his 2¾ hp Humber. The four-lap Junior event was introduced for the first time for 300cc singles and 340cc twins^{ix}

The Talbot business was originally an Anglo-French company, but from 1907 it became wholly English and the cars were simply named 'Talbot'. George W.A. Brown joined Talbot from the Austin Motor Company and took over development of the cars. The side-valve (or L-head) engine was developed to give more power.



Working closely with Percy Lambert the 25 hp design was refined to become one of the fastest cars in England and was the first car to drive over 100 mph.

By 1914, total Talbot production was 800 cars (twice that of Vauxhall and Napier), but on the outbreak of war, the Talbot works turned to building lorries for the War Office and the Royal Navy and later played a part in the development of Armoured Cars.^x At this point Val had found a new position as a senior and chief draughtsman at Messieurs J. A. Prestwich & Co. (JAP) in Tottenham.

Figure 4: 1913 Talbot advertisement

When Val joined JAP in 1914, the business had moved to Northumberland Park, Tottenham, after a boom in cyclecars brought in extra work. At the outbreak of WW1, the company switched from being an almost exclusive manufacturer in the supply of proprietary motorcycle engines, to making munitions and the overhaul and repair of aircraft engines for the Royal Flying Corps. Two other motor cycle manufacturers, Sunbeam and Royal Enfield, used JAP V-twin engines, that saw service respectively in sidecar machine gun units and stretcher-carrying outfits.^{xi}



Figure 5: JAP Advertisement 1914

While working at JAP, Val lived with his mother Bessie in two rented furnished rooms at 86 Manor Park Lewisham, London.

In 1917, Val left JAP and became an aero engine designer with the Air Ministry in London for the next two years.

At the age of 27, Val married Marjorie Allie Savel Corby^{xii}, daughter of Frederick William Corby, a printer and book manufacturer, and his wife Alice Emma (née Savel) at Holy Trinity, Tulse Hill, Lambeth on 7th September 1918.^{xiii}

Note Val's father was named as Valentine Page, gentleman, deceased to hide his father's true identity.

1918. Marriage solemnized at <u>Holy Trinity, Tulse Hill</u> the <u>Parish of Lambeth</u> in the County of <u>London</u> .								
No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
484	Sep. 7 th 1918	Valentine Page	27	Bachelor	Engineer	14, Rouse Rd. Sheffield	Valentine Page (deceased)	Gentleman
		Mayoria Allie Corby	23	Spinster		176, Tulse Hill	Frederick William Corby	Manufacturer
Married in the <u>Parish Church</u> according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the <u>Established Church</u> as after <u>Banns</u> by me, This Marriage was solemnized between us, <u>Valentine Page</u> in the Presence of us, <u>Frederick William Corby</u> <u>William Corby</u> <u>James Page</u> <u>Mayoria Allie Corby</u>								

In 1919, in his London home at 34 Cranley Gardens, Southgate, Val's first child Donald Savil Page was born on 15th October.

