

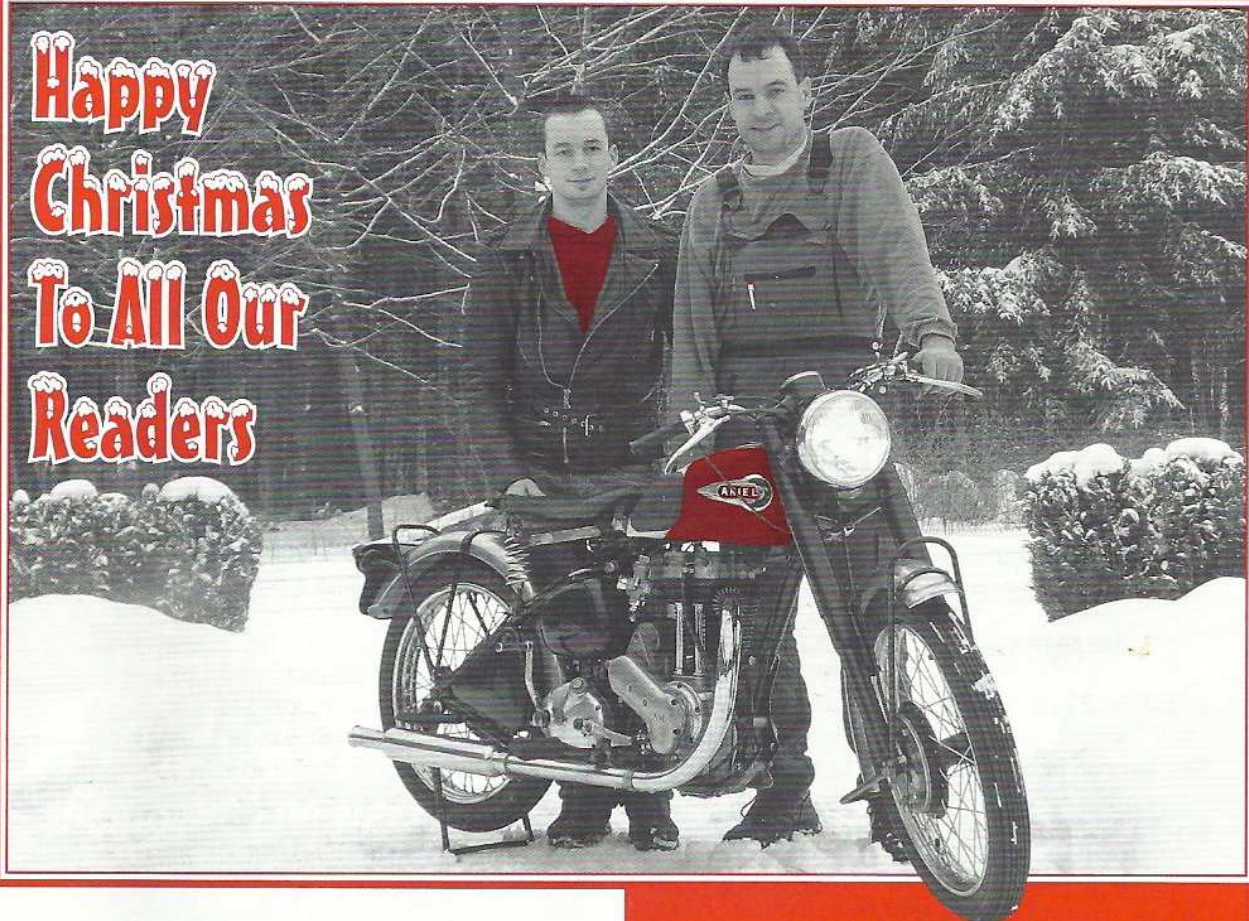


CHEVAL de FER



Magazine
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Motor Cycle
Club

Happy
Christmas
To All Our
Readers



December 2011



One of a kind

Patrick Frei relates the story of his father Mark's HT5, the only one imported into Switzerland

MARK Frei was born on 8 January 1924, and had an education in mechanics. He became involved in motorbikes through his elder sister Rosemarie, whom he had to accompany to regional race events (motocross, grasstrack) – she was a fan of the riders, but was not allowed by her parents to go alone to such horrible events...

