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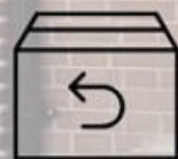
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WHO'S DONE WHAT

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THIS MONTH we've been reading **NEON PREY** by John Sandford (a thoroughly dependable Lucas Davenport manhunt); **BEAST** by Matt Wesolowski (a thoroughly contemporary social drama, dressed up as a vampire hunt); **DREGS** by Jorn Lier Horst (yet another Scandi detective à la Wallander or Beck); **FEARLESS JONES** and **FEAR ITSELF** by Walter Mosley (two gloriously irreverent social commentaries disguised as thrillers, which they are too).

MEANWHILE AT THE MOVIES... **STONE** with Ed Norton, Milla Jovovich and Bobby de Niro proved to be a surprisingly tense low-key drama; **JORDSKOTT 2** (Scandi supernatural strangeness) was astonishing if inconclusive; **THE EXPANSE S4** was simply superb (if full of sad farewells) and **BIRDS OF PREY** with Harley Quinn was extremely daft. But we liked it...

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FROM THE FRONT

Warning! Anorak stuff alert! You have been cautioned!

OK, that's quite enough exclamation marks. But I felt that you needed to be warned that I'm going to talk about a tiny subject of interest only to a tiny number of folk. Rear chains. You are officially permitted to sigh deeply at this point and move immediately to the first story, which is all about a Velocette.

Why chains? Because it's midwinter, and the only time I think about chains, pretty much, is in winter, because in summer they just do their jobs, tirelessly transmitting the engine's vast power to the rear tyre, day in, day out. I may have adjusted and even maintained drive chains in the less wet months, but if so those rare events have faded from my memory. In winter, however, it's another story. Because in winter chains can really suffer at the hands of the climate.

Actually, that's maybe a little simplistic. In the UK – where I do all my riding – I suspect that the salty muck spread on the roads to keep them clear of ice does as much damage to the chains as does dirty water. I could of course be wrong about that. It has happened before, me being wrong. So I'm told.

In any case, after riding slowly home through rather a lot of water, I'd decided that I should clean, check, lubricate and adjust the chain on the Triumph. It is a relatively modern Triumph of the Hinckley variety so doesn't have a handy auto-oiler as do noble AMC machines from the 1950s. I had my old bike rider's sneer ready – another pointy remark about how things were better back then.

Back then, my old warriors often carried a breather pipe from the top of the oil tank to the main chain, the idea being that 'oil mist' would pass down it and keep the chain happy. This was the theory. In practice, the chains on my old warriors went inevitably rusty, dry and creaky every winter. Mistily oiled they may have been; maintained and maintained they were not.

Back to the Triumph. Its chain is filthy, and it is also slack. But it is not rusty, and it is still silent in operation. The filth is road muck stuck to the aerosol chain spray which I'd previously applied. The chain itself has almost no sideplay and feels fine – if too long somehow, although were there any further adjustment available I would simply adjust it. However, there isn't, so I can't.

This made me ponder for a moment. Pondering is harmless, rarely offensive, and prevents a chap getting stressed at



life's endless madnasses, both major and minor. And what I thought was... if the oily 'mist' never prevented my old bikes' chains corroding, and if modern chainsprays are so good that they hang on coating their chains throughout winter's worst, how can I bang on about how things were better in the good old days?

I can't. So I won't.

And then I removed the inspection caps from the full chain enclosure on our Matchless G5, one of the apparently unloved AMC lightweights. I squirted some engine oil onto it when the bike landed in The Shed several years ago and have never looked it since. It's perfect still. Oily and in adjustment. Things were better in the good old days, then. But only sometimes...

Ride safely

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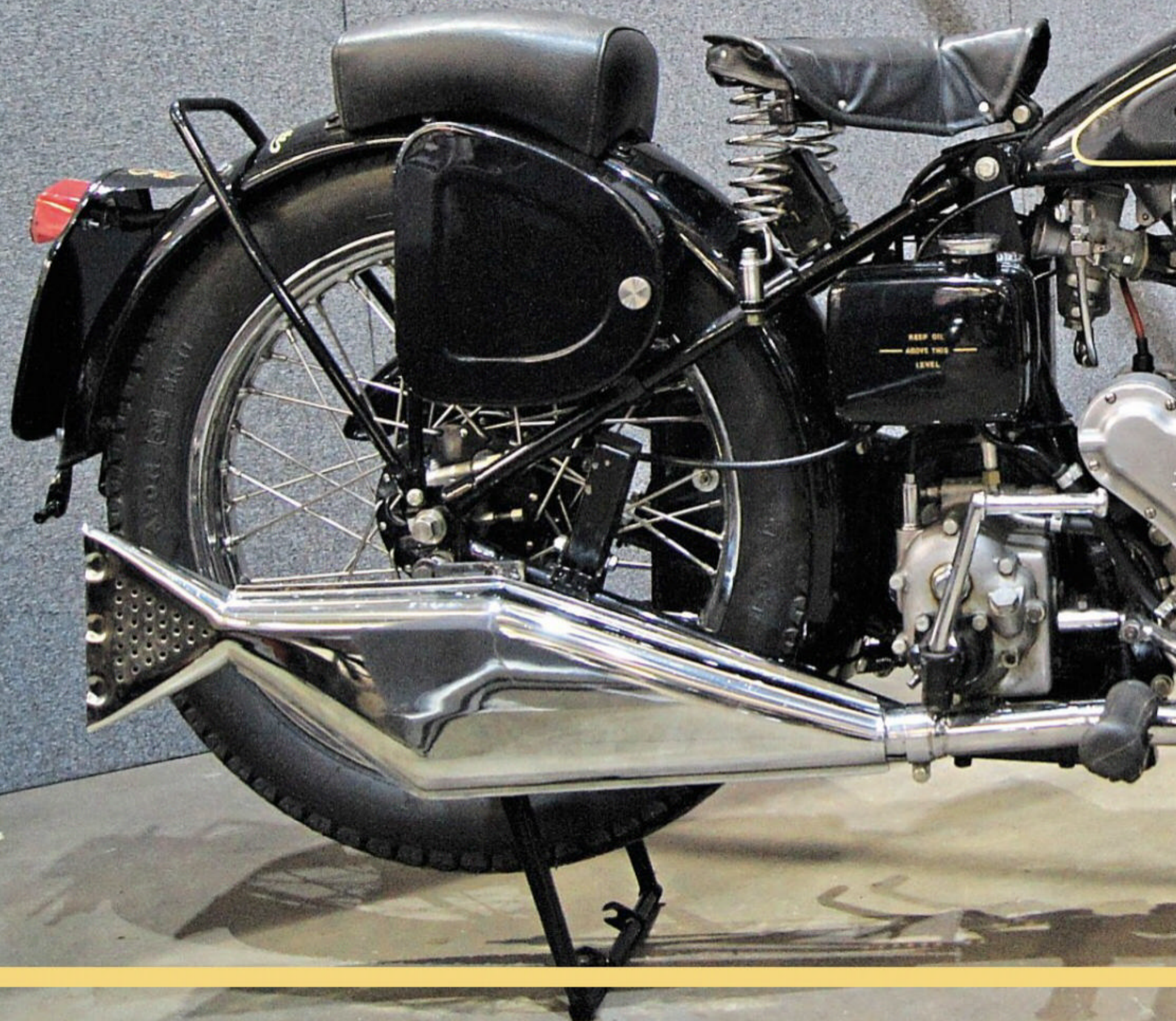
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Have we tempted you to try a pre-war British bike yet? If you're still resisting, Rowena Hoseason strings together a strong argument for Velocette's marvellous MAC...

Photos by Rowena Hoseason, Frank Westworth, Richard Edmonds Auctions, Andy Tiernan, Chris Spaett, RC RChive



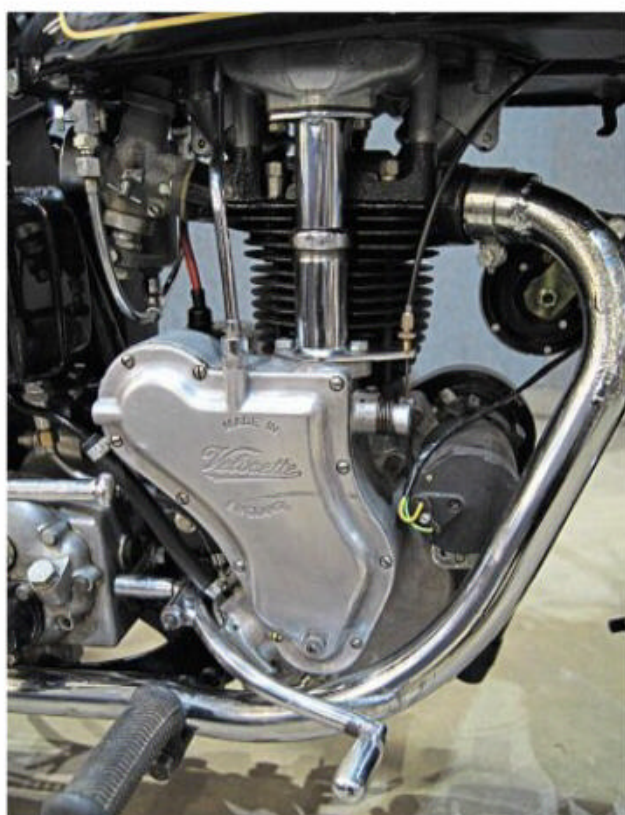
Velocette made a big deal of how robust their bikes were. The frame was 'very sturdy' with 'all brazed joints, making a very rigid construction.' Even the clutch cable was 'extra strong'!

Just lately we've been talking about vintage vehicles and the joy of riding pre-war motorcycles. In RC188, Ace Tester Miles gave us a crash course (not literally) in the fine art of living with a vintage bike, of getting to grips with hand-change gearboxes, flat tanks, manual lubrication and all that jazz.

Then last month Reg Eyre talked us through his stable of pioneer lightweights – which, if I'm being totally honest, look rather more like bicycles than motorbikes to me! Meanwhile Jacqueline PUB Bickerstaff has got her veteran Invicta ready to ride, so look out for an attractive miasma of two-stroke blue smoke tagging along behind her this summer.

All of the above come with a few disadvantages as Mr Miles outlined, not least that the exclusivity attached to a 'proper' vintage bike, built before 1931, means that these machines attract a price premium. Which is fine and dandy if you're happy to pay and you specifically want to ride in the Banbury Run or other vintage-specific events. But I'm not a great one for mass-participation jamborees – you won't find me in a lake with 2000 other outdoor swimmers either – so I'm not bothered about whether an old bike qualifies for a particular club or specific shindig.

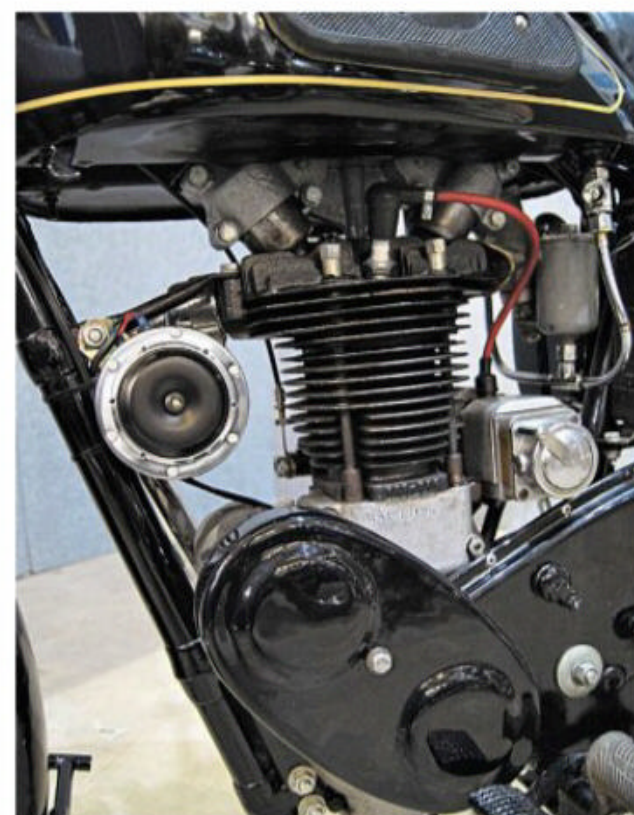
I do, however, have a soft spot for pre-war machines, those models which are comfortably 'modern' enough to have foot-change gearboxes (because I've never mastered that hand-change malarkey) and



The high-cam engine design served Veloce very well and for a very long time

something resembling a brake. Yet they still need to be quietly quirky enough to open that time-warped window into another world, where an intimate acquaintance with an individual machine counts for so much more than a hundred horsepower twist-n-go. So girder forks and rigid rear suspension it is – a lasting affection due in no small part of my encounter with a mid-1930s cammy Norton more than a decade ago.

But an ohc machine is beyond my mechanical aptitude (Dirty Harry Callaghan was right; a man's got to know his limitations) which rules out the delicious Inter. So which



The steel primary chaincase has an unusual extension to the front, containing the dynamo drive belt. It was possible to remove it to liberate a little extra performance (but only in daylight)

pre-war post-vintage motorcycle would I choose instead? You can see it right here: the Velocette MAC which graced our stand at February's Bristol Show. Yup, this is The One To Have as far as I'm concerned...

...which is somewhat ironic, because Roger, who restored and owns this 1937, only ended up with it by default! A friend of Roger's started rebuilding the MAC back in the early 1990s, then lost interest. The Velo was left part-assembled for a couple of decades and when Roger's friend passed away, he was asked if he'd be willing to buy

it. He wasn't especially interested in the MAC, but told me 'I was keen on the part-restored JAP speedway bike' which was sharing the same shed. They came as a pair, so 'I ended up having to take on the Velocette to get the speedway bike. I went to a Velocette Owners' Club meeting for the first time and found I was actually sat next to the person who sold it to my friend: how bizarre was that?'

HISTORY LESSON

Most people know that the MAC is a bigger version of the MOV, but few folk realise that it was Veloce's first 'modern' motorcycle of the 1930s, a four-stroke with overhead valves. At the time, Veloce used their slim 348cc ohc K-series singles to power their sporting motorcycles, alongside the utility 249cc two-stroke GTP. There was a definite gap in their range, which they initially attempted to fill with a 350 three-speed sidevalve single, housed in the GTP chassis. This sidevalve was both slow and noisy and not considered worthy of the illustrious Velocette badge.



The MAC's Webb-style front forks weren't the cheaper type you might expect to find on a ride-to-work roadster, but were hand adjustable and fitted with a steering damper

The next attempt utilised overhead valves with gear-driven cams mounted high in a large timing chest, driving a stumpy and sturdy set of pushrods. Initially the straight-cut gears included an adjustable pinion which could be fine-tuned for precise, near silent meshing, but in time these were swapped for helical-tooth gears. The almost-square 248cc four-stroke had an enclosed top end, a rear-mounted magneto and forward dynamo, dry sump lubrication and a four-speed, hand-change gearbox. To avoid sapping power unnecessarily, the belt to the dynamo could be easily slackened off for daytime riding when lights weren't required. The prototype GTP-based frame was discarded and the new MOV was fitted into Veloce's first full cradle frame.

Engineer Charles Udall acknowledged that the ohv engine would be cheaper to build than the firm's ohc motors, which in turn would make the purchase price more attractive to a wider audience. 'The pushrod four-stroke can be produced more cheaply than the overhead' ➔

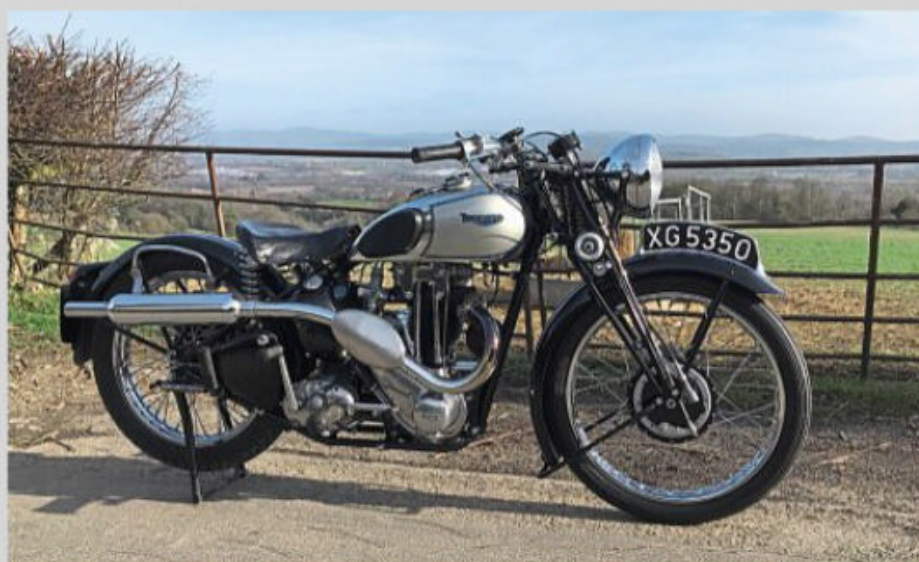
RIGID ALTERNATIVES



If you like the idea of a machine similar to the MAC, but maybe one that's a bit less expensive and more mechanically straightforward, then keep your eyes peeled for one of Val Page's excellent pre-war BSA singles. It was one of Page's 500s which swept Wal Handley to



Gold Star success at Brooklands, but the 350s tend to be more affordable and available. This 1938 B26 Star is up for grabs at Andy Tiernan's for £5350. It still has its original registration number and comes with all its historic paperwork. See andybuysbikes.com



Here's another alternative to consider... Before he moved to BSA and designed their singles, Val Page was busy at Triumph in the early 1930s, updating their range of ohv and sidevalve singles. Then Edward Turner arrived in 1936 and created the Tiger sports-roadsters. The improvements weren't just cosmetic – the Tigers were given significant



mechanical upgrades for 1937 and subsequently won the Maudes' Trophy.

Rather more 'invigorating' than either the Velo or the BSA, a pre-war Tiger won't come cheap. This 1938 Tiger 80 350 recently arrived at Venture Classics and is likely to sell for around the £10k mark. See ventureclassics.com



In 1936, the big news was that next year's MAC would be equipped with a fully automatic BT-H magneto, made exclusively for Veloce. 'Riders will be able to ignore the magneto entirely', said Motor Cycling, 'no advance or retard lever being fitted to the machine'

camshaft type,' he said. 'Moreover, the first type, perhaps on the score of cost, has a rather wider appeal than the second.'

The high cam / short pushrod arrangement meant that the new 250 could rev higher than its contemporaries: 5500rpm in 1933 was remarkable for a road bike. The MOV's fully enclosed top end was controversial, too. Conventional wisdom dictated that the valve springs needed a constant air flow to stay cool. Any benefit from better lubrication in a clean environment – protected from dust and grime – would be outweighed in the long run by continual over-heating. Or at least, that was what the pundits of the time figured. In the long run, Udall was proved right, although he did have the benefit of improving metallurgy and suitable oiling systems on his side!

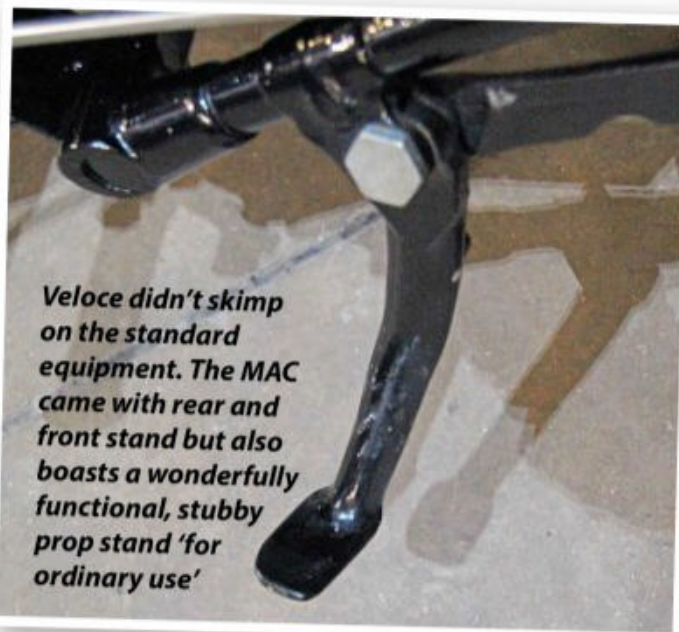
Although few of the MOV's cycle parts were shared with Veloce's other models, it looked and performed just like a Velocette should.



Voltage control box lives under the seat, where riders hope that it maintains its cool...



The rear wheel was QD, mounted on two self-contained bearings so it could be whisked away leaving the brake drum, shoes, sprocket and chain in place



Veloce didn't skimp on the standard equipment. The MAC came with rear and front stand but also boasts a wonderfully functional, stubby prop stand 'for ordinary use'

Early roadgoing examples would do 60mph and some of the tuned racing machines could achieve 100mph. Almost immediately the MOV was followed by its bigger brother, the MAC, which was created by extending the MOV's stroke to 96mm. Combined with a bore of 68mm this gave a capacity just under 349cc. In an unusually pragmatic moment of cost control, this meant the MAC could use the same piston, valves and cylinder head as its smaller sibling (Veloce weren't able to repeat the trick with the next development, the 495cc MSS, introduced for 1935. That would've been taking 'long stroke' to extremes, so the 500 was bored to 81mm).

Thanks to this sensible production engineering, Veloce marketed their new 350 at £51 when the MOV sold at £49... yet the MAC cost no more to manufacture. It was significantly cheaper than the KSS or KTS, which retailed at £62. No wonder the MAC went on to become the most commercially



The MAC specification also included electric lights, 'high frequency' horn, illuminated speedo and pillion accoutrements as standard

successful model Velocette ever built.

From Udall's comments about the capacity hike from 250 to 350, you get the impression that bigger versions were on his mind when he initially put the MOV design together. 'The 250 had very heavy flywheels that were rather heavier than they needed to be,' he explained, 'with the result that the MOV engine was extremely smooth. Owing to the decision merely to increase the stroke, it was impossible to inveigle flywheels of greater diameter into the existing crankcase, in spite of the theoretical advantage. In any

THINKING OF BUYING?



This MAC was recently offered at auction by Richard Edmonds with an estimate of between £5000 and £6000. It's a recently rebuilt bitsa with what might be a 1952 engine fitted into an earlier frame. Lots of work has been completed, including a rebore and a fresh piston; new exhaust, rear wheel rim, valves and gaskets, and the electrics have been overhauled. If originality isn't all-important then it could be a serviceable runaround – although we'd be surprised if a bike with an uncertain provenance like this went for more than the lower end of the auction estimate



event, the standard flywheels are perfectly adequate for this particular engine... Each flywheel is individually balanced, with the result that each flywheel assembly is balanced to perfection.'

The MAC was an instant hit. It avoided hand-change gears altogether and came with a positive-stop foot-change gearbox. Running lower compression than the 250, the MAC felt sweeter and more relaxed. The 350 long-stroke motor was lauded in *The Motor Cycle* for its 'remarkable pulling power' despite its modest 14bhp output and, indeed, it was good for 71mph and 87mpg.

These days the 6" sls front drum feels somewhat marginal, so you're well advised to use both brakes. The pre-war MSS was equipped with 7" stoppers at each end – now that would be a useful upgrade for a 350 should you happen to stumble across a 500 front end or wheels at an autojumble...

The MAC's Webb forks take a little bit (OK, quite a lot if you've only ridden bikes with tele front ends before) of getting used to but once you've adapted to the different feel of this type of steering it can be reassuringly steady and precise. On greasy roads, *The Motor Cycle's* tester was especially impressed;

'It was immediately evident that the machine was notably stable on such surfaces... this same steadiness continued throughout the whole speed range, hands-off steering being utterly simple from 20mph to full throttle.'

A girder MAC won't turn on a tuppence like its 1950s counterparts but it's not an especially lengthy machine; most swinging arm classics of the 1950s and 60s are a couple of inches longer. To modern riders the girders feel somewhat strange, at low speeds especially, and accurate cornering demands careful setting up, but the bike shouldn't fight you in the bends or veer weirdly on the straights. If it does, then that's a good sign that its forks need an overhaul and that's a job for an experienced specialist. When you go for a test ride on a prospective purchase it's an excellent idea to take along a friend

who knows what they're supposed to feel like! You will find some MACs built after WW2 with Webb girders and, personally, I'd prefer those to a worn set of Dowty telescopic.

Velocettes have a particular reputation for an obscure starting ritual but I've found that tends to apply more to the high-compression sporting and larger capacity models. Both the MAC and MOV have succumbed to my not-particularly-expert approach of tickling, rolling over compression, followed by one big kick. I find starting easier with rigid machines because their saddles are so much lower than twin-shock classics. This means you can kick the bike while standing astride it, so there's less chance of it stalling than when you have to faff around and take it off its main / rear stand after you've fired it up.

Another benefit – and I'm pretty sure this one is entirely psychological – is that from 1937 Veloce equipped the MAC with an auto-advance magneto. That removes one of those perplexing levers from the handlebars, and means that you don't need to concern yourself with whether you've retarded the timing too far – or worse, accidentally advanced it!

AN OWNER SPEAKS

All of which brings us back to owner Roger and his 1937 MAC which he had no intention of acquiring. But once you've bought a part-completed project, it would be a shame not to finish the job, no?

'When I picked up the MAC all the paintwork and plating had been done,' says Roger. 'It was very loosely assembled – even the wheels were loose, which made it difficult to move! The carburettor was missing but was found later; the oil tank and some tinware were in a box with the levers, and just things like the cables, chains, oil pipes and fuel



View from above – not entirely familiar to riders more used to post-war machines

pipes had to be found. It basically needed reassembly and finishing.'

Roger is a retired garage owner so had no problem with making his own pedal stops and similar bits, but 'most of the work was done by Velocette specialist Graham Drinkwater. He made the cables and such as I don't have much spare time.

'We did have a small problem with the decompressor cable adjustment, but the big hiccup was the new exhaust. When the engine warmed up for the first time the poor-quality chrome bubbled. As it is a special exhaust that's carefully shaped around the footrest on this particular model, and it has since settled down, I shall leave it alone for now.

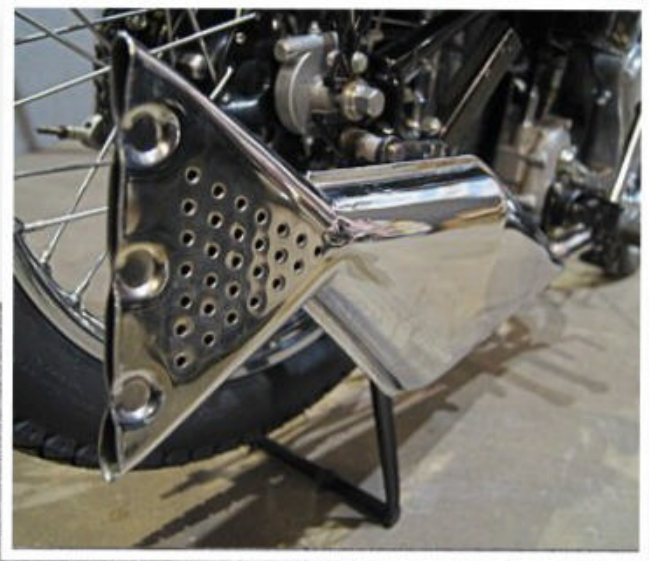
'If you're thinking of buying a Velo like this, the best advice is to join the club, learn the knack of starting them and use the correct oil. The VOC are very good for spares and advice, as are Velocette specialists Grove Classic Motorcycles.'

Back at the Bristol Show, one of the many people who stopped by the RC stand to admire Roger's MAC was his very own wife. She has restricted mobility which means she's

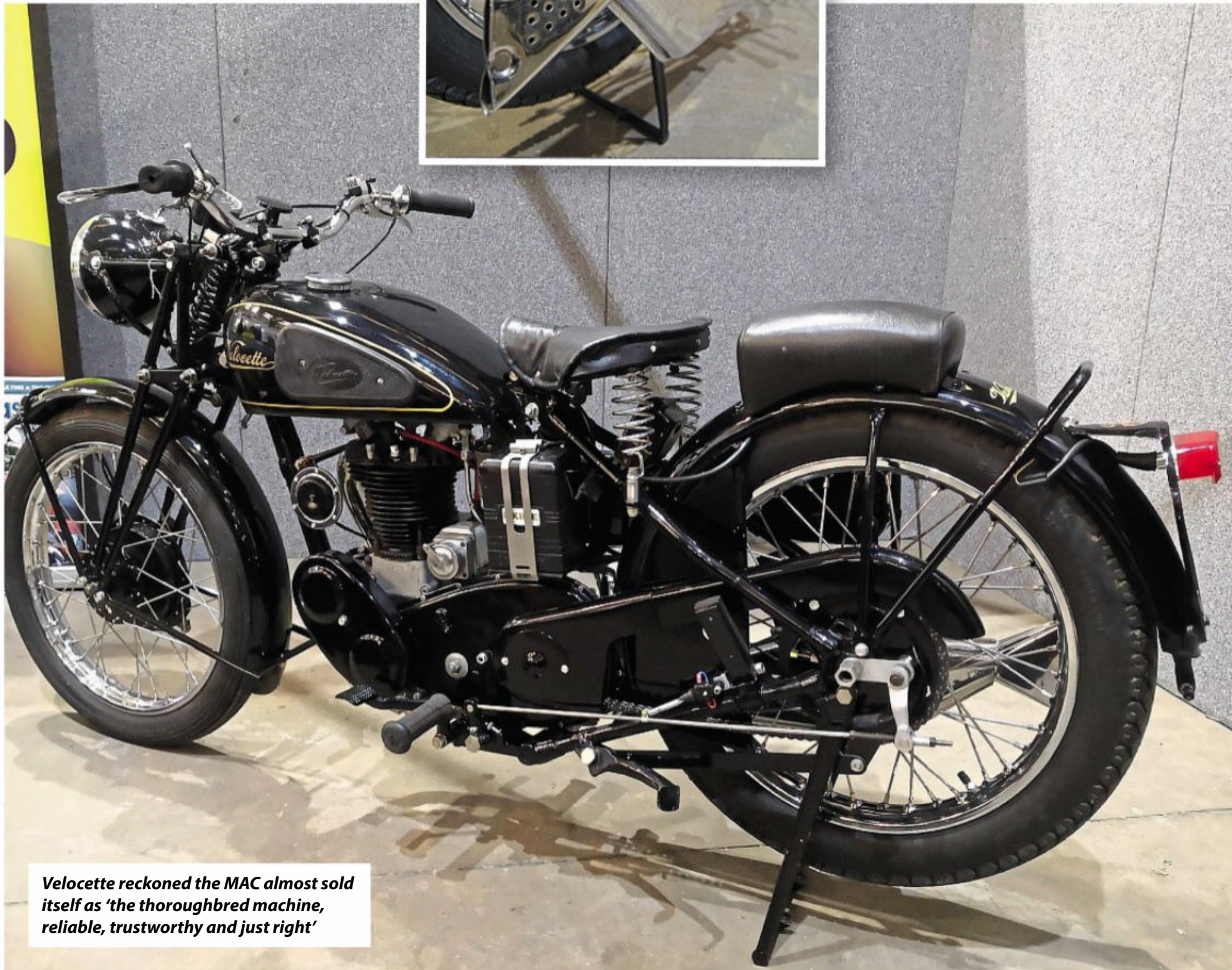
not been able to get out to the garage to admire the machine in all its glory. So until the show, she'd only viewed photos of the finished Velo. After careful examination she gave it the spousal seal of approval – apart from the patina on the old speedo which could do with 'making presentable.'

So how does the MAC compare to Roger's other classic Britbikes? 'I am quite happy with the rigid frame and girder forks as most of my bikes bounce up and down on spring seats,' he says.

'The MAC has lower compression, which makes it easier to start than my 500 Velocette Clubmans – and it has better gearing. You'd have difficulty riding with Clubmans gearing in traffic, but the MAC is as easy to ride as my smaller GTP 250 two-stroke. As a lightweight 350, the MAC is probably the best Velo to ride and enjoy.' **Rc**



VELOCETTE MAC FACT PACK	
Engine	Air-cooled high-cam ohv single
Bore / stroke	68mm x 96mm
Capacity	349cc
Compression	6:1
Lubrication	Dry sump, gear pump
Primary drive	Enclosed chain
Ignition	Magneto, auto from 1937
Clutch	Multiplate
Gearbox	4-speed foot-change
Frame	Single top tubes, duplex engine cradle
Front fork	Webb-type girder
Tyres	3.25 x 19
Brakes	6" s/s drum
Wheelbase	52.5"
Saddle height	27.5"
Dry weight	280lb
Top speed	70mph



Velocette reckoned the MAC almost sold itself as 'the thoroughbred machine, reliable, trustworthy and just right'

Introducing our new kit for Yamaha Fazer 600 1998-2003



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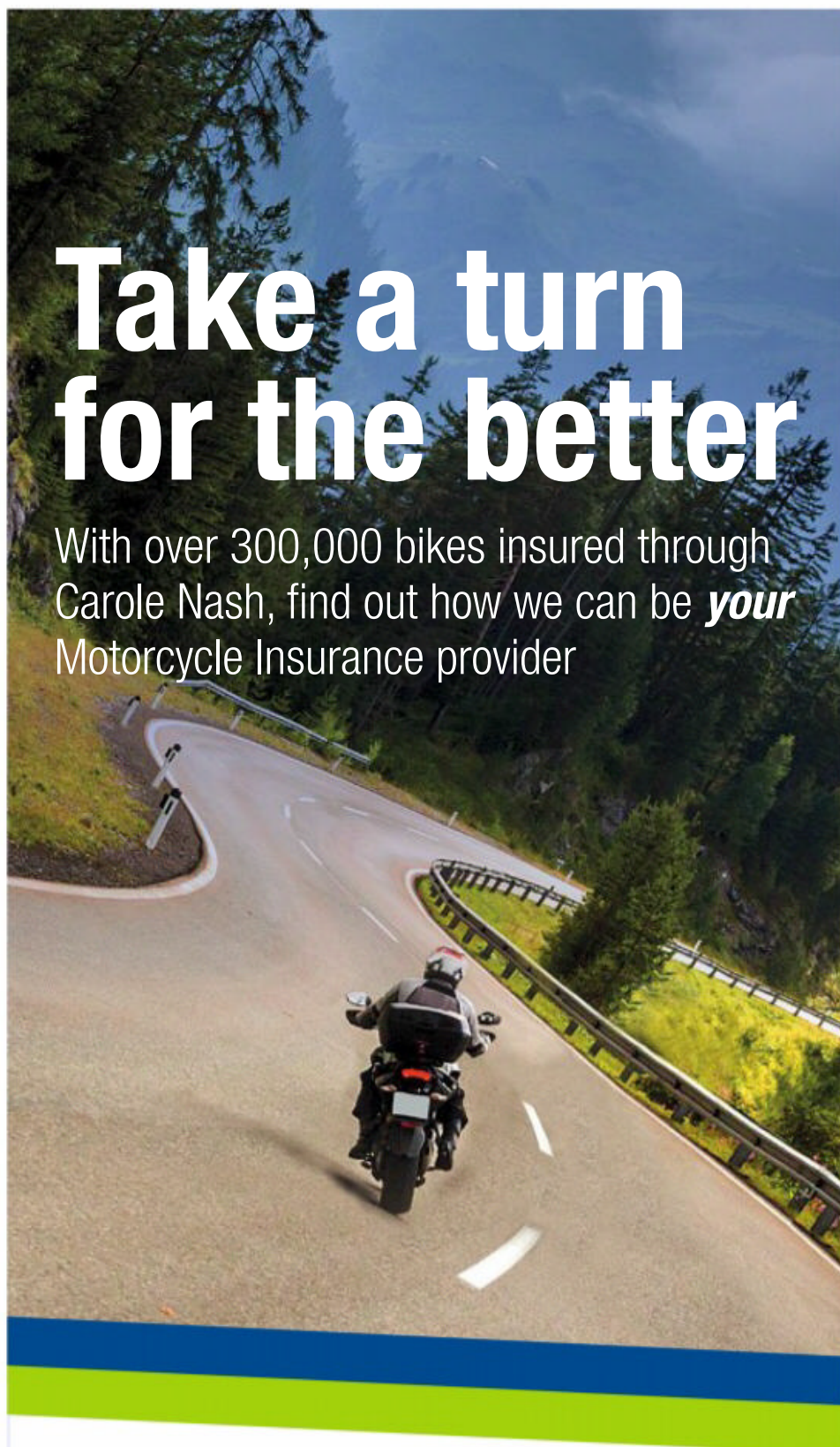
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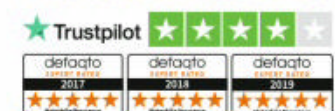


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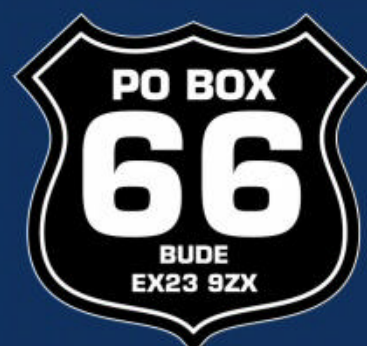


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INCOMING!



RC readers write, rant and rattle on...

