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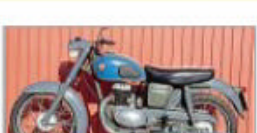
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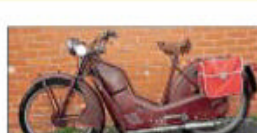
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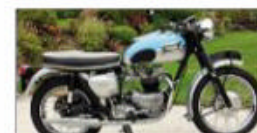
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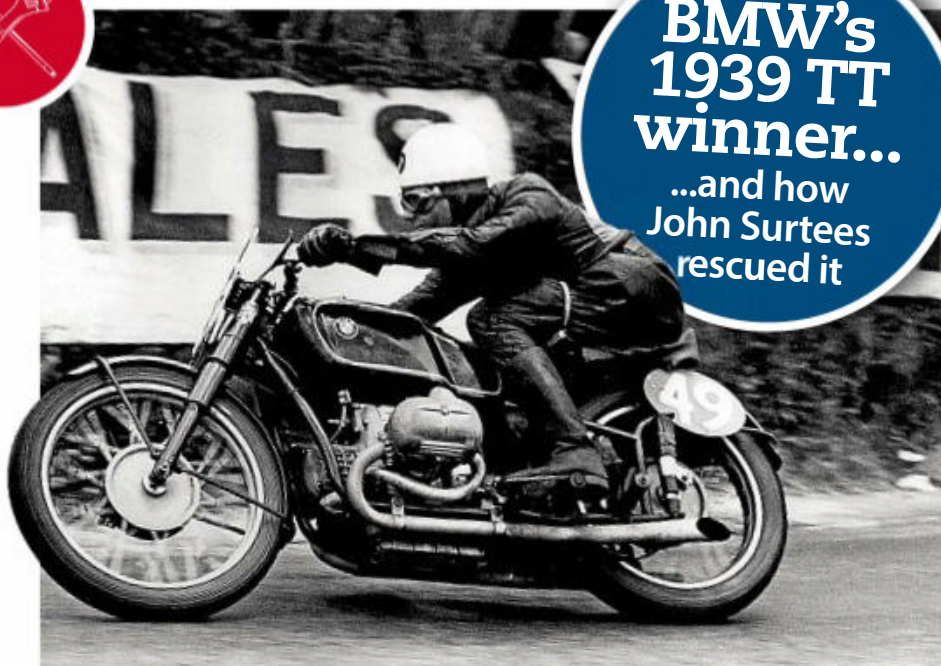
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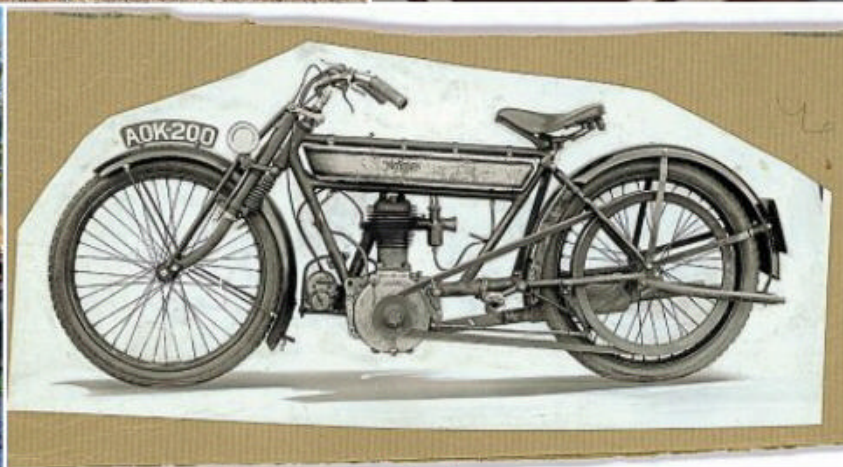
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Farewell, Norton; hello, technology

AS I WRITE THIS, THE MODERN incarnation of Norton Motorcycles has gone into administration.

While many are shouting from the rooftops about wrongdoings and what 'they' should have done, I just feel a real sadness; sad for those that work there, sad for those who put their faith and money into the marque, sad for the small supply companies and really sad that this once great name is, yet again, no more.

What is it about James Norton's company that made it a survivor when so many didn't? What made that name so powerful? Throughout Norton's 122-year history it has regularly trodden a rocky path, had to overcome adversity and despite this, the name still carries clout and vigour.

When I was younger, riding Japanese two-strokes, I may have had no knowledge and little interest in Norton (apart from watching them from the top of the pit garages power away from their rivals in the Race of Aces at Snetterton), but I'd heard of them. And more recently when working in the modern motorcycle press, putting a Norton on the front cover would see a rise in sales, every time.

All I know is, the classic Norton support network is healthy and strong, I still enjoy seeing a Commando, a Dominator or a 16H

on the road and that I must, must get my ES2 finished!

But work gets in the way. I was on a modern bike launch recently and while new bikes are great for everyday use (this one even had cornering lights!) the technology and the latest must-haves were somewhat disappointing. I don't want phone apps that tell my friends how far I leaned over or how fast I went, or a key that can stay in my pocket; I'm happy telling my mates how fast I was and old bikes don't need any key. Modern technology simply cannot replicate the sensations, the sound or the enjoyment of tinkering and riding an old bike. But could we have those headlights?....

Tech has its limits, too, as Royal Enfield has announced the Bullet is to be discontinued. They can no longer get the old thumper through the various tests, which I feel is a great shame. Badge snobs may say 'who cares' but for an everyday, cheap to run old bike, they are fantastic. And at just over £4000 for a brand-new one, it's been one of the cheapest modes of transport for many and a great way into our world of playing with old-style bikes. You'll still be able to get one for the remainder of the year or until stocks last.

Popped into see Oxford Products

recently and saw how technology helps, as well as being seen as the baddie. Look at the two leather suits – apart from the size of James Hiller (left) and Trevor Nation (right), they both weigh the same, yet James' has airbags and computers in it! Technology can be good.

Oh yes! You may see a Triumph Silver Jubilee special edition around, but this Ford 7810 came to ours recently – who knew the tractor world also had a silver Jubilee special – in 1989 a Silver Jubilee was introduced to celebrate 25 years of tractors built at Basildon. I wonder if there was a Mike Hailwood version?

I've been fixing my car recently to get it through its MoT, so with that done I can put all the big tools and metric spanners away and get my 'old box' out to carry on with that Norton. Got to press on this year...

Whatever you're playing with, have fun and be good

Matt

Matt Hull

editor@classicbikeguide.com



#011

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Always a favourite thanks to good looks and lightweight. And still good value for money

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How hard is it to have some dirty fun on your Tiger? How much would it cost?

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If 125s are your thing, then you've never seen such an array of machines. And if they're not, then you're missing out!

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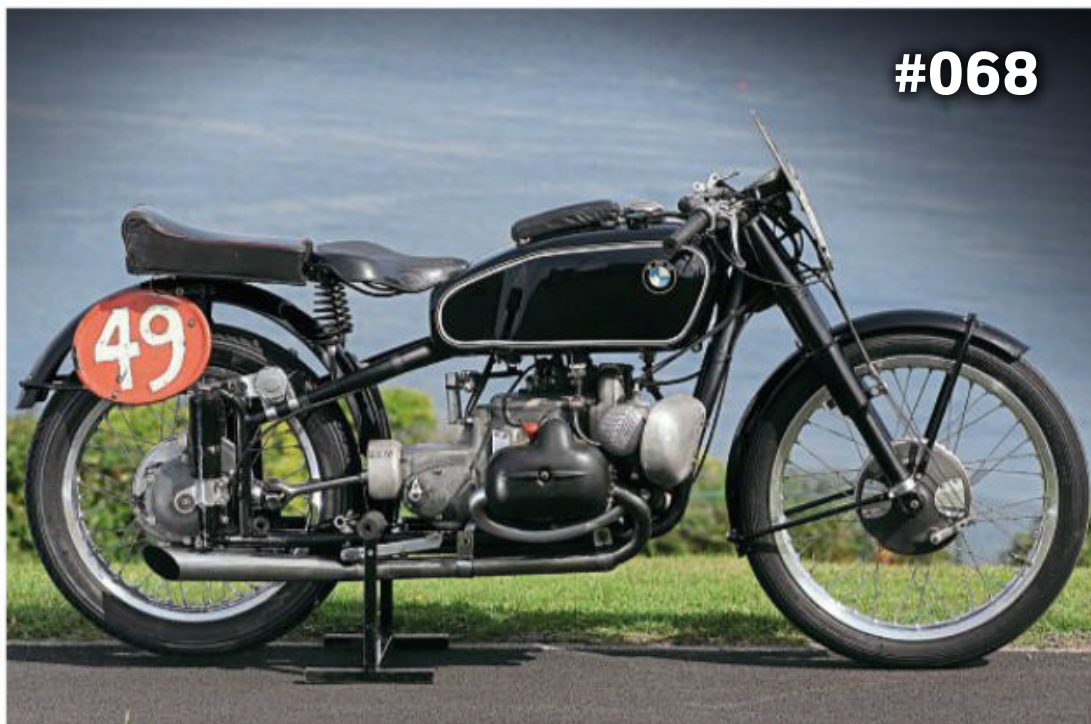
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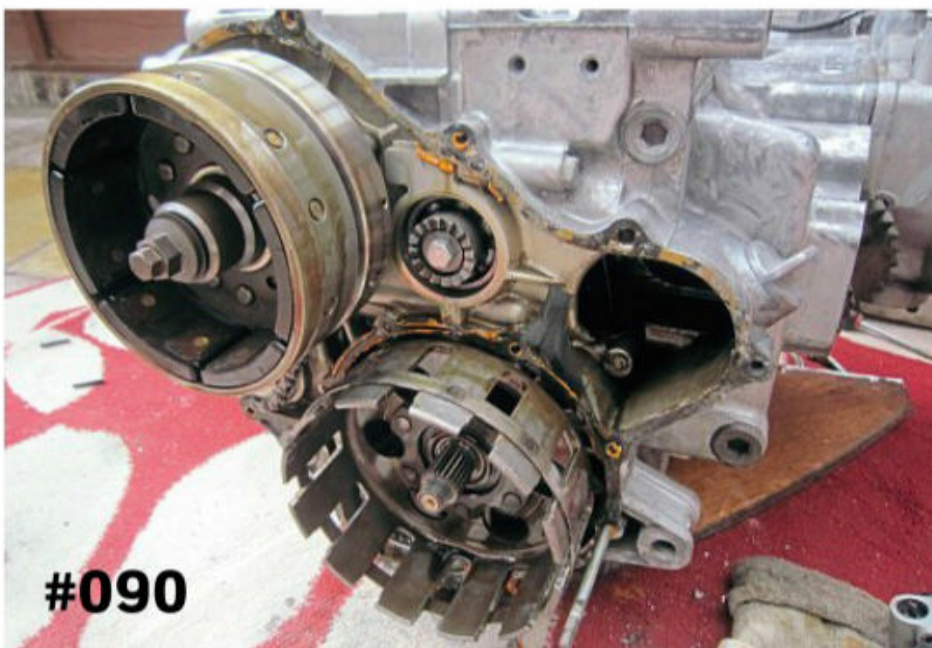
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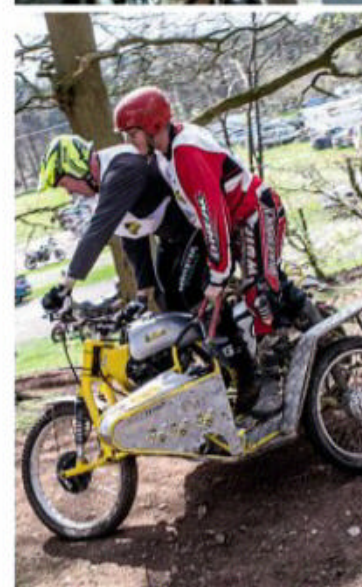
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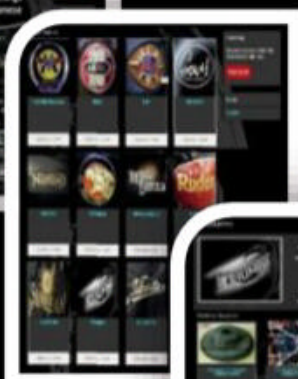


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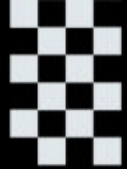
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From our archive

■ Sometimes talent is hidden; other times it is most pronounced

Barry Sheene began messing about on trials bikes after buying a Triumph Tiger Cub from future British sidecar champion Mick Boddice, when they were both about 12 or 13 years old. The Cub was replaced by a Bultaco Sherpa when Barry began entering Kent club trials.

This shot of him messing about at Snetterton on October 13, 1968 was taken shortly after he got back to Britain from acting as GP mechanic that season for Lewis 'Del Boy' Young.

Not only did Sheene win two world titles in 1976 and 77, but his style, personality and ability to harness the power of the media with sponsorship changed motorcycle racing forever. **CBG**



A young, 18-year-old Barry Sheene



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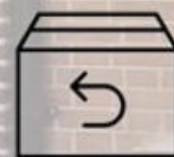
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Ducati desert dream

It's quite depressing looking at images of desert racing when you live in Yorkshire, especially when those pictures are of desert racing from 1970s California (will someone please crack on with building a time machine?). Those lush, saturated pictures of sun-drenched streets and pretty Ducati Scramblers couldn't be further from the infinite grey of a Yorkshire winter in 2020.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHIPPY 'I LIKE THAT' WOOD

YET, DESPITE GEOGRAPHICAL AND chronological incongruity, one man, an IT consultant from North Yorkshire, has made it his life's ambition to restore three Ducati scramblers to ride on the foggy, narrow lanes of God's Own County. The machines include a standard RT desert racer and an RT 'mongrel' – a burnt-out,

curious shell of a bike caked in dirt and heavily corroded.

But it's the latter that really grabbed his attention and led Ray Dudding – a lifelong Ducati collector – on an epic investigative journey, one that takes in Cold War technology, political crises and arachnid-reptilian invaders.

Rachel Clegg tells the story...



One wonders how many of history's baffling, bonkers endeavours are owing to that simple, fateful phrase, 'what the hell!' Certainly for Ray, 'what the hell!' sparked his monumental investigative mission into one of the most mysterious machines CBG has seen in years.

But that's what restoration is. Yes, there's the practical aspect: the plating, the cleaning, the upholstery; but to those who really care about staying true to a machine, restoration can be a paper-trail, a manhunt and a detective game.

At least, that's the story of this machine, the 1974 (circa) Ducati Desmo Scrambler RT 'mongrel' – and it makes Watergate look like a walk in the park!

Ray recalls how it all began: "As a lifelong Ducati singles owner I have always been curious about the Ducati RT. Having enjoyed most of the other singles, once I saw one in the flesh I just had to have one.

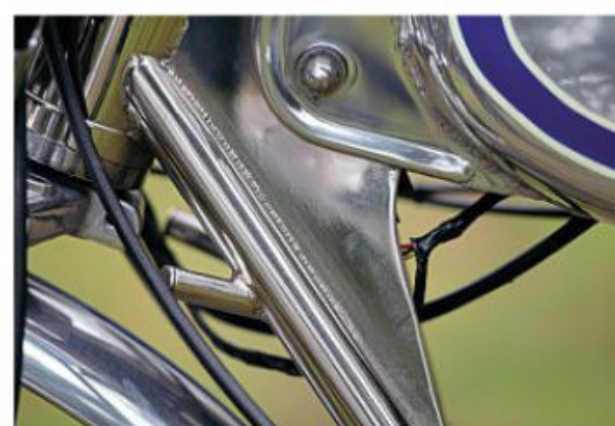
As they are thin on the ground in the UK, I asked Neil McCallum, a friend who imports classic bikes, to keep his eyes open for one and a year or so later he came up trumps by tracking down a couple in the States. One was reasonably complete, but the other was found as a wreck in the desert."

The machine really was a wreck, too. Images of it show little more than a burnt-out skeleton of a motorcycle – rusty and naked. Eventually, this deserted



RT would become known as the 'Baja Hot Rod' – but more of that later...

Ray's decades-long fascination with the Italian marque started when he was a teenager. He said: "I've been into Ducati racers ever since I bought a new one on HP when I was a 17-year-old student. I passed my test on a 250 Desmo with a full kit on. My dad didn't drive at the time, so we had to strap him into the sidecar of a friend's



Cossack 650 to take him down to sign my HP forms. I have had Ducatis ever since, but it all started with singles.”

It’s the singles that have the most significance for Ray: “For me they are the ultimate evolution of the four-stroke single and they are where the Manx Norton would have got to if they had continued to be developed.

“The 250 really is a race bike put on the road and you can tell that when you ride one. I remember when I first heard one being fired up as a teenager and thought ‘I have to have that’, so I scrimped and saved and didn’t eat much to cover the payments.”

These dainty, agile single machines were built for the street and competition, hence ‘RT’ – road and track. They also made perfect desert racers – it was a Ducati scrambler RT that won the very first Baja 500 race in 1969.

This desert racing history, combined with personal significance, was enough

to convince Ray to go about tracking some desert racers down. He instructed McCallum to find and import some examples. He sourced one RT – believed to be an ex-racer – and the ‘mongrel’.

Dudding said: “Neil brought the bikes back and one was reasonably complete but the other was found as a wreck in the desert. Tiny grainy photos showed a mongrel with tank missing, an unknown frame and running gear but, under all the decay, there was a Desmo 450 engine.

“For the chassis I expected the worst; that someone had tried to squeeze Fabio Taglioni’s masterpiece into some throwaway Japanese trail bike and given up. But that engine was another matter. Desmo engines have a significant value in themselves and I knew that the bike was never going to be cheap – a good complete cylinder head alone generally sells for around £2K.

“When they finally arrived in the UK I checked out the bikes – the RT was

as I had hoped for, a really well-used desert bike with a glorious patina and a solid engine. The mongrel was another matter though.”

Despite its ‘mongrel’ appearance, Ray recognised it was an important machine. “Literally within one second of looking at it I thought ‘this is something special’. We could see it was an Eric Cheney-type frame – well, hopefully a Cheney, because they are valuable!”

With more investigation, Ray discovered that the frame wasn’t built by one of Britain’s greatest chassis builders (whose work won him the ISDT Manufacturers Prize). Ray said: “I thought to myself ‘I’ve hit something here’ but the more I looked into it I realised it wasn’t a Cheney frame; even though a lot of the features were the same, but it was of that quality.”

From this point on, the plot thickened. The machine’s chassis may not have been a Cheney, but it was artfully constructed ➤

**“They also made perfect desert racers
- it was a Ducati scrambler RT that won
the very first Baja 500 race in 1969.”**







and too cutting-edge to be a run-of-the-mill job. There were other discrepancies, as Ray explains: “The DM450 frame number and California licence plate showed it had been put on the road at some point with a 1969 450 Scrambler engine, which had obviously been swapped later for the 1971 Desmo motor which was there when I bought it.”

“I wondered whether someone had fitted the Ducati single into an old Cheney replica frame when their British iron blew up. Then, I noticed a tube in the lower frame rail, perfectly positioned to allow easy removal of the oil filter from a Ducati single without the need to lift the engine. This confirmed it was originally built from the ground-up for a Ducati, and by someone with a meticulous eye for detail.

“Many of the frame’s features echoed Cheney techniques, and the quality of the welding and workmanship was up there with the best, but I thought all Cheney Ducatis were single down-tube. Whoever had built the chrome frame had displayed incredible care and craftsmanship.”

But before they could move on from the Cheney frame theory altogether, Ray needed absolute confirmation. Cheney died in 2002 at the age of 77, so Ray tracked down his son, Simon, who confirmed that it had not been built by his father.

Within days, Ray was circulating pictures of the rolling chassis on dozens of forums and Facebook groups, with very little success. The ‘mongrel’ mission was proving to be a dead-end. “I could have given up then,” he said, “but I still believed it to be something really special. I settled in for the long-haul, posting more questions online, quizzing people at shows and trawling all the off-road forums and photo libraries I could find.”

Soon, he was able to build a picture of the mongrel’s historical context. “I found out that in the late Sixties and early Seventies there were many small manufacturers of high quality off-road frames in California.”

This thriving industry ranged from ►



one-man bands in their own garage to highly-skilled workshops using the latest cutting-edge technology. And this was – albeit indirectly – owing to the aerospace industry: 15 of the 25 largest aerospace companies in the US were based in southern California.

During the 1960s the industry shifted towards electronics-based engineering, leaving many traditional aircraft engineers and welders behind. The latter were soon referred to as ‘tin-benders’ while the tin benders referred to the electronic engineers as ‘cone-heads.’

Inevitably, the cone-heads took over and a surplus of tin benders were looking for work in California. But they were bending much more than tin, as Ray explains: “I soon realised that this bike has



titanium on it. It really was state of the art.”

Titanium was first pioneered for use in military craft by the Soviet Union during the Cold War. The US was quick to follow. Soon the lightweight, super-strong transition metal was being stockpiled in the US for its own reconnaissance aircraft – the first being the Lockheed SR-71 ‘Blackbird’, which was developed in the first half of the 1960s.

So, to find the metal in a motorcycle, barely a decade after the Lockheed SR-71 ‘Blackbird’ went into production, suggests the mongrel’s builders were quite possibly aero-trained.

As Ray said: “There were plenty of highly-skilled craftsmen with access to exotic materials willing to service the booming desert racing scene in those days.”



But while this helped paint a picture of the bike’s background, it hadn’t brought Ray any closer to finding out who built his bike.

Then, finally, after several years of perseverance, he struck gold: “I found a photo of a Rotax in an almost identical frame on a long-dormant antipodean MX forum.” The chassis in the picture was an early C&J frame – the workshop established by American Hall of Fame engineer Jeff Cole, whose frames were raced by the likes of Kenny Roberts! Ray joined the C&J Facebook group and within minutes former C&J engineers Jon Theurich and Gary Barnard contacted him.

“They remembered cutting the tubes so precisely and performing the perfect welding of the frame in Jeff Cole’s workshop in California. They have since given me the low-down on which missing components to source.”

Ray had enough information to start the restoration process. “If it had just been an old bike and it was nothing special I’d have binned it and kept the engine, but I could tell the quality was there – it really is of aircraft quality.”

Despite its quality build, super punchy desmo engine and proven track record as a desert racer, Ray’s 1970s RT mongrel came about at the wrong time. “The US market lost interest in the RT after the 1971 launch, and a total of only 463 RTs in 350 and 450 capacities trickled out of Bologna after that – and even then it was only in fits and starts. By 1974 Ducati had killed off all its single-cylinder masterpieces.”

To rub salt into the RT’s wound, US motorsport in the early to mid-1970s was also crippled by limits on fuel usage as a result of the 1973 oil crisis. President Nixon had engineered an economic boom in order to boost his re-election. As a result, the US imported vast quantities of oil from the Middle East – essential to, quite literally, fuel the demands of a growing, gas-guzzling economy. But that all changed when war broke out between Egypt and Israel. The oil-producing Arab nations sided with Egypt and they imposed enormous tax levies on Israel’s

long-standing patron: the US.

This sealed the fate of the RT to one of obsolescence, as Ray explains: “The RT was sold in the US, Europe and Australia and it gained mythical status amongst aficionados in the UK as it was never released here, although we did get a tantalising glimpse when six were entered in the 1971 Isle of Man ISDT. The burgeoning classic scene has resulted in a handful being privately imported into the UK, where they make a great back lane tool.”

The relative rarity of the RTs makes the restoration mission all the more worthwhile. Ray has committed months and months of his time and a significant amount of money to complete the project. There have been numerous setbacks during the process, one of which was the discovery that a critter had set up home in the Desmo 450 engine, while the bike was a wreck in the desert.

“Whatever it was made its nest within the engine cylinder and for three years it had been dragging stuff in there. We don’t know if it was a scorpion, a snake or a lizard, but it was certainly something small enough to get through a 40mm exhaust valve. It made a real mess of the engine, which was totally corroded as a result of the waste that came from whatever this creature was. All that was left was mush, eggshells and three rings of sediment – presumably one from each year it was living in there. That cost so much money because it required a complete rebuild.”

The mongrel was also without a tank but fortunately one of the original C&J engineers provided details of which tank was used on the bike. “Gary Barnard confirmed that C&J bikes from this period were fitted with aluminium High Point tanks, made by Wassell at home in the UK. I found an early 1970s tank in California, still wrapped up in its cardboard box, which proudly displayed ‘Made in England,’ he said.

The seat – unlike the rest of the bike – was in decent condition and covered in ivory leather. “I had hoped to go for a less





exuberant shade when I had it recovered,” said Ray, “but Marty at Smart RRRs has plenty of experience building seats for Dakar desert racers and he convinced me that leather was needed, as vinyl would quickly disintegrate in the desert heat, and the reflective qualities of the ivory would help avoid the bum burning.”

This is only scratching the surface of the mongrel’s restoration. The frame was plated, new alloy engine plates were fabricated, the wheels were rebuilt, a battery box was built, and new footrest carriers were installed. And all the while, Ray was trying to remain faithful to the machine’s personal history.

“I think the machine had three lives. It clearly started off being built as a top class desert racer around the time of the ‘On Any Sunday’ film – circa 1971 – and the romantic in me can’t help wondering if it ever took part in the race scenes as Jeff Cole was a good friend of the movie’s creator. Then it had a life on the streets in California, as suggested by the licence plate. And finally, I believe it was used as an off-road run-around or in low-level competition in the 1990s.”

Finally, Ray had to decide on a final finish. “We wanted to make this bike distinctive enough to draw the attention of anyone who may have known it in the past. We had no pictures of the original and there was only one coloured item on the bike: a blue anodised cap on the unused oil

reservoir in the frame. It was exactly the same blue as the original California Hot Rod, so that was that – the colour would be a homage to Phil Schilling’s amazing victory at Daytona. I worked with Andy Parnaby to come up with a design which allowed the alloy and nickel to shine.”

Then, rather appropriately, Parnaby emblazoned ‘The Baja Hot Rod’ across the tank – a nod to Doug Douglas and Jim McClurg’s win at the inaugural Baja 500 desert race on a 350 Ducati Scrambler. That became the name for Ray’s RT mongrel, only now it couldn’t be further from a corroded desert hybrid.

Soon – and far away from the heady heat of the Californian desert – Ray will be out on the roads of God’s Own County on his ‘Baja Hot Rod’. He said: “That polished nickel frame will cause quite a stir amongst some of the more dour Yorkshire folk, to say nothing of an ivory leather saddle – what on earth will they think down at Squires Café in Sherburn?”

“I could have sent it back to America and auctioned it as a wreck or had a US restorer do the job but I thought ‘what the hell’. It’s about building and riding a bike that I’m going to enjoy.

“All I need to do now is give the bike a good thrashing and if anyone comes up with an image of the original RT 450 Desmo desert racer, I will strip it back and start again.”

What the hell indeed! **CIRC**



Next month

We look at another of Ray’s bikes, the Ducati 450 RT, the production racer you could buy from the showroom!

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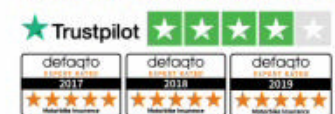


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Norton Motorcycles collapse



BRITISH MOTORCYCLE MAKER Norton Motorcycles has gone into administration, following its struggle to pay a £300,000 tax bill – and as a result, the Leicestershire-based factory has faced a winding-up order from the HRMC offices over the amounts it owes.

It's surprising, because Norton has been very busy over the past three years – acquiring a range of investments, making a range of export and licensing deals and seemingly selling plenty of bikes (well, taking deposits for plenty of bikes at the very least). So how is it they've not managed to pay a £300,000 tax bill?

In July 2015, (the then) Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne visited Norton to announce a £4 million investment from the British Government. The Advanced Manufacturing Supply Chain Initiative was intended to allow Norton and its 11 supply chain partners to set up a new British Motorcycle Manufacturing Academy to train and supply the next generation of engineer apprentices, build a new 10,000 sq ft manufacturing facility and develop clean motorcycle engine technology in the UK within two years. The funding was expected to result in 159 jobs at Norton – which was expected to grow to 600 direct and indirect jobs, including 200 apprentices, by 2020. It hasn't.

Then in April 2017, Norton announced it was scaling up production and hiring 40 more staff – thanks to a £3 million boost from Santander. At the time, the factory was turning out a (claimed) 500 units from the 961 Commando range each year – blending traditional techniques with cutting-edge technology. But, thanks to the financing from the Spanish bank Santander, Norton was said to be ramping up production and hiring more staff to increase output and meet demand.

The vast majority of the funds were set to

be allocated to the all-new 200bhp 1200cc V4 engine and chassis which would eventually form the basis of the new Norton V4 SS and V4 RR models – which went into production in the Summer of 2017.

ADMINISTRATION

In August 2017, Norton and Zhongshen entered into a 20-year, multi-million pound Design and Licence agreement based around Norton's 650cc engine. The 650cc parallel twin engine was jointly engineered and developed by Norton and Sussex-based Ricardo Engineering – and was specifically designed to the requirements of Zhongshen.

A couple of years later in December 2019, the Chinese factory displayed its Cyclone RK6 tourer and adventure bike built around the Norton licensed engine – so only a few weeks ago it looked like it was full steam ahead for the partnership. But with Norton going into administration, it'll be interesting to see if Zhongshen continue to use the engine and pay the licence fee. The specific value of the 20-year deal has remained private so far – but the initial fee paid to Norton is said to be in the millions of dollars, with ongoing royalties paid on each engine produced.

There was a £20 million export deal too. At the start of 2019, news emerged that Norton had signed a new £20m export deal with Japan – which it claimed would support 200 jobs in the UK and see around 1000 new motorbikes sold to Japanese customers over the next five years.

So what's happened to the money? According to its last full-year accounts, the company had sales of £6.7 million on which it made a £33,701 pre-tax profit. That's a lot of sales and not much profit. Norton will have been making investments in new models and development of the current and 'next wave'

of Norton motorcycles certainly isn't going to come cheap – but considering the numerous investments and deals we've detailed, it seems surprising that they've failed to stay afloat.

What if you've bought a bike? At this stage there's no answer as there's still uncertainty about the future, but if Norton fails to get back working then there's a couple of likely scenarios. For the bikes that have actually made it to their owners, it's fairly likely that the values will drop – with parts, spares and factory support extremely difficult to come by. For punters who have laid out a significant deposit for a new Norton motorcycle – they're going to be at the beck and call of BDO who are looking after Norton for the immediate future.

Of course, there's more to the story than we have room for and although the news might come as no great surprise to many, it's a massive shame that it's come to this; particularly considering Norton's received a lot of love from the British motorcycling fraternity. It'll be interesting to see as we finally get to the bottom of what exactly has happened at Norton.

Following the news, Norton CEO Stuart Garner said: "I'm devastated and personally have lost everything. However, my thoughts are with the Norton team and everyone involved, from customers, suppliers and shareholders, at this truly difficult time. Without dialogue Metro Bank appointed BDO administrators yesterday. We are now working positively and proactively with BDO to ensure Norton has the best possible chance to find a buyer. It has become increasingly difficult to manufacture in the UK, with a growing tax burden and ongoing uncertainties over Brexit affecting many things like tariffs, exports and availability of funding."



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SUPER LIGHTNING

Lancer style: First released: 1972 incorporating long length back, to exclude drafts, twin side strap adjusters and a total of five pockets (illustrated in red, rider bike behind)

EUROPA

Lancer style: First released: 1972 incorporating long length back, to exclude drafts, twin side strap adjusters and a total of five pockets (illustrated in red, rider bike behind)



SUPER MONZA

First released: 1973, incorporating racing style collar with a lancer style zip front. Fashionably tailored, it features padded shoulders and is cut longer for extra warmth. (Illustrated in dark blue).

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THE DEVIL IS IN THE DETAIL...



ROYAL ENFIELD DOWN TO THEIR LAST 500 BULLETS

ROYAL ENFIELD'S SINGLE-CYLINDER Classic and Bullet 500cc engine, originally launched in 2009, is being retired from production.

The unit construction engine was at the centre of Royal Enfield's success in Europe and North America but is now being eclipsed by the new 650 twin which has been winning plaudits across the world, as has the 410cc Himalayan adventure bike with its OHC engine.

In production terms the Asian-market only 350 Bullet vastly outperforms the 500, with RE reportedly building 60,000 350 Bullets a month against 4,000 500 and 650 models.

The Bullet was first built in Redditch in the 1930s and has been in continuous

production ever since, with production in India starting in 1948.

To mark the end of 500cc engine production, Royal Enfield will release a special limited-edition Classic 500 Tribute Black, 1000 of which will be available to the European market from May 2020. These motorcycles will be the last to carry the 500cc engine and each will have a hallmark commemorative 'End of Build' serial numbered plaque.

The Classic 500 Tribute Black motorcycles will have hand-painted pin-striped tank details and a unique dual-tone paint scheme, with mudguards and fuel tanks carrying both glossy and matt black finishes.

While Royal Enfield will discontinue further production of their present 500cc engine for the domestic Indian market, these Classic and Bullet 500 motorcycles will continue to be available for retail across European markets during 2020. Service and spares parts will also remain available for current owners throughout Royal Enfield's dealerships network.

At present, it is unclear whether Royal Enfield will start to export the 350 Bullet to the UK or rely on the Himalayan adventure bike to fly the single cylinder flag alongside their 650 twins.