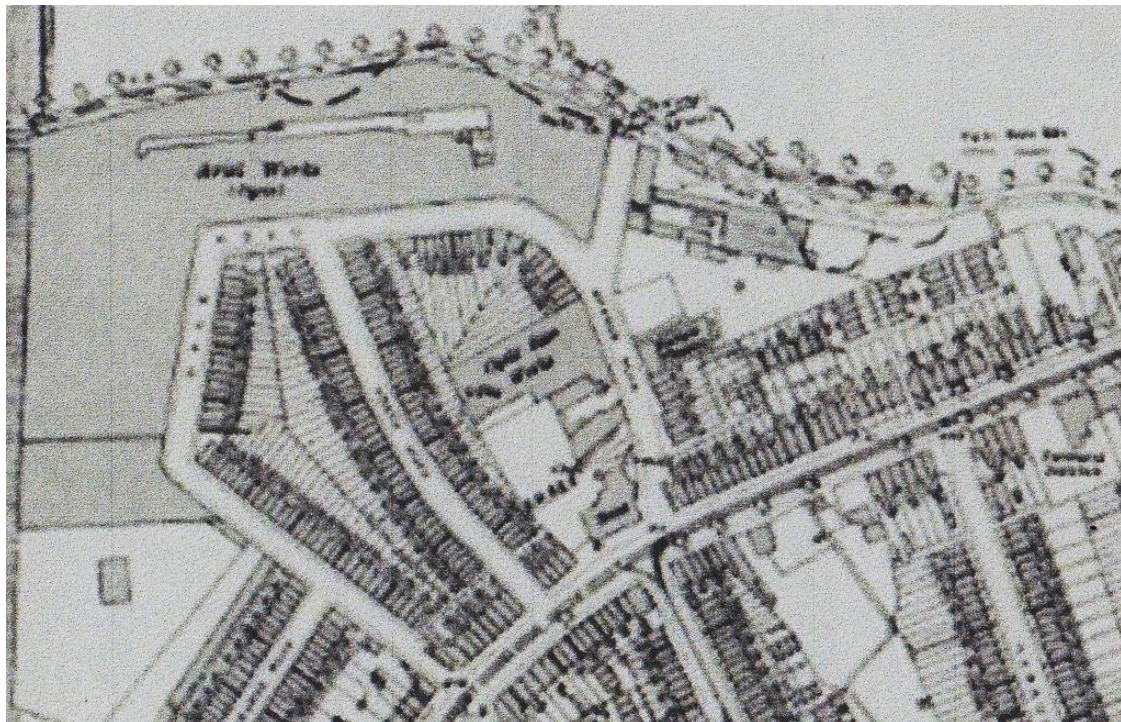
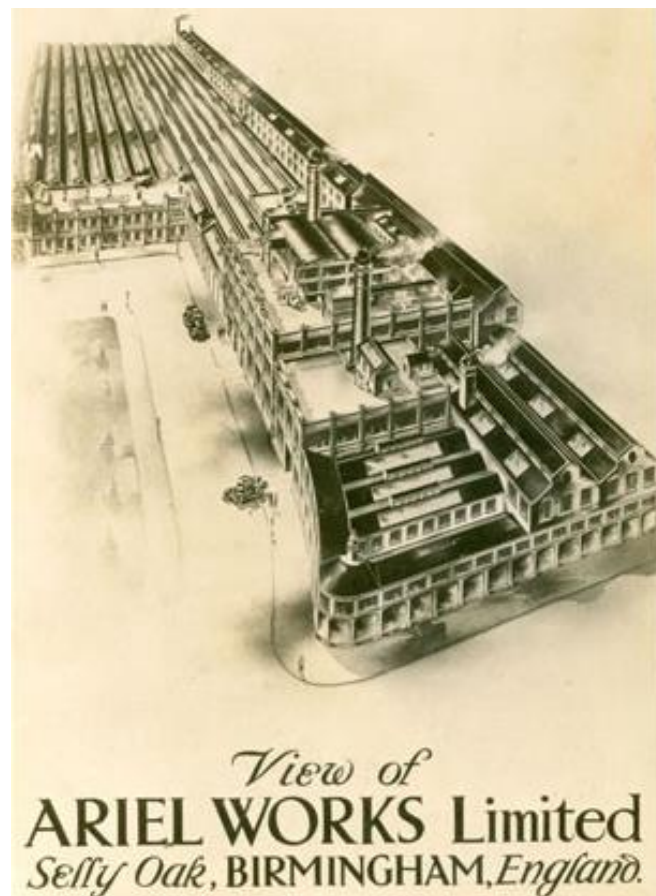
After the war, Val went back to work for JAP, as chief designer. During his time here, Val was able to improve the performance of JAP engines by enlarging the engine valves together with gas-flowing cylinder heads.^{xiv} He also designed the engines used in the Brough Superior SS80 and SS100 luxury motorcycles.^{xv} In addition, he developed the racing motorcycles which made riders such as Bert le Vack famous. Riding a Brough Superior, Bert won a 200-mile race by seven miles at an average speed of 83 mph.^{xvi}

In 1925, Val left JAP to work for Messieurs Ariel Works, Selly Oak, Birmingham as its Chief Designer and Engineer. He had been head hunted from JAP to improve the 'vintage' image of the company. The family stayed in London initially as a second child Allan Dennis Page had been born on 13th January 1925, but by 1926 the family were eventually reunited with a move to Birmingham, taking up residence at 9, Prospect Road, Moseley.^{xvii} A third son, Graham Desborough Page, was born on 4th June 1930.

It was in his capacity as Chief Designer and Engineer at Ariel that Val would have first met Jack Sangster, a board director.

John Young Sangster, known as Jack, was born on 29th May 1896, the son of Charles Thomas Brock Sangster, an engineer and bicycle manufacturer. Jack was educated at Hurstpierpoint College, a public school in Sussex. Jack spent his holidays working at the workbench of his father's factory. When he left school, Jack began an engineering apprenticeship taking him to the Continent where he spent two years getting practical experience in German and French cycle and motor car factories.^{xviii} His apprenticeship was interrupted by the First World War when he served with the City of Birmingham 14th battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, B Company. His brother, Frederick, was later killed in action on the Somme on 5th September 1916.^{xix}

The Ariel Factory occupied some 10 acres of land between the Bristol Road and the New Street to Harborne railway. It spread along the North side of Dale Road and finally along both sides of Grange Road.



In 1918 Jack joined the Cycle Components Manufacturing Company where his father was managing director. The factory occupied some 10 acres of land between the Bristol Road and New Street to Harborne railway line employing 2000 people. Jack designed a small low-cost car which he began manufacturing. The design of the car was later sold to Rover. Jack then joined Rover to manage the production of the car which became the Rover Eight model.



Kathleen Burns

In 1923, on 15th August, Jack married Kathleen, the only daughter of Mr Robert Burns, JP, at St Michael's Cathedral, Coventry. Mr Burns was for many years the managing Director of the Swift Motor Company, Coventry, see left.^{xx}

On his marriage Jack moved from the family home at 8, St Agnes Road to 76 Cotton Lane, Moseley.

