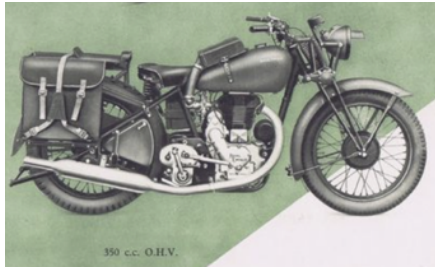


Part 12 - Service Brown

I saw a guy who had a bike,  
it really was quite old.  
I went to chat, I hoped there was  
a story to unfold.



I said, "That colour looks quite neat,  
Would look so smart in town!",  
He said, "The army ordered it,  
They named it Service Brown."

He seemed to be quite chuffed that I,  
had asked about his bike,  
He said, "He's got some history,  
I'll tell you if you like!".

"This one was a prototype,  
a sort of 'dispatch demo',  
designed to carry messages,  
somehow he got named Memo."



"The name was written in the log,  
Just inside the front cover.  
Unusually, it was not pooled,  
but issued to John Glover."

He rode it new straight from day one,  
fell straight off into gorse,  
But persevered and learnt to ride,  
then 'passed out' from the course.

A 'phoney war' was starting up,  
Now this was Johnny's chance,  
He packed his kit, with Memo too,  
and off they went to France.



Not much happened there at first,  
their life was quite routine,  
was time enough for messages,  
and to keep Memo clean.

Then one day, Johnny's captain said,  
"We're on a sticky wicket,  
The Huns have come through Belgium and,  
that really isn't Cricket!"

Then somewhat late, they realised,  
The battle would be lost,  
so off to Dunkirk at full speed,  
Before they got cut off.

But there was one last task to do,  
they rode off to the front,  
must tell the soldiers to withdraw,  
before they're overrun.



Luckily, they made it through,  
grazed by a shrapnel shell,  
a dent in Memo, Johnny scratched,  
a scene straight out of hell.

Messages sent back and forth,  
with no time for a rest,  
but land controlled by allied hands,  
was getting less and less.

Then finally those last few days,  
Memo worked hard as hell,  
"No time for rest, just get this through,  
and pray that we'll be well!"



Soon, Despatch Riders were stood down,  
as nowhere left to ride,  
the Allied troops had made Dunkirk,  
whilst Huns approached outside.

Events had happened so very fast,  
the navy were caught out,  
they sent all ships that were in range,  
but not enough to count.

Now desperate, the men fought on,  
all with stiff upper lips,  
but underneath they thought alike,  
"This time, we've had our chips."

Then someone with their brain in gear,  
produced a ray of hope,  
he said, "We'll send civilian craft,  
a thousand little boats!"



The call went out, all rallied round,  
the soldiers final chance,  
from all around our southern shores,  
small boats set off to France.

The men would fit into the boats,  
equipment had to stay,  
"We'll smash the bloody lot up lads,  
they won't get this today!"

They wrecked the tanks, the vehicles too,  
plus twenty thousand bikes,  
now, nearly all the men had gone,  
the plan was going right.



Johnny sat there on the pier,  
with Memo at his side,  
he said, "I'm really sorry mate,  
but this looks like goodbye."

Two men came running up the pier,  
"This bike goes to it's grave.",  
but just before the axe came down,  
they heard a voice shout, "Hey!"

Right near the pier a little boat,  
fought to come along side,  
"Come on mate, we've still got room,  
You want to bring that bike?"

With no one left there on the pier,  
the boat made haste to leave,  
With Johnny's and the two guys help,  
Memo, onboard was heaved.



Their duty done, they all sat down,  
whilst little boat made haste,  
the engineers seemed quite upset,  
"God! What a bloody waste!"

"We really needed all that stuff,  
to carry on the fight,  
at least the huns won't get it now,  
your bikes got a charmed life!"

Johnny, he was so relieved,  
Memo, he'd come to trust,  
At least his two wheeled steed was safe,  
not smashed and left to rust!

Luck was with that little boat,  
it safely made the coast,  
With Memo safe, the three of them,  
bid farewell to their host.



Johnny waved the guys goodbye,  
who headed for the station,  
"Come on Memo! Let's get on,  
we have to save a nation."

Next tour, they went to Africa,  
the paint scheme was 'Light Sand'.  
At first sight, Johnny had to laugh,  
"Memo? You've lost your tan!"