Summat to say? Send your comments, hints, tips, tales of woe and derring-don't to: RCHQ@RealClassic.net



I'd like to mention Karen of 'Bustle About' in Tipton who re-upholsters and re-covers motorcycles saddles, and does a super job. She does standard or custom seats and is good with logos. She uses marine grade materials for a lasting finish. Contact via 07817 851442 or bustleabout.co.uk

Rob Davies



SUPER STROKERS!

I read with interest about the Roy Davies Bantam/Ariel specials in RC188. The first special that Roy built struck a chord with me, and I wondered if the bike which inspired Roy is the one in the photo here. It was called the 'Bleader' and belonged to Pete Sole, well-known in the VMCC at the time. Sadly Pete is no longer with us but I am sure he would have liked the article on Roy's bikes.

Roger Kirkman, member

We remember the Bleader! In fact I'm pretty sure Frank awarded it a prize or two when Pete displayed it at Malvern, many moons ago. There are now quite a few of these specials knocking around; have a look on the Bantam Club's online forum for more versions of Barrows and Bleaders... **Rowena**



WINTER WINNER!

Thanks for the 'winter wanderings' mention. I will now have to buy a larger helmet! I got out for a run on my 89th birthday. It was cold, but OK with three stops for coffee and sinful cake. I hope that I am still riding on my 90th.

Enjoyed the story about the ISDT. I remember it: I was 18 at the time!

Alf Taylor-Smith, member

Happy belated birthday, Alf! As it happens, you were the winner of our entirely informal 'shortest day' competition – hopefully your prize has arrived and the RC T-shirt will help keep you a bit warmer on your next ride... **Rowena**



ONE CARB WONDERS



Some 30 years ago I was commuting 70 miles a day. I was offered a neglected 1979 T140V at a good price (in Tawny Brown – as was then the fashion) so I rebuilt it as a pick 'n' mix of various years to be low maintenance, four seasons, second string transport. I swapped the T140V head for a TR7V head to fit my brief and I have never regretted it. All the paint is stove enamel (powder coating was not then the finish it now is) including the tank, and the mudguards, silencers, spokes, fastenings, rear spindles and various widgets are all stainless.

I built the bike to be as durable and as easy to maintain as possible within the limits of a Triumph twin, and the styling merely derives from that. I am thinking of a slight revision to give more of a 1960s look.

I will retain Frank's thoughts on the TR7V and Rowena's comments in the accompanying Members' Enclosure to deflect the continuous drivel that I have 'ruined' a Bonneville and that I ought to return to twin carbs to regain the lost performance!

David Turner, member

I absolutely agree with Rowena about a single carb on a twin. On my Mk2 Norton Commando I found it difficult to balance the worn carbs so went to Stewart Engineering in Hinchley Wood and bought a 2-1 adaptor. Used one of the Amals with a bigger jet, that was fine.

Xavier Lebrun, member 13,842

Twin carbs are much easier to set up with a twin-pull throttle and access for vacuum gauges. My T3 Guzzi has the above. It takes about 10 minutes to check/set every 6000 miles, whether they need it or not.

Gordon Milburn, member

RC190 was one of the best issues yet. A good mix of bikes, something to suit everyone. I'd pretty much forgotten about the CD175, it's so long since I've seen one. They were everywhere in the early 1970s, pretty bulletproof, so where have they all gone?

The best bits of the issue for me were the Enfields in Wales and the single carb Triumphs. This is my own single carb Trumpy, a modified 1966 6T Thunderbird. Those right foot gearchange, rear drum braked OIFs are the best of the breed. The rear disc they fitted on later models was prone to warping, dirt and was no more efficient.

Chris Maugham, member



I took one of the carbs off my Bonnie to convert it to single carb. I have to tell you readers it ran terribly. I refitted the second carburettor and it ran perfectly. Conclusive proof that twin-carb bikes are better...

Lawrence Howes, member

So now I'm waiting for someone to send a photo of the three carbs they've fitted to a BSA Bantam... **Rowena**





MYSTERY SOLVED

I was delighted to see in RC190 that Robin Cowling identified my grandfather's bike as a Triumph. I have been trying to identify this machine for years and am most grateful to him for this. Frank is right, RC readers really do know everything!

Paul Roberts, member

SMELLS LIKE TEEN SPIRIT

I recently spent a most enjoyable morning watching the Talmag Trial, an early season event for pre-65 four-strokes. Lots of interesting bikes, good craic, the weather was mild and the burger van coffee was very acceptable.

There was just one thing missing: the wonderful, nostalgic smell of hot Castrol R. Anyone who went to a competitive motorcycle event before modern oils came in will remember this. And let's face it, we bikers are experts on smells, being out there among them. A vintage event like this without Castrol R is like a pork pie without mustard. Or something.

So come on guys. A teaspoonful in the petrol wouldn't hurt, would it? It might even lubricate those ancient valves. And that's all it would take to make a great day

out perfect.

Jim Peace, member 1262

Great suggestion. For years I used cheap (clean) 20/50 to protect the not-so-shiny bits on our Enfield Bullet. Trouble was, when it got hot it smelled like a mobile chip shop, and I finished every ride starving hungry! **Rowena**



LIGHTS! CAMERA! ACTION...

In the early 1970s I worked with an image-conscious colleague who, while very affable, always had more money than sense. As perhaps evidence of this, he bought a brand new Laverda Jota, arguably the most extrovert and desirable machine of the era. Not content with merely owning such a beast he decided he needed a permanent and immediately available image of him in action on it. This he would keep in his wallet and display to the us lesser mortals.

Apparently, in an effort to obtain this, he positioned his girlfriend at the exit of a blind bend with the instructions to record him in a daring acute angle of lean on the triple. I don't know what photographic equipment they had the use of, whether digital storage was available at the time; a series of 'instamatic' paper images or if the whole attempt covered several episodes and used conventional film. I do know, however, he was not satisfied with the results and believed success lay with the timing of the shot.

It was therefore decided that he would sound his horn at what was believed the most appropriate time to enable his better half to press the button. The new result was an improved fairly central image but lacking the action our hero felt capable of. The horn sounding was amended to a series of activations to give a progressive level of warning of approach and another run was made.

Success, a sharp, centrally positioned, correctly focused image – of a riderless, horizontal, sliding, scraping nearly new, now damaged Jota.

I don't know if their equipment was capable of recording the prone, solitary rider that followed, but in fairness to him he did admit to his actions, hence my knowledge of them.

Phil Rich, Member 12,595

Oh, the horror. One of my greatest fears when working on modern bike mags was being immortalised on film at the moment of maximum inconvenience. Bad enough that we could oh-so-easily drop a test bike which belonged to the importer / proud owner / a museum, etc. Worse still that there was a professional photographer on hand to capture the moment! **Rowena**

BAD NEWS FOR JOTA OWNERS!



Laverda Jota owners, like most experienced motorcyclists, thought they'd bought the best bikes available. So they had – but not any more, because now Laverda proudly announce the successor to the Jota, the Jota 1980-style!

Having dominated the superbike scene since its introduction, the magnificent Jota could be

bettered only by another Laverda – and it has to be the latest Jota.

What's new about it? Nothing dramatic; simply even more power, more torque and sharp, new styling. It's Laverda's policy to make changes only where development experience dictates.

So, it's bad news for Jota owners, but much worse news for owners of other big bikes. The new Jota, big, mean, powerful and fabulous. See it at your nearest Laverda dealer. If you dare.

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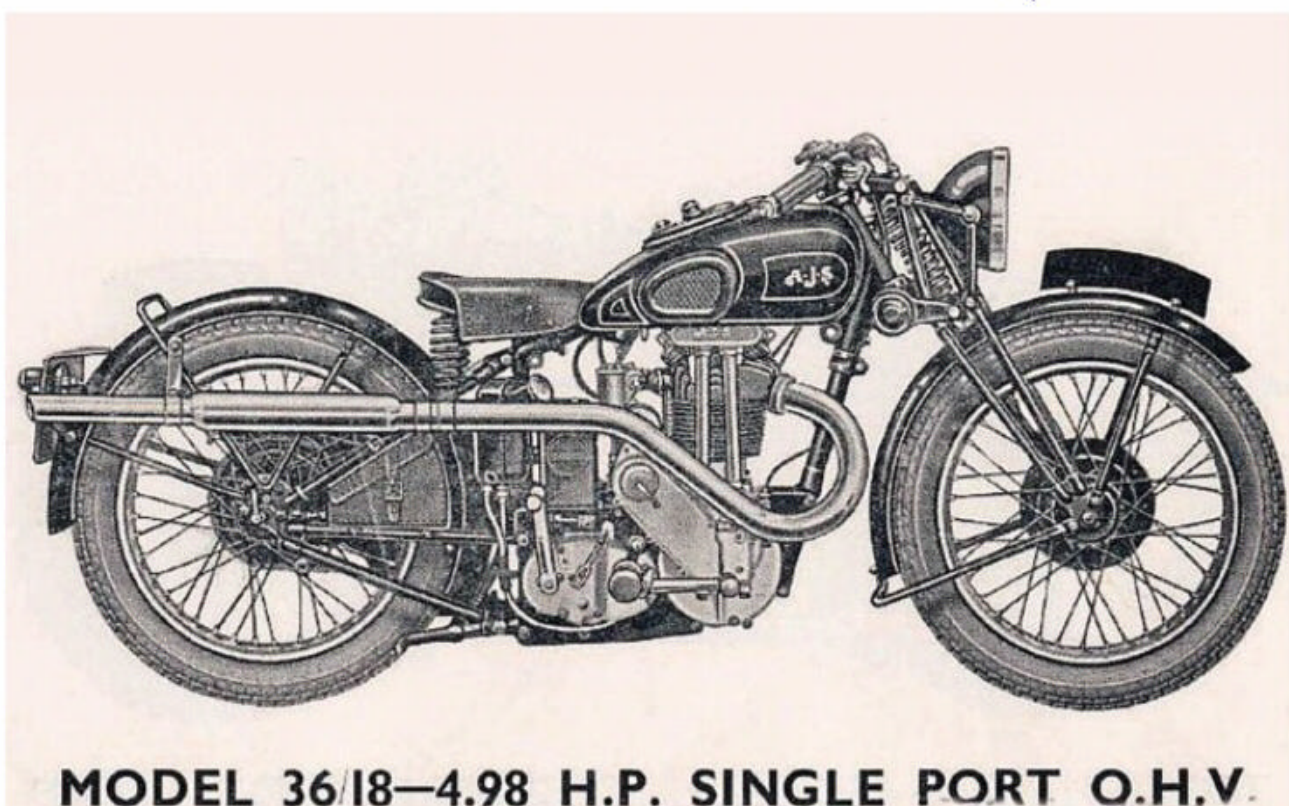
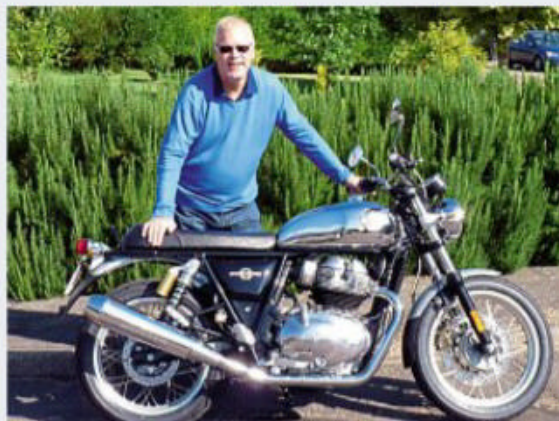
ANOTHER ENFIELD

Interesting read in RC190 about the new Indian Interceptor with some owners' findings. I too bought a chrome model last September from Coopers in Northants; an excellent friendly dealer from whom I bought the 500 Classic which I still have.

So far, my 900 miles of ownership have been delightful, bearing in mind that not everything is everyone's cup of tea. The six-speed gearbox would benefit from a gear indicator light or, better still, a five-speed box would suffice. Sometimes I'm not sure which gear I am in.

I am six foot and find the riding position fine, although the seat is too narrow at the front. I find the 47bhp enough for me, never having owned a plastic rocket of huge power. I don't believe I have missed out, as most of my riding has been on what we call 'classic bikes' nowadays. For me, it's the pleasure of the actual riding that delights and the Interceptor delivers that in many ways. I am a RE fan anyway.

James French, member 3068



AJS IMAGE

This picture is of a Stevens' Model 18 which I owned during the 1950s and 60s. I have many fond memories of riding it; the 18 was one of the nicest bikes that I ever owned. When I left home all those years ago it disappeared and no one knows where it went.

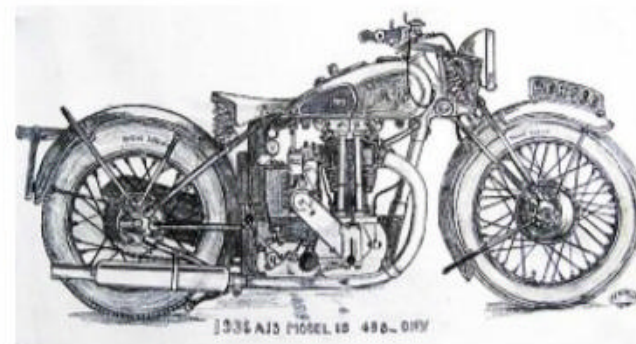
I have been a bike enthusiast all my life, and a mechanic for 65 years. I've attended shows and auctions all over the country and I have never seen another. I have seen 350s with sloping engines and ohc models but never a Model 18. Had I located one along the way I would've bought it on the spot.

The best the internet can produce is a thumbnail print of one with a high-level exhaust. So I wonder if anyone has a decent photograph of one of these Model 18s that I

could purchase, to remember my old bike? If so, I would be extremely grateful.

A R Whitehouse

I think we found the same image; a catalogue shot from 1936. We ransacked our archive but didn't find any photos of a pre-war Model 18 with an upright engine. Maybe an RC reader has a photo, or even an Ajay 18 from this era? If you do, please get in touch with RCHQ and we'll pass the word to Mr Whitehouse. **Rowena**



CAFÉ CULTURE?

During my National Service near Cambridge in 1960, I had a free Sunday after a night exercise and took a ride to meet an old friend in Chelmsford on my 1949 Matchless G3L. After a day of leisure I set off back to be ready for duty at 8am on Monday. Going through Great Dunmow I noticed that the lights were getting dimmer so stopped just outside Saffron Walden by a bus stop and parked to kip on the bench until light. I was woken by a policeman who listened to my woes and promised to wake me when it was lighter.

Not being able to sleep, I set off again in the dark, using only sidelights and kept behind a huge lorry as a guide. When he turned into a truckers' café, I followed him in and enjoyed a great fry-up and mug of tea for about 2 shillings. By then it was light and I managed

to get back in time for duty. I took the bike into Cambridge where there was a Lucas depot and was told to find 'old Joe' who would sort out the electrics for me. He set up the regulator and full charging was restored. He refused any payment, knowing the financial state of National Service pay at that time.

That greasy spoon breakfast was the best meal I had over my two years' service. The bike lasted another year back in civvy street until I could afford to upgrade to a new bike. Long live the greasy spoons!

Malcolm Aley, member 10,640

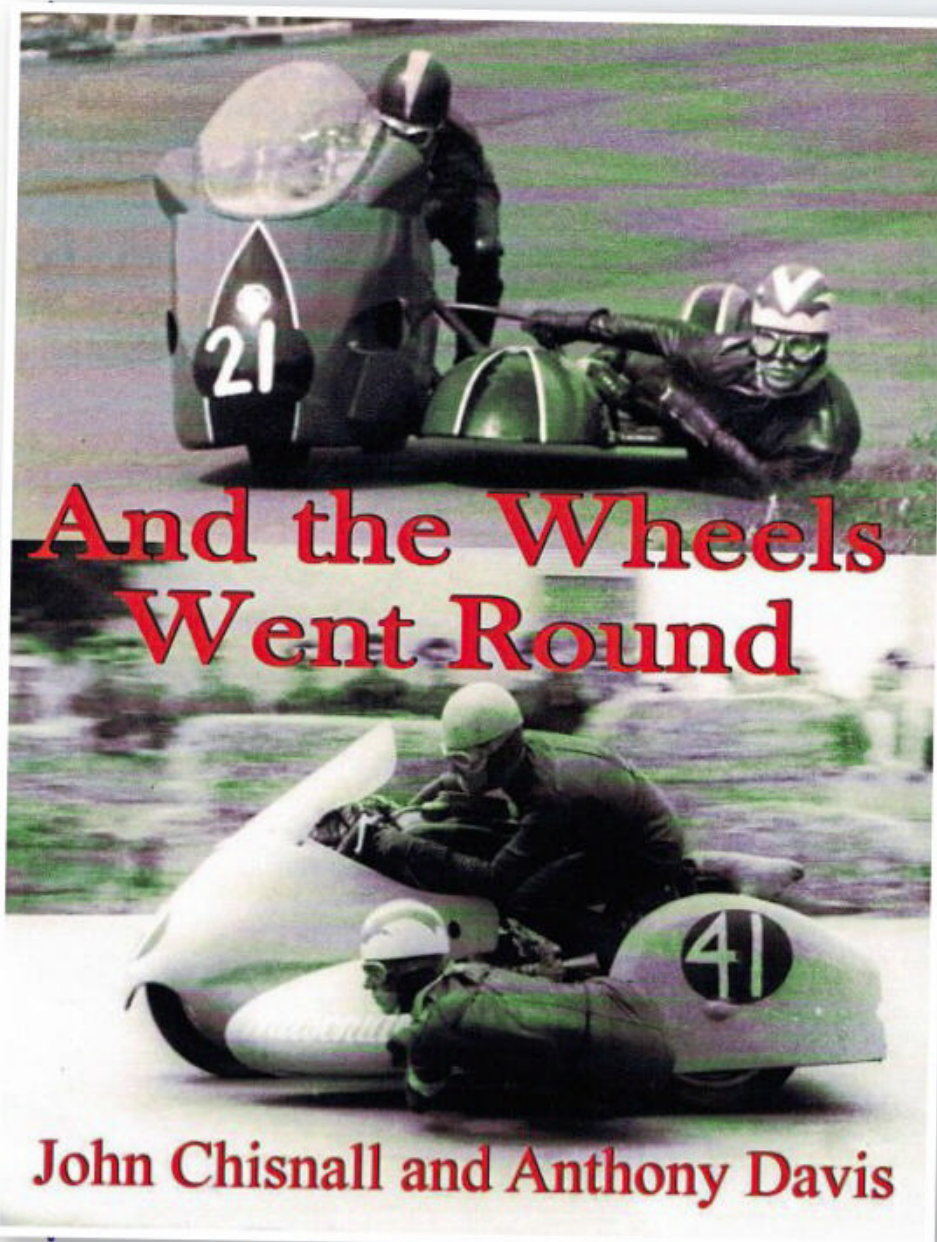
These days you'll have to hunt around to find a proper transport cafés serving an old-fashioned fry-up – they tend to be on bigger trunk roads, which aren't the best routes for

a gentle trundle on an old Britbike. Mind you, there are plenty of farm shops with cafés appearing in remote rural areas. Breakfast costs slightly more than 10p, however!

Rowena



RECOMMENDED READS



'And The Wheels Went Round' by John Chisnall and Anthony Davis was published last year. I'm a sidecar rider so the two racing outfits on the front cover prompted me to buy it. John, the passenger, was the main contributor to the stories, with Tony, the rider, adding his thoughts. What a great read!

The motorcycling part of the book starts in the mid-1950s with John getting a ride as passenger in a grasstrack chair. He went on to be a first-class passenger; he even passengered for Florian Camathias,

hoping to win some money or perhaps be given some start money. This circus lasted for several months each year, but many of these riders were racing and living on a very tight budget. A couple of the better-known names in the circus were Jim Redman and Hugh Anderson.

John also raced solos; at one time he was racing a BSA Bantam with a 125cc engine. This sort of bike was used by the Post Office for their telegram delivery boys to ride; if you got 50mph out of one you were

one of the really great sidecar riders of the time.

For me this book was a real blast from the past, having seen several of these racers in action on the track. Things were different in those days; if you had something like a Ford Thames van you were lucky as you could go to the various tracks and then sleep in the van if necessary. It was much more of a make do and mend era then.

A group became known as the 'Continental Circus' in the 1950/60s. This consisted of a band of riders, partners and friends riding around Europe to attend race meetings,

going well. John's little bike was tuned and he was timed at 96mph on the Norwich Straight at Snetterton.

This well-written book is humorous and with loads of pictures and anecdotes. It is all about their memories of riding at home, in Europe and also at the TT. It is well worth a read and is available from bearalleybooks.blogspot.com

Roy Workman, member 109

Thanks for the book recommendations, folks; keep them coming. Meanwhile, anyone who enjoys a mix of motorcycling and crime fiction should look out for 'Blood and Cinders' by DDC Morgan; a murder mystery set on the speedway track at Bermondsey in 1949. It's a brand-new publication, despite the gloriously retro cover art! **Rowena**



GOODBYE TO BIGGER BIKES

RC189 brought two things from my own experience to the fore. First, the chance to read a comparison of the BMW generations – R9T and R90S – similar to my own. In my case the pair were a 1978 R100S and a 2010 R1200R with a lot of extras. Yes, the brakes and power of the new generation machines are really impressive, but I liked the old two-valve twin much more. It was more than 30kg lighter than the modern bike. I had the chance to change the bikes as often as possible, so I could see

the impressive development.

But do we need that power? It's very often too fast on our autobahnen and meant I was rarely relaxed when riding. I didn't enjoy the hard ESA suspension and I had some electronic gremlins. So I liked the R100 much more. It was a comfortable, relaxed ride and was normally fast enough. Yes, you had to adjust the carbs and valves relatively often, but that brought a very smooth engine.

In 2018 I sold the four-valve machine and

last year the old Bimmer went as well. I had some tears in my eyes when it left our road. I'd owned it for a long time and it never let me down. For me, this was the end of the Bimmer era and the beginning of a 'lighter bike' chapter.

I agree with the guys about the need of a modern bike and a classic bike. Maybe add an outfit, as I did. And trust me, the light bikes (a 2018 Kawasaki X300 and 1977 Honda CJ250T) make for similar fun. So it is not negative to go for smaller bikes.

Peter Wüster, member




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ONE YEAR WONDER

It's a cliché to say that there's nothing new under the sun, but so often in motorcycle development terms that's all too true. Consider the single-sided swinging arm on the 1950 Moto Guzzi Galletto, conceived 30 years before ELF patented such a feature – and sold it to Honda. Or the upside-down Dowty fork on the 1948 EMC road racer – developed 35 years before Brad Lackey won the 1982 500cc MX World title using a Simons USD fork that was swiftly adopted globally thereafter. Or the 50-degree transverse V-twin engine layout of the 1931 AJS Model S3, conceived 35 years before the Moto Guzzi V7 launched in 1967, which established such to be the Italian marque's

trademark engine format, that it's persisted with right up to today. OK, the 1000 examples of the Indian 841 built in 1941 to fulfil a US Army contract were possibly the Guzzi's true progenitors, complete with the same 90-degree cylinder angle, let alone the mid-50s Marusho Lilac in Japan and Germany's Victoria Bergmeister, both with a comparable engine layout. But still – you get the drift...

Except that even the so-called AJS Transverse Twin wasn't truly the first such device to reach production, for five years earlier at London's 1926 Olympia Show, the much smaller Yorkshire-based P&M firm – maker of Panther motorcycles from 1924 to 1967 – had unveiled its 246cc Panthette. This was a truly innovative ►



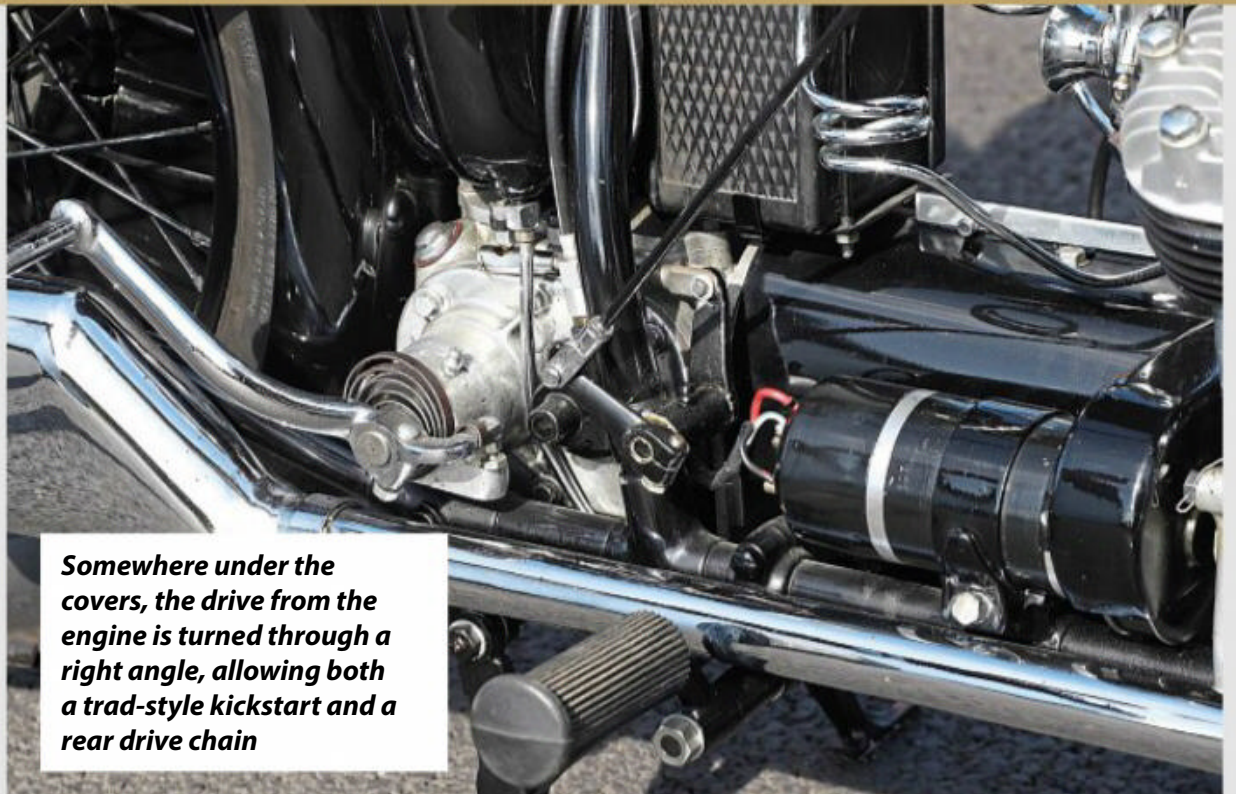
Then as now, the V-twin design has lots to recommend it

if evidently underdeveloped transverse V-twin design by the iconoclastic Granville Bradshaw, with its 60-degree cylinder angle, horizontally-split crankcase, leaf-spring valve operation, enclosed rocker boxes and unit construction car-type 4-speed hand-change transmission. But despite the acclaim it received on its debut, the Panthette proved a flop in the showrooms, and the unreliability experienced by owners of the few bikes sold swiftly made the model a one-year wonder, which was replaced by a less costly, much simpler range of Villiers-engined lightweight two-strokes.

Despite this, the Wolverhampton-based AJS marque owned by the Stevens family – by then one of Britain's largest manufacturers, producing upwards of 30,000 bikes annually



Layout is logical. A single carb feeds the engine, while the gearbox lives directly behind it, with the battery above



Somewhere under the covers, the drive from the engine is turned through a right angle, allowing both a trad-style kickstart and a rear drive chain



The AJS S3 is a sidevalve design, so it makes sense to hang the sides of the cylinders where the hot valves live out into the breeze

– forged ahead with development of its 498cc Model S3 with a similar transverse V-twin engine format, which entered production in 1931. This had been conceived as part of AJS's product-led drive to counter the effects of the late-20s economic downturn, which duly led to the global Great Depression. Thanks to the good relations between its family management and a loyal workforce, AJS had been hardly affected by the UK-wide General Strike which had taken place in May 1926 at a time of great industrial unrest.

But that year saw sales of its bikes begin to decline for the first time in the firm's history, not helped by the appearance of the attractively priced, mass-produced Austin Seven light car, which eventually led AJS itself to produce such a vehicle. The slump accelerated in 1927, and in the face of mounting financial difficulties the four

Stevens brothers bravely decided to try to fight their way out of trouble by investing in new products, and especially exciting new high-spec models sold at affordable prices which they hoped would grab market share by making AJS stand out from the rest.

These were led by sporting overhead-cam models which entered production from 1927-on, and as a more luxurious option, the two four-cylinder prototypes built in 1927 and 1928, which didn't however reach the marketplace. But the AJS Model S3, a direct product of that strategy, was revealed in April 1931, and did indeed enter production later that year. Sadly, just a handful were manufactured before AJS had to call in the receivers that October, owing to rapid over-expansion into various unsustainable areas, including the manufacture of cars, furniture and radio sets. Being honourable men, the ►



Until the rider gets entirely familiar with the process, changing gear using a handshift takes some attention. Best done without lots of traffic and not while cornering hard



Stevens brothers did in fact repay all their creditors by the end of September 1932, but were unable to keep hold of AJS.

After their local Birmingham rivals BSA had made a swiftly rejected lowball offer to acquire the company, the Collier brothers' S.E. London-based Matchless Motorcycles purchased the AJS name, manufacturing rights, and goodwill for £20,000, leading the Wolverhampton factories to be sold off, and AJS production moved to the Matchless plant at Plumstead.

The S3 failed to make the cut as one of the existing AJS models chosen for continued manufacture down South, probably because at £65 it would have competed with the comparably priced 400cc V-twin Matchless Silver Arrow, which meant that a total of what's understood to be just 31 such motorcycles were constructed by AJS in 1931. Yet these examples of what was another one-year wonder were shipped off all over the world, with one delivered to the AJS importer in New Zealand, another to eastern Romania – now Moldova – a third to Argentina and a fourth to Sweden. Today, these comprise four of the eight such bikes known to have survived, another of which is almost inevitably, given its rarity, in the Sammy Miller Museum on England's South Coast. There, it's on display alongside the **sole** surviving 630cc AJS four-cylinder prototype built in 1928, as well as the unique 1939 supercharged 500cc V4 GP racer, and the Porcupine which won

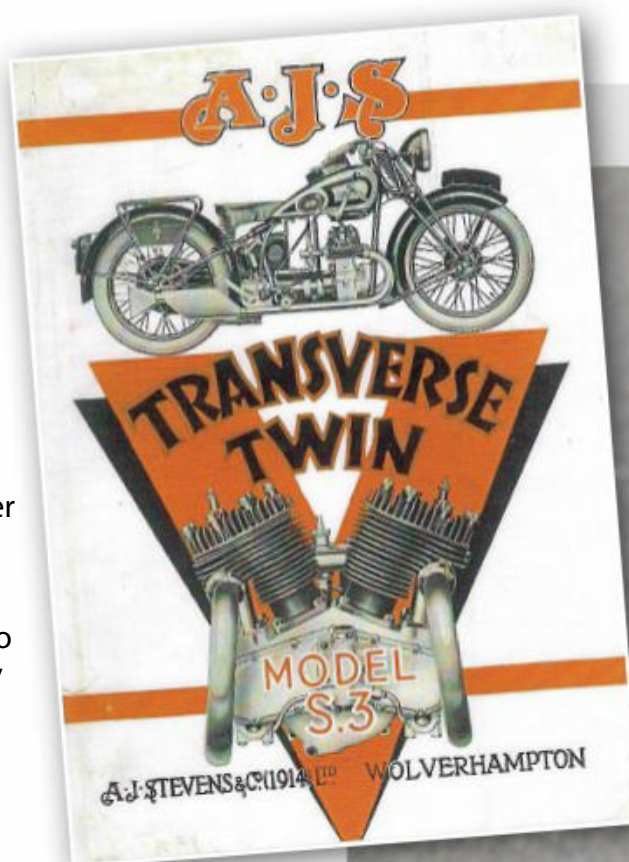
the first-ever 500GP World title 70 years ago, in 1949. It's in good company!

Complete with matching engine and frame numbers, 150045, though one other survivor carries numbers 150338, which seemingly casts doubt on that 31-bike overall production figure, the S3 has been on show in the Miller Museum for over three decades.

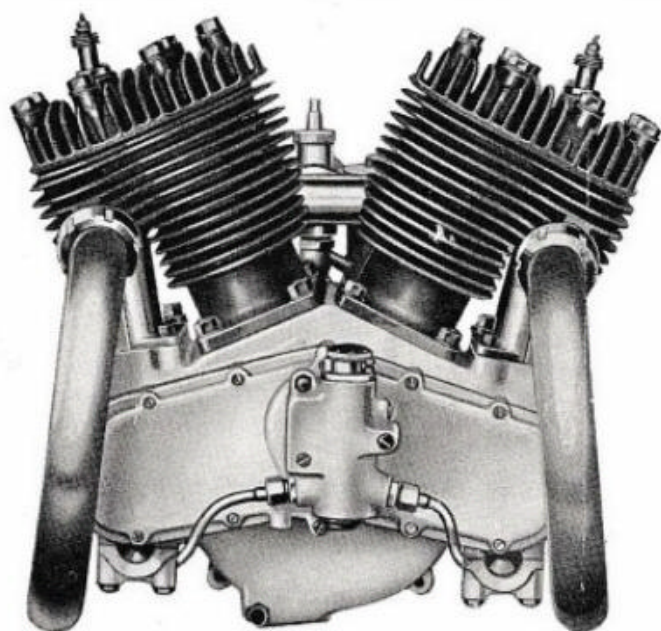
'I bought it at Sotheby's Stafford sale in 1988, and I just left a bid with the auctioneer before heading home, saying "I'll give two grand for it if that gets it," recalls Sammy with a grin. 'And the following Monday it turned out I'd bought it! It was pretty sad-looking, but all there, so we restored it quite quickly and I've since done the Graham Walker Rally on it, and various Ajay / Matchless events. It's a very mellow bike to ride – a proper plonker!'

Before heading out along the lovely New Forest lanes around the Museum to verify that opinion, I took a closer look at a model which, to be honest, I hadn't previously known even existed. Viewed up close, it's evident that the S3 is

indeed a true forerunner of all today's Moto Guzzis, thanks to its transverse 50-degree V-twin 498cc sidevalve engine measuring 65x75mm, with those valves unusually positioned on the outside of each cylinder. This ensures the exhaust ports get a plentiful flow of cooling air, while a single rear-facing Amal carburettor, sitting in the large clear space above the gearbox of what is a very compact engine design, feeds both



1931 AJS MODEL S3



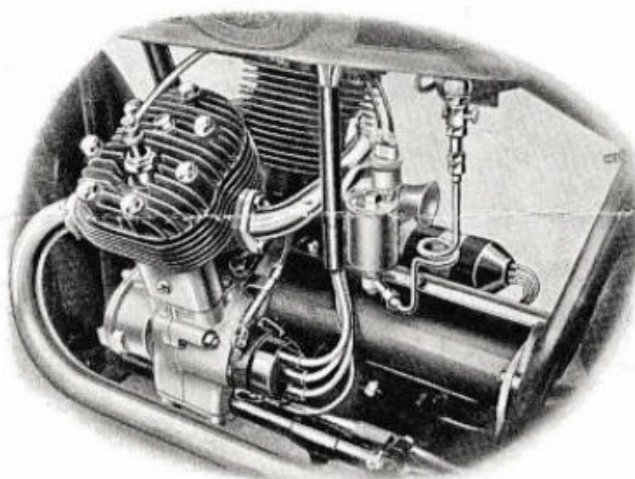
The A.J.S. Transverse Twin Engine.

THE ENGINE.

The engine, although unique in general design, has nothing freakish in its construction. It is built on car lines with the valves housed in the cylinder block. The detachable cylinder heads are of aluminium, and can be removed in a few minutes for decarbonising and valve grinding. The camshafts are driven by chains with patent tensioning device, and all valve gear is totally enclosed but readily accessible for inspection or adjustment. The roller bearing connecting rods are mounted side by side, and the main shafts are carried on ball bearings which are subjected to no driving load as is the case with the primary chain drive.

DYNAMO AND DISTRIBUTOR MOUNTING.

This illustration shows the mounting of the distributor and dynamo, which, as can be seen, are particularly accessible. The distributor is driven by the camshaft, and the dynamo is driven by a quickly adjustable endless flat belt which is noiseless, and by its nature cannot damage the dynamo in case of a back-fire or violent acceleration. The accessible position of the carburettor will also be noted.



The accessible position of the Dynamo, Distributor and Carburettor.

In their own words...

cylinders via a substantial-looking chromed intake manifold.

The valves are operated via a pair of chain-driven longitudinal camshafts, with each chain having its own Weller tensioner. There are no cam followers, since the tappets act directly

on the valves, and as on the conventional-format 998cc Model S2 which AJS also introduced for 1931, the detachable cylinder heads are cast in aluminium, incorporating a steel bush to carry the sparkplug. Also like the bigger twin, the S3's

unfinned cylinder axes are in line, so since the steel conrods (carrying cast aluminium pistons – unusually, with three rings at the top in the usual position, with a fourth lower down the skirt) sit side by side on a common crankpin, the little-end conrod eyes are perforce offset. A Pilgrim oil pump to force feed the roller-bearing big ends is mounted at the front of the vertically-split crankcase, and is driven off the same half-time layshaft running off the crank which drives the camshafts. The quite short lengthways crank runs in ball-bearing mains.