That same year, Jack returned to his father's company, as a joint managing director with him.

"THE MODERN ARIEL."

Something quite new is also coming from the Ariel Works this year. Ariel Motor Cycles for 1926 have been entirely redesigned—and are, in fact, new machines in every sense. Their design is the work of Mr V. Page, whose name hitherto has been associated with the most prominent of British proprietary engines—and whose engines have captured most of the classic records of recent years. This fact alone is sufficient indication that "The Modern Ariel" as it has been called, is going to be something good. Actually the four new Ariel models are, in layout, construction and appearance, far in advance of anything hitherto marketed by this old-established concern. The Ariel range consists of four models in two types. There are standard, sports and touring models with 5.50 h.p. side valve engines and super sports and fast touring model with o.h.v. engines of 5 h.p. In the side valve models, the engine which has an unusually "clean" appearance, has a double roller-bearing big-end, with a large ball-bearing on the driving side of the main shaft. Its aluminium two-ringed piston is fitted with a floating gudgeon pin. Oiling is effected through an internal mechanical pump, the only "outward and visible" sign of the existence of which being the sight feed on the tank top. Silence in timing is secured by means of a single valve-operating wheel with two cam faces.

Hull Daily Mail, 16.9.1925

Given a free hand in 1925, when he joined Ariel, Val was able to bring his wealth of experience of engine design for motorcycles, cars and planes together with his knowledge of the economic benefits by standardising the manufacture of parts. His engine updates culminated in a new reliable range, particularly the competitive single-cylinder engines, that were displayed at the 1925 Olympia Motorcycle Show.^{xxi} The 'Modern Ariel' resulted in sales success both home and abroad. By 1927 the foundations had been laid for the iconic Ariel Red Hunter. It was named for its distinctive red-painted tank panel evoking British foxhunting. In 1928, Val was also able to improve the development of Edward Turner's square engine concept that was originally considered a non-starter in quantity production terms. Edward had also been head hunted for his flair for style. A new eye-catching emblem of

the Ariel horse with the advertising slogan 'Ariel, the Modern Motor Cycle' was introduced by Victor Mole in charge of sales, another new man in the team.^{xxii}

In 1930, Jack announced that the future of a large motorcycle will be "a four-cylinder machine, because it is not only so much more pleasant to ride, but definitely safer and quieter than other types". He went on to say that the "Ariel Square Four had been under development for four years" and that "that model quantity production would commence in a few weeks".^{xxiii}

The creditor who moved the resolution of acceptance expressed sympathy with Mr. Sangster in being in a position which was "not of his own seeking."

Mr. Sangster, who recently made arrangements to take over the business of Ariel Works, Ltd., outlined the history of that company and of Fleet Motors, Ltd., and explained that their parent company was Components, Ltd.

In dealing with the events which led up to a receiver being appointed for Components, Ltd., in August last, Mr. Sangster pointed out that subsequent to his joining the business they increased the output of motor-cycles from 1,000 to no less than 19,000 in their peak year.

"Then the slump came along two years ago and hit us as hard as anybody else. The receiver advertised the business for sale, and a number of people desired to buy it. But I was fully alive to the fact that whatever the business might be worth to some outside person it was worth much more to me. I made a bid, and that bid was accepted."

Mr. Sangster said that his task now was to build up out of the ashes of the old business a new business.

He had no hesitation in saying that morally the creditors of Ariel Works and Fleet Motors had no better claim than the creditor of Components, Ltd., but there was just a bare possibility that they might have a slightly better legal claim.

The offer of 10s. in the £ which he had induced the bank to agree to on certain lines was contingent upon everybody accepting it.

However, in 1932 the Cycle Components Manufacturing Company folded, following the downturn of manufacturing after the Wall Street Crash, worsened by war debts, fixed exchange rates, and trade barriers. It had been a merger of five companies of which Ariel motorcycles was one. Jack explained to his creditors that this had occurred because "the slump happened two years ago and hit us hard as anybody else".^{xxiv}

When the receiver advertised the business for sale, Jack put in a bid of ten shillings in the pound, contingent upon everyone accepting it, saying "whatever the business was worth to some outside person, it was worth much more to me". Jack's offer to the creditors was accepted and he set about the task of building up the old business out of the ashes, establishing a new private company called Ariel Motors (JS) Ltd using the wealth of design and engineering talent employed by Cycle Components, which included Edward Turner as Technical Director and Bert Hopwood as Chief Draughtsman.^{xxv}

While this was taking place, Val left the company and on 30th August put in an application for employment through his membership of The Institution of Mechanical Engineers. He was asking for £600 per annum with a minimum of £500. Availability was 'at once'.^{xxvi} His

Birmingham Daily Gazette
11th November 1932

application was taken up quickly by Triumph, a rival motor cycle producer where he took up the position of Chief Designer.

