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APRIL 2020
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BLACK, 2009, 54,535 MILES
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KAWASAKI VN1900
BLACK, 2009, 13,300 MILES
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£7999



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RED, 2011, 6,708 MILES
£7999



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BLACK, 2009, 13,351 MILES
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£8999



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£5499



HONDA GL1500 VALKYRIE
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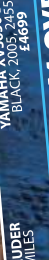
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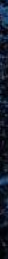
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CHECK OUT THE BSH FACEBOOK PAGE (BACK STREET HEROES)

AND THE BSH FACEBOOK GROUP AT BACK STREET HEROES - THE OFFICIAL GROUP



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BE PART OF THE BACKSTREETHEROES COMMUNITY
SUBSCRIBE ON PAGE 60

Hello, and welcome to another issue of *Back Street Heroes*.

We were sad to hear of the demise of 100% Biker magazine a few weeks ago; it's never great when anyone in the motorcycle world, especially the custom motorcycle world (cos it's not that big to begin with), goes under – there are so few people left these days who truly have a passion for what they do. Yeah, they were operating in the same market as us, but it's still a shame, and we all wish everyone who worked there the best for the future in whatever they do.

Magazines right across the board, not just in the motorcycling world, are really up against it these days due to the influence of the internet. It wasn't that long ago, 2015, that Superbike, one of the biggest mainstream magazines, launched back in 1977, was forced to close, and is only available as an online publication now, and even Easyriders, the great granddaddy of all custom bike magazines (established 1970, barely a year after the seminal biker film with a very similar name came out) has had to rein itself in, and is now published as a quarterly, just four times a year, rather than be the monthly it'd been for, pretty much, 50 years.

We here at *Back Street Heroes* we've weathered the storm so far, and we're intending to be here as long as folk want us here. Yeah, the magazine's changed over the years (2020 is our 37th of publication!) in the same way as the world's changed over the years, but we try to keep it as it should be – a reflection of the British custom bike scene, as amazing and diverse as the bikes you lot out there build, and the events you go to. Of course, we couldn't've done it without you guys and girls buying it, and we'd like to thank you from the bottom of our hearts for the support you've given us over the years – here's to a damn good few more!

You might've noticed over the last few months that I've had the BSH rat rod Suzuki thing (it's actually called 'Old Peculier', but no one, not even me actually, calls it that) up for sale, and very recently I sold it, and it went to live with a new owner in Leicester.

It's always a bittersweet experience selling a bike, especially a custom bike, that you've got something of yourself invested in, isn't it? Yeah, so I didn't actually build it myself (cos, as anyone who knows me knows, I'm a danger to myself with spanners), but it was dreamt up inside my head, and then built for me by ('Earthworm') Jim and Luke at the late-lamented Smiley Monkey Custom Cycles, who



took the idea and ran with it, eventually producing a bike that, while staying true to the original design concept, was way, way madder and more innovative than anything I'd conceived. The two summers I spent smoking it about were two of my favourite of my life, not least cos of the effect it had on onlookers, and I will say, hand on heart, that it'll be one of those bikes that, in years to come, I'll look back on and say 'I shouldn't've sold that'... as we all do, don't we?

But, anyway, onwards and upwards, the rat rod's gone, and it's time to get the Katana, that's been detailed in these pages over the last year or so, done and finished...

Actually, speaking of the Katana, you'll notice that, just as in the last couple of issues, there's no article on it this time either.

There are two very good reasons for this; firstly, because it's such an experimental build, things

need to be worked through to see if they work (there isn't another one out there like it to copy), and so things have to be tried and, if they don't work, thought about again to find some way of modifying the design so that they do. This has happened with the air-ride suspension – the system we planned hasn't worked, and we're waiting for the parts needed to try a new version and, as they're having to be handmade to suit, everything takes that bit longer.

The second reason is one that's outside anyone's control – Paul and Luke from Pointy Hat had a very personal tragedy just before Christmas that knocked them, mentally and emotionally, for six (I won't say what it was, it's not my place to do so), and so for a couple of months they really didn't feel like doing anything... well, much at all really, and I can't say I blame them. Time, as they say though, is a healer, and as you read this, the new suspension system components should've been delivered, and things are, fingers crossed, again moving forward. Hopefully there should be an update next issue – watch this space!

Finally this month, at long last we have the details of the 2020 BSH Custom Champs! This is the fifth year we've been running it and, once again, we've tried to improve it year upon year. For 2020 we're organising a series of custom bike shows around the country that're free to come to and free to enter, and you can find out all the details of when and where on page 72. Hopefully, we'll see you at one of them!

NIK

STUFF

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TRIUMPH STREET TRIPLE S

New for 2020, Triumph's A2-license compliant Street Triple S streetfighter's been given a host of updates. The aggressive-looking bike, with its 660cc triple engine, can also be derestricted by Triumph dealers to liberate the bike's full potential for those who don't have a restricted licence too.

Dripping with goodies, the Street Triple S costs from £7,900, and you can get more info from www.triumphmotorcycles.co.uk

BREAKFAST AT THE BREWERY

Reapers UK, the British branch of the worldwide hot rod and custom car club, would like you to know about their Breakfast at the Brewery events at the Limestone Brewery in Stone in Staffs (Mount Rd, ST15 8LL) every third Sunday of the month from 9am to 1pm, and invite you to go along and show off your custom bike be it a chopper, a streetfighter, a bobber, a café racer or whatever it may be.

Find out more, if you'd like to, by ringing **07928 214543** or emailing reapers.uk.cc@gmail.com



HOGPARTS UK SALE

Hogparts UK, the Staffordshire-based Harley specialists, would like you to know that they're currently having a sale of choice Harley and custom parts – go to their website at www.hogparts.zodiac.nl/en/catalog/blow-out-sales for more info.

CONGRATULATIONS RICK & MANDY!

We here at BSH would like to congratulate the legendary Rick 'NABD Chairman' Hulse and his lovely lady Mandy Berry on their recent nuptials – two of the nicest people we've met in recent years.

May your life together be long and full of magical moments and, hopefully, not too much strife!



NEW OWNER!

The BSH rat rod, built by Jim and Luke from the now defunct Smiley Monkey Custom Cycles, and featured in a series of build

and feature articles a few years ago, has gone to live with a new owner – Dave from Leicester.

Hope you enjoy it as much as Nik, and a fair number of other folk who rode it, did!

LIDS & LEATHERS

The Lids & Leathers Appeal is a non-profit appeal that gathers old and unused helmets, leathers and riding gear, and donates it to the Emergency Services/First Aid trainers to aid them in their training of safe removal, mock accidents etc.

It now covers England, Wales and Scotland, and they need your help! They've had a great response to the Appeal so far, but there're some areas they still need to cover - do you know of anyone (emergency services, HART, Biker Down, First Aid trainers etc.) who could use the helmets and leathers they collect? They're looking in the Essex, Cambridgeshire, South West, West Midlands, and North West (Cheshire/Lancashire) areas, and they're also still looking for reps in Essex, Hertfordshire, Greater London, Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, and central Wales (Powys).

If you can help in any of these areas, or know someone who can make use of their donations, please send them a private message via their Facebook page (**Lids & Leathers Appeal**).



GLOSSARY

A BRIEF, NOT TOO SERIOUS EXPLANATION OF TERMS COMMONLY USED IN THE MAGAZINE. THIS MONTH, THE KS:

K&N – American company producing, primarily, reusable performance air filters, but also oil filters too.

KATANA – a traditional Japanese sword that lends its name to the iconic Suzuki air-cooled superbike... and also a scooter too. If you want to induce apoplexy in Katana owners, call a pop-up headlight Kat, or a GSX600/750F, a Katana (they were called that in the USA)...

KAWASAKI – iconic Japanese motorcycle manufacturer that's part of KHI (Kawasaki Heavy Industries) who also produce some bloody big boats amongst other things, AKA Kwaks, Kwaks etc.

KEEWAY – Chinese manufacturer of small capacity mo'cycles

KEVLAR – A para-aramide fibre which is five times stronger than steel at the same weight, typically used with other fibres to make protective clothing

KEY – both a security device used to open filler caps/turn on ignitions, and a hardened steel wedge that holds alternators onto crankshafts etc.

KEYWAY – not the Chinese bike company, but the slot in a shaft in which a key fits

KICK-STAND – an American self-explanatory term that means 'side-stand'... daft name, really, cos you don't actually kick it, do you, you flip it up with your foot...

KICKER ('BOX) – a Harley (usually) gearbox without an electric start

KICKER-PEDAL – another Harley term, mostly, referring to the pedal atop a kick-start... a what?

KICK-START – a foot-operated lever that wakes up the beast, and makes it go brum-brum... if you're lucky. Scarily, as the years go by, fewer and fewer people know what one is...

KIKKER – very cool, small capacity hardtails that are rarer than tits on a bu... sorry, sorry, a rare thing

KILL-SWITCH – the switch on the 'bars that cuts power to the ignition, thus stopping the engine, often a major cause of starting 'problems' when they've been flicked off and forgotten about...

KNOBBLIES – tyres that have a prominent raised block tread, primarily used on off-road vehicles, but becoming increasingly popular on road-going customs

KNUCKLEHEAD – Harley engine launched in '36 with rocker covers that look like clenched knuckles, terrifyingly expensive these days

KTM – Austrian motorcycle brand renowned for their off-road machinery and some truly bonkers road bikes (and, often, delays in spares availability)

KUBASA – a smoked sausage with garlic, included here because we're a bit low on Ks... (Dave has been working quite hard of late, you know ... N.)

KYMCO – Taiwanese manufacturer founded in 1953, now building over 570,000 vehicles per year, mostly scooters and small capacity motorcycles

THE 30 CONTINENTAL GT CAFE RACER

The 30 is a new café racer built by Krom Works Jakarta using one of Royal Enfield's Continental GT 650, inspired by the golden era of café-to-café racing style of the '60s. The stripped-down retro base is complemented by modern upside-down suspension in the front, and a mono-shock rear, with Brembo discs and Tokiko calipers helping the bike to both

handle and stop with ease, and it's finished in a chrome/matt black/pearl copper paint scheme.

For more pics and info go to Krom Works Jakarta's Facebook and/or Instagram pages, and for more on the Continental GT 650 and other Royal Enfields please visit www.royalenfield.com



CAFÉ BRAT

Boyd's of Bedford've opened a new coffee bar/café going by the name of Café BRAT.

It'll serve high quality coffee supplied by Hot Numbers Roastery, and there'll be a range of bratwursts, sweet and savoury pretzels, and other cakey treats, including vegan options, to keep customers well-nourished, and free onsite Wi-fi for those wishing to catch up on emails. And while you're there you can check out their goods and apparel, including items from The Bike Shed, Biltwell, Knox Armour, Saint, Roeg, Bedfordshire Beard Co., Primal Suds, and Two Gun Salute.

Café BRAT is open Tuesday to Saturday 9am-5pm, and 10am-3pm Sunday, and you can get more info from the Instagram page or www.boydsofbedford.com or by ringing 01234 589499.



NEW FAT SKELETON TEES

These new tees from Fat Skeleton have a quality to match the designs. They're 100% cotton, soft-touch tees, with a ribbed neck and straight hem, and there're no annoying neck tags either as the Fat Skeleton logo, and care instructions, are printed, not on a sew-on tag.

They're available to fit chest sizes between 38" and 54", and retail at £24.99, and they're available at www.fat-skeleton.co.uk or you can drop in, Monday to Friday, at their unit at Imex Enterprise Park, Wigwam Lane, Hucknall, Notts (NG15 6RP).



OXFORD HOLWELL 1.0 JACKET

This classic-styled wet-waxed cotton jacket uses traditional materials, and manufacturing techniques, but hidden beneath the old-world look is a layer of modern technology. The pockets are pleated in order to lie flat when empty, but provide space to expand when full; the triple-stitching in all key/critical impact areas is highly protective; there's a breathable membrane; a classic Oxford lining; a neoprene collar with corduroy inside facing for company; hand-warmer pockets; and CE Level 1 protectors in the shoulders and elbows.

Available in both men's and women's sizes, and in black, green or red, it costs just £199.99 from anywhere that stocks the Oxford Products range – go to www.oxfordproducts.com to find your nearest stockist.



SPADA PILGRIM GRANDE LADIES

These new, rather cool ladies boots from Spada are available in brown, black or cherry, and made from oil distressed leather, have both zips and laces, a top buckle strap, a Hipora waterproof lining, ankle and toe support, a gear-change pad, and reinforced heels and toes. Available in sizes 36-40 (3-7), you can get them from anywhere that stocks the Spada range – go to www.spadaclothing.co.uk to find your nearest stockist.



HAND-SHIFT TANK

Retro chop builders, or anyone wanting something quirky for their build, might like this

V-Twin Mfg. reproduction of the long unavailable hand-shift 3.5 gallon (13.2 litre) tank, as used on the 1947-1965

Big Twin Harleys. They take the original rod-type shut-off valve, two vented cam-

style caps, a cross-over fuel line, and the '47-'65 shifter guide, all available, too. They're now available at your Zodiac dealer – check

out www.zodiac.nl to find your nearest place.



VECTA PERSONAL SAFE

The average burglary takes just 45 seconds, and motorcycle keys are targeted more and more frequently. The Vecta Personal Safe makes the classic key-grab a thing of the past, enabling you to secure bike, home, and car keys the instant you arrive home, and has a key rack, a removable valuables tray, and its own signal-blocking Faraday bag to help relay theft of vehicles with keyless ignitions. It locks and opens with a simple four-digit security code that you choose, and no mains power's required (the easy-to-read LED display tells you when batteries need replacing).

It has UK Police Secured by Design accreditation, is fully Sold Secure tested, and approved by the Master Locksmith Association, and comes with a fitting kit, batteries, and two back-up keys, and costs £149 from leading locksmiths or www.vectasafes.co.uk



LOMO CAMPING TORCHES

Lomo, the waterproof bags and camping specialists, have a new range of torches for rallies and camping to cover just about every eventuality – lanterns, mini lanterns, very bright torches, head-strap torches, loads!

Prices start at just £6, and you can see the whole range at their website at www.lomo.co.uk as well as all their excellent waterproof bags, too.