We will have more on the 500 Bullet in next month's edition.

CLASSICS TO GATHER IN ESSEX

PETER BEST INSURANCE, classic and specialist vehicle insurers, will be hosting a second annual Drive-It Day event at Braxted Park Estate, Essex on Sunday, April 26.

Last year 500 classics and many more enthusiasts took part and this year Braxted Park will be opening its stately doors to up to 1000 vehicles.

This is a free event offering a fantastic opportunity to admire a wonderful array of vintage vehicles through to modern-day collectables. As well as entries from clubs and motoring enthusiasts, there'll also be a static display of rare and interesting bikes and cars.

Peter wants to hear from clubs who'd like to take part. To secure your place register at: [pbis-drive-it-day-2020.eventbrite.co.uk](https://www.pbis-drive-it-day-2020.eventbrite.co.uk)



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I'VE TESTED DOZENS of cleaners for bikes over the years. Most feel like they're just car wash in a spray, while others have some thought put in them, like clinging onto vertical surfaces without drying too quickly, having a spray that will also turn to a jet, not marking seats, chrome or alloy and of course, cleaning and leaving a nice finish with minimal effort.

Clean MyRide is in my 'above a tenner so it better be good' category, and pleasingly has proved to be really good. The spray bottle is just right with coverage and doesn't feel weak or hard to use. The substance is of average thickness, meaning it does stick on vertical surfaces, though there is some noticeable movement down; such is gravity!

Instructions say leave on for a few minutes, and it gives time to cover a decent amount of your bike and still have time to agitate with some brushes. That really helps and then I use a hose to rinse it off. Just the rear wheel needed second helpings, with all that chain lube, which it did struggle with – but then most cleaners would. It's a balance between cleaning and not harming surfaces, I guess.

After rinsing I left the bike out in the winter weather and two weeks on, it still looks clean and all surfaces still retain that gloss finish. I like this and will be buying again.

■ clean-myride.com

■ £11.99

Ton up! – A century of Café Racer Speed and Style

'OH GREAT, ANOTHER book on café racers – just what nobody needs' I thought, when *Classic Bike Guide* contributor, Paul D'Orleans sent 'Ton up!' in for review. How wrong I was!

It is superb. You will have got halfway through the book before you even hit the 1950s, when most casual onlookers think the road racer phenomenon started. It traces racing, speed and, to a point, style, from the first machines when they were subjects of much question and speed limits were imposed, as no one knew what would happen to the frail human body should it go quicker than it had previously. The journey through time is illustrated brilliantly, and even those who have no interest in old bikes have shown a sparkle when faced with the old racers.

There's a lot in there I didn't know. There's yet more in there that made me research further; like Anke-Eve Goldmann, the beautiful six-foot tall German woman, who, though extremely talented and fast, wasn't allowed to race because she was female.

The book goes from America to Europe, but will then flick to Japan – it's a well put together and researched book from this experienced author.

Paul has a nice way with words and 'Ton up!' is easily read and crucially in this day and age, can be consumed in small segments;

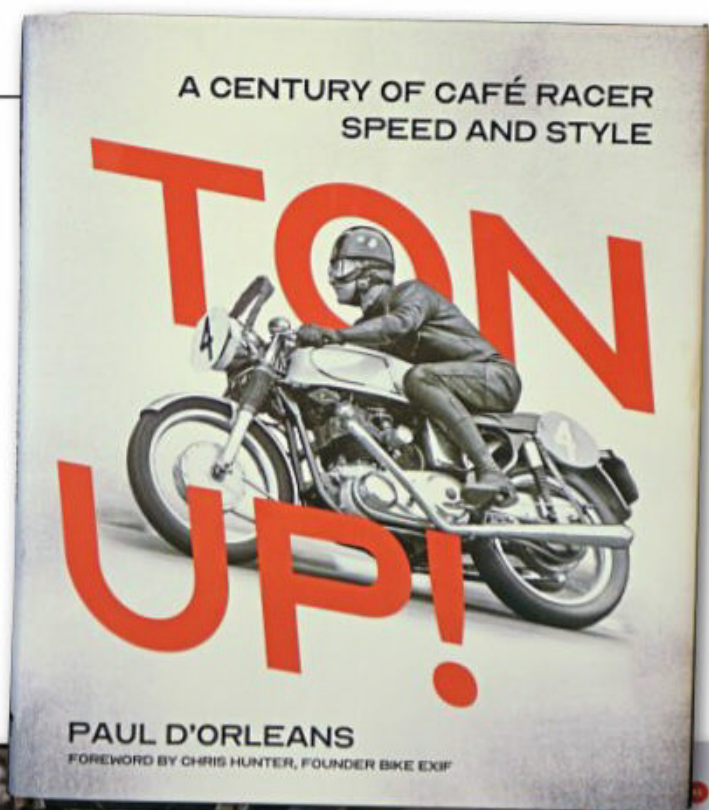
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Brew your own...

The Government has now said it wants the country to be carbon neutral by 2035.

So what are those of us with classic bikes and cars to do about fuelling our trusty steeds?

Perhaps we could start making fuel with illicit stills, and if we

don't use it in our vehicles we could use it as moonshine.

Jonathan Law.

Ed: Thanks Jonathan, why do I have visions of Mad Max and The Dukes of Hazzard in my head? I think the goals are 'fluid' at the moment...



Building a TriBSA from scratch!

These photos were taken two months in on my latest project, to build a TriBSA from scratch. The frame is a 1956 A7 S/S, the tank is a Manx Norton, cut and welded to fit the BSA frame. For the engine I sourced and purchased 85 parts and built what you see here.

I sometimes act on an idea without too much thought; I would blame old age but I've been like it all my life!

All my projects have to be self-financing, so the Triumph 955 Daytona, Kawasaki GPX600 and the Mercedes SLK all had to go. I expected the TriBSA to cost about £6000 to complete – I never thought it would be that much when I went head first into buying the frame etc.

Anyway it's the sort of bike I had when a boy some 54 years ago, Triumphs were my favourites back then and still are today. Completion is hopefully not too far away, but there's always the 'Cornishmen do it dreckly' effect to consider.

Great mag by the way.

Roger

Ed: Roger, apologies, I found this email from one year ago! Hope the build has gone well – would love to see it.



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Buying guide – Triumph Tiger Cub T20 (1953-1969)

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WHAT IS IT?

Triumph's antidote to the smoky small-capacity two-strokes of the time



GOOD POINTS?

Great looking, cheap, easy to work on and with a plentiful supply of spares – what more could you ask for?



BAD POINTS?

On earlier models, plain bearing big ends were prone to failure if the engine was revved hard before the oil was warm. A better oil pump was fitted from 1961, and a complete new bottom end was rolled out in 1962.

COST?

Runner: £2000-£5000
Concours: £5000 plus

Above: While the Cub didn't get a full bathtub fairing, from 1959 the T20 roadster models were fitted with a 'bikini' enclosure behind the engine and under the seat.

PRICED AT £127 WHEN IT WAS INTRODUCED IN March 1954, the 199cc Triumph T20 Tiger Cub was a little bike with big aspirations. Built from the bones of Triumph's first postwar single – the 149cc T15 Terrier – the T20 Cub was intended as an antidote to the swathes of smoky British two-strokes tearing up the streets at the time.

It was a clever move – and the Tiger Cub capitalised on the massive appeal of Triumph's more established machines, inspiring brand loyalty in the next generation of riders as they eventually worked their way up to a Speed Twin, Tiger 100 or Thunderbird. Or at least, that was the intention of Triumph supremo Edward Turner – who noticed the massive market for lightweight commuter bikes in the early 1950s, and went to work creating an entry-level motorcycle that mimicked Triumph's more premium sportsters. First came the Terrier.

Launched in 1953, Triumph's T15 Terrier showed the world the British factory was serious about little bikes. It was the first time they'd produced a lightweight machine for 20 years. It's an important bike – partly because it was the testing bed for a range of Triumph innovations that made it onto the Terrier's bigger brother the following year.

The Terrier was the first Triumph to use rear plunger rear suspension (in which the rear axle is sprung from a rigid back-end frame) – and it was powered by the first unit construction OHV engine made by Triumph (in turn establishing the design for later BSA unit singles). It looked great too – with clear Triumph styling – and produced a feisty little 8bhp (dwarfing the BSA D3 Bantam's 5bhp). Inevitably, once the Tiger Cub was introduced (for only marginally more cash) sales of the Terrier fell dramatically – and a few years later in 1956 production of the 150cc machine was discontinued.

So, the Tiger Cub's just a bigger Terrier right? Well, not exactly. Some of the smaller bike's issues were ironed out ahead of the launch of the new bike. The main one (among quite a few others) was its unusual crackcase configuration which allowed flex and caused main bearing and big end failure. The Cub introduced a more conventional one-piece case and a new flywheel assembly – but it still had its issues, with big end failure continuing to be a problem. It probably wasn't helped by some younger owner's less than consistent maintenance – but then those things never are.

And yet, it was (and continues to be) a cracking little bike. It'd hold its own up to 60-65mph and return something like 90-100mpg, it's easy to work on and it looks sharp, and it was comparatively cheap when it came out – it's not difficult to see why so



Buying guide – Triumph Tiger Cub T20 (1953-1969)



John Giles showing off the Tiger Cub's durability at the 1956 Travers Trophy Trial.

OWNERS' CLUBS

The Triumph Terrier and
Tiger Cub Association
www.tigercubclub.com
Triumph Owners' Motor
Cycle Club
www.tomcc.org

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

If you want to know anything about Terriers and Cubs, there's one man who knows more than anyone else: Mike Estall. Best of all, Mike published the brilliant 'Triumph Tiger Cub Bible', which will tell you all you need to know about the iconic learner legal machine. "A labour of love, and the result of many years of research, here is the complete reference to the Triumph Tiger Cub in all its forms: in fact, The Tiger Cub Bible. Every aspect of the Cub's design, production and development is covered, together with its success in motorcycle sport and record breaking, and its use by the utilities, police force and the military. Amazingly comprehensive appendices cover every aspect of specification from valve clearance to paint colour. Altogether the definitive work on the Triumph Tiger Cub and Terrier; the perfect companion for every Cub and Terrier enthusiast."

many people fell for the Tiger Cub. Between 1953 and 1969, Triumph sold an impressive 113,671 Tiger Cubs (and Terriers) – offering two-wheeled freedom to thousands of teenage tearaways and cash strapped commuters. That's a lot of bikes – even when you consider demand was increased as a result of a change to licensing laws in 1961, which restricted learner motorcyclists to a maximum of 250cc.

The punchy little single also proved itself popular with racers – so Triumph decided to release a wide array of variants to suit trials riders and road racers alike. From 1957-1969, the T20C was produced with larger wheels, more clearance, lower gearing and an upswept pipe – and to this day the Trials Cub endures, remaining a frequent sight at pre-65 trials meetings.

Increase the bore and stroke of the Terrier's engine and what do you get? That's right, the 199cc unit that powers the Tiger Cub. It was knocked up from 57x58.5mm to 63x64mm, if you're interested. The Cub's conventional four-speed gearbox (with right hand change) is from the Terrier too – but has a

larger sprocket fitted. The original carburettor was a specially designed Amal 332 – which was swapped for a Zenith in 1958 – before being swapped for a final time with an Amal Type 32 unit. That's what you'll find on most Cubs today. Power varies fairly substantially between the numerous models in the Tiger Cub range – ranging from 10-14.5bhp @ 6000-6500rpm. Compression ratios vary a bit too – from 7:9 to 9:1.

The Tiger Cub started out with 19 inch wheels – which were later reduced to 16 inch wheels on the base models. They came fitted with 5.5 inch cast iron drum brakes – which were far from revolutionary but more than up to the job to stop the little Triumph. Suspension was looked after by grease-packed telescopic forks and rear plungers. The plungers were eventually replaced by swinging arm suspension on later models. Its lightweight frame used the petrol tank as an integral part of its structure – with the internally braced tank bolted to the frame to provide strength. It worked. Mostly. They were also kitted out

Comeback-kid

Could the Tiger Cub be about to make a comeback? It's looking increasingly likely. Triumph's recently joined forces with Indian manufacturer Bajaj to produce a series of small-to-middleweight motorcycles, ranging in size from 200 to 750cc – and recent reports suggest we're going to see half a dozen new motorcycles built under the agreement. Could one of them be a Tiger Cub? We wouldn't bet against it.



TOP TIP

If you're looking at buying a Tiger Cub, be sure to check the bike's engine and frame numbers.

Tiger Cubs are frequently 'lashed together' from spare parts. It doesn't mean it's a bad motorcycle – but it will affect resale value.

Some of the original production bikes came with Zenith carburettors. They're increasingly hard to find and were reportedly not up to much – so as a result, most of the Cubs you'll see are fitted with either Amal or Mikuni carburettors.

MODEL TYPES

T15 Terrier
T20 Tiger Cub
T20 C Competition Cub
T20 J Junior Cub
T20 S Tiger Cub Sports
T20 T Tiger Cub Trials
T20 SL Tiger Cub Scrambler
T20 SS Tiger Cub Sports
T20 SH Tiger Cub Sports
TR20 Tiger Cub Trials
T20 SC Tiger Cub Super Trials
T20 SM and M Mountain Cub and French Army Cub
T20B Bantam Cub and Super Cub
Plus, several other varieties of some of these models made for specific export markets



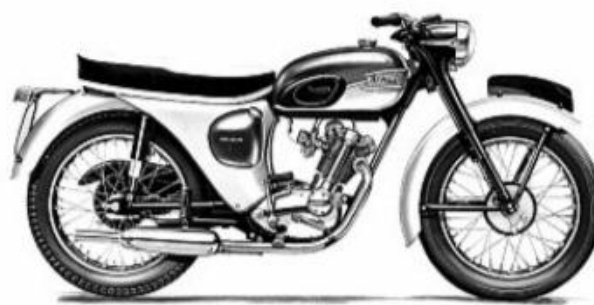
Which model?

Over the years, Triumph released a dizzying amount of Cub variants, so to help you get to grips with some of the most important machines in the line-up – here's a condensed timeline.



1955 T20

One year on from launch, the high-level pipe was replaced – although it still came with 19 inch rims front and rear. Essentially, the Cub was just a bored and stroked Terrier, with different mudguards and paint finish.



1963 T20

The side-points engine made its bow in August 1962, while the partial rear enclosure was introduced back in 1959. This was essentially the standard Triumph Tiger Cub's final incarnation – which stayed in production through to 1965.



1962 T20SH (SPORTS HOME)

Based on the SL (Scrambler Lights) and SS (Street Scrambler) versions, the SH bowed to British sensibilities with low handlebars, a 9:1 compression ratio piston, R cam and close ratio gears. A large Monobloc carburettor was fitted too.



1962 TS20 CUB SCRAMBLER

The competition potential of the Cub was examined early on – finding favour with trials riders. Others were used on the dirt tracks in the US, inspiring Triumph to introduce the rarest of all the Cubs, the Scrambler – of which less than 400 were built.



1958 T20

The swinging arm rear suspension debuted in 1957 – with the most notable differences for 1958 being the mouth organ tank badges and deeply valanced rear mudguard. The 16 inch rims were introduced on the plunger framed version of the Cub in 1956.



T20B SUPER CUB

The Bantam and Super Cubs were parts bin specials – the Bantam Cub using a BSA Bantam D7 rolling chassis, the Super Cub a D10 and later a D14. Most Bantam Cubs were made in 1966 and 'Supers' were made in 1967 – but a few trickled out as late as 1969.

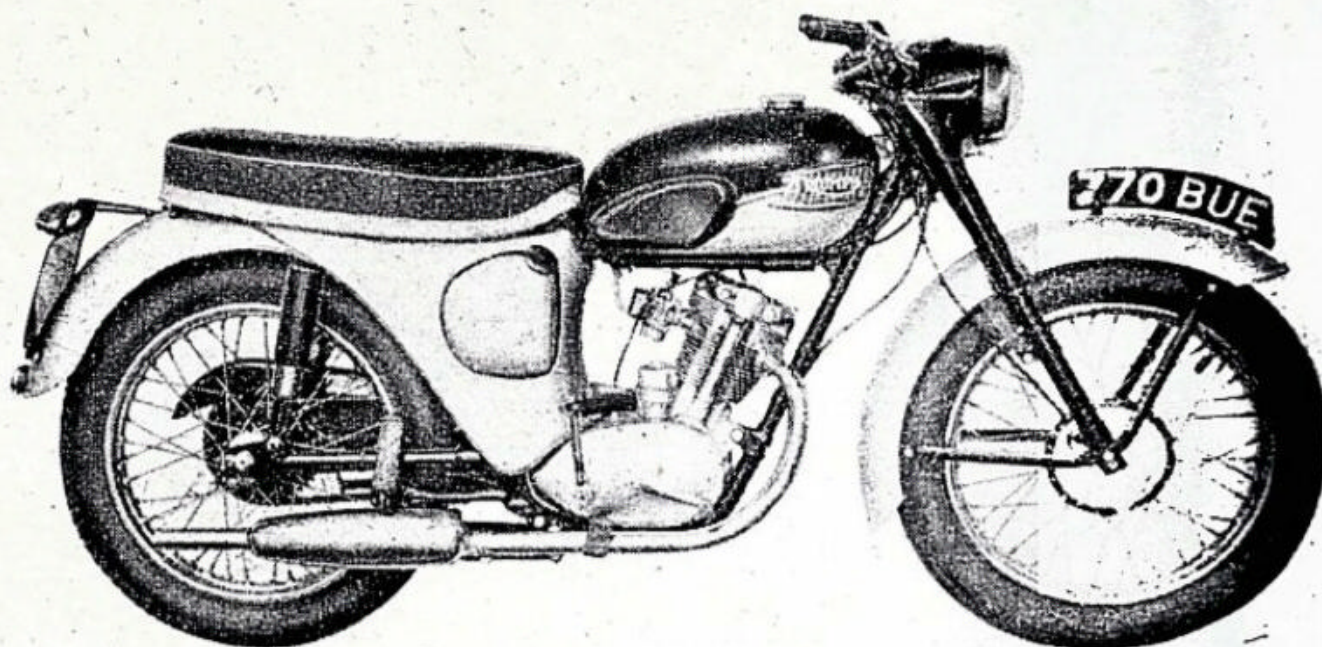


The 199 c.c. TRIUMPH T20

1961 ROAD TESTS

'TIGER CUB'

Latest version of
a lively and
economical lightweight



Specification

ENGINE

Type	Single-cylinder four-stroke
Bore	63 mm.
Stroke	64 mm.
Cubic capacity	199 c.c.
Valves	Overhead (push-rod)
Compression ratio	7:1
Carburettor	Zenith 18 MX, 18 mm. choke
Ignition	Battery-powered coil
Generator	Lucas RM13 6v. A.C. output
Makers' claimed output	10 b.h.p. at 6,000 r.p.m.
Lubrication	Double plunger pump
Starting	Folding kickstarter

TRANSMISSION

Unit gearbox with footchange	
Ratios	6.8, 9.0, 14.0, 20.3:1
Speed at 1,000 r.p.m. in top gear	10 m.p.h.

Speed equivalent to revs. at maximum power rating:

Second gear	30 m.p.h.
Third gear	48 m.p.h.
Top gear	63 m.p.h.
Primary drive	Duplex chain
Final drive	Single chain
Clutch	Multi-plate
Shock-absorber	Vane-type in clutch centre

CYCLE PARTS

Frame	Single tube loop, lugged and welded
Front suspension	Telescopic with coil springs and hydraulic damping on impact stroke
Rear suspension	Swinging fork with two non-adjustable Girling hydraulically damped spring units
Tyres	Dunlop Lightweight, 3.25 x 17-in. front and rear
Brakes	5½-in. dia. total lining area 20 sq. in.
Fuel tank	Welded steel; two-position lever tap
Oil tank	Welded steel, 2½ pints
Lamps	30/24w. head; 3w. pilot; 6/18w. tail-stop

Battery	Lucas 6v. 8 amp. PUZ 5/E/11
Speedometer	Smiths 80 m.p.h.
Seating	Dual seat
Stands	Centre
Tool kit	Spanners: 2 open-ended, 1 flat, 1 socket, clutch tool; tyre lever; Phillips-head screwdriver
Toolbox	Compartment in battery case
Standard finish	Black and silver sheen

OTHER EQUIPMENT

Tyre pump.

PRICES

Machine	£148 7s. 5d. (inc. £25 7s. 5d. P.T.)
Extras	Pillion rests, 19s. 11d. (inc. 3s. 5d. P.T.)
	Prop-stand, 19s. 11d. (inc. 3s. 5d. P.T.)
Total as tested	£150 4s. 3d. (inc. £25 14s. 3d. P.T.)
Tax	17s. 6d. p.a.
Makers	Triumph Engineering Co., Ltd., Meriden Works, Allesley, Coventry

'Motor Cycling' Test Data

Conditions. Weather: Fine, dry, cold (Barometer 29.20 in. Hg. Thermometer 40°F.). Wind: W.N.W. 8-15 m.p.h. Surface (braking and acceleration): Dry asphalt. Rider: 11½ stone, 5 ft. 8½ in., wearing riding coat, wader-trousers, safety helmet; normally seated except for best certified M.I.R.A. maximum. Fuel: Premium-grade (96 research method octane rating).

Venue: Motor Industry Research Association Station, Lindley.

Speed at end of standing 1,000 yd.:

East	57.7 m.p.h.
West	44.4 m.p.h.

Best certified M.I.R.A. maximum (rider prone): 64.3 m.p.h.

Braking from 30 m.p.h. (all brakes): 11 yd.

Fuel consumption:

At constant 30 m.p.h.	160 m.p.g.
50 m.p.h.	96 m.p.g.
500-mile overall figure	126 m.p.g.

Speedometer

30 m.p.h. indicated	= 28.1 m.p.h. true
40 m.p.h. indicated	= 37.6 m.p.h. true
50 m.p.h. indicated	= 47.0 m.p.h. true
60 m.p.h. indicated	= 56.0 m.p.h. true
70 m.p.h. indicated	= 63.0 m.p.h. true

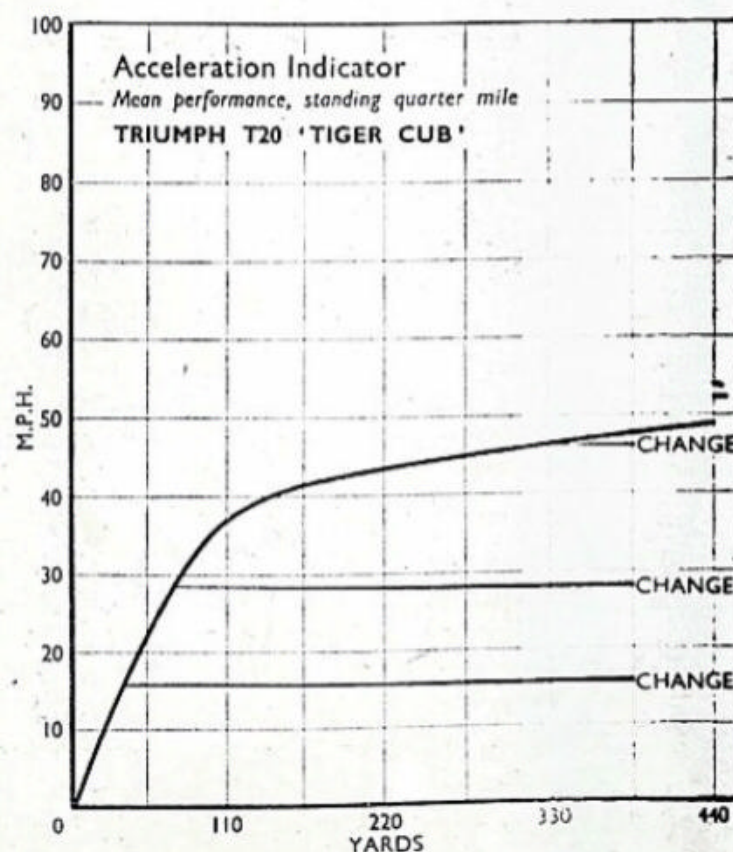
Mileage Recorder Over-reading 1%

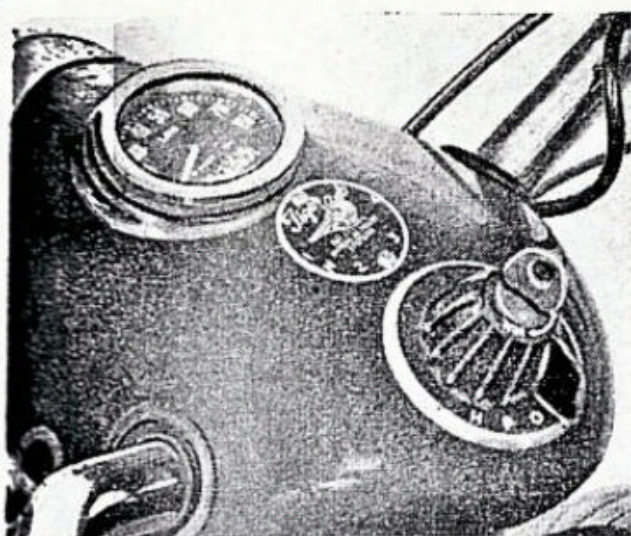
Electrical Equipment

Top gear speed at which generator output balances:	
Ignition	12-15 m.p.h.
Minimum obligatory lights	20 m.p.h.
Full lights	22 m.p.h.

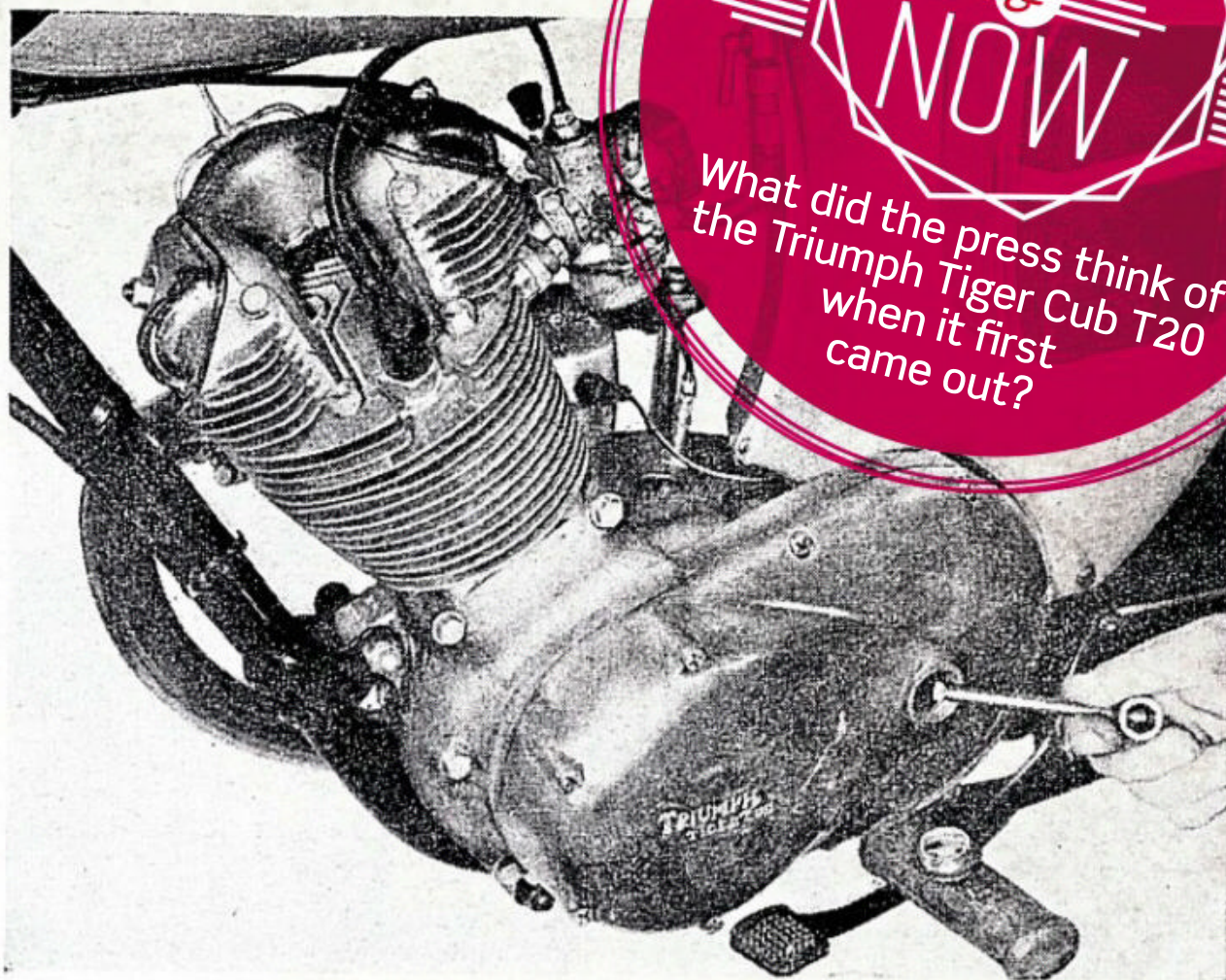
Weights and capacities

Certified kerbside weight (with oil and 1 gal. fuel)	234 lb.
Weight distribution, rider normally seated:	
Front wheel	38%
Rear wheel	62%
Tank capacity (metered):	
Total	3.0 gal.
Reserve	Nil





(Above) Grouped on the headlamp nacelle are the speedometer, gear indicator and ignition/lighting switch. (Right) Adjusting the clutch: the cover of the battery compartment, on the right, has been removed.



THEN
&
NOW
What did the press think of the Triumph Tiger Cub T20 when it first came out?

BRITAIN'S lowest-priced "200," the Triumph T20 "Tiger Cub," impresses even a seasoned tester with its outstandingly good all-round performance and value. This four-stroke lightweight is game for a genuine 64-65 m.p.h.; it will cruise energetically all day in the mid-fifties; and it will return fuel consumption figures little short of remarkable, whatever the throttle openings used.

Basic design of the power unit has remained unchanged since the introduction of the T20 six years ago, though for 1960 models (from engine number 56361) radical alterations were made to the crankcase to secure more rigid crankshaft support, bringing the layout of the T20 "bottom half" generally into line with that of the 350 and 500 c.c. twins. Here is the first published

road test of a T20 in this modified form.

Although the "Tiger Cub" has always been a docile and flexible little machine, this 1961 model was even smoother and more manageable than its predecessors. There was simply no vibration.

New on a motorcycle—at least in the tester's experience—the Zenith carburettor seemed to be an almost foolproof component. A rich mixture is obtained by pressing down the knob of the starter slide at

the top of the mixing chamber. Once the engine had fired, the slide could be raised to the first notch, then lifted progressively to the second and top notch locations as the engine warmed up.

Main throttle control is by a normal cable-operated slide-and-needle assembly. It gave well-graduated carburation while accelerating up to the main-jet stage, but there was occasional popping-back when the throttle was snapped shut at speed.

The standard Triumph "down-for-down" gear-change, though differing from general practice, commends itself to the novice because it is easy to remember. And for those to whom gear-changing has not yet become the instinctive business it should be, a neat finger indicator, mounted in the headlamp nacelle, swings around a dial from 1 to 4 and back again in unison with the action of the short-travel gear pedal.

Slick Changes

Engagement of all ratios was slick and silent. Top gear was on the high side, and it was better to use third when battling against a high wind or tackling a long but slight gradient. Several west-bound timed runs at the M.I.R.A. track were completed without changing into top and, on average, the speed gain between the 330 and 440-yard marks was no more than 1.6 m.p.h.

Since we last tested a T20, some five years ago, the wheel size has been stepped up from 16 in. to 17 in. This change has not perceptibly affected the very convenient seat height—scarcely more than 26 in. in normal trim—and the rider feels the confidence which comes from being able to plant both feet flat on the ground.

General handling was first class, whether pottering in top gear at less than 15 m.p.h. or cruising at 60 m.p.h. The steering was rock steady and had an excellent castor action.





with 6V electrics, with the power supplied by a crank-mounted alternator charging system – although recently fettled bikes tend to have been converted to 12V for improved reliability.

Following the retirement of Edward Turner, who had conceived the Terrier to rival BSA's Bantam – a hybrid BSA Bantam and Triumph Tiger Cub was created to further improve efficiencies and reduce costs. Production of Tiger Cub was shifted from the Triumph factory in Meriden, Coventry, to the BSA plant in Small Heath, Birmingham – but strangely, the Cub engines continued to be built at Meriden, and were transported to Small Heath to be fitted into Bantam frames.

Rumours suggest that the BSA workers weren't all that chuffed to see Triumph engines and badges in their factory – which resulted in the Bantam Cubs being badly put together. Either way, it didn't go well. They were a commercial flop. The last model, the T20 Super Cub (or Bantam Cub) was produced in 1969.

The Cub stood the test of time – and it remains well loved to this day. As such, it's not a surprise Cubs are in high demand at the minute. You're looking at paying

The Experts: Triumph Tiger Cub Club

To get under the skin of the Triumph Tiger Cub and learn why the loveable little rogue is so well loved, we took the time to speak to Mike Powell of the Tiger Cub Club. He's a font of knowledge on all things Tiger Cub – and he should be, considering he's owned somewhere between 80 and 100 of them in his time.