Meanwhile at Ariel Motors, Edward Turner transformed Val Page's sturdy overhead valve single cylinder engine, a plain "Black Ariel", by altering the styling of the bike. The black styling was replaced with a signature dark red paint on the fuel and oil tanks. Chrome plating was added to the fuel tank and wheel rims and an eye-catching instrument panel. The name given to the transformed motor cycle was Red Hunter, a name that cleverly conjured up a powerful imagery of English fox hunters racing through the countryside (see bottom left).^{xxvii} The motorbike was a massive commercial triumph and became the backbone of Ariel Motors.



Figure 6: Ariel Motor's Red Hunter

Married at Coventry Cathedral in 1922, Mrs. Kathleen Sangster was granted a decree nisi with the custody of the one child of the marriage. Evidence was given of the husband, John Young Sangster, staying at a Liverpool hotel with another woman. The respondent will be allowed custody of the child for three months each year.

Divorce of Jack and Kathleen Sangster

1932 was a turbulent year for Jack in more than one way, as at the end of the year, his marriage to Kathleen ended in divorce (see top right).^{xxviii} Kathleen remarried in the summer of 1933. Her second husband was Carl Louis Breedon, a manufacturer of aircraft components, shells, fuses and general war equipment. Jack had moved from the family home in Cotton Lane by 1934 to live at 77 Westfield Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham.^{xxix}

Meanwhile at Triumph, Val was bringing his expertise in engine development to a firm eager to innovate. Val was developing the vertical twin and a range of singles, including a 150cc two-stroke and 250, 350, and 500 cc four-strokes that modernised the company's offerings and restored its market position amid economic challenges. He also brought commonality and standardisation to production methods.

In 1936 Triumph Co Ltd issued a statement that "the industry was declining". Jack Sangster gave a categorical denial of the Triumph statement saying "During the past three years, Ariel machines have been called for in ever increasing numbers and the factory is working night and day to keep up with the unprecedented demand".^{xxx}

Mr. Sangster said that rather more than a fortnight ago the directors of the Triumph Co. Ltd. announced the staggering news that they would not continue the manufacture of motor cycles. He approached the company immediately and was informed that the motor cycle business would be sold to the first man who would pay the price they wanted. "I thought of the Triumph and I thought of Mr. Bettmann, and before twelve hours had passed I said, 'I will pay what you ask for the business.'"

Mr. Sangster stressed that this new Company had nothing to do with the Ariel at all. It was entirely a personal venture. The finance came from him personally and not from the Ariel. The only connection would be that he was the sole shareholder in both companies. He was not going to be a Director of the Triumph.

Mr Sangster bought Triumph Co Ltd from Mr Bettmann for the price asked for the business

With his own finance and not from Ariel, Jack was able to acquire the Triumph Motor Cycle Company for whatever price Mr Bettmann wanted. It was to be carried on under the style of Triumph Engineering Company with no connection between the Triumph and Ariel factories. Mr S Bettmann, founder of the Triumph company, was to be chairman and Mr Edward Turner the chief designer.^{xxxix}

By the time of the takeover, Val had left the company to work for the British Small Arms Company (BSA), attracted by the opportunity to work at Britain's largest motorcycle manufacturer, which sought to modernize its line up amid economic recovery from the global recession.

Appointed as the group's motorcycle designer, Val's initial mandate focused on rationalising BSA's diverse and outdated model range to improve efficiency and competitiveness against rivals Ariel and Triumph. He overhauled the single-cylinder lines by overhead-valve engines with vertical cylinder placement. By 1937 Val had introduced 12 new models with enhanced performance. The updates incorporated shared components, drawing on Page's earlier designs for streamlined production. The revamp emphasized ruggedness for sidecar use, boosting BSA's sales in 1937. This was about one-third of UK sales and overseas exports.



Figure 7: BSA M23 Empire Star 1937 500cc

His designs included the Empire Star, which was developed into the high performance production Gold Star, named in celebration of Wal Handley's 100 mph lap time at the Brooklands circuit in 1937.^{xxxix} The innovative Gold Star had a single cylinder 500 cc engine with twin pushrods operating double-coil springs and overhead valves. The pushrod tunnel was an integral casting in the cylinder block.^{xxxiii}

As the possibility of war approached, Page's pre-war efforts prepared the company for potential military contracts, and reliable, mass-producible singles suitable for dispatch and utility roles. In 1938, Val with foresight, remarked "that the enthusiasm for multi-cylinder engines could only be satisfied by increased costs" and "the failings of the single-cylinder model, in time, could be rectified by using battery ignition and self-started carburettors. Vibration could be reduced by increases in crankcase and shaft stiffness coupled with flexible engine mountings".^{xxxiv}

WELL-KNOWN DESIGNER'S NEW POST.