UNIVERSAL STAINLESS MUFFLER

These universal stainless steel mufflers are for 1.75" (44.5mm) or 2" (50.8mm) diameter headers, and are 10" (25 cm) long, have a 65mm baffle diameter, and include a body mounting clamp.

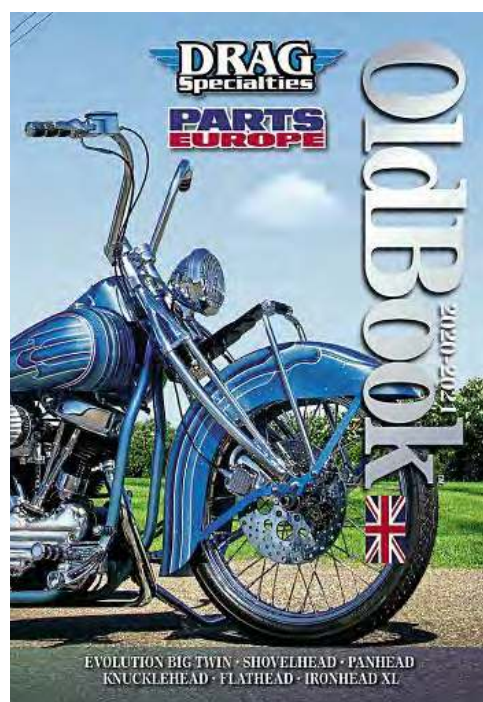
They're available in oval or triangular shapes from your local Zodiac dealer – check out www.zodiac.nl to find your nearest place.



PARTS EUROPE FATBOOK & OLDBOOK

These two new 2020 catalogues are packed with loads of products, accessories and parts, and cover the Evo Sportster, Twin Cam and M8 (Fatbook), and the Evolution Big Twin, Shovelhead, Panhead, Knucklehead, Flathead, and Ironhead (Oldbook).

They're chock full of cool stuff from brands including Klock Werks, Legend Suspension, Arlen Ness, Joker Machine, S&S, Kellermann, Custom Dynamics, Drag Specialties, and many others, and they can be browsed through online or downloaded as a PDF file. Visit www.dragspecialties.eu or www.partseurope.eu to have a good look.



LETTERS

Need to agree, or even disagree, with something you've seen in the mag? Heard a bloody awful joke you think we should groan at? Email nik@backstreetheroes.com or send it snailmail to the address in the front (somewhere) of the mag!

DEAR BSH,

Is it just me? Back in the '70s when I was a virginal teenager working in, at the time, a relatively big Honda dealership in Dorchester (I think it was the 100th five-star Honda dealer in the country, and was featured in one of the bike mags), customers came in just for a chat, especially on a Saturday. That's when people talked to each other – no mobile phones (unless you were in the cast of Star Trek). It was good times, loads of friends, loads of fun. I always remember my boss saying: "Even if you don't like the customer, always try and remember their name, and greet them by it when they come in," as some of them could be real assholes! All a long time ago now, then I woke the other morning, and I'm 60... where did that go?

Anyway, I have numerous bike shops within 40 miles of me, so a nice little ride out, coffee and a chat would be nice, but you walk in, and oh dear... People with their heads down in their laptops, no acknowledgment, not even a grunt (which'd be something) – they're all the same. Their excuse is that they don't want to be 'pushy' to customers when they walk in... what a crock of shit. Why not just say hello? I rode 40 miles to visit you. What're they doing on their laptops that's so important? Playing bingo? Or are they on some granny-dating site?

Saturdays are the days when you visit your local bike shop for us hard-working bikers, and these places're usually dead in the week, especially on a wet day, so come on you salespeople – do your laptop work in the week, not on a Saturday... give the grannies a rest!

Is it their fault? I suppose society

has institutionalised them. Back in the 'Old Days', a good salesman could sell you a bike to go with the spark plug you only came into buy, and if it was a Gold Wing, it'd only set you back as much as £1,600! £1,600 for a new bike – imagine that!

Great happy days.

STEVE WARREN,

aka the Chelsea Pensioner on a Harley at Poole Quay bike night (Issue 431).

Sadly, Steve, it's not just you – I went into a very well-known Norfolk shop a while ago with the express intention of spending a bit of wedge on an air-bag vest (about £500-ish), and all the staff were, as you say, sat at their desks almost pointedly ignoring me. Now, I don't know if it's cos I have dreads, and they just assume I'm another no-hope crusty, but it took a fair amount of time to attract the attention of a staffer, and she still didn't seem that interested when I told her what I wanted to buy either... one can only assume they're not on commission any more? When I worked in shops years ago, we got paid more the more we sold, so it was in our interest to be polite, interested and attentive but, as I seem to say at least 10 times a day these days, the world now's a very different place. N.



STAR LETTER

This month's Star Letter wins a PREMIER ROCKER U9 BM open-face helmet worth £89.95. Premier have been around since 1956 and found fame in the 1970s with Phil Read MBE. The Rocker features a retractable internal sun visor and moisture-wicking/ odour-free lining. Find out more at www.thekeycollection.co.uk

DEAR BSH,

I enjoyed the Kent Custom Bike Show retro feature in BSH 430.

My first time there was in 1985 and anyone who attended that particular event must recall the scorching hot weather – that is if they actually managed to find the show! Located in fields more rural than The Archers, and more rustic than The Haywain, it took some finding, I can tell you!

That year the show was sited on Stone Street, which is 2,000 miles long (approx.), and there were millions of bemused bikers all wandering about trying to find the damn place, me included. I saw one home-made sign about the size of a postage stamp bearing the legend 'BIKE SHOW', with an arrow pointing up (as in straight on for the time of your life), which was miles away from the show's entrance, which I did eventually find. So too had a coachload of unwitting OAPs out on a day trip, halted by the lone constable doing his best to keep any through traffic moving on this very narrow country lane. There were bikes, bikes, and yet more bikes at said entrance, and as I waited I could see the surprise, bewilderment and delight peering out from the halted coach's windows. I'm sure the elderly passengers within were caught up in the excitement of it all, just as I was – something to tell the grandkids about, eh? You can bet you

chrome-plated kicker conversion that this was better than anywhere they'd been or were going. Ah, to be 21 again and a biker at the Kent Custom Bike Show!

I purchased my ticket (which I still have, I'm proud to say) from the prospect on the gate, and I was in. I couldn't believe it; people, bikes, tents, stalls! Y'see, the only chops I'd seen up until then in the metal, as it were, was one tidy example parked up in York city centre, and one even tidier at Mallory Park. Oh, and my C15, chopped by someone who had little money (my wage was £12 per week back in 1970), no knowhow, and bags of enthusiasm... yep, me. I'd also seen Easy Rider, of course, and those two bikes remain the prettiest custom Harleys you'll ever see, and there were occasionally bits and pieces in Bike, Superbike, Custom Car, and even Motorcycle Mechanics and MCN. When our kid came home with the December 1971 issue of Choppers magazine, I nearly collapsed. Later, when he came home with issue #3 of Easyriders, I did collapse! (I still have that issue of Choppers too!). Here at Kent in '85 there were choppers galore, all bathed in glorious sunshine.

It seemed to me that this is what biker heaven must look like. And the girls! I believe that everything these days is 'cool'. Well, this one lass riding pillion on a Bonnie, wearing her pudding basin lid, and John Lennon sunglasses, – she was cooler than an iceberg in a snowstorm, Daddy-o. Some blokes have all the luck.

But... err, where was I? Umm, magazines. Well, back in July 1985, BSH was up and running, and at that time I think it may have been issue #15 that would've been on the newsagent's shelves or dropping on to subscribers' doormats? So the mag was young and there. How lucky we were to have BSH, a magazine dedicated to chops. Thank Odin and his ravens, thank Wasiya, the Winter Giant, high up in the Wolf Mountains, and we might even like to thank Nik, our editor, and staff for sweating blood to bring us BSH every month, and that BSH is still here; issue 430 as I write.

Later that year of 1985, I was able to enjoy the write-ups and photos of Kent, and relive the experience. And do you know what, that has just happened again with the Kent Show retro feature.

MIKE WHALLEY

DEAR BSH,

It was great to see the article on the brilliant Kent Custom Bike Show in the February issue. My mates and I went every year for 15 years from 1986, and loved every one of them. I was disappointed though that the most famous bike ever seen at that show was not included – Mick Fish's Scalliwag. We rode down from Wigan with Mick the first time he showed it, and were pretty pissed off when it came second on the basis that the judges thought it was unrideable. It actually never missed a beat all the way down and back, and the handling was brilliant.

I enclose a photo (that's my mate Don's bike in the background). RIP Mick.

PAUL COMERFORD

*There wasn't one in the archive, Paul, I was quite surprised too.
Cheers for sending this one! N.*



DEAR BSH,

Thank you for letting me know you're publishing my picture, famous at last! It'll be my first photo in *Back Street Heroes* after reading for god knows how many years – I remember buying issue one!

My Harley Softail Standard, after 80mph, runs out of puff. I've had it up to 90mph, and it was like hanging on for dear life, and it was howling like a banshee. I think the five-speed gearbox doesn't do it any favours. Besides that, it's a good bike, just not very good for German autobahns where, as you know, everyone here in

Germany drives like Michael Schumacher! It's a good bike for around the town and city. It has just failed its TUV (MoT) though 'cos of the Vance and Hines exhaust, Arlen Ness Big Sucker air filter, and three-inch Arlen Ness extended foot controls – all forbidden. So I've had to put it back to the original spec to get it through the TUV. Bikers in Germany get picked on a lot by the authorities!

I got my new *BSH* delivered last week, nice write-up about the old Kent Custom Bike Shows.

I remember when I went to the very first Crazy Days bash way back when – rode from Blandford in Dorset on

the Saturday, and decided to have a few beers before putting the tent up... not my best idea. Went back to it later in the evening to find I couldn't get into it, and had to sleep outside. In the morning I discovered why – I'd put the flysheet on the wrong way round (the opposite side to the door).

Thank you very much, keep up the great work with the mag, ride safe.

All the best!

GARY

Mate, we've all done that – 'I'll just have the one beer before I put me tent up' is the phrase that you know means the night'll end badly! N.



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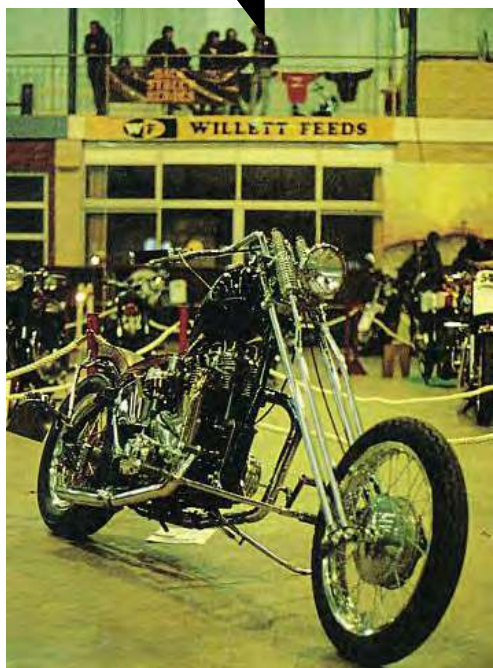
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RETRO-
PERSPECTIVE



THIS IS THE THIRD OF OUR RETRO, LOOK-BACK, FEATURES ON THE COVERAGE OF THE GREAT EVENTS FROM THE EARLY DAYS OF THE MAGAZINE'S HISTORY, AND THIS ISSUE WE LOOK AT THE SOUTH & WEST CUSTOM & CLASSIC BIKE SHOW.



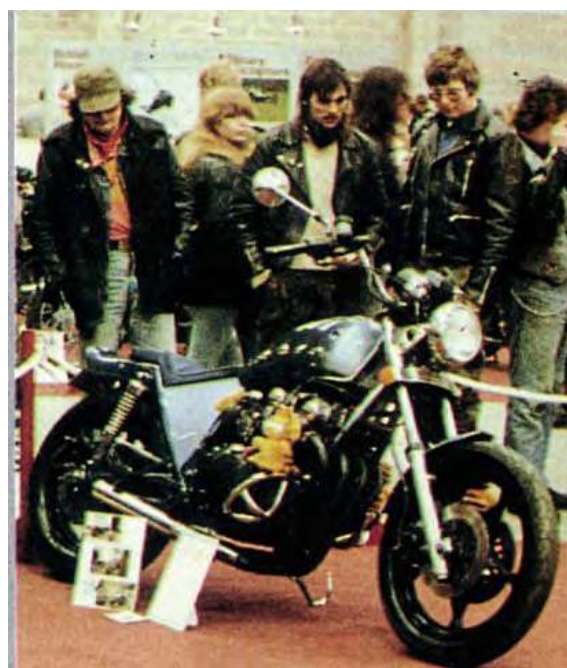
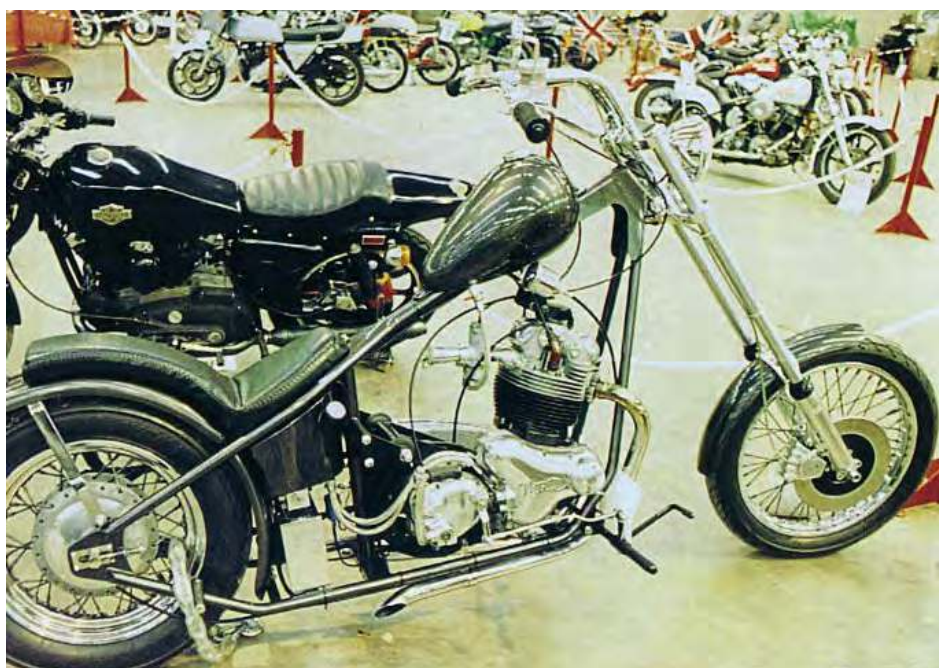
WORDS: NIK