A Panzer nearly spelt their end,  
Johnny leaned hard to port,  
Memo slipped, they skid-stopped dead,  
the shell landed well short.

Another day, radio dead,  
'Get message there, all haste'  
Memo made it just in time,  
two thousand lives were saved.



But sand would block the air filter,  
and that made Memo slow,  
Colonel and workshop both agreed,  
"We'd better send them home".

Light Sand was changed to Service Brown,  
a brand new lick of paint,  
This time Johnny smiled and said,  
"Your suntan's back again!

The Japanese upset the Yanks,  
and so they joined in too,  
brought with them much equipment,  
in a colour that was new.

Over time our vehicles changed,  
The U.S. shade was seen,  
Memo went to the workshop, brown,  
but came back Olive Green.



The war pushed on, we all fought back,  
D-Day was on the move.  
The names were picked, Johnny would go,  
of course, with Memo too!

As they neared the coast of France,  
memories bought back pain.  
"Memo, I just pray this won't,  
end up the same again".

The landing craft threw down it's ramp,  
and down it Memo sped,  
Johnny's rifle made a bang,  
another German dead!



They fought so hard to keep their lives,  
escape from the beachhead,  
determination won the day,  
slowly the allies spread.

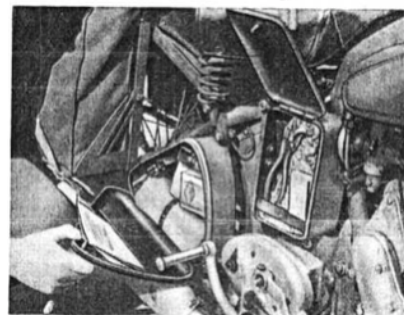
This time the Germans did retreat,  
backwards all they could go,  
whilst Memo with important work of  
orders to and fro.



The German army fared not well,  
resistance got quite thin,  
Johnny and Memo followed as,  
they headed for Berlin.

The only times that they would part,  
would be for maintenance,  
plus the regular services,  
even a re-paint once!

There must have been a dozen times,  
that bike had saved his life,  
it took a bullet for him once,  
in toolbox, right hand side.



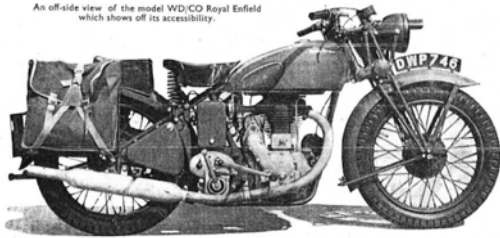
It was May in forty-five,  
the Germans did surrender,  
Then after that the surplus bikes,  
were all put out to tender.

Johnny had got so attached,  
he was upset that day,  
when disposal came in a van,  
to take Memo away.

It must have been a month later,  
in his best uniform,  
A medal for his bravery,  
in weathering the storm.

Congratulations all around,  
till smile went astray,  
His colonel asked him, "What is wrong?",  
"They took my bike away."

An off-side view of the model WD/CO Royal Enfield which shows off its accessibility.



Dispersal took the colonel's call,  
later that same day,  
"The paperwork says it's been sold,  
yes Sir, it's gone away."

Johnny's time was nearly up,  
before he'd be de-mobbed,  
but one thing really left a hole,  
of Memo, he'd been robbed.

Johnny got on with other things,  
but something would not mend,  
he thought "It's just a bike" but felt  
more like he'd lost a friend

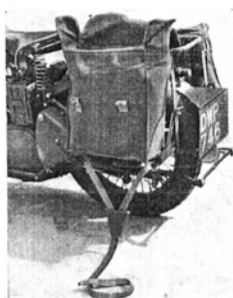
Back at dispersal, bright chap said,  
"This paperwork is wrong?  
Now see this bike in front of me,  
It's marked as 'sold and gone'.



There's an enquiry marked on here,  
from quite a senior chap,  
We've told him wrong, and that's not good,  
I better ring him back!"

"Good morning Sir, it's dispersal,  
we've rung to bring some cheer,  
that bike we said we thought we'd sold,  
well, actually, it's here."

"Very good." the colonel said,  
"return the bike to stock,  
send it to Motor Transport shop,  
they really know their job!"



ly 08 One of the pannier bags extended to give an idea of its capacity.