A coil-ignition Lucas distributor sits at the rear end of the left hand camshaft which operates it, with the dynamo on the opposite side of the bike belt driven off the engine's primary drive coupling, in what looks like a very neat, well considered layout. The 6V battery is mounted centrally just in front



Superb view from the pilot's seat, and the tanktop instrument panel, complete with clock, is a major attraction of this age of machine

of the half gallon oil tank, above the three-speed gearbox. This has widely spaced ratios of 5.00, 7.93 and 13.58 to 1, with a hand-shift to the right of the fuel tank, and a multiplate oil-bath clutch, with primary drive from the lengthways crank effected via a short propshaft with a rubber-and-canvas UJ at either end. But instead of the shaft final drive such a format almost begs for – as Moto Guzzi designer Giulio Cesare Carcano was happy to adopt from the start – the unknown AJS designer opted instead for a spiral-bevel right-angle drive off the in-line gearbox, to a conventional but fully enclosed chain final drive. This doesn't however run in oil, though the substantial chaincase will surely help prolong chain life simply via protection from dirt.

Hand-operated gearchanging becomes easier with practice. However, early attempts can often be entertaining for onlookers

[illegible]



Webb-type girder forks are simple single spring affairs, and a neat touch is the way the legs run through the commodious mudguard. Front brake is not a device to inspire confidence, sadly



the chromed fuel tank, an absence of external cables, the toolbox, rear carrier, twin small leather-fronted panniers and the amply flared and valanced front mudguard aimed at enhancing protection from the often poor quality road surfaces of the day, plus the hinged rear mudguard for rapid wheel removal, all fitted as standard, demonstrate that the Stevens brothers had aimed this model at the upper end of the market. The substantial real dry weight of 353lb dry (against the over-optimistic 330lb claimed in the model's brochure) is evidence that substance was the issue here, rather than performance. Indeed, the 65mph top speed claimed in the brochure was equally fanciful, as I found for myself riding the AJS Model S3 along a straight stretch of road out in the New Forest.

Unlike on comparable German bikes with transverse cylinders and a lengthways crank, the AJS has a conventional kickstart lever on the right, which means you don't need to park the bike on the centrestand (another upmarket feature for the time), and kick it into life while standing beside it. The low 6.5:1 compression makes firing the engine up pretty easy, even from cold. There's no decompressor lever, and none needed, merely a choke on the right just below the fat horn button, and an ignition lever on the left.

The Terry saddle is extremely comfortable, and its ample springing more than makes up for the absence of any rear suspension on this rigid framed device. It is however set very low, which combined with the quite bulky ➤

The S3's chassis, made from mild steel, is a widely splayed brazed-lug duplex cradle frame with a single top tube, no rear suspension, and AJS's own Webb-type girder fork, which with 19-inch wheels (against 26-inch beaded-edge originals) fore and aft, both shod with Avon Speedmaster Mk.2 rubber, delivers a 56in wheelbase.

The low build of the unit construction engine – no chain primary drive to a separate gearbox here! – permits a very low height for the Terry saddle of just 26 inches, resulting in the need for AJS to offer adjustable footrests, which can be moved up or down (the twin straight exhausts permitting) and forward or back over a four-inch range. The three gallon

fuel tank is surmounted by a massive-looking instrument console – now you know where Harley designers got the idea from! – which sits well proud of the tank, since this is too small to adequately encase it without losing precious fuel space.

These instruments would have been the height of luxury back then, and the first owner of the bike was evidently intent on spec'ing it up irrespective of cost, since it includes the optional clock (at £1.10.0) and speedometer with tripmeter at £2.5.0 – the 4267-mile odo reading on the 80mph speedo (whose clockwise sweep takes a bit of getting used to!) is genuine, believes Sammy.

The electric lights fitted as standard,

kneepads delivers a riding stance that many a Harley owner would find familiar, although the position which Sammy has chosen for the footrests is a rational one beneath the seat, not further forward. It's still quite a close-coupled riding position, though, with the wide curved handlebar sweeping backwards to deliver a fairly upright posture that's paradoxically quite relaxing. And the sticking out cylinders don't go anywhere near your legs – they're much more tucked in than on a 90-degree V-twin Moto Guzzi.

After firing the V-twin engine up, you're immediately aware that the Amal carb has no return spring, so the revs remain exactly where you last set them. This makes changing gear a little easier once you get used to knowing just where to leave the throttle setting, while you grasp the light-action clutch lever with your left hand, and pull the gear lever back towards you with your right to engage bottom gear. That ratio is quite low, as befits a bike which AJS obviously envisaged might be used as a sidecar tug – indeed, the West Sussex-issued logbook for KPO 285 shows that its then Portsmouth domiciled owner is credited with having 'Removed Sidecar' on May 15, 1951. In December 1956 he sold the AJS to a dealer in that port city, after which there are no further entries until Sammy re-registered it in 1988, so it was presumably taken in part exchange for another bike, then consigned to the cellar for the next 30 years!

Once under way in bottom gear it's soon time to shift into second, pushing the lever forward through neutral – which is quite easy to find when you want it, thank heavens – and then to third. This is a long, lazy gear befitting the touring nature of the bike, though even with a good long run at it I could never persuade the speedo needle to go any higher than 58mph on level ground. However, just as Sammy told me, it's a proper plonker – a very relaxed 50mph ride, which in 1931 would have been more than enough to satisfy the likely customer for such a bike – especially as there's very little vibration at any speed, and the twin fishtail silencers deliver a nice lilting exhaust note that's relatively subdued.

Once in top gear you don't really ever need to shift down to second unless you encounter even a relatively gentle hill, where despite the long stroke engine dimensions, the AJS needs a little more urge at higher revs to scale the summit. But you can plonk along in top gear in towns and villages, with no need to shift down to second until you're practically at walking pace.

A.J.S. Motor Cycles

TRANSVERSE TWIN

Model S3

"P. as we are told, "Silence is Golden," then this new A.J.S. Transverse Twin Model should be worth its weight in gold. Still, it is offered at a very moderate price, when you consider its many advantages beyond that of SILENCE, such as:—Easy Starting, Accessibility, Perfect Steering, High Average Speed, Flexibility, Smooth Running and Sound Detail Work. The Transverse engine makes for accessibility and, more important still, excellent cooling.

The riding position has been most carefully studied giving perfect control, and a delightful sense of confidence is felt from the first mile which is retained after long distances have been covered.

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With that in mind, it's still amazing to learn that Ajay's lead test rider, George Rowley, who combined clocking up the miles on prototype roadbikes with racing to top ten finishes in the Isle of Man TT (he was 2nd in the 1928 Senior TT, though he never won a race in 14 years of trying), did most of the development riding on the V-twin S3. This included following management instructions to enter it for the May 1931 Scottish Six Days Trial, despite the fact that it's hard to think of a more unsuitable model for such a gruelling off-road event – especially with its low-slung build and lack of ground clearance.

Having failed to recruit the two other riders his bosses ordered him to try to find to accompany him – hardly surprising, once they knew what they'd be riding – George quite incredibly not only finished the six-day marathon on time, but actually won a Gold Medal in doing so. 'Rowley showed in convincing style that the new AJS twin will stand up to the hardest of hard work,' said the report in the weekly *The Motor Cycle* magazine. 'He had wheelspin at times and was not always steady on rough surfaces, but the machine however appeared to run like oiled silk (!) and on good sections of road was often seen cruising at an effortless 50mph.' With that kind of PR, it seems even more of a shame that the model's shelf life was so short...

As I discovered, the AJS V-twin engine is indeed so flexible that you can actually take off from rest in top gear on level ground without excessive clutch slip, and once you've reached top gear a rider of



Rear suspension. Simple and effective



One handsome, gentle sidevalve twin, from a more gradual age...

average weight certainly doesn't need to work the gear lever again until he (or she) comes almost to a halt. And all this is accomplished with a complete lack of any undue vibration, whether loping along at 50mph in top gear, or buzzing the engine a little harder to climb a gradient. There's also no rising and falling on the suspension when you change gear like there is on a Moto Guzzi or BMW with a similar lengthways crank, but presumably one reason for that is that there is no suspension to rise and fall on! And while you can detect a modest sense of inertia from the lengthways crank if you blip the throttle while stationary in neutral, it doesn't at all affect riding the bike – the mass of the crankshaft must be relatively minimal for it to be so forgiving.

The only time I felt obliged to shift back a gear to second while on the go was

to slow the AJS downhill, which is why I was so relieved that the gearshift action is quite precise, better than most other hand-shift transmissions I've experienced. That's because the pair of 7-inch AJS single leading-shoe drum brakes are pretty useless, especially the front one, which isn't really up to the job of stopping such a heavy bike from even modest speed. The rear brake was slightly better, but to stop the AJS properly you need to a) plan ahead and b) really stamp on the rear brake pedal when you need to stop in a hurry. And that from only 50mph or so – just as well it won't go any faster, then!

Like Yamaha nowadays, AJS was a truly innovative manufacturer in the pre-WW2 era, unafraid to flout convention by inventing new types of motorcycle and the technology to make them work. It's a matter of great regret even

today that the four honest, upright and technically open-minded Stevens brothers weren't able to survive the Depression by keeping their company afloat. But at least the Collier brothers – designers and engineers themselves, don't forget, as well as victorious racers – who gave AJS a new lease of life alongside Matchless appreciated the value of what they'd acquired, and permitted – even encouraged – the creation of designs which stepped outside convention. Too bad the S3 wasn't one of them, that's all – especially as the upfront cost of tooling up to produce an all-new model had already been invested.

Just like the stillborn AJS 632cc Four which sits alongside it in the Sammy Miller Museum, it's hard not to conclude that the AJS Transverse Twin was the right motorcycle, but at the wrong time. What a shame. **Rc**

FAMILY ALBUM

Does motorcycling run in your family? RC readers share their relatives' encounters with old bikes...



This is my great grandfather, Frederick Goodall. He was quite a stern Edwardian gentleman and a real motorcycling pioneer. He started riding in approximately 1906 aged about 40. This photo was taken around the time of WW1 and I would love to know the make of his machine! Apparently he did a huge mileage on it, regularly travelling between Southampton and Stoke where he had an interest in a ceramics factory. I was told he always stopped at Banbury for a bun on the way there and back!
Paul Roberts, member 10,626



These photos show my brother and I wearing our father's and uncle's crash helmets, and sitting on his (now classic) Honda while he gives it a scrub. This is our uncle Graham who ran Draganfly with my dad at the time. They've since retired and now Iain and I run the business – well, Iain does and I support from behind the scenes!
Lauren from Draganfly Motorcycles



Here is my maternal grandfather, Fred Thickpenny, on his 1927 Triumph Model N 500 single taken in 1932. And here I am on my 2001 Hinckley Bonnie, taken in 2003, outside the Parchment Works in Newport Pagnell.
Neil Cairns, member 2501



Some things certainly run in the Westworth family! Here's Frank's little brother, Iain, thrilled beyond description by the discovery that the FS1-E was faster than big brother's 650 Matchless...
Frank Westworth, member 001



I thought you might like this picture of my dad Ivan aboard his 1952 Triumph Speed Twin, taken around 1956. He looks the part with various extras on the bike that he swears that were on it when he bought it. Helmets were optional then, too!
Mark from Australia

SEND YOUR SNAPS!

We'd love to share motorcycling photos from your own family album. So if you've got a snap of grandma and grandad on the old combination, or maybe your father on his first bike, then send them to us for this page. There

may be prizes for TP's favourite photo each month...

It's probably easiest to take a digital image of your original pic and send it by email to RCHQ@RealClassic.net but you're equally welcome to send actual photos (but not prints of

scans, sorry) by post, and include an SAE if you want them back.

And don't forget the younger generation – photos of your offspring and their close encounters with classic bikes would be wonderful as well!



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SPEEDWAY STAR

Work started on this ambitious project forty years ago, when owner Dave built a classic racer from a JAWA speedway engine in a BSA A7 frame. More recently it's been recreated as a rip-snorting roadster. Martin Peacock rides and reports

Photos by Martin Peacock, David Witt





Iwonder how many great projects start with a mad idea. Take this one for instance; who in their right mind would even think of putting a Jawa speedway engine into a road bike? At least, not without a very good reason. Fortunately for us, David Witt, builder of this splendid BSA special, had that reason: 'I did it because I liked the look of the engine,' he said, entirely seriously.

Such is the confidence of youth. It was in the late 1960s when David first saw the engine in the family's workshop. It was his grasstrack racer brother Alan's birthday present but, even then, Dave had a vision of how his finished machine would look. Those were the days of Concorde test flights, Pirate Radio and the Vietnam war. Now, Concorde is a museum piece, the pirates are drawing their pensions and Vietnam is a holiday destination, but David's vision stands gleaming in the sunshine. You must agree, that engine really

does look good.

It was certainly not an undertaking for the faint-hearted, even for a man who built his first Gold Star from parts at age nineteen. Clear vision or no, the project was extremely challenging with many blind alleys. A speedway engine is designed for a few laps of a track, flat out, for about a minute. It has a total loss oiling system, runs on methanol, has no refinements such as dynamo or valve lifter, and a single-speed transmission. There is far more to using one in a road bike than making up a set of mounting plates and mating it to a gearbox.

David 'borrowed' Alan's engine in 1981 so he could adapt and fit it into a 1961 BSA A7 Shooting Star rolling chassis. Some of the key points of the finished machine:

- Compression ratio reduced from 14 to 9:1
- 40mm Amal Concentric carburettor
- BT-H competition magneto
- Goldie silencer
- Pre-unit Triumph clutch
- Single row primary chain
- BSA 4-speed gearbox with a Honda 250 rear sprocket





The bike looks nearly as good from the drive side. BSA primary chaincase retained. And Dave is proud of his chainguard

- Dynamo driven from a sprocket fitted to the back of the clutch drum
- A10 oil pump mounted externally on a locally made timing cover and driven from the camshaft idler pinion

Although the bike ran well, Dave was unhappy with the dynamo drive, oil flow regulation, leaks and other aspects of the build. The project stalled and was soon forgotten as David and his brother became fully occupied with building and racing Gold Stars.

Local VMCC section members encouraged David to race his home-built Gold Star and eventually he tried a practise day at Donnington. He enjoyed this enough to enter a couple of races, coming seventh on his

first attempt at Cadwell Park. Well and truly bitten by the racing bug, he carried on and finished the 1984 season in the top third of the 500cc class and sixth in the 250cc class on his 'learner' C15.

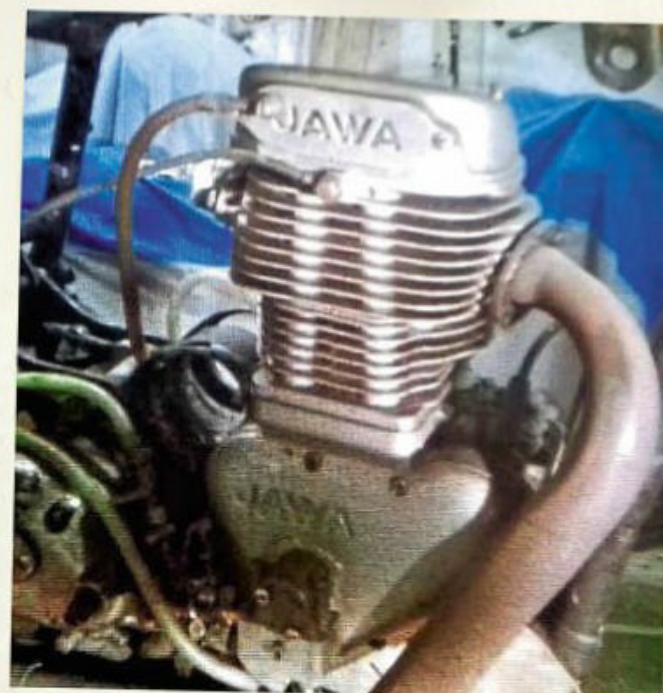
This early success was followed by many mechanical failures and a few spills through pushing too hard. An ignominious clutch failure at the start of one race was enough for Alan, who was in no mood to argue: 'I will take care of the mechanics, you concentrate on twisting the throttle and staying on.' Although rivals on the track, they now teamed up to work on the bikes. David did most of the assembly and tuning while Alan, with his engineering business, did the crankshaft

and machining work. This enabled them to maintain reliability by upgrading parts such as cam followers, big ends, and crankshafts as the engine power was pushed to increasingly high levels.

David funded a Heenan & Froude DPX-2 water brake dynamometer to measure final drive output from the racers. He had been inspired by a 'really quick' engine built for him earlier by David Holmes of Velocette fame. The dyno proved itself a valuable tuning aid and showed they were achieving as much as 47bhp at the 500cc racers' back wheels. However, according to Dave, modifications producing power increases migrated to Alan's bikes, while those that



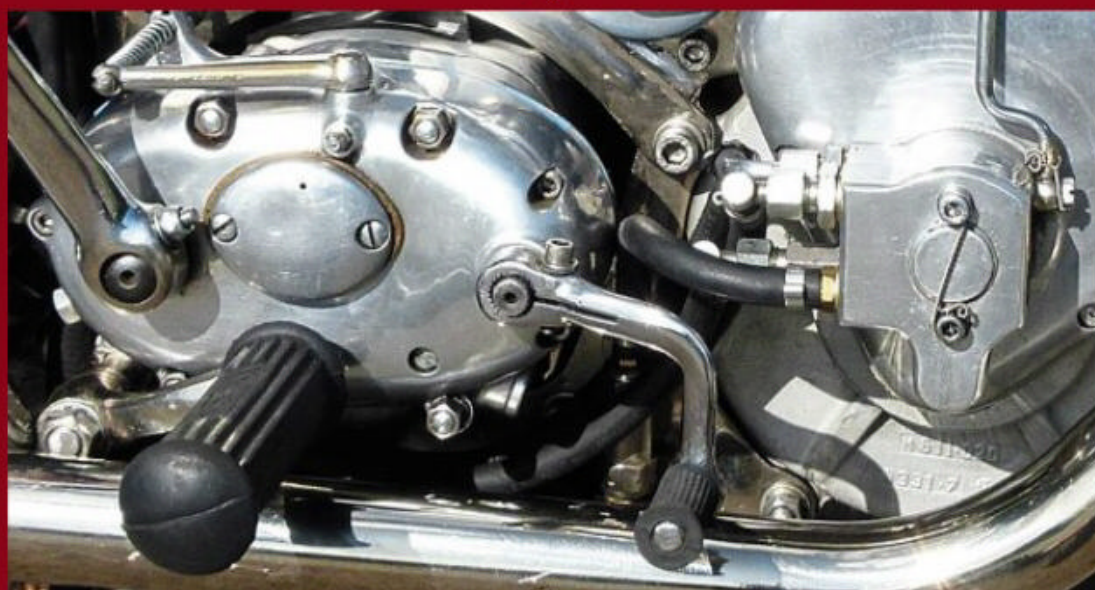
A sorry sight: engine, frame, gearbox and not much more



Right: Oh yes, it's a Jawa alright, perhaps not looking its best



The heart of the matter. David's oil pump with rocker box feed and breather by the 'J'. Magneto up front and dynamo behind



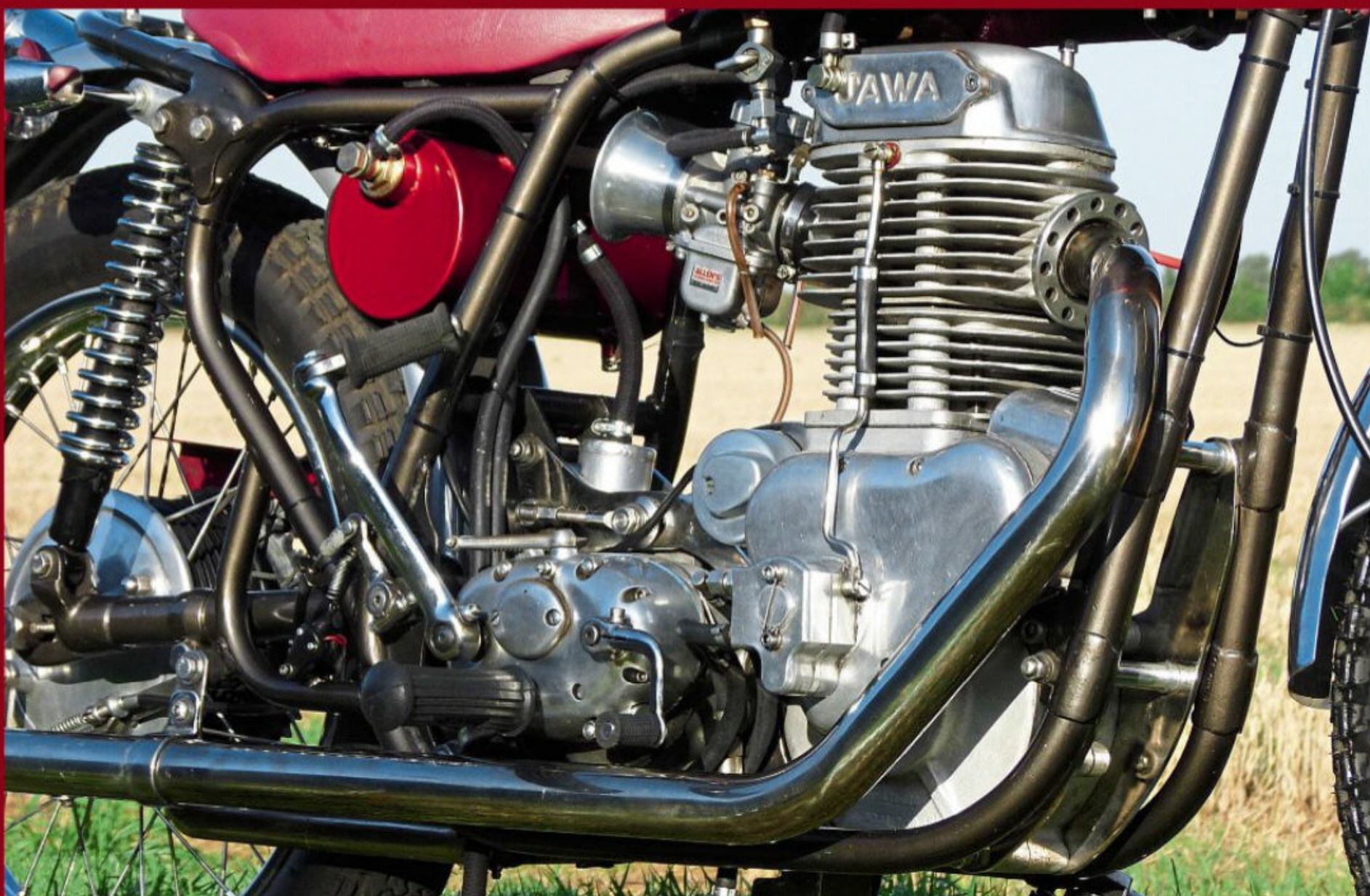
BSA gearbox cover hiding a 5-speed Nova cluster with David's carefully shaped pedal perfectly positioned. There's that oil pump including the later bypass line on the feed side



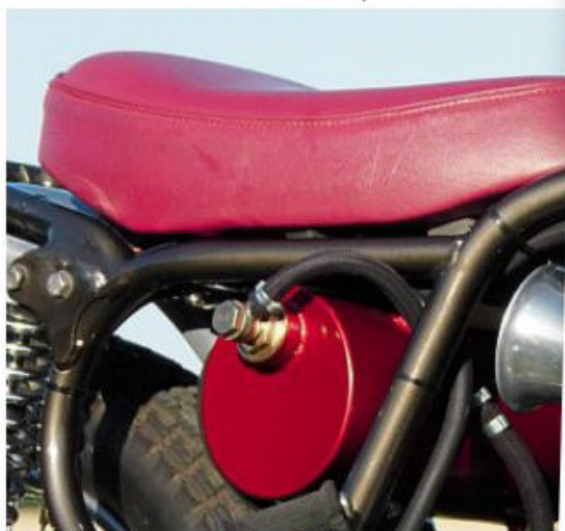
Very clean drive side using the original BSA primary chain cover



Mikuni carburettor bearing its tune-up by angle grinder with dignity



Engine and gearbox detail and that custom oil tank and seat. Exhaust by Aldens in stainless steel



Beautiful custom oil tank and David's handmade saddle

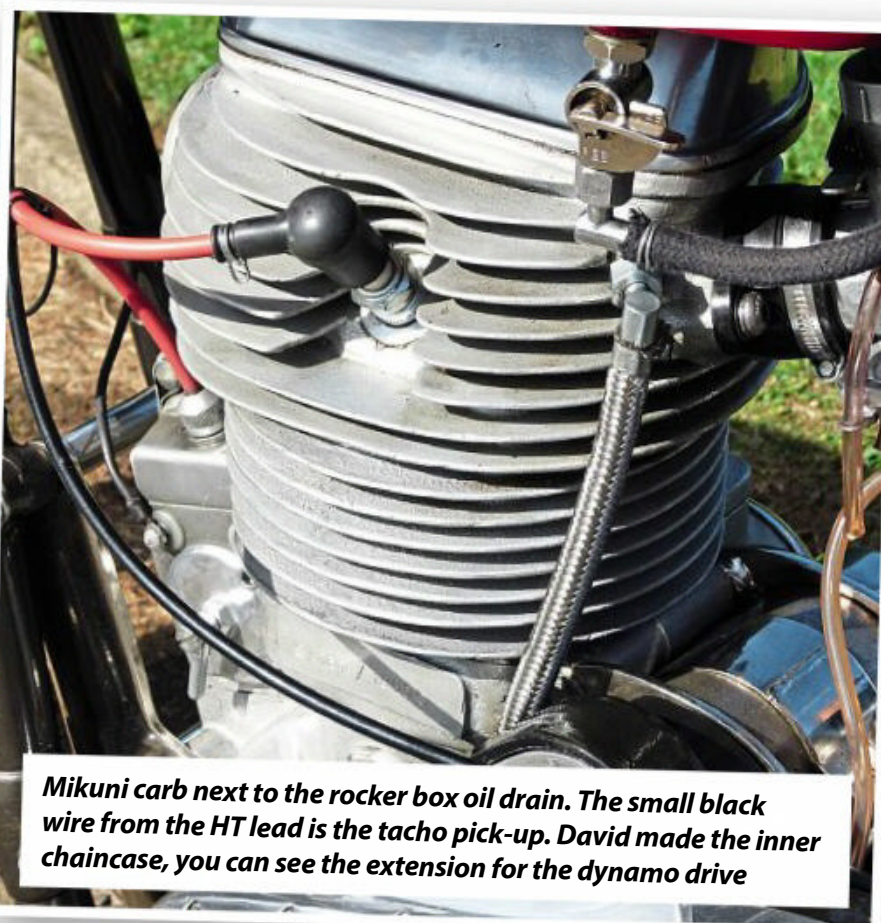
didn't work were his alone...

David's racing career ran from 1984 to 2007. He won several VMCC championships in both 500cc and 350cc classes, beginning with the 1988 season. He also won the CRMC championship three times. At one stage, he, Alan and a nephew had a stable of five 350cc and 500cc Gold Stars and David went on to race a Rob North Triple and several Ducatis in later years. All that experience with building racing bikes proved invaluable when he returned to the Jawa project in 2017.

By then, there was little more than a frame, engine and gearbox left, and Alan suggested he should start by paying for the engine! So, back at square one, Dave aimed for a roadworthy, leak-free bike with the integrated, uncluttered look of his earlier vision. He retained the 500cc Goldie piston and fitted a later Jawa crankshaft with smaller, lighter flywheels to keep them above the crankcase oil level. The original Jawa cams were fitted along with a new Carrillo conrod after changing the barrel packing. He kept the standard head but with lead-free valve seats and compression ratio of 9.1:1.

Unable to fit a new KB1 BT-H magneto due to its size, David used a speedway PAL magneto with the advance fixed at 36.5-deg. This, and the absence of a valve lifter, means that kickstarting requires care and technique. The Lucas dynamo was retained, now driven by a 10mm V-belt from the crankshaft pulley. This is to be geared higher in the future for more output.

The primary drive is by belt and six-spring NEB clutch; a setup that gives no possibility of oil leaks. David started with a blank pulley and machined it to suit the crankshaft and clutch drum. Declaring the original BSA gearbox 'pants' (it just didn't suit the engine), he bought a Nova 5-speed cluster. This was the single most costly item, and difficult to fit into the BSA shell, but the result is very sweet



Mikuni carb next to the rocker box oil drain. The small black wire from the HT lead is the tacho pick-up. David made the inner chaincase, you can see the extension for the dynamo drive

shifting and perfectly spaced ratios.

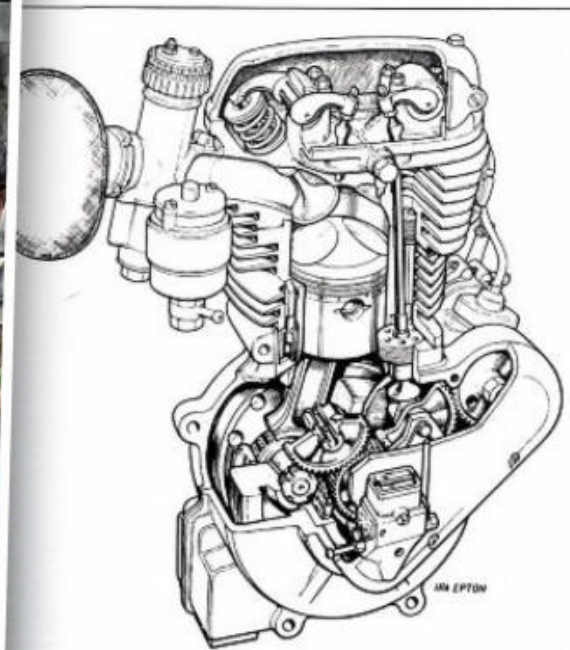
We take lubrication systems very much for granted. Engine designers and production engineers take much time and trouble to get it right. So, no matter what else we might do to 'improve' an engine, we generally leave the oil circulation alone.

Dave had no choice; his original A10 pump set-up needed improvement. This time, he mated two recirculating pumps of the type used behind the Pilgrim pumps of JAP engines fitted to road vehicles. He reduced the feed pump's gear size to ensure the scavenge pump had a higher capacity. Even so, he later found the feed rate was too high and further modification was needed. According to David, 'this was really fiddly to get right.' More machining finally had the assembly working, oil tight, aligned with the oilways and, of

SERVICE STARS

Although David did much of the fabrication and fitting work himself, completing the project to such a high standard needed some skilled and experienced specialists. This was particularly the case with:

- **T&L Engineering of Elstow, Bedfordshire** who did the cylinder head work, rebore, crankshaft assembly and balancing
- **Paintwork Express of Wisbech** for the petrol and oil tanks
- **Classic Brake Services: Front wheel and brake**
- **Five One Wheel Building, Louth: Rear wheel and tyres**
- **Fenland Choppers, Wisbech: Oil tank fabrication**



Inside the engine. Neat and conventional

course, looking right.

A working oil pump was just the beginning. It took more time and

experimentation with the sump oil level for the scavenging to work properly. Other work included fitting a drive side crankshaft oil seal and timing side oil feed lip seal, mini Morgo oil filter on the return line, a non-return valve to stop wet sumping and, later, a bypass line to reduce the feed. He also designed and fitted an external drain for the rocker box because the early engines had no channel from the valve pocket to the pushrod tunnels. Even with this, the oil level remained above the valve guides, so he fitted valve stem oil seals.

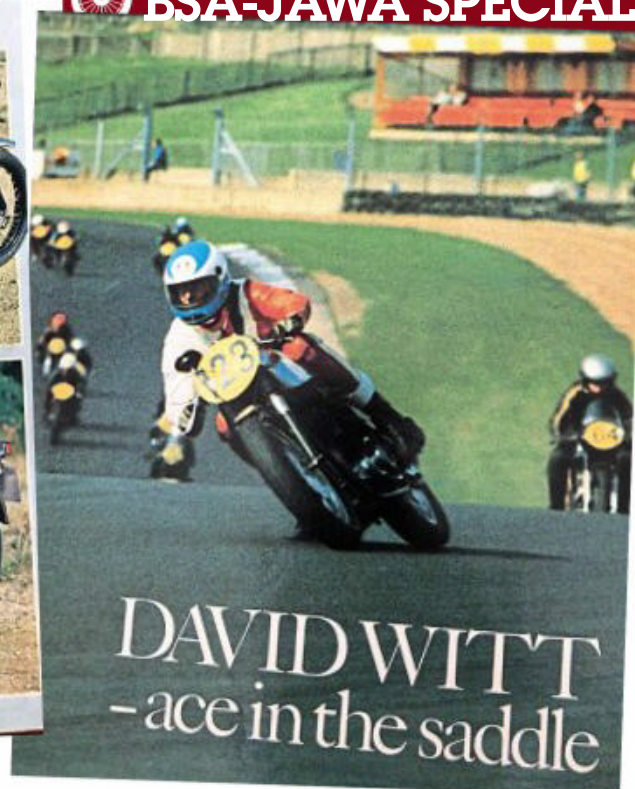
Even getting the engine breathing right was unexpectedly tricky. A modified Yamaha reed valve in the crankcase breather pipe worked a little too well. All the oil from the tank was drawn into the crankcase by the resulting low pressure. More experimentation led to a successful arrangement with a pipe from the rocker box to the oil tank and a small catch tank fitted to a pipe from the oil tank, venting to atmosphere.

A Mikuni VM36 carburettor replaced the missing Concentric, but the engine ran too rich despite changes to the jet and needle settings. Dave's racing experience came to the fore as he took up his angle grinder and, with practised eye, cut the slide cutaway back by about 1/16". The result was an engine running with the correct mixture and much cleaner low-speed running.

Those few paragraphs do not begin to capture the time, effort, difficulty and frustration David went through. In fact, there were times when he was close to taking it apart and selling the bits. Fortunately, dogged persistence won through and, even though he already had improvements in mind, the engine was running well and leak free. We can now turn to the cycle parts that complement the motor and make for such a fine road bike.



Motorcycle Mechanics: 'Me and my Bike'
page (Nov 1981)



David leading the field at Donnington

The frame was painted in Gunmetal grey and fitted with a pair of 1971 Triumph forks to replace the missing BSA originals. A Triumph 8" 2ls conical hub brake, replica stainless steel Triumph front mudguard, headlamp and period indicators were topped by Triumph-type flat-tracker stainless steel handlebars. These were fitted with a quick action throttle, bar-end mirror, Doherty-type levers, a kill button, and a multi-function switch unit from eBay. Triumph speedo and rev counter pods and brackets were fitted with a GPS speedometer and Scitsu electronic tachometer with a pickup on the HT lead. These

saved a great deal of money and trouble. Dave fabricated the steering damper by modifying a BSA damper plate, welding on stops to suit the bottom yoke and topped off the assembly with a custom Triumph adjuster knob.

LED bulbs were used throughout and the sheer brilliance of the headlight belies the paltry 22W or so it consumes. Dave runs the dynamo at 12V and did the wiring himself with a digital voltage regulator and racing 'Anti-Gravity' Lithium battery.

He kept the BSA rear hub and had the wheels built with 19" stainless steel rims and spokes. Mitas tyres, with the right look, and a pair of generic rear suspension

units completed the running gear. A chrome-effect powdercoated rear mudguard from a chopper parts supplier was rubber mounted to a frame loop he had fabricated and

welded in place. The custom rear light unit was sourced from eBay. David made the seat base starting with a cardboard template. He covered the base with memory foam and spent much time and effort fitting a wooden rim to hold the professionally upholstered cover. The finished seat was rubber mounted to the frame, as were the petrol and oil tanks.

The bike sports a two-gallon Catalina scrambler petrol tank, as used on Gold Stars, and a neat custom oil tank, both painted BSA Cherry Red. Another special item is the exhaust pipe, made by Alden Exhausts to David's requirements and rubber mounted at the back. A 'penny on a stick' baffle gives some reduction in decibels but, again, that racing experience had showed that exhaust back pressure was necessary for good carburation and running.

David's original engine plates were bright nickel-plated along with other parts that were not stainless steel or painted. He also made the inner chaincase to match the BSA outer, dynamo cover, and the chainguard. Naturally, this too is rubber mounted. ➤



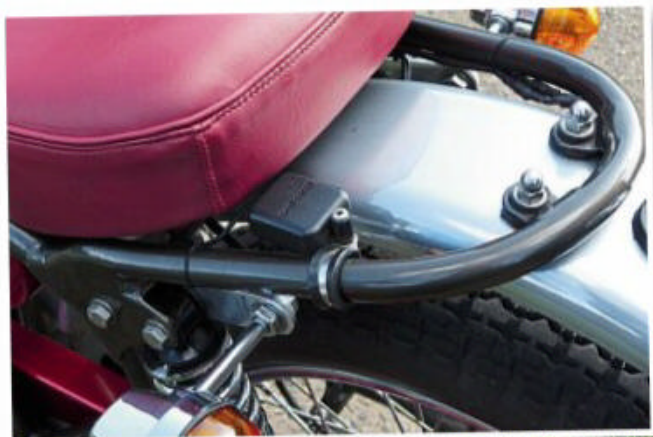
Above: Electronic clock faces are also available in black. Front end and shiny damper knob by Triumph. Electronic tachometer and GPS speedo save a great deal of trouble and cost over the original Chronometric types



Simple controls: indicators, dip switch and horn on the left. Kill button and throttle on the right



BSA-Triumph's often derided conical hub TLS brake. Very effective when set up properly. Stainless steel rim and spokes, as for the rear wheel also



Rear mudguard rubber mount on David's frame loop and the GPS speedometer receiver

The result is most definitely a motorcycle that's more than the sum of its parts. Dave finished the build and put the bike on the road in 2018. It weighs 163kg wet and produces an estimated 35-38bhp at the back wheel, based on the dynamometer results from 1981. Given the original A7SS's nominal 190kg and 30bhp at the crankshaft, the special's performance should be lively to say the least.

