

Rip Smith remembering Strawberry Williams

This is my appreciation and remembrances of Michael Thomas Watkin Williams

8th April 1930 -25 January 2026

I first met 'Strawberry Williams' [he got this nickname from picking strawberries at Cheddar !] circa March in 1964 after leaving the brigade training school and reporting for duty at A3 Avonmouth.

Mike was on a different watch to myself although there is one facet of his life that still remains with me some 62 yrs after first meeting him all those years ago. I attended Mike's funeral on the 10th March at Westerleigh Crematorium and there amongst the many other lifetime remembrances on the TV screen was something I instantly recognised.

It was Mike on his 1952 James Captain 197cc which he had from 1956, and I developed an interest in his mechanical connectivity with his bike together with his Merchant Navy background.

With this navy experience it was only too obvious that he was to become a coxswain on the Endres Gane fireboat in Avonmouth docks. Incidentally it is still afloat in the Mud Dock being used as a house-boat.

During my service at Avonmouth I pestered Mike to sell me his James Captain, and his reply remained the same, ' Roger I will never sell that bike ' ! Well that remained the case until I sent him a letter congratulating him on his sixtieth wedding anniversary and also asked whether after his fifty sixth year of ownership he might be willing to sell me the James Captain.

Mike was then 81 yrs old (my age now!) and he invited me to his home at Wellington Hill West, and after some very friendly memories he decided that I could become the bike's third owner.

It has now almost been retired and rests in mechanical peace in my garage which is unfortunate, as I would have been delighted to have ridden it to his memorial service.

However, very occasionally I tickle the carburettor and arouse it from its internal combustion slumbers and ride it around the block in memory of Michael 'Strawberry' Williams !

Roger Smith (aka as RIP)



Roger Smith riding bike in memory of Michael 'Strawberry' Williams