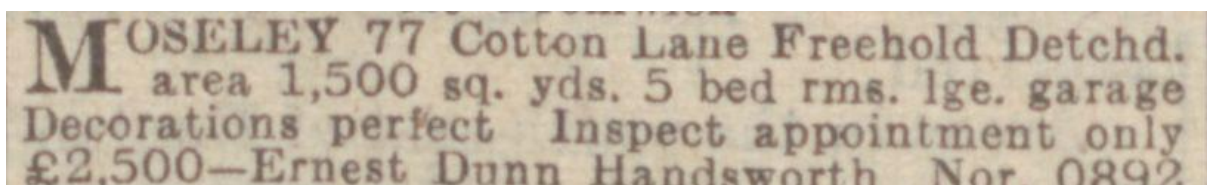
Several important changes in the executive departments of the motor cycle industry have recently taken place, the technical men especially being in the news. Amongst them is Mr. Val Page, who has transferred from Birmingham to Coventry, rejoining the Triumph people in the capacity of chief engineer. He is taking charge of the experimental department and the drawing office, and will carry out the designs of Mr. Edward Turner, the managing director, who, of course, is well-known for his highly successful creations—the Square-four engine and the Speed Twin Triumph. Mr. Page has a lengthy association with the motor cycle world. He went to Birmingham from the J.A.P. engine works in London, and soon became recognised in the Midlands as a sound and clever technician. His paper on "Motor Cycle Engine Development," given before the Institute of Automobile Engineers last year, was such as to unquestionably consolidate his reputation.

Express and Echo, 18th January 1939

In January 1939, Val transferred from Birmingham to Coventry, re-joining Triumph. He took charge of the experimental department and drawing office and was to carry out the designs of Edward Turner (see left).

However, just months later, in May 1939, Val was back at Selly Oak, replacing Vic Anstice as Ariel Motors' chief designer. During the war, Val directed Ariel's efforts towards producing military motorcycles suitable for rugged terrain. The large numbers produced through government contracts ensured the company's survival.

After the war, Val transitioned production to enable the update of motorcycle design to meet shortages of materials, He refined the single-cylinder engines and introduced complementary parallel twin configurations to revitalise Ariel sports and touring line-up while maintaining reliability and performance.^{xxxv}



MOSELEY 77 Cotton Lane Freehold Detchd.
area 1,500 sq. yds. 5 bed rms. lge. garage
Decorations perfect Inspect appointment only
£2,500—Ernest Dunn Handsworth Nor. 0892

Birmingham Mail advertisement for the sale of 77 Cotton Lane
on 22nd October 1942

In October 1942, 77 Cotton Lane, Moseley, was advertised for sale. It just happened to be opposite the house that Jack once lived in from 1923 to 1934.

Val bought the house for his family and remained there until 1967. To afford a house opposite to where his boss Jack Sangster once lived must have given Val a tremendous sense of achievement.

In 1944, Jack sold Ariel to BSA (Birmingham Small Arms Company). He also bought a number of shares that entitled him to join the board of BSA.

On hearing the news, 500 workmen from Ariel Motors Ltd, staged a sit-down strike following its sale to BSA in 1944,

**PROTEST AGAINST SALE
OF FACTORY**

Nearly 500 workmen at Ariel Motors, Ltd., Selly Oak, staged a sit down strike this morning, "as a protest against being handed over to a combine without any safeguard to the future of the workers and Servicemen."

A spokesman for the firm said: "This company is owned by Mr. Jack Sangster. He is in negotiation with the B.S.A. to sell it. The work-people have heard about it and are protesting. That is all there is to it."

"They staged a sit-down strike this morning, but went home at mid-day after arranging for a men's committee to meet Mr. Sangster to discuss the situation to-morrow morning."

Birmingham Mail 16th December 1944

**Ariel Strike
Ended**

The sit-down strike of 500 employees of Ariel Motors, Bournbrook, Birmingham, which started last Saturday as a protest against negotiations for the sale of the firm, ended yesterday.

At a full meeting of the employees, the managing director, Mr. J. Y. Sangster, announced that the sale of the share capital of the company arranged with the B.S.A. Co. had been completed, and control had passed to the purchaser. Provisions had been made to safeguard the interests of the Ariel employees, and these he explained to the meeting.

The employees unanimously decided to return to work on the first working day after Christmas.

At a meeting a few days later, Jack Sangster announced that provisions had been made to safeguard the interests of the Ariel employees. Subsequently, the employees unanimously decided to return to work on the first working day after Christmas (see above right).^{xxxvi}. However, BSA gradually merged Ariel's engineering with its own.

In 1949, Val again took over design work and produced the 500cc Kawasaki KH500 two-stroke triple, a parallel twin to compete with others in that market. And in 1954 helped produced the 'Huntmaster', which used a BSA A10 650cc engine in an Ariel frame.



In 1951, Jack married for the second time. His new wife was Phyllis Violet Gladys Hamer. The marriage was not to last as, in June 1959, he petitioned for a divorce on the grounds of his wife's adultery (see left).^{xxxvii}

The same year, Jack sold Triumph to BSA for around £2,448,000, a good return on his initial £41,530 10s 5d investment in 1936. He joined the board of BSA following the acquisition of Triumph.^{xxxviii}

B.S.A. BUYS UP TRIUMPHS

By the Industrial Correspondent
THE Birmingham Small Arms Company, makers of B.S.A. motor-cycles, announced today that it had acquired the share capital of the Triumph Engineering Company, of Coventry, makers of the Triumph motor-cycle.