CBG: HOW DID YOU GET INTO TIGER CUBS?

MP: My dad had one. He left me three things, Tiger Cubs, premature baldness and Notts County.

CBG: DO YOU HAVE A FAVOURITE VARIANT?

MP: Yer, I like the Sports Cub. The ones from the mid to late Sixties. That's when all the bugs were ironed out.

CBG: WHAT IS IT ABOUT TIGER CUBS IN PARTICULAR?

MP: Back in the day they were a little runabout – and the Triumph badge helped them appear stylish. But now, it's like all the others – people wanted one when they

were younger, and now's the time they can perhaps get their hands on one.

Of course, it works the other way – there are guys like me who are maybe well into their seventies now, and the bigger bikes are too much to hold – so they're looking for a lightweight, easy to handle bike. That's why the Cubs and Bantams are still going up (against all my expectations). And you know, they're a nice little bike.

There were inherent problems with them in the beginning, but they can be ironed out by modern oils and maybe having it serviced every now and again.

And they're still turning up aren't they? They're still coming out the woodwork – like everything else. It amazes me that there are still some undiscovered ones about. But mainly, it's the States now. That's where a lot of the bikes are coming from.

Do you know Mike Estall? He knows more about Cubs than anyone ever will.

Well, he was running the register and people were asking him if they could join up, and it became obvious that a club might be useful. So I started one. He kept running the register independently, and it just snowballed from there – we've got 1000 members now.

THINGS TO WATCH OUT FOR?

It's all the old things. Mechanical problems don't come into it really – because all the spares are available. You can get almost any part for it. You could more or less build a new one. The main thing for me would be to make sure the engine and frame numbers match. And if you need the numbers checking, come to us at the Tiger Cub Club and we'll tell you if they're right or not. Most of the stuff I do now is with the DVLA – we'll go through the process of registering a bike for an owner from start to finish.

around £1500 for something a little rough. Basic models are going for somewhere around the £3000 mark, while a tricked out Trails Cub could set you back as much as £8000 (if not more). That's big money

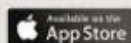
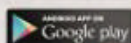
for such a small bike. But there's no doubt this easy to live with classy lightweight with good handling, decent brakes, and enduring good looks wouldn't look good in the garage. **CBG**

SPECIFICATION: TRIUMPH T20 TIGER CUB (1959)

ENGINE: 199cc OHV single four-stroke **BORE/STROKE:** 63x64 mm **COMPRESSION RATIO:** 7:1 **CARBURETTOR:** Zenith 17MCX-CS5 **IGNITION:** Lucas AC/DC with battery. RM13 alternator. **TRANSMISSION:** Four-speed unit gearbox multi-plate wet clutch, chain final drive **FUEL CAPACITY:** 3 gallons **TYRES:** (F) 3.25 x 16 on WM2 rim (R) 3.25 x 16 on WM2 **BRAKES:** (F) Drum (R) Drum **SUSPENSION:** (F) Telescopic forks (R) Swinging arm rear **WEIGHT:** 220lb (100kg) **POWER:** 10bhp @ 6000rpm **TOP SPEED:** 70mph

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www.TheTriumphTigerCubClub.com

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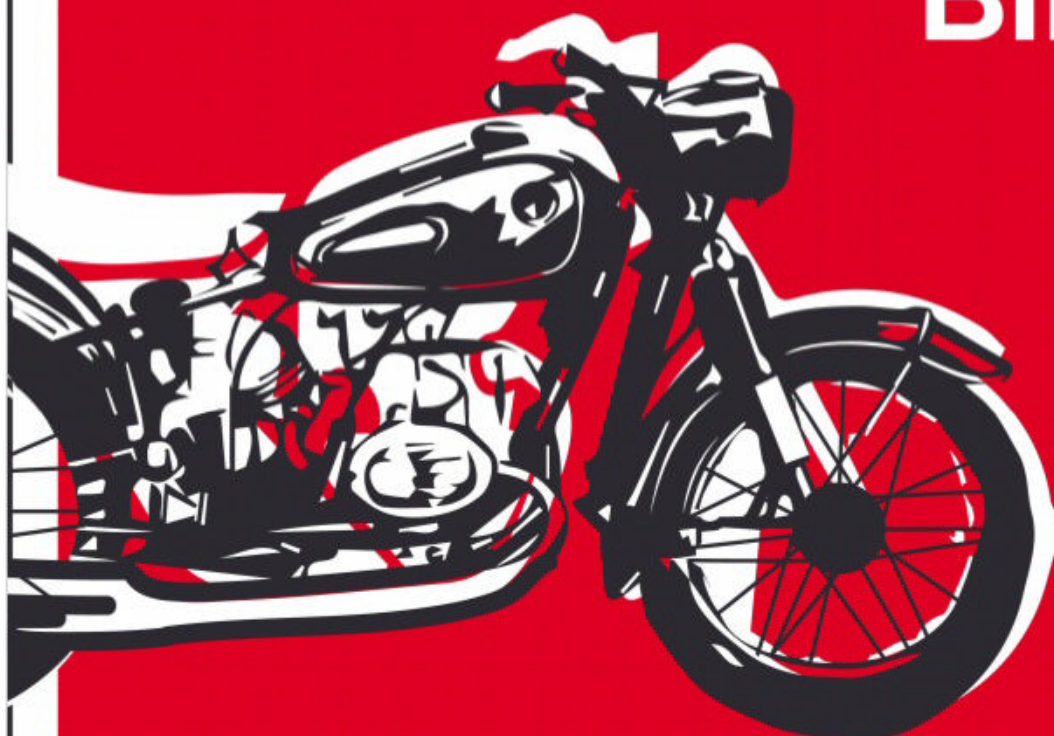
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WORDS TIM BRITTON

PHOTOGRAPHY MORTONS ARCHIVE, TIM BRITTON, FIONA WATSON

George Wilson spends a day having fun with John Surtees on a muddy trials course, on a Triumph Tiger Cub

Trials on a Tiger

CONVERTING A CUB

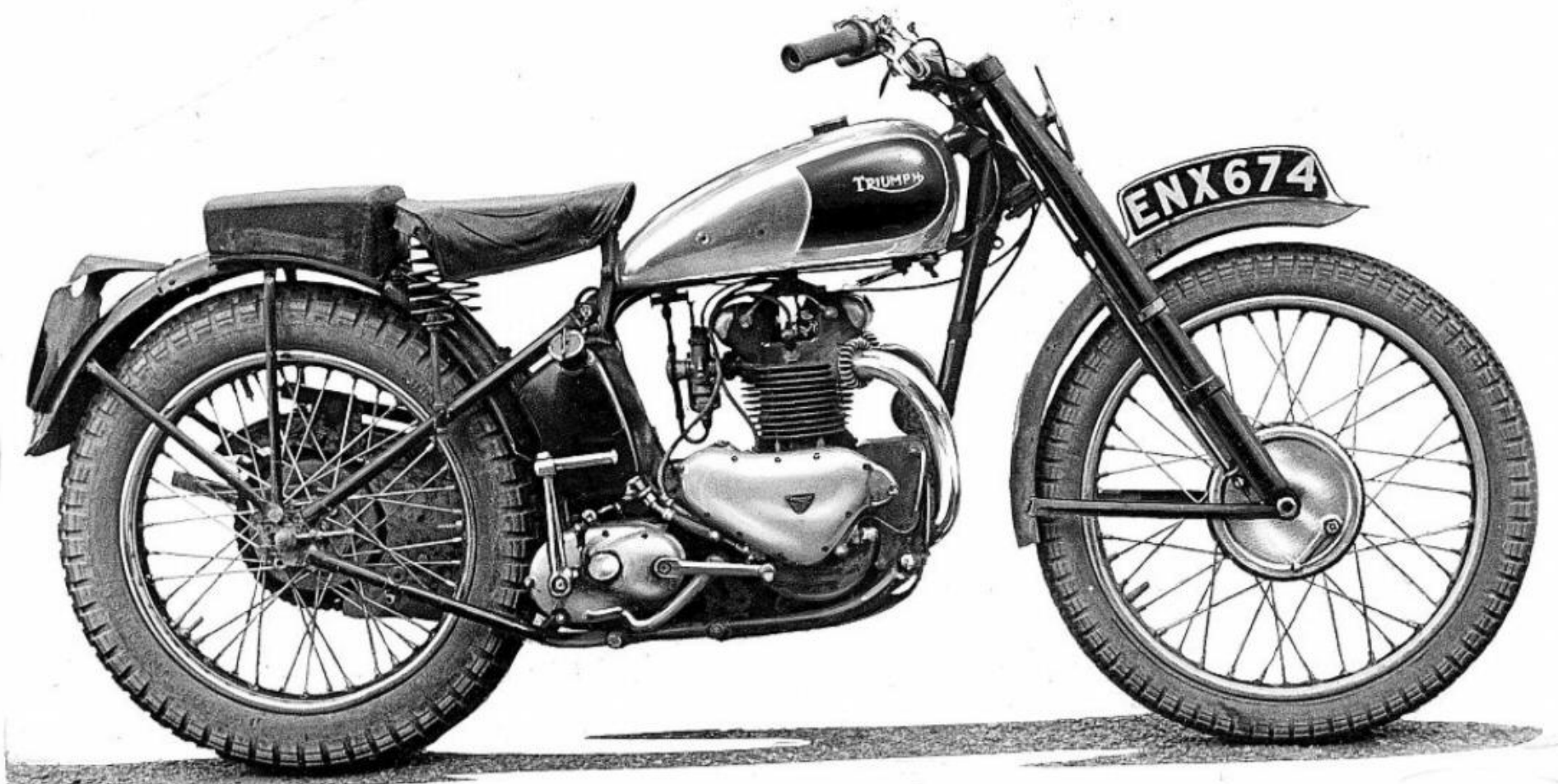
Creating a Pre-65 eligible Triumph Tiger Cub can be horrendously expensive... but does it have to be?

TRIALS RIDING IS PROBABLY THE WORLD'S most accessible motorcycle sport. It's easy to start, not complicated to do and it's a sport in which Triumph's Tiger Cub has quite a good record.

From Roy Peplow's Scottish Six Days Trial win in 1959, dozens of national and trade supported trials wins by Peplow and other Triumph team members such as John Giles, Artie Ratcliffe and Gordon Farley, plus innumerable club-level wins by ordinary riders out for a day's sport, the tiny Cub has certainly made its mark.

It is still doing so in Pre-65 trials too, and winner of the 2019 Pre-65 Scottish was Cub-mounted Dan Thorpe. Even better, it was the diamond anniversary of Peplow's full six days win and Dan's dad, Dave, was a Triumph-supported rider on a Cub. So as you can see, a bit of a track record there for the 199cc single.





“Maybe you’ve read the tale of Peplow’s victory, seen the classic trials reports and the odd test or two and thought ‘hmmm I wonder what it’s like to try this trials lark?’”

Maybe you’ve read the tale of Peplow’s victory, seen the classic trials reports and the odd test or two and thought ‘hmmm I wonder what it’s like to try this trials lark?’ – then thought ‘but surely it’s horrendously expensive to do...’

Well, yes it can be but it doesn’t have to be. At the outset let’s say building a super trick Tiger Cub trials bike can be an expensive exercise which doesn’t actually need a Tiger Cub to start with – a set of crankcases will suffice!

It might sound odd, but such is the industry surrounding the Pre-65 scene, and Tiger Cubs in particular, everything other than crankcases is available, at a price.

But what if you just want to dip your trials-booted toe in the scene, and fancy a wobble around the local club’s novice trial?

If this sounds like you, then the good news is you don’t have to remortgage the house in order to have a go at Pre-65 trialling with a Tiger Cub, as creating

a usable machine from the most basic of beginnings is quite possible and not difficult. It’s even easier if you already have a Tiger Cub on hand and are prepared to do a little work on it in return for a few hours of fun on a Sunday.

A BIT OF HISTORY

Before going into the nuts and bolts of a build, you’re going to have to put up with a bit of history on why a company so associated with vertical twins settled on producing a 199cc single cylinder trials bike.

After the Second World War, when motorcycle sport got going again, a win in a trade-supported national trial was serious publicity. The problem for Triumph was they only had twins in their range and everyone thought only a rigid, 500cc single was any good for trials riding. Enter Jim Alves, a Somerset trials rider doing well on an ex-Army 3HW Triumph.

The factory persuaded him to try a 350 twin; he did and to the shock and astonishment of the world, won the very first postwar trade supported national trial. Triumph then created a 500cc twin for use by Alves and other team members in the ISDT, in those days a shop-window to the motorcycling world, where the cobbled up Speed Twin-based machines did well and helped the UK dominate the event.

All seemed well with the twin world and the company enjoyed many successes with what had become the Trophy in the hands of their team riders.

But fate played a hand when Alves was seriously injured in a car crash. Out of action for a full season while he recovered, when he returned to trials he wanted something lighter than the twins

so he looked at the 150cc Terrier road bike Triumph had introduced as an entry level machine, converted one to trials trim and started winning on it. Then he did the same with the company’s 199cc Tiger Cub when it was introduced a year or so later.

The idea was not lost on the trials scene and even before it was possible to buy a competition Cub from Triumph, converting a roadster to trials spec wasn’t difficult and there were pics of the Alves bike in the press to help. Add in that thanks to the nature of trials, anyone riding or spectating at the same event as Alves could see the bike at sections, and so could check out what had been done – externally, at least. Triumph would introduce a production competition Cub into their range fairly quickly and once their works riders were mounted on them, development continued in leaps and bounds.

DOING THE DIRTY ON A CUB

I’m assuming at this stage your ambitions are modest and it’s the local wobbler trial or practice day rather than the Pre-65 Scottish you’re looking at. In this case it’s more about what you don’t need than what you do. As we said at the start of this piece it is possible to spend a sizeable chunk of money in building a super trick Tiger Cub from scratch and there are plenty of people out there who will help you do just that.

In the engine department there are new crankshafts, new gears offering wider ratios, new barrels offering much increased capacity up to such dizzy heights of 320cc and probably cylinder heads too which will match just such capacities. Once a fancy engine has been

Below: Roy Peplow, a fan of small trials bikes, seen here on the 1959 Scottish





Factory Trials Cub is a thing of beauty



Narrower tank helps slow speed balance



The nitty gritty

Look at your bike. Determine what can get damaged by contact with the scenery, or with mud and water, even the pressure washer afterwards, then remove, reroute or protect it. An air filter or even better an airbox, to stop the engine sucking in water or mud in a trial is essential; I'd go so far as to say electronic ignition is essential too, nothing more frustrating or tiring as kicking a reluctant engine into life. Ball-ended control levers are compulsory in competition, folding footrests are too – I think. Also a good idea is a side-pull throttle such as Amal's T20/800 one, keeps the cable out of harm's way as life can become interesting really quickly if a throttle cable snags on a branch for instance.

constructed then there are aftermarket frames, frame kits and even complete rolling chassis kits to slot it into. Also available out there are aluminium hubs, brake plates, fork yokes, ignitions and much more besides.

In fact the whole thing can be quite bewildering for the novice as everyone you speak to will have their own idea of what you need in order to ride trials.

Good news though – there's no need to go to such extremes. The idea is to encourage someone reading this to have a go with a Cub they have. There are certain 'musts' for a trials bike and other things which are a good idea, but not essential for a casual dip in to the trials world.

It's reckoned there have been more than 100,000 Triumph Terrier and Tiger Cubs produced since the early Fifties. Pretty much any of them will be suitable for a bit of light off-road work with a few adjustments. Generally, the later the bike the better to convert as the earlier

distributor engines can suffer from odd ignition issues in a trial, though electronic ignition can solve this.

Don't panic, as I'm not advocating radically reworking your pristine Cub; just suggesting a few things to help enjoy a bit of sport. A trials bike needs to travel slowly, start reliably, find grip in adverse conditions and achieving these aims is the key to having some fun. Don't forget in the good old days, many enthusiasts would use their motorcycle for all sorts of things including the daily ride to work.

When thinking what to do to convert your bike – assuming it's a roadster Cub and not the competition version – get hold of a picture of the actual competition Cub and compare it with your bike, you'll see what Triumph did and what you should be looking at. The bare minimum is lowering the gearing to help reduce your clutch slip at slow speed, and finding some trials type tyres for the original Cub wheel sizes. This alone will allow for a little light trail ▶

The rider

While we've looked at converting a Cub for trials use, perhaps a word or two on prepping the rider will be advisable too. Trials riding, being a slow sport, is generally not dangerous, so protective gear can be limited to a lightweight crash helmet and a pair of trials boots. A trials helmet is open face and has a peak – in the old days a helmet wasn't compulsory and most riders wore a flat cap – but thankfully those days are long gone. As for boots, the once popular safety wellies are still around, though good trials boots are available. Gloves aren't compulsory though are a good idea and again there are quite a selection of them on the market. That pretty much covers it for protective clothing – you could get a pair of trials trousers with some padding in them, maybe a mountain bike undershirt with armour in it too.



Wasp are just one of the frame builders around for trials



type-going, such as seen in an event like the Beamish Trophy Trial in the North East. This might be as far as you want to go and if so that's fine, but you may then find such a taster inspires you to try a bit more!

It is possible to lightly convert a bike to do some proper trialling and put all the road equipment on the shelf until such time as you want a fully equipped road bike again. Taking things to this stage means a bit of serious thought and might require building or finding proper trials-sized wheels, some lighter alloy or plastic mudguards, a smaller petrol tank and trials handlebars with controls such as a side-pull throttle and a high-level exhaust system. All of these things mean a bit of investment but the basis of the bike is still unaltered.

If you're going this far then you've already lowered the gearing with the front sprocket, so don't worry about finding wide-ratio gears; few trials have the huge road miles of even club trials of years ago and a standard road box won't be an issue.

These mods give you a usable trials bike, yet allow an easy conversion back to road trim if you decide this feet-up lark isn't for you. Do be aware though, this sport is addictive and there are no self-help groups where you stand up, introduce yourself and admit to being a trials rider in the hope of being cured of the addiction... **CBG**

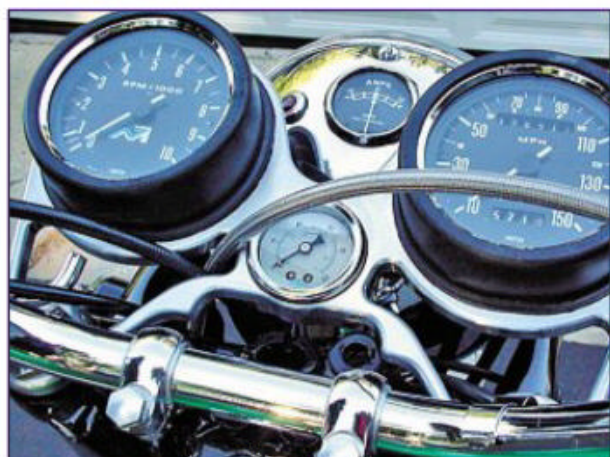


Jim Alves in the Scottish six day trial, 1954



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Classic EUROPEAN 125s

Looking for a bit of fun on a tiddler? Last month we looked at some of the Japanese offerings and this month we look at what mainland Europe has to offer

WORDS BY OLI HULME

IN A EUROPE DEVASTATED BY THE SECOND World War, cheap transport for the masses was an essential part of the rebuilding process. The small capacity motorcycle was just what was needed to get things going again.

At first these bikes were lightly updated versions of the prewar models, mostly two-stroke singles and basic. After all, the majority of companies had been working on other things during the previous few years. Each country quickly developed a style of their own – Eastern European manufacturers set up behind the Iron Curtain made simple, solid, machines that could be fixed with an adjustable spanner and a hammer, often based on the German DKW 125 design. The Italians started off with simple machines, but quickly saw the style split between Lambretta and Vespa scooters, and delicious little sports bikes. The Spanish Fascist dictatorship imposed stiff import conditions which protected their native industry, while the West Germans

built ever more sophisticated lightweights. Unless you are in the market for something rare and desirable, prices are reasonable, ranging from a few hundred pounds for a running project up to a few thousand for something in good, rideable condition.

The biggest problem you are likely to have with a European 125 is spares availability. While Eastern European bikes changed little, the Italians built massive numbers of bikes, all featuring different engine designs and cycle parts, though the Italians did have the benefit of a strong support industry for electrical components and instruments. These bikes trickled into the UK, so if you are looking for parts then the internet is your friend, as is a passing knowledge of Italian or Spanish.

AUSTRIA

Puch

Well known in the UK for their high-quality step-thru and sports mopeds, Austrian

manufacturer Puch did try to market their M125 roadster in the mid-1960s. A smart little machine, heavy on the chrome and well made, *Motorcycle Mechanics* raved about the M125 in 1968, thrashing the two-stroke single 2000 miles from the UK to Graz in Austria and back again in three days, down German autobahns and over the Alps, throttle against the stop most of the way at an average speed of 58mph. The tester reportedly tried to break the Puch but couldn't. Parts are available but finding a M125 will be tricky. Prices for a good one are in excess of £3500.

BELARUS/USSR

Minsk 125

Soviet central planning was a curious thing. The USSR decided that it didn't really matter what a factory made, be it cardboard boxes, or cement, or shoes, or motorcycles, they all had to be made in one big factory, with whole towns and cities set up to produce

one core product. To build 125cc motorcycles a factory was set up in Moscow to build a version of the DKW RT125. This used the documentation and equipment from the German DKW factory in Zschopau, then in East Germany, which were taken to the USSR as war reparations. Production of the RT 125, renamed the Minsk M1A, began and the central planners then decided that the place to build them was Minsk, the capital of the Soviet republic of Belarus. In 1951 production was moved – along with the entire workforce – to the Minsk Motorcycle and Bicycle Plant.

The M1A became the basis of simple and Minsk models. This model was imported into Great Britain by the Soviet trade organisation SATRA, branded as a

Cossack, and later by Neval Motorcycles. Around 6.5 million Minsk 125s have been built and many were exported to Soviet satellite countries, with Vietnam one of the biggest marketplaces.

The Minsk 125 is about as basic as you can get – a simple piston-ported 125cc engine in a steel cradle frame. The build quality was crude, as was most of the componentry. The brakes were terrible and the handling equally poor.

But it was tough. Designed for awful Soviet roads, third world deserts and jungle tracks, most of the bike is made from alloy or steel and can be straightened out with a hammer. The engine, a tough little device, was worth persevering with and there's nothing much in the way of plastic on board.



It would, however, take a lot of effort to make a Seventies Minsk suitable for UK roads in the 2020s. If you paid more than £500 for one, you were robbed.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

CZ

Unlike most postwar two-strokes, the CZ wasn't based on the DKW but a design that was Jawa-CZ's own. Rugged and fairly reliable, their biggest weak spot is the electrical system, which is likely to be worn out by now, but that goes for a lot of small classics. It's also a reasonable size, unlike Japanese motorcycles of the period, and looks and feels like a proper motorcycle.

Five different models of CZ single were produced between 1968 and 1996. They came in 125cc and 175cc forms, with the only differences being the engine and side panel badges. The 125s simply have less acceleration and top speed.

Until 1982, when the 125cc laws were introduced, most CZs were 175s, with only those on the tightest of budgets plumping for the 125. After that, the 175 all but vanished from UK dealerships.

There was one major stylistic change from 'early' to 'late' that took place in around 1975. Early-period bikes have a square-ish tank and a square headlamp. This was followed by a rounded tank, with normal headlamp and the speedo in a binnacle. A trail bike version, the CZ Model 482, 175cc, is quite desirable. They fetch more money than standard road bikes, although they're not actually much use in mud. Expect to pay anything from a few hundred pounds to £1500 for a good one.

GERMANY (EAST)

MZ

Born in East Germany after the Second World War, MZ's future was based on the brilliance of the prewar DKW RT125. DKW's factories in Zschopau were in the Soviet occupation zone and were largely undamaged. Little would have been left to build motorcycles with, as the Soviet NKVD had taken most of the equipment, but the staff got to work and the factory continued production of the RT 125 under the MZ brand into the 1950s while developing world-beating two-stroke technology. MZ's road bikes were extremely well built from good quality materials, tough and well equipped, and most importantly, cheap.

ES/TS 125/150

The frame of the ES125/150 used pressed steel with the two frame halves folded together rather than welded, which greatly increased its stiffness. This frame design was used with minor modifications until 1985. On the ES, the front forks were Earles type, part-cast from alloy, as was the rear subframe. MZ used a lot of chunky aluminium on their bikes, which has led



Buying guide – European 125s

to them lasting well. The ES was replaced by the TS, which used conventional front forks and full width front brakes. There were two TS models, with simple equipment on the base model, while the top-of-the-range 'Eagle' model had a rev counter and speedometer in rubber cups on smart alloy brackets and a better finish. The shock absorbers had levers to adjust them. The angular styling splits opinions but has a certain period charm, while the engine is easy to tune and squeeze a few more BHP from. Spares availability is good.

An interesting rarity is the TS125 Pathfinder trail bike developed by British importer Wilf Green in 1982 to take on the new learner market. Expect to pay between £300 for a complete project to £1500 for a runner in good condition.

GERMANY (WEST)

West German manufacturers tended not to try and sell their smaller machines in the UK. Import taxes and high production costs meant the German 125 was too expensive to market in a country that had vast numbers of Francis Barnett Merlins and BSA Bantams to satisfy the market.

DKW

The engine of the DKW RT125 ended up providing transport to the world for decades. DKW was the world's largest motorcycle manufacturer until 1939 and, as

well as building all-conquering racers, the company's RT125 changed motorcycling forever. 'RT' stands for 'Reichstyp' or 'National Model'. The DKW's strong point was a two-stroke loop scavenging process to improve the efficiency of the combustion chamber. DKW also developed a highly efficient arrangement of transfer ports. These two features were included in the RT125 to great commercial advantage.

Postwar, the DKW patents could be ignored, and they were. Bikes using the engine were made by Yamaha, BSA, Harley-Davidson, Maserati and WSK. The RT125 was relaunched in 1949, gaining plunger rear shocks, but otherwise it was unchanged from the prewar models. The plungers lasted a few years before a simple under engine shock absorber was introduced, followed quickly by a conventional swing arm twin-shock arrangement.

The RT engine was also used in more than 20 other manufacturers' machines, most of them scooters, while later DKW models got Sachs engines. Never imported officially into the UK in postwar form, your best chance of finding one is to search in Germany. Prices range from £2500 to £3500.

Zundapp

One unusual German model was an Anglo-German project, the Rickman Zundapp 125. This was a small trail bike with a Rickman frame and a Zundapp engine built





in the early 1970s. As well as being sold as a trail bike, the Rickman Zundapp was also ordered as a road version by several police forces. These were to replace worn out Velocette LEs and they were partly chosen because of the British manufacturers' content. Some orders were cancelled, and the bikes were sold cheaply in Exchange and Mart. Kent Police kitted theirs out with full fairings and panniers. Price: anything up to £3000.

ITALY

Ah, the Italians. Like most of Europe postwar the country was a mess and its people desperately needed transport. Scooters and mopeds were first to appear, but the Italian passion for the motor vehicle and a popular small capacity racing scene, where clubman riders would ride their bikes to meetings, race them flat-out and ride them home again saw a rapid uptake in small capacity bikes. And unlike the British models they were given sparkling paint schemes and dynamic looks. After all, just because you are going to work, doesn't mean that you don't want to do it in style.

Aermacchi/Harley-Davidson

After launching the space age Chimera 125 in 1956, Aermacchi produced their first sporting motorcycles the following year. Its bosses had realised that the punters wanted sports bikes and built a 175 four-stroke single, the Ala Rossa, using the bigger engine.

Aermacchi was bought by AMF Harley-Davidson in 1974, the US company having owned 49% of the company since the early Sixties. The company's skill at building racing two-strokes was demonstrated when they won the 1974, 1975 and 1976 250cc world championships and the 350cc title in 1976. In 1970 they built a 125cc racer that produced 25bhp from a simple two-stroke single engine. They also built a road-going two-stroke, the Aletta 125 Rapido, which is worth a look.

AMF used their purchase of Aermacchi to launch a range of basic, cheap to produce two-stroke singles. The engines were punchy, and the bikes good-looking but the build quality was poor and although the US styling was popular in Italy, elsewhere they were less enthusiastically received. Parts can be scarce, and some of the ancillary parts were of dubious quality, while the chrome would quickly flake off.

The SS/SST/SX 125s will turn heads. All the models have a large dollop of flamboyant Seventies chic. A resto project will cost anything from £800 and cost a fortune in time and money for parts. A good usable example will cost around £2500.

Benelli

Benelli's class leading Leoncino (Little Lion) 125 was a motorcycle of incredible sophistication for the day, a 125cc, four-stroke, OHC single with a gear-driven camshaft, in a spine frame with swing arm



rear suspension. It was also built with a two-stroke engine as the 125 Sport, which was a competitive racer straight out of the crate. After winning the first Motogiro of Italy in 1953, with Bologna-born pilot Leopoldo Tartarini, the Leoncino achieved fame and became a huge success in terms of sales.

The real snag with the Leoncino was it was so fast most of them were hammered into the ground by over-enthusiastic young riders. In the early Sixties Benelli launched a more conventional 125, the Nuovo Leoncino, which lacked the original's charm. Priced from £800 for a project to £4000 for a good example.

When Alessandro De Tomaso took over Benelli in the mid-1970s he oversaw a vast expansion of Benelli's range. While the new big fours were based heavily on Honda designs, they also made motorcycles that were clearly 'inspired' by Yamaha's two-stroke twins and the 125 2C SE had



Buying guide – European 125s

a marked similarity to the RD125 twin. It might not have been as hard-wearing or have the finish of the Yamaha, but it was more powerful, knocking out 17bhp and had a claimed top speed of 80mph. Benelli eschewed such sophistication as pumped premix oil, requiring a 25:1 two-stroke mix.

The suspension and brakes were excellent, but other bits less so. Sharp and stylish, with a nose fairing on the last bikes, the 2C is worth a look if you can find a good one at £1000 to £3000. There were also two-stroke singles like our 125 Enduro, but they are rare in this country as their price new was so much higher than their rivals.

Ducati

Expensive, troublesome to look after and extremely demanding, the bevel gear, single-cylinder Ducati Sport 125 single is a stunner. The Bologna single marked the debut of Fabio Taglioni-designed road Ducatis. In 1957 the 100 and 125 Sport series were launched on the two-wheel market, inspired directly by experience on the track. Thanks to demand from Ducati fans who had been wowed by the racing version, the tiny singles were hugely popular in Italy. Had Taglioni not been such a genius, and the 125 such a success, there might never have been Ducati's Desmodromic twins.

Lots of Ducati 125 and 160 singles were part of the infamous rejected Berliner consignment that saw 3000 small Ducatis flood the UK market in 1968. It's a Ducati, so expect to pay a premium price – £2500 for a tatty runner to £5000 for a good 160.

Fantic

If you don't mind feeling a bit ridiculous and you want to draw a crowd, the Fantic Chopper 125 is one of the silliest motorcycles ever made. With early 1970s 'Easy Rider' styling and a 13.5bhp Minarelli two-stroke engine, the Chopper featured steeply raked forks, a stupidly tiny peanut tank, plenty of badly applied chrome and was claimed to top 80mph, which must have been an interesting experience for the rider. It rotted badly and finding parts is a nightmare. One of the toughest parts to find is the plastic side panel. Now very collectable, if you've got a good one, you can pretty much name your price.

Gilera

As well as building world (and MV Agusta) beating four-cylinder race bikes that nearly bankrupted the company, Gilera built some of the smartest small capacity road bikes you could buy in the 1950s.

An OHV, air-cooled single with a wet sump and, unusually for a four stroke, finned rocker covers, the Gilera 150 Sport was launched in the late 1940s with blade front forks, a sprung saddle and pillion pad and a version of their friction rear dampers as used on the 500cc Saturno.

Almost always dressed in red, the 150 sport later got conventional forks and

shocks, and a gorgeous jelly mould petrol tank. It looks best with clip-ons and is a sweet little heart-breaker.

Gilera also built 125cc and chunkier 175cc versions, and rather ruined the look with more angular styling of the 125 into the early 1970s. A new Gilera 175 in 1959 cost just £5 less than an AJS 500, which gives you some idea about how they failed to sell in the UK in big numbers. Prices range from £1500 for a project to £3500 for a show winner.

Piaggio bought Gilera in 1970 and set to work updating the range, coming up with the 125/150 Arcore 5V. Using an updated version of the old engine with new, squarer engine cases, the Arcore was a conservatively styled, full size machine. Imported to the UK by Douglas of Bristol, the Vespa importers at the time, the first Gilera Arcore 150 machine was shown at the 1972 Earls Court Show. They went on sale in the UK from September 1973 with a retail price of £295, which was pretty hefty for the time.

The four-stroke unit developed 14.5bhp and transmitted its power to the rear wheel via a five-speed gearbox, hence the 5V coding. Its top speed was stated to be 72mph. They occasionally appear from Italy in restorable condition. You should expect to pay anything from £1000.

Motobi

Motobi was founded by Giuseppe Benelli when he fell out with his family, but hatchets were buried by the early Sixties and Motobi's design was adopted by Benelli for the US market.

The Motobi Imperiale/Benelli Sprite 125 and the 175 Catria were gorgeous little things fitted with flat single four-stroke engines. The powerplant had egg-shaped cases and distinctive curved finning on the cylinder head. The plot was suspended by a sprung spine frame. The design resulted in a low centre of gravity and consequent fine handling. Expect to pay between £1000 and £4000.