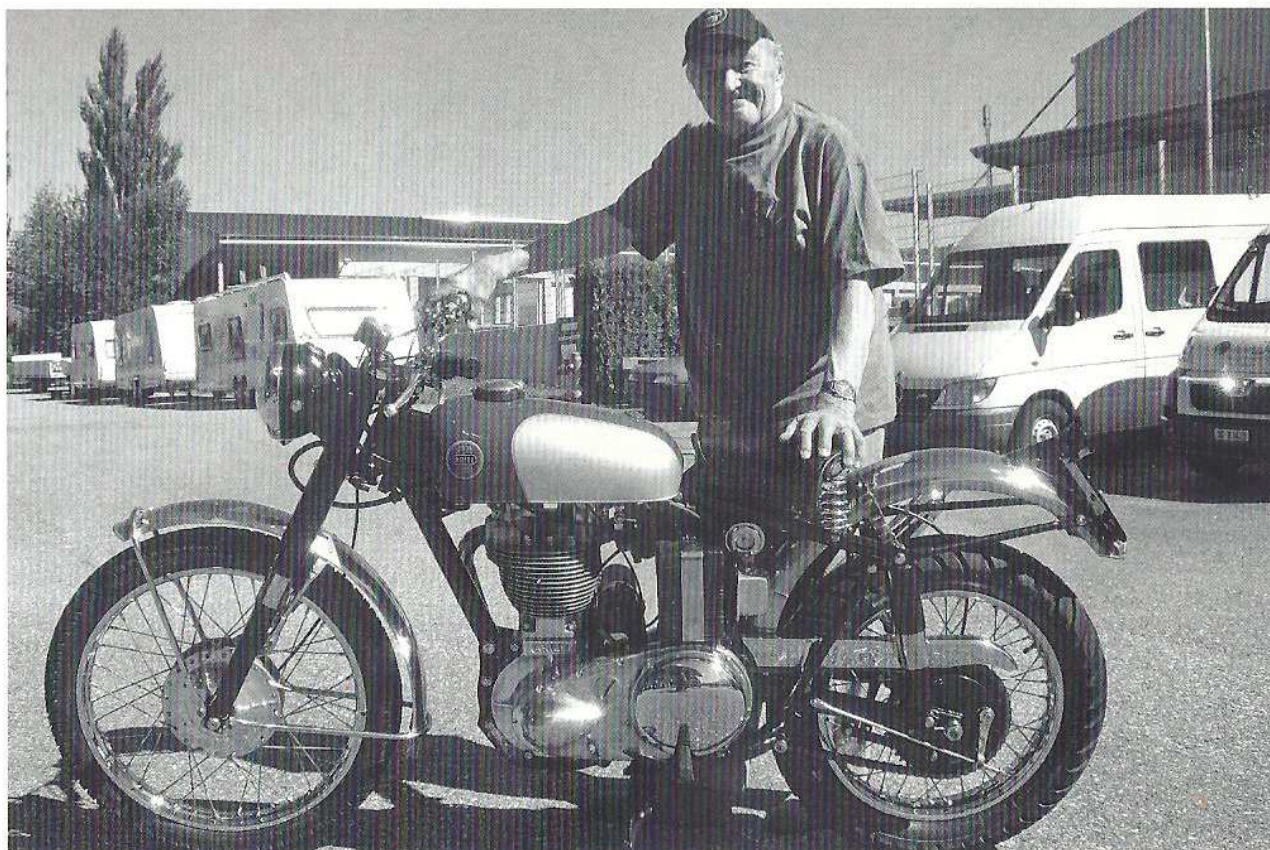
In 1949 he bought his first motorbike, a Puch 125cc with double pistons. This was followed by a Horex 350 and a NSU Maxi 250 4T. He bought these at the shop of Hans Taveri, the elder brother of Luigi Taveri, who would later go on to be world champion on the Honda 125cc.