Mr. Jack Sangster, chairman of the Triumph Company, has been appointed a director of the B.S.A. Company.

A Triumph spokesman emphasised today that the acquisition "would involve no change of management, policy, or anything else."

As far as the general public was concerned there would be no difference whatever, he said.

Some years ago, Mr. Sangster sold his Ariel Motor Cycle Company to B.S.A.

Surprise

As Triumph was a private company no figure for the share capital is available.

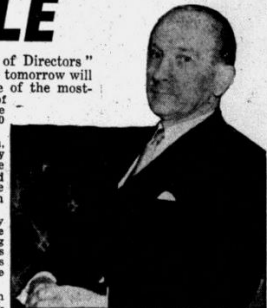
The announcement of the take-over has come as a surprise to Midland motor-cycling circles.

There has been no connection between Triumph cars (now a subsidiary of the Standard Motor Co.), bicycles, and motor-cycles since pre-war days.

MILLIONAIRES ARE READY FOR B.S.A. BATTLE



SIR BERNARD DOCKER
 —will the tie that brings him courage bring him the necessary votes to win back the chairmanship of B.S.A.?



MR. JOHN Y. SANGSTER
 —shuns publicity behind a screen of secretarial staff who protect him even from enquiries about his health.

IN the columns of "The Directory of Directors" appear the names of two men who tomorrow will face each other in London in one of the most-discussed financial battles of post-war years—the battle for control of the £25,000,000 B.S.A. organisation.

Both are Midland men, and their battle is basically a Midland battle, for the B.S.A. factories are centred in Birmingham and have their main subsidiaries in its environs.

On the left we tell the story of Sir Bernard Docker, the former chairman and managing director of B.S.A., who was deposed from office earlier this year by a majority vote of the board.

On the right we give a pen picture of the man who succeeded him—Mr. John Young Sangster, who five years ago sold his interest in the Triumph motor cycle concern to B.S.A. for £2,400,000.

Tomorrow shareholders of B.S.A. will decide which of these two industrial tycoons they want as their chief.

It is the Battle of the Millionaires.

Birmingham Mail, 31st July 1956

In 1956, after a series of boardroom battles, Jack ousted the previous chairman, Sir Bernard Docker, and became its new chairman. He appointed Edward Turner as Chief Executive of the Automotive Division—comprising BSA, Ariel, Triumph, Daimler, and Carbodies (makers of London taxicabs).

In 1958, in complete contrast to anything they had ever produced before, Ariel introduced the 'Leader', designed by Val, with a 247cc twin-cylinder two-stroke engine and a four-speed gearbox. It also had the panel-enclosed engine unit hung from the main frame beam in pressed steel with trailing-link forks. This modern design could be mass-produced and offered scooter

protection with motorcycle handling. Although light, agile and lively, and receiving good press reviews at the time, the design did not prove very popular with traditional riders. The following year, Ariel released a cheaper stripped-down version of it called the 'Arrow' and in 1961 the 'Golden Arrow', a higher-performance sports model to appeal to budget-conscious racers and sport riders.



Figure 8: Ariel Leader twin-cylinder, two-stroke motor cycle



Figure 9: The 1961 247cc Golden Arrow

Motor-cycle Designer to Retire

Mr. Val Page, chief designer of Ariel Motors Ltd., Selly Oak, Birmingham, is to retire after 50 years in the motor-cycle industry. He is 67.

For many years he designed J.A.P. engines, and at one time machines fitted with these held 23 world records.

In January 1959, Val retired after 50 years working in the motor cycling industry. He was aged 67.^{xxxix} The retirement came earlier than expected, influenced by the cancellation of several developments under the parent company BSA. He however continued semi-officially as a consultant.

Val Page retires in 1959 after 50 years in the motorcycle industry

In 1961, Jack retired as chairman of BSA, declining a peerage the following year.

Two years later in 1963, BSA closed the Selly Oak factory and moved production to Small Heath. Val Page had a design for the 'Leader' as a 70cc four-stroke with in-line four engine, but the executives did not share his vision, so it was never built.