And that certainly is the case, according to Dave. Still running-in the engine, he finds it difficult to stay below his self-imposed 4000rpm limit. This amounts to 60mph in top gear with plenty more to come. Unlike the torquey, softly tuned BSA twin, the Jawa doesn't really come alive until about 3500rpm. This is not to say that it doesn't pull well below that and the five-speed box really helps. Nonetheless, David aims to get the start of the power band nearer 2500rpm as part of his continuing, continuous improvement programme.

Nervous doesn't begin to describe my feeling on taking this precious machine out onto the Queen's highway. Dave started it using his well-practised routine and politely suggested that I don't let it die. Once warm, it ticks over steadily enough, but I didn't want to risk a vicious kick-back and so kept the revs up.

Feeding in the light clutch, the bike set off smoothly but, as expected, it didn't have much urge until past 3000rpm. From there, the pick-up was rapid and I had to be quick with the upshifts to stay below 4000rpm. Even so, I saw 4500 at one point because the engine revs so freely. The gearbox is an absolute delight and the 15mph per 1000rpm gearing makes cruising at 60mph very comfortable with that smooth-running engine. A sure sign of a good job made of the crankshaft build and balancing.

Braking was excellent, at least at the front thanks to the carefully set up Triumph's 8" 2ls brake and the bike's light weight. BSA's original cable-operated rear brake was, to say the least, uninspiring and, naturally, will be improved.

A happy marriage of 1950s BSA frame and 1970s Triumph forks with the high-rise bars made the ride very comfortable, with precise steering and drama-free handling. I found the riding position and control set-up very good despite being quite a bit shorter than David. He readily agreed that he could 'really chuck it around the bends' and was having great fun riding it around the local lanes – strictly in the interests of further development of course.

And who wouldn't enjoy such a machine? That engine really does look good, surrounded as it is by the care and detail that went into this stunning special. **Rc**



The VMCC South Lincs and Peterborough Section's 'Best Bike' award was thoroughly deserved

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ANCIENT &

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Photos by John & Steff Moulton and Frank Westworth

R

MODERN

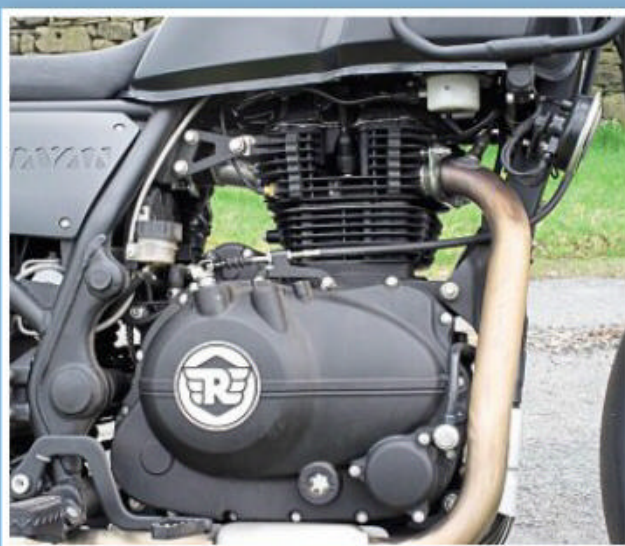
When one motorcycle simply isn't enough, you might choose to own a modern machine alongside your old 'un. John Moulton reckons one of each is just about right...

There is a trend, as we inevitably age, for some of us to ditch the labour-intensive old relic for something where you just press a button and go. I am equally sure that a very high proportion of RC readers run a modern(ish) machine alongside their classic P&J. The logic behind such a lifestyle choice seems both simple and inescapable; a motorcycling treasure for high days and holidays, and a reliable modern machine for everyday riding tasks.

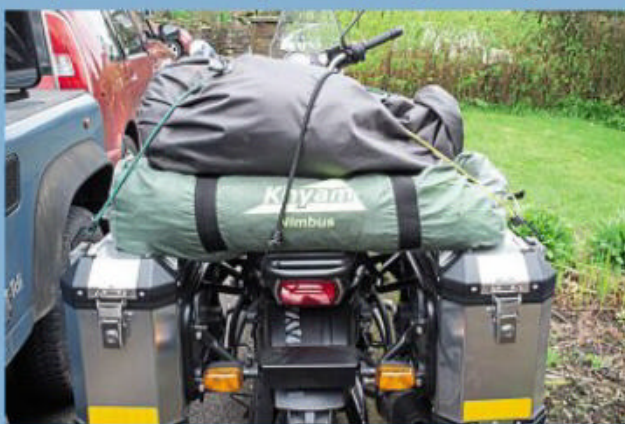
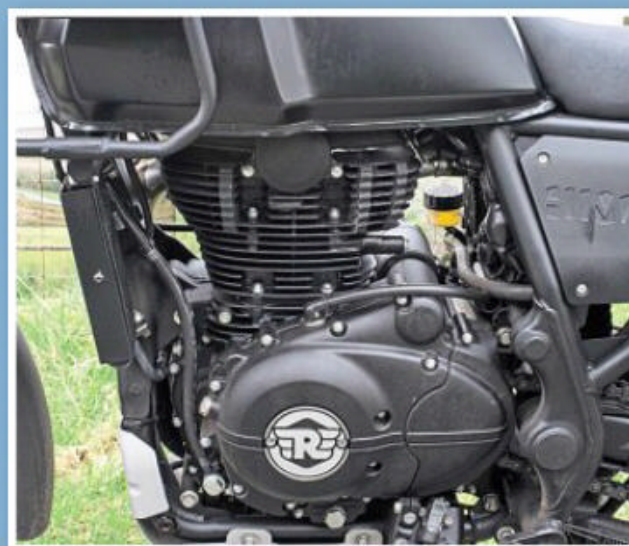
This train of thought set me considering. What is a good workable contrast of ancient and modern machinery? (I hope that those of you who suffered many a Sunday school and the interminable accompanying church service get the reference!) Which contrasting bikes go together like fish and chips? Or do some pairings just not work?

What, Dear Reader, is your ancient and modern pairing? Why did you choose these bikes? Is the partnership a happy one? To put my money where my mouth is, I'll start us off. My combination of A&M is a 1975 Moto Morini Strada 3½ (which first appeared in RC184) and a Royal Enfield Himalayan, purchased new in 2018 (featured in RC171).

Let's start with the ancient, although 1975 seems like yesterday to me! Much has been written about the diminutive Morini V-twin in this hallowed journal, so rather than burden you with the details, I'll point you in the direction of RC161 and 162. Having digested



Despite its modernity, the Himalayan's engine is a simple device, rugged and easily maintained



Unsubtle luggage makes the Himalayan ideal for the Round Britain Rally. Also perfect for camping, and many other exciting if puzzling things!



those excellent and honest articles, you are now up to speed with all things Morini, so you may be interested in why I chose one. I'd love to say that it was a logical choice, made after much painstaking research, and that I spent a great deal of time and effort seeking out the perfect machine. However, it wasn't

like that at all.

My riding mate of some thirty years standing, Ralph Martin, is an excellent mechanic. This fact was well known in his local motorcycling circle. Consequently, he

The perfect tool for touring in Snowdonia



FACT PACK:	MORINI STRADA	ENFIELD HIMALAYAN
Engine	OHV 4-stroke V-twin	SOHC 4-stroke single
Bore x stroke	62mm x 57mm	78mm x 86mm
Capacity	344cc	411cc
Compression	10:1	9.5:1
Power	35bhp @ 8250rpm	24.3bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque	30Nm @ 6300rpm	32Nm @ 4500rpm
Ignition	CDI electronic	Digital electronic
Gearbox	6-speed	5-speed constant mesh
Frame	Duplex steel cradle	Half-duplex cradle
Front suspension	35mm Marzocchi forks	41mm tele forks
Rear suspension	Twin Ceriani shocks	Monoshock
Front brake	200mm 2ls drum	300mm disc ABS
Rear brake	180mm drum	240mm disc ABS
Front tyre	3.25 x 18	90/90 21
Rear tyre	4.10 x 18	120/90 17
Wheelbase	1384mm	1465mm
Ground clearance	7 inches	8.5 inches
Seat height	30 inches	31.5 inches
Weight	160kg fuelled	200kg fuelled



The view ahead reveals neat instruments, which look rather modern compared to those on the Morini

acquired many lame ducks; you know the sort of thing, bikes that had been through a number of mechanically inept hands and simply would not run right. One day, he got a call from a bike breaker / dealer. Would Ralph be interested in a Morini at the 'right money'?

Truth be told, Ralph thought that a Morini was some kind of two-stroke, but the 'right money' part of the conversation interested him and before long he was the owner of an unusual little bike that wouldn't run right. Ralph soon had the 350 sorted. The problems were mostly related to it having been inactive for some time and the crankcases were full of petrol due to a tap being left on. Ralph expected to turn the Morini round for a quick profit. That was until he rode it...

...and Ralph subsequently kept the Strada for 21 years. Then ten years ago, we were out for a ride and Ralph casually asked if I would like a go on the Morini. Of course I didn't need asking twice. I returned with a big grin on my face, asking for first refusal if it was ever for sale. (Some ten years later when my brother Phil rode the bike for the first time, he returned wearing an identical grin and, he gave me strict instructions to leave the Morini to him in my will!)

A decade of gentle nagging meant that the Strada became mine three years ago. I find it to be delightful in every way, apart from the awkward left-sided kickstarter and lack of feedback when coaxing it into life. The engine is a peach, the handling is (as Frank suggested in his roadtest) sublime, and it just oozes character. Riding a well set-up Morini is a special experience. People who've ridden ➤



Singles may indeed be singular, but V-twins do have a certain charm



A really rather good ride almost anywhere machine, then



Although a rather different breed of motorcycle compared to the RE, the Morini also gets pressed into long-range rally riding



'It's all his fault!' Ralph Martin on John's Morini ten years ago



Much has been written about the charming character and perky performance of the wee-vee. It's all true. Great engines indeed!

mine invariably return wearing that stupid grin and they are frequently lost for words. Not quite everyone agrees about Morinis; Ace Tester Paul Miles is underwhelmed, but I'll side with the opinion of that esteemed expert, Dave Minton, who considered them to be Something Special.

So, here's the rub; why is the Morini not my main ride? Why do I feel the need for a modern machine as well? Especially when I feel that a 3½ Morini *could* easily cope with being a rider's only bike?

Firstly, I think that having two motorcycles is worthwhile. I really cannot stand not having a motorbike available to ride at any time. So with a modern machine available, I can take my time on maintenance tasks on the Morini;

not rushing to get it back on the road. Also, there are certain tasks that a modern machine can do better than the Morini – carrying a lot of gear, for example, or riding in the dark or on poor roads.

Why then did I choose the Royal Enfield Himalayan as my modern machine? In contrast to my selection of the Morini, I chose with care, reading everything that I could about the bike. I've always enjoyed the riding position of big trailies, but these days they are far too big and heavy for me, so I was looking for a versatile, comfortable, economical and reliable alternative for day-to-day use.

My modern machine didn't need to be thrilling, as the Morini excels in that department, but it did need to be all-day

comfortable with a low seat height and without excess weight. The ability to keep up with modern traffic was important, but high-speed motorway cruising potential was not a consideration. The capacity to carry luggage, including camping gear, efficiently was vital but I wasn't concerned about catering for a pillion passenger.

Some 10,000 miles down the road, I can assess my choice of modern machine. The Himalayan has done everything that has been asked of it without complaint. I find it to be superbly comfortable and I consider the suspension to be almost perfect for our pot-hole strewn roads. I've never owned a bike that carries luggage as efficiently as the Himalayan. The hard panniers are very



Morini instrumentation is possibly best described as being 'classic'. Little to distract the rider



If a bike has plenty of Go, it needs plenty of Stop, as well

useful, and when fitted they provide a stable platform for attaching camping equipment.

Yes, I know that on paper the Enfield is dog-slow and, certainly in motorway situations it will seem so. But, let me put this in context; last week, I led a group of very experienced riders on a tour of the lesser-known roads of North Wales. Their machines were a BMW R80 G/S, BMW R1150R, BMW F700 and KTM 690 Duke. To a man, the riders agreed that they would not have ridden any faster if one of them had led and that the Himalayan had not slowed them up at all. Admittedly, swift overtakes are not in the remit of a 26 horsepower machine, but that did not really have an adverse effect on the ride.

What their bikes couldn't compete with was the 99 (yes 99!) mpg achieved by the Enfield!

Where the Himalayan really excels is in making progress on poor roads. It really is sure-footed on the sort of roads that the Morini simply would not enjoy. The design input on chassis and suspension by Harris into modern Enfields has really paid dividends.

So what's not to like? The savings made due to the Enfield's superb fuel economy are partially offset by the short, 3000 mile service intervals, but when the warranty expires, I will carry out my own maintenance. The steering head bearings which were under-greased on assembly were replaced without fuss under warranty. The instruments tend to mist up. The engine makes some weird and wonderful noises (related to the counter-balancer if online forums are to be believed), but all checks out well at the dealers, so I just keep riding it!

I suppose that owning the Himalayan allows me to pamper the Morini a little and, importantly, it allows me to match the bike to the ride. So the Morini gets used for fine weather Sunday morning blasts on good roads, going to classic shows or race meetings, VMCC runs (although some old stagers look on it as too modern!) and outings on the Round Britain Rally of less than 100 miles. For RBR trips that exceed 100 miles I take the Himalayan, likewise camping or touring with luggage, bad weather, poor roads and green lanes, trips to the shops and other local short runs.

Would I change either bike? Definitely not. They complement each other well, being such contrasting machines, and I really enjoy riding them both. For me, having both a classic and a modern machine works well for my type of motorcycling. Does a combination of ancient and modern do the business for you too? **Rc**



John Moulton suspects that many RC readers own a modern bike as well as a classic. He's correct; over 60% of regular readers own an old bike and one manufactured after 1990



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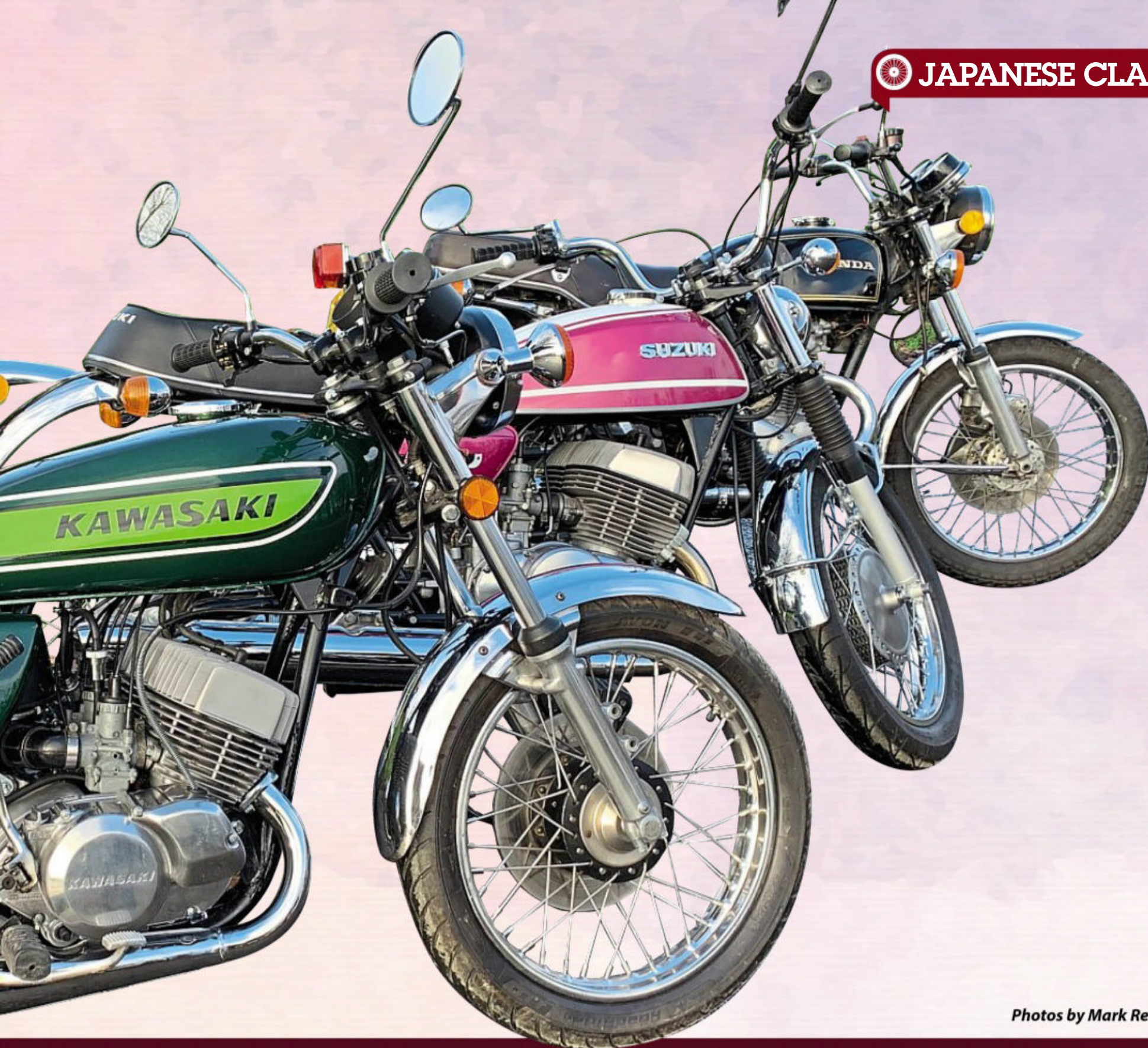
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RISING SUNS



Continuing our quest to uncover practical classics that are easy to live with, we turn to Japanese machines. Enter Mark Redfern, who's in an ideal position to compare three popular middleweights...



Photos by Mark Redfern

There are plenty of people looking for a middleweight, easy to ride classic. We speak to lots of prospective purchasers who come to our showroom wanting a bike which is reliable, light on the handling, reasonably low on the seat height and which looks good when parked outside a café. There are lots of four-cylinder machines from Japan which would fit the bill but that means four carbs to balance, more complexity and, in some cases, spiralling values which put them out of reach.

Maybe a 500 with fewer cylinders would fit the bill instead? Something from the 1970s means historic status so no road tax or MoTs, and the twins and triples of this time each have their own character – they're a

long way from later UJMs. A Honda CB500T was an obvious choice. It looks like it was made for people used to British bikes, with its black and gold livery and rounded retro styling. These 500s even vibrate a little, just to complete the similarity.

One of the favourite 500 twins of the time was the Suzuki T500. It's a two-stroke but without the peaky high-end screaming and limited powerband. We needed a third to join the party and I settled on a (slightly) wild card. The Kawasaki H1F is a two-stroke triple and comes from a long line of screaming madcap bikes which would wheelie without provocation and dare you to take corners too fast. After considerable development – all the way through the letters of the alphabet to the

F model – the H1 had become much more docile and compliant. Not exactly a pussycat, but no longer a tiger with an attitude problem. So let's give all three a spin...

THE SOLID HONDA

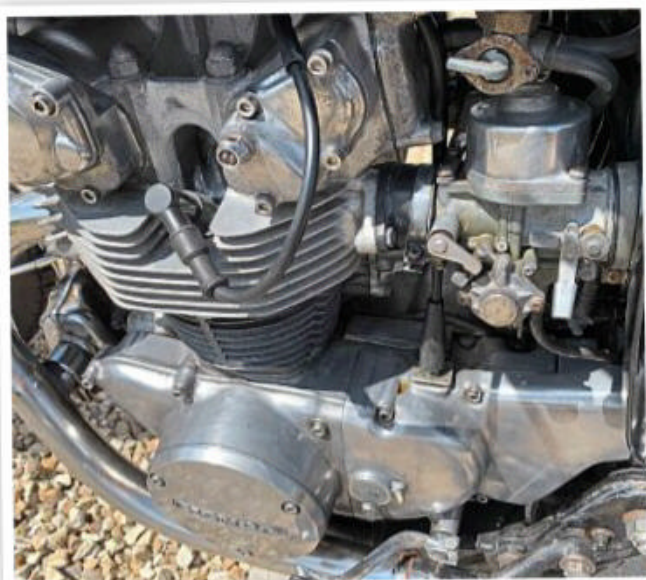
This is the logical place to start for someone new to Japanese classics. Reminiscent of British twins, it has a pinstriped, subdued paint scheme – so it's dressed in the motorcycling equivalent of a three-piece business suit compared to the Hawaiian shirt of the Suzuki and the Kermit-coloured Kwacker. The CB feels bigger; physically it has more bulk than the more slightly-built two-stroke competition.

The original Honda exhausts have been ➤

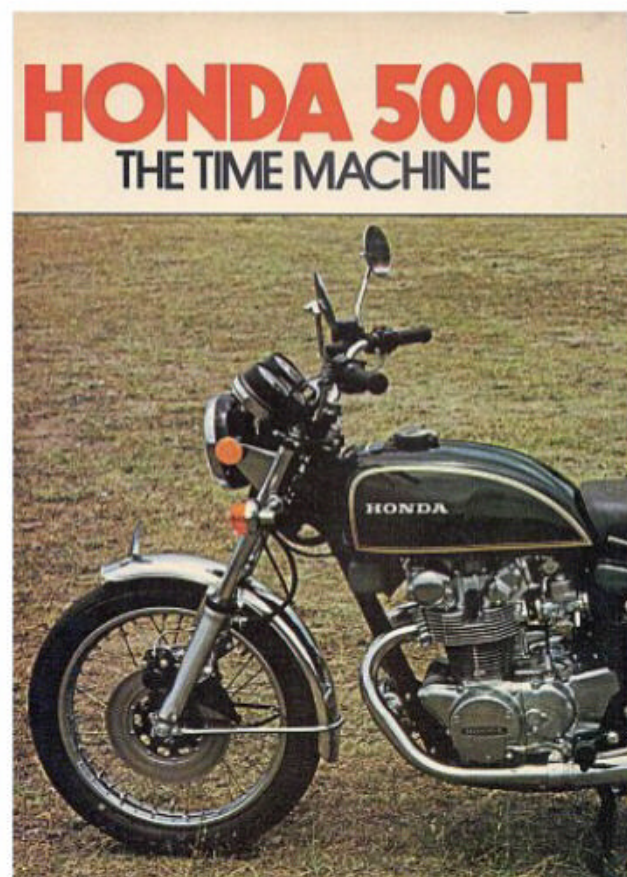
replaced on our test bike with something more like the Dunstall silencers which were common back in the day. This produces a deeper, louder exhaust note, adding a bit of drama to what can be a somewhat staid choice. It certainly sounds nice and the soundtrack comes with some accompanying vibration, just to let you know you are good to go.

This is the heaviest of our three bikes and I can feel that weight as soon as I swing my leg over the seat. I'm not particularly tall, but I regularly ride heavier motorcycles so it doesn't bother me. If you prefer a lighter bike with a lower seat then the CB might not be as ideal as the others on test here. That said, the Honda is nicely weighted and easy to hold up. The slightly raised bars make for a relaxed position.

Dials are a simple speedo and rev counter, with warning lights for neutral, oil pressure, main beam and turn signals. The choke is positioned next to the carbs and is usually needed just to get things started. Warming



Twin overhead camshafts were pretty exotic when this machine first appeared. Times change...



In keeping with a somewhat schizophrenic motorcycle, Honda offered ads ancient and modern



Fancy a neat 500 twin with a faintly exotic engine spec? Honda's CB500 is decently easy to live with

up is quick and the choke can be completely backed off after a minute or so. Standard exhausts were always a little quiet on these CBs, but the note of the replacement pipes is more like a bass note as the big twin thumps away happily.

Power is delivered smoothly and progressively in the approved Honda manner and progress is brisk if not jaw-dropping. Power is 42bhp – the lowest output of our trio – and its weight of 460lb makes it the heaviest of them. A Triumph T140 of the time would produce 54bhp and weigh around 415lb, so it feels as if the CB could do with a little more in the way of horsepower. Of course, it's the only machine of our three which comes equipped with an electric start – so the extra mass does bring a significant benefit.

Wringing the Honda's throttle will get you

**CB 500 TWIN**

Technical Specifications
Engine Unit
Type: 4-Cylinder 4-Stroke 2700cc (16.5 L)
Bore & Stroke: 81 x 94 mm (3.19 x 3.70")
Total Cylinder Capacity: 490 cc
Compression Ratio: 9.5:1
Valvetrain: Overhead Valve/Variable Valve Timing
Ignition: Spark Plug
Air Filtration: Paper Element
Lubrication System: Forced Oil Pump
Oil Capacity: 2.5 Imp. Quarts
Annular Oil Pan Capacity: 12.8 L (3.4 U.S. Gallons)
Starting: 12 Volt 12.6 Ah
Starting: Electric and Manual
Starting Pumps: 12 VDC
Cooling: Air-Cooled
Transmission: 5-Speed Automatic
Primary Reduction: 3.304:1
Gear Ratios: 1st 3.71, 2nd 3.14, 3rd 2.70, 4th 2.36, 5th 2.00
Final Reduction: 2.700:1
Maximum Power: 62.8 BHP @ 5000 RPM (2000 Watts)
Maximum Torque: 4.2 Kg-M @ 1200 RPM
Low Fuel Warning: On
Control: Push Button

	
Frame	
Rear-End Double Cradle	
Front Suspension: Upside-Down Fork	
Rear Suspension: Swinging Arm	
Steering: 25° (25.1°)	
Wheels: Front 17-in. Magnesium Spoked	
Rear: 16-in. Alloy	
Power Plant & Cooling	
Engine: Liquid-Cooled, 4-Cyl., 600 cc (36.1 cu in.)	
Overall Length: 2,060 mm (81.1 in.)	
Overall Width: 615 mm (24.2 in.)	
Overall Height: 1,115 mm (43.9 in.)	
Wheelbase: 1,490 mm (58.7 in.)	
Ground Clearance: 165 mm (6.5 in.)	
Seat Height: 815 mm (32.1 in.)	
Passenger Height: 815 mm (32.1 in.)	
Dry Weight: 210 kg (463 lb)	
Kerb Weight: 238 kg (525 lb)	

down the road slightly faster, but with much more noise and effort. That said, the motor is willing and still has an unburstable feel to it after all these years. There are no major vices with these bikes so if the motor is oil-tight and chugging away happily then you should be fine.

You soon accept that the CB isn't about pushing hard, it's about relaxing and just savouring the exhaust note, the retro feel and the knowledge that it won't let you down: it is a Honda, after all. Accepting that this is for cruising, not racing, I begin to enjoy it for what it is. The CB will happily cruise down the dual carriageway at 70mph, but pushing it to anything near the top speed of 99 is missing the point. Speed limits are not a problem on this one.

Brakes are adequate (you can never say more than that about any 1970s bike) and the Honda has the added benefit of some engine braking over the two-stroke alternatives. The longer you ride the CB, the more you appreciate it. It isn't trying to be fast or in anyone's face, it's just getting on with doing its thing. You could ride it to work or to the



The giant multi-bike tests of the day reckoned that the Honda 'looks good, probably won't break, will be economical and not especially fussy. But in this displacement range you can do so much better...'



Testers in the mid-70s remarked that the CB wasn't wildly happy at low revs and felt less flexible than other Honda twins of the time. Britbike riders might be bemused by the engine's rev-happy characteristics. Transmission backlash could be a problem, which meant that above average rider input was needed to maintain smooth progress in traffic



The Honda's brakes, disc front and drum rear, were considered 'superb' for the time. Other views are available

coffee shop everyday if you wanted to.

Apart from original exhausts, parts are fairly easy to come by. There are plenty of spares dealers with original parts and many of the pattern parts are very well made. The CB500T sold in sufficient numbers to ensure a supply of secondhand mudguards, tanks and such which would otherwise be expensive to source.

To me, the CB is a bike you could grow to like and appreciate. It's more like a pot of tea and plate of hobnobs by the fire than a wild night on the town with someone of ill-repute! It won't thrill your socks off or

land you in jail, but it might win your heart for its dependability and loyalty. It isn't trying too hard, it just does its thing, time after time. A sensible choice... but what if you want to be slightly less sensible?

THE SENSIBLE STROKER

My second choice was a Suzuki T500. The test bike was finished in a very period colour scheme of rose and white. All the chrome had been replaced but otherwise the motor was left untouched and showing only around

1400 miles from new. As close to 'back in the day' as we could hope for.

The first thing to notice is that the kickstart is on the left side rather than the right. Everything else is where you'd expect to find it on a Japanese bike. The second thing you notice is the low rumbling noise of the exhaust. No high-pitched tinny popping noises here! Pulling the clutch lever causes the rev counter to drop to zero which is a little disconcerting until you find out this is

Clear clocks tell you all you need to know





The Suzuki can be considered one of the most under-rated motorcycles of its time; not as glam as the green meanie nor as iconic as Honda's Black Bomber, and out-weirded by its RE-5 stablemate



perfectly normal for this bike. Release it and the needle springs reassuringly back up to the correct revs.

I can tell right away that this is a lighter bike than the Honda. Not exactly skinny, but the seat height and the overall size are more compact. The bars are a tad lower than the Honda, giving the Suzuki a slightly (and I do mean slightly) sportier feel. This bike might come from the same stable which produced the legendary 500 two-strokes ridden by Barry Sheene and Steve Parrish, but anyone expecting some family resemblance in terms of performance will be sorely disappointed. Instead you get a sweet, middleweight two-stroke with all the power the chassis can reasonably handle.

Instruments consist of the usual speedo and rev counter with warning lights for



The T500 bowed out in 1975. It was replaced by the GT500 which looked much the same but boasted a disc brake up front and electronic ignition. The earlier drum looked nice and worked at least as well as the disc



Suzuki's 5-speed gearbox included a 'safety feature' which would not allow the rider to change down from second to first while on the move...

neutral, turn and high beam. There is no gear indicator fitted, as favoured on Suzuki two-stroke triples, but the dials are clear and easy to read.

The handlebars have a rubber mounting to absorb some of the vibrations. This can feel slightly strange at first but I get used to it and it becomes part of the bike's character. A steering damper is included, but fiddling with it isn't recommended: best to set the bike up and leave it alone unless you're going track- ➤

Here's what the experts say about the Suzuki T-500 Titan.

"...if you care to crank the kick of the way up, you can shake the wheel... even in 10th gear, if you crack the throttle, acceleration is unbelievable... the brakes are more than adequate, electrical system... excellent... everything is working the way it was designed to work... It's all the 'King Kong' of the two-strokes."

"...the 500cc Suzuki road machine is a very impressive piece of equipment... you'd better believe this machine can accelerate... it can be cranked through its series of quick bends with real ease... any serious road rider should consider [it] before deciding on a motorcycle."

"...only one two-stroke has been able to do the thing and win a big-bore AMA National Expert race. That one is the Suzuki 500... the engine is surprisingly close to stock... with the same steel frame as used on the Titan street five hundred."

"The thing runs and runs. And it runs fast. Better for horsepower, money for performance, Suzuki's 500 is formidable."

"...the 500cc Suzuki road machine is a very impressive piece of equipment... you'd better believe this machine can accelerate... it can be cranked through its series of quick bends with real ease... any serious road rider should consider [it] before deciding on a motorcycle."

"...only one two-stroke has been able to do the thing and win a big-bore AMA National Expert race. That one is the Suzuki 500... the engine is surprisingly close to stock... with the same steel frame as used on the Titan street five hundred."

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"...the 500cc Suzuki road machine is a very impressive piece of equipment... you'd better believe this machine can accelerate... it can be cranked through its series of quick bends with real ease... any serious road rider should consider [it] before deciding on a motorcycle."

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"The thing runs and runs. And it runs fast. Better for horsepower, money for performance, Suzuki's 500 is formidable."

"...the 500cc Suzuki road machine is a very impressive piece of equipment... you'd better believe this machine can accelerate... it can be cranked through its series of quick bends with real ease... any serious road rider should consider [it] before deciding on a motorcycle."

"...only one two-stroke has been able to do the thing and win a big-bore AMA National Expert race. That one is the Suzuki 500... the engine is surprisingly close to stock... with the same steel frame as used on the Titan street five hundred."

"The thing runs and runs. And it runs fast. Better for horsepower, money for performance, Suzuki's 500 is formidable."

"...the 500cc Suzuki road machine is a very impressive piece of equipment... you'd better believe this machine can accelerate... it can be cranked through its series of quick bends with real ease... any serious road rider should consider [it] before deciding on a motorcycle."

"...only one two-stroke has been able to do the thing and win a big-bore AMA National Expert race. That one is the Suzuki 500... the engine is surprisingly close to stock... with the same steel frame as used on the Titan street five hundred."

"The thing runs and runs. And it runs fast. Better for horsepower, money for performance, Suzuki's 500 is formidable."

"...the 500cc Suzuki road machine is a very impressive piece of equipment... you'd better believe this machine can accelerate... it can be cranked through its series of quick bends with real ease... any serious road rider should consider [it] before deciding on a motorcycle."

"...only one two-stroke has been able to do the thing and win a big-bore AMA National Expert race. That one is the Suzuki 500... the engine is surprisingly close to stock... with the same steel frame as used on the Titan street five hundred."

"The thing runs and runs. And it runs fast. Better for horsepower, money for performance, Suzuki's 500 is formidable."

"...the 500cc Suzuki road machine is a very impressive piece of equipment... you'd better believe this machine can accelerate... it can be cranked through its series of quick bends with real ease... any serious road rider should consider [it] before deciding on a motorcycle."

"...only one two-stroke has been able to do the thing and win a big-bore AMA National Expert race. That one is the Suzuki 500... the engine is surprisingly close to stock... with the same steel frame as used on the Titan street five hundred."

"The thing runs and runs. And it runs fast. Better for horsepower, money for performance, Suzuki's 500 is formidable."

"...the 500cc Suzuki road machine is a very impressive piece of equipment... you'd better believe this machine can accelerate... it can be cranked through its series of quick bends with real ease... any serious road rider should consider [it] before deciding on a motorcycle."

"...only one two-stroke has been able to do the thing and win a big-bore AMA National Expert race. That one is the Suzuki 500... the engine is surprisingly close to stock... with the same steel frame as used on the Titan street five hundred."

"The thing runs and runs. And it runs fast. Better for horsepower, money for performance, Suzuki's 500 is formidable."



Unusually tractable for a modern two-stroke, the T500 will pull smoothly from 2000rpm in top gear. Vibes only start to become uncomfortable above 5000rpm when your foot could easily be shaken off the footrest



Suzuki's positive feed oiling system was considered more efficient than the lubrication on Kawasaki and Yamaha's two-strokes. The T500 should merely sip its oil, so if you find one that drinks lube then something is rotten in the state of Denmark...

Experts, huh?

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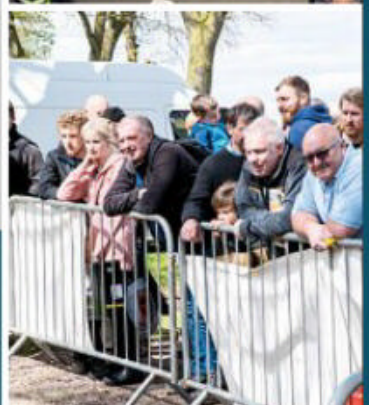
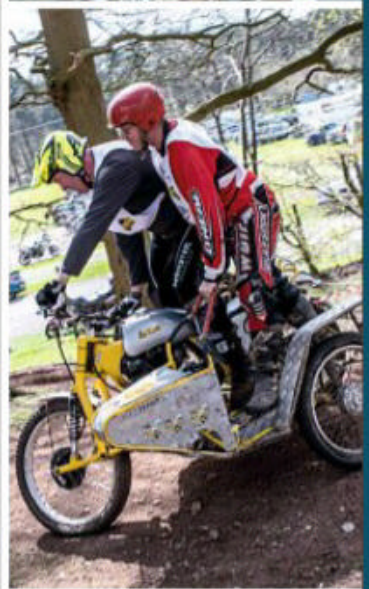
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When new, neither of the H1F's brakes was considered exceptionally powerful, but they were progressive and predictable and could lock the wheels if you tried hard. From 30mph in dry conditions, a new H1F needed an unimpressive 35ft to haul down to a halt. Definitely not the best performance in its class

day racing with it. I remind myself that these bikes are quite rare and sought-after, so I do not go track-day racing with it!

These 500s always had a reputation for being reliable and this one fires up willingly for each ride. Power output is around 44bhp so it's not going to set your trousers on fire, but it will pull nicely and is certainly powerful enough for a run to the coast or the caff. Over several rides I never found myself wanting more power – that would have ruined the friendly nature of the machine. Cruising at 60 to 70mph is easy with power left to spare.

