

By Royal Appointment (well almost)

I was at the Barton Bike night in North Lincolnshire a few months back, Barton stands in the shadow of the Humber bridge on the south bank of the Humber Estuary and this event is one of the biggest one night bike gatherings held in the UK. It attracts thousands of bikes/bikers each year and has as many as 10,000 people visit the town on the night to see the spectacle. There's always several biking celebrities to see, fantastic bikes to look at, displays to watch and old friends to meet and because of it's popularity, virtually the whole town is closed off to everything apart from bikes and people.

You can find every type of bike imaginable there, from old to new, modern to retro, off road bikes, trikes, combo's, race bikes, one off specials, club stands, bikes from virtually every manufacturer ever known and there was even a bike that had been owned by the same person for over 65 years, as I said just about every type of bike and owner under the sun. I spoke to one eccentric biker who'd gone on holiday to Thailand, he'd got drunk one night and hired a motor-bike taxi back to his hotel, that's the three wheeled bike taxi that carries up to eight passengers in a cab behind the bike. When he got up the next morning he thought he'd had a dream about buying it from the taxi driver but sure enough, there it was in the hotel car park. He eventually got it back to the UK after a hell of a lot of hassle and now uses it to raise money for charity, what an amazing story.

There's a street in Barton where all the classic and vintage bikes gather and although the kettle is 40 odd years old, it still raises a few eyebrows from the owners of the really old stuff when I park "FAB" amongst them. So imagine my surprise when I read the report in the Grimsby Evening Telegraph the following night and saw the photo of my bike, taken with the

Mayor of Barton proudly posing behind it. I'd gone off on a walkabout when the picture was taken and knew nothing about it till I saw the telegraph, but I was well chuffed to think that of all the bikes there, the Mayor had chosen mine for the photo shoot. So as the title says, "By Royal Appointment" well almost, after all it's only the Mayor of Barton, but who cares, fame at last.



One of my so called friends who saw the photo rang me up and said the Mayor was actually trying to "nick it" but it was too heavy to get it off the main stand, another said he was trying to "nick it" but changed his mind when he saw the paintwork close up and another said he'd picked it because it was the ugliest bike there. What a load of rotten gits, I reckon they're just jealous of my bikes new found fame.

Cheers, **Steve Wharton**