After his retirement from BSA, Jack remarried on 15th June 1963, Jack drove his Rolls Royce round to Caxton Hall and quietly got married. His bride was Mrs

Margery Lucile Bianchi, former wife of Senior Manuel Bianchi, the Chilean Ambassador in London from 1941 to 1951. It was the third marriage for both of them.^{xl}



In 1965, the parent company, BSA, stopped the production of all Ariel models. Foreign competitors had invested heavily in research and development. Japanese manufacturers introduced more advanced technologies, including electric starters, overhead-cam engines, improved reliability, and modern production methods. Their motorcycles offered superior performance and required less maintenance. Despite Val's foresight in his 1938 statement about the future of motorcycle development, BSA had not invested in their future development and production methods to keep up with foreign competitors, hence the demise of the industry.^{xli}

Jack died from cancer at his home at 34 Ennismore Gardens, his Knightsbridge home in London, on 26th March 1977. He left £651,538, nearly four million pounds in today's money.^{xlii}



Figure 10: Val Page

In 1967, Val moved to Chipping Campden with his son Donald and family. Val's wife, Marjorie, died shortly after from leukaemia at Stratford on Avon. Val developed cancer himself some years later but survived. After his near brush with death, he decided to tell his children of his long-held secret regarding his father's identity and his relationship with his mother. In his final years, Val suffered a stroke at his home at 8 Cherry Orchard Close, Chipping Campden, Gloucestershire and needed to be cared for at a nursing home in Cheltenham. He died on 9th February 1978. He was survived by three sons and eight grandchildren.^{xliii}

Jack Sangster and Val Page were chalk and cheese characters, but with a shared passion for motorcycles. Jack was born to a father who was a pioneer in the motor industry. He was educated at a public school and as an apprentice was sent by his father to France and Germany to study their manufacturing

processes. He was a clever and astute business man, and was one of a few men who after the Great War slump who was in a position to buy up failing



Figure 11: Jack Sangster

businesses and turn them around by attracting some of the best engineers in the business. He recognised the capabilities, talents and vulnerabilities of his top team and used them to his advantage to drive a very successful business portfolio where others had failed. He was described as a gentleman, slight and aloof and proud of his elegance. He was a fine judge of wine and a lover of good food. He enjoyed swimming and skiing and riding a Triumph motorcycle around the country. His working life was detrimental to his personal relationships over the years, but after retirement, he remained married to his third wife until he died.

Val, on the other hand, held a secret relating to his parentage that he was unable to tell his family until late in life. He was a grammar school boy with a passion for engineering from an early age. By working his way up through seven companies between 1906 and 1925, Val learnt the essential tools of draughtsmanship and the design of engines. This gave him a unique knowledge of not only of motorcycle engines but also those of motor cars and aircraft. This wide experience of engines proved extremely useful to him in the future when his abilities to innovate were recognised by Jack Sangster who made him chief engineer at Ariel Motors in 1925. Val was a family man with a wife and three sons. He enjoyed tennis and gardening and lived in Prospect Road, then Cotton Lane with his family for more than fifty years.



Jack Sangster's house at 76 Cotton Lane, Moseley

Val and Jack Sangster had a good working relationship, so why did Val leave the company when Jack set up Ariel Motors (JS) Ltd and later on when he took over Triumph Motors? The answer to this lies in a clash of character between Val and Edward Turner. Val was one of nature's gentlemen, quiet and unassuming, whereas Edward Turner was full of his own importance and in his own words "Always had lots of salesman in my make-up. I reckon I knew what turned the boys on - colour and style".^{xliv}

And yes, Val and Jack Sangster did have houses opposite each other but not concurrently.



Val Page's house at 77, Cotton Lane, Moseley

Written and researched by Edwina Rees, Moseley Society History Group

For more technical details of Val Page's motorcycle designs there is much information in newspaper interviews with Val on his latest technical innovations and in online motorcycle websites. There is also a magazine *Cheval de Fer*, produced monthly, an Ariel Owners Motorcycle Club Magazine. A published booklet called '*Motorcycle Designer: Valentine Page, 1892-197*', by Jim L. Lee and '*The Strange Death of the British Motor Cycle Industry*' by Steve Koerner are also available to buy. To view some of Val Page's motorcycles you can visit 'The National Motorcycle Museum' at Coventry Road, Bickenhill, Solihull, B92 0EJ and 'The Coventry Transport Museum' at Millennium Place, Hales Street, Coventry, CV1 1JD.

Permission to copy subject to acknowledgement

The Moseley Society History Group carries out its own research and publishes the results on its website and in booklets, posters and written reports. It also responds to individual enquiries as far as it is able. The History Group grants permission to quote from any of its published research material and any responses to individual enquiries for non-commercial and educational purposes, but only on condition that the History Group is acknowledged as the source of the information used, together with the author where specified, and on the understanding that the History Group cannot guarantee or accept liability for the accuracy of its material. Use for commercial purposes is not permitted unless terms have previously been agreed with the History Group.