I found the handling to be very neutral and predictable. The T500 wasn't made for scratching around corners scraping footrests, and its modest output means you won't be tempted anyway. If you want a hooligan bike, this isn't for you. If you want a bike which will get you there and back every time then it just might be.

Fuel consumption depends on how much throttle you like to play with of course, but is comparable with most classic bikes, British or Japanese. Certainly the tank is plenty big enough for days out but, as you'd expect, would be on the small side for touring. If that's your thing then the Honda will be more suitable. The

T500 needed petrol at about the same rate I need coffee, so we worked well together.

Brakes work as well as they ever did; which is to say nothing better than adequate. Unlike the other two, this has drum brakes on the front. If you're thinking of buying one, check the brake shoes. I've seen them crumble to dust with plenty of meat still on them simply due to age. The linings on this have been replaced, as have the tyres, so all is well on the handling and stopping front.

This particular T500 still has its original exhausts. The mudguards were painted silver at some point but have now been chromed using the traditional copper, nickel and chrome method. It now looks better than it would have done with just a thin layer of nickel out of the factory. You will find T500s with their original chrome, which is great, but do check the exhausts for holes and signs of imminent failure such as rattling baffles.

Suzuki, bless 'em, have actually started making many parts for their older machines once more, such is the increase in popularity of Japanese classics. Most parts can be found, except for (you guessed it) the exhausts. Solid secondhand exhausts are still out there, so no need to panic yet.

The T500 might not be the most exciting bike you'll ever ride, but it will certainly put a smile on your face. Overall the Suzuki is a little more racy than the Honda but still quite sensible. So what if you want to be a bit more radical than that?

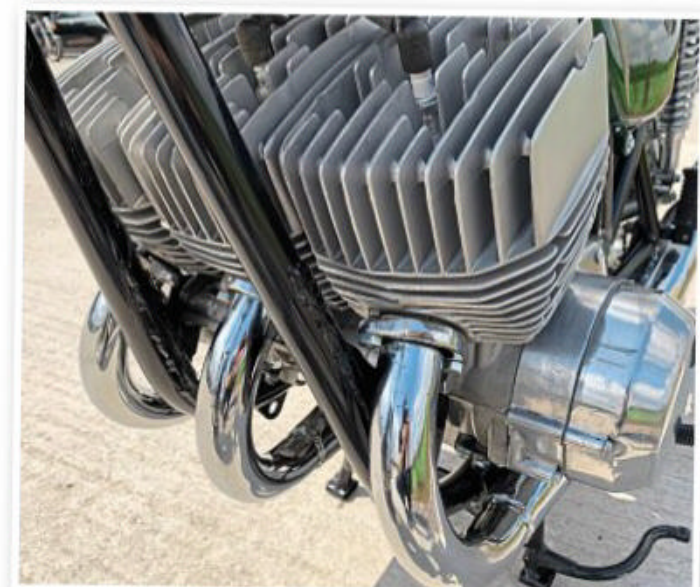
THE WILD CARD

Next I rode the famous Kawasaki triple. Our test bike is an H1F. It's a bike I know quite well because I own it. I had it restored from a US import and kept it faithful right up to the paint job. I wanted to keep everything as it should be but then I faced a dilemma.

For the year in question, 1975, Kawasaki offered two colour schemes. You could have two shades of blue, not bad, but neither of them was the gorgeous but weirdly named 'Halibut Blue' of earlier 250 models. I opted for the classic candy lime green over dark green. OK I cheated, but the results look fantastic. Unusually the restorer also managed to get the exhausts



Neat ads for the triples, even if only one of these is the right one...



Never mind two wheels on your wagon – how's about three pots on your engine!

Classic 1970s Japanese instruments. Clear, simple and easy to use on the move



re-chromed. It's very rare that this happens nowadays as the carbon in the pipes ruins the chrome bath, making it useless for anything else afterwards.

This is the last of the H1s and so is somewhat more muted than the early models, which were prone to wheelie at the slightest provocation. By the time of the KH500 (the very last of the breed) power was down to a still respectable 50 horsepower, but the stroker had become too civilised for its own good. No one bought these to be civilised!

Sitting on the Kawasaki after the other two, the first thing I notice is how small it feels. The Honda feels quite chunky; the Suzuki feels like a 500 should but the H1 feels more like a 250. Easy to ride and push around the garage but arguably not as planted on the road.

The usual speedo and rev counter are complimented not only by warning lights for neutral, turn and high beam but also one to show when the stop light is lit. Not that you need to be reminded you're braking but I guess you know the lamp is working.

The kickstart is where you would expect to find it on a Japanese bike and soon the motor is singing and popping away happily. You soon realise that this engine needs a lot of choke when cold. Unlike the Suzuki, which soon warms up, this one is best left to run on choke for a minute or two before setting off from cold.

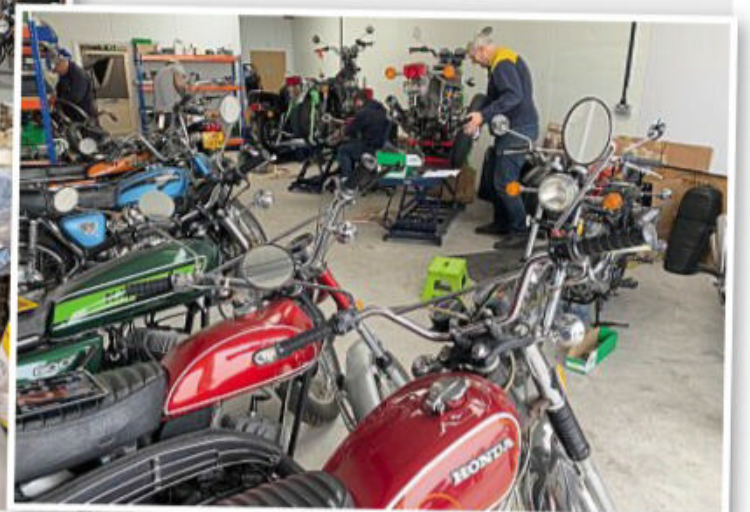
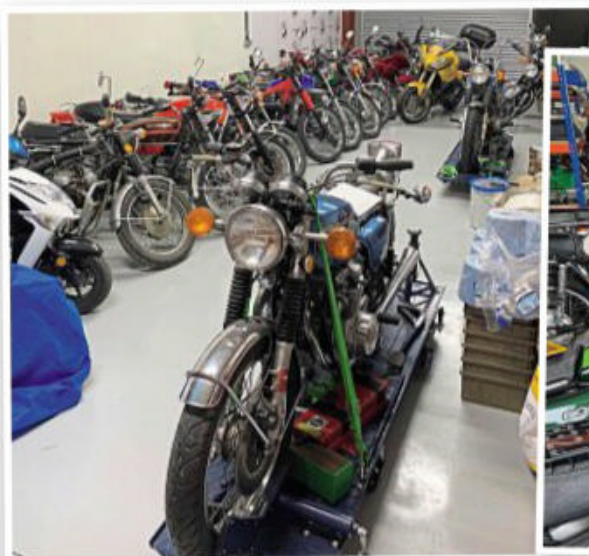
The next thing you realise is that the gears are not the usual 'one down and all the rest up', in this case they are 'all up' Not a major issue, but something to remember when sat at the lights, stabbing the gear level downwards...

The exhaust note is instantly recognisable

and, unlike the Suzuki's growl, this bike just wants to howl and announce itself to all around. The three cylinders crackling away do sound nice, but it does like to drink its fuel. Using the available performance of the engine will result in a gallon of the good stuff disappearing in not much over 20 miles. That's scary territory if you need to commute, not so bad if you're just off to the caff with your mates. If you measure that fuel consumption against the size of the motor then it's crazy... but if you measure it against the grin factor ➤



Some vibration was always apparent on the H1F; a heavy shuddering under 3000rpm and buzzing tingles at higher revs. Enough to turn your fingers white and cause significant fatigue after a couple of hours



THINKING OF BUYING?

Somerset Classic Motorcycles is run by Andy Taylor and Mark Redfern and focuses on Japanese classics from the 1970s. With a team of experienced engineers they offer everything from newly-found survivors, just waiting for a new owner to get them back on the road, right up to fully finished bikes which are as good or better than they were when new.

Mark and Andy will give an honest view of the condition of bikes and the availability of spares and replacement parts. For people looking for a lighter bike with an electric start, or maybe just something to add to the collection, they can usually find something which fits the bill among their stock of 1970s Japanese machines. They deliver across the UK. See somersetclassicmotorcycles.co.uk

then it's a bargain. Put your sensible trousers on and you should see over 30mpg, giving a range of about 100 miles.

Running up the revs reveals a true two-stroke power band. Take the H1 above 6000 revs and it really takes off. This isn't a bike designed to be easy to live with. It's designed to give you something to do on a ride: keep it in the power band. If you want to bumble along admiring the scenery, there are better choices. You can certainly cruise at the legal limits with the H1 but it will always be urging you to play harder.

At higher speeds it becomes more important to remember that the brakes are no better than adequate. Take some time to make sure they are set up properly. Slowing the motor produces no engine braking from the two-stroke powerplant, but even this model of the H1 is very light – under 400lb – so there's little dramas if you plan your deceleration appropriately.

When buying any two-stroke, try to find out as much as you can about its history. Two-strokes can go bang much more rapidly and with less warning than four-strokes. In this case the motor was rebuilt by one of the leading H1/H2 experts in the UK, with pictures of the rebuild to prove it.

Delivery of the critical two-stroke oil to the motor is vital, so check that the oil delivery system is working perfectly. When riding, a quick glance in the mirrors should provide a reassuring slight blue haze, not a massive cloud of blue fog. No smoke at all would be equally worrying.

There aren't as many parts dealers for

JAPANESE 500S FACT PACK			
	1975 Honda CB500T	1975 Suzuki T500	1975 Kawasaki H1F
Engine	4-stroke dohc twin	2-stroke twin	2-stroke triple
Bore / stroke	70 x 64.8mm	70 x 64mm	60 x 58.8mm
Capacity	498cc	492cc	499cc
Compression	8.5:1	6.6:1	6.8:1
Power	42bhp @ 8000rpm	46bhp @ 7000rpm	60 @ 7500rpm
Number of gears	5	5	5
Carburetion	2x 28mm Keihin	2x 32mm Mikuni	3x 28mm Mikuni
Starting	Kick and electric	Kick	Kick
Front brake	Single disc	Drum	298mm disc
Rear brake	Drum	Drum	sls drum
Front tyre	3.25 x 19	3.00 x 18	3.25 x 19
Rear tyre	3.75 x 18	3.25 x 16	4.00 x 18
Wheelbase	55.5"	57.3"	56.7"
Seat height	31"	32"	32.2"
Dry weight	453lb	410lb	384lb
Fuel capacity (gals)	3.5	3.7	3.3
Top speed	99mph	106mph	118mph

these Kawasakis as there are for Honda or Suzuki machines, but the H1 series are still very popular bikes and parts are out there. The build quality isn't up to Honda standards so look for a pampered example, kept under cover and used for dry rides.

The H1 is a totally different ride to the Suzuki but no less fun. A bit more shouty and not a machine for a shrinking violet. Its rarity means that it definitely attracts attention.

WHICH BIKE?

Which one is best? It depends on what you want. If you want to let people know you're

coming before you get there, then the Kwacker will announce your arrival like no other. If you want to wait until you get there to turn heads then the Suzuki will provide enough drama, and send a little smoke signal just to make the point. If you don't care about making an entrance but want a reliable ride and easy starting then the Honda will do both of those.

None of these bikes have any major vices and all should reward simple regular maintenance with good reliability. Owners of older British machines shouldn't find them hard to maintain, although the Honda's engine will feel more familiar – even if it does come with double overhead cams. If fuel efficiency is a concern then the Honda easily wins by delivering more than 50mpg.

Unless you really push these bikes to their limits you shouldn't find any issues with handling or performance in today's traffic. Don't be put off by the drum front brake on the Suzuki; when the bikes were new it was more effective at stopping the twin than the disc brake on the (lighter) Kawasaki triple.

Perhaps it all comes down to price. These bikes might not have been massively different in price when new but they are now. At the start of 2020, the Kawasaki was priced at £7995, some way ahead of the £6250 needed to buy the Suzuki. The Honda is much cheaper than either at just £2995. Is the H1F worth twice as much as the CB500T? Only you know the answer!

I like to chop and change my bikes and have not owned a T500. So that would be the one I'd choose to have in my life for a while. Until I see the next thing... **RC**





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SWEETLY

Better known for their bigger bangers, Norton also built some fine 350 singles. Rob Davies asks whether this was the company's sweetest single of them all?



SINGULAR



Norton's pushrod singles may not be as popular as their cammy and twin siblings but they do have many admirers

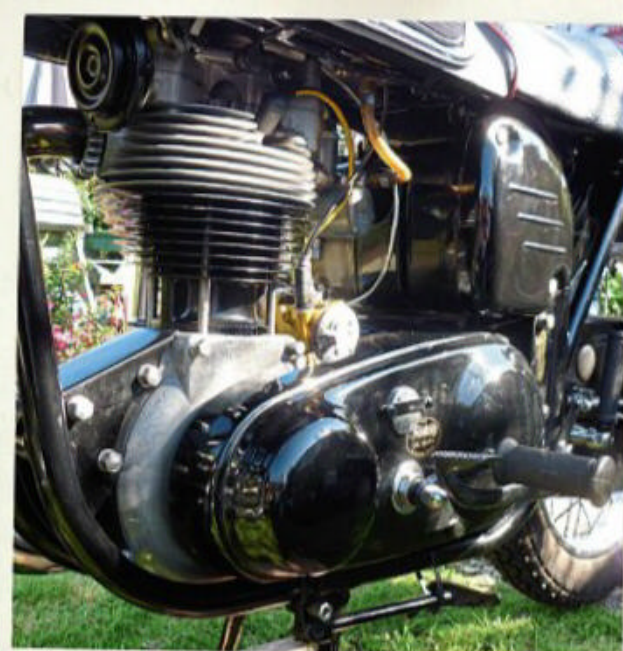


Tony Cooper, best known in the Midlands – and way beyond – as the guy to go to when you need new life in an old magneto, happens to have a very nice but select classic stable of old British metal. In 2017 he added, or more correctly meticulously restored, a Norton Model 50. And, when you consider that he bought this bike as a box of bits, I am sure you will agree with me when I say what a super job he has made of it. Also true to his own standards, it starts with an easy kick, because Tony fitted a magneto, rather than the usual distributor that was originally fitted to this 1959 model.

Does Tony have any tips when restoring a Model 50. 'Just a couple,' he muses as we sit comfortably in his garden during the summer

of 2019, gazing down into his pool of Coy Carp that were feeding vigorously on dog biscuits. Yes, that's what I said – dog biscuits, for these Coy are truly massive. 'When you come to fit the engine into the frame, lie the frame on the floor on some carpets, and then fit the engine to that. And as for the oft-leaking steel clutch over, I used clear silicone sealer, and let it cure overnight before running the engine up.'

Once money had changed hands, Tony went to the Norton Owners Club and checked through the accompanying paperwork, and yes the engine and frame numbers were correct, and yes there were even details of the original distributor: Motor Sales of Birmingham, and the first registered owner was one SE Bloomer of Smethwick in March

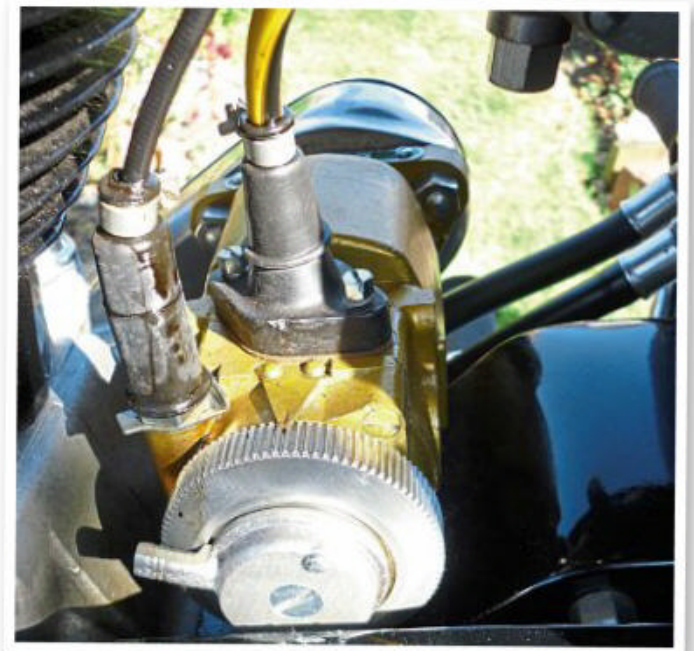


Above: Seal that leaky chaincase with clear silicone and let it set. Norton footrests were always in a dodgy place

You really can't beat these singles for their natural beauty. Neat Norton motifs on the timing cover and gearbox



Maybe not the most beautiful of tanks, but the silver and chrome scheme is nice



Fitting a magneto instead of a distributor is a good move – especially if you're a magneto expert

1959. How about that?

However, even though there was an original registration plate to go with the bike, the DVLA said that he couldn't use it. Something about it not being on their records anymore. Never mind, that was only a minor hiccup.

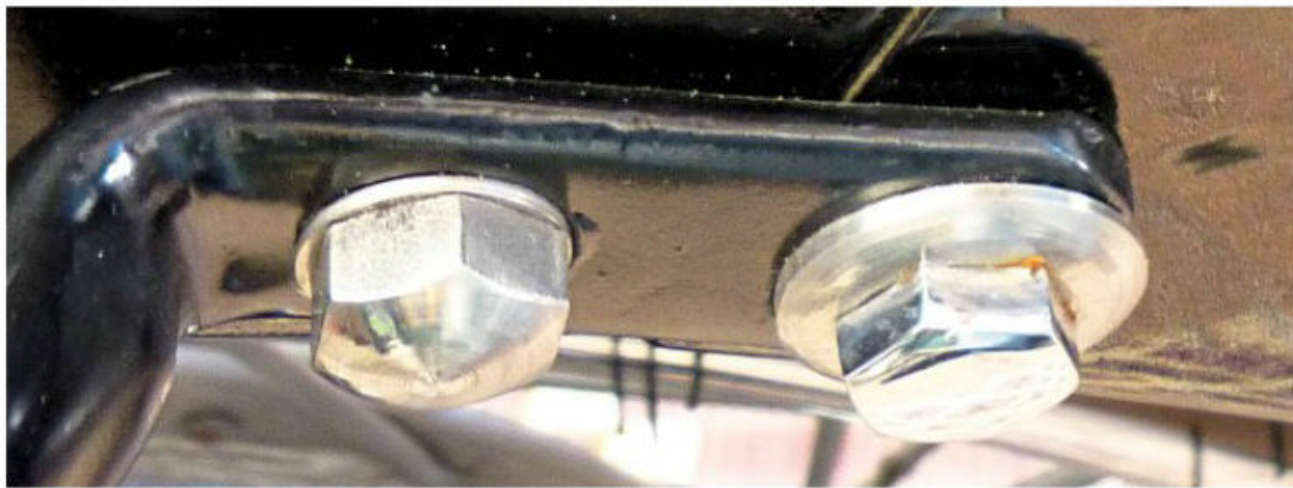
The Model 50 was one of three singles that Norton made during the 1950s, the 50 being the baby of them with only 350cc, while the ES2 had 140 more, giving it that little bit more oomph, while the larger 19S was almost 600cc. Tony will acknowledge freely that the 350 doesn't have a very exciting turn of speed compared to the other two, or even to his ➤

NORTON MODEL 50 FACT PACK

Engine	Air-cooled ohv single
Bore / stroke	71mm x 8mm
Capacity	348cc
Compression	7.3:1
Carburettor	Amal Monobloc
Lubrication	Dry sump
Primary drive	Simplex chain
Transmission	4-speed AMC gearbox
Clutch	Norton multiplate
Electrics	Lucas RM15 alternator
Frame	Wideline tubular welded featherbed full duplex loop
Front brake	8" full-width sls drum
Rear brake	7" drum
Front suspension	Short Roadholder tele forks
Rear suspension	Swinging arm, Girling shocks
Front tyre	3.00 x 19
Rear tyre	3.50 x 19
Wheelbase	55.5"
Ground clearance	6"
Seat height	30.5"
Weight	399lb fuelled
Price new	£228.11.8 in 1959



Roadholder forks and that good 8-inch full width drum brake



Proud Owner does like to finish off with homemade stainless nuts and bolts. Most metals, ferrous and non-ferrous from Keatley Metals, Birmingham

350 MAC Velo, which he admits goes 'much better', but the Norton is still a sweet reliable ride for that occasional Sunday afternoon, and is always a pleasant addition to the usual classic gatherings.

The Model 50 first came out in 1933, so in a sense it's an old design, but one that went through many small improvements as the next twenty years went by. Starting out with a rigid frame, it ended up with the Slimline featherbed, and those Roadholder forks, an altogether good-handling machine. In 1956, after a break since the outbreak of WW2, the Model 50 was reintroduced into the Norton range, three years after AMC took over Norton. During those years Bert Hopwood was at the helm of the design team, and in essence they were doing their best to get more power out of their designs, but also

aiming to reduce engine noise.

As we have already admitted, the model 50 was a bit on the slow side, with just 20bhp at 5800rpm, and certainly the whole Norton single range was in many ways past its sell by date by the time this machine was built. Bert Hopwood himself, now famous for his well-written and documented account of just why the British motorcycle industry went down the tubes, was casting a judicial and critical eye over these exact models. He recalled that the 350 market was the most difficult and least rewarding of all the capacities, mainly because the potential buyer naturally expected to pay less for a machine that had pretty much the same cycle parts as the larger models in the range.



Yes, those rims and hubs are really 60 years old ... almost

The true charm of the Model 50, however, lies in its smooth unhurried power delivery, its ability to cruise nicely on those sunny winding A-roads at 45-50mph, a speed reckoned by many classic riders as the nicest of all. The engine's heavy flywheel gives it a comforting regular tickover, and though it may be behind Velocette's 350 MAC in the acceleration stakes, it's a darned sight easier to start, while the full width 8-inch front hub is possibly the best brake of its day. Yes, it really does work well.

Despite sharing much the same running gear as the 500cc ES2, there are some subtle differences. The most striking concerns the clutch, a three-spring unit that takes up very cleanly and compliments the one-up three-down AMC gearbox. Instead of the 500's eight plates, the Model 50 has two fewer, along with a deeper alloy pressure plate.

As for the restoration, well that, said Tony was a complete one, right down to the bearings and nuts and bolts – indeed, most of those Tony has made himself. It involved a total engine strip and rebuild, though the main bearings were still OK and useable. And really, the only components that had stood the test of time, and the British weather, were the rims and hubs. These items just needed a good clean and polish. All the chrome work, including the fuel tank was done by a local firm – who I can't really recommend here, not because they aren't good, because they are, but because they only do the occasional odd job for mates.

As for the colour scheme, Tony preferred

TAKEN FOR A RIDE

Norton's Model 50 is an entirely endearing machine. It's a featherbed Norton, dripping with history, charm and charisma, blessed with a remarkable combination of brilliant steering and handling, along with a trad single's relaxed ride and easy starting. All of the various Model 50s are great bikes, their only weakness being that they are slow, but you'll forgive that, because they embody that delightful chuff-chuff which so many of us remember from those distant days



when old bikes were simply old bikes to be ridden and enjoyed, and when we were young.

As well as the glorious frame, late Model 50s share the Dominator's brakes, excellent gearbox and ... infamously leaky pressed steel primary chaincase. It's all character, of course. the brakes make this one of the few 19650s machines which are almost over-braked – if you believe that to be possible.

Tremendous fuel economy, very low wear rates, because the engine's bottom end uses the same major components as the 500 and 600 singles, and enormous reliability await the prospective Model 50 rider. Who could ask for more?



THINKING OF BUYING

Not to be confused with the pre-war Model 50, the post-war 350 arrived for 1956 and shared many of its cycle parts with the Model 19 and ES2. AMC's in-house gearbox arrived late in that year. For 1957 the singles were substantially overhauled with a new cylinder head, integral pushrod tubes and cams with extended quietening ramps, a revised frame with Girling shocks, new front hub, and instruments mounted in the headlamp.

The versions built from 1959 are the most expensive and benefit from the famous featherbed frame with short Roadholders at the front end, alternator electrics giving decent lights, and good looks all-round, but the earlier non-featherbed machines are charming, much cheaper and have a better riding position. Gearbox ratios were changed for 1960.

The wideline frame was swapped to a slimline for 1961 with a narrower saddle and slimmer petrol tank to match. The final incarnation, designated the Model 50 Mk2, used AMC's short-stroke engine and these are particularly rare but worth little more than their predecessors (in fact Roy Bacon suggested they'd be worth more with AJS or Matchless badges!).

Definitely check the history of the machine and engine and frame numbers on any prospective purchase – many Model 50s were converted into Tritons by 1960s fast lads, and then get cobbled back into something like standard in the classic era. The result is still a pleasant machine to ride but it's not worth as much as an all-original example.

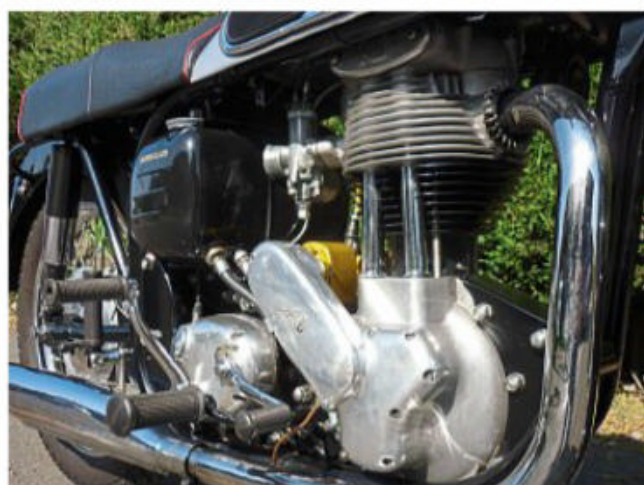
The ES2 was manufactured for far longer and in much larger numbers than its smaller sibling, so you'll have greater choice of 500s than 350s. A Model 50 can cost half as much as a particularly pretty ES2, however.



► **THIS 1960 EDITION** has been owned by the seller since 1973, and was restored back in the late 1980s. It's covered around 50,000 miles and has been parked under cover but outside in recent years. Engine and frame numbers match but all the docs have been lost so it would need considerable recommissioning and paper-chasing. Attracted several eBay bids up to £3450 in January

► OFFERED AT AUCTION

last autumn, this is fully-restored 1960 bike has kept its original registration number and recently had more than £6000 spent on it. That encouraged the auction house to give it a high estimate and reserve, and we're not surprised that no one paid £8000 (!) for it, even with new rims, stainless spokes and new tyres. About 100% over-priced, we reckon



A thumpingly good, but quiet, exhaust system and robust four-speed AMC gearbox are all part of the Model 50's charm

the silver and black in contrast to the more regular Forest Green which was popular in the day. Tony thoroughly enjoys taking the 50 out for a spin as it is very user friendly, and like most of the big singles of its era, it has a valve lifter, but its modest compression ratio means that that is hardly ever needed. A casual kick does the business every time, and the engine settles quickly into its hypnotic rhythm. But that's just what you would expect from a long stroke, heavy flywheeled machine, and it's a real treat and contrast if you regularly go out on a high revving Japanese jet mobile.

The seat was covered by RK Leighton of

Birmingham. Today, Andrew Leighton is the Managing Director of Leightons, a small family business that has been specialising in motorcycle seat restoration for over fifty years. Andrew's father Roger started the company back in the 1950s, and since that time thousands of classic seats have been made by father and son – and assistants of course. From AJS jumpots to Honda 90s, the company can provide a quality DIY kit that includes the correct foam foundation, to embossed vinyl coverings. Or, if you prefer, and have the funds, they will do the whole job for you.

I went to watch Andrew one afternoon as he worked on several seats at a time. Once a cover has been finished, it has to be stretched over the foam and glued into place – with a contact adhesive, so once you have committed yourself to the fixing process, you can't go back.

The adhesive therefore is brushed onto the seat pan and the edge of the cover, then both are put to one side in order to let the glue go off for about 20 minutes. In the old days, Andrew informs me, the vinyl was of a much tougher type, with less give in the material, also the covers were often held on by metal clips, but now contact adhesive is used on

most productions.

It quickly became apparent that every seat is different in dimensions, upper cover pattern and on some bikes like BSAs and Nortons, the authentic golden embossed logos need to be correctly positioned. Over on the opposite work desk to Andrew I meet Usha, who after working in the car trade many decades ago has been cutting and stitching covers for ►



Flat Norton bars, with the choke on the right and ignition advance on the left. Lucas PRS8 switch and Smiths speedo share space in the headlamp shell



Featherbed Nortons have a long and proud reputation for handling. The 350's acceleration is just a tad staid, some say

Leighton's motorcycle seats for some thirty-two years. I watched her nimble fingers putting the finishing touches to the Norton seat.

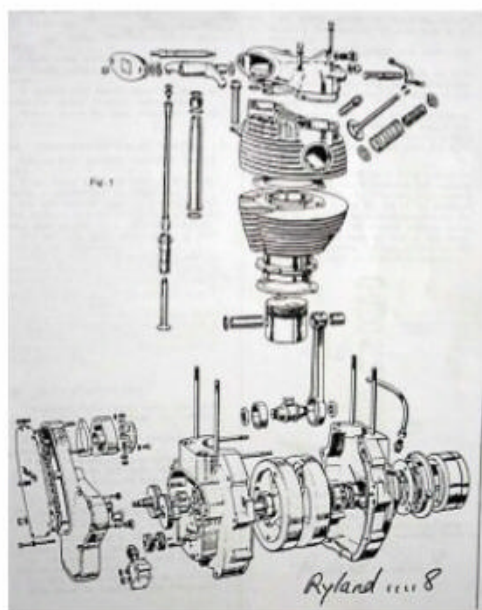
EVOLUTION

Norton built their first OHV single in 1922, entering it in the TT where it didn't do very well. But they'd got that all sorted by 1924 when Alec Bennet won convincingly. The 350cc model actually started production in 1928, but didn't get its Model 50 moniker until 1933, when it came with a four-speed gearbox. The 1956 post-war model was actually a version of the larger ES2, having an alloy head from the start, and featured a wire-wound piston designed to run at closer tolerances and with reduced noise, supposedly. 1957 brought some small changes – a deeper chainguard, more generously finned head with cast-in push rod tunnels, a slimmer silencer and chrome tank panels. For 1958 Forest Green was the colour of the year, while the price was rather large, comparatively speaking, at £236, 8 shillings. The big change for 1959 was the excellent duplex featherbed frame, and 1961 saw the slimline frame replacing the earlier wideline. Then in 1963 the Norton singles were dropped from the range but were reintroduced a year later, actually completely different: matchless singles badged up as Nortons. They didn't sell well. Tony's is one of the 1959 models.

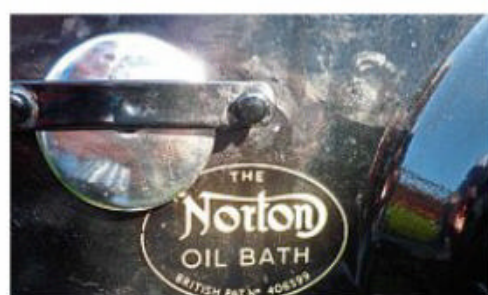
As for the handling of the Norton Model 50, you don't need me to restate that the featherbed frame was the best thing since sliced bread. It's still a fact that riding a duplex-framed Norton will see you unintentionally cornering faster than when aboard other similar-aged machines. Indeed there is a generally unnoticed mismatch between the Model 50's cycle parts and its engine. Generally a frame and engine come to the end of their natural life at pretty much the same time.

In this instance the frame and running parts were far superior to the engine. It was a ride to work engine, with a race-going bike – odd, really.

So, was it the Norton company's sweetest single? Possibly. Probably... **Rc**

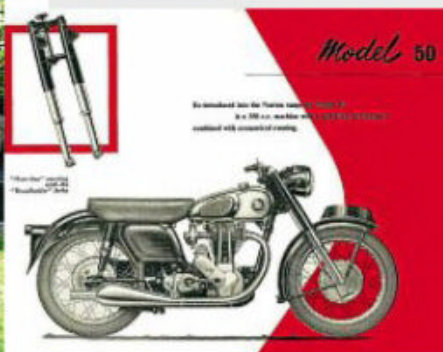


Norton's ohv single is a comparatively easy engine to work on if you're looking for a first serious restoration



Norton were proud of their oil bath chaincase – even though keeping the oil inside can be a challenge

WHAT THE PAPERS SAID



1956

reach its top speed and about 20 seconds to cover a standing quarter mile. Its braking was brilliant, stopping from 30mph in just 26ft at a time when 30ft was considered exemplary...

► FEATHERBED SINGLES

offer impeccable handling without too much of the hard ride of the earlier models. All the singles tend to have hard rather than soft suspension, but they hold their line well.