Moto Guzzi

Moto Guzzi might not be a name that springs to mind when considering small capacity motorcycles, but they did produce two significant 125s, one of which helped out a British manufacturer.

Moto Guzzi's Giulio Carcano, the designer of their V8 racer, designed the Stornello 125. This looked similar to the Gilera but it was a little fussier and a proper motorcycle with a twin-tubed, open-cradle steel frame, twin shocks and telescopic front forks.

It had 17in wheels and a modest 7bhp at 7200rpm from the 123cc four-stroke single wet-sump engine and drove a four-speed transmission via helical gears. Sparks and six volt lighting were provided by a flywheel magneto.

Despite the limited power, Moto Guzzi

claimed a 63mph top speed. A Sport version followed in 1962, which managed 8.5 horsepower. Fitted with clip-on handlebars, a racing seat and alloy rims, the Sport was good for a claimed 70mph.

The other Moto Guzzi 125 that you might find interesting is the Moto Guzzi 125 Co-Uno. This wasn't actually a Moto Guzzi and neither was it made in the Moto Guzzi Factory. It was a rebadged version of Benelli's 125 single, a cooking model produced to sell alongside their 2C twin.

Basic but with good quality cycle parts, the Co-Uno was shipped to the UK with Moto Guzzi badges in kit form and put together by workers to the Meriden Co-operative for sale in the UK. Around 1000 were made.

It seems a shame they didn't put Triumph on the tank – no self-respecting



learner in 1983 would have been able to resist owning a Triumph 125 as their first bike. They are priced at around £1200, if you can find one.

Moto Morini

In the 1950s Morini developed a range of four-stroke single-cylinder pushrod engines. Prior to this, two-strokes had formed the foundation of the company's range.

The 123cc Corsaro (Pirate) was introduced in late 1958. The performance of the single cylinder machine was impressive for its time, knocking out 9.5bhp and topping 70mph.

With a forward sloping cylinder, traditional heel and toe gear-change and typical Italian styling, the machine is a very attractive prospect. For the 1961 season, a development saw the introduction of a





Buying guide – European 125s

Veloce model, with dropped handlebars and sleeker lines.

Never imported into the UK, you can nonetheless see a few on the road, and they really are very special. You will pay anything from £1500 to £4000.

The very last Corsaro in 1972 came with a new Heron Head design with a flat cylinder head and an indented piston. This was used on the brand's famous V-twins in the Seventies.

Moto Morini produced a 125 Sport from 1978 with what was basically half a V-twin 250 with the rear cylinder chopped off. A pretty little thing, like all Morinis from the Seventies, it will be blessed with a brilliant frame and engine, and terrible ancillary parts. They will cost you between £1000 and £2000.

MV Agusta

For most of us the only way we'll probably ever be able to afford an MV Agusta is to buy a 125.

In 1954 MV produced a 125cc production roadster, the Gran Turismo, with a single-cylinder overhead-valve engine. It had a four-speed gearbox and the powerplant was fitted in lightweight cycle parts. In 1965 the 125/150 range was updated with five-speed gearboxes, the 125 being offered in two guises: GT and the more sporting GTL.

MV's small roadster was completely redesigned for 1975, with an engine that

was essentially the same, only squarer. An alloy cylinder barrel and electronic ignition helped the Sport produce 14bhp at 8500rpm, good enough for a top speed of around 75mph. The unit was housed in a silver duplex cradle frame equipped with Ceriani forks and a now unobtainable Scarab front disc brake. A good one will cost around £4000.

SPAIN

As a fascist dictatorship from 1939, the Spanish government imposed strict economic rules based on the principle of autarky – economic self-sufficiency. This restricted imports dramatically and allowed the domestic market to flourish.

It was easier for foreign, mostly Italian manufacturers, to open factories in Spain and then export them, and both Ducati and Lambretta had Spanish production plants that were part-owned by the Spanish government.

Bultaco

Although Bultaco are probably best known for their off-landers, the first bike the company made was a 125cc roadster. Founded in 1958 by Francisco Bulto, a former Montesa director who was unhappy that the company had decided to stop road racing, Bulto built the 123cc sports bike in a barn in four months with the help of other Montesa engineers.

The first production Bultaco was the

Tralla 101, a 125cc single that pushed out 12bhp. It had a unit construction engine, a four-speed gearbox and an excellent cradle frame. At its first race meeting the works racer, which was almost identical to the roadster, took second place in the Clubman section of the Spanish GP, and six of the next eight places too. Next time out, in a full GP, Bultaco beat Ducati and MV Agusta to the chequered flag.

While the road and trail bikes had names, the racing designation TSS was Bulto's tribute to the Velocette KTT and KSS, which he had campaigned in the 1930s. By the mid-1960s Bultaco were building a 125cc racer with a water-cooled 125cc engine that produced 30bhp.

There were several 125cc Bultaco road bikes between 1958 and the factory closing in 1983, all fitted with the same basic two-stroke single engine. Models included the Mercurio, Campera, Lobito and Junior.

With US markets going wild for Bultaco trials bikes and other off-landers, there was little change until 1977 and the Streaker 125, a surprisingly modern-looking and well-equipped single with alloy wheels and a new gold-painted frame.

While the styling was modern like most of the small Bultacos since production started, the Streaker 125 used a 20:1 petrol mix and had awkward left foot kick-starter.

A lot of Bultacos from all eras have come in from Spain and you can pick up a project from around £1000. **CBC**

CONTACTS:

Jawa CZ

www.jawaczownersclub.co.uk

MZ Riders Club

www.mzridersclub.com

British Two Stroke Club (for all makes and models)

btsc2t.weebly.com

Italian parts:

Moto Di Marino

www.dimarino.co.uk

Mdina Italia

www.mdinaitalia.co.uk



UPCOMING EVENTS

I am really looking forward to this year, and hope you are too! After hibernating in the workshop for what seems like an eternity, it'll soon be time to get out there – and there's never been more choice.

Look through the next few pages and you'll see we've got something for everyone. For the sports fans, there's Darley Moor circuit at the foot of the Peak District, or Chimay, in Belgium – that's definitely not one to be missed. Or how about Hoghton Tower Sprint near Preston?

Looking to make a purchase? Try the Richard Edmonds auction, Veterama at Hockenheim, Stickney autojumbles, the many autojumbles put on by ELK Productions or Kempton Park – always a big one. And there's the Manchester show if you are on the lookout for a new bike, the Gloucester Classic Motor Hub, Sammy Miller's excellent museum, the National Road Rally, the BSA open day, Bears and Bikes in Scotland, the Enfield Pageant of Motoring, or even Chipping Steam Fair!

Whatever you do, have fun and hopefully we'll see you there.

Matt

BIRTHDAY IN THE BORDERS



Come along and celebrate the BMF's 60th Birthday at our New Bears & Bikes Motorcycle event.

14th to 17th May 2020 at Traquair House
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Book online at bmf.co.uk/events
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Exhibit A



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April 26	Royal Enfield Ride In + BMW Club Day
May 3	Spring Auto Jumble
May 8	VE Anniversary
May 17	Hants & IOW Air Ambulance
May 24	Triumph Meet
June 7	Vintage Japanese Day
	Morris Minor Annual Car Meet
June 14	Norton Natter & Nosh
June 21	Rickman Day
June 28	Honda Owners Club (GB) Classic Show
July 5	Italian Bike Ride In
July 19	Ladies Day
July 26	Harley Ride In
August 9	Scooter Ride In
August 16	Two Stroke Day - All Makes
August 23	Goldwing
September 20	Café Racer Rendezvous

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The Pageant is purely a fundraising event for the upkeep of
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UPCOMING EVENTS



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2020 RACE DATES

Saturday 28th March Test Day - Darley Moor MCRRC
 Sunday 29th March Round 1 - Darley Moor MCRRC
Includes Round 1 of the Curtis Milner Trophy
 Saturday 11th April Motor Cycle Races Classic RMC
 Sunday 12th April Motor Cycle Races Classic RMC
 Saturday 2nd May Round 2 - Darley Moor MCRRC
Includes Round 2 of the Curtis Milner Trophy & Thunderfest 2020
 Saturday 16th May Motor Cycle Races Vintage MCC
 Sunday 17th May Motor Cycle Races Vintage MCC
 Sunday 14th June Round 3 - Darley Moor MCRRC
 Saturday 11th July Test Day - Darley Moor MCRRC
 Sunday 12th July Round 4 - Darley Moor MCRRC
 Sunday 13th September Round 5 - Darley Moor MCRRC
 Saturday 10th October Round 6 - Darley Moor MCRRC
 Sunday 11th October Round 7 - Darley Moor MCRRC
 including
STARS AT DARLEY 2020
Saturday & Sunday
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Did my first one last year and loved it! Went for the Gold and got it. Going for Special Gold this year, If you love riding your bike then this is for you! M Craig

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For information call 01788 566 412 email nationalroadrally@acu.org.uk

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Great Orme & Conwy, Evening Road Runs

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www.llantransfest.co.uk



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UPCOMING EVENTS

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THE CLASSIC



MOTOR HUB

Events Diary 2020

The Hub has a busy schedule of both public and private motoring events throughout the year and we always welcome new groups and enthusiasts wishing to take advantage of our atmospheric facilities in the heart of the Cotswolds at the former site of RAF Bibury.

This year we are holding a special day just for classic bikers: **Ride-It Day**. Held on **Saturday 16th of May**, this special event will follow a similar format to our hugely popular Coffee & Classics, but with **fundraising for the Thames Air Ambulance**, special guests, displays and spaces for motorcycle club stands. Registration is now available for all classicbikers at: ClassicMotorHub.com/Events



PRE-REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED FOR ALL VEHICLES ATTENDING EVENTS AT THE HUB
VISIT OUR WEBSITE OR FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT OUR UPCOMING EVENTS



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Sunday 5th April : 10am - 1pm
COFFEE & CLASSICS
open to all classic, vintage and high-performance vehicles

Sunday 26th April : 10am - 1pm
DRIVE-IT DAY CELEBRATION
for all owners of classic vehicles

Sunday 3rd May : 10am - 1pm
VE CELEBRATION
a street party for owners of military and period vehicles

Saturday 16th May : 10am - 3pm
RIDE-IT DAY CELEBRATION
for all owners of classic motorcycles

Sunday 7th June : 10am - 1pm
COFFEE & ITALIAN CLASSICS
for all owners of Italian vehicles

Sunday 5th July : 10am - 1pm
COFFEE & CLASSICS
open to all classic, vintage and high-performance vehicles

Saturday 18th July : 5pm - 10pm
HUB SUMMER BBQ
open to all friends and followers

Sunday 2nd August : 10am - 1pm
COFFEE & PRE-1970s CLASSICS
open to all vehicles registered before 1st Jan 1970

Sunday 6th September : 10am - 1pm
COFFEE & 70s, 80s & 90s CLASSICS
open to all 70s, 80s and 90s classics

Sunday 4th October : 10am - 1pm
COFFEE & CLASSICS
open to all classic, vintage and high-performance vehicles

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Ashford Classic Show & Bikejumble 10am Easter Monday 13th April

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Romney Marsh Classic Show & Bikejumbles: Bikejumble: 10am Sunday 17th May Show & Bikejumble: Sunday 21st June

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The South of England Showground

Romney Marsh Classic Bikejumble 10am Sunday 13th September

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STEVE COOPER

First born

When it comes to riding pleasure, Steve questions the true desirability of buying the first of a model

“Before firing off an angry-gram to the editor, think – the first iteration of any consumer object is just one step away from the shake-down prototypes.”

HAVE YOU EVER ENCOUNTERED THE LAW OF Inverse Desirability? Though not actually established within academia, both scholars and laymen will have experienced the effects of said diktat. The Law of Inverse Desirability states: the more something is wanted, desired or needed, the less likely it is to be delivered or received.

In its most basic form, the ‘LID’ will ensure that the seized fastener that’s holding up a shed job will snap and break, rather than free off. Other applications of the phenomena include waiting anxiously for postie to bring that one vital spare part that’s taken forever to arrive, and without which you can’t get your machine back on the road. Many argue that the infamous shed pixies hold massive sway over the Law of Inverse Desirability, whereby these transient sprites have the unnerving ability to hide the very tool you need for that one, important, Saturday morning job.

Something similar and infinitely more tangible holds true when it comes to old motorcycles. How often do you hear people saying that it’s the very first of the breed of any given machine that’s the most desirable?

That statement might carry some credence in as much as a new-to-market model that shifts things forward has a certain kudos to it. First to market takes the lion’s share of the sales, too, but at what cost to the customer? An all-new, precisely unseen, revolutionary motorcycle is, without doubt, a covetous object... but does that necessarily mean it’s peerless? Before firing off an angry-gram to the editor, think – the first iteration of any consumer object is just one step away from the shake-down prototypes. These are the bikes, cars, food blenders, that the manufacturer’s staff have supposedly tested to the limits. A sound notion and one that makes the products we buy intrinsically safe, but they aren’t automatically the best of the genre.

Think Honda 750/4. This was The Game Changer for the global motorcycle industry and riders of the late 1960s. Yet Honda refined and developed the bike over a decade or more which, logically, suggests that they, the designer/manufacturer were less-than-content with the first iteration of the bike. Now look at prices and rationalise why the earliest and least refined of the breed should command

such stellar premiums than the later examples. Some will doubtless argue that the 1969 model is the fastest, but if that’s the case surely logic would argue if you want a fast 750/4 you should be looking at the CB750FB range? Many say the K6 version of the world’s first superbike is the viable one to own, run and ride.

The same can also be said of the bike that usurped the Honda four. Kawasaki’s Z1 was a significant machine without question but does a late 1972 example really outshine the 1976 Z900A4? What suggests the former is worth so much more than the latter when the A4 derivative does everything so much smoother and easier? Why is there such inverse snobbery when it comes to choosing models? Surely the more refined a bike the better it is to use as a method of transportation.

From the same stable we also have widow maker’s widow maker in the guise of the Kawasaki H2 triple. The 1972 powder blue model is unquestionably eye candy, but it’s also the triple with a ripple. Having ridden both the 1972 original and the final 1975 H2C over the same roads on the same day, I can unequivocally state the final machine in the model run is significantly more stable than its progenitor!

It’s not just Japanese machinery. Anyone who has sampled the delights of products from Armoury Road, Smallheath will testify it was the final series of A65s that really showed just how good the OIF models could be when all of its gremlins had been evicted. A few miles away at Meriden, similar occurred with the everyman Triumph Tiger Cub and yet curiously, for once at least, both press and public seem to agree the post 1964 models were, without doubt, the best. The same firm’s 750 triples are generally acknowledged to have matured with age even if the two distinct styles still split opinion. Without question the first Commandos had a certain reputation, yet it’s the final examples that honed the concept. And if further proof were needed that first-off models aren’t automatically the best choice, how come Les Emery and the team at Norvil have been so successful in selling both updates and complete, modernised, versions of what is arguably the best British twin ever? The Law of Inverse Desirability is a peculiarly strange force! **CBG**

Steve Cooper once had a real job pretending to be an industrial chemist but is now a classic motorcycle journalist, serial restorer, editor of the VJMC’s *Tansha* magazine and perpetually obsessed by Japanese bikes of the 1960s and 70s. He likes two-strokes so much he often smells of semi-synthetic 2T!

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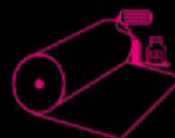


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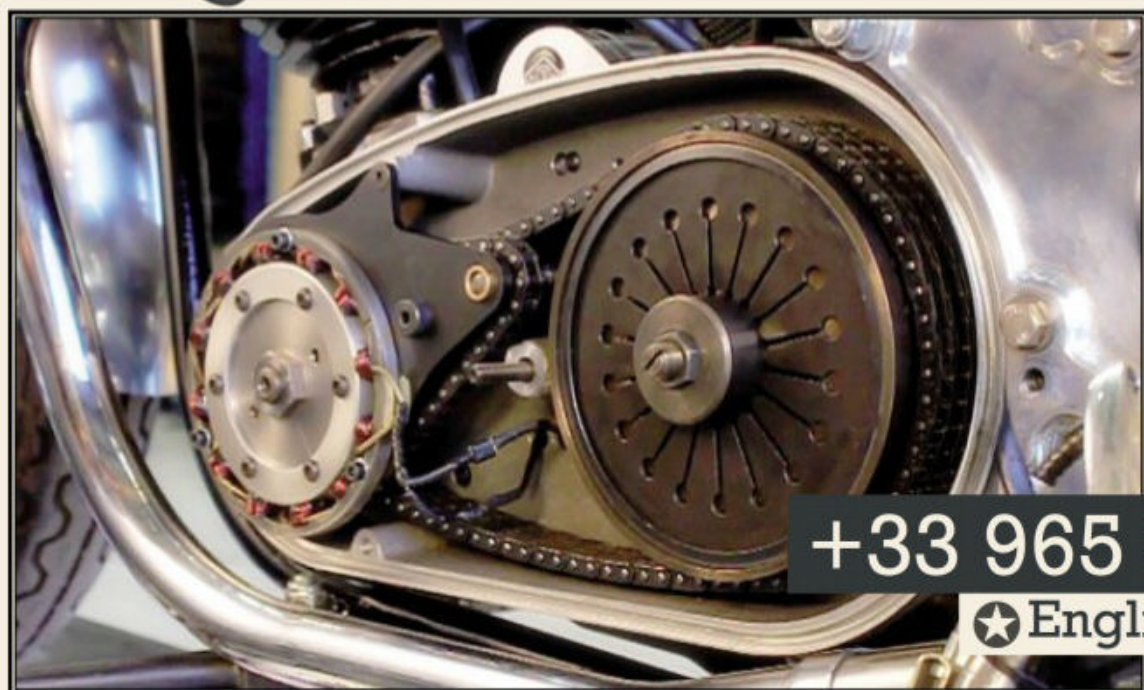
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Paul is proud of his latest conversion

“It seemed sensible to ask my friend Ian if he fancied riding a ‘proper’ bike for once. He jumped at the chance, the fool.”

HAVE A FRIEND, LET’S CALL HIM IAN; stop sniggering at the back, I really do have some friends. We met online (I said that’s enough!) via Twitter – @classicrider, as you ask, look me up. Being motorcyclists we share lots of similar views and experiences and both broadly sit in the ‘any bike is good’ camp, but freely acknowledge that some are better than others.

Earlier this year, my local VMCC section organised an event purely for girder-forked machines of any age and not just pre-1931, like, for example, the famous Banbury run which is exclusively for vintage and veteran machines.

Ian, despite a garage stuffed with bikes of differing flavours, was sadly lacking in the girders department; an appalling oversight. As the date approached, by some miracle I happened to have two bikes working – at the same time! I really am a spannering god. As even I can only ride just the one motorcycle at a time, it seemed sensible to ask my friend Ian if he fancied riding a ‘proper’ bike for once. He jumped at the chance, the fool.

Arriving at my house on his huge modern Triumph that I doubt I’d even be able to straddle, let alone ride, I talked him through the arcane starting rituals, use of air and magneto controls, what to do when you stall, how – existential – the brakes can be, and so on. It would be reasonable to expect him to have some initial teething issues, having hopped off an electric start, multi-cylinder behemoth and straight onto a comparatively tiny OHV Rudge single, but no, he kicked it once and off he went to the run starting point.

He made it look too easy; must be my brilliant instruction and nothing to do with any inherent riding skills he might possess. He didn’t even stall it at the end of my road, darn it, like I always do.

I didn’t really see much of him for the rest of the day, but when he returned the bike to me I asked how it went: “great”. Any problems? “No”. Oh. These bikes are supposed to be a challenge and demand a higher level of skill and concentration than modern stuff, helping one achieve a zen-like state of machine mastery.

A few months pass and a bike comes up for sale quite local to me. In fact I know the

vendor, who was selling off a small collection of elderly jun... valuable classics on behalf of the family of one of our long-standing section members who’d gone upstairs to ride in the clouds, where your machine never breaks down and it’s always sunny; Godspeed, Peter. Amongst these tarnished gems was an Ariel Red Hunter, a 500cc OHV single for those amongst you who are yet to discover the true path.

I mentioned it to Ian. Does it have girder forks? He asked. It did. Is there a V5? There was. Does it work? Ummm...

A few days later, Ian came to collect his... ‘project’ Ariel. From a distance it looked every inch the prewar thumper that rolled from the factory over eight decades earlier. Up close, not so much. Several months of work and procurement of parts, old and new lie ahead for him, but by hook or by crook that Red Hunter will ride the roads of Dorset once again this coming June on the GIANTS 2 run.

I follow his progress on social media; you can too if you wish. There’s been painting and plating, hammering and swearing, all the usual stuff when it comes to recommissioning a bike. Even better, he’s not going for the full concours restoration; that just leaves you with an ornament. Instead, it’s a smart yet patinated standard he’s after, with sensible upgrades to improve reliability and it’ll get used a lot, in all weathers.

I’m delighted that he’s bought this bike, as I was unconvinced he’d really had a good time riding my old Rudge as he’d said so little afterwards and thought it might be the whole ‘riding ancient bikes’ thing wasn’t for him. It’s not for everyone, I’ll concede, they can be quite daunting compared to a push button retro. But I was completely mistaken, he’d embraced the whole experience and has even joined the VMCC, crikey.

Finally, sometimes you just know this latest acquisition to your shed is going to be there a long time and become a dear friend. When that happens it seems appropriate that your lump of metal ceases being just a bike and becomes a person, so you give it a name. He’s called it Peter. Thanks Ian, I know he’d be delighted. Enjoy the ride. **CBG**

Paul Miles is a lifelong Londoner who rides every day and regards a prewar classic as perfectly suited to urban commuting. A contact lens specialist by profession, he nowadays appears to be a full-time rider, breaker and fixer of old bikes. Entirely fails to understand the concept of patina or winter lay-ups.

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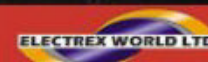
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#20
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BSA DBD34 Gold Star

Illustrations and Words by Martin Squires

The Genesis

The BSA Empire Star ridden at Brooklands by Walter L Handley on the 30th June 1937 became the genesis of the now infamous BSA Gold Star. Previous to this, Handley had actually retired from motorcycle racing two years earlier, after an incredible career achieving wins at the TT and the Ulster GP. By 1937 Handley had opened a motor dealership in Birmingham, was racing cars and flying aeroplanes, when a friend from the Midland Aero Club, Bert Perrigo, asked him to come out of retirement to race a modified BSA M23 Empire Star at Brooklands.

The 500cc machine had been developed by the competition department at BSA, managed by Perrigo, without the knowledge of the higher management. Len Crisp had built the bike and Jack Amott had tuned the engine. The standard iron cylinder and barrel were highly tuned with a high compression piston running at 13:1 compression, special cams, a racing magneto and run on methanol, the resultant engine output was 35bhp. The whole build was tailored to run at Brooklands; this included specific gearing in order to run on the banked track.

Handley agreed to compete in two races at the midweek meeting, the first was a three lap race with a nine second handicap. By the second lap he was in the lead and won by a huge margin. The overall average speed was 102.27mph and on the fastest lap the average was 107.57mph. Having lapped Brooklands at more than 100mph, Handley was awarded the Brooklands Gold Star for the 500cc class. Hot on the heels of this achievement, BSA knew that the award would be good for sales and so they released their first Gold Star model later that year.



Fast Forward...

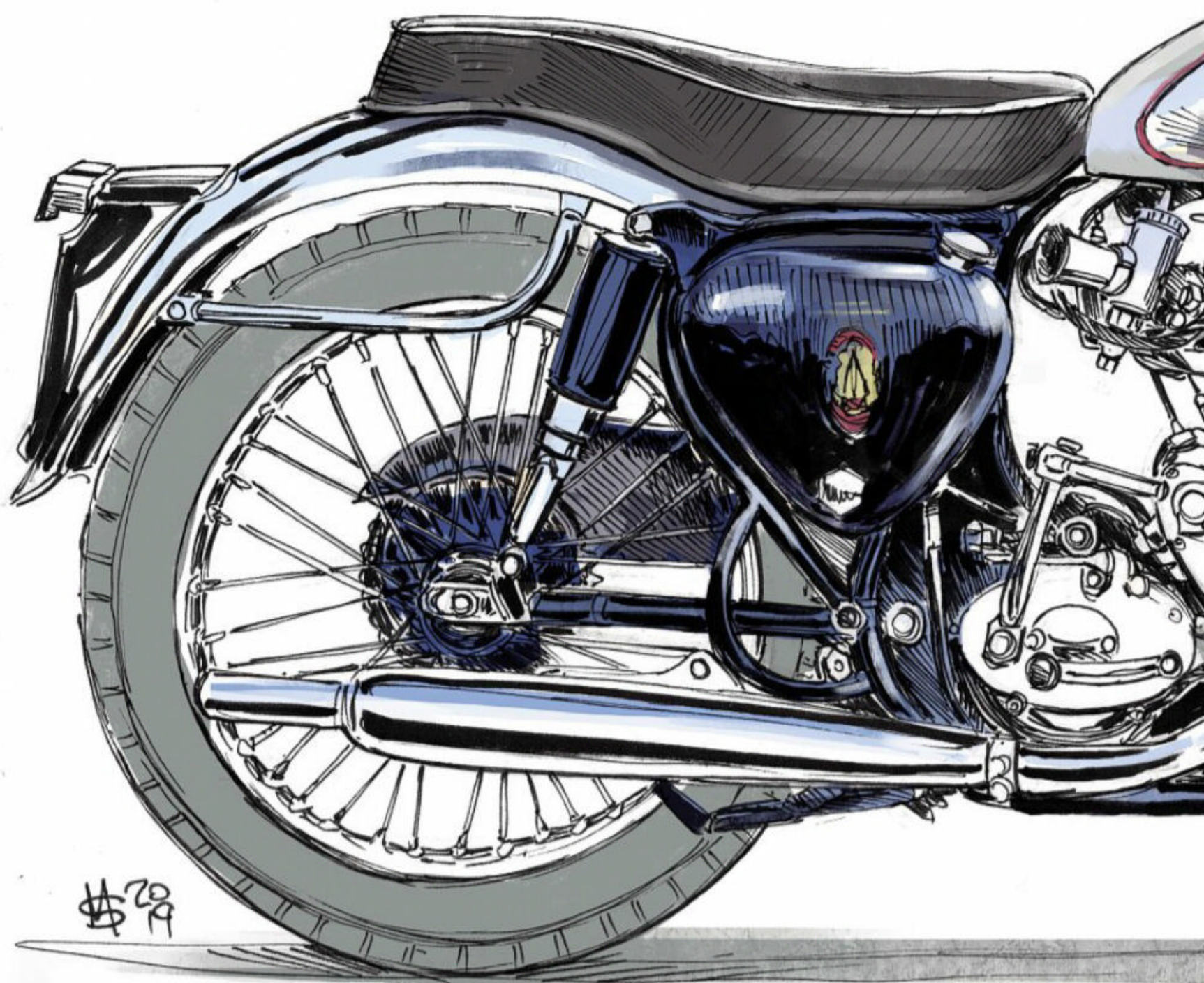
Six incarnations later in 1956, the DBD34 Gold Star was introduced. This would be the final development of the famous model and is considered by many to be the ultimate Gold Star.

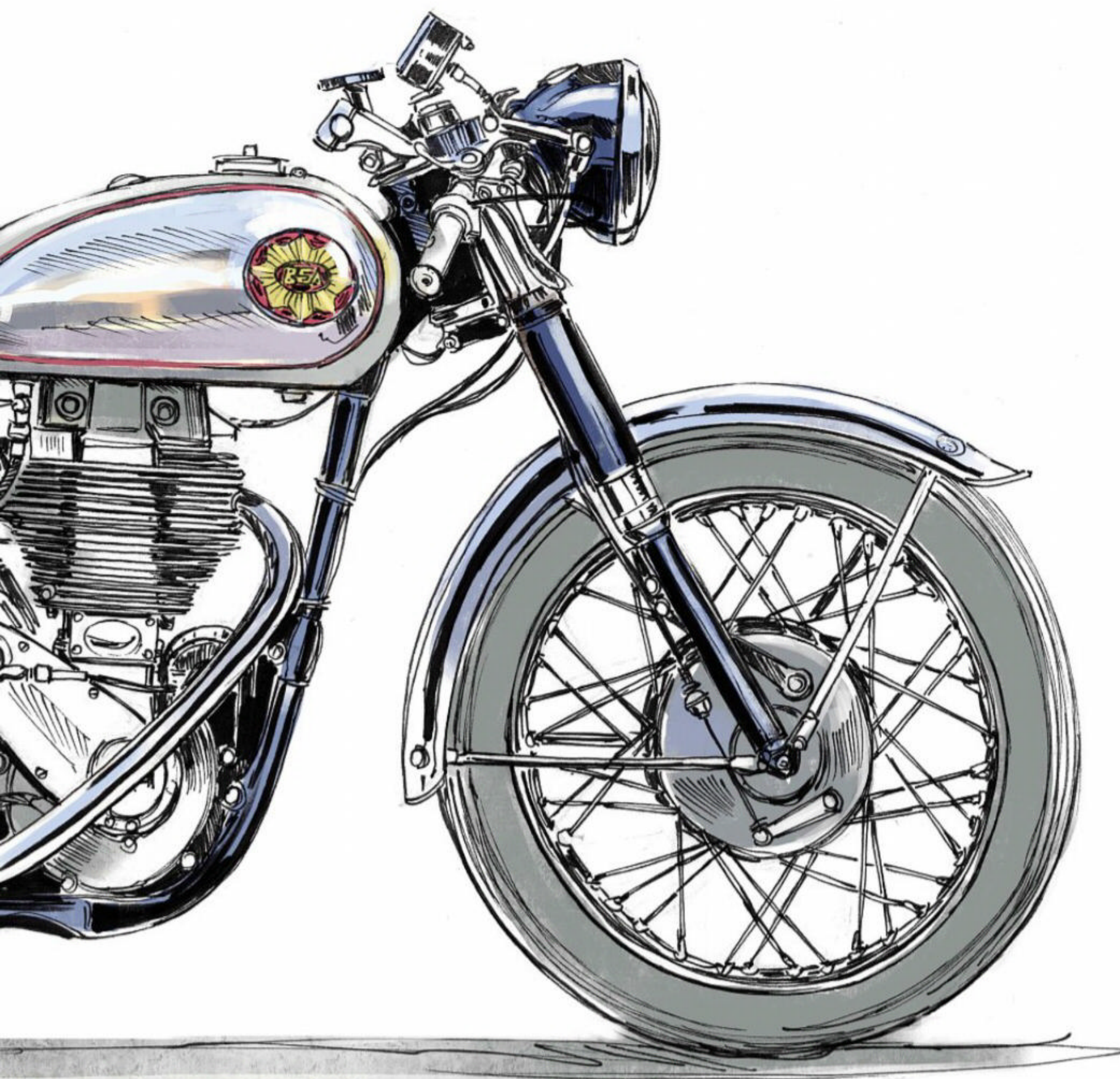
Seen as a promotional tool for BSA, yet rarely to be featured in BSA's published advertising, it was through competition that the Gold Star gained its status. The Gold Star was adapted to compete in all disciplines including trials, scrambles, grass track and sprinting.

The DBD34 Clubman was a road race machine, with its roots on the Isle of Man. Run between 1947 and 1956 the Clubman TT class was exclusively for production motorcycles. With the top riders banned from the class, riders were up and coming talents. To compete in the class, BSA built the ZB32 Gold Star in 1948. One hundred were produced in order to qualify their twenty one entries into the 1949 350cc junior race. From here onwards the Gold Star dominated the Clubman class, so much so it

Top: Dick Aldous at full chat on his DBD34 at Silverstone, 1956.

Above Right: Wal Handley BSA M23 Empire Star Replica.





References:
BSA_DBD34_001

Artist:
MARTIN SQUIRES
Date: April 2019

Sketchbook Travels:

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Drawing No: 035

Amendment: 0

BSA DBD34

Gold Star

Clubmans

was stopped in 1956 due to little inter-manufacturer competition; the original intention for the format. As a result BSA lost incentive to develop the Gold Star beyond 1956, with no direct production class to migrate to.