Illustrations

Figure 1. Hastings Grammar School 1905

https://historymap.info/Hastings_Grammar_School

Figure 2. The History of Caffyns from 1865, p 4

https://bluesky-cogcms-prodb.cdn.imgeng.in/media/bnwnpmtmp/history_of_caffyns.pdf

Figure 3. Thames Iron works motor section July 1910

<https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/File:lm19100723Auto-Thames.jpg>

Figure 4. Grace's Guide: Clement Talbot

<https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/File:lm1913Autocar-ClementTalbot.jpg>

Figure 5. Grace's Guide: J. A. Prestwich

Industries<https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/File:lm19140309LCar-JAP.jpg>

Figure 6. Wikipedia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ariel_Red_Hunter#/media/File:Ariel_350_cc_Red_Hunter_1938.jpg

Figure 7. Car and Classic

<https://www.carandclassic.com/car/C1091378>

Figure 8. National Motor Museum

<https://nationalmotormuseum.org.uk/collections/vehicles/ariel-leader/>

Figure 9. Bonhams

<https://cars.bonhams.com/auction/18221/lot/408/1961-ariel-247cc-golden-arrow-frame-no-t21046g-engine-no-t21046g/>

Figure 10. Wikipedia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Val_Page

Endnotes

- i The 1891 census recorded Bessie as 'married' to hide the illegitimacy of her children
- ii a) In conversation with a member of Page's family by marriage provided by Wali Taylor, editor of the Ariel Owners Club Magazine "Cheval de Fer"
b) The Speirs Family Tree, Ancestry
- iii Ipswich Luminary
<https://www.ipswichluminary.co.uk/mayors/valentine-desborough-colchester/>
- iv See ii a) From the family tree of a member of Page's family by marriage provided by Wali Taylor, editor of the Ariel Owners Club Magazine "Cheval de Fer'.
- v 1934/1953 Who's Who in the Motor Trade, Grace's Guide
- vi The History of Caffyn's Garage
https://bluesky-cogcmprodb.cdn.imgeng.in/media/bnwnpmtmp/history_of_caffyns.pdf
- vii Humber motorcycles for 1911
<https://cybermotorcycle.com/marques/humber/humber-1909-1919.htm>
- viii Grace's Guide https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/Humber:_Motorcycles
- ix Percy Evans, Grace's Guide https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/Percy_J._Evans
- x Clement Talbot Ltd History
<https://www.talbotownersclub.co.uk/history/clement-talbot-ltd-history>
- xi JAP: a history
<https://www.classicbikehub.uk/features/article/jap-a-history/>
- xii The spelling of the name varied over many years on official documents eg Marjory/Marjorie and Savil/Saville
- xiii London Birth and Baptisms
- xiv Lee, Jim J., 2012, Motor Cycle Designer Valentine Page, 1892-1978, Reprint, Loughborough
- xv Wali Taylor, editor of the Ariel Owners Club Magazine "Cheval de Fer'.
- xvi *Sport (Dublin)*, 28.7.1923
- xvii Electoral Registers for Southgate and Kings Norton from 1925 to 1927
- xviii *Birmingham Mail*, 20.12.1957

- | | |
|--------|--|
| xix | <i>Mid-Surrey Times</i> , p 7, 25.1 1916
<i>Coventry Evening Telegraph</i> , 1.1.1958
Commonwealth War Graves Commission, Lieutenant Frederick Charles Sangster,
16th Royal Warwickshire Regiment, of St Agnes Road, Moseley, son of Charles and
Louisa Sangster |
| xx | <i>The Sketch</i> , 24.10.1923 |
| xxi | <i>Hull Daily Mail</i> , 16.9.1925 |
| xxii | See xiv, pp 3, 6, 9 |
| xxiii | <i>Evening Despatch</i> , 19.12.1930 |
| xxiv | <i>Birmingham Daily Gazette</i> , 11th November 1932 |
| xxv | <i>Birmingham Daily Gazette</i> , 11.11.1932 |
| xxvi | Institution of Mechanical Engineers; London, England; <i>Mechanical Engineering
Records, 1847-1938, Ancestry</i> |
| xxvii | A brief history of the Ariel Red Hunter
https://silodrome.com/ariel-red-hunter-history/ |
| xxviii | a) <i>Birmingham Daily Gazette</i> , 13.12.1932
b) See xiv, p 17 |
| xxix | Electoral Register for 1933
Graham Reeves archive in the Moseley Society History Group registering Jack
Sangster at 76 Cotton Lane in 1934 |
| xxx | <i>Birmingham Daily Gazette</i> , 11.1.1936 |
| xxxi | <i>Coventry Evening Standard</i> , 27.1.1936
<i>Coventry Evening Telegraph</i> , 27.1.1936 |
| xxxii | Reynolds News 19 th September 1937, also 26 th September 1937
<i>Coventry Evening Telegraph</i> , 8.7.1937 |
| xxxiii | Wikipedia: Val Page
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Val_Page |
| xxxiv | <i>Coventry Evening Telegraph</i> , 9.2.1938 |
| xxxv | Val Page, Grokipedia
https://grokipedia.com/page/val_page |
| xxxvi | <i>Birmingham Daily Gazette</i> , 23rd December 1944 |

xxxvii *Daily Mirror*, 18.6.1959

xxxviii See xiv, p 3
Evening Despatch, 16.3.1951

xxxix *Birmingham Daily Post*, 8.1.1959

xl, *Daily Express*, 18.6.1963

xli *Senior Times*, 8.7.2026
<https://seniortimes.ie/the-demise-of-great-britains-motorcycle-industry-how-the-world-leader-lost-its-crown/>

xlii Probate calendar

xlili See ii a

xliv See xiv, p 18