PICS: BSH ARCHIVE



SOUTH & WEST

CUSTOM & CLASSIC

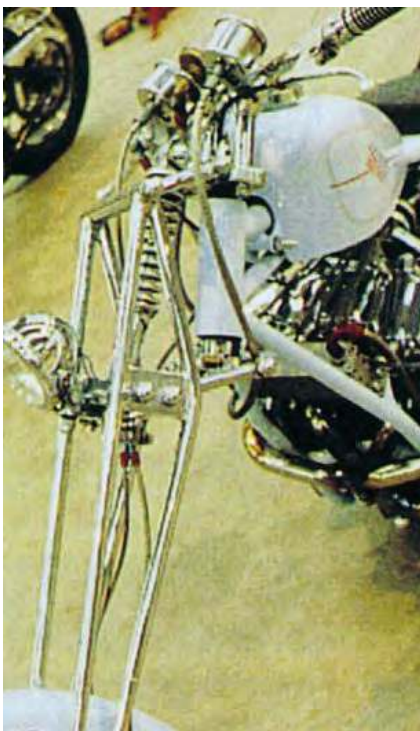




have to admit that my knowledge of the South & West, as it was affectionately known, is a little limited as in the days when it was in its heyday, I was young and skint, and Zummerz, where the event was held, was a long, long way from Suffolk, and I only actually went once, in 2007, when I was working for another magazine. I must admit, also, that I had a little bit of a downer on the event that one time too, as the advertising department for said magazine had, very kindly, volunteered me, without asking me first, to judge the custom show, despite the fact that that day was actually my 40th birthday – meaning that, on the day when most people are being spoilt rotten by their family and friends, I had the best part of a 500-mile round trip on the bike in the early part of the year when it still wasn't particularly warm...

Anyway, my moans aside, most people who went to the Shepton Mallet site had a really good time. The South & West was regarded by many as the season-opener in the days when, really, only the truly insane did winter rallies (says the bloke who's just come back from a very, very wet and very, very windy Dragon Rally), and one of the three biggies of the time, along with Kent and the Bulldog. It was started way back in 1984 by a lady with a passion, Lizzie Stott (and others too, o' course) as quite a small concern, but it proved very popular and grew and grew. When it started out it was, as I say, relatively small with the bar upstairs in the hall, but as more and more folk attended they started using one of the big halls/barns outside for the entertainment and bar. It continued to grow to a size that she and her crew couldn't really manage any more and, six







years after it started, she handed it over to the HA Nomads, but continued running it for them as she knew how to do it better than anyone else. Makes sense, doesn't it? If you have someone who knows how to do something really well, it'd be a bit silly not to let them do it, wouldn't it?

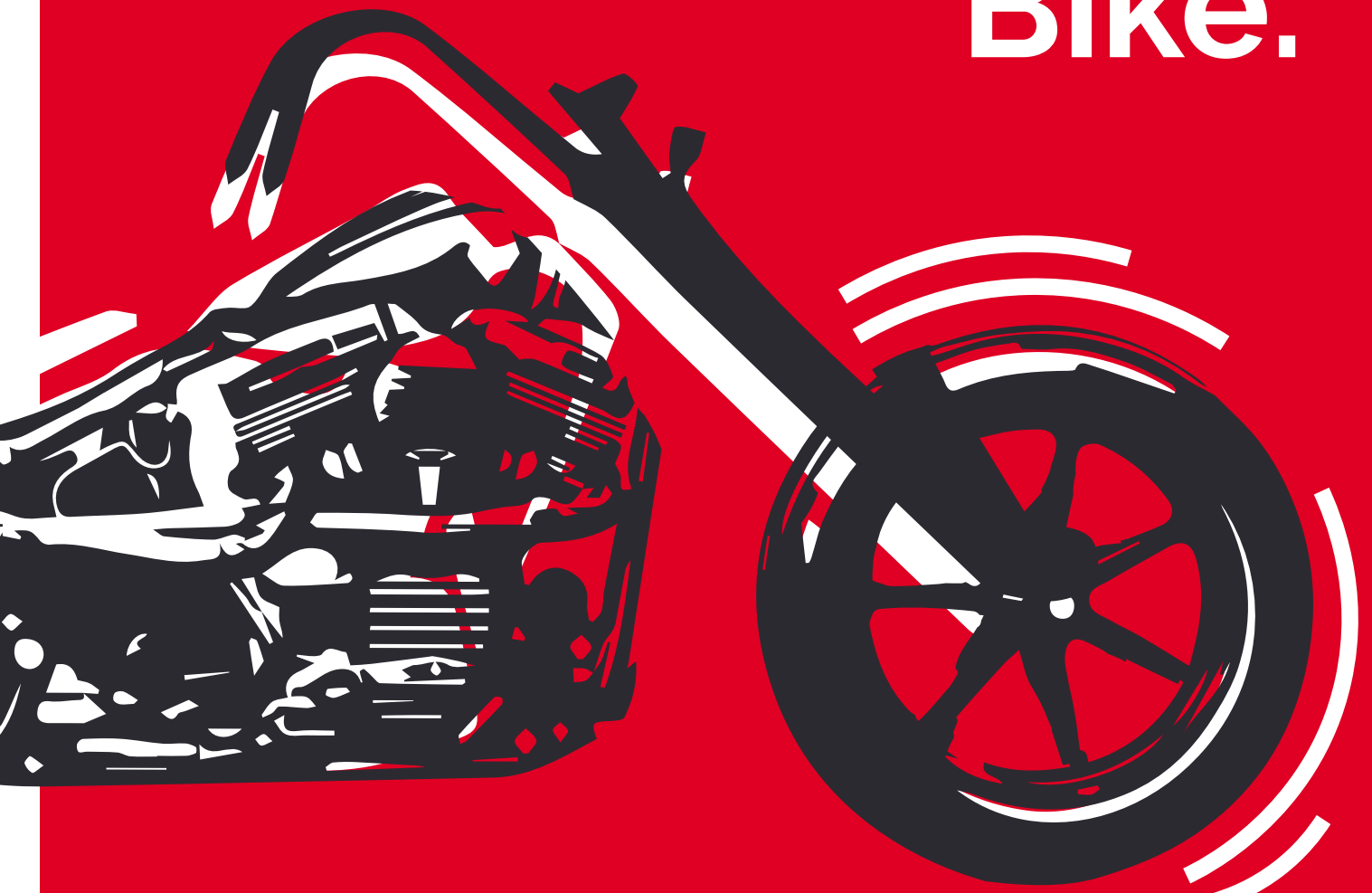
By all reports, this partnership worked out really well, and the show just got better and better. Bad Manners, the legendary two-tone and ska band, headlined in 1991 and went down an absolute storm (cos bikers only listen to classic rock, eh?), and in 1993 the show celebrated its 10th anniversary with a major party. In 1995, after having run what was easily one of the best biker bashes in the land for 11 years, Lizzie called it a day, and from then on the Nomads ran it themselves until, and the dates of this are a little hazy, it was passed on to the showground itself who continued to hold it, but changed it from a full weekend, full-on biker party to more of a family event and, by all accounts, it didn't really have the same feel to it after that, which is a real shame.

Anyway, as with previous articles, I'll sign off at this point and just let you look at the pics hereabouts – personally I love looking at old pics like this cos they really give you a warm fuzzy feeling, don't they? Nostalgia, they say, ain't what it used to be, but it's still cool... 🍷

Next issue:

EITHER THE EARLY FARMYARD, THE EARLY DRAGON, THE MAGNA CARTA OR THE EARLY DAYS OF THE ROCK & BLUES!

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SHED BUILT



WORDS & PICS: NIK

AS ANYONE WHO'S BEEN READING *BSH* FOR ANY TIME NOW'LL KNOW, WE'VE BEEN GOING TO NCC LONDON'S ANNUAL DIAMOND DAY CUSTOM BIKE SHOW AT THE ACE CAFÉ IN LONDON AT THE BEGINNING OF JULY EACH YEAR FOR A FEW YEARS NOW.

SMALL, BUT PERFECTLY FORMED

Like all NCC shows it always has some of the best bikes that the National Chopper Club build, and it also has some really, really good ones from outside the club too. It's one of those events that often turns up some real gems; bikes that aren't quite the norm as far as most people regard them, bikes, in fact, like Becky's lovely little VT125, or Shadow as they're also called, Honda bobber that you see here in front of you.

She'd been planning to build a custom 125 for a little while, as she really fancied one, and'd started gathering plans and parts towards it, when this one appeared for sale locally. She says that it ticked all the boxes in her head, not least because not only had Ionut, the guy who'd built it, done everything, absolutely everything, himself, from the frame mods to the carbon fibre mudguards to the hand-carved seat to the paint, and not only was it his first







ever custom project, but it was actually his first ever bike, and the one he learnt to ride on, and passed his test on! Now I don't know about you, but that, in my book, is some achievement!

Ionut got the little Honda, of 2000 vintage, as a project as a Christmas gift. It was, basically, a frame, a pair of wheels, the engine (which was seized solid), the forks, and the yokes, and not much else. He'd only been in the UK for something like seven months, and so didn't really know anyone who could help him with the build so, undeterred, he set to, and did all the work himself. Obviously a man who's no stranger to spanners, he rebuilt the engine himself, cut the back of the frame off, made the carbon fibre front and rear mudguards, hand-carved the cool little bobber seat, sourced and mounted the Sportster tank, and pretty much made or modified everything else he needed as he went along. The shocks, yes, he bought them from Hagon Shocks (www.hagon-shocks.co.uk), and the speedo is a neat little Daytona digital item (distributed by Digital Speedos – www.digital-speedos.co.uk), but apart from those, the bike as you see it is all his own work, including painting the wheels a fetching shade of turquoise (look good, don't they?), and doing the wonderful scale-effect paintwork on the tank and 'guards. When you consider that, for a lot of us, our first foray into the world of paint was spraying our bikes with rattle-cans in the garden while trying not to get any runs in it, to do this as your first paintjob is pretty damn good.

Once he'd passed his test, the need for a bigger bike meant that he sold the little Shadow, and bought himself a 600 Shadow, and bobbed that too (there's a picture of it in last month's Readers' Lives) but, no sooner had he finished it, literally the next day, someone stole it. Undeterred (well, possibly a bit...) he used the insurance pay-out



ENGINE:

2000 Honda VT125 Shadow, pod air-filter, one-off stainless exhaust with internal baffles

FRAME:

Modified 2000 Honda VT125 Shadow, rear section cut, stock foot-rest hangers, aftermarket 'pegs

STUFF:

100/90-17 tyre, stock wheel/brake/forks/yokes/brake lines/master-cylinder/controls/switchgear, aftermarket 'bars/grips, Daytona digital speedo, handmade carbon fibre mudguards, Sportster tank, handmade leather seat, one-off side-panels, aftermarket rear 'guard/side-mount, stock swingarm/wheel/brake, Hagon shocks, Metzeler 130/90-15 tyre, stock loom, aftermarket headlight/tail-light/indicators

FINISH:

Turquoise & graphics by Ionut Petcu

ENGINEERING:

Ionut Petcu

THANKS TO:

"Ionut Petcu..."



to buy a 1400 Intruder, and he's currently in the process of modifying that. I've seen a couple of pics of it mid-build, and it looks like it's going to be pretty good when it's done so please give us a shout when you finish it, Ionut!

Becky bought the wee Honda in June 2018, and although she's no stranger to big bikes (she's previously had a ZX-6R, a FireBlade, and a Sportster among others), she's fallen in love with it. Yeah, it's no good for doing any distance really, but in and around London it's mustard. In fact, the only criticism she has of it is that, due to the reduced weight of the back end, the shocks are a bit hard: "It's a bit of a back-breaker, but that's the only fault it's got." Sometimes, Becky, you just have to suffer for your art, don't you? And if that's the worst thing about it, I think you've done quite well, don't you? 🍷



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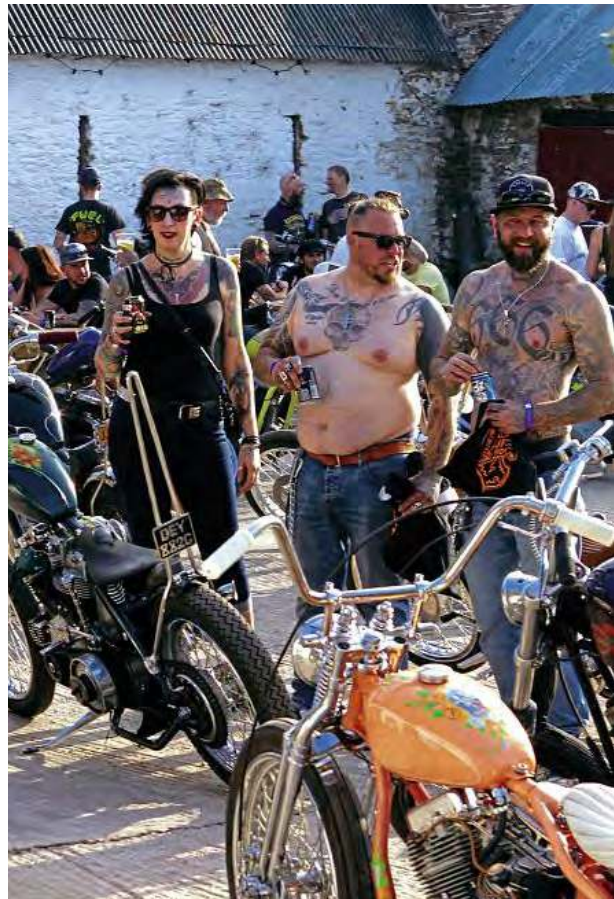


EVENT THE HOOK UP

WORDS & PICS: GARRY STUART

FOR FIVE YEARS NOW, COME THE FIRST WEEKEND IN AUGUST, LONG FORK CHOPPERS, AND BOBBERS, HAVE HEADED WEST TO GOD'S OWN COUNTRY (YES, I AM WELSH ACTUALLY) TO A SMALL HILL FARM NEAR LLANSOY.