With the NSU Mark competed at regional

Geländefahrten (enduros) around Zurich. In 1956 he bought a real Enduro Maico 250cc, on which he continued to compete at regional enduros and on which he rode his first trials in Switzerland.

Mark became more interested in trials. He was a keen reader of the English *Motor Cycle*, through which he followed the two idols of the day, Gordon Jackson and Sammy Miller. He also bought the first edition of 'Trial Riding' by Max Kind (he still has it), which became his new bible.

He was impressed by the Ariel HT5, which had a claimed weight of 134kg against the 147kg ▷



Mark Frei competing on his HT5 in the 1950s (facing page); and (above) briefly reunited with his old friend, many years later

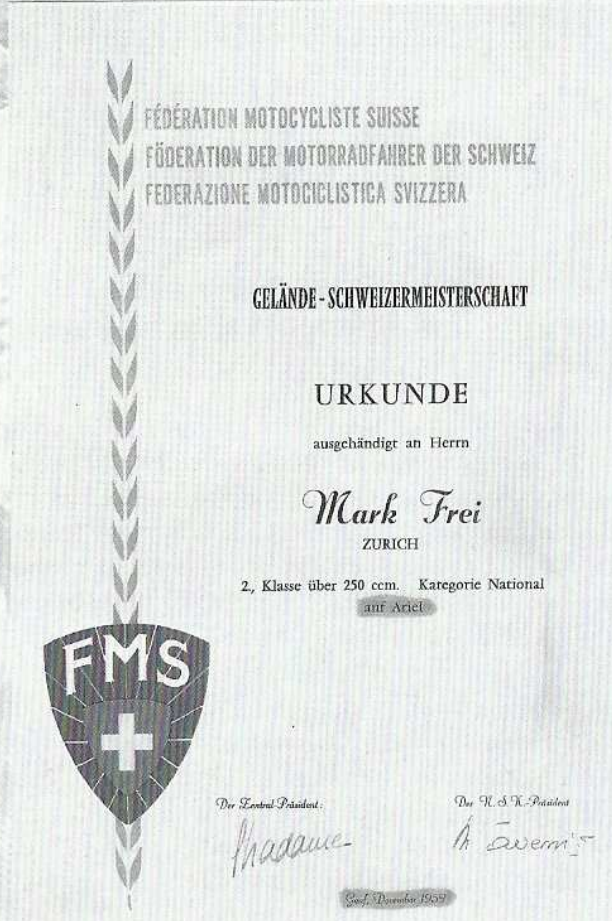


▷ of the 350 AJS, and he also liked the Ariel's higher ground clearance. In 1958 his club friend Rene Del Torchio imported an HT5 for him from England. It arrived in a wooden box and needed to be assembled.

The HT5 turned out to be a very reliable bike. Mark competed on it in the emerging trials scene in the Swiss National class, and also at enduro competitions. In 1959 he came second in the over-250cc Swiss National Enduro Class, whilst using the same bike for trials in the National class. In both disciplines he started with the same number 73 on the bike (see pics).

In 1960 Mark married Arlette. Around the same time *Geländefahrten* were banned in the Zurich region; Mark calmed down, sold the heavy Ariel and bought a light 200cc Tiger Cub instead.

The Ariel changed hands twice, ending up in the cellar of the last owner, where it rusted



Mark's certificate showing his second place in the over-250cc Swiss National Enduro championship, 1959; Mark in action; and the HT5, forgotten in a garage, awaiting restoration

for 40 years. In the 1980s Mark had contacted this owner several times, more in curiosity about his HT5 than with any real interest to buy and restore it.

The owner died and the widow got rid of the rusted thing in the cellar – a local motorbike shop got it for, I guess, almost nothing.

In 2010 a friend of mine, knowing the Swiss old-timer scene, told me about a restored HT5 stemming from the region of the last owner. I arranged a meeting and Mark, now 86 years old, was able to swing his old legs again over the saddle of the Ariel. A really happy moment for him.

The Ariel, now in road trim, nicely restored, remains with this collector. I have no intention, space or money to buy it back. But when I'm competing in twin-shock trials, my heart beats always stronger when a rare Ariel comes thumping by.

Patrick Frei