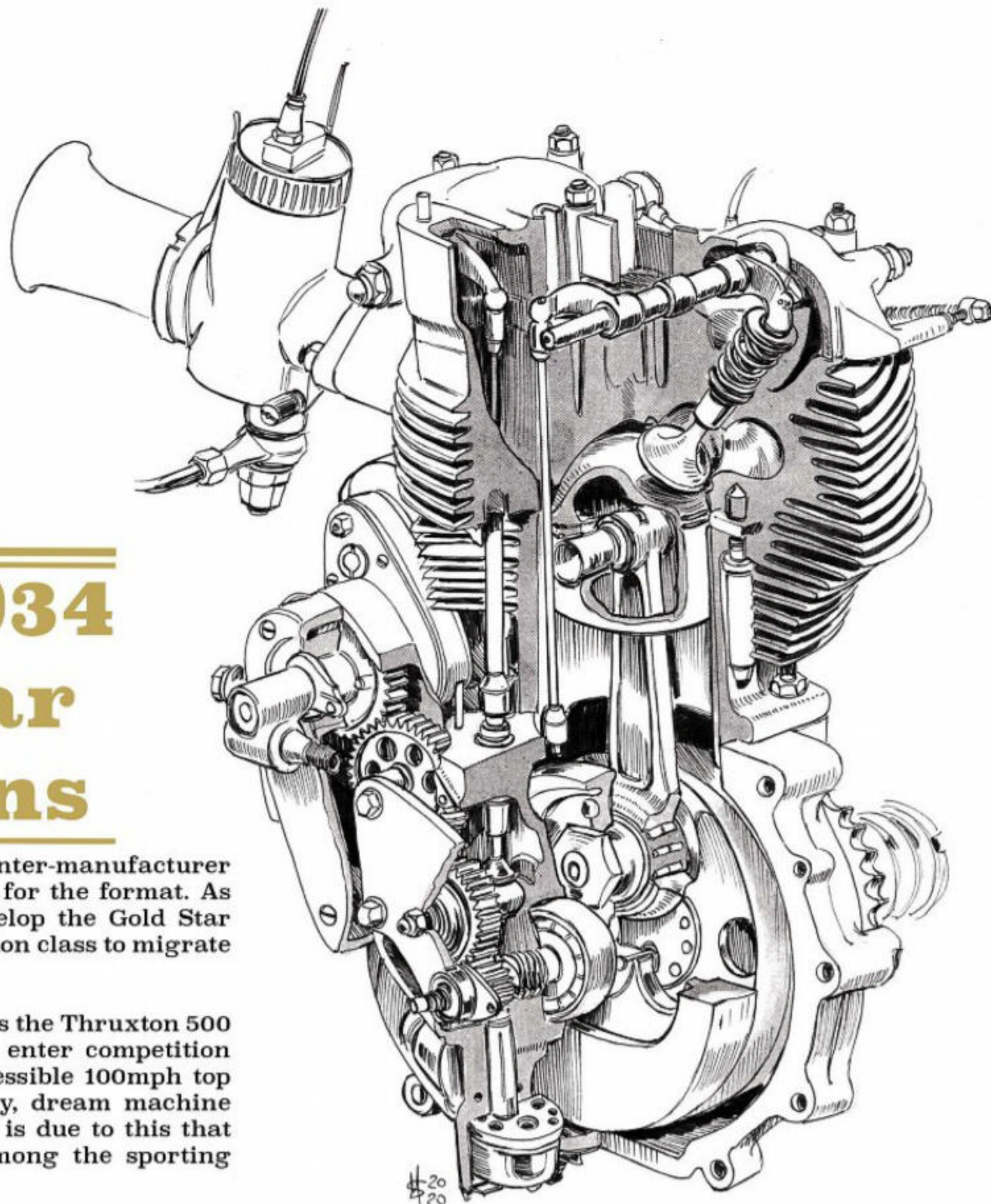
The Clubmans TT and events such as the Thruxton 500 enthused fledgling road racers to enter competition with the Gold Star, whilst the accessible 100mph top speed made the DBD34 a must buy, dream machine within the cafe racer fraternity. It is due to this that the DBD34 has become a king among the sporting classics.

As a stock motorcycle the DBD34 needed little changes in the eyes of the cafe racer crowd of the 1960s. The all-alloy engine housed in a duplex frame, offered performance and handling whilst the Burgess - BSA megaphone exhaust, provided that unmistakable bark.



Top: DBD34 engine cutaway.

Above: the iconic combination of low down clip ons and high mounted headlamp



The 500cc engine of the DBD34 wasn't too far removed from the previous unit in the DB32 (350cc). The only differences were; the allowance for a larger 1 1/2 inch Amal GP carburettor and a wider diameter inlet valve head. Elsewhere on the Clubmans there were more notable changes, the road race or RRT2 gear box was a close ratio unit with a first gear good for almost 60mph, great for road racing, obviously, but not intended for town traffic. As standard, the DBD34 came with a single-sided eight inch front brake, but BSA offered a full-width 7 1/2in unit. Some say there isn't too much difference between the two, but for looks the optional unit is the one.

Aesthetically BSA got it right when designing the Clubmans with its alloy mudguards, chrome and silver tank, matching Smiths speedo and rev counters and of course those clip-on bars. All this came from the racing development which rang true with its eager customer base the cafe racer crowd, where the Gold Star or "Goldie" was highly revered. All these elements account for the survival rate of original Gold Star machines, very few were amalgamated with other marques for racing, some hybrids used the Norton featherbed frame but this was more for competitive road race machines, not road going examples. The combination of rich racing history, a highly developed engine and links with the cafe racer culture, has made the DBD34 Gold Star one of the most desirable motorcycles of all time.

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PAUL D'ORLÉANS

Percy, who promenades

Our stateside old bike addict laments the old UK seaside cruisers

“Motorcyclists of a certain age and inclination were naturally drawn to them for the same reason: unintended procreation and forced marriage (kidding/not kidding). Thus we have a seaside promenade, upon which one promenades, in our typical manner of verbing our nouns.”

IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE SEA... OR MORE accurately, the seaside, and the construction of public walkways, or promenades, along the strand to keep the sand from our shoes. Adding pleasure piers, amusement parks and music venues to the promenade compounded the interest of a fun-seeking public, even in the midst of the Depression.

Youth will find a way to its opposite sex in any economic condition, and a tourist-laden seaside resort is a happy hunting ground for perambulators of breeding age, whether the hunter is on foot or a wheel. In short, places like Southend-on-Sea were the hottest pickup spots outside of a London dance hall, and motorcyclists of a certain age and inclination were naturally drawn to them for the same reason: unintended procreation and forced marriage (kidding / not kidding). Thus we have a seaside promenade, upon which one promenades, in our typical manner of verbing our nouns.

The introduction of any new technology brings unforeseeable cultural consequences, and so it was with the motorcycle: who knew it would become an essential tool for the mating rituals of a certain youth subculture? A subset of mostly London-based motorcyclists made their gathering point exactly these seaside promenades. They were noted for riding ‘modern, sporting mounts’ resplendent in extra chrome and straight-through exhausts, dressing snappily, and doing their best to attract the attention of so-called ‘seaside fairies’, or young ladies expecting to be courted by just such fellows.

These mostly male riders were disparagingly called the “seaside promenade Percy”, presumably in reference to Percy Shelley, the notorious 19th century libertine and dandy, who died young and beautiful in 1822. Shelley was scandalous for his Bohemian lifestyle and free love antics, and decamped for Italy to live a hassle-free life with his young genius bride, Mary Shelley, who wrote the first, most profound, and most misinterpreted treatise on the unexpected consequences of technology, called ‘Frankenstein: or, a Modern Prometheus.’

In the typical English gift for abbreviation, our obnoxious inter-war heroes were soon called simply Promenade Percys: a perfect double entendre.

Other names for motorcyclists revving along a

seaside walkway would be far less successful: an Esplanade Ernie or Roberto de Rambla would not do, because Promenade Percy is an even more demasculinizing term than the postwar taunt of ‘café racer’.

Digging through layers of subtext, ridiculing such amorous antics implies the proper focus of a young man’s energies is war, not love. Or, a less-bloody battle substitute like sport: in this case, motorcycle racing. That implication was made explicit in letters and editorials in the mid-1930s, when Percys were compared unfavourably with ‘real men’ like Jimmie Simpson, the square-jawed hero of the Norton factory racing team, who retired in 1934 with five European championships under his belt. (And oh how the Norton name has been sullied today – but that’s for another column).

Real men risked their necks in battlefields and on racetracks, while Promenade Percys and café racers merely jousting for attention, and had their own standards for chasing glory. It’s a classic conflict: youth bridling against the rules and expectations laid down by The Man.

The Promenade Percy was not the origin of the species now called the café racer: I argue in my book ‘Ton Up!’ that a subculture attracted to ‘racers on the road’ is evergreen and simply human nature, and dig back to an account of the joys of speed (30mph downhill!) on an 1869 Michaux pedal-velocipede.

But our Percy is generally recognised as the direct ancestor of the Ace Café denizens of the 1950s, and was excoriated in the press in exactly the same manner. From the *Western Gazette* of Feb 12, 1932: “Pukka riders must not be confused with those ‘bright Percys’, the promenade pests, who float up and down their main streets and seafronts adorned in spotless suits with carefully oiled hair, looking for some fair damsel to adorn their pillion seat.” A 1934 letter describes Percys “engaged in ‘Simpsoning’ up and down the seafront with their pillions bedecked in beach pyjamas.” From 1932 onwards such letters blossomed in *The Motor Cycle* every springtime, but their condemnation sounds more like envy to our modern ears.

And frankly, I can’t imagine much better than riding a chromium-plated 1930s sports motorcycle along the seaside, in a fantastic tweed suit, with my fairy damsel on the back. **CBG**

Paul D’Orléans is a writer, artist, sartorialist and photographer. He’s best known as The Vintagent for his long-running blog and judges concours such as the Quail and Villa d’Este, consults for Bonhams auctions, shoots digital and tintype photographs, and is curating an exhibit on café racers at the Sturgis Motorcycle Museum.

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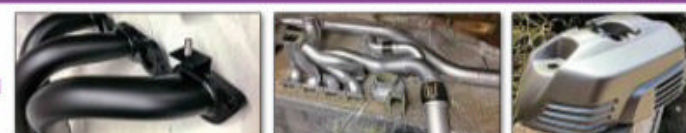
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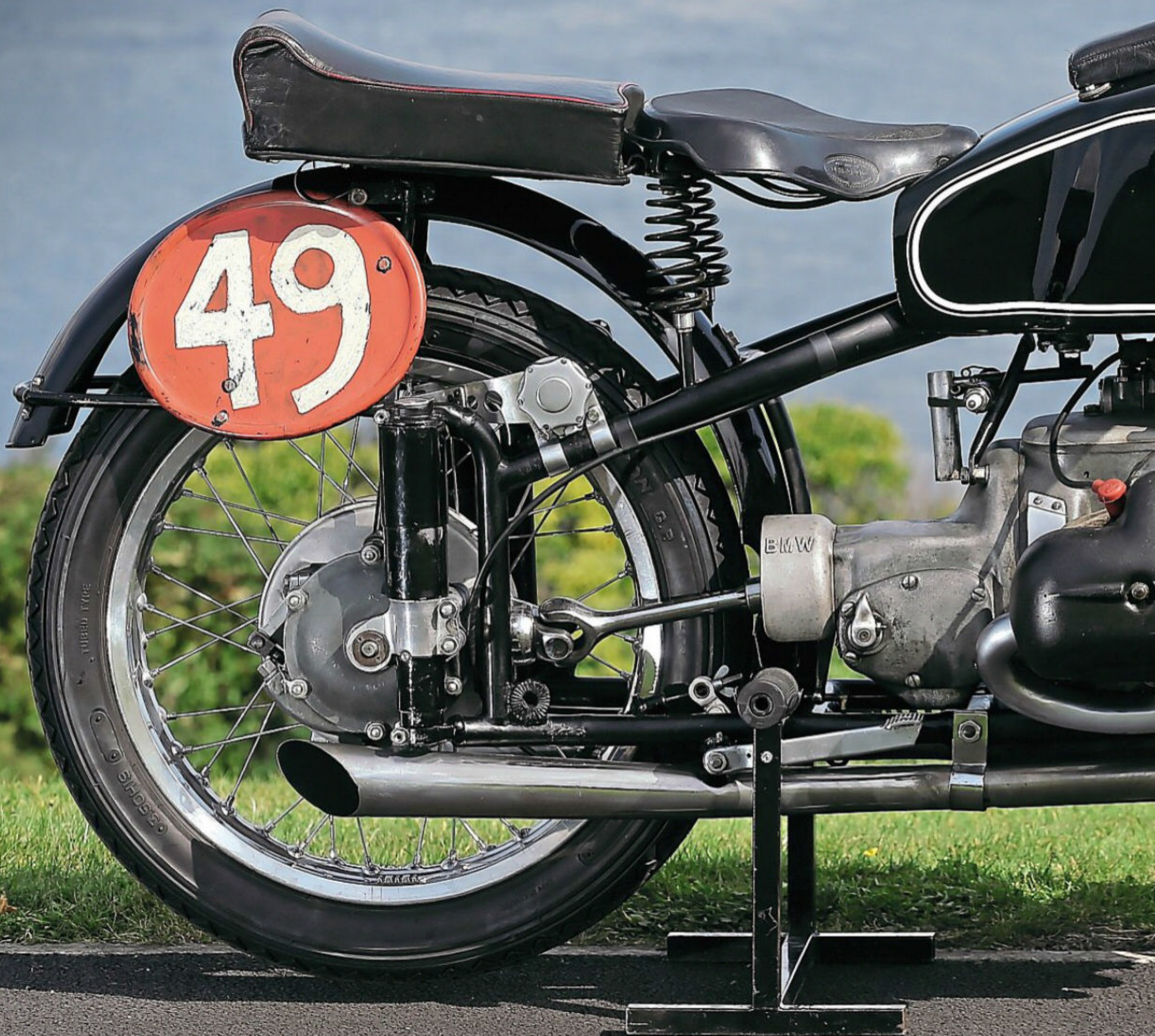
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A labour of love:

How John Surtees saved Georg Meier's
1939 BMW Kompressor from oblivion



WORDS: STUART BARKER

IT WAS THE BIKE THAT TURNED HIM ON TO RACING, and if it wasn't for the late, great John Surtees, this most historic BMW might well have been lost forever. After being ridden to victory in the 1939 Senior TT by Georg Meier, the bike disappeared during the war, was later raced (and crashed) in postwar France, was then bought by an Englishman and later shipped to the US before Surtees tracked it down, restored it and, finally, returned it to the BMW factory.

This is the incredible story of the supercharged RS 255/1 Kompressor – the bike that beat the Brits. ➤



You're looking at a very important motorcycle. The RS 255/1 Kompressor was the technologically-advanced weapon used by BMW to win its first TT in 1939.

When Germany's Georg Meier won the 1939 Senior he became the first non-British rider to win the race since its inauguration in 1907. This is the bike that ended 37 years of British domination, so it's somewhat ironic that it was a Brit who proved to be the bike's saviour – who tracked it down, authenticated it, restored it and preserved it for posterity.

John Surtees is a true motorsport legend who achieved what no other man is ever likely to do. After winning the 500cc world championship in 1960 (his seventh world title on a bike), he switched his attention to four wheels and, four years later, became the only man in history to win both motorcycle grands prix and Formula 1 world championships. Even the great Valentino Rossi considered that challenge a bridge too far.

When Meier won that landmark TT race, Surtees' record-breaking achievements were still decades away. He was just five years old, but already showing an interest in motorcycles thanks to his dad's passion for grasstrack racing. When he saw a picture of Meier on the RS 255 Kompressor (the RS stands for Renn

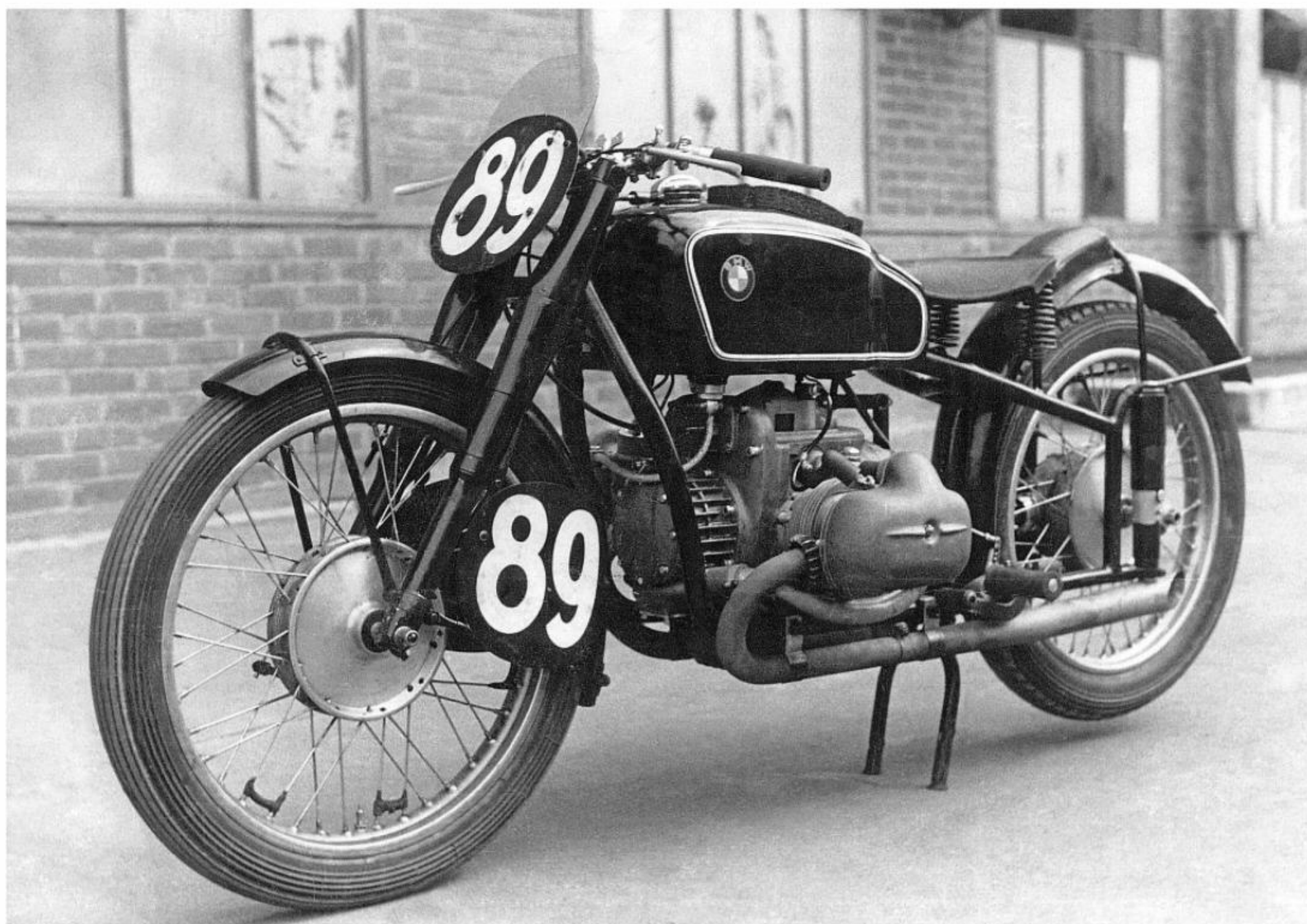
Sport, or Racing Sport in English) in full flight at the TT, something happened. As inexplicable as it is to a child of that age, the sight of Meier and the BMW struck a chord that resonated for decades to come, and a lifelong fixation with the Kompressor began. It would prove to be a very fruitful one.

What actually happened to the RS 255 after it won the TT is a bit of a mystery and various conflicting stories are in circulation. What is certain is the bike remained the property of BMW and was never given to Meier. No man knows the bike's history better than Fred Jakobs, head of the motorcycle department in the BMW Group archive, who takes up the story:

"We're not completely sure what happened to the bike during the war," he admits. "BMW's racing department had been sourced out by 1939 to a little castle at Berg, Lake Starnberg, near Munich – all the drawings, all the tools, and all the bikes. There's one story that Georg Meier picked up a Kompressor race bike from there and stored it in a stable during the war, but it's not clear exactly which bike it was – you didn't have all the documentation that you get with race bikes nowadays.

"But we do know that a French motorcycle dealer called Charrier – who





“There’s one story that Georg Meier picked up a Kompressor race bike from there and stored it in a stable during the war but it’s not clear exactly which bike it was - you didn’t have all the documentation that you get with race bikes nowadays.”



SPECS

1939 BMW RS 255 KOMPRESSOR

ENGINE: 492.6cc, air-cooled, dohc, horizontally-opposed flat twin with Zoller supercharger

BORE/STROKE: 66mm x 72mm

DRY WEIGHT: 138kg (304lb)

POWER: 60bhp @ 7000rpm

TOP SPEED: 136mph

owned a shop called Rapid Motos in Saint-Cloud near Paris – owned the TT-winning bike by 1946.

“We don’t know if it was officially bought or if it was stolen by French soldiers, but he had it for a long time in his shop as a big attraction – ‘see the TT-winning bike from 1939!’ He also raced the bike in May, 1946 and crashed it in practice at the Grand Prix De La Resistance in Paris. Two weeks later he did a little demonstration ride in Saint-Cloud and we also know the bike was raced in Brussels too.

“Then, in 1962, an Englishman called Charles Locker bought the bike from Charrier. Locker was a partner of the British BMW importer MLG. We don’t know what condition the bike was in, but in the 1970s Locker sold it to a man called Ted Pratt. He took it back to add to his classic bike collection in America. It was Mr Pratt who eventually sold the bike to John Surtees in 1982.

“Surtees restored it and rode it at several classic bike events before eventually selling it back to BMW in 2002, with the

official handover being at Goodwood in 2003.”

Although he is often associated with MV Agusta, Surtees had long enjoyed a good relationship with BMW, and it was this connection that would lead to the re-discovery of the Kompressor.

“I was in contact with John Surtees and was involved in the deal to get the bike back for BMW,” Jakobs says. “I asked him why he was so fascinated with this bike. Of course, he had famously bought a BMW 507 sports car in 1957 with the money he got from MV Agusta for winning his first world championship. But as a very young child he had seen a picture of Georg Meier at the TT on the Kompressor and he said there was something about Georg’s extreme riding position and the fact that both wheels of the bike were off the ground in the photograph that really captured his imagination.

“In the 1950s he actually tried to get a contract with BMW to race our bikes but we had very good German riders at that time and business was not so good, so we never made a contract. But he was ▶



“The spoke nipples are made of aluminium which might only save about three grams on each one, but there are 40 spokes per wheel, so that’s a 240g reduction in unsprung weight.”



friends with BMW’s factory rider, Walter Zeller, and BMW’s racing director, so he ordered a special 507 car with 30bhp more than standard and four disc brakes instead of two. So John always had a good connection with BMW and when he was talking to Walter Zeller and Dr Helmut Krackowizer (a classic bike expert from Austria) in 1981 about what happened to Georg Meier’s Kompressor, they told him it had been advertised for sale in an American collectors’ magazine, called *Hemmings Motor News*. Everybody who saw the advert thought it was a joke – that it couldn’t be real – so nobody wanted to buy the bike! But Mr Krackowizer contacted the owner, Ted Pratt, who insisted the bike was genuine, so John Surtees got involved and eventually went to America to buy the bike.”

The Kompressor could not have fallen into better hands. Surtees was renowned for his private collection of classic cars and bikes and, with his contacts in both the two-wheeled and four-wheeled worlds, he knew just the right people to bring Meier’s Kompressor back to original condition. “John had a very good collection of classic cars and bikes and he had great

contacts and knew all the best experts to restore them accurately,” Jakobs says.

“He was assisted by BMW to restore the Kompressor in the 1980s and had the best specialist BMW engineer to help him. When the bike was restored and they tried to bump start it, it fired up within five metres, so it was a perfect restoration.”

The RS M255/1 Kompressor is still a technical marvel today but back in 1939, it might as well have been from another planet. This was German engineering at its finest and it wasn’t just the engine that made it special. “Not only did it have the supercharged Kompressor engine, but the bike was also extremely light,” Jakobs says. “It only weighed around 138kg (304lb). Most of the Kompressor’s rivals weighed between 18kg and 22kg more than this. There was a lot of modern technology involved in the construction of the frame. It featured conical oval tubes and it was very thick where there was a lot of weight from the engine, but very thin in other places. And there was a lot of magnesium and aluminium used in its construction. Even the handlebars were smaller than standard and made from aluminium – and the rear brake pedal had big holes in

John Surtees: The man who saved the Kompressor

John Surtees is a motorsport legend. A six-time TT winner, seven-time motorcycle world champion and Formula 1 car racing world champion, he was also the man who brought Georg Meier's BMW Kompressor back to life.

Interviewed before his death in 2017, this is his side of the story:

"I was evacuated to Yorkshire during the war and one of the things that went with us was a tea chest full of magazines. One of the top magazines was of the 1939 TT with a picture of Georg Meier practically standing up on the footrests as he tackled Bray Hill on the BMW Kompressor. It's a famous picture and, as a kid, it really fascinated me and that's when I fell in love with the Kompressor. I just loved the whole look of it and it just caught my imagination as a youngster.

"The bike was in bits when I first saw it in America in 1981. But I checked the part numbers and chassis numbers with BMW in Munich and we established that it was genuine. It was quite a thrill to have found Georg Meier's actual TT-winning bike after all those years.

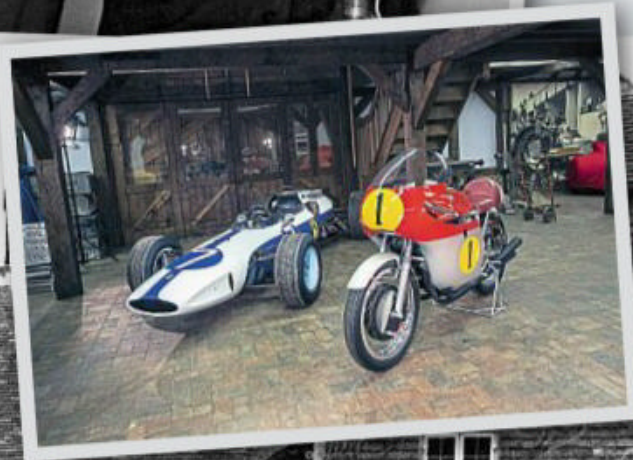
"Walter Zeller's former BMW works mechanic helped me a lot with the

restoration work, including the engine. We did the gearbox in the UK, which was in good condition, but the supercharger had suffered because the bike had been run in France without castor oil being mixed into the fuel. So it was basically clapped-out, but we re-made some parts for it and got it working again.

"I rode the bike extensively once the restoration was complete. I rode it in New Zealand, Australia, Italy, Germany, Austria and the UK. The first time I rode it was at Goodwood and it did feel very different to ride compared to anything I was used to. We kept the left-hand gear-change on it so I had to adapt to that and I remember thinking it sounded a bit rumble when we started it up, but as soon as I pulled away the power band really impressed me. It just powered through the torque and it was immediately obvious why it had been such a competitive machine before the war. It had such a willing power unit and the supercharger was superb – it didn't just come in at the top-end of the rev range, it was all through the power curve. It was a very rideable bike and it probably would have felt way ahead of its time in 1939 compared to the competition.

"I was very, very sad to see the bike go

when I sold it back to BMW. But at that time we were trying to finance another racing project and BMW came to me and said 'Look, we really, really want that bike and you can always have it back any time for demonstration rides, so you won't lose it completely'. And that's what persuaded me – I certainly wouldn't have let it go into private hands. I have a great affection for the Kompressor and I had a great time with it – I would have loved to have ridden it round the TT course, that's for sure!"





it, rather than being solid metal, to save weight. The whole bike was designed to be light – it was not a case of building a bike first and then trying to strip weight off it. The spoke nipples are made of aluminium, which might only save about three grams on each one, but there are 40 spokes per wheel so that's a 240g reduction in unsprung weight.

"Its lightness was the bike's main advantage. If you compare it to the bikes in the 1939 Junior TT (for 350cc machines) it was still the second lightest bike and it would have been the sixth lightest bike on the 250cc grid! So the Kompressor was a fantastic machine but, of course, in Georg Meier, it also had a fantastic rider."

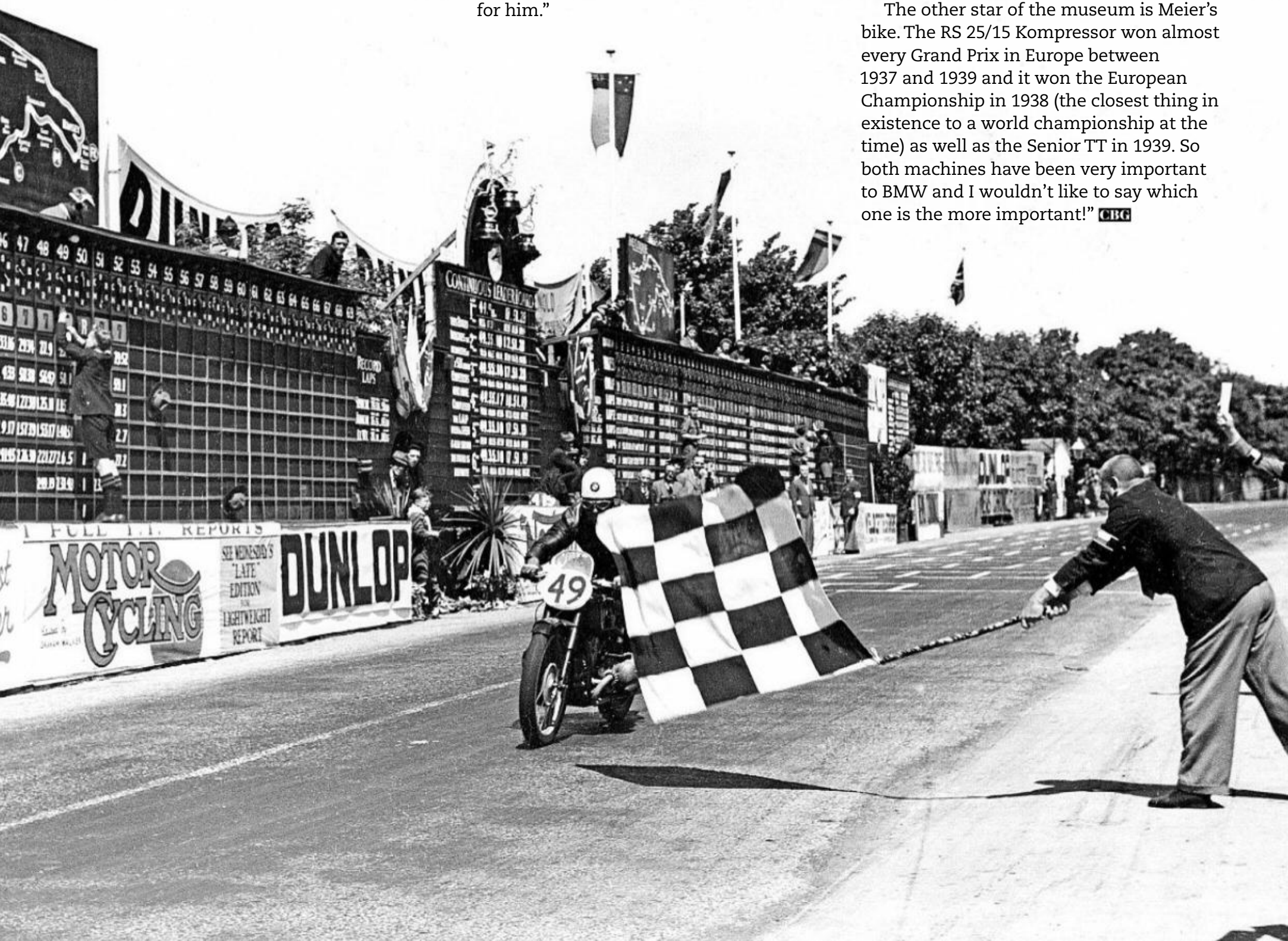
Meier was reunited with the bike at the 1989 TT and he completed a lap of honour on it to mark the 50th anniversary of his famous Senior race win. "Georg had a great time at the TT in 1989," Jakobs says. "He was so happy to be there, and to do a lap of honour on the same track where he took his most famous win, 50 years earlier, was something very special for him. He also really enjoyed a nice dinner and evening with his team-mate from 1939, Jock West, who finished second in the race and there were even some members of his old crew at the dinner – mechanics and racing managers – so it was a great event for him."

Sadly, Meier died in February 1999 at the age of 88, but his bike was ridden in the Classic TT Lap of Honour in 2014 by his nephew, Wolfgang. Allowing such a historic and precious machine to be taken out of wraps in BMW's Munich museum and actually ridden is a brave decision but it's one of which Jakobs wholeheartedly approves. "To hear the bike running is fantastic and the bike is made for running, not just for display," he says. "It has a fantastic sound and it even has a fantastic smell when it's running – it lives!"

"Of course, any expert can walk around the bike and spot all the technical details but to actually hear it running and see it being ridden is another thing altogether. The bike only leaves the museum once or twice a year, so it is always a special occasion."

Jakobs believes the RS 255/1 is one of the most important bikes in BMW's collection. "I would say we have two truly iconic bikes in the BMW museum," he says. "One is the supercharged R37 used by Ernst Jakob Henne to set the land speed record in 1930 and again in '32, '34, '35, '36 and '37. Henne reached an ultimate speed of 173.68mph in 1937 and that was not bettered until 1951, so BMW held the motorcycle land speed record for 22 years with that bike."

The other star of the museum is Meier's bike. The RS 25/15 Kompressor won almost every Grand Prix in Europe between 1937 and 1939 and it won the European Championship in 1938 (the closest thing in existence to a world championship at the time) as well as the Senior TT in 1939. So both machines have been very important to BMW and I wouldn't like to say which one is the more important!" **CBC**



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WORDS: DAVE 'LET'S TURBO IT' MANNING

PHOTOGRAPHY: TRIUMPH

TRIUMPH THRUXTON RS

A faux classic taken further towards modernity

When Matt rode the 1200cc Triumph Thruxton R for this magazine back in July of 2018, it was the very sportiest version of the Hinckley factory's parallel twin output. However, new for 2020 is the RS version of the Thruxton, with more in the way of performance-oriented parts and specification.