I t's not too far over the border so no need to be nervous, and the local bikers are a friendly bunch... mostly, as long as they're plied with beer and Sailor Jerry rum. Finding the farm entrance to the show is part of the rite of passage for newbies, and overshooting the gate is inevitable (unless following a bunch of Hook Up veterans).

We have one James Bull, and his mates, to thank for this mid-summer concentration of chopper tomfoolery, and they run a pretty tight ship considering the venue is nowhere near to the sea. At the end of the long, dusty farm track there's a choice of left or right, and should you be riding a bolide of such glacier coolness that your headlight has a sticker on it, you'll be allowed to turn right into the holy of holies – the farmyard. Here you can park your chop/bob/thingy at the event's nucleus where it'll be revered by the people who had to turn left, following a sign that read 'All Other Shit'.

Previous years' attendance was restricted to 250 advance purchased tickets, but this year saw that number doubled. There's ample camping space, and no cramming, but the numbers this year were probably at the limit of the rest of the facilities. This is a chopper party where the bikes are the main attraction, and only a small handful of stalls are there to supply t-shirts, and coffee and, for this year, really good street food – Brazilian or Portuguese-type scan. The farmyard, with the 'cool' chops, is enclosed by barns in which the bar and art exhibition are situated, and a larger, more cavernous, open-fronted barn hosts the bands, DJs, and other types of entertainment (more of which later).

The weather gods were kind once again, and by Friday afternoon the camping field was almost full with dry, warm, happy campers imbibing their liquids of choice as the sun set behind the Black Mountains. The good vibe continued as people migrated to the farmyard bar





where I was able to help one poor misguided soul who'd ordered a large round of Flat Tyre canned lager. I commented to him that he must be riding somewhere later, seeing as he'd ordered a load of zero-alcohol beer, and the shock on his face was comical as he shouted to the bar staff: "No! No! Fook that, give me Red Stripe instead!"

In the entertainment barn a van'd arrived, and a chap was busy assembling some contraption consisting of rubber components, and an air pump. What could it be? Surely not a bouncy castle? No, it was much better than that – a mechanical rodeo bull emerged from the recesses of the van. Riders who'd endured hours of bouncing, spine-crushing hardtails on our potholed highways could now choose to be spun, twisted and bucked for the entertainment of others, and you should never underestimate the numbing power of alcohol – a queue for this ritual humiliation soon formed! As the crowd-pleasing show went on, inhibitions were shed, along with all items of clothing, when a bunch of drunk Valley Boys decided that their sweaty naked arses'd enable them to stick to the saddle longer...

Saturday at the Hook Up is always ride-out day. After knocking back a few artisan coffees to counteract the previous night's beer and rum intake, choppers were pushed, kicked or thumbled into life, ready for a long (four hour!) excursion into the Welsh countryside. Scotland has its Thunder in the Glens, so can we have Vibrations in the Valleys? Or shall we leave that for H.O.G.?

The Hook Up really has become one of the stand-out events in the chopper rider's calendar, and it was noticeable this year that there were a fair few Continental visitors, judging by the number of Dutch, German, Belgian and French 'plates present. One Belgian chopper in particular caught my eye, and I was pleased to see it win Best of Show. It was a super-clean, dark cherry red, Nor-Cal style Generator Shovelhead with a foot clutch/jockey shift, and no front brake, leaving the bars free of levers and cables and, even more surprisingly, it wasn't just a suspension-less hardtail, but a hard front as well!

Saturday night is traditionally boxing night – a very popular spectator sport made even more interesting this year by the addition of burlesque dancers. Alas, I wasn't there for the fun and frolics, having had to set off up north for another engagement, so my loss is errrr... my loss, I guess, so roll on August! 🍷

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SIXTY TIMES ROUND THE SUN





WORDS & PICS: DAVE MANNING



ANDY WRIGHT'D ALWAYS WANTED A GENERATOR SHOVEL SO, AS HE TURNED 60 AT THE END OF JULY LAST YEAR AND HADN'T GOT A BUILD ON THE GO, IT MADE PERFECT SENSE TO TREAT HIMSELF NOT ONLY TO A NEW BUILD, BUT ALSO TO A SIXTIETH BIRTHDAY PRESENT TO HIMSELF AT THE SAME TIME!

He'd actually bought the bike back in 2002-ish as a more or less stock SuperGlide, after a considerable time looking for a suitable Shovelhead. While Shovels are often thought of as being truly old, near-vintage models, it's easy to forget that they were being built into the Eighties, right up until the Evolution engine came into production in 1984. As it happens, it was actually his wife, Jenny, who'd spotted the bike in the local paper, after Andy'd given up looking! He rode it standard for a bit, before deciding that a stock machine was not what he really wanted, and that he could make it better, visually and practically, than it was as it came out of the factory.

So it was stripped down, and rebuilt in a Fenland Choppers frame with an S&S Sidewinder big bore kit, and it went okay, although the standard four-speed 'box wasn't really good enough for what he wanted. He just so happened to mention it to his mate, Malc, who pointed out that Baker Drivetrain'd just brought out a six-speed kicker, so that was next! Then came the cylinder heads, getting them twin-plugged

and fitted with big valves, which meant that, to get the best gains, a bigger carb'd be required – an S&S Super G was added to help it breathe more easily. He much prefers them to the flat-slide Mikuni that's often used, and by the way that the Shovel so easily kicked into life on the photoshoot, you can see why he's happy with the chunky S&S.

The traditional spoked wheels are of the trad' chop dimensions (a 21" at the front, with a 16" at the rear), while the forks are a modified set of DNA springers topped by a pair of homemade 'bars held by tall risers and staggered clamps. The brakes, front and rear, are hydraulic, with the rear being a sprocket/disc arrangement with a chunky twin piston caliper of unknown origin, while the standard Harley front caliper is operated by the left-foot brake pedal (that sits in front of, and below, the gear shift pedal on the neatly arranged forward controls), thus meaning that there's no requirement for a front brake lever which, in turn, keeps those apehanger 'bars nice and clean, with the internal throttle adding to the effect.

The tinware comprises of a Fenland Choppers oil tank, a fuel tank that may (or may not) be a Wasp tank, homemade battery and electrics boxes, and a homemade rear 'guard supported by a bespoke sissy-bar.

Over the years, the chop's been black and red, light blue and cream, candy red, and now, finally, red and gold. Talking about the paint, Andy Barlow, who sprayed it, said: "You won't lose that in a car park, will you!" but it's not all about the looks – it rides and handles well; Andy can scrape the exhausts without too much trouble, and for a Shovel it really is very quick!



ENGINE:

Harley S&S Generator Shovelhead, S&S Superstock crankcases, gas-flowed/twin-plugged heads, oversize valves, S&S Sidewinder barrels/crank, Andrews cam, S&S Super G carb, unknown airfilter, Barnett clutch, belt primary drive, Baker six-speed kicker gearbox, Dyna 2000 ignition (twin coil, single fire), homemade exhaust with short fishtails/wrapped headers, remote oil filter, homemade oil cooler/lines

FRAME:

Fenland Choppers hardtail, wishbone downtubes, homemade footrests with modified/homemade controls, standard side-stand

STUFF:

3.00x21" Avon Speedmaster MkII tyre, H-D hub, 21" rim, stainless spokes, modified stock caliper, modified DNA springer forks, homemade brake lines/'bars, unknown brake master-cylinder, Chinese grips, unknown petrol tank, Fenland Choppers oil tank, homemade battery/electrics boxes, homemade rear mudguard/side-mount, modified H-D rear hub, 16" rim, stainless spokes, unknown caliper, homemade mudguard struts, sprocket/brake, 5.00x16" Avon SM tyre, homemade loom, Bates headlight, BSA Bantam tail light

FINISH:

Red/gold paint by Andy Barlow, blasting by George, polishing by owner, plating by Marque Restore (02476 622225 or www.marquorestore.co.uk)

ENGINEERING:

Owner & Steve Ellis

THANKS TO:

"My wife Jenny; Steve Ellis; & Geoff of Cycle Enterprises (01455 213007)..."



Considering that he popped five discs in his back a number of years ago when he was rammed by a car, the hardtail Shovel's proved to be an okay ride, providing there isn't too much air in the back tyre. He has, he says, loads of ideas of what else he'd like to do, other bikes to build, but he probably won't live long enough to do half of them! As a Christian, and a member of God's Squad CMC, though he believes that he'll be able to carry on building in heaven, he won't be playing a harp so much as rattling spanners!

It's for sale (£15,000) to fund the next one, unless you want one building from scratch? Contact Andy on 07805 392530, but it's best to drop him a text first as he doesn't always have his phone to hand. 📶



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SINCE MY TEENS I'VE LOVED CAFÉ RACERS, THE MINIMALIST FOCUSED LOOK, THE PERFORMANCE, THE NOISE, THE WHOLE PACKAGE. THAT LOVE CONTINUED THROUGH MY 20S, 30S, AND 40S, AND I'VE HAD MANY BIKES, BUT NEVER A CAFÉ RACER.

KWAK IN A 'BED

WORDS: KEVIN SHUREY

PICS: SIMON EVERETT



2

014, the wrong side of 50 and still without my first love, an unfortunate situation changed that – my dear old mum died at the ripe old age of 91, and left me a little in her estate – not enough for an Egli Vincent or a BSA Gold Star, but enough for a Featherbed frame, and a crash-damaged donor bike.

I started to formulate what I wanted to build; it had to have a twin-cylinder motor with about 80bhp, spoked wheels, good brakes,

NOT upside-down forks, an electric start, and reliability – once it was built it had to stay together! My influence for the overall look was Manx Nortons and Matchless G50s. I wanted a modern take on those machines, and so bought a fibreglass Manx Norton petrol tank to be used as a dummy tank to cover the electrics and air intakes.

After trawling eBay for a suitable motor I settled for a Kawasaki ER6 as they had the right power, were totally reliable, and I liked the look. I also got a frame, and a Suzuki GS450 rear wheel. The engine was great



(fired up straightaway and sounded great), but the frame was borderline scrap – it'd been used for sidecar sprint racing, and'd been drastically altered, very badly, and needed a lot of work to be put right.

Around this time I changed jobs – my new employer made exhaust systems for F1 and NASCAR, and one of the perks of the job was that you could unofficially get little jobs done for yourself. The currency for getting these little jobs done was McVities Hobnobs, and I purchased many packets that year. The forks and wheel came from the US, and work provided a nice set of alloy yokes (they cost four bottles of cider), and I had a rolling chassis with an engine!

Due to the position of the gearbox sprocket, the engine had to be offset to the right, so I decided to have a high level 2-1 exhaust exiting to the left, and many Hobnobs later I had a beautiful Inconel exhaust as good as any F1 car out there! The pretty tank with the Norton logo is purely a cover for the electrics (the real one's where you'll find the oil tank usually), and I used the Monza cap from the original with access via a cut-out in the seat. This was 2018, and my old shed rotted away, so I had to build a new one to carry on. I decided to use the original ER6 loom, but it wasn't designed for a Featherbed frame so had to be lengthened/shortened/adapted, and I bought a spare loom to cannibalise.

Once it was all wired, it was time to fire it up. All looked good, and everything was plugged in where it should be, so I put some petrol in. It turned over, popped, and misfired, but wouldn't start. In desperation I sprayed some Easy Start down the inlets to encourage it... big mistake! I overdid it, and a pool

collected below the injectors – there was a flashback, and it ignited. I won't go into how much I panicked (a lot!), but eventually put it out. It turned out a couple of connectors were the wrong way round, and once sorted my baby fired up without hesitation, and sounded beautiful.

The work continued, and by November 2018 it was ready to get legal. It failed the first time on noise, but I quickly remedied that and took it back, and it passed without a hitch. Now it was time to strip and make pretty – all the polishing was done at home on my buffer, the frame and swingarm blasted and powder-coated, and I took a YouTube lesson in nickel-plating at home. The results were surprisingly good, especially after polishing! One of the biggest dilemmas was the colour scheme – I went from pearl white to British racing green to everything in between, and settled on gunmetal grey in a Manx Norton pattern.

So how does it ride? Well, it's surprisingly neutral when flipping it around the local lanes, and at speed it's rock steady – I've taken it to

over 110mph, and it feels like it's on rails, no weaves or wobbling. The front brake does the job with ease, the rear steadies the back end up nicely, and the suspension is firm as I like it. As for performance, it's got enough power for my needs, but I plan to get the engine remapped for more bottom end and midrange. The riding position puts weight on the wrists at low speed, but it's a price I'm willing to pay for the overall look of the bike – it's not a café racer without clip-ons! 🏍️

ENGINE:

2006 Kawasaki ER6, cleaned up, polished, expansion tank removed, waterless coolant, one-off exhaust, modified electrics, one-off chain outtrigger

FRAME:

1960 Norton Model 50 Featherbed Wideline, modified/reworked, engine offset to right, one-off rear-sets

STUFF:

Suzuki GS hubs/discs, stainless spokes, flanged rims, Pretech six pot caliper, Suzuki GS750 forks (Hagon progressive springs), one-off yokes, clip-on 'bars, Kawasaki ER6 master-cylinder, old-style alloy front mudguard, modified H-D nose cone, modified Manx Norton tank as dummy, one-off underseat tank/seat, Hagon twin shocks, modified Manx Norton swingarm

FINISH:

Paint by Neil at Tazart (07515447677 or www.tazartdesign.com), polishing/nickel-plating by owner

ENGINEERING:

Titanium footrests/wheel spindle nuts/fork nuts/ various bolts

THANKS TO:

"Jim Zamett, Graham Barrow & all the boys at SST Technology, Neil at Tazart; my darling wife Joss & son Gene; & Hobnobs..."



