
HUNTING FOR RICKMAN

Say **Mid-Anglia Constabulary** today to someone in Cambridgeshire, and most people will not recognise the name. This was the name of the Cambridgeshire police prior to 1974. Formed from **Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, Isle of Ely and Cambridge City** police forces on 1st April 1965, it **became Cambridgeshire Constabulary** on 1st April 1974



Mid-Anglia was a progressive force and in November 1972 they purchased three **Rickman 650cc police Métisse motorcycles**. Numbered *VCE 49, 50 and 51 L*, they were frame numbers *1277 to 1279* off the Rickman line. Métisse is French slang for a mongrel dog, a deliberate choice of name which hinted at the motorcycle's mixed ancestry

Derek and Don Rickman became famous as cross country and scramble motorcycle champions, developing their own frame, into which they fitted power plants from any company who would supply them. For the police models, however, the brothers used exclusively Triumph plants



In January 1969 the Rickman brothers were 'persuaded' to make a police special for their local force, the **Dorset and Bournemouth Constabulary**. These MKI machines were followed by the MKII in December 1971, but although there was a loyal following from one or two English police forces – they never sold to any force beyond England – difficulty in obtaining power plants meant that police production was limited, because at the time the Home Office was promoting solely British-made vehicles for their fleets. The Rickmans could obtain any number of foreign engines but Triumph-BSA were reluctant to supply engines to this upstart company, preferring to sell their own Triumph Saints to the police

In November 1972 the **Mid-Anglia Constabulary** took delivery of their first three MkII Métisses (numbers 50, 51 & 52 of the Rickman police production). They bought three more in January 1973, followed by a fourth in March 1973. Mid-Anglia must have been happy with these motorcycles, because in November 1973 they

purchased five more (numbers 70 to 74 of the police machines) with frame numbers *1349-1353*. This made the force the second largest fleet user with 12 machines, behind **West Mercia Constabulary** who had 21

The last MKII police Metisse was built in March 1974 (production number 81, frame 404) and was supplied to the **Hull City Police**



So what became of the Cambridgeshire **Rickman Métisse** bikes? I know that all 12 became part of the Cambridgeshire Constabulary on 1st April 1974. Just three years later they had all been sold and there was a fleet of 16 **BMW 750cc** machines

With such a large fleet, I expected I would be able to find lots of photographs & information about these enigmatic motorcycles. With just 81 having been made for the police and sold to just 12 English forces, I am trying to trace the registration number, a photograph and the rider's name to properly record the history of the **Rickman Police Métisse**

It should be possible! But so far these *Cambridgeshire* motorcycles remain elusive. I have photographs of just three of the twelve, **VCE 49L** issued to *Jim Robertson*, **VCE 51L** issued to *Adrian Tomkinson* and **YER 74M**. The last of these is still in use and taxed until March 2020, but I don't know its whereabouts

I have no registration numbers for the January/March 1973 machines and researching through the Cambridgeshire Police Museum and similar police contacts has all drawn a blank. **Mid-Anglia Constabulary** was a small force and in 1967 had just 929 officers. In 1972 there were 938 officers and in 1976 Cambridgeshire Constabulary had 1,061 officers, of whom 177 were in "T" Traffic Division. The Home Office statistics do not break down how many were on traffic before 1974. My information is that these motorcycles were a personal issue to officers who were based at detached stations until the police motorcycle unit started in the late 1970s

So I wonder, do any **CambsIAM** remember these motorcycles, or have any more details about them and their riders? If anyone has recollections, anecdotes or a photo, I would be delighted to hear from you. Please contact sunday-rides@cambsiam.org.uk who will then put us in touch with each other