Roy Bacon, 1991

► **THE MODEL 50** is a gentlemanly mount which combines the docility, reliability and economy of a ride-to-work machine with a standard of handling seldom found in this category. *Motor Cycling, 1959*

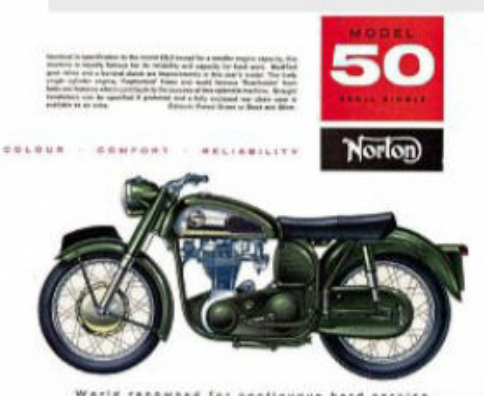
► **THE MODEL 50** is the most over-specified machine of all time in terms of brakes and handling. It could even have a 21s backplate installed, but nothing much can be done to improve its slow acceleration which is due to the weight it has to pull along. *Roy Bacon, 1991*



1959

► VALVE ADJUSTMENT

is hardly a chore with accessibility this good; there is no need to remove the tank. Equally, enclosure of the final drive chain extends its life while the design leaves the brake and chain tension adjusters fully exposed for easy manipulation. *Motor Cycling, 1959*

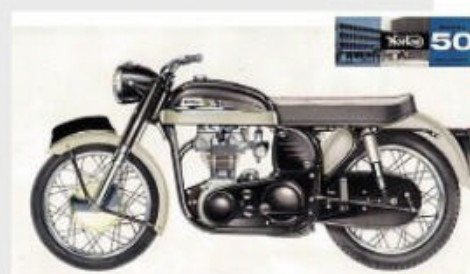


1960

► **THE ES2 WAS NOT** the most exciting motorcycle of its time and the Model 50 was further handicapped by having 20% less power to haul around just as much weight. *Derek Magrath, 1991*

► **NORTON'S SINGLES** are not really about flashing acceleration and high speed. The heavy flywheels, relatively small carburettor and mild cam timings all worked together to produce low-down torque and pulling power. *Roy Bacon, 1991*

► **THE HEAVY FLYWHEELS** of the long-stroke motor demanded time to build up momentum but this was largely offset by the ease and speed of changes with the AMC gearbox. No aptitude at all was required to bring about a quiet change. *Motor Cycling, 1959*



1961

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COMMANDO
ARE STILL BEING MANUFACTURED

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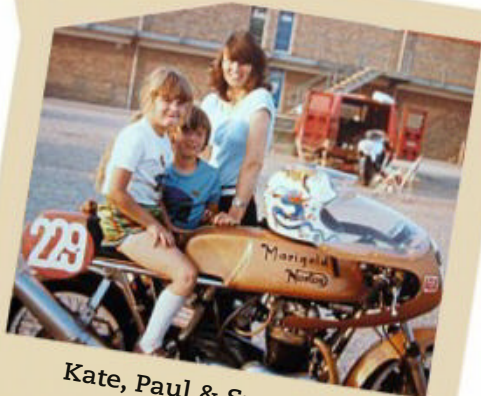
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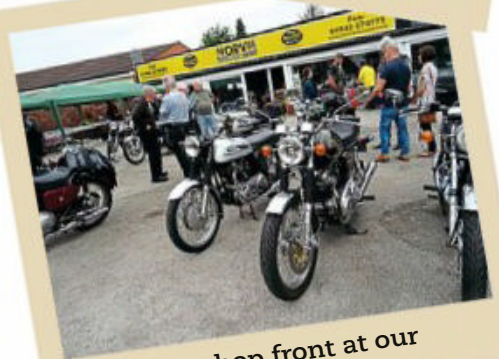
Les Emery in the 1980's



Kate, Paul & Sue Emery in the 1980's



Sue, Mike, Les, Kate & Paul 2016



Our shop front at our 2019 open day



Kate & Mike's son - Kanan - the next generation

NUMBER	DESCRIPTION	BIKE	RRP	SALE
D12/377RC				
067921ARC	BARREL - CYLINDER - 600 & 650 - ALLOY - LINERS WITH FIXINGS	- D - -	1400.00	1250.00
061705ARC	BARREL - CYLINDER - 750CC - ALLOY - LINERED - WITH FIXING KIT	C D - -	1400.00	1250.00
C3/713RC	CONNECTION - RUBBER - OIL RETURN & ROCKER FEED - OHV SINGLES	- - - S	13.80	10.00
0331168RC	EXHAUST PIPES - SWEEP BACK - 500SS, 650SS & ATLAS	- D - -	89.25	83.00
C2/63RC	GUIDE - TAPPET - 16H & BIG 4 - 1947 TO 1955	- - - S	52.00	44.00
19800RC	GUIDE - TAPPET - ES2, 19, 50 - 1957 TO 1963	- - - S	52.00	47.00
D12/513RC	HANGER - FOOTREST - RIGHT HAND - FRONT - LESS PEG	- D - S	45.66	33.00
010150RC	HEADLAMP ASSEMBLY WITH AMMETER & SWITCH ON BEZEL	- D - S	60.00	55.00
069385RC	HOLDER - CLOCK - LONG - POLISHED - GENUINE	C - - -	39.00	36.00
TRI-0005BERC	KIT - IGNITION - ELECTRONIC - TRI-SPARK - COMMANDO + A65	C - - -	160.00	150.00
TRI-0005BARC	KIT - IGNITION - ELECTRONIC - TRI-SPARK - TRIUMPH T120+T140	TRI	160.00	155.00
D12/377RC	LEVER - CLUTCH OPERATING - LAYDOWN GEARBOX - GEN NORTON	- D - S	46.00	42.00
109343RC	NUMBER PLATE - REAR - ENCLOSED TYPE	- D - S	41.98	30.00
060345SSRC	NUT - FORK TOP - POST 1968 - LONG TYPE - EACH - ALL COMMANDO	C - - -	12.80	9.00
060000RC	PLATE - BRAKE - TWIN LEADING SHOE - AIR SCOOP - BARE	C - - -	208.25	170.00
067773SSRC	PLATES - ENGINE REAR - PAIR S/STEEL - 88,99, 650, 750 - F/BED	- D - -	155.00	125.00
9163932RC	SCREW & LOCKNUT - ROCKER ADJ - 9/32" - ALL OHV - PRE-1946	- - - S	15.00	8.00
067672ASSRC	SET - CENTRE STAND BOLTS & NUTS - FEATHERBED - SET OF 2 + 2	- D - S	22.24	20.00
B4/675ARC	SET - COVERS - PLUNGER REAR SUSPENSION - BURNTWOOD MADE	- D - S	57.00	50.00
NR208SSRC	SET - PLATES - ENG - COMMANDO INTO F/BED LEANING - SET 4 - SS	C D - -	216.00	175.00
9698RC	SHAFT - KICKSTART - C/W INNER BUSH - PRE 1946 - 5 1/4" LONG	- - - S	135.00	110.00
A2/353RC	SHAFT - KICKSTART - UPRIGHT/DOLLS HEAD/WITH BUSH - 4 7/8"	- D - S	135.00	115.00
B4/169RC	SILENCER - ES2, 30, 40 - PLUNGER MODELS ONLY - BRITISH	- - - S	79.50	75.00
3831RC	SPACER - FOR L/H CHAINCASE & L/H FOOTREST - 1939 to 1945	- - - S	34.50	29.00
031520ARC	TOOL BOX - WITH LID - ALL G15 MODELS - SELF COLOUR	- D - -	200.00	175.00

C = Commando, D = Dominator & Altas, L = Lightweight Twin, S = Single



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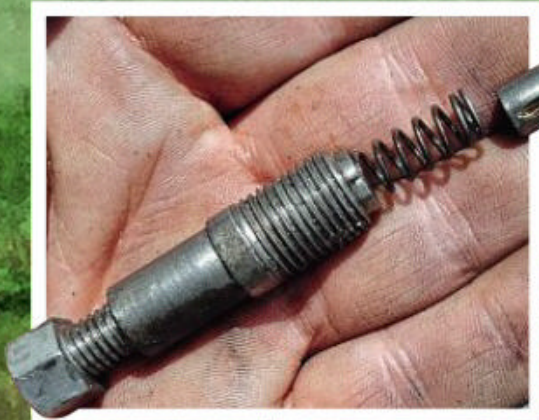
SIX DAYS IN WALES



Oily Boot Bob and his courageous companions are re-tracing the route of the 1949 ISDT on an array of Royal Enfields. One machine has already retired – will the others all reach the finish line?

*Photos by Oily Boot Bob and
Mortons Archive*





The culprit, an escaping detent plunger. Fixed by the roadside



A jammed gearbox on one of the Constellations called for major maintenance

Back in 1949 some 240 competitors rode around 250 miles each day across the loosely surfaced and rough roads of Wales in the ISDT. Last year, half a dozen Enfield owners followed in their wheel-tracks...

A very experienced motorcyclist on the more orderly roads of the Netherlands, Inge was still quite new

to her Bullet. She was un-learning the binary gear-changing action of modern bikes to slowly coerce the Albion pinions into useful partnerships. Inge's glossy 2003 Bullet was rebuilt by Klaus, a friend in Germany, whose business apparently makes Indian Bullets autobahn-friendly. He built the sporty stainless exhaust system and gas flowed the head himself, to match the new valves, forged piston and 28mm Wassell concentric carburettor. The roller big end which replaced the

regular floating plain bush is served by lubrication modifications which remain unmapped and undisturbed territory to date, yet evident from the strange external plumbing. And it goes very well indeed.

Inge herself is no stranger to adventure. She casually mentioned – when we were gathered around the gas cooker one evening – that she cycled from the Arctic Circle to Cape Town on her own, which put quirky gearboxes and twisty Cambrian roads into a new kind of perspective. And talking of Albion gearboxes – something that no Royal Enfield story is complete without – we experienced our second breakdown of the re-trial...

To the south of Llangollen there are ➤



some very steep lanes which punish any poor gear changing, and Kelvin's gearbox on the Constellation was not behaving well. His complaints about stiff gearchanges weren't taken seriously until he was left behind, fiddling at the roadside, unable to move bike or gear lever. Peter's mighty tool bag swung into action, gear oil was drained into someone else's tool tin and the right-hand gearbox casing was removed, all within twenty minutes.

Up to his elbows in oil, Peter presented to the four supervisors the offending component, while Kelvin whispered quietly that the gearbox had not been touched during the machine's recent rebuild. There may be a moral there somewhere.

Inspired by a test ride on Vince's tidy and very original Constellation, Kelvin, our youngest and most recent convert from modern two-wheeled missiles to classic bikes, set out in the search for one of his own, which soon led him to a rough but complete bike of

Most of the distance was covered on tarmac, but old green lanes offered occasional alternative routes. Inge takes gate duties this time



The RE-Triallers endured such stunning weather that they were hard pressed to find any shade to park the bikes during a picnic lunch. In Wales!

Far Left: Bob's Bridge must be around here somewhere, muses Bob himself, possibly missing the point



Peter's 1995 Bullet appears to be decaying slightly faster than the old building it's posed in front of

unknown provenance, it having spent many years in a dusty dormant state. The presence of sparks and a free turning engine in a rolling chassis were too inviting for Kelvin, who soon had it running with seemingly no problems for several months, until the engine came to a rather harsh full stop.

The disaster, the rebuild and further rebuild could easily fill another article, the central theme being one very unusual crankshaft discovered when Vince helped Kelvin split the crankcases. Both sludge trap end caps were missing, prohibiting any normal oil feed to the big ends, which were further restricted by just one oil hole apiece. Surprisingly, if the radius on the drive side big-end had been ground correctly, it may not have broken; the factory reject could still be turning, kept alive by the very random splash-feed.

Back at the roadside with two hours of

daylight left, we had to work fast to fix the jammed gearbox. Like Triumph and BSA gearboxes, the Albion unit uses a spring-loaded plunger which indexes on cut-outs in the cam plate at gear engagement. The finger-tight plunger holder had almost completely unscrewed from the gearbox cover, allowing an insecure plunger to jam sideways, preventing the cam or any pinions from shifting.

Improvising with the tools available, the plunger holder was centre punched to create a new retaining dimple, taking care that the plunger could retract freely against the spring, but not pop out of the end again.

The Albion gearbox is undeniably crude, but its simplicity does make for easy maintenance, exemplified on this day by doing a roadside rebuild and being home in time for supper – home being the campsite.

But this wouldn't have been permitted in the ISDT. All major parts including cylinder heads, crankcases and gearboxes were marked with special paint in a way that would show up any illegal disturbance, a fundamental law of the reliability trial.

By midweek on our ride, the almost Mediterranean temperatures had returned while we upped sticks and decamped to our second HQ, searching out some wild trails near Bala lake on the way south. Threading the front wheel of an aging road bike – shod with smooth road rubber – between the grass and gravel of green lanes requires a certain amount of concentration, heightened all the more by the burden of camping luggage, but it was fun and no one fell off. Our six-man caravan formed into a slick relay team, each taking a turn to open and close gates across the shimmering green countryside.

Green lanes are ancient unclassified roads which missed out on numbering and hard surfacing at the beginning of the last century. Although most are rough tracks, they were, until recent legislation, still open to all forms of transport, which sometimes caused conflict between the various interest groups, so you need to be sure before you set forth.

By early afternoon we were looking out for a shady spot to ➤



Above and Below: Inge and her modified Bullet travelled from the Netherlands to participate in the 2019 ISDT RE-Trial



have our picnic lunch. How often does a motorcyclist need to shelter from the midday sun in Wales?

Our second camp site near Llandovery was better than the first in every respect, except for the clouds of hungry midges. How can a fly no bigger than a full stop draw blood? They must have very high-tech cutting tools.

The next day dawned sunny and warm once more, perfect for a dip in a cool mountain river. The Abergwesyn water splash seems to have featured in most Welsh trials, and we weren't going to miss a chance to wet the wheels in the river Irfon. Peter, undeterred by an enormous gravel heap deposited on the bank at the crossing place, demonstrated the tricky business of maintaining momentum, traction and balance across the slippery river bed, where some 220 riders had done the same in the 1949 trial. A stone-built bridge now stands in the place of the wooden one in the photograph of an otherwise unchanged landscape.

Apparently, 'several British riders went like the wind between the water splash and the home check. As soon as they arrived they set about changing their engine oils and, in some cases, fitting new tyres.' The latter act was to save part-worn and 'nicely rubbed down' tyres for the next challenge...

A speed trial was always held on day six of the ISDT, lapping around an improvised circuit against the clock. Seventy years ago, a portion of the narrow roads through the Sennybridge army range provided a five and a half mile triangular route known

Below: The RE-Trial team about to enter the army range at Eppynt, where the final high-speed test of the 1949 trial took place. 'Eppynt's roughly surfaced, approximately triangular 5.2-mile circuit glimmered as it lay surrounded by the beautifully tinted Brecon mountains,' reported The Motor Cycle



The Abergwesyn water splash featured in most Welsh trials and the 2019 RE-Trial team couldn't resist the temptation to wet their wheels in the river Irfon.



'It was interesting to watch the tactics (perhaps antics would be a better word) used by competitors to cross the splashes,' said The Motor Cycle in 1949



'Some went through unconcernedly, each deliberately giving a steadying dab. Some of the foreign riders rushed through obviously with the idea that momentum was needed to get them safely across

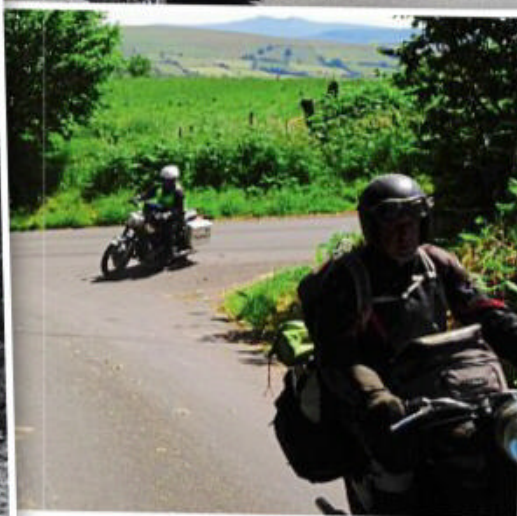


'FH Whittle on a 600 Panther sidecar came through with a very definite lean-in on the outfit. It was later learned that his chassis had broken...'



Just 15 minutes for maintenance were permitted on each morning of the trial: the 2019 team may have taken slightly longer in their parc fermé. Back in 1949, Olga Kevelos had to fit a new primary chain to her Norton 500 and ran out of time to complete the task. Undaunted, she fired up the bike, rode it over the start line, finished the work and then rode like a demon to make the first checkpoint on time. She went on to win a gold medal





In 1949, Charlie Rogers (on an Enfield Bullet no less) and JB Evans entered the roman road section... followed seventy years later by the RE-Trial riders

as Myndd Eppynt. Riders were required to complete a scheduled number of laps determined by the capacity of their engine, gaining bonus points for any laps exceeded, which was well demonstrated by the Czechoslovak team mounted on 150cc CZ 2-strokes, holding their own against the traditional 500cc machines.

Unless the gates are closed for army exercises, the Ministry of Defence roads are open to public traffic across the wild plateau, whose altitude provides spectacular uninterrupted views in all

directions on a clear day. If it weren't for the unfenced and unpredictable sheep dotted all around, it would have been very tempting to open the throttle and get down some enthusiastic ISDT-style riding on those well surfaced, ribbon-like army roads.

A much older military road was the high point of our final day. Some 440 metres above sea level, the remaining length of the Roman road connecting Brecon to Llandovery posed our final challenge. The silver Cornish Connies had departed earlier, leaving four of us to set off along a very

straight narrow lane, knowing that the tarmac would soon give way to rough track, which occurred just beyond the signpost indicating halfway, where I couldn't help whistling a Billy Fury tune.

The *No Through Road* sign presented an irresistible invitation to the Bulleteers to continue bouncing up the track and out of sight. At this point the rocks of the rocky track had become the size of bricks, perfect for breaking the spokes of a heavy motorcycle, so Mike and I turned our 700 twins around to take the easy route along the A40 to Trecastle instead. The eastern end of the Roman road provided a more forgiving surface up to the highest point with beautiful scenery where we all said our goodbyes.

The photos on these pages may give the impression that our aim was to punish our pride and joy on the rough trails of Wales, but this couldn't be further from the truth. No classic bikes were harmed in the making of this adventure. Probably less than 5% of our six days was spent 'off-road', but these experiences were more memorable and made more interesting photographs than most of the road riding. ➤

All four 700cc twins were in normal road trim, yet were as capable as most road bikes of riding on gentle green lanes in dry weather, once you get the hang of steering on a loose surface with a bit less air in the tyres. Deeply rutted or rocky tracks are a very different story and best avoided with a 420lb steed like my Super Meteor, yet still manageable for short distances if you take your weight on the footrests instead of the saddle, which itself is tiring on the legs with the forward mounted footrests on 1950s British bikes.

The two rubber cush drives – one in the wheel and one in the clutch – certainly help to protect the 1930s gearbox from unavoidable snatching power delivery on the rough stuff, creating a short delay between engine and rear wheel response like winding and releasing a rubber band; it's something you get used to on large Royal Enfields.

But above all, concentration on the 'road' ahead is probably the most important requirement, giving yourself time to choose the best way for the front wheel to lead you and the bike following behind. A relaxed moment on unfamiliar terrain could find your wheel taken away from you by a tractor rut, with disastrous results.

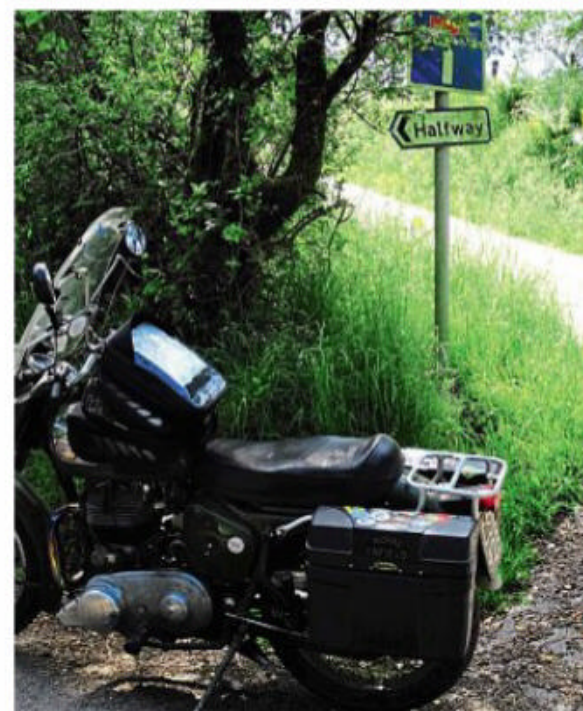
The 1949 routes chosen by CW Stagg, Major A Lewis-Jones MC and AR Lowary provided a most interesting and sometimes challenging basis for a two-wheeled tour of unchanged Wales. We covered less than half of the original roads, leaving plenty of scope for a return trip in future... if only we can book the same weather again! **Rc**



There's a moment when you're riding a big touring twin that discretion quite rightly overcomes valour, and turning around seems the lesser of two evils...



The victorious British team in 1949



Halfway indeed, on a Roman road, probably in between two places...



Wheely tricky work

Wheel building is one of those painstaking tasks which rewards precision, patience and plenty of practice. You need to know your old wheel's offset, the length and number of spokes required and the right size of rim. The hub and rim can be refurbished or individually replaced. Spoke holes have to be exactly aligned to make sure the rim and hub remain true, and the spokes can then be laced to the hub – with each spoke in the right place to suit the wheel's pattern.

Then the spokes are secured to the rim with nipples – making sure, of course, that the rim is the right way around! Spokes must be adjusted to the correct tension to ensure that the wheel runs smooth, and all the spoke ends must be ground down to avoid punctures.

All that is far from straightforward if you start with a rusty set of wheels that have seen better days. Get it right and it's a rewarding task, a job well done. But if you'd rather stick to more straightforward spannering, there are plenty of experts on hand to help...



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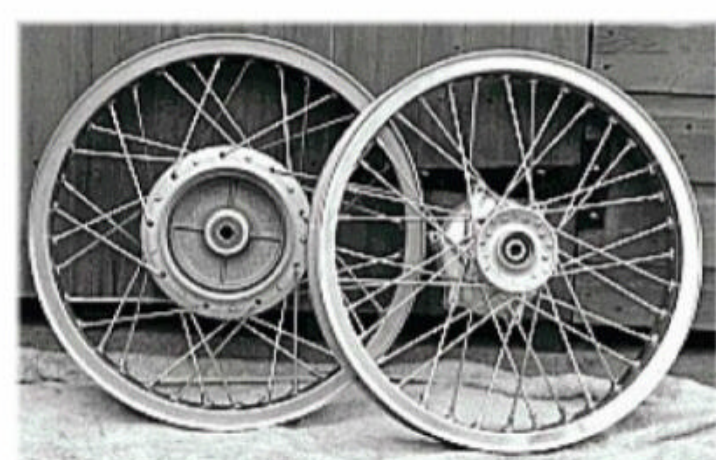
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MARCH 1ST

► There's a Normous Newark **AUTOJUMBLE** at Newark Showground, Winthorpe, NG24 2NY. Mixed bike, car and all things auto. Free parking. Classic vehicle display. Opens 10am (or premium pass from 8am). Display your classic for a £2 discount on the entry fee of £7. 01507 529593 / newarkautojumble.co.uk

MARCH 8TH

► The Cambs **CLASSIC BIKE MEET** assembles at the Jolly Sailor pub at Ramsey, PE26 1HH from 11am. Bikes and riders of all ages welcome. Dedicated bike parking at the front of the pub.

► The **MOCHDRE AUTOJUMBLE** opens 9am to 1pm at Mochdre Village Hall, Colwyn Bay, LL28 5BE. Motorcycle parts and b

MARCH 14TH

► There's an **OPEN DAY** at Warco from 9am to 1pm, selling ex-demo machines and tooling at knock-down prices, plus discounts on new lathes, milling machines and such. At Fisher Lane, Chiddingfold, GU8 4TD. 01428 682929 / warco.co.uk

► The marvellous VMCC Somerset **AUTOJUMBLE** returns to the Bath and West Showground at Shepton Mallet. Doors open 9.30am to 3.30pm. Hundreds of stalls selling genuine old bike bits, usually plenty of part-built and running classic motorcycles, too. Good refreshments, very friendly atmosphere, plenty of machines to admire in the bike park too. The RC Roadshow will be absent but you might see Frank wandering around if he can grab time for a ride! Admission just £3. vmccsomerset.co.uk/autojumble/

MARCH 15TH

► The Haynes **BIKERS' BREAKFAST RIDE-IN** meets from 9am at Café 750, next to the Motor Museum itself at Sparkford, Yeovil, BA22 7LH. All marques and ages of machine welcome. himm.co.uk

► This date was originally announced for the **WISTANSTOW SHOW** but the event will now be run every other year: the next show date is now 21 March 2021.

MARCH 21ST

► The **GREAT NORTH JUMBLE** starts 7am at the North Yorkshire Events Centre at Scorton, DL10 6EJ. Admission £3, huge jumble site with indoor and outdoor stalls. Pitches from £12. On-site refreshments. 07909 904705

► There's an **AUTOJUMBLE** at Dunkirk village hall, near Faversham, ME13 9LF, from 10am to 2pm. Organised by local clubs.

MARCH 22ND

► The Sunbeam MCC host the **PIONEER RUN**, the premier event for pre-1915 motorcycles and three-wheelers. Leaves Epsom at 8am, and arrives at Brighton City Airport, Shoreham some time after 10am. Spectators always welcome. sunbeam-mcc.co.uk

MARCH 28TH

► There's a **BOOK LAUNCH** for the newly-updated Velocette bible by Ivan Rhodes at the National Motorcycle Museum from 11am. The author will be signing copies of 'Velocette: Passion of a Lifetime', and all Velocette owners are invited to join an impromptu Velocette show to celebrate publication. thenmm.co.uk

► The National Motorcycle Museum hosts its **TRY A CLASSIC BIKE DAY** at Bickenhill, B92 0EJ.

Members of the NMM Friends' scheme can ride machines from the museum's collection for several 'laps' around closed roads. Training provided for hand-change bikes. AM or PM session costs £15 on top of annual Friends subscription and includes fuel and insurance. Prebook only via thenmm.co.uk / 01675 444123

MARCH 29TH

► The **STICKNEY AUTOJUMBLE** starts at 7am at PE22 8AG. Pitches just a fiver, free parking and entry. 01205 480274

► Dave Degens is guest of honour at the South of England **CLASSIC MOTORCYCLE SHOW** at Ardingly. Five indoor halls with displays of classic bikes, club stands, autojumble and trade stalls. Free BikeMart display-to-sell area for complete motorcycles for private vendors; cheap clear-out stalls for £10 (must be pre-booked). Admission £6. Opens 10am at the South of England Showground, Ardingly, RH17 6TL. elk-promotions.co.uk

APRIL 4TH

► The National Motorcycle Museum hosts a **CLASSIC BIKE TOUR** based at the museum at Bickenhill, B92 0EJ. Members of the NMM Friends' scheme can prebook a day aboard a bike from the museum's collection, from a BSA B31 to a Brough Superior. Runs from 9am to 4pm, goes on two guided rides around rural roads. 'Hire' fees between £250 and £750, on top of the annual Friends sub, includes induction, lunch, TP insurance and fuel. Prebook only via thenmm.co.uk / 01675 444123

APRIL 5TH

► There's a Normous Newark **AUTOJUMBLE** at Newark Showground, Winthorpe, NG24 2NY. Mixed bike, car and all

things auto. Free parking. Classic vehicle display. Opens 10am (or premium pass from 8am). Display your classic for a £2 discount on the entry fee of £7. 01507 529593 / newarkautojumble.co.uk

DIARY DATES!

► The country's biggest classic bike show returns to Stafford on April 25th and 26th when the Carole Nash International **CLASSIC MOTORCYCLE SHOW** opens 9.30am at Stafford County Showground, ST18 0BD. Advance tickets £13 per day. See classicbikeshows.com

► The utterly excellent **GIANT'S RUN** returns at 10.30am on Sunday 7 June. Entries open now. Held in Dorset, it's exclusively for bikes with girder forks of any age, there's no date cut-off. 80 entries last year and over a hundred expected this time. Choice of two routes (shorter and flatter 35 miles, or a full 65 miles) on roads carefully chosen to be suitable for the machines; a slap-up lunch; an optional evening excursion on the Saturday night for folks who are staying overnight, with scope for trailers, camper vans etc at the start/finish venue. Run costs just £6, £13.50 with lunch. Prebook absolutely essential. 07774 921600 / dorsetvmcc.co.uk



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MATCHLESS 350 G3L, 1955. Good condition. New tyres fitted, indicators and stainless steel rack. Good usable bike, bad knees force sale. £3900. Jim, 07591 134791, Lancashire



TRIUMPH LEGEND, 900cc three cyl. 2000-W. Classic, low seated, great sounding bike. 40k miles, good condition for age. MoT September. Has been used frequently. £2500ono. 01933 402340, Northants



TRIUMPH BONNEVILLE T140V, 1975. Fully restored in 2001, then put into a private collection, never put on road. A1 condition, matching numbers, everything works electrically. Runs well but will need a tune up. £5950. 07901 917126, Twickenham, Middx



MATCHLESS G5 350, 1960. Great condition, lots of work done over the years including total rebuild sometime in its past. Runs as it should and no pools of oil. Only selling as I'm older than the bike and now need an electric start. £3750ovno. Bob 07815 324787, Brixham, Devon



ROYAL ENFIELD CLASSIC 500. Redditch Edition, December 2018. 1565 miles. Completely stock except for the Halcyon mirror. No issues. 11 months warranty. Lovely to ride. Big enough to make you feel comfortable but not so big that it is daunting. 07971 971162



TRIUMPH TRIDENT 750. Reluctant sale of my beautiful T160. Matching numbers, thousands spent, a truly lovely bike to ride, good chrome and stainless steel and many top quality parts. £9750. 07877 017041, East Sussex



HONDA CB400T, 1978. Not many about now. Excellent running condition, plenty of new parts. Only selling cos I need cash qwik. £1200. Gary, 07913 076801, Shipdham, Norfolk



NORTON COMMANDO R Type, 1969. Approx 400 made for export. Featured in The Classic Motor Cycle. Restored to show condition with the usual upgrades; electronic ignition, Mk3 Isolastics, etc. V5 in my name, matching numbers. £9500. Reading 0118 942 8101 or kweait@btinternet.com



I'D LIKE TO BUY my old 1947 M18 AJ5, reg JLM 470 back if possible. If it's for sale please contact mikewoodley4@aol.com



BMW K75 RT, 1992. MoT Sept 2020. Top box and panniers, BMW toolkit. New battery June 2019. Handbook and workshop manuals. £1300ovno. 01472 399867, Lincs. 24hr answerphone



TRIBSA BSA / Triumph 650, 1957. A10 frame, Triumph 6T engine, Triumph alternator primary cases, BSA gearbox. Remote oil filter, TLS front brake, siamese pipes. Recent new tyres, alternator, solid state reg/rec, ammeter, rebuilt rear wheel, rear sprocket & chain, carb, electronic ignition. V5. £6500, may take p/x 01328 700711, Norfolk



TRIUMPH BONNEVILLE T120R, 1966. Lovely old bike. Runs well, good chrome work. Needs a bit of painting and welding. New tyres, matching numbers. £6000. 07365 297414



TRIUMPH T21 3TA, 1960. Historic vehicle. MoT / tax exempt. Many new parts, mostly stainless fixings. £3750ono. 07952 931426, NE Lincolnshire



BMW R100GS, 1992. Nice classic airhead. In good original condition. White Power rear shock, panniers. Proved a good reliable bike but now hardly used. MoT and V5c. £4199. 07798 866071. Ruislip, Middx



HARLEY-DAVIDSON EL Knucklehead project, 1939. Good start to a restoration. if you really want a challenge. Engine is stamped & registered as a 39. All the components are original knucklehead parts. All parts included are what you see in picture, a motor and frame. Mikebusinez@gmail.com (+US) 208 515 2726



TRIUMPH THUNDERBIRD 900 triple. 2001 X-reg. Only 7000 miles, very good condition, MoT February 2021. £4000ono, may take px/swap classic bike. 07875 709342, Lincs

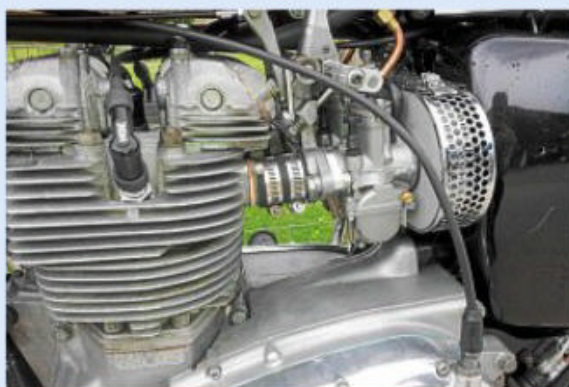
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ROYAL ENFIELD 535GT, 2014. Mikuni, Hitchcocks seat, silencer and raisers, RH gearchange conversion, easily returned to LH. Avon tyres. £3259. 07961 948279, evenings. Somerset



MOTO GUZZI LE MANS 2, 1981. One owner, unrestored, presentable, carriage-free machine. Original bodywork. Quality extras fitted. Stainless throughout. Spares, toolkit. Luggage, manuals. £8500. 07947 423998, Mid Wales



Matchless G12, 1959 650CC TWIN. Restored 2006. Still in excellent all-round condition. Original registration £4250. 01424 220772, E. Sussex

BIKES

HARLEY FLSTS, 1997.

Superb very low mileage Heritage Springer. Very original with full history, V5C and MoT. Reluctant sale. £18995. Please contact me for info and pics. peterpaulmoore@hotmail.co.uk or 07798 866071 Middx.

TRIUMPH T120C, 1963. Mint condition. 01933 355796, Northants

WANTED

SANGLAS 400/500 PARTS

and any information and specification. Fair price paid. 01507 443305 or neilcorncroft@hotmail.co.uk

BSA B25/44, TR25 etc.

Wanted fork slider for 7" TLS hub right side or both sides, mudguards, seat and wheels. Brian, 07970 000774 or brianjfielding1@gmail.com

WANTED PUCH MAXI, NSU Quickly, Cyclemasters or just parts. 07799 168224

OSSA 250cc 5-speed engine circa 1970s wanted. Any condition considered. Also Ossa 230cc frame or bike without engine or whole bike in need of restoration. Circa late 60s. Vince, 07941 545422

WANTED: AJS / Matchless Model 14 250cc flywheel / crank. Must be usable. 250 / 350cc engine at the right price! ianacott@hotmail.com or 07961 027138

BITS

MOTO GUZZI LE MANS

2 petrol tank, wants work but no dents. Collection only. £25. 01925 450096, Warrington area

BSA A65 1970. Matching crankcases with crankshaft and rods and non-complete gearbox, also various A65 engine parts and cycle parts. AJS Mod 16, various engine parts and cycle parts. Both sold as job lots, for list of parts ring Iain on 01772 611818 Lancashire



KAWASAKI GPZ900R A7, 1990. Late forks, calipers, wheels. 26K. Scottolier, luggage rack, stainless hoses. Excellent condition. Starts and runs well from cold or hot. £3400ono. Purchaser has first refusal on spares including standard top fairing, headlight, relays, etc. 07950 822939



HARLEY-DAVIDSON FLTC Tour Glide, 1985. 1340cc, Good condition. £5000. Neil, 07413 935748 Hants



NEW HUDSON flat tanker, 1927. 500cc S.V. Ride or restore £4650. Neil, 07413 935748 Hants



HONDA RS125 1991 in excellent working condition. Stored for many years so it has very low hours. An absolute beauty. Mechanically in excellent condition. Starts and runs perfectly with a crisp and sweet sounding engine. \$4100. Willcual@outlook.com



KAWASAKI GPZ 500S, 1990. 32500 miles. New MoT. V5. Many new parts. Motad stainless exhaust. Original handbook. History file. Clean tidy starter classic. £895. Callum, 01297 489578 or callbrig@gmail.com Dorset



BMW R1150RS Sports Tourer. Beautiful dark blue. 2003. 35k miles. FSH. New MoT and service. 2 keys. Large black panniers and rack. New tyres and battery. Good condition. £2399ono. Wellington, Somerset, 07767 152081



TRIUMPH THUNDERBIRD 900, 1997. 6500 miles, MoT June. Owned from new. Alarm, screen, centrestand. Genuine Triumph leather panniers and chrome mounting rails. Always serviced by Triumph dealer. Full history from new. Exceptional condition, like new. £4995. 07850 339159. Lancs



YAMAHA FZR1000 Exup 1990. Immaculate condition, 14700 miles. Extras included. £2720. Mike, 07964 266863, Scottish Borders



BMW F650 Funduro, 1996. 27k miles. Clean, well maintained bike. Recent chain & sprockets. MoT August. Top box (not fitted just now). £1450. George, 0775 401 0967 or georgegunn1953@gmail.com Edinburgh area.



76 Yamaha XT500 Enduro, 10k, runs well£4,250



55 BSA M21 600, gd old slogger£3,995



60 Matchless G12 650, nice chunky twin£4,950



61 James Sports Captain, runs well£995



75 Motobecane Moby X 49cc, V5c£995



67 R/E Interceptor Mk1A, lovely 750 twin£6,995



70 MZ ES250/2 Trophy, 8k, superb£2,995



80's CZ Mod 513, 250, ready to race/awesome£1,995



62 Norton ES2 W/Line, runs well£5,995



61 Norton Navigator 350 DeLuxe, runs well£3,395



70 Bultaco Alpina 250, ready to trial£1,495



41 Norton 16H 500, ex MoD£7,995



16 Lexmoto FMX125, 2k, as new£995



08 R/E Electra X 500, 13k, nice bike£2,395



55 Ariel NH350, low owners, v nice£3,995



57 BSA CB32 350 Gold Star, superb£14,995



74 Puch Maxi S, 49cc, runs well£595



09 Triumph Bonny 865, 1 owner, fsh£3,750



89 Kawasaki GT550, good hack£1,595



81 Moto Guzzi V35 Imola, great bike£2,995



72 BMW R75/5, great bike£5,995



60 R/E Conny 700, fast/reliable£5,250



70 R/E Bullet 350, superb£1,995



52 Trojan Mini Motor/Hercules, runs well£795

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56 Ariel VHA Special 500, great bike £3,795
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71 BSA Lightning 650, nr mint £6,595
75 Cossack Jupiter 350 project..... £595
53 Cyclomaster, fabulous..... £1,395
98 Fiat Itaca Camper Van..... £8,995
28 Ford Model A Tourer, great car £14,995
80 Honda H100, 9k, ride/restore, runs well..... £750
84 Honda CD125 light project £1,250
64 Honda CB92 Super Sports, superb £9,995
79 Honda CB250N S/Dream, goes well £1,450
80 Honda CB400N S/Dream, ride/restore £995
83 Honda CB400N S/Dream, ride/restore £995
73 Kawasaki 175 K7, like new £3,495
70 Kawasaki 175 K3 Bushwacker £3,495
16 Lexmoto FMX125 Scooter, 2k, as new £995

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55 Norton Mod 30 International, mint £19,500
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19 R/E Interceptor, as new/extras £4,995
29 Sunbeam Mod 9 500, oily rag .. £7,995
75 Suzuki GT550 Ram Air, superb £5,995
75 Triumph X75 Hurricane £23,995
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74 Triumph TR5T Adventurer..... £7,750
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94 Triumph Trophy 900, bargain... £1,995
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Photos by
Oddie Himself

PROJECT WORLD BEATER

PART
THE
FIRST

Oddie adored his old Can-Am scrambler, which someone else admired so much they stole it. Aiming to improve his performance on the flat track circuit – and maybe beat bikes and riders half his age – he begins a new project to create his ultimate Can-Am flat tracker...

I wasn't going to build another race bike. I'd told myself the A65 was the last one, and I believed it too. But then... I was doing pretty darn well on the A65, I race against guys mostly half my age or less, on modern 450 MX bikes converted to flat track. But I must be doing something right as I can run top five in most races, top three regularly, and consistently enough to come second in our championship.

But then you get to thinking. There's a reason they stopped using BSAs for flat track racing 50 years ago – newer and better bikes came along. So if I never race a more modern bike, how will I ever know how fast I can really be?

I still didn't fancy a cut-down MX bike – a flat tracker should look like a flat tracker for heaven's sake, not an explosion in a garish plastic factory. But I came across a very nice Rotax 604 single, sat in an original Cotterell Brothers frame. Top notch parts everywhere, whoever built it had spared no expense, and the price was both reasonable and, having just sold the old A65 chopper not long before, actually achievable. Crikey.

So now I was racing a modern (if you can call an engine designed in 1983 modern, but I do anyway) genuine flat track bike. I was even a little quicker on it. More to the point, now I was riding something specifically designed for the job, I learned a lot about set-

up and technique and bike control. So far so fine and dandy, and I grabbed a couple more seconds in the championships (always the blinkin' bridesmaid, eh?).

But much as I loved the Rotax, I hadn't built it. It was a great bike, and a less hands-on rider would have been more than happy with it. But, well, y'know...