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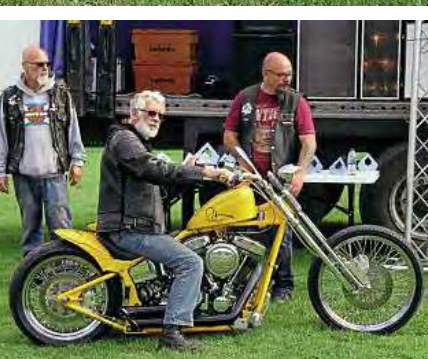
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EVENT NCC NOTTS' CUSTOM SHOW

WORDS & PICS: NIK

YOU KNOW WHEN YOU HIT A POT-HOLE SO HARD THAT THE JOLT MAKES YOU FART? I DID THAT ON THE A1 ON THE WAY UP TO NCC NOTTS...





Deciding to forgo the plushness of the Niken's seat, I thought I'd drag out my faithful old (twelve years on the road now!) silly-sided Bandit, with its minimal subframe (and, okay, clip-on seat), and give that an outing. All was going well – the A14/A1 up from Cambridge was okay, if mind-numbingly tedious, but just south of Newark, as I was passing under a bridge and so the road was in shadow, a hidden 'ole caught me unawares, causing me to release a very loud vocal expletive, and an equally sonorous one from down below me, too. The state of the roads in this country really is shocking!

NCC Notts' show, my destination that day, was held at the Newark Rugby Club on the outskirts of the town famously known as an anagram of what teenage boys are when they're left alone in their bedrooms, and was, by the time I arrived, already full of very, very nice chops and customs. Layla Leatham's lovely BSA was one of the outstanding ones, and April's very cool, as featured, 125 rat too, and the flat-six Honda (Gold Wing? Valkyrie?) trike was pretty damn impressive an' all, as was the Terminator chop with its mile-long forks and intricate murals. Actually,



there were a fair few bikes at Newark with good tank murals, and the green-flame devil skull one on a Club bike was probably my favourite. Oh yeah, the chopped Intruder side-car outfit was ace, too!

And despite the fact that I was so far from home I met up with a number of folk I knew; some from the BSH Facebook group, some reprobate rat bikers from the R&S, some old Club acquaintances, and a friend on her Hornet making the long journey back from a wee holiday near Manchester down to the south coast, who'd stopped in on the way 'cos she'd heard it was a good show. It's always cool to meet up with folk you know, or know of, especially when you're in a different part of the country and don't really expect to know anyone there.

Due to the fact that my Bandit picked up an award, I can't really tell you who won wot in the actual show as I was lined in the queue to go up and collect my trophy. A lot of NCC shows these days don't actually have actual categories – they just pick bikes of outstanding quality, and give them an award. Don't know if NCC Notts did this, but the bikes they picked (there should be pics hereabouts) were pretty damn good, so...

This year's bash will be a two-dayer (well, a party with bands Sat night and the show Sunday), and will be held on the weekend of 15-16th Aug, at the same place. Look in the BSH Events pages for more info. 🍻

**SHED
BUILT**





WORDS & PICS: **FD**

SEAGULL

CALLING IN TO SEE PEOPLE WHO BUILD CUSTOM BIKES FOR A LIVING IS ONE OF LIFE'S GREAT PLEASURES; NOT ONLY DO YOU GET TO CHAT WITH PEOPLE WHO LIVE AND BREATHE CUSTOMS, AND DRINK THEIR TEA, BUT YOU ALSO FIND BIKES THAT YOU MAY NOT'VE COME ACROSS OTHERWISE.

I'd called in to see Gary at Public Enemy Customs in Slinfold in West Sussex (just across the courtyard from P&D Customs, as it happens), and spotted this very, very nice black 'n' cream 'n' brass Harley Shovel' bobber, belonging to a gentleman by the name of Dennis Downes and, as I just happened to have my camera with me, photographed it then and there. Serendipitous, eh?

Dennis'd bought the bike back at the end of 2018 and, once the winter was a dim and distant memory, started using it, but it developed a problem with its hydraulics, and so was taken to Gary to get it sorted out. It was built a few years previously by a guy called Garry Griffiths from Cornwall, and'd started life



as just an early '80s Santee hardtail, and a bollixed 1340 Shovelhead motor that'd been left stood in a shed somewhere. He acquired them both, had the motor rebuilt with a few choice goodies by B&H Motorcycles in St Austell, and then, through his commendable involvement with his local lifeboat station, found a lovely brass fuel tank from a British Seagull outboard motor that he could see'd make a perfect oil tank for his bike. That was all the inspiration he needed; he decided to build a bike with a particularly Cornish theme to it*... well, that was the plan at first anyway but, as with many builds, as the build went on, and bits and pieces he liked were found, it evolved from Cornish to distinctly American. That wasn't entirely intentional, you understand, it's just that as more and more old brass goodies turned up, the plan evolved.

First things first though – suitable wheels, he found, were difficult to source so he bought chrome ones, had them



ENGINE:

H-D 1340cc Shovelhead, rebuilt by B&H Motorcycles, aftermarket carb, brass air-filter, electronic ignition, hydraulic clutch conversion, 2" Ultima open belt primary, five-speed Evo' gearbox, one-off wrapped exhausts with one-off heat-shield

FRAME:

Santee rigid, one-off forwards

STUFF:

Shinko 3.00/21 tyre, 21" powder-coated 40 spoke front wheel with 20 cent coin in end of spindle, aftermarket disc, Kawasaki caliper, 2" under H-D Hugger forks, one-off wide yokes/handlebars/clutch master-cylinder, modified Buell brake master-cylinder, 1940s inverted levers, vintage grips, miniature side-mounted speedo, modified 1945 Greeves front mudguard, lengthened Sportster tank, single sprung seat with diamond stitching, modified H-D front mudguard as rear, one-off oil tank with Esso oil can lid filler cap, one-off battery/electrics boxes, 16" powder-coated 40 spoke rear with 25 cent coin in end of spindle, Demon Cycles sprocket/disc, Shinko 5.00/16 tyre, one-off loom/headlight, aftermarket tail light

FINISH:

Black/cream base with logos/pin-stripping by Kelvin Green/Nick Williams, brass plating by builder

ENGINEERING:

Bike built by Gary Griffiths
Thanks To:
"Gary Griffiths; B&H Motorcycles (01726 824256 or www.bnh-motorcycles.co.uk); & Public Enemy Customs (01403 791482 or www.publicenemycustoms.uk)..."



powder-coated black, and swapped the spokes for stainless ones as they have a softer sheen to them than the standard chrome. A set of Sportster forks went into wider yokes, and a Sporty tank was lengthened too, and two Buell master-cylinders, to power the front brake and the hydraulic clutch, tucked away underneath it to keep the 'bars looking clean and suitably olde-worlde. He made the 'bars that take the 1940s inverted levers, and these kind o' set the tone for a vintage look, as did the lovely brass bits he'd found. Once he'd decided on the black and brass theme, he utilised a former employment skill to set up a plating vat in his workshop, and was able to brass-plate his own parts. He also began to recycle/rework bits – half an old Sportster headlight conceals the electrics, the back mudguard's a late '80s front one, and the rails mounted on it are actually MFI kitchen cupboard

handles. The front mudguard's off a 1945 Greeves, the front caliper is Kawasaki (modified), the mudguard struts, the gear and brake levers (with their inset coins), and the link arm for the forward controls are a nod to his trade as a fabricator of metal gates. The brass also gave rise to an almost US service theme; the number 187 on the battery box, and exhaust heat shield, is US police code for distress/shooting/murder, the headlight's made from a ship's bell, and the ignition barrel's created from a brass stirrup pump from a Green Goddess fire engine.

Once his dad'd reupholstered the gel-insert seat, he clocked up over 6k miles on the Shovel before selling it on. Dennis saw it, bought it, and loves it... especially now it's got working hydraulics! 🏴󠁧󠁢󠁥󠁮󠁧󠁿



*Even though British Seagull outboards were actually made in Dorset

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EVENT

YORKSHIRE ROCK & BIKE FEST

WORDS & PICS: **FD**

'IT'S YORKSHIRE' THEY SAID,
'EXPECT RAIN'... I DIDN'T EXPECT
A WEDDING THOUGH!



T

his event is open from the Thursday if you're happy to just camp, drink, and chill out to acoustic music the first night, but I got there Friday morning as this was going to be a calling point on a trip further north. I found Squires Café easily, and the camping fields up behind the pub are well maintained, and there are 'proper facilities' if you choose to walk down to them – if you have a real aversion to porta-loos, it's nice to know there's that option.

There were 20 assorted stalls, and a Yorkshire Wrap food van with delicious meal-size Yorkshire puddings filled with meat and gravy (other options were available, but I didn't venture any further down the menu board after trying a Yorkie Wrap), and the café also does lots of alternatives.



Music started mid-afternoon on the Friday with the first five of the mostly Yorkshire-based rock bands – Purple Zebras, Meanstreak, Mr Chief, Women In Rock, and Angel Fire. It was all good, and the beer was cold – what more could you want on a Friday night?

There wasn't much time for a lie-in Saturday as Outatime kicked off the tunes again at 11.30am, followed by Ey-Up Maiden, and Empress, playing before the bike show, which was independently judged by the River City Riders. Winners' details are a bit sketchy as entrants don't always take entry forms seriously – for example, Best Paintwork went to a Triumph Rocket 3 entered by Gary 'dunno I'm still hammered'; Best Trike to Mel Shadforth's '78 Gold Wing; Best Chopper to Layla Leatham's gorgeously psychedelic '59 BSA A10; Best Engineering to Nick Potter's Sportster bobber 'Iron Horse'; Best Classic to John Burbridge's beautiful Brough Superior; Best Streetfighter to Tom from SSMC Devon; and, lastly, Best in Show to Mike Keating's Road



King with its deep red paintjob that was so subtle it was difficult to appreciate it in the overcast weather.

Immediately the prize-giving was finished, there came a call from the marquee for everyone to come inside. A bit of confusion followed, and there was an announcement for 'Robert and Jane' to go to the stage. The compere, Peter from the Tribe of Judah Motorcycle Ministries, handed Robert a box, whereupon he promptly got down on one knee, and proposed to Jane. Thankfully she said 'yes', and a huge cheer went up from the crowd. At this point Peter announced that he was actually 'Reverend Peter' and, as Jane'd said 'yes' they might as well crack on and have the wedding. A bouquet of red roses suddenly appeared for the bride, champagne was already on ice, and, Hey presto! we had a wedding!

Rory Holl and The Men launched the evening's music, followed by Gun Law, Cash and, lastly, The Erics. I can honestly say that all the bands this weekend were good, and credit



for that lies in the capable hands of Joe Lally from Sound Solution Services, who ran the sound desk. There are many unsung heroes behind the scenes at events so it's nice to give them credit when opportunity arises – for example, the main compere, Tony Easton, took a moment during the evening to thank their regular photographer, Paul Marshall, and everyone else who worked the bars, the stalls, the security, and the clean-up crew, without whom the events just wouldn't happen.

The event raised £1077.56 for the Yorkshire Air Ambulance, so well done to all those who made it happen. 🍀

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**SHED
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SEXY LATINO

WORDS: DAVE RICHARD ELLIS

PICS: SIMON EVERETT

IT ALL STARTED AS A BET DOWN THE PUB WHEN ONE OF THE LOCALS ANNOUNCED HE WAS BUILDING A TRIKE FOR HIS MISSUS, AND INVITED ME TO HAVE A LOOK. TO CUT A LONG STORY SHORT, HE ENDED UP CHALLENGING ME TO DO BETTER... ME AND MY BIG MOUTH.

SENORITA



IN

the 1970s and '80s I worked for a really nice guy called Cedric Seltzer, who was one of Jimmy Clark's F1 mechanics in the '60s, and he taught me chassis design, how to construct wish-bones, and how to set the angles for camber, castor, toe in/out, bounce, and rebound, etc. Some of the cars we'd built were Lotus 22 Junior, and 23B racing cars, and we also built a Lotus 7 from drawings, so I used this knowledge to base my frame around the same set up as the Lotus race cars of the day.

Once I had the 1700cc Alfa Romeo QV-33 engine, and five-speed gearbox (with reverse) set up at the correct riding height above the floor, I modelled the frame around

it. Once the main back end was complete, which stopped where the car's rear firewall'd be, I started working on how to make the transition flow nicely to the headstock without looking like I'd chopped the front off a motorbike, and just stuck it on. I made jigs to build the rear uprights, and to position the headstock, machined a pair of drive-shafts to pair the Alfasud inner and Seat Leon outer shafts and lobros, and decided on a 55-degree rake angle as I really wanted good high-speed stability for cruising. It works, too – it's really stable on the open road. I used Gaz Shocks (www.gazshocks.com) rear shocks as they're really good, and reasonably priced, and they will actually make one-offs to your design if you need them to.

As always with any trike with telescopic forks, she's a bit of a handful round corners, but nothing you can't handle if you





ENGINE:

Alfa Romeo QV-33 1700cc, twin Dellorto DRLA 40 down-draught twin-choke carbs, trumpet air-filters with inner gauzes, modified Seat Leon drive-shafts joined to Alfasud inner lobros, Alfa 1200 5-speed gearbox, Bosch electronic ignition, 4-4 slash-cut tail pipes

FRAME:

2016 AR1S trike frame by DRE Engineering, 55 degree rake, 3.5" trail, one-off running boards with forward controls (foot rear brake/clutch)

STUFF:

Metzeler 110/80/18V front tyre, Suzuki VX800 wheel/disc/caliper, Suzuki GSX 1100G forks/yokes (top modified to take

instruments)/front mudguard, Goodridge stainless braided brake lines, one-off 1" alloy 'bars/switchgear/instrument surround/grips, Girling 3/4" master-cylinders, hand throttle, front brake lever, one-off steel panelling & battery/electrics boxes/alloy petrol tank, GRP rear mudguards, one-off trike back end, fully adjustable

mean it. You do also get a bit of head-shake when a rear wheel hits a pothole, but it instantly settles down, and I'm working on building a pair of leading-link forks which, I hope, will lighten the steering, and help settle things down.

The only real hassle was getting the tank right – the one you see here is the result of three failed attempts before I was completely happy with it, but at least my alloy TIG-welding's come on leaps and bounds since I started building the trike. The worst part of the project, as I'm sure most people find, was constantly changing

my mind during the build, meaning lots of brand new stuff I'd bought going back on eBay, and having to change or re-do bits over and over. The paint was also a real hassle; finding someone to actually do it took over three years, and three different attempts, before a mate's mate got me out the shit by recommending Paul Williams, who's made a cracking job of the black 'n' grey 'n' pin-striping. I'm very pleased as it means I've ended up with a look, and a standard of finish, way beyond my expectations.