FITTING INTO TRIUMPH'S MODEL SPEC nomenclature, the RS becomes the top of the Thruxton Bonneville range, sliding into the line-up ahead of the R and the standard model.

What is a little confusing is that the RS is only £600 more than the R model, yet has a host of upgraded components, and is also a bike that seems to be aimed at a very focussed market share – a café racer version of the Bonneville range with all the latest gizmos and performance of a truly modern machine, priced at £13,000, will have to be a rather impressive machine if it is to gain a considerable level of sales...

While the styling remains resolutely Thruxton, the high spec that enables the RS suffix brings both increased power and reduced weight, with some subtle tweaking of pretty much all the major components of the more basic Thruxton models.

The increase in power comes in the form of a number of upgrades to the 1200cc water-cooled powerplant, which include a revision to the cam profile, higher compression pistons (now at 12:1) and a shaving of weight from some of

the engine components, including the 270° crank, the clutch, a magnesium cam cover, the addition of a rare-earth alternator, thin-walled engine covers and, thanks to the crank's reduction in mass, the engine's balance shafts have been able to be slimmed down too, bringing a total of 6kg weight saving.

The end result is an increase of 8bhp over the Thruxton R, with a total of a claimed 104bhp. However, a convenient side effect is that there is an increased torque figure (of 83ft-lb) that hits 700rpm lower down the rev ranger than the previous torque high point, yet the engine also revs harder than previously, peaking 500rpm higher. Unsurprisingly, this perkier, more responsive engine is much more appealing from a rider's perspective, as various riders had considered last year's 1200cc Thruxton to rev a little slowly, and to not have the instant drive that a large capacity twin should have.

Essentially, what Triumph have done is what they did to the original twins – a regular revision to engine and chassis components to steadily improve the breed.

As is usual for a fuel-injected motorcycle, the RS has three riding modes – Road, Rain and Sport – each mode featuring a dedicated throttle map and also, new on the RS, a dedicated traction control setting for each mode. The modes can be changed on the fly, while the traction control can only be turned off at a standstill, and while the modes stay as chosen when the bike is turned off, once the ignition is turned off, the traction controls reverts to 'on'.

Of course, for a café racer, fine handling and sharp brakes are just about as important as a powerful engine. So, for the new bike the chassis was due to have some revisions too, with Öhlins developing a pair of fully adjustable piggy-back rear suspension units to work in tandem with a pair of equally as adjustable Showa 'big piston' forks in the now normal upside-down configuration.

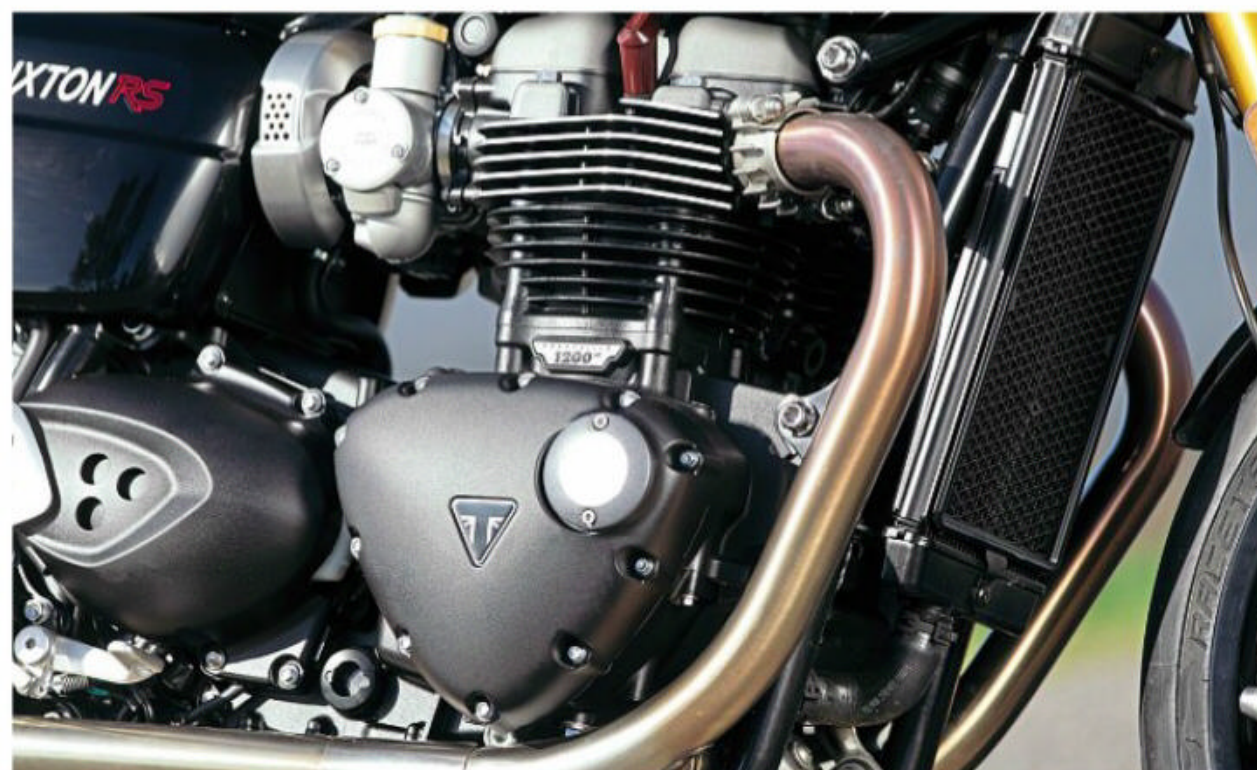
The high tech shocks are matched by high tech brakes, with Brembo Monobloc (cast as one piece, rather than in two halves) four piston M50 radial calipers biting twin 320mm floating discs.

Don't grab a handful of front brake like you'd have to with a Seventies Bonnie, just a single finger, or two at the most, will be all you need for any situation, including emergency panic braking, although as like any other modern machine, the Thruxton has ABS so you'll not lock the front wheel when you grab a fist full of front brake, although you may end up with a top yoke / denture interface scenario.

The RS also has a lighter clutch than the previous R, able to be operated with just an index finger if necessary – which will be hard to believe if you're used to the clutch from a Seventies Bonnie. With the glitch-free fuel injection, this makes the Thruxton a breeze to ride around town, although it might give a little more wrist and back ache when equipped with the optional Café Racer pack that was fitted to the bike that Matt rode nearly two years ago, and which is also available for the new RS, with clip-on bars and sleek headlight fairing.

Perhaps the only niggle with day-to-day riding comes when you need to fill up with fuel, as the perfectly styled Monza filler cap flips up to reveal a second fuel cap that needs to be unlocked with the key. Once unlocked, it needs to be put somewhere while you fill up, which totally negates the point of the flip-up Monza cap! Triumph suggest that the RS can manage 58mpg, although during my ride it was slightly lower than that, dipping below 50mpg, although that means that the 14.5 litre tank will take you easily in excess of 150 miles.

The free-revving nature of the new engine means that it surges through the rev range, with accessible power from tickover right through to the higher redline. The power level and delivery is ideal for tortuous, twisting tarmac, with the near-flat torque curve giving instant ▶





“Unsurprisingly, this perkier, more responsive engine is much more appealing from a rider’s perspective, as various riders had considered last year’s 1200cc Thruxton to rev a little slowly”



Playing at being Malcolm Uphill on your own personal version of the Isle of Man TT course has never been so much fun...



grunt whenever required. And with the improved chassis componentry, it's possible to use all the power, and all of the Metzeler Racetec RR tyres. Playing at being Malcolm Uphill on your own personal version of the Isle of Man TT course has never been so much fun...

Unlike traditional café racers, the new Trumpet also has practical considerations, like the impressive LED headlight, an underseat USB charging socket, and an immobiliser built into the Thruxton-branded key. As per the previous model, the half fairing is an optional extra, but in my mind it should be standard fitment for the sportier version, but then we go back to the fact that the RS is a mere £600 more than the R, and fitting the fairing as standard would raise the price point.

As it stands, I can't see why anyone would opt for the marginally cheaper model, but for the fact that the RS is only available in two rather muted colour schemes – all black (Jet Black) and a satin finish black and grey (Matt Storm Grey and Matt Silver Ice) – and in my opinion neither look as nice as the red, silver or British Racing Green that the basic Thruxton and Thruxton R are available in. Although the blacked-out engine and wheels of the RS do look rather exclusive, and will probably be easier to keep clean too.

Coming back to the price, thirteen grand is a lot of money, especially bearing



in mind that Triumph have recently announced that their new 660cc Street Triple starts at just £7900, and the Royal Enfield twins are only just over a third of the price of the RS. But the Triumph has an impeccable finish, and while it is more

expensive than a Hinckley Bonneville, it's still cheaper, easier to find, and excels better in every way than a genuine Thruxton Bonneville. Which is probably something that a classic bike magazine shouldn't really admit to... **CBG**

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Remembering Kawasaki Baby Triples

Specialist of all things green, Rod Ker reminisces about the smallest of Kawasaki's two-stroke triples, the KH250, and revisits his youth





IT'S CHRISTMAS! WELL, ACTUALLY IT'S not, but somewhere in the dark recesses of my brain there's a short circuit linking the festive season with Kawasaki's baby triples. No doubt a passing psychiatrist could come up with all sorts of worrying reasons why, but it's really quite simple, doctor, and it mainly concerns the unmistakable noise made by the 250 Green Meanies, as they 'jingle jangle all the way', probably en route to the nearest spark plug supplier.

Beyond that, all the lyrics of 'Jingle Bells' could be seen as an expression of Kawasaki's, 'Let the Good Times Roll' philosophy, minus the gravel rash. Oh, what fun it is to ride in a one-horse sleigh, indeed, although 28 horses is nearer the mark, unless there's something serious wrong.

Let me give you a brief history lesson, starting in 1969, when the H1 500, aka the Mach III and/or SS, was launched to gasps of amazement. 60bhp at 7500rpm was the claim, and no-one doubted it. On paper,

that's about the same as various other 'superbikes' of the era, but the Norton Commando, Triumph Trident, Harley Sportster and Honda Four all needed 50% more displacement to achieve it.

The H1's 'Unique Scaring Proposition' was the way the engine produced power, not its quantity. One minute you're jangling along at 40mph wondering if the throttle cable has snapped or a spark plug has drowned in four-star, and the next millisecond it hits 6000rpm and takes off like a proverbial scalded feline. If this happened in the middle of a wet corner you definitely had a problem, but there was little you could do about it, apart from pretend you were Evel Knievel and be nice to A&E staff.

Kawasaki didn't really care about that, because the 500's express purpose was to cover a standing quarter-mile as fast as possible, which was the American dream in the 1960s. It made perfect sense to create a motorcycle with an engine that produced the highest specific output for its weight.

In a nutshell, two-strokes generate twice as many propulsive bangs as four-strokes and have very few moving parts (let's try to forget their propensity to seize and have no moving parts).

More cylinders generally means more power, but three-pots tend to be the optimum unless it's water-cooled, but that puts the weight back on...

So, make mine a triple, with potential embarrassing issues about ruinous fuel consumption and noxious exhaust emissions largely swept under the carpet, for now.



“60bhp at 7500rpm was the claim... that’s about the same as various other ‘superbikes’ of the era, but the Norton Commando, Triumph Trident, Harley Sportster and Honda Four all needed 50% more displacement to achieve it.”

You could get away with destroying the planet in 1969, but things were about to change dramatically, thanks to the American Environmental Protection Agency, as formed the following year by the totally trustworthy President Richard Nixon. With increasingly tough legislation in the pipeline and a literal cloud hanging over California, it became apparent that current two-stroke engines didn’t fit into the clean green new world.

KILLING THE PLANET, YOU SAY?

Kawasaki’s previous ultimates, disregarding the W-series, BSA A10 lookalikes, were the two-stroke 250 Samurai and 350 Avenger twins, which featured rotary inlet valves. In theory, an engine of this ilk should have been more efficient and less polluting than the basic two-stroke piston-ported induction used in the triples.

Honda had cleverly stuck with four-strokes from the beginning, but the rest of the Japanese Big Four had to divert attention away from ‘dirty’ ring-dingers,

with mixed results. Yamaha produced the XS1/XS2/XS650 twins, which beat the Brits at their own game, but then they tried again with the disastrous TX750, a warranty claim on wheels. Meanwhile, Kawasaki started from scratch and created the sublime Z1, while Suzuki’s triples were eventually ousted by the four-stroke GS-series (allegedly copied from Kawasaki).

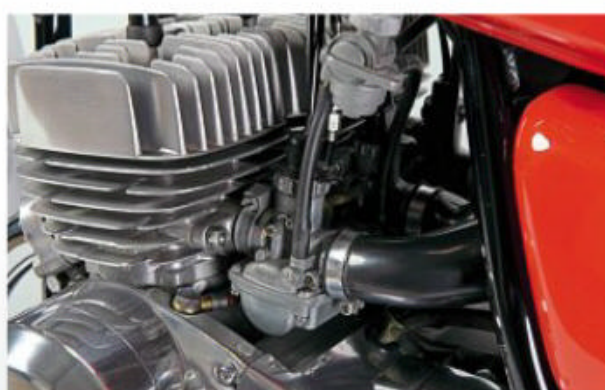
While air-cooled, two-stroke motorcycles seemed to be living on borrowed time in the 1970s, car manufacturers, notably Ford, did spend pots of R&D wonga in an effort to make ‘strokes clean and green enough to meet legislation. And don’t forget that in the early 1980s the Yamaha RD500, Suzuki RG500 Gamma and Honda NS400R proved that liquid-cooled ‘strokes were anything but dead. Kawasaki’s contribution at the time was a rotary valve 125 single available in either restricted or ‘Full Power’ versions, the latter being about as fast as the last KH250.

In the 1990s Kawasaki fought back with the 250 KR-1 and KR-1S, but the Suzuki

RGV250 and Aprilia RS250 (which used the same engine) could be seen as the ultimate 20th Century ring-dingers – with reasonable fuel consumption, hardly any smoke, and boasting the same power output as a H1, from half the capacity. All these will soon be classic enough to feature in CBG, have no doubt!

To return to Green Meanies in the Seventies, despite US President Tricky Dicky’s interference, Kawasaki, now with US-based R&D, persevered with the triples. Sadly, taming the noise and emissions resulted in less power, delivered in a less dramatic way. Initially, the 500 was the only member of the family, but this was joined by the S2 (350), S1 (250), H2 (750) and the swansong S3 (400). These transmogrified into KHs (Kawasaki Highway) from 1976, although there’s some argument about whether a KH750 ever existed.

In the early years, triples of any variety were hard to find in the UK, as imports were handled in a small way until Kawasaki UK was established in 1974. This being the age when learners could jump straight on to a 250, the S1 and its A/B/C variants were in great demand, originally a snip at just over £500. Despite rapid inflation and fuel crises, by the time the KH250 hit the streets the price was still only £599. Unsurprisingly, this was almost exactly the same as the Suzuki GT250, Yamaha RD250 and Honda CJ250T. To put that into perspective, a gallon of four-star cost about 80p and a Triumph Bonnie 750 was listed at £999.



“Interestingly, the four-stroke Honda wasn’t hugely better in fuel efficiency terms, and also it wasn’t much slower in general use.”



Although motorcyclists generally subscribe to the bigger is better philosophy (thank goodness for Damart), I put it to you that the overlooked 250 triple was, and is, the most charismatic bike of the bunch, even if I might be the only one who bursts into a spontaneous chorus of Jingle Bells on sight.

Firstly, call me a wimp, but I find outright power of little importance these days. Besides, speed usually comes from larger, heavier motorcycles with bigger engines, which tend to be harder to drag out of the shed and kick into life. Yes, I have heard a rumour that some bikes now have high-tech things like electric starters, but a Kwak 249cc two-stroke triple weighs less than 350lb (158kg) and can be fired up with minimal effort. I daresay you could turn over each tiny 83cc pot by hand.

By the mid 1970s the KH250 may not have been the fastest quarter-litre any more, but it had charm by the bucket-load, unlike the devastatingly dull Honda CJ250T. In 1977 *Motorcycle Mechanics* staged a 250 shoot-out, pitting the Japanese Big Four's L-plate offerings against each other on an extended tour of England and Wales, in freezing weather.

Starting from the centre of the known universe – Peterborough and then hopping over to Snetterton for some track action, on day two the Suzuki GT250 and its heroic pilot retired hurt in Melton Mowbray (those pork pies can be lethal), leaving the rest to head across country and tackle the Welsh mountains.

Day three took in some more of the principality, and a spot of photography before a long, cold, dark ride back to base.

The Suzuki retired hurt before any conclusions were drawn, but the others were remarkably close in performance, on the road or track. Interestingly, the four-stroke Honda wasn't hugely better in fuel efficiency terms, and also it wasn't much slower in general use either.

Journalists were tough in the Seventies. After three 250-mile days of ruthless thrashing, the Kawasaki emerged as the best-looking and most 'grown-up' of the bunch. In a niche in which style was prized above everything, this was enough

to get a signature on an HP form, sending another clueless teenager out on the streets with a provisional licence.

For my sins, I was one of the L-plated clueless. Being of Scottish descent, hire purchase was never a reality in my family, so the 250 phase was spent aboard a series of decrepit Hondas and a Ram Air Suzuki GT250 that seized its crankshaft. Twice. They're all like that, sir... After passing the test I moved on to big boys' toys, as was the natural progression, but unlike the rest I didn't abandon the lower orders completely. I even briefly owned a Honda CB250N (aka SuperDream), a much maligned machine that helped boost UK



bike sales to record levels in 1979 and 1980, before new licensing legislation took effect.

The law said learners would be restricted to 125cc and maybe enough power to clock 65mph. Unsurprisingly, 250 sales nose-dived, causing a knock-on effect in the rest of the market. This was bad news for the trade and particularly painful for those who owned a quarter-litre and saw it depreciate rapidly. A lot of motorcycle dealers went bust in the 1980s and 1990s as a direct consequence of the new legislation.

Those of us who lived through the era of ton-up L-plate lunacy can look back and appreciate that something had to be done in the name of road safety. The government was trying to preserve the teenage species, not just being a spoilsport.

Faced with the loss of a crucial market sector, the Big Four hit back. Honda gave us the CB250RS single, Suzuki drastically lightened their two-pot twins, Yamaha appropriated the RD250LC from the racetrack, and Kawasaki... ermm, didn't do much, really, at least not with the 250 and 400cc 'stokers.

Following the Z1's lead, a range of four-strokes was planned, but for some reason the KH250 was left to soldier on, basically unchanged, apart from colour schemes and B1, B2, etc, yearly model designations. The KH series was officially terminated in 1980 with the B5. I had to laugh at Kawasaki's ad for the B2 version, which helpfully pointed out that the KH was still the only three-cylinder 250cc motorcycle in the world, and then continued by boasting that during that year it had been uprated with a "stronger gear-change return spring". Wow.

It's ironic that while most of the early triples were mean but not green, later versions, as seen here, were less mean but definitely greener in their paintwork, although they gained dark side-panels and tank graphics. This particular bike (presently on offer at Classic Bikes: 01630 657156) is a B4, but apparently it was not registered until 1982.

Humbling but true, new old triples were hard to shift at any price. Rumour has it that 250s gathering dust in Kawasaki's warehouse were flogged to dealers for peanuts. Meanwhile, the KH400 formed the basis for a successful race series. Want not, waste not.

If you're wondering who would be dim enough to buy a KH250 when everyone else was deserting them, the answer, of course, is me. It was one of the first models, finished in subtle candy wine red livery, not the lime green introduced for the succeeding B3. No matter, it was dirt cheap and seemed okay, apart from an obstinate gearbox.



"In the Seventies, despite US President Tricky Dicky's interference, Kawasaki, now with US-based R&D, persevered with the triples. Sadly, taming the noise and emissions resulted in less power"

That wasn't unusual, the problem being more a rather sloppy linkage (the stronger spring was obviously a failure!) than internal cog failure. A little adjustment worked wonders, but Kawasaki should have done better. As an aside, at the same time the Honda 400 Four came with a well-engineered linkage with proper pivots (Heim joints).

It's a long time ago, but I jingled and jangled on my KH for a few months, turning the air blue and doing my bit to reduce the EEC spark plug mountain. 60mph felt like 100mph, and oh what fun it was! A lot more so than what came next...

REVISITING MY CHILDHOOD

Almost four decades on, I've ridden quite a few triples, but not the often overlooked 250. The closest encounter came in 2003, when one of those unwanted and unsellable late KHs emerged from hiding. That unique specimen featured in CBG's sister mag, *Classic Motorcycle Mechanics*. Disappointingly, fresh from the time-warp, and effectively new with just 1.7 miles clocked, I wasn't able to have a ride.

Fast forward to 2019 and another late (very) B4 turned up at Classic Bikes, ready to roll, this time with period modifications, including alloy wheels and expansion

chambers. While I prefer standard trim, particularly exhausts, my head was in danger of exploding with nostalgia, and we hadn't even started the engine.

Booted into life, the aftermarket spannies were actually fairly quiet, so the cold two-stroke stutters didn't wake the rest of Shropshire. Still, there really isn't anything else that sounds the same, not even the bigger triples. As speeds rise, the jangling is drowned out by a sort of possessed floor polisher whine, DIY dentistry, cacophony. Standard or expansion, the exhaust crackle never goes away, but would you want it to? On a long journey, perhaps, although the Motorcycle Maniacs squad didn't report any deafness problems.

As it happened, I had recently ridden my workhorse Honda 400 Four. Quite a contrast! With its wide cowhorn bars, the KH actually felt like a bigger, more stable bike. Looking at the figures, the Honda is 50lb heavier (probably biased to the front) yet has a shorter wheelbase and about 10bhp more than the Kaw. The snag for Big K was that the Four only cost £100 more.

So, was a ride on a 250 triple worth a 38-year wait? I've suffered more than a few disappointments with other bikes of the same area, not meeting expectations. But in the Kawasaki's case, I really didn't need rose-tinted cataracts.

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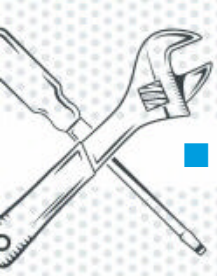
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RESTORATION

1976 HONDA Gold Wing GL1000 K1

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY ROB DAVIES.

MANY THANKS TO LEE CHAMBERS FOR A SUBLIME RESTO AND EXTRA PICS





IN 1975, ONLY SIX YEARS AFTER THE great success of the 750 Four, Honda came out with the 1000cc, flat four, Gold Wing. Was the world ready for this?

The sophistication of the whole machine with its car-like air filtration system, fuel pumps and fuel gauge was ahead of its time. The engine was nothing like any other motorcycle powerplant of its day, not only in looks but in operation.

It looked a bit like a suitcase, had shaft drive and it was watercooled. But, and it was a big but, would the motorcycling public take to it? And more to the point would they buy it?

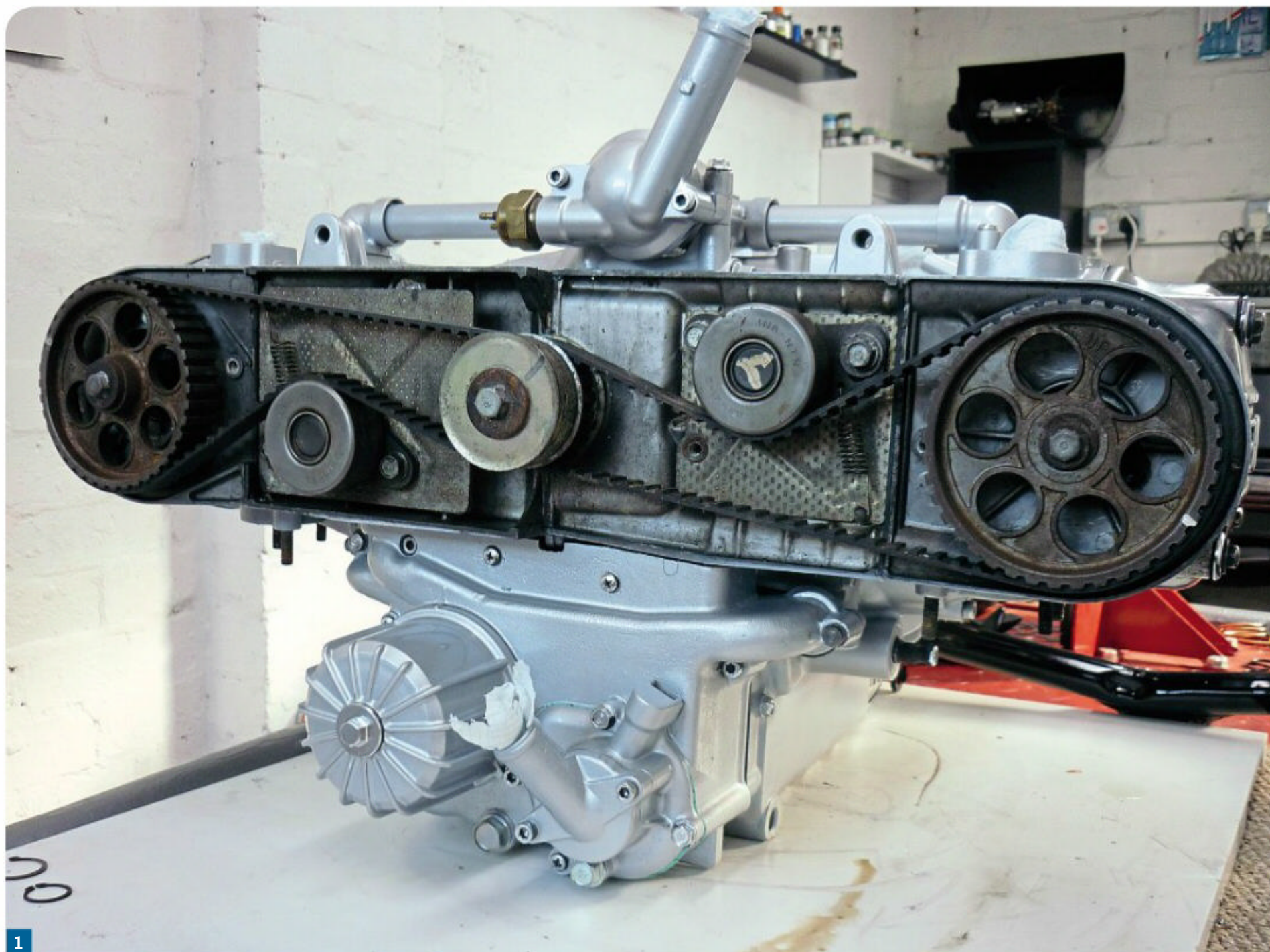
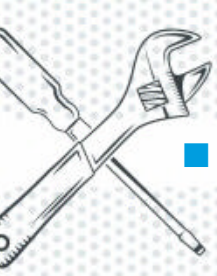
Personally I believe that during these momentous years Honda was at the top of its technical and inventive game, for not only did it take a calculated gamble with the Gold Wing design, but followed it up three years later with the CBX six. So you have to take your hat off to Honda's designers, because the quality of their products was second to none. Forty or so years later – yes that's right, four decades of continual evolution – and the Gold Wing variants are still going strong, which in itself must be a record.

As a consequence, the Gold Wing engenders a lot of affection from its large fan base. Yes, the machine has transmogrified from a naked

classic to the futuristic machine of today, complete with acres of fairings and every electronic device that can be fitted to a long distance tourer. And yes, there was even one with a kitchen sink... I'm joking, of course. So where did the inspiration come from for this magnificent cruiser?

Travel back to the early 1970s and we discover the chief designer – Shoichiro Irimajiri – and his team, considering a six cylinder engine. They initially designed and built a 1500 flat six cylinder that was perfectly balanced with shaft drive; a mock up was even built. This was eventually dropped in favour of the flat four, 1000cc engine that was less expensive and easier to produce.

The company did its projected sales research, but couldn't know for sure that the bike would go on to be a huge success. As already mentioned, in many ways the Wing was a revolutionary machine, but Honda had been carefully examining the American market and watching the success and popularity of the Harley-Davidson 1200cc and its ability to eat up the long roads that the US of A had. Soichiro Honda's idea was to build something grand, something luxurious and powerful – the 'King of Motorcycles'. If the Americans loved big machines, then his company was only too happy to supply one, a better one. ►

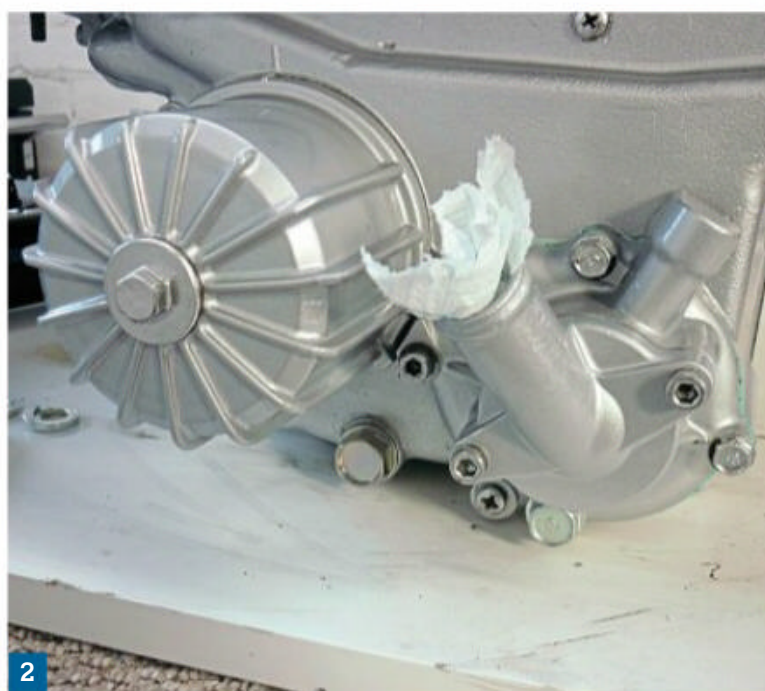


1

In May/June of 1975 Honda took three GL1000s to the Isle of Man, where the press were allowed to ride them under strict instructions not to take them over 5000rpm. As a tribute to Mike Hailwood, Honda fitted a plaque to the headlamp of one of the bikes and gave Mike the opportunity to take the bike for a spin. Unfortunately he still had a limp from a car racing accident and was unable to ride the huge Gold Wing; though he was happy to sit on the back with Geoff Duke in control. In August the same year, Honda displayed the bike to the public at the Earls Court Motor Show. The price had been set at a very reasonable £1600.

Over the years some journalists have criticised the poor handling of the Wing, failing to recognise that this bike is indeed designed for relaxed touring, whether you are the rider or a passenger. But it can be more nimble than its bulk demonstrates. Indeed, some years ago I had the opportunity to take it in and out of the cones on a motorcycle training course and was surprised by its slow speed manoeuvrability.

But the Wing was never a slouch, despite the lack of a fairing, having a top speed of 125mph with a 12.73 second standing quarter. Those who have ridden this bike, and let's remember that this is a 125mph machine, swear that its handling is far superior to the CBX that followed. Possibly due to its low centre of gravity and the width and strength of its frame. Ground clearance may be a limiting factor for really

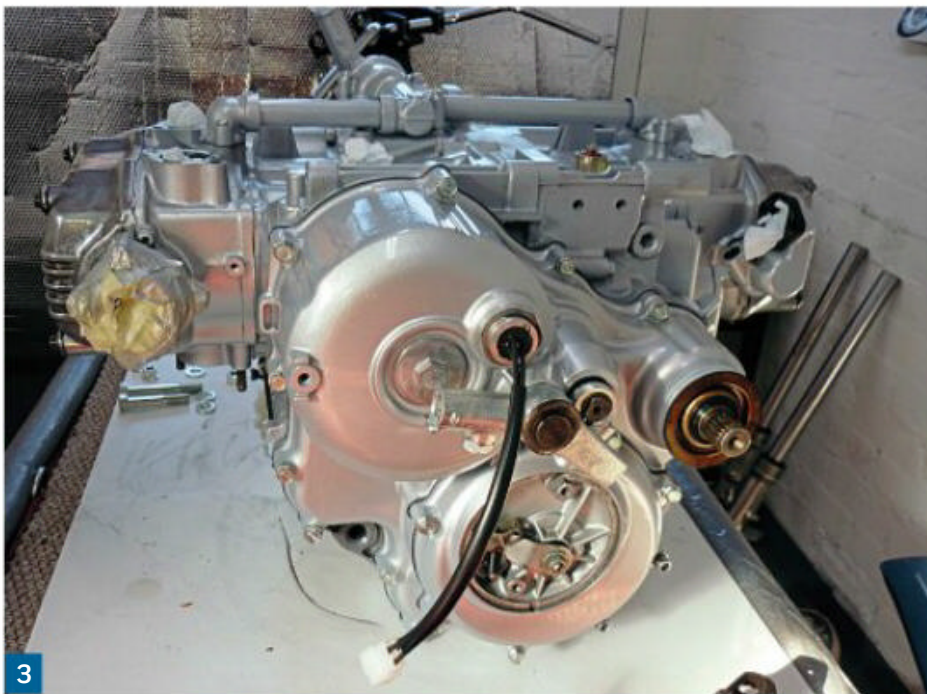


2

1. Is this really a motorcycle engine? Yes, it's the flat four Gold Wing. But which way up is it? This is the front of the engine with the central drive from the crank via belts to the cam shafts at each end. On top - the plumbing for the water cooling system.

