



drawn to two wheels - the story of **Francis Alexander Simpson** - *technical artist*

by **Alan Freke**

As a break from frightening myself to death by the speed and power of my Matchless G2CSR, I spend much of my retirement acting as curator of our village museum. We are very lucky in the village of Frenchay (Bristol) to have past villagers who were not afraid to travel the world and found cities, universities, climb mountains, invent chocolate, but perhaps most importantly create record breaking cars.

David Fry, the last of the family to be involved in J.S. Fry & Sons the great chocolate manufacturing business, built his "Freikaiserwagen" Hill Climb Special here in 1936, and it held both the inaugural VSCC record at Prescott, as well as

Frances and Ethel Simpson aboard a Douglas combination manufactured at Kingswood, Bristol

the first post-war record at Shelsley Walsh.

Some years ago the Fry family allowed us to borrow one of their record breaking cars, and we held a "Vintage Vehicle Extravaganza" in the car park next to the museum featuring this car and other interesting cars, motorcycles, and bicycles. In subsequent years the show has grown, and during the 2007 event a fellow museum volunteer told me that he was involved in clearing a house of a recently deceased friend of his. During the process they were finding lots of bits and pieces of paper relating to old motorcycles. He asked if I was interested.

Of course I was. The

unearthed material had belonged to the father of the last owner of the house, and his name was Francis Alexander Simpson. It transpired that he had spent much of his life as a technical artist in the motorcycle industry, and following his death in 1975, his only daughter - the recently deceased - had simply kept all his possessions.

Most of Simpson's career was on the staff of "The Motor Cycle" - starting in 1916; however, he was also on the staff of Douglas Motors of Kingswood for two years as their advertising manager. One of the advertisements he produced for Douglas has cricket being played on Frenchay

Common as a backdrop to the Douglas outfit, with the slogan "Douglas - always a sport".

In 1932 he left "The Motor Cycle" and went freelance working for many great names in the days when Britain's motorcycle industry led the world. During this freelance period he was also involved with many other industries, including radio, television, boat-building, and even aircraft.

The material found in the house dates from 1910 through to the mid-1930s, and includes notebooks, diaries, scrapbooks, a book of press cuttings, badges, medals, membership booklets of local motorcycle clubs, printer's proofs, and a number of original drawings.

Those original drawings give an insight into the way that he worked, but presumably as