She did fail the first VOSA SVA test due to silly things like an alarm, sharp corners and edges, and the really minor issue of it being way too loud. The sharp corners were the easiest to correct by popping the blanking bosses out, and increasing the corner radius, and temporarily changing the mirrors to nanny state-suitable ones. I did quieten the exhaust down too, much as it pained me to do so 'cos it sounded really sweet – it still sounds nice now, but before it was even sexier.

Future plans? Well, I've just bought an Alfa 33 16V twin cam engine, which I'm going to graft carbs on to, to, hopefully, achieve 150bhp (she's 120 now, and doesn't hang about at all)... assuming I can fit it into the frame without too much modification. At the moment I'm enjoying entering her in shows, and have won 'Best Engineering' and 'Best Trike' at the Home Grown show in Rye, 'Best in Show' at the Medusa Rally in Kent, and also 'Best in Show' at the Legionnaires Cocktail Party. She always draws a good crowd wherever we go, and everyone always wants to know how this was done, or why that was done like so – I can rarely just enjoy a quiet pint! To answer everyone's question: I don't know how fast she goes – I've been hands off at a ton, and she drives perfectly in a straight line, which's good enough for me!

As for the other question that everybody who's interested asks, is it for sale? Yeah, it is, but you need to make your own mind up as to what you think it's really worth, and make me an offer, as I can't put a price on it, y'know? And was it worth all the hassle and money? You bet – every time we go out for a ride! 



Gaz Shocks coil-overs, Wolfrace Eurosport 15x7.5" wheels, inboard Alfasud brakes, 4 one-off 18mm solid stainless radius arms with stainless rose-joints at both ends, Seat Leon/Alfasud hybrid drive shafts, 195/50/15" tyres, one-off loom/twin vertical projection headlights in stainless housings, LED stop/tail lights/indicators in chrome

billet housings, side marker lights/reverse lights/fog lights

FINISH:

Black paint with decals/clear lacquer by Paul Williams, powder-coating by Performance Powder-Coating (01303 844760 or www.performance-powdercoating.co.uk), plating by Paramount Plating

(01263 631006 or www.paramountplating.co.uk), polishing by owner

ENGINEERING:

DRE Engineering (owner)

THANKS TO:

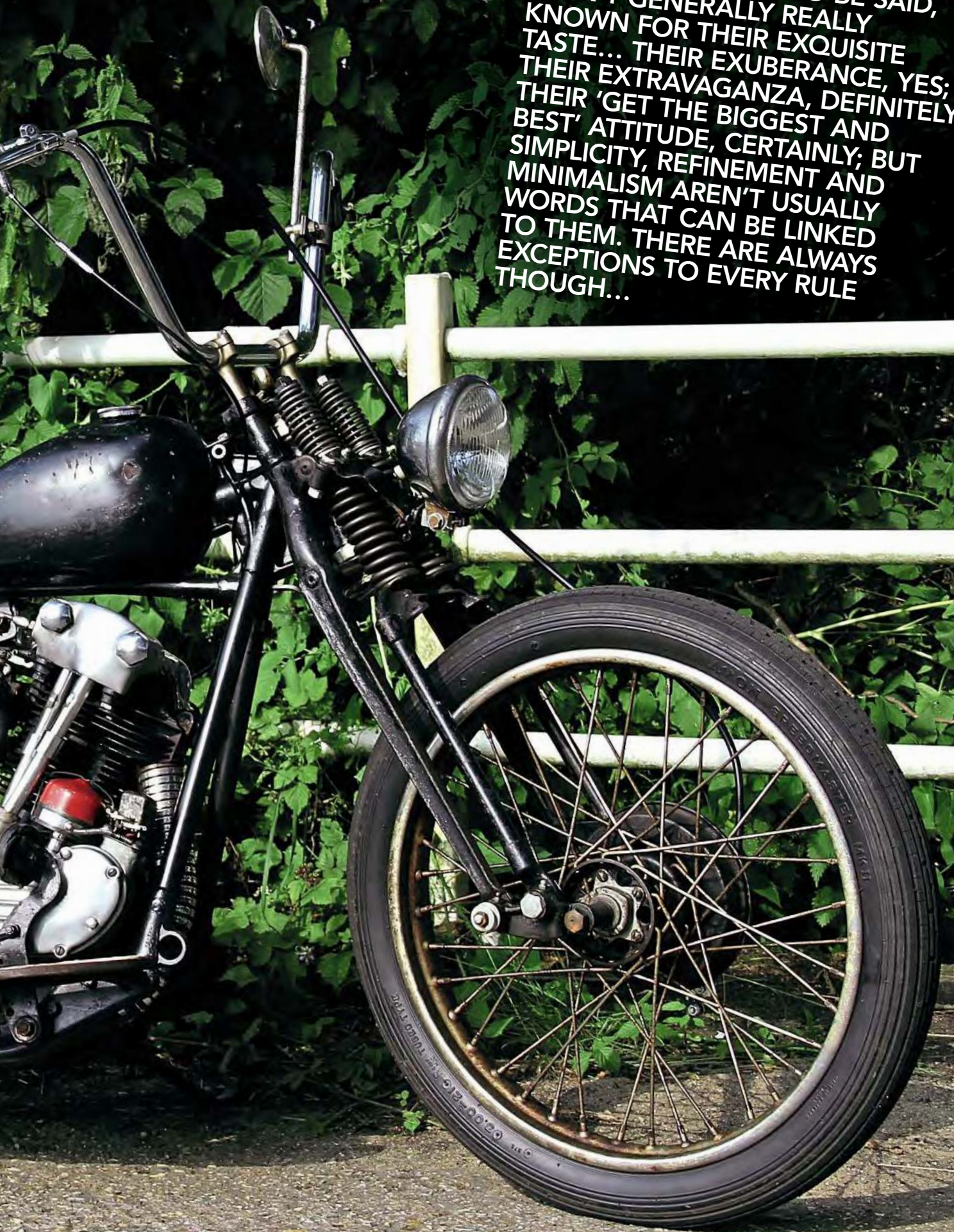
"Ian Walton of T&I Engineering Ltd; Andy Chidwick; Paul Williams; & Cedric Seltzer for his help/inspiration back when I was a lad..."



Adored...

WORDS & PICS: NIK

ROCK STARS, IT HAS TO BE SAID, AREN'T GENERALLY REALLY KNOWN FOR THEIR EXQUISITE TASTE... THEIR EXUBERANCE, YES; THEIR EXTRAVAGANZA, DEFINITELY; THEIR 'GET THE BIGGEST AND BEST' ATTITUDE, CERTAINLY; BUT SIMPLICITY, REFINEMENT AND MINIMALISM AREN'T USUALLY WORDS THAT CAN BE LINKED TO THEM. THERE ARE ALWAYS EXCEPTIONS TO EVERY RULE THOUGH...





T

he bike you see here before you belongs to a rock star, a real rock star, a real British

rock star, but it isn't the exercise in excess as you might expect – no, it's an absolutely sublime, cool-as-hell, superbly retro chopper that looks for all the world like it's just been found in a barn somewhere, a true survivor from yesteryear, and put back on the road as is. It isn't, of course; it's a new build from early last year, but you'd never known to look at it, would you? It looks old, properly old, but it isn't...

Well, I say it isn't, it actually is – the engine's from 1942, and the frame's from 1947, and just about all the parts used in its creation are either genuinely old, frighteningly rare, H-D parts from years gone by, or properly authentic '60s and '70s chopper parts from the days when folk first started building proper chops, but it was, as I said, built last year. The gentlemen behind its creation are Andy and Sav (Paul) from Pacoima Motorcycles; two of the leading lights in the new old-skool chopper scene, and two guys who really know what they're doing when it comes to creating uber-cool retro choppers.

They'd built a really rather lovely Shovelhead for our anonymous rock star friend and, as they were delivering it to him, he happened to let on



that he had a '42 Knuckle motor, and 'box, in his studio that he'd bought because he loved the distinctive shape of the classic (1932-1952) FL engine. Andy asked him what he was going to do with it, and he replied something along the lines of "Not much, I just like looking at it"... these artistic types, eh? Andy wasn't having that though – he couldn't bear the thought of such an iconic engine not being used for the purpose it was intended and, as you'll know if you've met him, he's quite direct in himself. He and the guitar maestro (I'm not telling you who he is, you'll have to keep guessing), amicably of course, argued back and forth for a while, and eventually a plan was worked out – Andy and Sav'd build him another bike using it, but this one had to be the genuine article; made from old parts, either genuine H-D or period chopper, and looking like it really belonged to the era it was based on. He, once he'd got his head around the idea, wanted to source the parts, the correct parts, himself, and so the Pacoima lads headed south, back to Norfolk, with the supposedly rebuilt Knuckle motor and gearbox in the van.

Now I say 'supposedly rebuilt' because, as it happens, when they started to pull the motor apart to check a few things, they very rapidly discovered that, firstly, it hadn't been rebuilt at all, and, secondly, it was absolutely bollocksed... no, I mean, utterly Donaldled (Duck, not Trump... although...).

They did tell me, as I was talking to them, what exactly was up with it but, as the list lengthened and the full horror of exactly how knackered that venerable old engine was unfolded, my brain went into shock and shut down to save me from sympathetic nightmares... let's just say it was very, very poorly indeed, shall we, and leave it at that? There was nothing for it, but to pull the whole thing down to its constituent parts, and rebuild it all to stock specifications, which is exactly what they did.

While they were doing this, the owner used every one of his contacts, and a fair amount of internet time too, to hunt down all the parts he'd need, and turned up an unmolested '47 Knucklehead frame (rare in itself!), a set of genuine 1930s VL springer forks, an ultra-rare Hap Jones fuel tank (Hap Jones was a famous American motorcycle racer from the '20s and '30s who went on to found his own accessory shop, selling very, very cool bike bits that're almost legendary in the new old-skool chopper scene), a

genuine Bates seat (that he re-covered himself using leather from one of his own, very old motorcycle jackets), and a host of horribly uncommon genuine H-D parts. As they came in, they were sent to Pacoima (Norfolk, rather than north LA) where Andy and Sav mended, refurbished, or modified them to suit, and then added them to the bike. Because the idea was that it'd have suitable patina, they didn't really clean them up too much, and any parts that were actually new (like the wheels and spokes, for example) were aged, using their tried-and-tested secret process, to look just so too.

The result is a bike that, as I said, really does look like it was parked in a barn somewhere in the early 1960s, and just left there until recently, when it was given an oil change, the plugs cleaned, the points adjusted, and fresh petrol added, and then fired up and used exactly as it was in the days before it was parked there. The owner, a man of particular taste himself, absolutely loves it, but he's not precious about it – as he was going off for an extended period over the summer of 2019, and wouldn't be able to ride it, he lent it to Andy to smoke around on (and get all the gremlins, that you always get with a new build, absolutely ironed out), and finally took delivery of it late last year after Andy'd had the most amazing summer aboard it. Some people are just too damn nice, aren't they? 🍷

ENGINE:

1942 H-D Knucklehead, rebuilt by Pacoima Motorcycles, old H-D air-filter/kicker-pedal, one-off 'pipes by Pacoima M/Cs

FRAME:

1947 H-D Knucklehead, old H-D foot-boards/controls

STUFF:

New rims/spokes (aged), old H-D hubs/brakes/VL springers, modified risers/'bars, old grips, rare Hap Jones tank, genuine old Bates seat (recovered/aged), old H-D rear 'guard/oil tank, one-off sissy-bar by owner, minimal loom by Pacoima M/Cs, old Bates headlight/tail light

FINISH:

Original patina tank/rear 'guard, age-painted frame by Pacoima M/Cs

ENGINEERING:

Bike built/components refurbished/modified/aged by Pacoima M/Cs (07512 784798 or Facebook or Instagram)





ONE OF
THE MOST
OFTEN
ASKED
QUESTIONS
WE HEAR IN
REFERENCE
TO CUSTOM
BIKES IS
'WHERE IS IT
NOW?'

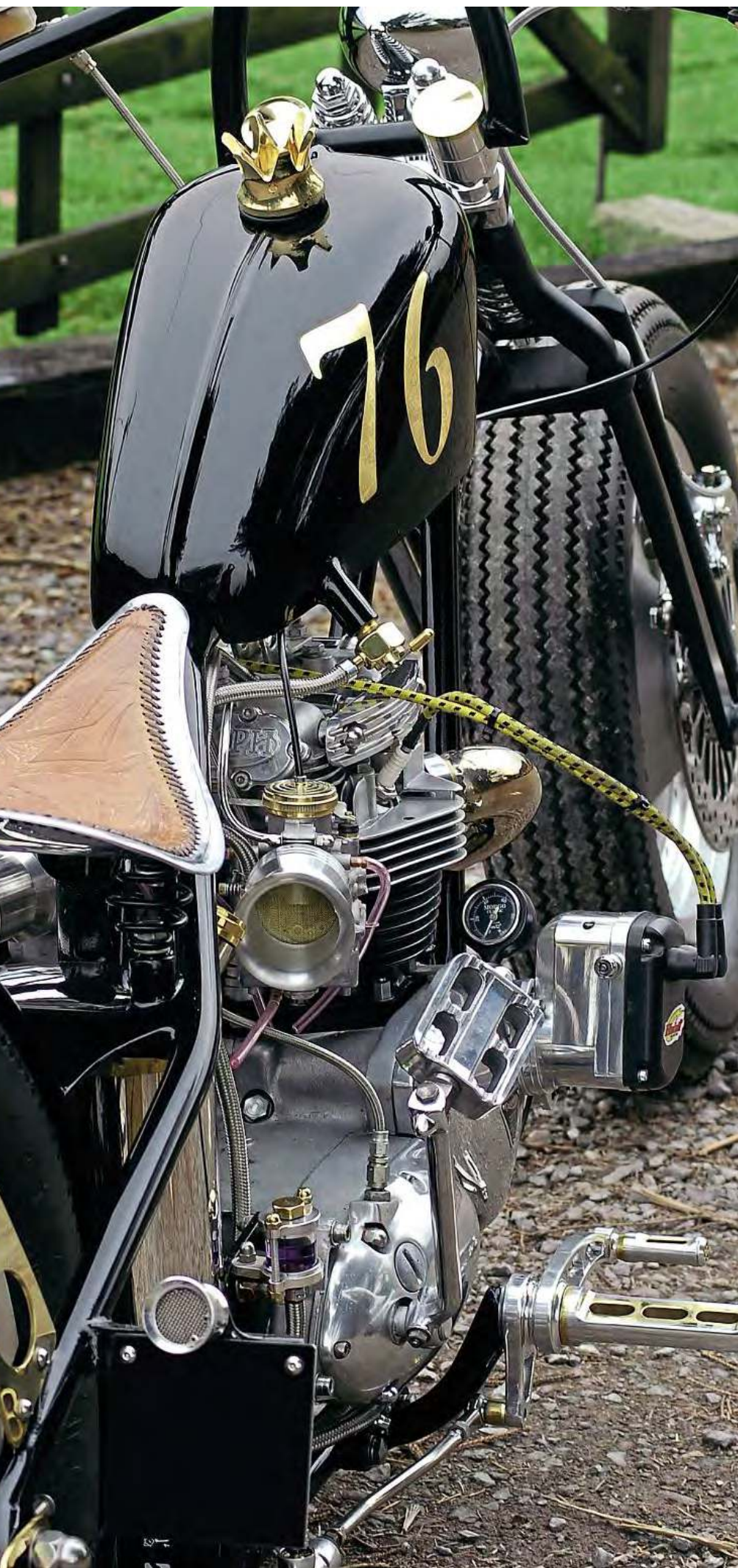
WORDS: **NIK**

PICS: **BARRY Ó DONAVAN**

DUCKIN' GORGEOUS!