Other things came into play. Regular readers will recall my first Can-Am, converted ➤



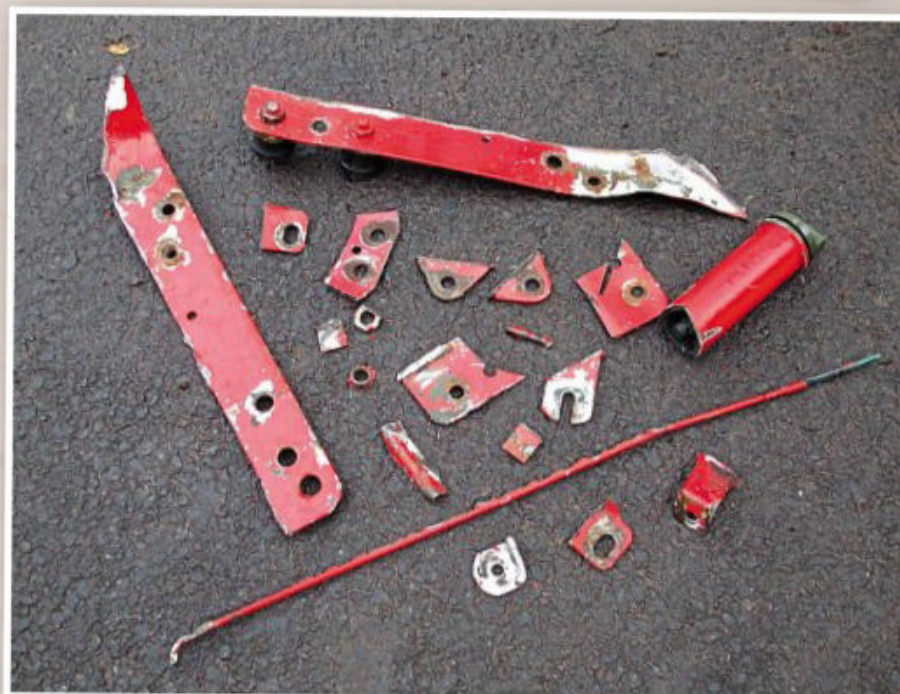
The first Can-Am donor bike...

...which became a pre-74 scrambler, before sadly being stolen

Oddie at play on his
(modern) Rotax



The starting point: one bog standard military Can-Am frame, for some reason with red Dulux covering its original Olive Drab



It's surprising just how much weight you can lose just by removing superfluous brackets. Note also the removal of the long bracing bars that carried the silencer and supported the subframe, and the elongated oil tank filler stem



Much angle-grinding and wire brushing later, it's already starting to look a little more purposeful. The hole in the top tube where the oil filler used to go behind the headstock has been filled with a welded-in plate. The outer bracing plates on the rear subframe have been cut away completely, some new outer top shock mounts will be fabricated eventually



First order of the day is a new swinging arm, to save a little weight, but mainly to give a lot more adjustability to the wheelbase. The starting point is the original swinging arm, and two lengths of solid steel round bar. Note that I've already pressed out the swinging arm bushes from the front, as they have rubber inserts which won't take too well to welding. They'll be replaced with solid steel slugs which will stop everything moving as well

from a clapped out military spec bike into a rip-roaring classic scrambler. It was a great bike – so great that someone decided they ought to own it more than me, so they nicked it. These things happen (sigh). I was philosophical about it, it was one of my race bikes, not the only transport I had to get to work and back to feed my family, so a first-world problem then really. But as time went by, I did kinda miss it.

New Plan: Build another Can-Am, this time in full flat track spec. I knew a lot more about building flat trackers than when I built the Beesa; I could incorporate all that knowledge into the build. It should be hopefully as fast as the Rotax, but I'd have built it, the singular satisfaction you get from knowing you've had your hands and mind over every fraction of a square millimetre of every single part of the entire motorcycle. Read on... **RC**



Here you can see the jig, two lengths of thick-wall box section welded together, and the two lengths of bar turned down to the correct width, bored to the spindle size, and clamped securely front and rear. That will now maintain the correct alignment of everything



This gives a better view of the jig itself, with everything being welded securely in place



There are two crucial aspects to building things in jigs. The first is to make well sure the jig is substantial enough. When you are welding metal, you have localised sources of extreme heat, things will move if you give them half a chance. And secondly, fit is everything. It's easy enough to fill holes with weld, but consider the effects of red hot metal filling a space and then shrinking as it cools... The correct way is to make sure the metal all fits together snugly to start with, then the welding is about joining things together, not bridging large gaps



At the front I've cut the pivots off the old swinging arm and left them bolted them in place. At the rear here I've bolted up the new axle plates, cut from 6mm steel, and am just making sure they're both aligned correctly



It's very easy to make simple mistakes on simple jobs. I've learned to mark things as I go along, in this case the cut marks on the box section. You might think it's impossible to make two rights or two lefts instead of one each, but it isn't (don't ask me how I know that...)



The swinging arm in the jig. The box section has been cut and welded to shape (different angle each side to allow for the chain clearance), then welded to the original pivots at the front and the new axle plates at the back. Then I cut some sheet steel to make up the large bracing area at the front, top and bottom, and then filled in the sides. Adequate bracing is a must, it all needs to be as stiff as possible when in use. I try to design the jig so I can get to every join and weld it up before taking the arm out of the jig, to minimise any pull or distortion afterwards



A couple more quick things, Can-Ams are peculiar in having an unusual system for steering head bearings. The two outer cones sit in the steering head, the two (offset) inner cones sit inside them, the needle rollers sit inside the inner cones and run directly on the steering stem, and the radial thrust bearings support the load top and bottom. Complex but effective, the offset inner cones are pegged at 180 degrees, which means you can run them both front or both rear, or one either way. It means the standard rake of 28 degrees can be altered two degrees either way. Originally when the bikes were being raced you could buy offsets from half a degree upwards, but the military models only ever had two degree inserts



And here it is! I'm quite pleased with it, the long spindle slots will allow for wheelbase changes, and the multiple shock mounts mean I can alter rear ride height fairly easily. In the end it was all nicely true when I took it out of the jig. It had sprung in slightly at the rear but I expected that, a quick tweak with the trolley jack brought it back out half an inch. Job done then!



Two nice bits of alloy bar. At one time you would have had to try to find a local supplier who could be bothered to cut you short lengths, and then probably only with paperwork and a minimum charge, or wait to hopefully find some offcuts at an autojumble. These days it's fantastically simple, find what you want on eBay, select the length and diameter, press Buy, and two days later the metal arrives on your doorstep. The modern world – it has its moments. And we'll be finding out what I'm using this for next month...

'NORMOUS NEWARK AUTOJUMBLE

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THE IBERIAN ITALIAN

Photos by John Lay

When is an MV Agusta not an MV Agusta? When it's built in Spain and badged as an MV Avello, that's when. John Lay brings a 1963 150cc four-stroke back to life...



As displayed for sale at an autojumble; the Spanish-built MV 150 which turned John's head

Sometimes you find bikes because you are looking for them, and sometimes they find you. Thus it was at the VJMC's autojumble at Popham Airfield. There it was, propped up against the vendor's van. Initially I ignored it because I thought it was a two-stroke, there seemed to be too much missing and it was going to be too much money anyway. Returning later, the vendor had produced the mudguards and a large cardboard box of bits so it was worth a better look.

It said MV on the tank but MV didn't make it. It was Spanish, made in 1960, a 150cc four-stroke called a 'Stella'. The first bit was true enough and the rest slightly less so. The bike belonged to the vendor's father who had owned it for a number of years and had clearly spent a lot of time and money, but he'd decided not to carry on. A deal was done, with the bike arriving a few days later. Then I could see exactly what I had bought – or maybe what I hadn't. Whenever you

acquire a dismantled bike it's never, never all there, no matter what the vendor tells you. Finding bits for a Spanish-built motorcycle, of a type that was never imported and sold here wasn't going to be easy. But if it's just a copy of the Italian factory model then maybe it wouldn't be so hard... That didn't turn out to be entirely true.

The previous owner explained how he had all manner of work done; engine rebuilt, frame powder coated, wheels rebuilt, seat



John's new project arrived home, complete with its Spanish numberplate. As ever, it wasn't quite as ready for the road as he'd hoped...

recovered, forks and rear shocks, new chrome, etc. All true, he even produced receipts for the work. All I had to do was finish off the paintwork and bolt it all back together. Sadly not quite so true as it turned out.

The MV wouldn't stand up very well and, when retracted, the stand rubbed on the rear wheel, despite the wheel being as far back as it would go. Clearly that would need to be fixed. Both the holes in the frame and the stand were very worn, and the whole thing was held on by a pair of bolts with the threads filed away where they passed through the frame. No wonder it was sloppy.

The fix involved boring out the holes in the stand and turning up a pair of stepped bushes. These were pressed and brazed into the stand to give an improved bearing surface for the pivot bolts. At the same time two small holes were drilled to act as oiling points. The holes in the frame were tapped to accept the pivot bolts which, once fitted, were given a thin locknut on the inner side of the frame to keep them in place. Why the PO didn't think to fix the stand properly before he had the frame powder coated I have no idea.

The MV could now stand up properly, but the stand still fouled the rear tyre. That proved to be an easy fix. Someone had fitted an oversize tyre and fitting the correct one (2.75 x 18) solved the problem. The bike

could now go onto the workbench without it falling over, and my attention turned to the rear suspension.

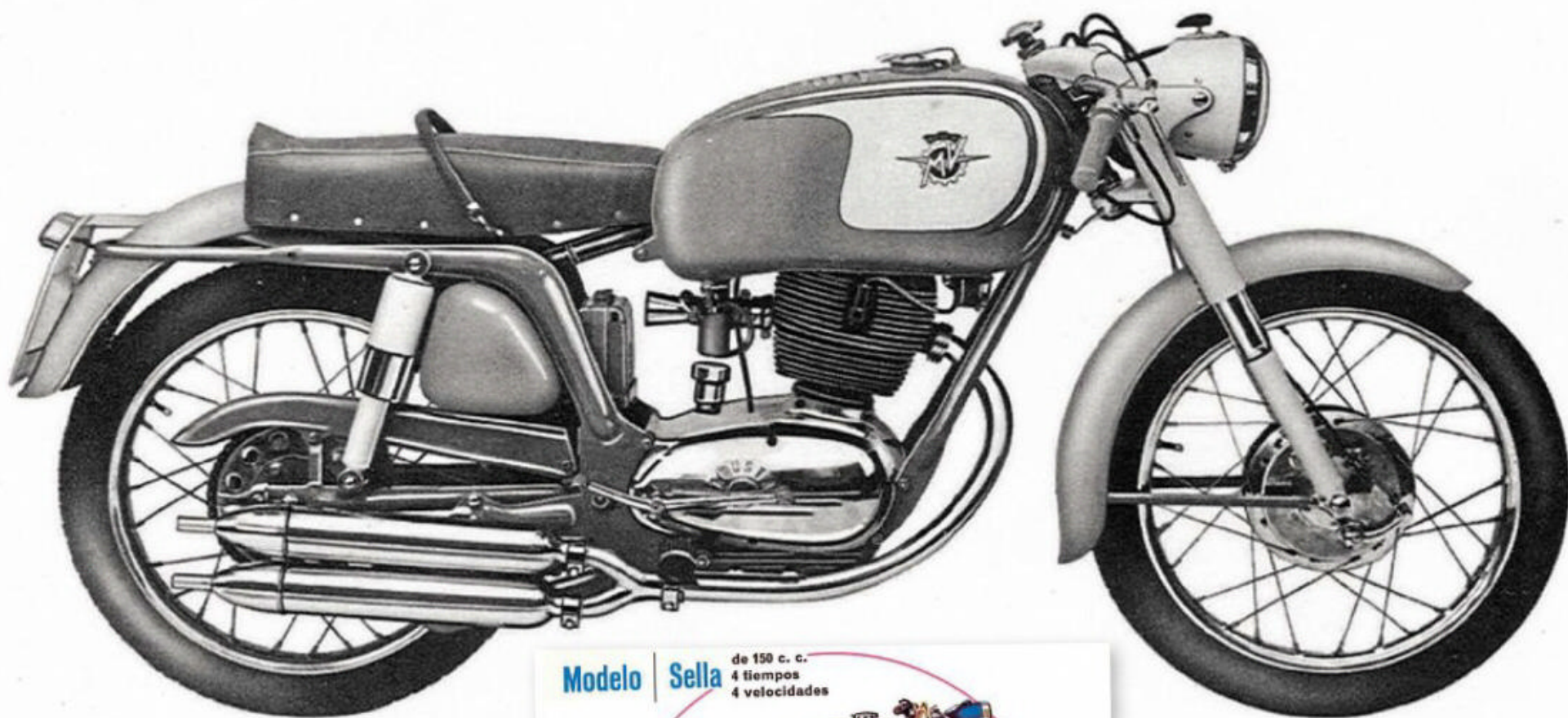
Both of the upper mounts were damaged, with the lower ones missing altogether. Of the upper mounts, the offside was too short to get the fixing nut on. On the nearside it had clearly snapped off at some time in the past and had been 'repaired' by welding on a piece of 12mm studding. All rather crude.

Fixing the missing length of thread was simple enough. It involved facing off the end of the mount, drilling and tapping 6mm, turning up a twin diameter stud, 10mm by 6mm, and screwing it into the mount. The

10mm thread doesn't carry the load, it's there to fix the outer nut that keeps the suspension unit in place.

On the opposite side, some careful work with a die-grinder and file formed the 12mm studding to the correct form. The lower mounts should have been screwed into lugs welded to the swinging arm. In fact the remains of the thread could just be seen once the powder coating was dug out of the holes. Again, why all of this hadn't been fixed before powder coating is a mystery. The fix was to drill and tap out the holes in the swinging arm brackets to 12mm, and turn up new studs, 12mm at one end, 10mm at the ➤





other. A thin locknut behind them will ensure they stay in place.

As so often with these projects, fixing one problem leads you to another you didn't know you had. Although the shocks had been overhauled, powder coated and re-chromed, they were still fitted with their original and completely worn out rubber bushes. Where to get new ones? A long internet search tracked down some on eBay in the USA. The vendor said these were genuine Italian made by the original manufacturer and gave the name of the original maker. More searching turned up a dealer in Italy who had not only got them in stock but was happy to send them to the UK. Ordered, arrived and were duly fitted.

Meanwhile the tinware, which came in grey primer, was sent off to a paint sprayer along with the tank. That had had been quite nicely restored and repainted so the sprayer was instructed to match the colour of the tank on the toolboxes, guards, etc. I made the mistake of assuming that the PO would have made sure that they all fitted – of course they didn't. Happily the sprayer supplied a small tin of extra paint, so retouching wasn't a problem.

There seemed to be rather more holes in the guards that there should have been. These were filled using the small plastic bungs of the type used by kitchen fitters, but oddly the two 10mm holes where the rear guard attaches to the frame were not visible. They'd been filled with body-filler and painted over. Once cleaned out, the guard went on quite nicely.

The front mudguard was fine, but not so its fixing. It should be fixed to the bottom fork legs using short studs, only some of which I had. Some of the holes in the alloy fork legs



Alfredo Avello built small capacity MV motorcycles in Spain between 1951 and 1977, badged as MV Avello bikes. In the 150cc category, they offered the Turismo which became the Sella GT (often listed as the 'Stella')

had stripped out and, to confuse matters even more, they were 7mm x 1mm, a rather odd size. In the end I just re-tapped them all 8mm x 1.25mm but made them from 13mm AF stainless so they looked externally the same as before.

I also replaced a missing bolt that should have been on the forks to lock the wheel spindle in place and replaced the two pinch bolts in the bottom fork yokes. These again were an odd size and somewhat rounded off. They worked OK but didn't look very good. I cheated a bit here, replacing them with $\frac{3}{8}$ UNF, which are only a few thou different and look much better.

The toolboxes were fitted with small locks which had no keys. I turned up a pair of mushroom-headed screws to do the job and they don't look too out of place.

Next, the handlebars. A new set with new levers came with the bike so I just needed to make new pivots which were turned up from stainless. The correct rubber grips were in the box of bits, but the throttle was completely



The repaired top suspension fitting, showing the newly extended thread



The lower suspension pivots

the wrong sort and incomplete. These are by all accounts very difficult to find, even in Spain. So I used the type fitted by the Italian factory – not quite right, but it looks more the part than a British one would.

A new exhaust pipe and silencer came with the bike, but the large threaded ring



Suspension bushes, the real thing, all the way from Italy

nut that holds it all onto the cylinder was of course missing. The UK MV Owners' Club said they could supply one, but it turned out that the Italian and the Spanish ones were in fact different sizes although they look identical. The Spanish developed the machines separately and used locally sourced parts. As a result, almost nothing interchanges between the two factories' models. Only one thing for it; I had to make one from scratch.

I obtained an off-cut from a stainless bar and mounted it in the outside jaws of the chuck. The centre was first bored outsize and then the thread was cut. Although cutting metric threads on an imperial lathe is possible, slight inaccuracies can build up. To counter this, an internal thread chaser was used to clean the finished thread. The outside of the sleeve was turned to a pair of ribs and four slots cut. I subsequently discovered that

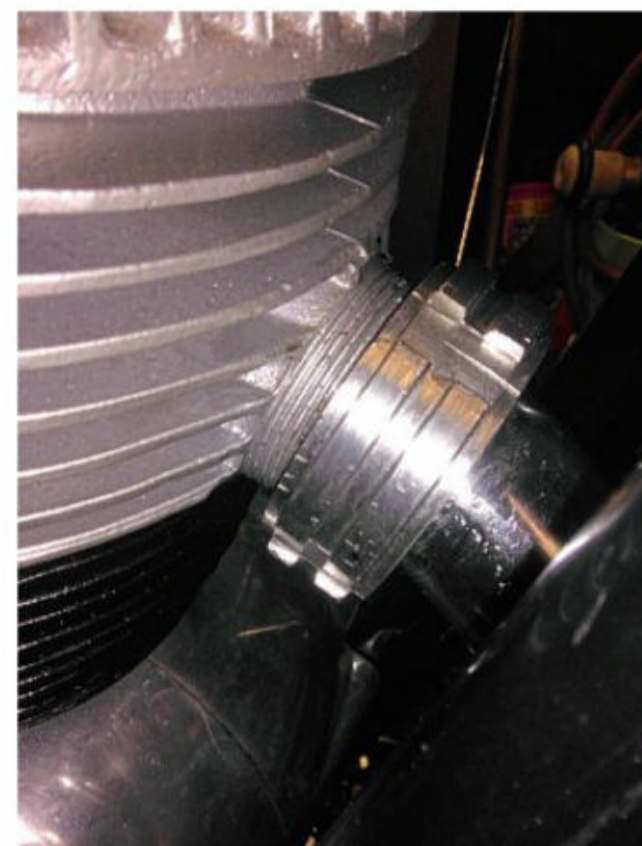
there should have been three rings, but I am not going to make another! I found a new exhaust sealing ring in the box of bits so, apart from turning a few spacers, fitting the exhaust was quite straightforward.

Some other small jobs needed attention: the engine mounting studs were too short, not quite long enough to get a washer and full nut on. New ones were made from 8mm stainless, threaded 8mm x 1mm and suitable nuts fitted. I made up new throttle, clutch and front brake cables; fixed the numberplate carrier and rear light. The footrests needed a bit of straightening out and were fitted with generic rubbers from the Kempton autojumble.

Then came the fitting of the gear change, kick starter, rear brake pedal and the front brake arms. All of them were nicely chrome plated and polished, but sadly the kick



The fork pinch bolts replacement



The new home-made exhaust ring in place



The exhaust ring being machined on John's Myford lathe



The little MV came without a chainguard, so John found some photos online and adapted a jumble find accordingly

starter and the rear brake arm were both damaged, and the brake pedal was a very strange shape. On the brake arm, the pivot where the brake rod fits was very worn. It was replaced with a new one, again turned up from stainless. The brake pedal and kick starter were heated up with a torch – this didn't do the chrome much good of course, but it mostly polished up OK afterwards. I made a new brake operating rod (the old one was too short), attached the newly painted headlight and found a suitable chainguard at a jumble. It was somewhat over-size so was cut and shut to the correct shape, using photos on the net to see how it should look. **Rc**

NEXT TIME: Onto the engine, and the electrics!



A garage full of bikes, and nothing to ride to the Bristol Show – how could that be?

Since the Triking departed from PUB's garage there should have been working space to spare – but that is never the way it works, is it? Instead a couple more bikes have somehow grown in the space (from seed?), which makes far too many, especially as PUB had vowed to reduce their number. So how was it possible that she did not have a ride for the trip down to the Bristol Classic Bike Show? Strictly, of course, she did, for the PUB Vincent would be quite willing and able. But a committee meeting the same weekend



Even before reaching the Bristol Show paybooth this pretty little BSA 250cc C11 was seen amongst the parked bikes. The weather was very good, resulting in packed motorcycle parking

could mean returning a long way in the dark, so as well as PUB's dodgy hips to worry about, there were the not-too-young eyes being less than compatible with PUB335's 6 volt lights, especially with a battery that had failed to charge the previous Sunday.

That proved to be due to a light having been left on for an indeterminate number of weeks, reducing the relatively new battery to rather less new in its performance,

and an old (ie. previously discarded) one had been temporarily refitted pending checking out the flat one. The modern Suzuki (a mere 22 years and 97,000 miles stripling) has sprung an oil leak a bit too serious to take on a longish trip until fixed, and everything else



Pre-war bikes often fitted their instruments in a panel on the petrol tank. This Ariel (the 'Sloper') makes a big feature of the panel, but is it really pretty?



Back in the day Brockhouse really did list, and supply, sidecars for the 98cc Corgis. The Corgi, as everyone knows, is the same as a wartime Welbike. Well, it is except for the frame (different and longer on the Corgi), the wheels (discs on Corgi and spoked on Welbike), handlebars (Corgi single fold, but double folds for Welbike), petrol tank (saddle tank with gravity feed to carb on the Corgi and twin pannier tanks with pressure feed for the Welbike), and the engine (Excelsior 'Spryt' for the Corgi and Villiers 'Junior' for the Welbike). Yes apart from those 'little' differences they are the same!



This Ariel features an unusual layout for the marque, and also for the penmanship of Val Page whose singles usually had a certain family resemblance

The Ariel 'Sloper' was also unusual in featuring a 4-valve cylinder head, more usually thought of as a Rudge speciality (and the Triumph 'Ricardo')

is too slow, and mostly without lights.

Slow includes the Fiery Francis Barnett, although theoretically that does have lights, but they are powered more by imagination than Villiers 'own brand' electricity. Even more annoyingly, it actually turned out to be a nice weekend for a ride, better even than the forecast, but PUB had to use transport which she is too ashamed to admit to.

Nevertheless, she did get there and also attended her meeting the following day. The weather, forecast to be a bit damp, turned out well and encouraged far more riders to attend on bikes than in recent years, including at least a few classics. Inside the show she picked up one item she needed, trotted around the stands taking a few photos which may be scattered around here somewhere, and spent far too much time talking to friends and acquaintances (whether too much of her own or their time will not be contemplated – probably both).

At the first pass by the RealClassic stand the space was far too crowded to call upon (this being Saturday), so a brief stop-by was made rather later in the day – and even then it was still a busy area. However, within a short time it was almost deserted – was it something PUB said? Frank continues to threaten to send his magneto, with the intention of soliciting a repair article, but readers should not hold their breath, for even when / if it arrives Frank is not alone taking time to get around to completing projects.

Around the stands Geoff Stray had his 1300cc Panther V-twin on show again, to keep showgoers abreast of the progress of this interesting special, which looks nearly ready to go. The card listed developments with a Yamaha ignition, Kubota alternator,



Long and low, the 'dirt track' Douglas (this being a 1928 500cc DT5) was the first king of the tracks, with riders using a leg-trailing style, before JAPs eventually changed and dominated the sport. It cost £85 and a factory tuned engine might produce 32bhp



Brough Superior were not the only make to use long, shiny and bulbous saddle tanks in the 1920s. Here is one fitted to a Matchless 495cc ohv Super Sports model of 1926. It even sports BS-type tommy bar tank filler caps! Interestingly, neither of the two shiny tanks in this photo is chromed. The Matchless pre-dates the general adoption of chrome plating, so would be nickel, whilst Phil Vincent did not like chrome, so the HRD behind has an all stainless tank



1934 model 30 New Imperial. This is a 250cc bigger brother to the more famous model 23 150cc bike, which gave good service and some of which were sleeved down for post-war 125cc racing. New Imperial adopted the more compact, and lighter, unit construction, like many continental manufacturers, whereas most of the British industry continued with separate gearboxes into the 50s and 60s

Allden exhausts, and internal engine modification for a bigger breather. A rather impressive oil distributor festooned with polished copper pipes occupies the space between the V. It clearly continues to impress the judges (who would also have seen it before) for later in the day it sported a

winner's rosette.

Another interesting special, to PUB at least, was an HRD-JAP, acquired by its current owner on impulse at an auction. The information card was more of a request for information than a source, and the owner may have been a bit overwhelmed when PUB

turned up, it being her 'speciality subject' – but he does know a bit more now.

Although Vincent-HRD did fit JAP engines from 1928-34, and raced JAP-prepared 'high camshaft' (not ohc) prototype engines in 1934 and 1935, this bike featured a later roadster high camshaft JAP whose number appeared to indicate 1938, well after that era. A few other things were not standard, but as some of those consisted of racing rather than roadster specification parts that was not necessarily undesirable. But the market demands its Vincents be matching number and standard, so the depressed price was a bargain, reckons PUB (but that is between buyer and seller).

A very shiny and attractive exhibit, which the organisers also recognised with their Best in Show award, was the early thirties Ariel Sloper. Many of Val Page's single cylinder designs carried a distinct style or family resemblance, through all of his JAP, Black Ariel and Hunters, then the Triumph pre-war singles, and latterly the BSA M and B range (including Goldies). But the Ariel Sloper was different, although possibly internally still recognisable as his handywork. For example, although usually referred to as a sloper the cylinder slopes so steeply as to almost



Geoff Stray's 1300cc Panther V-twin continues to make progress year on year. The card listed a Yamaha Virago ignition, a Kubota alternator, Allden exhausts, and internal engine changes for a bigger breather



Technically this is a 'Triton', because that frame was once a Featherbed, before the top-tube / spine / fuel tank modification was made. It is an excellent example of the once popular recipe of beefed-up Triumph engine and a Shorrock supercharger for sprinting

Close-up of the sprinter engine room illustrates the 'beefing up' that blown and tuned Triumph engines tended to need, ever since Titch Allen suggested in pre-war days that his friend Ivan Wicksteed should insert a screw jack between head and frame to help keep the top end attached to the crankcases. More recently, slightly better engineered bodeses such as these top plates and through bolts to plates sandwiched under covers were developed

approach a horizontal cylinder layout. Then again, a closer look reveals that this model also features an advanced 4-valve layout, which is not something that Ariels are usually known for (normally a Rudge feature, the other better known exception being the 1920s Triumph Ricardo).

At home, with the self-inflicted battery issue, and the oil leak to investigate, there has not been much time to spare for other garage work recently (retired PUB was even called back to her old work for a day). Whilst last month all of the most desirable Invicta jobs had been completed, there had been a little

room for more titivating before the disasters intervened.

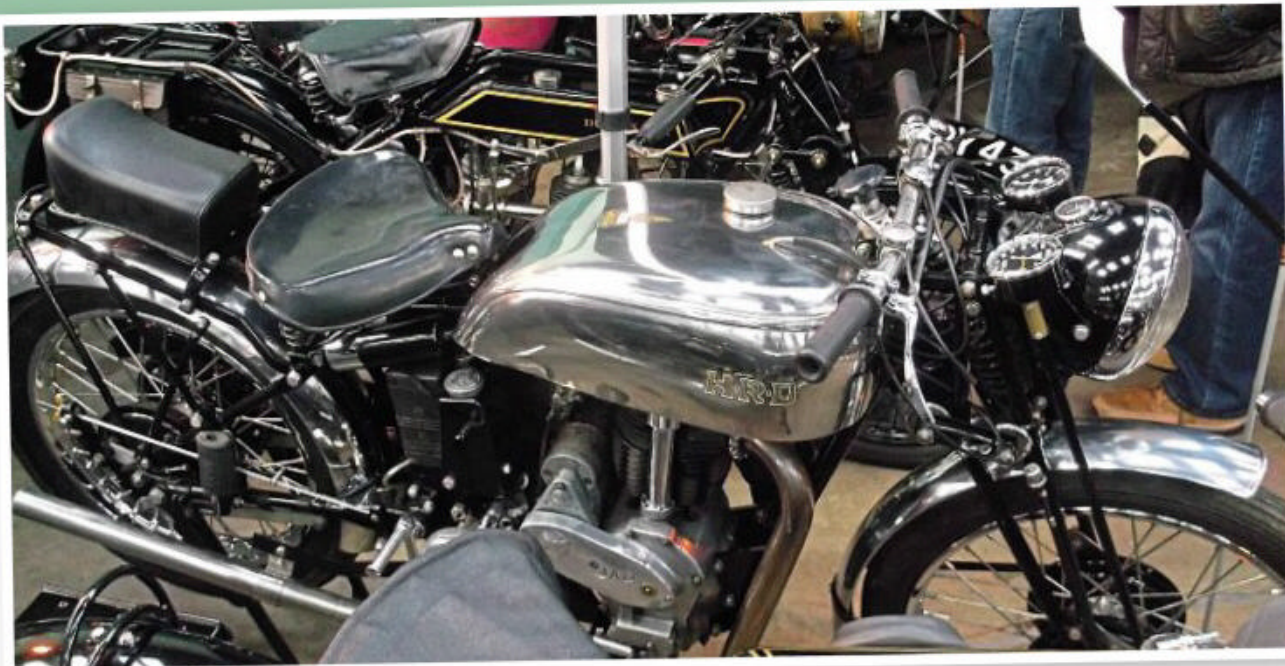
For example, there was no toolbox for carrying a few spanners, spare plug, belt link, etc.. That was put right by mounting a box (actually a biscuit tin lined with corrugated cardboard) on the carrier, with a strap to retain its lid, and painted a maroon to match the petrol tank. The bike came already fitted with a 'bobby dodger' front lamp, in the shape of an acetylene era shell with modern LED item (from a hardware shop) packed in. PO (previous owner) clipped a cycle lamp at the rear when required, but this did not come with it, so the box also has a little mount onto

which one of those lying around (or carried in the box) can be fitted.

However, the bike did come with a cast aluminium acetylene era rear lamp fitted just for looks. It is incomplete, PUB reckons, as there is no opening for lighting the burner (which remains), but instead a plastic reflector is glued in where an opening door would probably have been. No matter, as there is no intention of returning it to acetylene (or even riding at night proper, for that matter), and it usefully disguises the compulsory reflector. However, it can be useful to have something available to cope with an early dusk, or bad weather, so some fiddling around, and soldering up a few LEDs and resistors produced a little board to insert into the lamp to shine through that reflector. Those less sure of making their own can get such a little board out of the 3-LED lights commonly stocked by hardware shops.

Access to the inside was obtained through the glass side window (retained by a clip), and a white LED was even angled to shine sideways through the window to illuminate the number plate (as it should, and why little windows are found in old rear lights). It is powered from three AA/AAA batteries in the newly fitted toolbox (red LEDs can be done with only two, but a white LED needs a higher voltage, hence three). Until some test rides suggest anything else, that seems to be about all the titivating that PUB can think of.

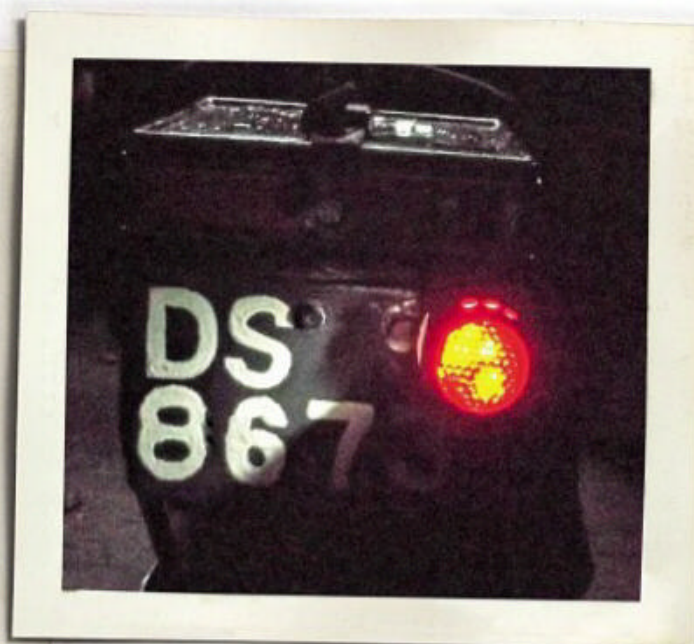
Anyway, she now has a Suzuki that still needs looking at – is there never any rest? **RC**



This Vincent-HRD is actually a special (the factory only used hi-cam JAPs in 1934 and 1935 TT machines, and had ceased using JAP when this roadster hi-cam design appeared), and has a number of other non-standard features. But as some of those include race parts, such as the stainless petrol tank, the overall build is a pretty desirable 1938-ish motorcycle. The two dials on the forks are not speedo and rev-counter, but speedometer and eight-day clock



When the Invicta arrived it had been using a clip-on bicycle rear lamp, although also fitted with this old and non-working acetylene lamp shell. Oddly there is no door through which the gas could be lit, probably replaced by the modern plastic reflector. A little bracket on the new toolbox above will allow one of her cycle lamps to be clipped on



After a bit of work with soldering iron, LEDs and a resistor or two, the dummy is now a fully working rear lamp as well as a reflector, even shining a white light on the number plate through the original plain window. The upward facing air holes have been blocked with sealant to keep the rain out



The three-wheeler brigade may wonder what happened to PUB's rather sad Triking that 'passed on' some time ago. Well, old and battered Triking's remain desirable and it has been rebuilt into a shiny new incarnation, still pretty much to the original specification (but with a reverse gear, it is thought). Here it is – possibly more may be written about the rebirth and its new home some other time...

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Ollie's ODDJOBs



Purposeful? An outrage? You decide

Meet the Iron Lady – an Ariel Square Four which is made of stern stuff...

Photos by Ruth Ackroyd

There was a time, in that brief period between the death of the British motorcycle industry and the arrival of classic motorcycle culture, when the greasy-haired British proto-motorcycle customiser would chop pretty much anything he found in a skip with an internal combustion engine. Everything from a Bantam to a Vincent was fair game for a keen chap with a fistful of fivers, a hacksaw and a desire to stand out and/or overdo things.

My own effort comprised an old BSA M20 rigid frame I found in a ditch which had the bits I stuck on it held together with some Meccano. The project foundered due to my inability to source the Ducati 450 Desmo engine I had planned. A jolly good job too, you might say, and I'd agree wholeheartedly.

There being no substitute for cubes, one bike you do see in grainy black and white pictures from the 1960s and 70s which endured being merrily hacked about is the now revered Ariel Square Four. Fifty years ago you could pick up a Square for small change. More than a few of the big Ariels ended up with 20-inch over front forks, ridiculous exhausts and massive sissy bars. There is a splendid example on display in the National Motorcycle Museum, if you can bear it. In those far off days such custom bikes got given garish metalflake paint jobs too, although they were fortunate enough to avoid being adorned with iffy airbrushed mighty dragons and inappropriately dressed pneumatic heroines. Those came later.