The tops of the pannier bags have leather corners which fit snugly over the edges of the metal frame and which are held securely in place by press studs.

A note went to the MT chaps,  
who'd kept Memo alive,  
"We've planned a little favour here,  
in hopes of a surprise."

Late in the war, was olive drab,  
that had made Johnny frown,  
but now Memo's about to get,  
a coat of **Service Brown!**

Two days later colonel came,  
"Johnny? I've a surprise!",  
around the corner, Johnny speechless,  
as he spots the bike.

Now they had said Memo was sold,  
so was this one a fake?  
But right hand toolbox bullet hole,  
proved there was no mistake.



The colonel said, "We present this,  
for your civilian life!"  
The colonel almost thought he saw,  
a tear in Johnny's eye.

Civilian life was easier,  
with sunshine or when snowing,  
Johnny learnt bike maintenance,  
and Memo kept on going.

The guy explained, "He rode that bike,  
till he was seventy three!  
Then one night he went peacefully,  
while he was fast asleep.



He mentioned Memo in his will,  
must stay in family,  
He left it to his grandson,  
and that; my friend; is me!

Many bikes from nineteen forty,  
and from forty one,  
survived the war unto this day,  
but from Dunkirk? Just one.

This is the bike that made it back,  
there really is no other,  
So now you know the facts behind,  
Memo and Johnny Glover!

Now, Memo may be getting old,  
but his rights are preserved,  
love and respect as family,  
no less than he deserves!



#### REPLIES FROM HITCHCOCK'S FORUM MEMBERS about Service Brown

Mark M Well done! Great use of pics too! REgards, Mark

Gwilly Had to read it all once i started, now late for work.... Brilliant, best yet.. Well done indeed...

Alan R same goes from me too, matey !!----- You've missed your vocation in life somewhere down the line.....To be actually issued with your own bike ?..WOW !!.....Thanks also for that apt homage to all those involved in D-Day etc...Least we forget, eh ??

Brad Hi Really enjoyed this one. Thanks for posting

Stainer brill scallyback,went to a d day fest Saturday put on by the legion loads to see 1943 bullet was on show with rider and others forgot to take picks of them plonker Rodney regards phil

Wilf Well done Scalyback,you must be our poet luaREat.Brilliant stuff,keep 'em coming.

#### REPLIES FROM <http://www.enfieldmotorcycles.com> FORUM MEMBERS about Service Brown

TWinOKC Well done Simon! Thanks for sharing.

GreenMachine I like it, a great tribute to a great cause....I just got to finish it now.. S far it spot on and "Brilliant"...Well done..

t120rbullet Best intro I've ever seen.  
Welcome

bob bezin wonderful i am just finishing re -reading Winston Churchill's 6 volume set , the second world war and " service brown"just made my day.

AussieDave Fantastic story! Very moving. Thank you very much for sharing.

tooseevee That's a terrific piece a' work. I love history especially Civil War, 1st & 2nd WW history. And all other history in general.

Thanks for sticking the picture of the harley 45 flathead in there. There were 93 some-odd thousand of them "over there" along with the Enfields.

And check out the tail light in the two pictures showing the panniers. It's the tail light I have on my '08 Classic.

mattsz Where's your black-out cover?

WillW Nice one Simon. I hope you'll not mind me posting a link to your piece over at Hitchcocks forum to continue the theme... (link to 'a bike too far')

REpozer Well done!!

Simon Taylor Thanks guys, and I don't mind cross references to Hitchcocks forum, I write a load of old trash there! Well, some of it is interesting.

I guess I wanted to write something meaningful, not so much the glory, but something that tried to tell it how it actually was. I also wanted to add how Jonny relied on his motorcycle, with 'Memo' actually becoming more like a trusted and welcome friend after all that they had been through together.

I'm actually quite pleased how it turned out!

Thanks for you comments, it's nice to get feedback.

The flathead Harley went in as I could not find the right type of pic with a WD/C enfield!

OH, did you all know that WWII was not the last time that Harley Davidson supplied the British Army with bikes?



That would be a blast to turn up at a hog meet on one of them! introduced around 1980, used during the Falklands, but the last are retired now.

GSS Brilliant! Thanks for sharing.

Sam Simons Outstanding, Simon! Thank you.

bluesdaddy2 Nice piece of work. Is it based on actual accounts?

barenekd Beautiful piece, Simon.  
Bare