IT

does seem to be A Thing – bikes, quite stunning bikes, get featured, and

they just seem to disappear off the face of the planet. It seems almost a rule, to which there are, of course, exceptions, that no sooner has a bike had its five minutes of fame, or 30 days if you like, it then vanishes into the ether in a manner reminiscent of the Roanoke colonists, Lord Lucan, or Sheffield Wednesday.

Occasionally though, just occasionally, the whereabouts of a very special bike can be ascertained years, decades even, after it's been built, and this 'ere Triumph, ladies and gentlemen, is one such machine. Built way back around 2012 by the elder statesman (he's going to kill me for that...) of Irish custom bike building, Mr Ger Conlon, it is, at this precise moment, sitting unused and unloved in a garage in Cork. I know, I know, fuggin' criminal, isn't it? Someone may be able to rescue it though; we'll get to that in a moment.

It was originally built, as I said, back in the early 'Teens by Ger for Mike Collier, a fellow member of the Ducks Custom Club. He had, at some point, bought an oil-in-frame Bonnie (made from '71 to '83, they started out as 650s and were enlarged in '73 to 750cc), but'd never been able to get it to run right so it languished in his shed gathering dust and cobwebs. Then, one day, after yet another conversation as to what he was going to do with 'that Bonnie', he made up his mind – he was going to chop it... or, more correctly, Ger was going to chop it for him. After all, if you're good mates with arguably the best custom bike builder in your country, and you're both members of a small and very exclusive custom club, and you don't have the time, or perhaps the skills, required to build a custom yourself, it'd be slightly foolish not to avail yourself of their services, wouldn't it?

The motor then, of 1976 vintage (making it a T140, as opposed to a T120), was stripped out of the stock chassis, and shipped across the water to a very, very well known specialist in rebuilding British motors for a full, ground upwards rebuild. Who were they? Well, I'd rather not say for reasons that'll become clear in a few moments but, suffice to say, they probably won't be getting any more work from that corner of the Emerald Isle, okay?



While the motor was away being rebuilt, Mike dropped off a few bob so Ger could start buying in parts. He (Mike) gave him (Ger) a few instructions of what he wanted, but mostly he (Ger) had free reign to do whatever he thought'd look good – again, when you have a mate whose bikes've won major awards on just about every continent there is (okay, so perhaps not Antarctica... and I don't know about South America to be honest), and is an absolute tour de force in the custom bike world, it's probably worth trusting his judgement, isn't it? He picked up a set of 2" under DNA springers, and a pair of Biltwell z-bars, and Mike arrived with a pair of Fat Boy solid wheels, so he ordered the pair of Firestone 500 tyres to give that classic look. A Sporty tank and a ribbed rear mudguard, which Ger'd found in Sweden, went into the mix, and he added a rib down the centre of the tank to match the 'guard, and got hold of a DNA sprocket/brake, and a matching front disc and caliper, too. Now all he needed was a frame to hang it all off, and for that he needed a... well, the motor.

Not too long after all this collecting (much more fun than stamps!), the engine arrived back, so he set it, the rear wheel, and the assembled front end, up in the jig, and then, he says modestly, "moved things around until I liked the look of it, and built the frame around it". If only it was that easy for us mere mortals! He then made the 'pipes, the foot-controls, the oil tank, the hand-carved seat, the rear struts, and the 1001 other little bits and pieces that a bike needs too – as he says:

To contact Ger about this bike, or to have him work on, or paint, your own one, ring him at C&C Choppers on **00353 86 306 4784** (from outside Eire, or **086 306 4784** if you live there), or look him up on Facebook – **Ger Chopper Ireland**.

"I try to make as many one-off parts as possible on any bike I build so..."

One thing Mike'd been quite insistent about was that he wanted the bike painted black with the year of manufacture done in gold leaf on one side of the tank so Ger, who's ever-so slightly handy when it comes to all things paint as you may or may not know, did that, and put the Ducks' hockey mask logo on the other side to even it up. Angry Ed, from Mad Manx Polishing, made it all so, so shiny, and then it was time to fire it up...

That didn't go too well... it took ages, many, many kicks, before it eventually fired, and when it did it didn't sound too good – the new carbs needed a lot of adjustments, and the timing was way out, and there was an oil leak from one of the rocker boxes. The rebuild was rumoured to've cost over €3k – hmm, as Ger says: "You'd think that after charging top money to rebuild the motor, these things should've been sorted..."

Eventually, though, they got everything sorted out, and the little Triumph sang as sweetly as a bird. Mike, though, almost immediately

traded it for a Buell without, Ger thinks, ever actually riding it. It sits now in Tim's garage (Tim's C&C's wiring go-to guy), and he's thinking of taking out the engine and building a Featherbed-framed café racer around it, and breaking or selling the rest of the chop. Yeah, I know, I suspect your reaction's pretty much the same as mine! There is a bit of good news, though – he'd also be willing to sell it complete, as a whole bike, as is, if anyone's interested. Ring Ger on the number hereabouts, or contact him through Facebook, if you're interested.

Me, I'd absolutely love it... hmm, anyone know how you set up one o' them crowd-funding pages? 

ENGINE:

1976 Triumph T140 Bonneville 750, rebuilt/detailed/polished, Joe Hunt magneto, brass carb tops, one-off bell-mouths/exhausts with brass tips/kicker pedal, hydraulic clutch conversion

FRAME:

One-off hardtail by Ger Conlon/C&C Choppers, one-off machined alloy/brass foot-controls

STUFF:

Firestone 500 tyres, H-D Fat Boy wheels, DNA front disc/caliper/springers (2" under)/rear sprocket brake, Biltwell Z-bars, aftermarket master-cylinders/controls, modified Sportster tank, one-off risers/filler cap/sprung seat/oil tank/rear brake master-cylinder/rear struts/rear light/loom, modified aftermarket rear mudguard, aftermarket headlight

FINISH:

Paint & gold leaf by Ger Conlon/C&C Choppers, blasting/polishing by Mad Manx Polishing

ENGINEERING:

Ger Conlon/C&C Choppers

THANKS TO:

"Owen, the other half of C&C Choppers; Mort; Tim; Angry Ed; & the people I probably left out... I usually forget someone."



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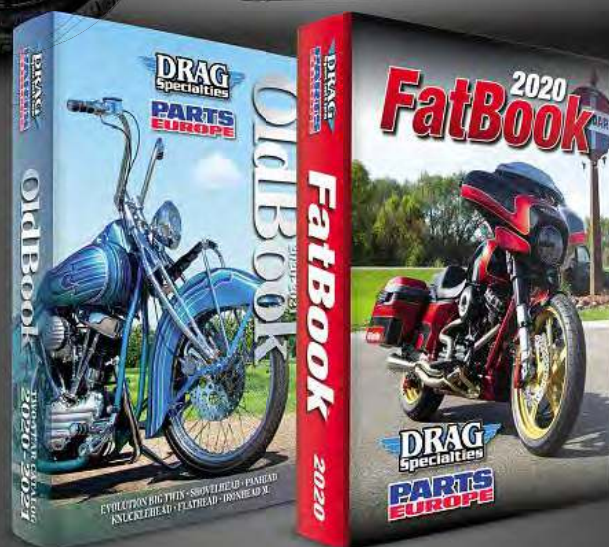
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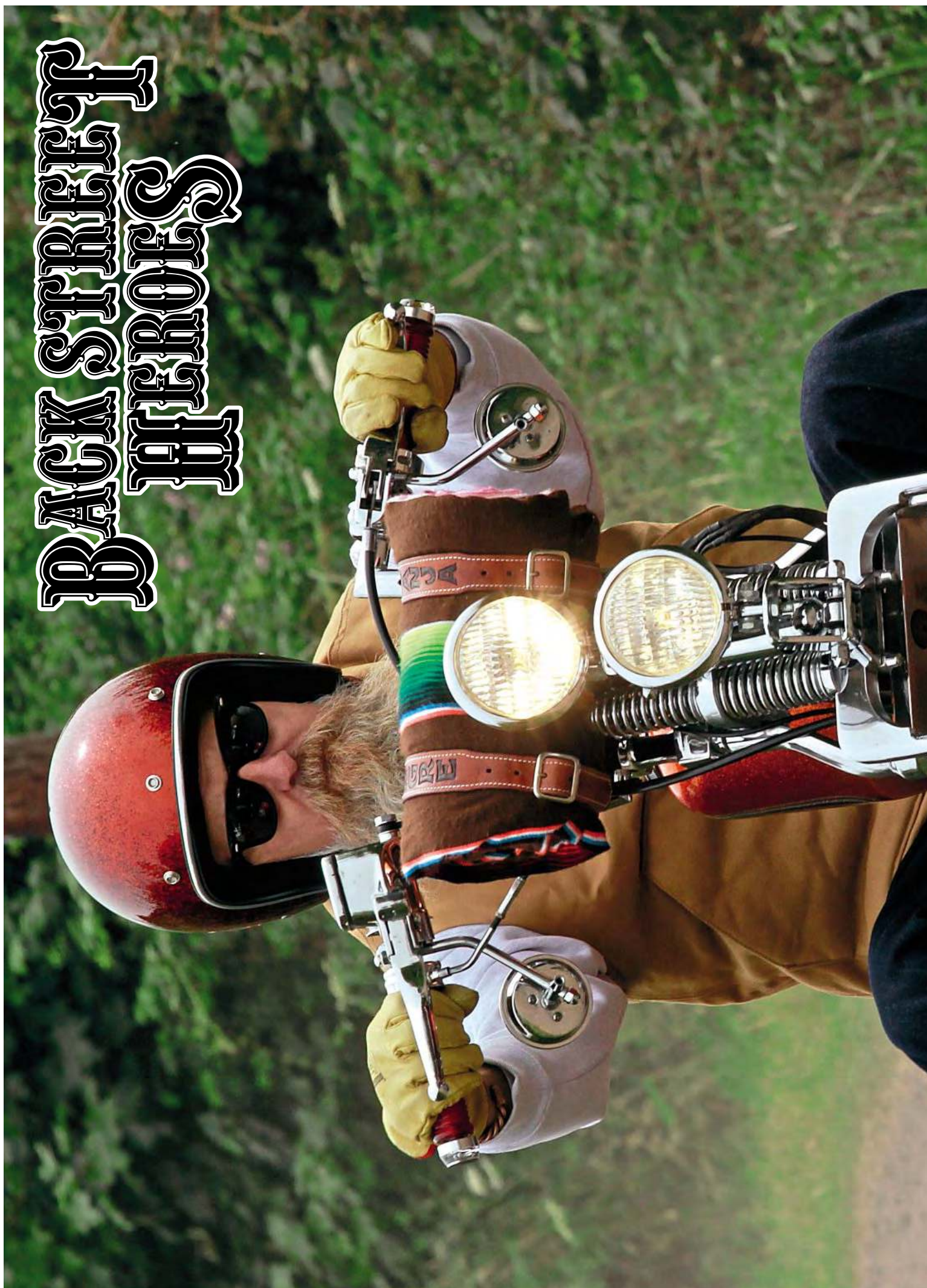


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Cool

TWIN
THING





WORDS: NIK

PICS: SIMON EVERETT

OF ALL THE AUTOMOTIVE PAINT SCHEMES THERE'VE BEEN OVER THE PAST 100 YEARS OR SO, SOME'VE REACHED ALMOST LEGENDARY STATUS – MARLBORO, JOHN PLAYER SPECIAL, SUBARU, CASTROL, MARTINI RACING, THEY'RE ALL INSTANTLY RECOGNISABLE. THE MOST FAMOUS, THOUGH, IS PROBABLY THE GULF OIL BLUE AND ORANGE.



Although Gulf Oil started back in the early part of the 20th Century, it wasn't really until the 1960s that the distinctive blue and orange livery became famous. The first cars to wear the colours were the Ford GT40s and Porsche 917s raced at Le Mans; the car driven by the legendary Steve McQueen in the film 'Le Mans' was a Gulf Porsche 917, and other famous names who piloted Gulf livery cars included Jacky Ickx and Derek Bell. Other marques associated with the brand were/are Audi, Aston Martin, McLaren and Lamborghini, and the Gulf Oil scheme's been copied on to a large number of road cars and bikes too over the years.

The latest bike we've seen wearing the famous design is this one: Neil Ormston's 125 Rebel Honda, built for him by a talented outfit called Twin Thing Custom Motorcycles down in Waterlooville in Hampshire who specialise, as you can probably surmise, in bikes with just two cylinders, and've built a fair few very cool bobbers and street-scramblers, a large proportion of which are based on learner-legal 125cc bikes.