This bobbed Ariel Square Four might raise

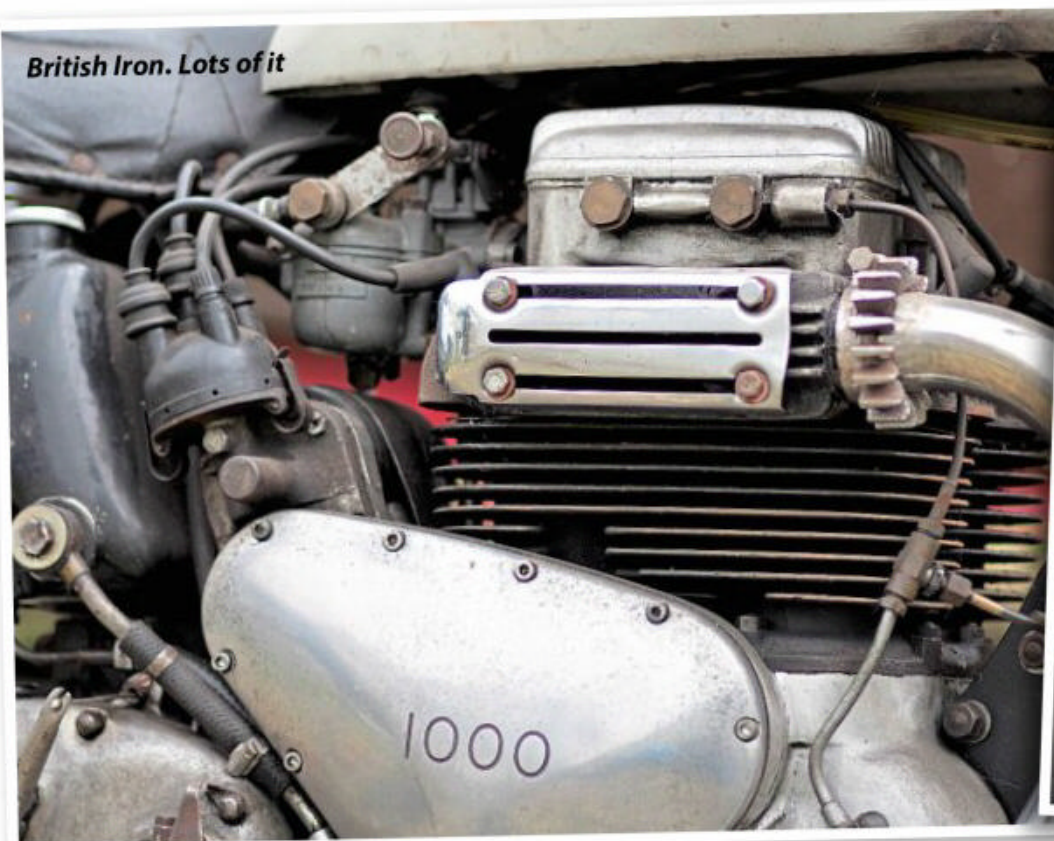


The tiny vintage(ish) rear light is de rigueur on yer akshull bobber, you know

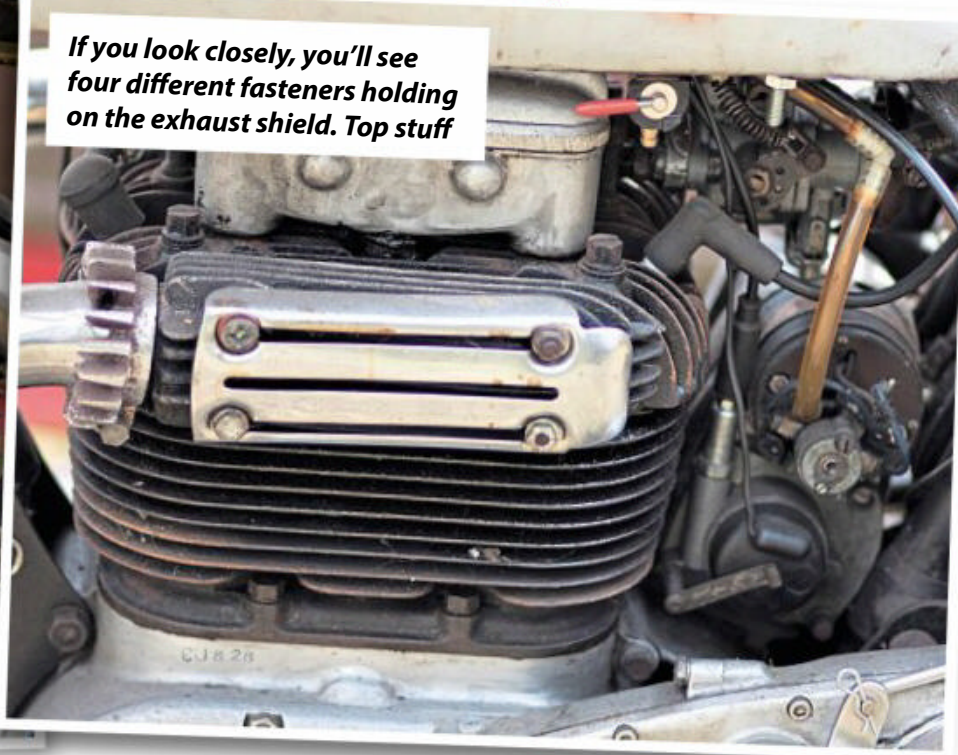
a few hackles among those who would rather see a classic motorcycle like this restored to standard, but there are good reasons for its current appearance, mostly down to the cost of buying and the difficulty of finding the necessary bits.

The bike, the Iron Lady, is cared for by owner

British Iron. Lots of it



If you look closely, you'll see four different fasteners holding on the exhaust shield. Top stuff



Steve Hillary of Ducati and custom specialists Redmax in Devon. While Steve's work more commonly shows an attention to detail and a quality that makes jaws drop, the 1000cc Ariel is an example of the old adage 'you never see a well-shod cobbler'. It really was found at the back of a barn covered in a sheet, the kind of find you dream about but which always seems to happen to other people. The Ariel was an unfinished chopper project with high bars which had been left standing for several decades. As the years passed by, quite a lot of the essential tinware needed had gone astray,

including the rear mudguard, toolboxes, headlamp and the instrumentation.

Steve is tight-lipped about how much he actually paid for the 1948 Ariel, which was re-registered in the 1970s, but the twinkle in his eye indicated it wasn't an enormous amount. But with the cost of restoring the venerable lady to standard coming in at the eye-watering end of the scale, he decided on returning her to the road as a light customisation job instead. The silencers came from the shelf at Redmax, as did the rear mudguard and a handful of other

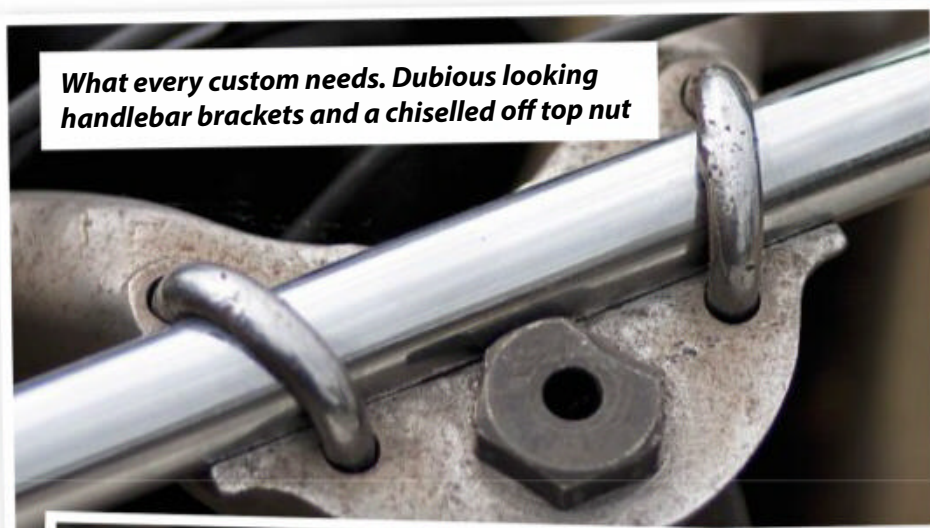
bits and pieces, like the drag handlebars and the custom headlight. The petrol tank is as fitted to the Square Four, with the deep insert originally intended to hold the speedometer and other dials including an eight-day clock now gaping skywards. Possibly you could jam a sandwich in it. Spam, to keep it in period. The tank should have knee pads too, the removal of which by the previous keeper caused petrol to leak out of the mounting holes.

Keeping a Square Four running holds its own challenges, not least coping with ➤

Surprisingly trim around the waist, for a big thou four



What every custom needs. Dubious looking handlebar brackets and a chiselled off top nut



Wires and brackets and Bakelite. An ideal combination



overheating. Work had already started on the bike when Steve got it, with the 4G engine with its cast iron head and barrel being rebuilt using new-old-stock parts.

Those new parts might, in fact, have been a bit too much of a snug fit, as the engine has that tendency to nip up on the rear cylinders, which requires the rider to pay careful attention to the sounds the motor makes on a longer ride. If the mill's intention to seize is spotted in time, the drill is to pull over and allow the engine to cool down before making further progress. This regular occurrence makes the prospect of using this Ariel as day-to-day transport unlikely, for the time being at least. Steve believes that this tightness in the engine might have been caused by an overzealous engineer during the rebore, who machined things in the venerable beast to a far finer tolerance than was entirely needed.

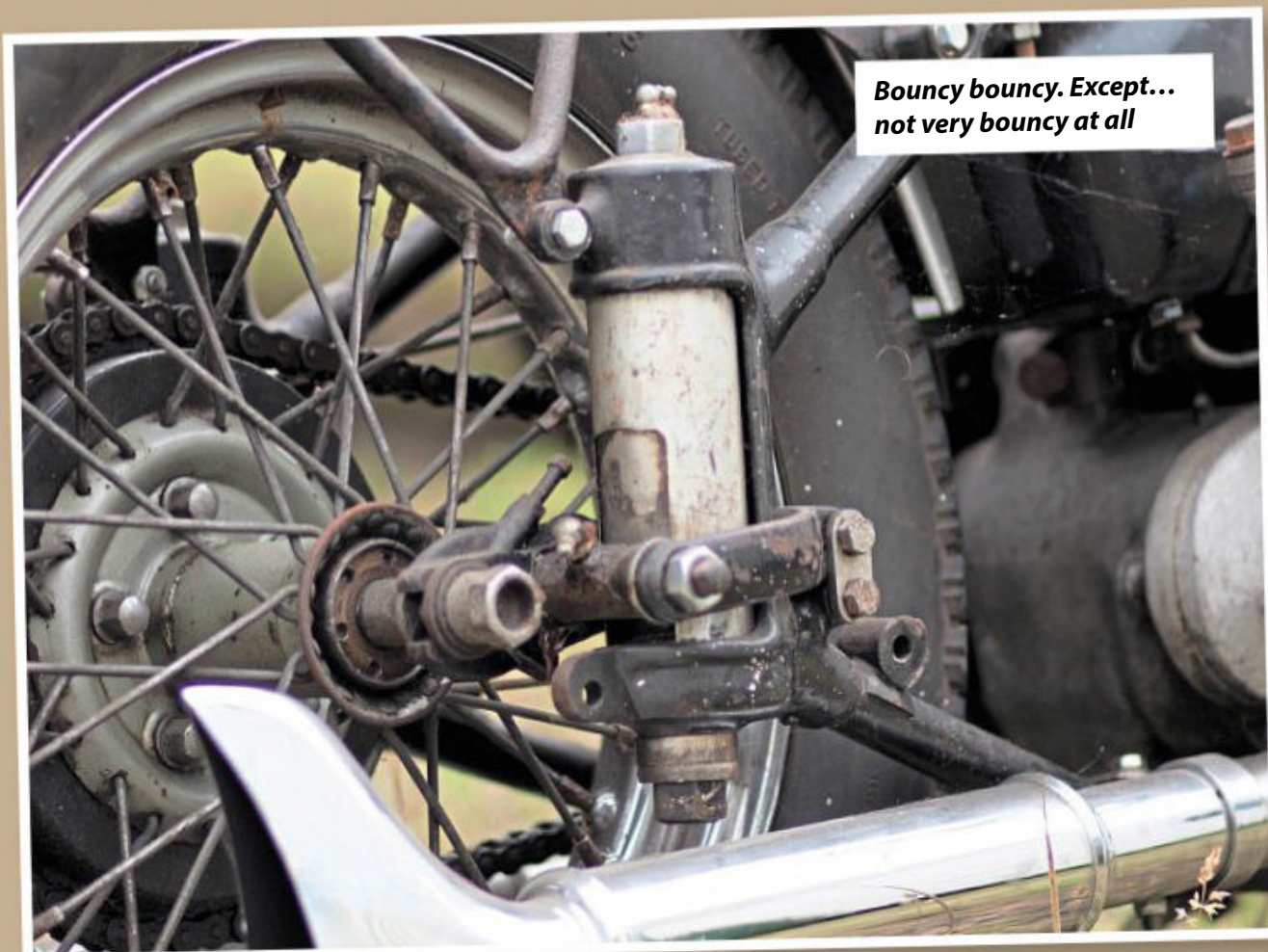
The forks are as found on later models, as is the front wheel with its full-width alloy hub. Although the missing headlight has been replaced with a dinky custom item, the original headlamp brackets are still there – twisted round, tied together and hidden behind the headlight. The steel hoops holding the bars on are up to the job, appearance notwithstanding. The bike is extremely stable in a straight line, though the corners on the Devon lanes near to Redmax HQ present more of a challenge. This is why the Square Four has been christened the Iron Lady. Because, like Margaret Thatcher, it's not for turning...

Setting up the rear wheel has also been

a challenge. The Ariel's rear suspension is a sophisticated plunger set-up, if that's not an oxymoron. The Ariel system created by Frank Anstey was intended to solve the problems encountered with more primitive systems thanks to a pair of links which allow the chain to move elliptically and retain its tension. This worked, but the Anstey link needs a lot of maintenance and regular attention through a forest of grease nipples, something the original builder neglected. The set-up of the solid brake rod on a plunger frame was something of a challenge, too.

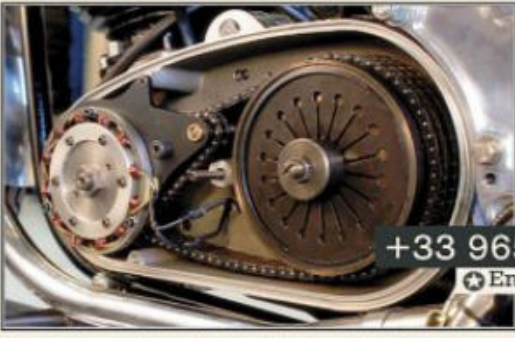
Handling problems caused by having this complex arrangement sitting unloved in a Hampshire farmyard for two decades have possibly not been helped by the use of a very old-fashioned square section rear tyre on a replaced 16-inch rim, combined with a skinny 19-inch front with a ribbed Avon Speedmaster of indeterminate vintage. Steve likens the sound the Iron Lady makes through the custom fishtail exhausts to that of a big-bore Bentley.

Like many a custom, The Iron Lady is a work in progress. It looks like one of those bikes that may never really be finished. **RC**



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*Matchless Moments. Sounds like a chocolate bar.
Maybe Frank needs chocolate...*



Back on the bench for a quick burst of maintenance. This shot is over a year old

If you've just read the excellent PUBtalk before reading this, you will surely have been as shocked – nay, outraged! – as I by Jacqueline's implied suggestion that I will still have failed to send her the magneto from my ailing Matchless. Actually... it's completely ailed, nothing ailing about it. Dead as a doorstop. But better looking.

It feels like several years ago – and possibly was – that Jacqueline and I first discussed the lamentable lack of reliable sparks from the CSR – currently parked on the bench and possibly pictured nearby. She most generously suggested that if I furnished her with the dead magneto, then she might apply magic, voodoo and possibly RealEngineering to it, thus restoring it to prolonged active life and adding a much needed sparkle to my view of this fine and

handsome – if mildly corroded – machine. A very generous suggestion. I undertook to send it forthwith.

Which I still haven't. I've been casting around for interesting and original excuses for my lassitude, but can't think of one. Add your own at this point. If you succeed in originality, let me know – I'm always in them market for creative excuses.

Sadly (adopts a serious tone; furrowed brown and weary gaze optional), following what might charitably be described as the Great BSA Fiasco, I have been reluctant to take on anything even distantly resembling a Shed project. Failure is not fun – especially my own. I'm pretty good at offering sympathy when my pals succeed only in creating disasters, with all secret sniggering kept safely away from such sensitive souls, but I try to be honest with myself. If only in

MATCHLESS 650 c.c. MONARCH



Specification is similar to motor respects to the standard 650 c.c. twin but, with the following alterations:
ENGINE. Highly tuned with 6.5:1 compression ratio. Magneto ignition.
MOTOR. Chrome plated steel frames.
COLOUR FINISH. Black frame, fuel tank, etc., with aluminium, gun and chrome plate on top, and into aluminium red of tank and fenders.
SPECIAL FEATURES. Range of Dyna Springs Special concerning this motorcycle, the others and several complete, New-Concept, Shovelair, Shovelair, A heavy magneto and separate electrical system can be fitted if the operator is desirous of engine replacement.



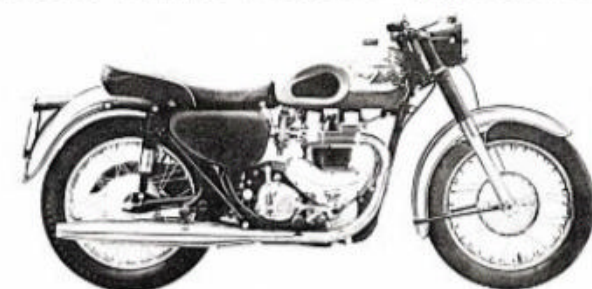
650cc. 31CSR HURRICANE
Matchless
650cc. 012CSR MONARCH

SPEED... SAFETY... HANDLING EASE... A Matchless winning formula – translated here into two exceptional twins. Staggered speed-ports with the optional extra speed-41, which does not affect the low down flexibility of the motor's pulling power. Safety-enhanced-up by top-rate roadholding and braking, goes hand in hand with steering light enough to ensure complete handling ease.

SPECIFICATION
Specification is similar to many respects to the standard 650cc twin, but with the following alterations:
Engine. Highly tuned with 6.5:1 compression ratio. Magneto ignition.
Magneto. Chrome plated steel frames.
Colour Finish. Black frame, fuel tank, etc., with chrome red (A.J.S. Blue) and chrome petrol. Tank and fenders red (A.J.S. Blue) of tank and fenders.
Tank and fenders red (A.J.S. Blue) of tank and fenders.
Ovalair. Ovalair. Range of Dyna Springs Special concerning this motorcycle, the others and several complete, New-Concept, Shovelair, Shovelair, A heavy magneto and separate electrical system can be fitted if the operator is desirous of engine replacement.



GO
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See The 1963 Models



750cc G-15 features 13 changes for 1963

5.50" x 19" alloy front fork. Re-designed fuel tank. Streamlined tank. Re-designed fuel tank. New lower plate bracket incorporating larger fuel and stop light. Re-designed rear frame with front sloping shock absorbers. Re-designed dual mufflers for increased capacity and efficiency. Re-designed brakes and fenders giving larger braking area. Choice of changeover or chokeless. Filling with starter. Chrome fenders. Quickly detachable rear wheel.

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All Matchless models for 1963 will feature black frames

1963 G-15 CS
5.50" alloy front fork. Magneto. Streamlined tank. Re-designed fuel tank. New lower plate bracket incorporating larger fuel and stop light. Re-designed rear frame with front sloping shock absorbers. Re-designed dual mufflers for increased capacity and efficiency. Re-designed brakes and fenders giving larger braking area. Choice of changeover or chokeless. Filling with starter. Chrome fenders. Quickly detachable rear wheel.

1963 G-12 CS
5.50" alloy front fork. Magneto. Streamlined tank. Re-designed fuel tank. New lower plate bracket incorporating larger fuel and stop light. Re-designed rear frame with front sloping shock absorbers. Re-designed dual mufflers for increased capacity and efficiency. Re-designed brakes and fenders giving larger braking area. Choice of changeover or chokeless. Filling with starter. Chrome fenders. Quickly detachable rear wheel.

1963 G-12 CSR
5.50" alloy front fork. Magneto. Streamlined tank. Re-designed fuel tank. New lower plate bracket incorporating larger fuel and stop light. Re-designed rear frame with front sloping shock absorbers. Re-designed dual mufflers for increased capacity and efficiency. Re-designed brakes and fenders giving larger braking area. Choice of changeover or chokeless. Filling with starter. Chrome fenders. Quickly detachable rear wheel.

JB Matchless Corp.

SEPTEMBER 1963

A study in mudguards. The 1963 monochrome is an American ad for a seriously rare Matchless, while the next two are both UK ads for not quite so rare machines. They all boast the same rear mudguard, but with airbrush artwork disguising their mountings. Did AMC spare no thought for fans in 2020?

private. Like here. Oh...

The BSA should have been an easy project. I've worked on them before. I know how they fit together. Except... it didn't, as you may recall. My pal Richard of course overcame all my insurmountable obstacles without even noticing that there was an obstacle to surmount – which is both humbling and slightly wonderful at the same time. And the BSA is now a merry runner, and on a good day I can actually start it. At least once.

The Plan (there is always a plan, and I always write that at this point) is to get the



FW's initial thought was that the guard was from a Norton Commando, but they're stainless, which this is ... not

Norton ES400 Electra out of storage and back onto the road. Why? Because it has an electric hoof, that's why. And the last time it was running, its fabled Lucas starter motor always reliably started the equally fabled Norton twin engine. Whether the bike is actually worth the expenditure of all those athletic electrons is a question for another day, of course. Meanwhile, the bench is already occupied – as it has been for the last several months, somehow, by possibly my favourite Matchless of all time. Except for the outstandingly glorious G5, of course. Who could ask for more than a decent 350 lightweight anyway? Keep your answers to yourself, please.

The CSR was on the bench because I decided that I needed cheering up after the lost centuries of the BSA Fiasco. I like

working on AMC bikes. I know what goes where and how to put it there if it falls off. Not that this ever happens, of course. And although you might be fooled into thinking that the CSR was on the bench so I could remove the magneto and send it forthwith to PUB for her undoubted delight, in fact it was on the bench because of ... roll of drums ... the rear mudguard. Let me explain. Are you sitting comfortably?

The CSR was expertly rebuilt many, many moons ago by a genuine AMC expert, and has been decently reliable – and great to ride – until relatively recently. Which is why, apart from a few bouts of minor fettling and servicing, I've done very little to it. It is also rather easier to kick up than the BSA, strangely. So although I have messed around with it a little from time to time, I've used its

general good nature and ready rideability as an excuse to fail to fix the really irritating thing about it. The rear mudguard.

Isn't it utterly bizarre that something as unimportant as a rear mudguard can somehow develop into an obsession. I mean... a mudguard is just a mudguard, right? Wrong. The CSR is really rather rare. It is a grand example of a dying breed and is almost standard. I have this inexplicable fetish about returning really rare, really late AMC machines to stock. Every time I've acquired one I have striven to return it to stock. This makes no sense, so feel free to laugh at my expense. Feeling better now?

I have long been convinced that the rear guard fitted is from a Norton Commando. Apart from the fact that Commando guards are stainless and this one is ... rusty. And I've never seen a correct guard for a 1965 CSR offered for sale, anywhere, ever. Until I found one on eBay. I knew what it was at once and being a dynamic sort of fellow I instantly bought it. Huge hurrahs and smug feelings. The vendor had a front guard as well, but my CSR is already graced with the correct item, so no need for further walletary demolition.

It arrived. I unwrapped it. It was in the condition described – as is almost always the case – and I gazed upon it happily. I may also have gloated a little. A tint of smugness may have descended. Until I spotted the holes for the lifting handles, that is. Single holes. The last CSR twins used Norton-style lifting handles instead of the more usual (and more common) AMC types. Norton handles are held to the mudguard by a pair of bolts on each side – AMC types with just a single bolt. Worked it out yet? My new mudguard is drilled for the AMC handles, and is therefore not for a 65 CSR. It's more ➤



The CSR's rear guard looks rather more like the item fitted to the 750 hybrids in CS trim, seen here on FW's old N15CS



The new(ish...) guard FW found online. It's another Matchless mudguard, but is not for a G12CSR. It's bigger than the G12's and has a centre rib, too. Nicely patinated, however!



rare even than that.

Despair. Also gloom.

But I stripped down the rear end of the bike anyway. What the heck. And when I removed the (correct, Norton-style) lifting handles I discovered that the guard is not from a Commando. But it's not some generic blade, either. What is it? Am I not a verdant green anorak in AMC matters? I need to know. But I'm still unsure, because in the final years of their production AMC produced some very short-run machines. I suspect that the guard is from another CSR twin – a G15CSR rather than a G12CSR. And it has been drilled at some later date to accept the G12 lifting handles. Are you following this? Keep up at the back!

So what am I to do? The guard I've recently acquired is truly rare. It is in fact for another Matchless – a G15 Mk2 – and they are far, far less common even than my own G12CSR. Mine is probably the only spare rear mudguard for one in the entire known universe. Which may make a chap feel all warm and fluffy, but is no help at all. It will fit my CSR, and it will look better than the current effort, but I would need to drill holes in it to accept the lifting handles. And that feels all

wrong, somehow. Or... I could fit different handles to suit the mudguard, which would be wrong for my bike, but would save the drilling. Can you spot the approaching problem? Hurrah! There are no 1964-on lifting handles anywhere on the planet!

So what, gentle reader, would you do in my situation? If I fit the (in)correct guard I can then also replace the strange pattern seat with the correct item, which looks better. That's an extra temptation, no?

Meanwhile, while you are considering this, let us glide smoothly over to the magneto. As I said already, I was wounded and humbled by PUB's comment, so decided there and indeed then to remove the dead sparkler and amaze that fine lady friend by sending it to her under a plain brown wrapper. Or in a Jiffy bag, which is more likely. What could be easier than to whip off the dead parrot and despatch it eastwards to chez PUB?

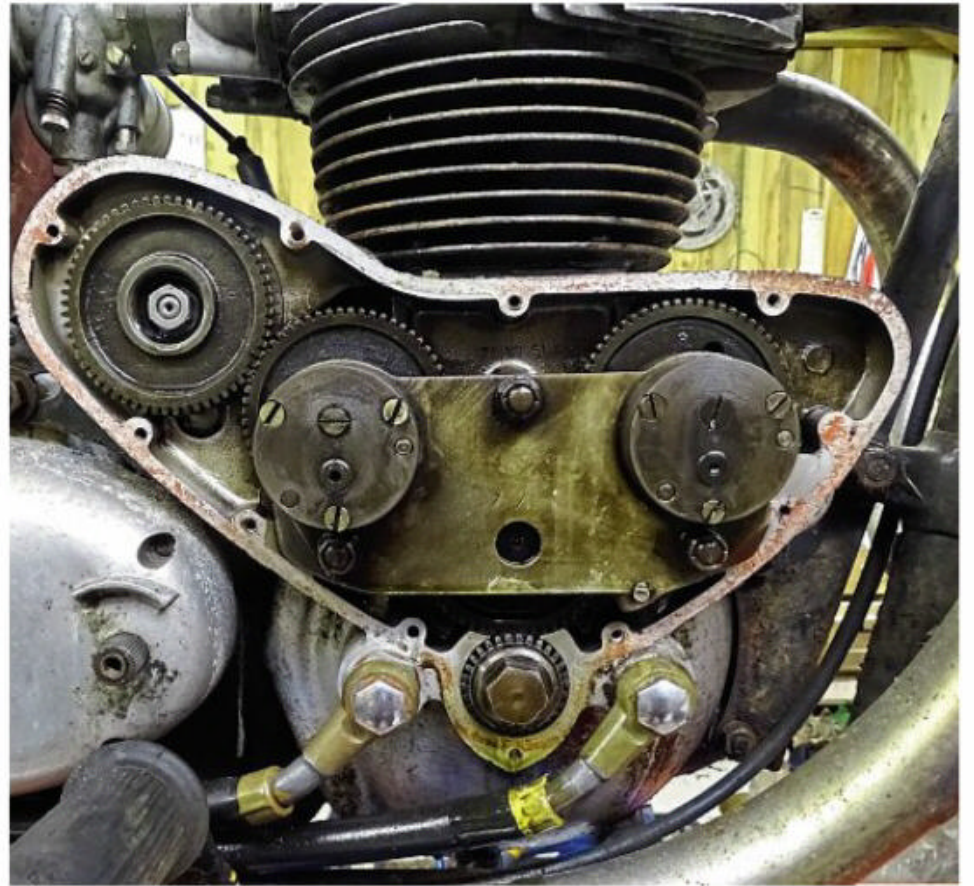


FW's most wonderful new guard is in fact for one of these, a Matchless G15 Mk2. Very rare indeed. Should he drill holes in it, rechrome it and fit it anyway?





While pondering the anorak delights of AMC rear mudguards. FW decided to remove the sparkless magneto. Here it is now. Observe the cunning shrouded retaining nuts



The timing cover came off sweetly, revealing a handsome high capacity CSR oil pump, and letting drip just a few drops of remarkably clean, golden oil

Bursting into immediate action that had taken only a year or two to ferment, I set to, removing the gear lever with ease. You don't actually need to do that, because the timing cover can come off with it in place, but hey, I know how to do it, so I did it. Discovering on the way that the little gear indicator pointer-thing is held on by a caphead screw instead of the correct bolt. Mental note made to rectify this come reassembly. Next, the timing cover itself, which as you know is simply a matter of removing a stack of unique fixing screws, at which point the cover simply falls off.

You are now expecting me to reveal that this apparently simple operation proved impossible to execute, right? Wrong. The screws all undid, which is a relief. Why a relief? Because AMC chose to use a strange fastener to retain this cover. It has a standard screwdriver head but an unusually slender shaft, with a thread which looks more BA than BSCy. It is actually 2BA, research has revealed. No doubt there was a sound engineering reason for this choice, but apart from making it distressingly common to find the shafts snapped off and permanently fixed in the crankcase's drillings I have no idea why. The reason the screws stick and then shear is because the head is slotted for a big screwdriver, and we know what Hammerfist Joe Bodgit does with big screwdrivers, do we not?

But... they all undid fine, not a single one was over-tightened. One of the holes had no screw in it, which is common and is always because the internal thread has been stripped, but it's not a problem here. And the timing cover did indeed simply fall off like it's

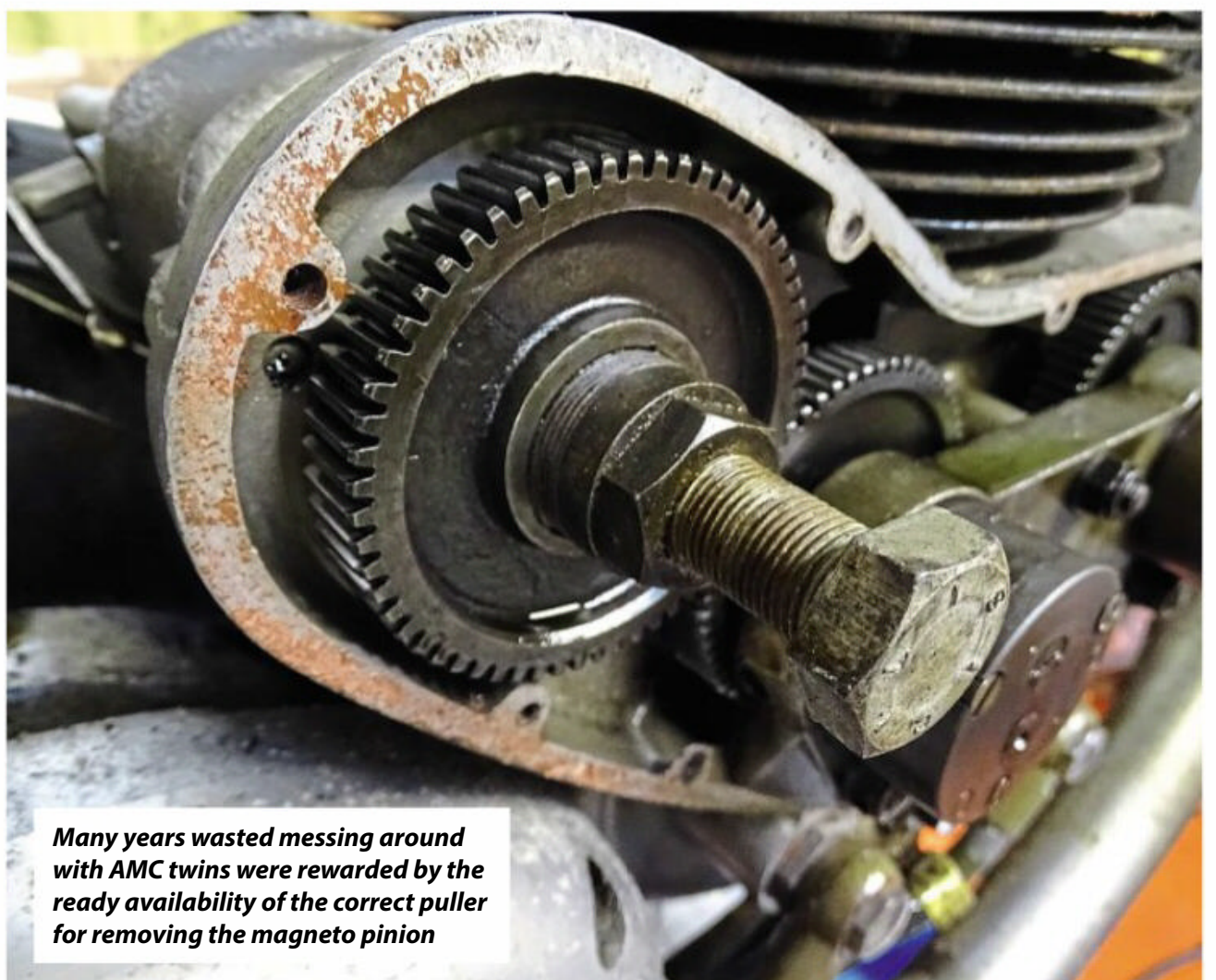
supposed to. This is the age of miracles.

This is also the first time I've actually seen inside the engine, and all is good news. There's that high-capacity oil pump – AMC's mighty gear device of almost infinite reliability, and there's the magneto drive pinion, smugly waiting for me to fail to remove it.

But no! I have removed lots of magnetos from lots of AMC twins. And at this point I should remind us both that these engines were designed in the 1940s, when socket sets were rare and hand-twirled spanners were the tools of choice on most assembly

tracks in the motorcycle world. When actual fitters did actual fitting. Why am I reminding us of this? Because access is sometimes a challenge. This will be important in a minute.

In the bottom drawer of my tool chest is a battered Jiffy bag with 'Frank's pullers' written across it. This is not a relic from the days when I was a woman-chasing man of youth and vigour, no; it is filled with pullers, various, for pulling motorcycle things off other motorcycle things. Like magneto drive pinions from their tapers. And after only a couple of false starts I found the correct puller. Freed off its seized thread with



Many years wasted messing around with AMC twins were rewarded by the ready availability of the correct puller for removing the magneto pinion

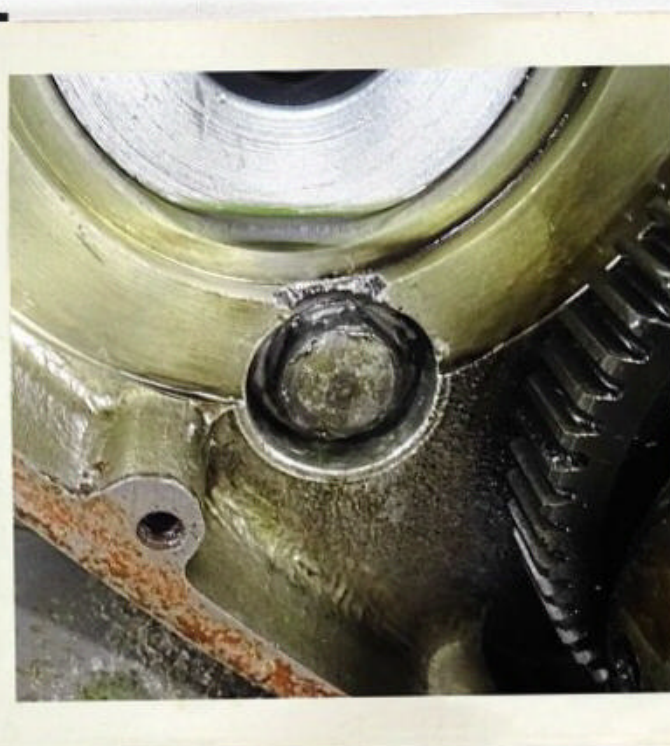
a decent dose of Superslax, a long-lost penetrating oil from 1979 or so, and a little spanner-twirling, and applied it. Expecting, I must admit, some resistance. But no – off came the pinion, exactly as it's supposed to do. Was this skill, I asked myself? Or that fabled lulling into a false sense of security?

The magneto itself is clamped to the crankcase extension by three nuts, two of them gripping studs and the third – the lower of the three – mated to a bolt. Using a bolt here is sensible, because getting access to the bottom fastener on K2F magnetos can be a challenge on many bikes. On the factory assembly line, the instrument was fitted before the engine was slotted into its bicycle, which does make things easier, research has shown. And of course the top left nut undid easily. The top right? There should be a photo somewhere showing the nut with its spanner. Of course there is no room to actually turn the spanner. So I just ignored it and turned the searing expertise of my steely gaze to the lower fastener. Remember my remark about the lack of socket sets in those faraway days? The bolt lives in its own neat little recess in the crankcase wall. No socket nor modern ring spanner can get at it – at least, none of those in my eclectic tool collection. I scratched my memory...

Back in antiquity, that memory suggested, timidly, I'd made up a special tool for this



But finally, the unexpected halt. There's no room to move the spanner, and neither a ring nor a socket will fit



Sometime in the past, someone has struggled to remove the lower of the three magneto mounting fasteners. But FW has the correct (home-made) tool. Welding has never been an obvious skill, we observe

very job. It's actually a multi-purpose tool, because it solves a similar problem when turning the eight nuts which hold down the twin's two cylinder heads, and is a box spanner with a socket welded to it. The box spanner can reach into spaces few sockets can penetrate, and the socket means I can use my big T-bar to undo it. Which I did. Back to the top right nut, the one nearest to the cylinders. Can I budge it? No. Do I have a special tool for the job? I do not.

Only one thing to do: invite the collective

expertise of the RealClassic Facebook members-only group. They'll know the answer. Or... not.

So I have stalled again. Jacqueline still doesn't have my magneto. She was correct in her assessment of the progress I will make. I have, however, ordered a couple of flat ring spanners – vintage tools turn up quite often and are always useful. A flat ring should do the job. If not, maybe I'll need to remove the right-hand barrel and head and... **Rc**



Progress is slow...

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