2. Front of engine. From the Honda 750 Four onward, the company fitted an efficient oil filtering system, one that was accessible. The water thermostat housing is to the right.

"They initially designed and built a 1500 flat six-cylinder that was perfectly balanced with shaft drive; a mock up was even built. This was eventually dropped in favour of the flat four, 1000cc engine that was less expensive and easier to produce."



“There is a common saying on the TV these days – ‘Now don’t try this at home’, so I can only advise those reading that the Gold Wing perhaps shouldn’t be a first project.”

tight bends but one soon learns to ride sensibly, while a pair of better rear shocks would improve the ride.

The engine of course is silky smooth, due in part to the contra-rotating alternator, rubber drive belts and water jackets, so it was all truly impressive when first released. Low down torque has been progressively improved over the years, but the Wing has always pulled low down in the rev range, while the power is continuous.

WHAT ARE THEY LIKE TO RESTORE?

We now turn our attention to the restoration, undertaken by Lee Chambers who is no novice in bringing classic bikes back to pristine condition.

There is a common saying on the TV these days – ‘Now don’t try this at home’, so I can only advise those reading that the Gold Wing perhaps shouldn’t be a first project. Possibly start off with a more modest machine, just to get the hang of things. Then again, after this article you may be itching to take on the challenge... I’ll leave that decision to you.

For a while there was a little confusion as to the exact model this was. The bike had been registered in 1975, but was after some study found to be a 1976 model K1. There were a few differences between them, mainly in trim – early models, for instance, had only one pinstripe on the faux fuel tank, later ones had two. Clock faces went from dark to light green, while the UK bike had a slightly larger rear light unit. There were three colour options and they were (the one in our resto) candy blue green, while the alternatives were candy antares red, or the Americans could also have a sulphur yellow.

The bike was a tad over 40 years old with 10 previous owners, but the general condition was good and the mileage was just above 32,000, not many for a well designed and engineered piece of kit. Some Wings have gone on to do a million or more miles. Age and mileage are important factors in any

3. Rear view of engine. The generator is top left inside the casing, while the clutch is at the bottom. The splined drive via shaft to the rear wheel is at the right.

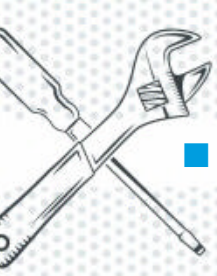
4. Engine right side, showing the head where two cylinders lie. Notice the small sight glass to view oil levels at the bottom of the crank case

5. Built like a bridge, notice the width and strength of this frame, and the ample area under the seat where the fuel tank resides.

6. The engine fitted to the frame showing the exposed cam belt arrangement.

7. The framework for the dummy fuel tank.





purchase, but this bike hadn't been used regularly in bad weather. As an indicator of that fact the original seat was still in good condition so would not need to be replaced – and seats can be difficult to source and pricey too. The radiator, rear shocks and front forks were also very tidy. An hour or so with soft cloth and a bit of polish would bring them up like new.

Lee had already heard the engine running soon after purchase. It ran sweetly with no problems, and taking the low mileage into consideration he decided wisely that the engine need not be taken down to the last nut and bolt. So, he lowered the engine and removed the carbs so that they could be dismantled and refurbished. It was here he realised the earlier carbs had been replaced by the slightly later GL1100 carburettors.

Whoever had done this work had not only done it efficiently but had left workshop notes of all jets used and float heights. Additional information like this says a lot about the way a bike has been treated. So, yes there are minor differences with successive carburettors but essentially they are the same design. The 1975 bikes were fitted with fairly hot cams, but as the next few years progressed, Honda slightly detuned the engine for smoother running and reliability. Nevertheless Lee looked on eBay and found a set of original carbs; so decided to buy those,

reckoning that it would be more authentic to have the originals fitted; and if they didn't pan out then the later carbs would be plan B. Randakk's Cycle Shakk in the USA provides excellent rebuild kits for Gold Wing carbs, plus videos and information on its website to aid anyone doing a restoration. The very useful video that comes with the kit gives all kinds of info such as how not to get the various jets mixed up – and yes, this is done all the time – and how to set the float height. And while we are mentioning information from the internet, Maurice Gardner on YouTube supplies several videos on Gold Wing engine strip down and repair.

Gold Wing carburettors from this era are as reliable as any other, but they are decades old, so if you are giving them a thorough clean and using a service kit then you should pay particular attention to the small orifices within the carburettor. If these are not cleaned out thoroughly you will have plenty of aggravation getting the engine to run smoothly.

One last point about carb refurb is given by one expert who recommends weighing the carburettor pistons. As you probably know these are vacuum carbs, and the pistons need to be beautifully shiny so as to slide as easily as possible. Using a jeweller's balance (very sensitive electronic scales that measure in grams), Lee weighed the slides and adjusted any

“Randakk's Cycle Shakk in the USA provides excellent rebuild kits for Gold Wing carbs, plus videos and information on its website to aid anyone doing a restoration.”



1. The early Wings had points, two sets, and they lie under the masked cap on the left.

2. The later GL 1100 carburettors with only small variations from the earliest. The actuating mechanism is a collection of levers and rods. The car-like air filter fits to the middle open rectangle, while the engine is fed via the four 90° tubes.

3. Cover removed to show clutch basket – empty – and generator next to it.

GOLD WING GL1000 SPEC

999CC FOUR-STROKE OPPOSED FLAT FOUR CYLINDER WITH TWO VALVES PER CYLINDER.

ELECTRIC START, WATER COOLED, FIVE SPEED SHAFT DRIVE. WEIGHT: dry – 571lb

BRAKES FRONT WHEEL: Two x 232mm discs, two piston callipers. REAR WHEEL: single disc 250mm single calliper. Fuel tank 19 litres.

POWER: 80hp. Top Speed 125mph



4. The fuel tank – try making that shape yourself!

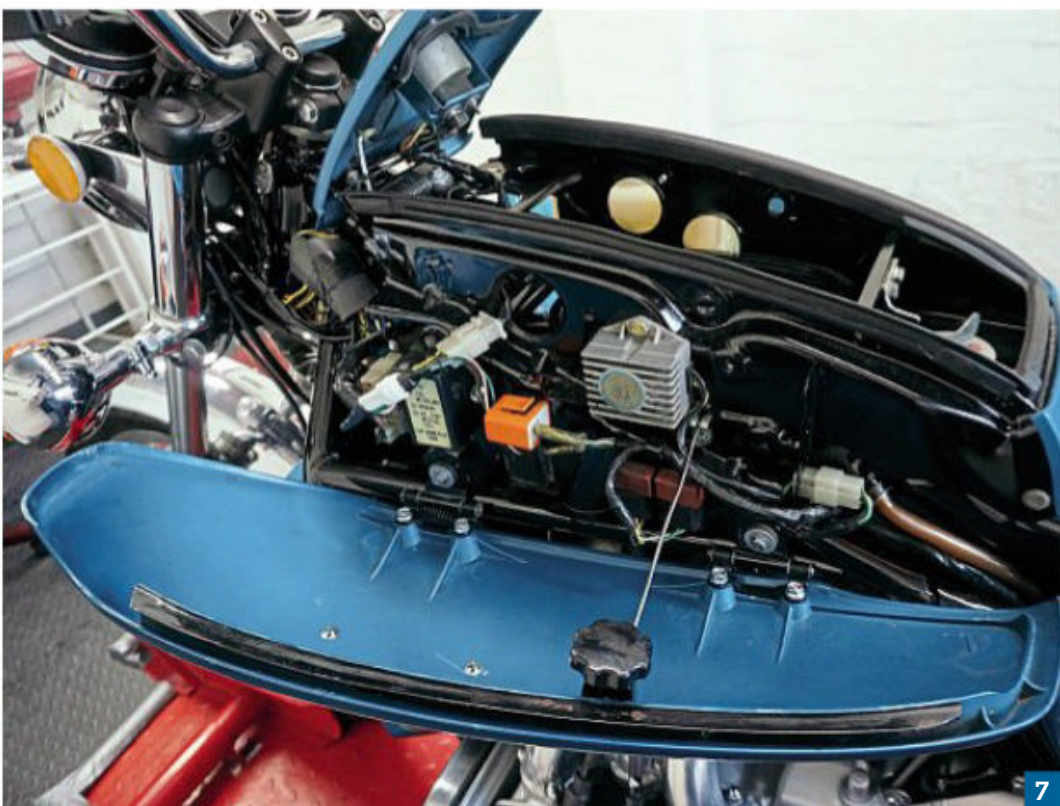
5. Looking inside the faux fuel tank with fuel cap at the rear, handbook centre – with room for gloves, and the tool bag at the front. Oh and you can just see the body of the fuel indicator ... that still works.



6. The right-side of the faux fuel tank. No, that metal bar isn't for self defence, that's the kick-start lever – re-zinc'd – which fits into a socket on the left-side near the gearbox. We also see the header tank and top-up cap for the water. The black screw locating knobs were later altered.



7. On the left side we have electrical gubbins including the rectifier, fuse box and step down box for the gauges.



difference by drilling away small amounts of inner metal. As things turned out, Lee found that the original carbs were okay but the idle was poor, so he replaced the 1100 carburettors and then used a colour tune kit to view the colour of the burn, adjusting the air screw to get a Bunsen-burn blue.

For such a large bike, the engine came out relatively easy, and this was necessary to make sure that all the major parts such as clutch and generator not only looked in good condition, but were working fine.

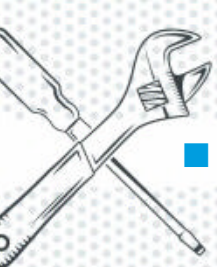
At this point it became obvious that the engine had been pulled apart at some stage as there was tell-tale gasket goo where various cases had been removed and stuck back on. These surfaces were all meticulously cleaned. Once the back end had been removed, along with the fuel tank, a trolley jack was placed under the engine, and the bolts removed.

Always the hard part with a Wing engine is lifting the huge lump onto a suitable work surface; so my advice is get some strong lads with strong backs. Once the engine was out it was time to degrease it with cellulose thinners (very useful for cleaning most engine parts) and get it painted. Early Gold Wing engines were painted silver, as were other Hondas such as the 750 and CBX. An aerosol etch primer was used after going over the engine with a soft wire brush, followed by silver paint and two pack lacquer.

Once everything had been stripped from the frame, it became apparent how good the original paintwork was and how strong the item is. Just take a look at the picture to see the width and thickness of the tubing. The needle roller bearings fitted to the swing arm were showing absolutely no signs of wear after all those years – phew, another job saved. The original paintwork was in very good shape and there was no rot on the inside or outside of the frame. Indeed Honda had wisely put small drain holes at the bottom of the tubing to remove any water and thus resist corrosion. The frame was soda blasted and then painted – not powder coated – for 1976 authenticity. And I must admit it looks pretty fab. Many bolts and nuts were re-zinc coated, but when it came to the parts like the return springs for the side and centrestand, it is much wiser to simply purchase new parts. David Silver is the main supplier for many Honda parts such as springs, and they are not expensive, so why try and scrimp?

The wiring loom was inspected for any wear and poor connectors, but in this case only required a clean up with cellulose thinners. The colours of the different wiring strands then came up like new. Connectors were polished up with a Dremel tool. When taking the clutch apart, Honda Classics has a video on YouTube to show how this is best done. They also provide a tool that assists dismantling. Once all the clutch plates were out it was a case of measuring the thickness to check for any wear and then replace if necessary. ▶

“The wiring loom was inspected for any wear and poor connectors, but in this case only required a good clean up with cellulose thinners. The colours of the different wiring strands then came up like new.”



Another innovation for the Gold Wing, and a complete deviation from the norms of classic motorcycle design and aesthetics, is the fuel tank.

That thing that looks like a fuel tank and feels like a fuel tank is nothing more than an imitation that houses the air filter and electrics; but you aficionados already knew that didn't you? The real fuel tank sits underneath the rider and in-between the frame members. I took a good look at the odd-looking fuel tank and wondered how I could describe its shape. It's certainly not box-like or indeed like any other abstract shape I could bring to mind. The engineers must have used some weird formula to get it fitted where it is.

I would loosely describe it as looking like a small grey cloud... but made of metal. Having said that, it's a very neat piece of design and engineering, but not as we know fuel tanks Jim.

And in a movement to modernity it was fitted with a fuel sender... how could we live without them now? Don't you find a fuel gauge an extremely useful addition? A great improvement on sloshing fuel around in the tank between your knees and listening! The fuel is then pumped from the low tank to the carbs and not, as usual, fed by gravity.

Getting a restored bike to an authentic finish such as this is always down to the small details, and Lee revels in his knowledge of this model. For instance the bike had been fitted with high bars which were not original, so they had to be changed. On a new model there would have been red dots on the master brake cylinders – these had to be replicated. The UK bike had a longer rear mudguard to the US version, so that had to be sourced (the short is still fitted on the photos, if you're wondering). One interesting point about this bike is that both fuel and temperature gauge run on a dropped voltage system. The small electrical box that performed this trick had long given up the ghost, but fortunately Lee discovered a guy in Italy who makes a spare; the same chap also does a replica tool kit for £40 – handy to know! Tank badges can be difficult to source, but a small company in Australia makes new cast metal ones. The original was in good condition, but the Honda logo at the rear had faded badly. Lee had a template made and gently sprayed gold to make it good – job done.

Maybe you are not a great fan of long distance touring, and would never dream of buying a late one; but the early naked Wings with their spoked wheels are a truly gorgeous classic, are slowly becoming collectable, and therefore holding their price. So now are you tempted? I'll leave you to savour the result. Well done Lee; I wish it was mine. **CBG**



1. Early clocks were dark green, later ones pale. Lights (from top) oil light; high beam and neutral light. The fuel gauge sits at the front of the faux tank.

2. Only small differences between the first KO and the next K1, which included two pinstripes on the tank as opposed to the earlier single. The colour is the most popular candy blue green. Early models were blessed with spoked wheels into alloy rims, while later models had the rather less desirable – in my opinion – comstar wheels that were also fitted to 750 fours and the CBX.

3. What a gorgeous machine. Those spindly front forks never did snap under the braking power, but were beefed-up over several later models. The twin exhausts came as a one-piece unit

4. Silky smooth power from the very first Japanese flat four. The 1100 carbs are fitted to this machine, while the round alloy points cover is just behind the cylinder head.

5. Here we see the diff for the first Japanese shaft drive. Original rear shocks are retained for authenticity.

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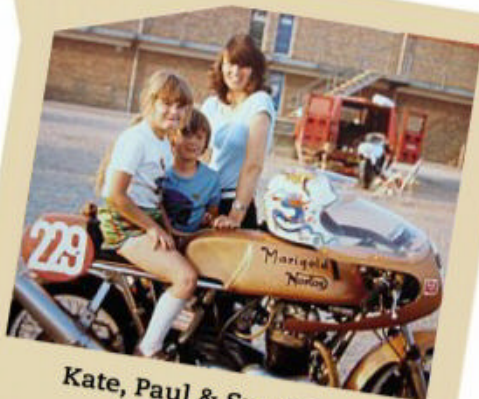
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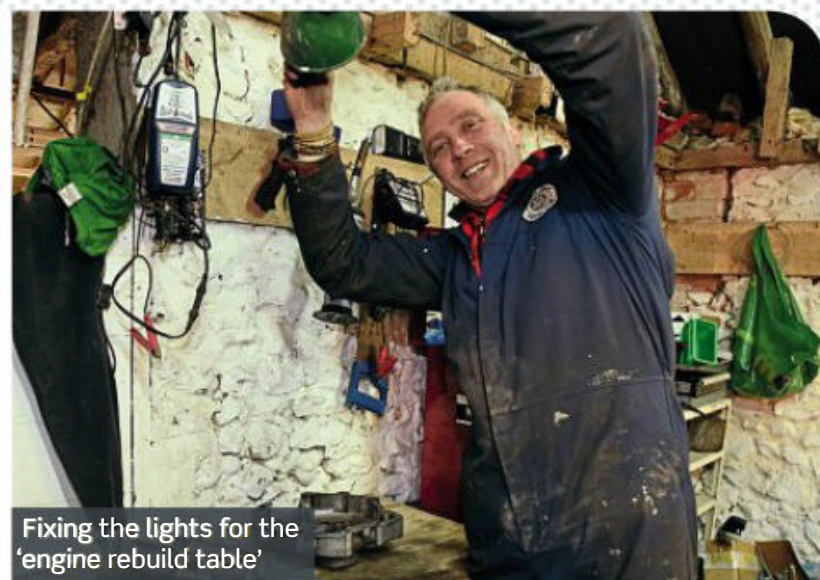
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Project Norton ES2

A break is as good as a rest? Nonsense...

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY MATT



Fixing the lights for the 'engine rebuild table'

PROJECT NORTON ES2 HAS BEEN languishing in my shed for some months now. Unloved and untouched, it has been largely forgotten thanks to running low on funds, spare time being taken up by shows and events, cars in need of work, plus my terrible attempt at having a life outside of old bikes.

But, for now at least, some of these issues are abating. I've still not got any money, and the workshop desperately needs some work to the roof doing and some pointing, but I need to start on the Norton again. No, I want to.

I thought a looming deadline every month would help keep the momentum of this large project, but it ended up being a hindrance. And crucially, I stopped enjoying it which, allied to being skint, led to the stop.

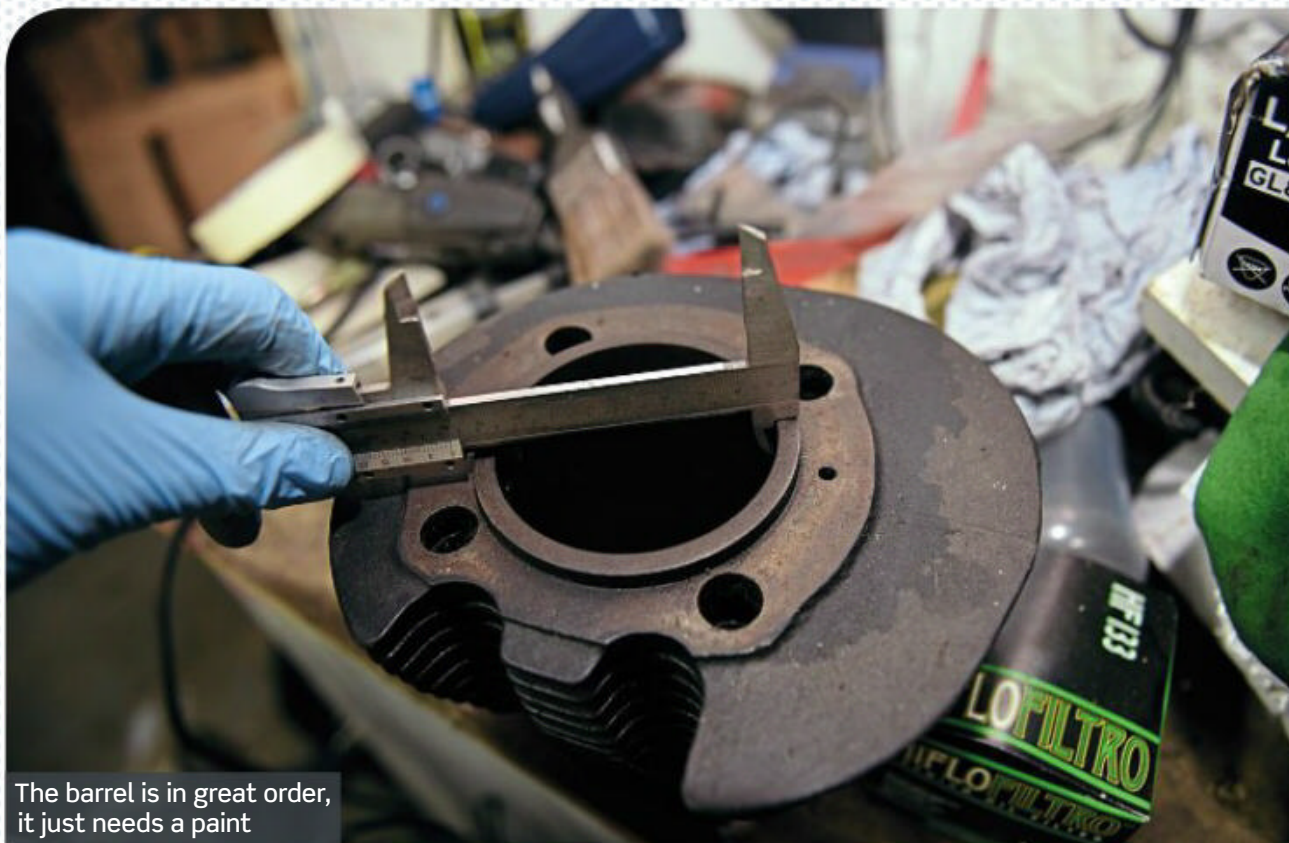
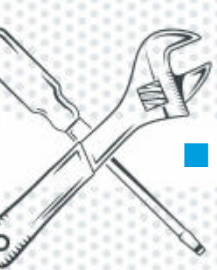
With new vigour I gave the workshop a good clean-up – it's amazing how much and what gets dumped on a dormant project! After moving a few other bikes, I had some room to lay out what parts I had, and work out which I would need to look for. A break helps you to step away and see issues in a new light – helping what were seen as problems seem simple fixes now. And that makes it even more tempting to crack on!

I've completely lost track of the parts that I have and those that I need to buy. It's long been my intention to get the mechanicals finished and in one piece, so they are safe and then if there are any parts that are needed, I can look out for them at events.

So, it's out with the random boxes, the cut-out oil containers and the bags to put things together for the top and bottom ends and so on. That should help a lot.

TOP

I found new valves and new guides, which can go to be pressed into the head and the seats can be cut to match if needed. With the rockers successfully repaired with stellite welding, and the old valve springs measuring up okay, the head is sorted. I've also cleared and cleaned an area for



The barrel is in great order, it just needs a paint

engine building and it's even got some new lights!

MIDDLE

The barrel and piston look fine. They are out to $+0.030\text{in}$ but they look like a DIY clean-up and some new rings will do the job, and I also need to find the gudgeon pin. The barrel will get a coat of heat-proof paint, but more to protect it than make it look shiny.

BOTTOM

The crank is nicely wrapped up after Trevor Hedge rebuilt it, the casings are clean and most parts are present. I'm still thinking about how to check the oil pump and I have two bearings in boxes that look like the crankcase bearings, but the numbers don't add up – so more investigation is needed. At least with the

cam followers rebuilt (again, using stellite welding) it's now ready to go together.

CARBURETTOR

I had Hutch (HTE motorcycles 01328 700711) clean the carb for Maria's Benelli, so I asked him to throw the old Amal in there too. It looked awful and I was interested to see how it would return. The answer is a little better, but not perfect. Brushes, thinners and scrapers might help a little more, as I don't really fancy getting it soda-blasted. I could buy a new one, but I have all the parts for the original, minus the cables and twist grip, and I'd like to use as much of the old bike as possible, or it's not a restoration; it's a new bike.

CLUTCH

The clutch seems to be all there with



The piston is $+0.030\text{in}$ and it looks ready to use



Amal carb needs a better clean – vapour?

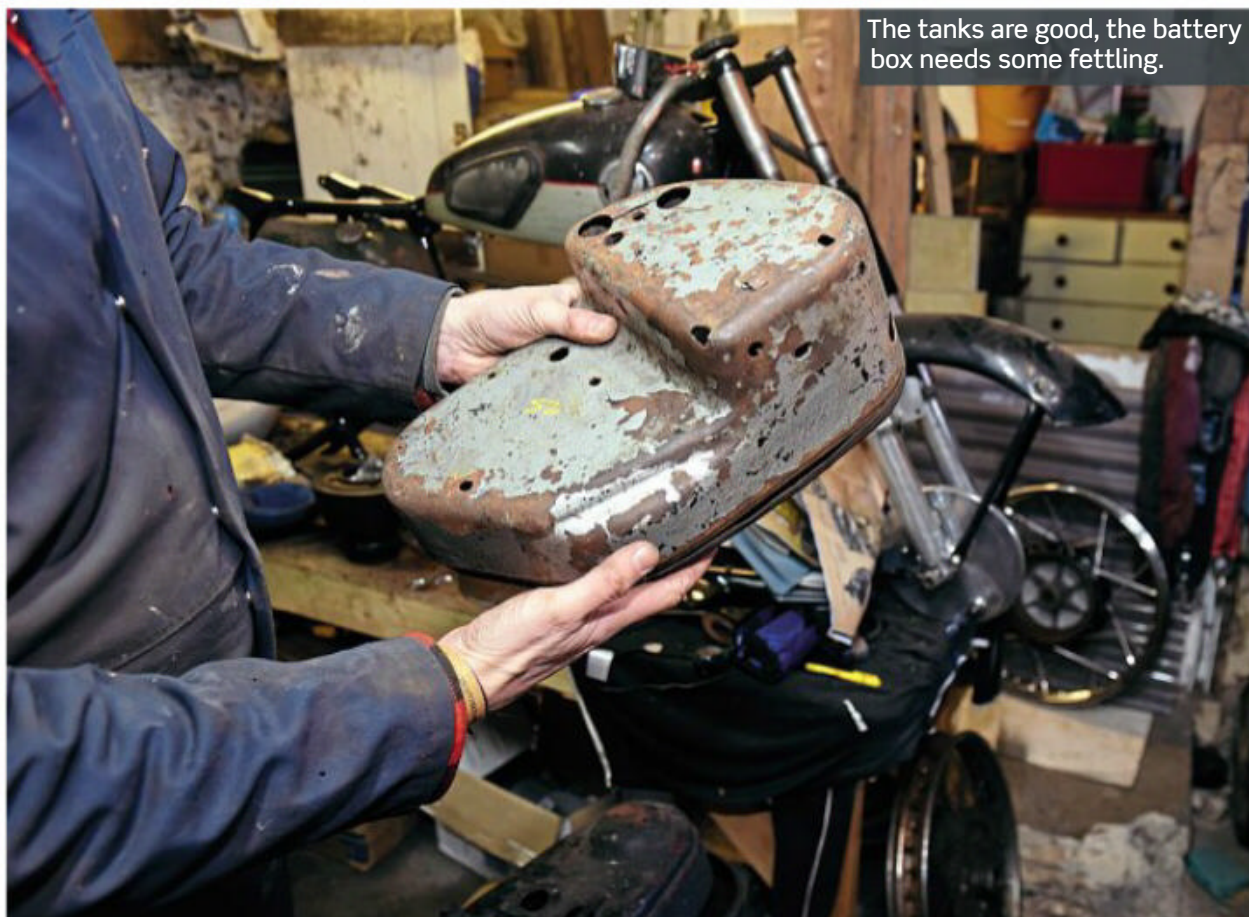
plates that at least look dry. Hopefully just a clean up will be needed, but springs and plates may be a possibility.

GEARBOX

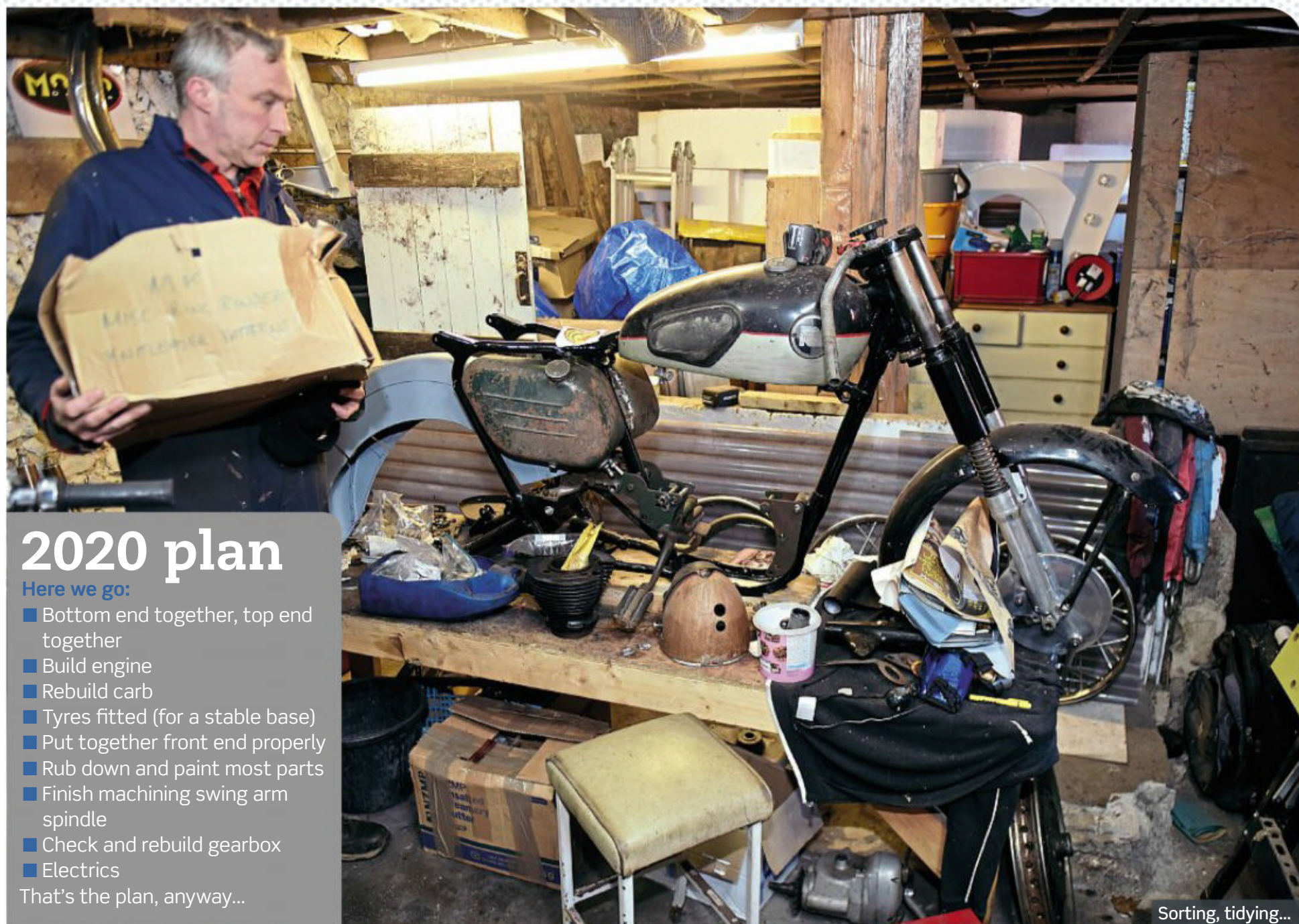
It's there, it's in one piece and I don't even



Rediscovering what we've got



The tanks are good, the battery box needs some fettling.



2020 plan

Here we go:

- Bottom end together, top end together
- Build engine
- Rebuild carb
- Tyres fitted (for a stable base)
- Put together front end properly
- Rub down and paint most parts
- Finish machining swing arm spindle
- Check and rebuild gearbox
- Electrics

That's the plan, anyway...

Sorting, tidying...

know if it has any cogs in it. Once the engine is together, I'll pull it apart. It's a later AMC model, so it should prove less of an issue to get bits for it.

BODYWORK

The oil tank needs rubbing down, the fuel tank looks okay but the battery/toolbox needs looking at. I think it's a body from one place and a lid from another, and both need some careful tin-bashing to fit nicely. They also have many holes in them, yet only one lines up with the frame. The chain case and cover look fine and fit together, though. The new rear mudguard also needs lining up to drill the holes, which I'm going to have to wait for; but I think I have all but the 'hockystick' stays. Luckily, as I do my own painting, I can mix the paint and do different parts as I go along.

Apart from one handlebar bolt – a short Allen key bolt – which I can't find, and the headlamp that also holds the speedo (which needs a cable), which I have, the front end looks nearly finished!

ALL THE OTHER PARTS

I seem to have all the engine plates, but I need to ascertain which bolts I have and where they go. The mag/dyno will need checking and, I'm sure, rebuilding, as it looks

a state. I need shocks, battery, primary chain, silencer and grips. The wheels are all built up and waiting for action, the brakes and even a new sprocket are all ready to go – all I'll need is a new drive chain, new tyres and tubes. There's a new loom that looks really basic and a load of nuts, bolts and other random parts. I did not get a V5 document with the bike, so it must be registered. I will use the remaining winter evenings to work this one out along with the Benelli, so it's done before we get a chance to ride. **CBG**

The primary chaincase is all good



Now I can work out what is still needed...



Fancy a day out?

What's on in March 2020

1 'Normous Newark Autojumble:

The Showground, Drove Lane, Winthorpe, Newark, Notts NG24 2NY
www.newarkautojumble.co.uk

1 Sidecar Sunday: Ace Cafe, Ace Corner, N Circular Rd, Stonebridge, London NW10 7UD.

london.acecafe.com

2 German Night:

Ace Cafe, Ace Corner, N Circular Rd, Stonebridge, London NW10 7UD.
london.acecafe.com

2 MARCH ISSUE OF REAL CLASSIC

5 Mod 'n' Mini Night:

Ace Cafe, Ace Corner, N Circular Rd, Stonebridge, London NW10 7UD.
london.acecafe.com

5 LE Velo Lancs & S Lakes, Blue Anchor, Bretherton. Tel. 01772 782516.

6 APRIL ISSUE OF THE CLASSIC MOTORCYCLE

6 Bike Night + Streetfighters: Ace Cafe, Ace Corner, N Circular Rd, Stonebridge, London NW10 7UD.

london.acecafe.com

7 MARCH EDITION, OLD BIKE MART

8 S Dorset Section VMCC Club Run meet:

The Three Compasses, Charminster DT2 9QT. Muchelney Abbey Run. Contact: Eddie Sheppard 01305 786891.

