

1931 Ariel, 30 years in the making
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Recently, I was telling the story of how I came across my 31 Ariel VF 500 single to an admirer who spotted the bike at the local gas station while filling up.

It was 30 years ago when I received a call from fellow Section member Wes Fraser who informed me he had a lead on an Ariel in Napanee and thought I would be interested. I sure was!

A quick phone call to my good friend Dave Lacombe and soon we were off in search of this rumoured Ariel.

We arrived soon after and the search began. Up and down the street where the Ariel was said to be located but nothing. Now we are wondering if we had the correct street name, we made another tour around the block for the heck of it. Dave pulled over and we thought just maybe Wes had been given a false lead.

We were getting ready to leave when a young lad approached the truck and asked if we were lost.

Dave replied that we were looking for a guy with an old Ariel. The young lad eyes lit up and proudly stated "That's my Uncle" Dave leaned out the window and asked where does he live? The lad turned around and pointed across the street.

We were then introduced to his Uncle and taken around back.

My eyes fell upon the Ariel and my first thoughts was F@#@! This is not what I had expected. A rusty wreck that looked like it had caught fire at some time in its life.

I looked closer, the bars are original, the T bar for steering adjustment was there as the hand shift & linkage, saddle, oil tank but missing gas tank, gearbox etc.

Ok this was a challenge indeed, I then asked how much? \$250 he replied, deep breath, I then offered \$150. Long pause..Ok. I'll take it he replied.

Once home the laughter began. Yes laughter and I bet some of you have had the same reaction to your acquisitions at some point over the years.

Even with parts hard to come by in those days, Nicholson Bros supplied the Big end bearing. Mike Duncan did the Crank. Draganflys the NOS piston .Leitner & Bush made the new liner.

Ken Rosevear supplied the gearbox and I bet he wish he still had it.

Vic Horley in Sweden supplied a dented but useable gas tank. . Ron Brooks welded the missing front piece to the Front fender, cut off by one of the previous owners.

The holes in the rear fender were filled .Foot pegs came from the UK.
A later magneto was bought at Paris, the clutch is the taper type and I just happened to have one up in the rafters. What luck!
Then around 92 the bike sat as I was unable to continue due parts being unavailable.
Fast forward to about 2008, the gas tank was sent to Draganflys for restoration .5 years later Draganfly notifies me it's finished. This was the motivation I needed to have another look at the Ariel.

2015,

Gregg Kricorissian from Ottawa overhauled the Magneto & Generator.
The DVR-2 electronic regulator came from the UK; it's small and hides out of site.
Rick Wood machined the layshaft to accept the new speedo drive gear.
Insured & Licensed the ol girl was ready for the road.

2016

Peter Kemp of the Ariel single spares suggested I use "G" Valves & Guides as Ariel used on the sportier 1930 "G" Model.

I then installed a Sportier cam (664 cam as used on the "G") to give a little more performance over the original soft "F" Cam.

On a Hot Wednesday night in 2016 I rode the 31 over to the Madoc Cruise night and to meet fellow Member Al Cooney at Hwy 62.

With Sandra following me down Quin-Mo-Lac road with maybe 3 miles on the clock it tightened up, pull in clutch, coast ,let out clutch and boom she fires, This got me a fair distance until she refused to go no more. As Al waited, I let the 31 cool down for 10 minutes, try again and away we went to Madoc without another issue.

Once home I pulled the top end off to inspect why it tightened up.

It turns out my request for piston clearance of .005 was not used but .0035 instead.

Gary McCaw came to the rescue and cleaned up my cylinder along with the required .005 clearance.

New rings from Cox & Turner in the UK were a perfect fit for this 2 compression ring piston.

Wet Sumping was another issue I tried to solve.

For no reason it would just stop returning oil to the tank. A quick clean of the pump always solved the problem but why?

Turns out it was the pump, even with new balls & springs it would just stop pumping at anytime, anywhere. A better pump has now been installed.

This year I switched to LED bulbs on both of my Ariels, what a difference that made. I can now ride with the lights on with no charging issues.

The Slovak Ariel Klub supplied some of the hard to find parts, this year they sent me the correct 30/31 "Q" gearbox, a new clutch sprocket and a 23th drive sprocket assembly, the Ariel UK gearbox spares supplied new clutch cushion rubbers and rollers. Clutch Plates for the early clutch came from Darganfly's.

A fellow in Australia supplied a new CNC machined final drive gear & 19th sprocket.

Along with using Kendal 50w with high zinc I also added a "Unique oil filter" from the UK using a Royal Enfield filter to help keep the motor clean.

I've been out for 2 runs to the Hidden Golden Bakery in Madoc for our Saturday Morning Coffee & Chat this year and 50 mile Sunday ride, what a joy to ride this ol Gal. 1st & 2nd gear are about right but the jump to 3rd is drastic I must say. You must wind it out in 2nd to about 35mph then shift, the revs drop to a Thump...Thump..Thump and slowly builds. Once it reaches 40 mph it starts to come into it's own as they say.45-47 mph is where it likes to be but will cruises at 50 mph no problem. Despite what many think a vintage machine rides like the Ariel is surprisingly very smooth.

30 years in the making but it was worth the wait.

Only 12 of these 31 Ariel VF's were imported to Ontario. Ariel shipped my VF on June 5th 1931 to Overseas Motors Ltd.

1931 was the last year for this model .That year, Ariel moved the generator from up front to the rear Re Magdyno set up and a Chrome tank; basically it was still a "Black Ariel" With only 12 imported I suspect mine could be the only survivor here in Ontario.