8 Ledbury MCC presents Anything

Motorcycle Autojumble:

Bromsberrow Village Hall, Albrighton Lane, Bromsberrow Heath, Ledbury, Herefordshire HR8 1RU (just off M50 jct 2). To book a table contact Sally Palmer 07968 649327, email sallyannpalmer226@gmail.com

8 Malvern Drive-In Classic Car & Motorcycle Autojumble:

Three Counties Showground, Malvern, Worcestershire WR13 6NW. Tel. 01484 667776. www.classicshows.org

8 Kenley Autojumble:

Portcullis Club, Kenley Airfield, Victor Beamish Avenue, Caterham CR3 5FX (just off Jct 6, M25). For sat nav use CR3 5LT.
www.kenleyautojumble.co.uk

8 Classic Bike Day:

Ace Cafe, Ace Corner, N Circular Rd, Stonebridge, London NW10 7UD.
london.acecafe.com

8 BMPS motorcycle jumble and bikes for sale:

Mochdre Village Hall, Colwyn Bay, LL28 5HU.
www.bmpswnwales.org.uk or leonardferney@gmail.com

10 S Cumbria VMCC Club Night:

8pm at the Ulverston Sports Club, Priory Road, Ulverston, Cumbria LA12 9HN.

11 Brit Bike Night with Triumph & Royal Enfield OC & WIMA & BMF:

Ace Cafe, Ace Corner, N Circular Rd, Stonebridge, London NW10 7UD.
london.acecafe.com

12 Italian Bikes & Cars:

Ace Cafe, Ace Corner, N Circular Rd, Stonebridge, London NW10 7UD.
london.acecafe.com

13 Bike Night + Bandit OC:

Ace Cafe, Ace Corner, N Circular Rd, Stonebridge, London NW10 7UD.
london.acecafe.com

14/15 NG Road Racing:

Pembrey. www.ngroadracing.org

14 S Dorset Section VMCC Breakfast Meet:

The Three Compasses, Charminster DT2 9QT. Contact: Martin Figg/Rod Hann 01935 872528.

14 Vintage Motorcycle Club Autojumble:

Doors open 9.30am-3.30pm Admission: £3 per person Bath and West Showground, nr Shepton Mallet, Somerset.

15 LE Velo Lancs & S Lakes, Downham: meet bridge at bottom of village. Tel. 01772 782516.

15 Huddersfield Auto/Retro Jumble:

The Old Market Building, Brook Street, Huddersfield (next to Tesco) HD1 1RG. Phoenix Fairs, tel/fax: 01773 819154 – 07795 505388. www.phoenixfairs.jimdo.com
Email: jeffpff@hotmail.co.uk

15 VMCC Pre-65 Sporting Trial:

Rectory Farm, Uppingham. www.thetaverners.co.uk Contact: Peter Hydemonk 07826 683600 or email pmonk83@yahoo.com

15 Bike Day:

Ace Cafe, Ace Corner, N Circular Rd,

Stonebridge, London NW10 7UD.

london.acecafe.com

18 APRIL ISSUE OF CLASSIC MOTORCYCLE MECHANICS

19 Super Moto + XJROC + NABD + Classic Scooters:

Ace Cafe, Ace Corner, N Circular Rd, Stonebridge, London NW10 7UD.
london.acecafe.com

20 Bike Night + Rockers & Classic:

Ace Cafe, Ace Corner, N Circular Rd, Stonebridge, London NW10 7UD.
london.acecafe.com

21 Scorton Auto & Bike Jumble:

Scorton, North Yorkshire Events Centre DL10 6EJ. Tel. Bert 07909 904705.

21 Mathewsons Motorcycle Auction:

Roxby Garage, Pickering Road, Thornton Le-Dale, Pickering, North Yorkshire YO18 7LH. Tel. 01751 474455, 07507 210031. Mathewsons.co.uk

22 The Churchill Arms Spring Bike Jumble:

in association with Wheelers Motorcycle Events. The Churchill Arms, Daggons Road, Alderholt, Fordingbridge, Hampshire SP6 3AA. Tel 01425 652147. www.wheelersmce.co.uk

22 Straightliners:

Santa Pod Raceway, Airfield Road, Podington, Wellingborough, Northants NN29 7XA. straightlinersonline.co.uk Tel. 01234 782828.

22 Sunbeam MCC 81st Pioneer Run for pre-1915 machines:

from Epsom Downs to Brighton City Airport. Contact: Ian McGill 01293 771446 pioneerorganiser@gmail.com

22 Overland & Adventure Bike Day:

Ace Cafe, Ace Corner, N Circular Rd, Stonebridge, London NW10 7UD.
london.acecafe.com

25 APRIL ISSUE OF CLASSIC BIKE GUIDE

26 LE Velo Lancs & S Lakes, Glasdon Dock. Tel. 01772 782516.

26 S Dorset Section VMCC Club Night:

The Three Compasses, Charminster DT2 9QT. Contact: Martin Figg/Rod Hann 01935 872528.

26 Harley Night:

Ace Cafe, Ace Corner, N Circular Rd, Stonebridge, London NW10 7UD.
london.acecafe.com

27 Bike Night + Performance & Fast Bike:

Ace Cafe, Ace Corner, N Circular Rd, Stonebridge, London NW10 7UD.
london.acecafe.com

28 LE Velo Northampton, Noon, Plume of Feathers, Weedon Bec, NN7 4QU. Tel. 01604 499858.

28 S Cumbria VMCC George's Spring Run:



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- Know of a show, club meet or event that would be of interest to fellow classic bike enthusiasts? Then feel free to drop us a line with some details and we'll do our best to include it so others can enjoy it as well.



starts at 11am from The Red Lion, Lowick, returning to the pub after the run around Coniston and the local area. Contact George Bownass 01229 580776.

27-29 NG Road Racing:

Pembrey. www.ngroadracing.org

28-29 Goodwood 78th Members' Meeting:

Chichester, West Sussex PO18 0PX.

www.goodwood.com

28-29 Manchester Bike Show:

EventCity, Phoenix Way, off Barton Dock Rd, Manchester M41 7TB. Tel. 01484 482005.

www.manchesterbikeshow.com

29 South of England Classic Show & Bikejumble:

South of England Showground, Ardingly, W Sussex RH17 6TL. Tel. 01797 344277. www.elk-promotions.co.uk

29 Scooter Sunday & Raleigh Chopper Meet:

Ace Cafe, Ace Corner, N Circular Rd, Stonebridge, London NW10 7UD.

london.acecafe.com

29 Stickney Auto Jumble:

Stickney car boot field, (PE22 8AG). Tel. 01205 480274.

Coming Soon!

April

4/5 The 2020 Cardiff Classic and Contemporary Motorcycle Show. A great

club show organised by the South Wales Sunbeam Club, the Cardiff show takes over three halls at Llanishen High School with a fine collection of specials and classics to view, and autojumble and great reasonably priced food. Llanishen High School. Heol Hir, Llanishen, Cardiff CF14 5YL. Admission is £5 and under 14s go free. Visit www.southwalesunbeammcc.co.uk

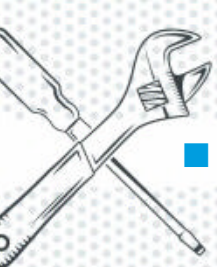
25-26 The Spring Stafford Show. Carole Nash International *Classic Motorcycle Show* features over 900 traders, dealers and autojumble stands offering a wealth of parts and spares for every project. It includes a host of excellent club stands, exciting live action, the Bonhams autumn sale, classic off-road machines and special guest stars. Early bird advance e-ticket sales cost £13. Visit www.classicbikeshows.com. Staffordshire County Showground Weston Road, Stafford, Staffordshire ST18 0BD

June

6-7 Shetland Classic Motor Show. This utterly charming event on Shetland – a location blessed with the best surfaced roads in the UK – will be held at the Clickimin Leisure Complex in Lerwick, the capital of Shetland.

Extend your stay and enjoy the quiet roads and take in some of the sights on organised tours, or head off by yourself. Don't miss the Saturday night party. Travel to Shetland is on a nightly ferry service which departs from Aberdeen, or you can travel via Kirkwall in Orkney on alternate nights. If you are thinking of attending, it's worth booking your ferry and accommodation now. shetlandclassicmotorshow.co.uk.



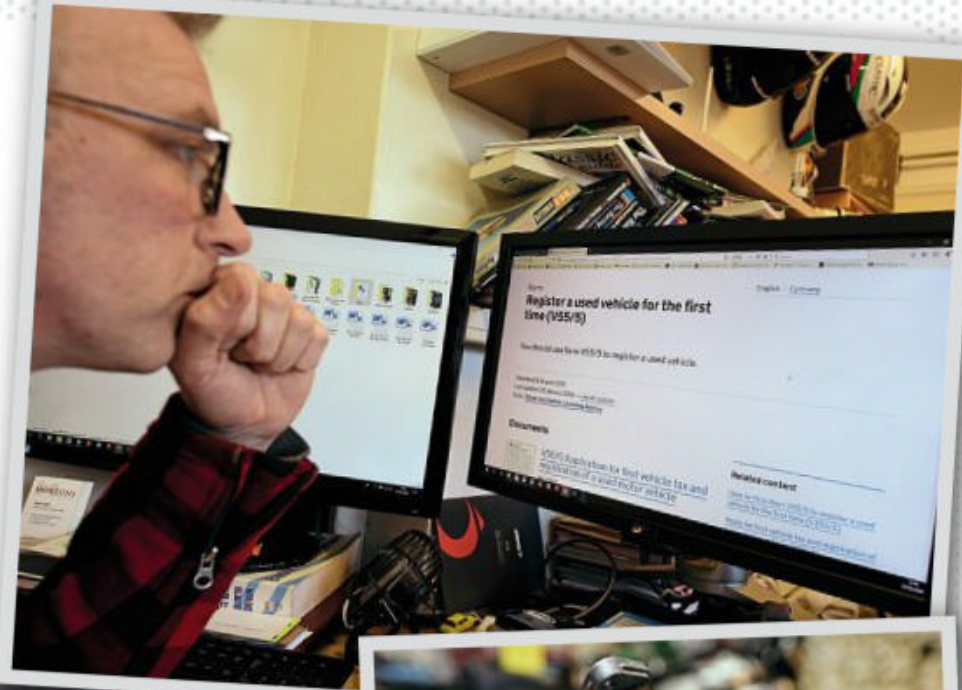


Nearly there...

BENELLI 125 ENDURO

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY MATT

Maria's Benelli keeps throwing problems in the way of getting it started – but we're nearly there...



AFTER SORTING OUT THE CARB FOR Maria's Benelli 125 Enduro last month, I had high hopes all would get sorted. But life never quite works like that, does it?

With the carburettor all put back together it was surely just a case of putting everything back on and flying off into the muddy sunset – except my car failed its MoT and most of my spare time was spent with big, metric spanners and greasy CV gaiters and suspension rubbers...

Still, with one piece of Ministry paper in my hand, I could get on with 'Nelly'. Except, five minutes into the job and I could see daylight through the sides of the inlet manifold rubber, which sits between the carb and the airbox. Damn. It had completely perished, no doubt helped by

the constant fiddling and the cold weather.

A replacement was out of the question as these 125s never sold well in the UK when new as they were so expensive and didn't have a great dealer network. They were also up against the Japanese bikes, which were far more superior. Consequently, spares for this bike are as rare as a pleasant rambler. Gaffa tape was on my mind, but I had a word with myself. Glue it was, but what sort? Rubbers and plastics can be glued, but you need to know what they're made of. So, in this situation, I have always trusted two-pack Araldite, which you mix up and then apply. My thinking was being thicker than glue, it would fill the splits and build a stronger barrier.

To give it the best chance, I cleaned the rubber with brake cleaner, then popped

it in the oven to warm. After mixing the resin, I applied it to the rubber with a screwdriver, being careful to get it into the cracks. Then, it was back into the oven to help cure.

After an hour I inspected the rubber. It's sealed perfectly, but the Araldite has cured to be hard, although not completely rigid. But then the rubber is 42 years old, so that's not exactly pliable...

It took a bit of time to get onto the airbox, but the carb inlet was fine and crucially, it stayed intact; so hopefully the Araldite has done its job – time will tell. And Nelly started! We ran it for a few minutes with no issues – it was happier revving than before, but as we did it Storm Ciara dropped snow, so it wasn't possible to give it a run. Next time and then we need to get it registered! **CBG**

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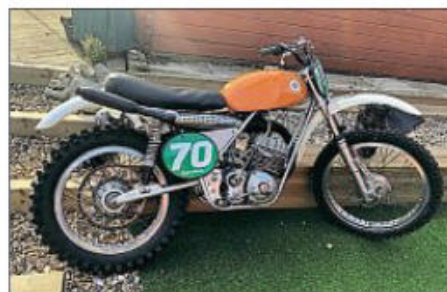
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cbg's pick



BSA A70 LIGHTNING rare, 19,071, one of 202 manufactured, BSAOC dating cert, entered on the A70 Register, matching nos, Boyer ign & power box, £12,000 ono. Tel. 07951 783066 for more pics and info. Surrey.



AJS STORMER 250, good useable condition, been dry stored for about a year, put some fuel in and it started after a few kicks, £2795 Tel. 07969 254753 Hants



ARIEL Square Four, reg 1959, with dating cert from Ariel Owners Club, fully restored 2013, with buff log book and purchase invoice from 1964, £17,500 Tel. 07770 880822 Essex



BMW R100GS 1992, good original condition, panniers, kickstart and an updated rear White Power rear shock, MoT, £4350 Tel. 07798 866071 Middx



BMW R100RS 1981, good original condition with reconditioned gearbox, new clutch and main bearing seal, MoT Oct 2020, 68,000 miles £3750 Tel. 07973 344987 Leeds



BRIDGESTONE GTR350 1967, stunning condition, fast and drop dead looks, massive history file with receipts, £10,000 Tel. Robert 07818 891892 South Yorkshire



BSA Rocket 3, Mk2, UK spec, 1971, vgc, recent Nova 850cc conversion, Rob North electric starter, recent new carbs, runs well, £10,750 Tel. 07941 928952 Warks



BSA 650 HORNET 1967, matching numbers, aluminium fuel tank and side panels have been re-painted with new decals and a lacquer finish coat, £6750 Tel. 07939 373880 Leics



BSA A7 500cc, 1951, matching numbers, original reg no, amazing history, buff log book, lovely original condition, superb engine runs and rides well, £5600 ono Tel. 01162 880266 Leics



BSA A7 Shooting Star, 1958, 500cc, total restoration eight years ago, done 5000 miles since, on Sorn for four years, just needs battery, £4900 Tel. 01294 833320 North Ayrshire



BSA B31 1958, in military trim Royal Army Ordnance Corps, interesting reg, MoT, historic tax, £3975 Tel. 01297 489578 Dorset



BSA BANTAM 1957, been stored away in a barn for years, excellent project for someone Tel. 07972 009572 Glasgow



BSA B175 Bantam, 1971, matching numbers, full history, very original and correct, show or ride, ring for full details, £2600 Tel. 07943 945235 Chester



BSA C15 250, 1965, showroom condition, new clutch and cable, new valves, powder coated frame, new rims and exhaust, £2665 Tel. 07748 975241 Essex



BSA G10 1932, 1000cc, V twin, older resto but still lovely, large file of paper work and history, £19,000 Tel. 07842 234777 Northampton



BSA SHOOTING STAR 1960, matching numbers with dating certificate, original reg, previous long term ownership, rides as it should, £6750 Tel. 01723 372219 North Yorks



CCM FLAT TRACKER 2019, warranty still valid, 15 miles only, phone for full details, oiro £10,500 Tel. 07748 492912 Stafford

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2013 Royal Enfield Continental GT
Very collectable no 12 of 30 ace café show bike, Vin no. 0000012**£3699**



1980 Honda CB650 All standard, good all round condition, realistically priced**£3550**



2019 Royal Enfield Trials 500
Green, brand new **£4699**



1986 Yamaha FJ1200 First generation bike, fantastic condition **£2200**



1987 Suzuki DR125, for restoration very rare now rides perfect**£3250**



1952 BSA Goldflash
Stunning, full nut and bolt restoration, must be best available, same reg from new in 1952, all correct, only 3 former keepers, no plastic aftermarket parts, perfect **£8650**



1985 BMW R80 Completely original, new paint to the original colour**£3250**



2012 MV Agusta Brutale 1090R
As new, only 2500 miles**£6950**



1968 Yamaha YM1
305cc, stunning, full nut and bolt restoration to standard, must be best available, twin Mikuni carbs, 100mph bike, introduced in 1965, this bike is 1968, as new condition **£9650**



1959 Royal Enfield 250 Crusader Stunning nut and bolt restoration, over £4000 spent **£3899**



2008 Royal Enfield 350 Bullet Stunning cond, all books and keys, nice retro exhaust & screen. **£2699**



1976 Yamaha FS1
Just stunning. Full nut and bolt restoration. All correct matching numbers. Original owners handbook, two original keys. And only three owners from 1976. A UK bike. Must see in our showroom **£5995**



2011 Royal Enfield Electra, chrome tank. Lots spent, chrome mudguard & sports exhaust**£3299**



1993 Ducati 750SS very rare, all completely original, fantastic condition**£4950**



1966 BSA Lightning
Stunning nut and bolt restoration. This was done back in 2016. The bike looks fantastic. Please see photos. Must see in our showroom. The bike rides great with no problems **£8500**



1997 Moto Guzzi California
1100cc, great condition with luggage**£4699**



1985 MZ TS150, full nut and bolt restoration, as new**£2850**



1964 Royal Enfield Bullet Roadster
350cc, stunning nut and bolt restoration, lots of history **£3899**



1996 Ducati 600 SS, perfect condition timewarp bike, 12,800 miles**£2899**



FRANCIS-BARNETT Falcon 197cc, 1956, trials spec, Suzuki forks and wheels, reconditioned after 30 years in storage, ring for details, £1500 Tel. 01270 662186 Cheshire



FRANCIS-BARNETT Fulmar, 1962, 8113 on clock, one of the last models of this bike built by a great British company, dry stored for many years, vgc, £2500 Tel. 07539 688428 Leics



GREEVES GRIFFON 1970, 250cc, total rebuild, powder coated frame, new tyres, tank, side panels, gearbox, rebuilt by Geoff Nunn, ready for Pre 65 motocross, £3500 ono Tel. 01206 501579 Essex



HARLEY-DAVIDSON Heritage Softail Anniversary model, 2003 Stage 1 tuned, 15,500 miles from new, vgc, £7950 p/x R75/80, low miles and good condition Tel. 07761 056655 South Yorks



HONDA Super Four, 1993, 11,325 miles, MoT June 2020, £1295 ono Tel. 07543 246382 Lancs



HONDA Africa Twin 2003, dry stored, many sensible extras including Leo Vince and standard exhaust, heated grips, crash bars, 50,000 miles, £4750 Tel. 07717 518694 Wilts



HONDA 250 SUPER DREAM 1979, only 3 miles, never used, air-cooled, 4-stroke parallel twin, SOHC, 3 valves per cyl 6-speed trans, ready to use or display, on Sorn, £7995 Tel. James 07835 925885 Nth Tyneside



HONDA 400/4 1976, garaged from new, 4300 miles, original unrestored, last on road 1980, service and MoT Oct 2016 not used since, £5000 Tel. 01782 316943 Staffs



HONDA CB350F 1972, imported, UK registered Oct 19, Sorned, new tyres, loom brakes, refurbished resprayed, too much to list, £3800 Tel. 01474 702503



HONDA CB400T 1978, excellent running condition not many of these about now, selling cheap, plenty new parts on it, £1200 Tel. Gary 07913 076801 Norfolk



HONDA CB550 Four 1974, KO, 15,000 miles, original except for new maroon paint superb condition and runner, V5, ready to ride, £3500 firm Tel. 07521 937850 Nth Yorks



HONDA CBX550F11 1982, vgc, new tyres, recent battery, serviced, MoT July 2020, original tool kit and user manual, £2495 no offers Tel. 01934 514174 Weston-Super-Mare



HONDA CL90 Trail, American import, restored, rebored, powder coated frame, many new parts, £2500 Tel. 01733 575042 Cambs



HONDA CX650 1985 Turbo, 700 miles from new, UK bike, tested and road ready, condition as miles covered, £20,000 with close offers considered Tel. 07818 891892 South Yorkshire



HONDA NTV650 1996, 92,000 miles, Powder bronze fairing (some minor damage to r/h side), heated grips, MoT till June 2020, £750 Tel. 07470 859610; 01455 284687 Leics



HONDA REBEL 1997, 250cc, MoT April 2020, excellent condition, 8000 miles, just serviced, new tyres, £1650 ono Tel. 01524 733604 Lancashire



HONDA SH300 2007, 11,750 miles, full s/h, all MoTs, new rear tyre, silver, MoT till Feb 2021, £950 ono Tel. 01865 371094 Oxon



HONDA VFR750FT 1996, 46,106 miles, maxtonised forks, Givi panniers, baglux tank bag, powder coated wheels, £1500 Tel. Jim 07974 071187 Lancs



JAWA 350 1990, 12V, very good condition, new tyres, chain and battery, MoT, £695 Tel. 01270 662186 Cheshire


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73 Z1A 900, candy brown/orange	£18995
73 Z1A 900, being fully rebuilt	£POA
75 Z1B 900, candy brown	£13995
75 Z1B 900, candy blue	£16995
76 Z900 diamond green	£6995
75 Z900 diamond green	£17995
75 Z1000A1 Sky blue	£11995
78 Z1000 Ltd Green	£POA
77 Z650B2 red	£5995
78 Z650B3 green	£5995
79 Z650F1 blue	£5995
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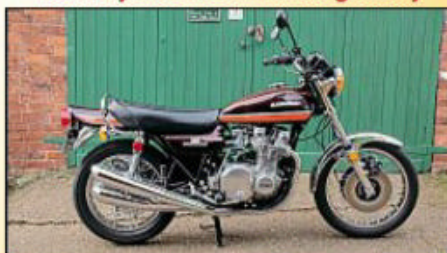
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MATCHLESS G5 1960, 350cc, 17,074 miles, been restored sometime in its life, it is so clean, frame looks to have been powder coated, £3750 ovno Tel. Bob 07815 324787 Devon



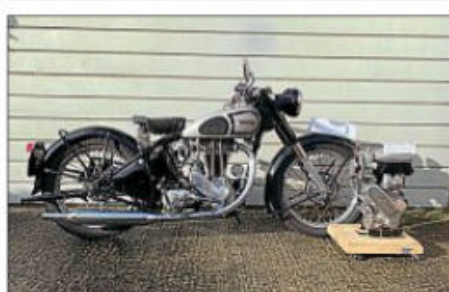
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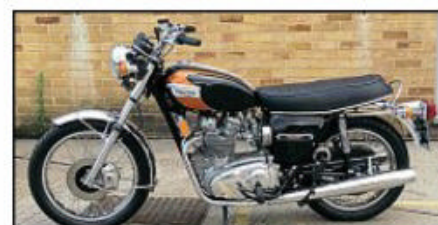
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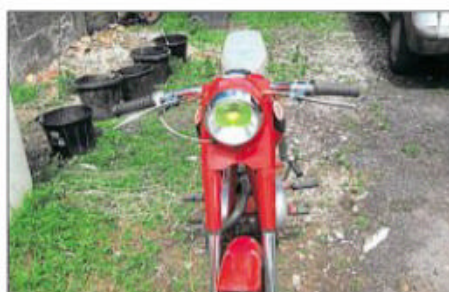
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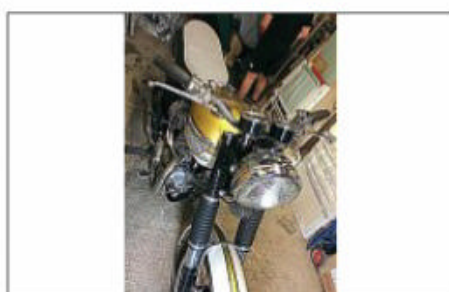
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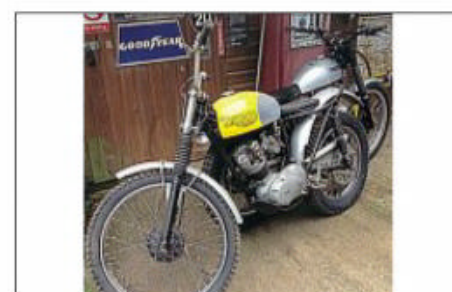
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WANTED BELL STAR HELMET 1970s, medium or large must be in reasonable condition and full face, good price paid for right helmet. Tel. 07772 330033. Essex.

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Miscellaneous

BOOKS: 'Motorcycles and How To Manage Them', circa 1960, (33rd edition), as new, £15. 'The Book of the Triumph Twins', circa 1969, (13th edition), as new, £15. 'Motorcycle Care & Maintenance', (David Frost), circa 1963, pages yellowed, but clean, otherwise as new, £10. Tel. 02086 995307. London.

DUCATI 750 1974, original Factory Parts Book, GT8 Sport, £100 inc post. Ducati Bevel twins, Restoration Guide, 1971-85, Falloon, £50 inc post. Morini 31/2 Harglo Service Manual, £15 inc post. Tel. 01492 530908. North Wales.

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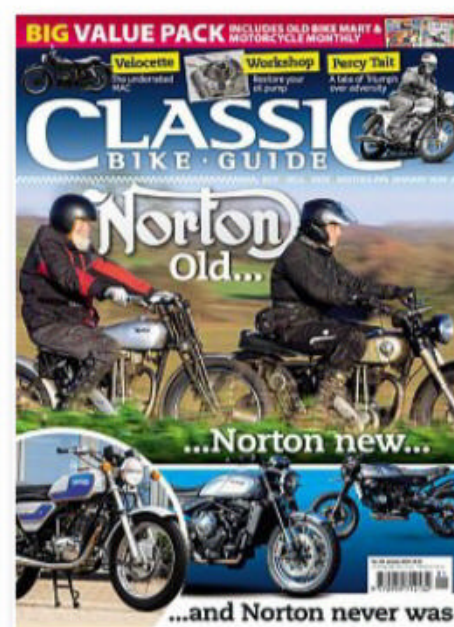
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We go behind the scenes of Guy Martin's Great Escape jump – as seen on TV! || Then we celebrate the last of the Royal Enfield Bullets || Seventies tuned Harley-Davidson Sportster || Project Norton || And more!



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FRANK WESTWORTH

AFTER THE REBUILD OF THE DECADE ... WHAT NEXT?

Frank does what he does best – sprinkles a little truth over our dreams

“You hate it. All your adult life you have lusted after a prewar big British V-twin. Now you have one. It is in perfect condition. It is unpleasant to ride. The only things you like about it are the exhaust note and the envious comments of your few remaining friends.”

WE ALL KNOW HOW IT GOES. THE FIRST stage is all impossible optimism, as a chap gazes in awe and wonder at something impossibly worn out. We beat ourselves into accepting that it's a project. If we can convince ourselves that it's a project for someone else – anyone else – then hurrah for us. Sanity is saved. We survive to fantasise another day.

Unhappily, too often we succumb to temptation. An improbable sum of money – probably statistically connected in some arcane way to memories of a hopefully misspent youth when but for financial misfortune we would have been roaring through the gloaming aboard a glittery example of the bike before us – that sum changes hands, and the imagination is tasked with dreaming up excuses to maintain domestic accord.

And then comes the actual project bit. The rebuild. The relentless inevitability of an overspend so heroic that a Government minister would be proud of it, the desperate search for serviceable parts which might with a squint look a bit like the correct ones in a certain light and from a certain angle. The years in the shed, closeted in semi-darkness and admitting no male visitors unless they bring magic beer and encouragement. The secret communication with other guys who do, unfairly, actually know what they're doing and are willing for only a seriously hefty sum to correct those slight blunders which cause us normal chaps to stumble on the endless path of righteousness.

However. Finally. Finally at last the job is done. Mountains have been climbed. Impossible obstacles have been overcome. Friends have been made and fortunes lost. On the floor stands a motorcycle, and there is neither mechanical nor electrical reason why it will not, y'know, work. So the ritual, the routine, the weary voyage of exploration and misunderstanding which means that you set all the controls in the correct places and kick like a dervish, working up a sweat like a sumo wrestler in the process and discovering cardiac muscles you didn't know existed.

However. Finally. Finally at last it fires up. And you stand there, panting, perspiring and proud. It runs smoothly as a road drill and sounds like a cement mixer chewing on old

breeze blocks, but it is yours. Where once there stood an unlovely, unloved pile of scrap, there is now a glittering (other adjectives are available) and handsome motorcycle. A transport of delight, waiting only for you to get appropriately toggled and ... start it again. Which you do.

The sun is shining. Both of your remaining friends send messages of encouragement on Facebook. You are encouraged, enthused and proud. You sniff the air like a hunter, stride like a warrior to the grumbling beast and mount it, setting out boldly into the great unknown. Or the housing estate, whichever is nearer. Great unknowns are more romantic than most housing estates, we find. But never mind.

Some time later, you return. You are strangely quiet. Your domestic partners ask how it went; the ride, that is. You mumble, maybe mutter a little. Your domestic partners know how much time, effort and indeed money you've lavished upon this, the most dreamy of dream machines. You drink a large one, maybe two, and repair to the bath for a long soak.

Because it's horrible to ride. You hate it. All your adult life you have lusted after a prewar big British V-twin. Now you have one. It is in perfect condition. It is unpleasant to ride. The only things you like about it are the exhaust note and the envious comments of your few remaining friends. You understand with a grim finality that, truth be told, you would rather ride a Honda Superdream. Maybe a Super Cub. It would be much more pleasant and would cost maybe 10 per cent of what you have spent if you bought the very best example in the entire world, preferably ridden by both Steve McQueen and Barry Sheene to victory on The Island.

There is no way out of this.

Except...

Gentle reader, I share this knowledge – hard-won, as you can probably tell – in a spirit of generosity, of kindness.

You announce to anyone interested that you intend to preserve this glorious example of our fine and proud motorbicycling heritage so that future generations will feel their breasts swell with pride as they gaze upon your mighty works. At a show. In a hall. Wearing it out would be a sin.

Which leaves you free to buy that Honda Superdream. Go for the CB400N, maybe an Automatic. They're great. No, really... **CBC**

Frank Westworth is the editor of *RealClassic* magazine, the latest in a long series of publications that began in 1982 when he was bullied into producing *The Jampot*, the previously excellent magazine of the AJS & Matchless OC. He was also founding editor of *Classic Bike Guide* and has returned as a columnist as a penance. Or something. He has a mysterious obsession with riding obscure and elderly motorcycles, which he does very slowly...



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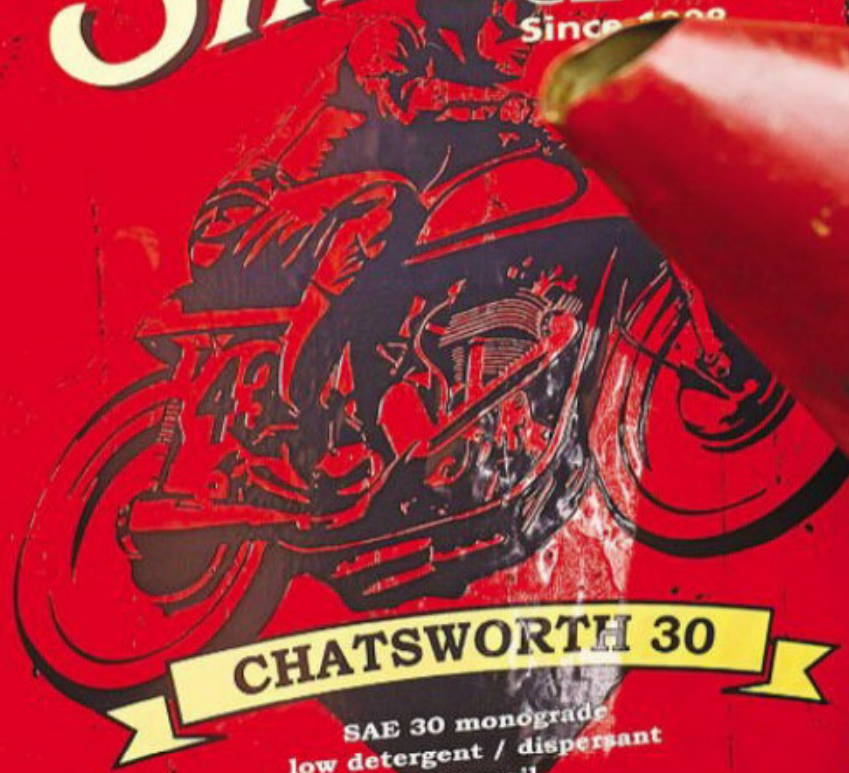


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