Neil was just starting out on the biking road, and he wanted a bike that was a little cooler and a little less run-of-the-mill than other newbies'd be riding

ENGINE:

1995 Honda Rebel 125, rebuilt, bead-blasted, painted, aftermarket air-filter, one-off exhausts with titanium wrap

FRAME:

1995 Honda Rebel 125, modified rear section, stock foot-rests/controls

STUFF:

Stock wheels (blasted/ powder-coated)/ brakes (refurbished)/ forks (painted)/yokes (painted)/master-cylinder (refurbished)/controls, aftermarket 'bars, leather grips, stock front mudguard/tank (modified), one-off leather seat/ battery box, one-off rear mudguard, stock swingarm (modified), aftermarket shocks, over-size whitewall rear tyre, one-off loom, aftermarket headlight (painted) with yellow lens, one-off side-mount 'plate with aftermarket tail light, aftermarket indicators

FINISH:

Gulf blue with custom decals by Twin Thing Custom Motorcycles

ENGINEERING:

Bike built & all engineering by Twin Thing Custom Motorcycles (07557 449187 or www.twinthing.co.uk)

so he went along to see the chaps at Twin Thing, and discussed what he wanted with them. Between them they sourced a '95 Rebel, and he then pretty much gave them a free hand with the build, reasoning that they know more about how to do these things than he does.

They started by redesigning the frame to suit the tan (real) leather solo seat, made in-house; all unnecessary tags and welds were removed, and the frame sandblasted, and painted in piano black. The swingarm was modified too, to fit the custom-fabricated rear mudguard which sits less than a centimetre away from the tyre, achieving a lovely bobber look. The engine was removed, bead-blasted, and then painted black; the carbs were ultrasonically cleaned and the jets adjusted; and new sprockets; and a new chain (natch) fitted. New custom exhausts that flow under the bike were made, and they sweep out to each side, and are wrapped with titanium exhaust wrap. They make a beautiful grumble, and the bike, when it's running, really doesn't sound like a 125.

The wheels were blasted and then powder-coated black to create a lovely contrast with the Gulf blue paintwork, and the tank was taken back to bare metal, and resprayed, and custom-made stickers were put on either side. The battery was upholstered in the same brown leather as the seat for a vintage feel, and a new side-mount 'plate bracket made to keep the lines of the bike flowing nicely with a grilled rear light and 'plate. New tyres were fitted front and back (with a wider one on the rear for the

look), the yokes were refurbished, and new handlebars fitted with real leather grips. The headlight was painted black, and fitted with a yellow glass, and the lil' 'Onda was rewired, and gifted with smaller, less obtrusive indicators.

The finished bike both looks, sounds, and rides so much better than the stock bike it started as, and that's not surprising as Twin Thing literally left no nut or bolt untouched. It doesn't look like a 125 either – it has an air of something much bigger; a 250, a 400 or a 500 perhaps. This is helped, of course, by the exhaust note from the new 'pipes, which has much more of a low-down rumble and growl than any 125 has a right to, and Neil is more than pleased with his new bike, as you can probably imagine. The only problem will be when he's passed his test – no one really wants to ride a 125 when they can smoke around on something bigger, do they? Mind you, a 250, 400, or a 500'd go in there nicely, wouldn't it? Someone pass the shoehorn! **60%**



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EVENT

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WORDS & PICS: FD

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the grave's not actually signposted, and very much 'local knowledge for local people'. Back at the site, the afternoon rally games involved alcohol, a water slide, more alcohol, and the riding of the Jacobike – a challenge which provided hours of entertainment! For the less energetic there were more sedate games, trophies to be won, and a raffle in aid of Highland Blood Bikes.

Four great local bands – Fire Power, Bad Actress, The Fragz, and The Unforgiven – and a piper, John Mackenzie, entertained us over the weekend, and Bad Actress, a youthful and very exuberant blues-infused rock band are one to watch out for in the future.

If you're planning a summer visit to Scotland, the 2020 Rebellion Rally is on 7-9th August, and is well worth a visit. Tickets are pre-book only – find the details in the Events pages or on Facebook. 

T

he Jacobite MCC's Rebellion Rally was held on a small farm just outside Nairn – a whopping 505 miles for me, but it was

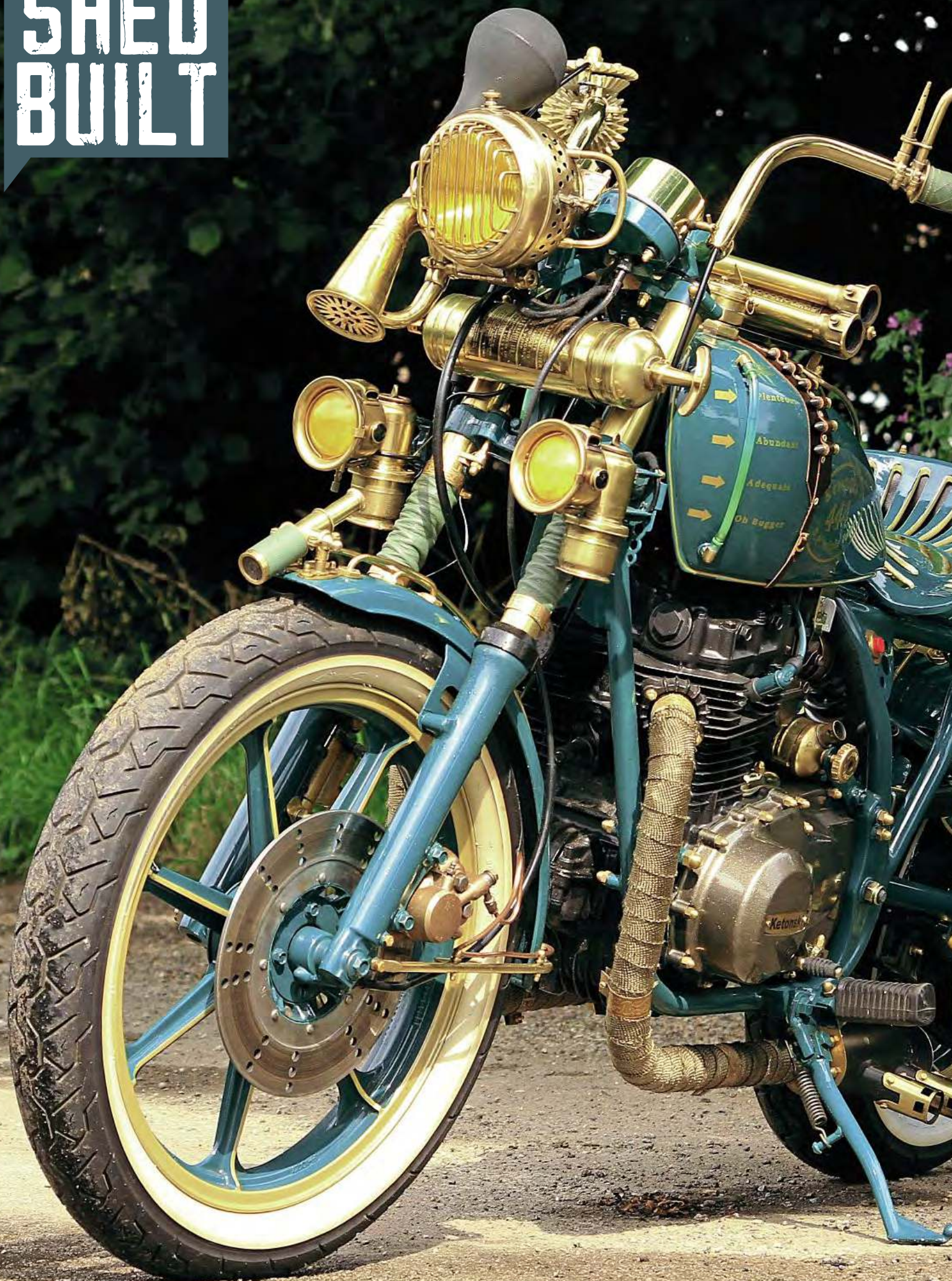
worth it! The club was founded in 1991, and a couple of the founder members, David Bowie (oh aye?) and Al Green (come on, really?) are still members, and they hold this small, very friendly rally in August, timed to coincide with the Nairn Highland Games!

Two marquees for the bands and bar/kitchen nestled at the base of a slope at the edge of woods which divide the farmland from the coast, and most camped there as well, but there is the option to camp on higher ground if you choose. This club's very much hands-on, and the current Convenor (Scots version of a president) was hard at work catering for 150/200 rally-goers in the food bar all weekend.

Saturday morning brought sunshine for a ride out to visit the famous Clava Cairns, and then on to the grave of the Unknown Clansman who died of wounds received at the Battle of Culloden in 1746. It felt quite special to share this tribute as



**SHED
BUILT**





WHILE SOME MAY DISAGREE, I'VE LONG BELIEVED THERE'S AN INHERENT SENSE OF HUMOUR IN CUSTOM BIKES. THERE'S ALWAYS BEEN ONE, AND THAT'S BEEN REFLECTED IN SOME OF THE BIKES FEATURED IN *BACK STREET HEROES* OVER THE YEARS.



(STEAM) PUNK IT UP!

WORDS & PICS:
DAVE MANNING





C

hris Ireland's 'Honda-Davidson', for example, or his 'Low Life' trike with its cartoon infections (painted

by Rich King!), Hank's nitrous XS1100 with its massive apehangers, or Jake Manglewurz's loopy 'Ecilop' – all of them not only made you smirk, but also became influential to many other folk building their own too.

You'll not be surprised to hear that Paul Keeton's steampunk Kawasaki was built, as he puts it, as "an amusement". He'd never built a custom before, and was keen to own something that stood out from the crowd and, not wanting the financial implications of a Harley, a BMW, or an old Brit, he decided a Japanese (parallel) twin'd serve as a donor. Before long, he'd bought a Kawasaki Z440, and with little plan as to the actual final look'd be, got stuck in, wielding a grinder with impunity, and relying on serendipity to guide him.

He'd been to the Lincoln Steampunk Asylum, and was sufficiently inspired to take on board the steampunk ethos of recycling old parts into new creations. A significant amount of time on internet auction sites resulted in a collection of suitable parts, and the frame was trimmed, modified, and mono-shocked using a Bandit 1200 shock, and the proven technique of filling a tube with sand before bending it to prevent creases. He did have one hiccup while doing this; after welding up the 'arm and bracing in situ, he realised the bike's endless belt final drive meant he needed to put a removable section in to get it all to fit together as it should.

Niggles aside, he's used a great deal of imagination with regards to random and disparate parts to explore the steampunk theme. Some are 'genuine' steam punk, such as the converted carbide lamps that now have LED bulbs and are used as the headlight, tail light and indicators, the tractor seat, and the brass syringe fuel tank breather, while



ENGINE:

1982 Kawasaki Z440, Ramair air-filters, one-off wrapped exhausts

FRAME:

1982 Kawasaki KZ440 LTD, rear end cut/shortened/monoshocked, standard footrests, brake/gear levers brass-coated, modified side-stand

STUFF:

Maxxis whitewall tyres, stock wheels/brakes/forks/yokes/front mudguard, cable-operated ATV master-cylinder, modified stock 'bars, brass reverse levers, bevel gear throttle, one-off brass switchgear housing with flick switches, stock clocks with brass-etched faces, one-off leather bar grips, stock fuel tank with fuel sight tubes/1.25 inch brass pipe fitting as filler cap/brass medical syringe as tank breather, WM Doyle & Co Ltd cast iron tractor seat, modified stock tail unit with brass additions, Enfield brass rack/gun, ex-army ammo boxes as battery/electrics boxes, modified stock swingarm, Suzuki Bandit 1200 shock, modified stock loom, modified 1903 Lynx acetylene carbide projection lamp as headlight, modified early 1900s brass Calcia Cadet carbide lamps as indicators/rear light, mudguard-mounted telescope skull lasers, 'laser flux capacitors' in rear ammo boxes

FINISH:

RAL .6004 blue/green paint by owner, brass plating by Prestige Plating Mexborough (01709 577004)

ENGINEERING:

Owner

THANKS TO:
"My wife Zoe..."

others, like the telescopes mounted on the mudguards that emit skull-shaped laser lights, are modern brass parts sourced from India. Further lasers're used on the ammunition boxes (for the battery and electrics), and their downward-pointing lights give a 'flux capacitor' effect on the ground. There's also a home-brewed 'laser-guided colonic bowel disruptor' mounted atop the otherwise standard tank, while the multiple examples of brass etching he did himself using the negative photoresist method (just one of the processes he learnt watching hours of YouTube) – this bike really needs more than just a couple of minutes of viewing to see all the details. And, if there's a picture of the back of the headlight, you can see the mirrored surface that reflects an image of the idiot lights mounted on the back of the clocks, with the writing in reverse so that the reflection reads correctly! He admits the bevel-gear throttle's perhaps a little on the large side, and plans to create a smaller version at some point, but he's very happy with the reverse levers, although they can only work with cables, and the front brake is, of course, hydraulic – a cable operates a hydraulic master-cylinder down on the right fork leg. All the brass plating was done locally, but he did the paint himself, and also made the grips, fork gaiters and telescope covers from leather from his own settee!

A happy side effect of the build that he'd never contemplated was getting drawn into the steampunk scene, "I'm glad I did, as it's given me a whole host

of venues to visit, and people to meet! When I first started showing the bike, so many people wanted to take a picture it occurred to me I may be able to do some fund-raising, and I now have a collecting tin at most events I attend, and ask for a donation to take a picture of the bike, or me and the bike." He adds the money to his Distinguished Gentleman's Ride donations and, last year, raised in excess of £400 – so, apart from being cool, unique, interesting and quirky, custom motorcycles can also raise money for charity!

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The *BSH* Custom Bike Championship is back again for 2020 and, now in its fifth year, it's going to be a(nother) cracker!

There are a couple of changes this year though, but ones for the better obviously! Firstly, we've reworked where we're doing the rounds to make them more accessible to folk – it was great doing them at rallies, but a lot of custom bike owners don't go to rallies, so we thought we'd change that.

There will be seven rounds this year, and we've tried to spread them out geographically around the country as best we can:

17th MAY **DOWN & OUT MOTORCYCLES** THE OLD BOILER HOUSE, ALMA RD, ROTHERHAM (S60 2HZ)

7th JUNE **OGR CLUBHOUSE, GLOUCS** BUILDING 100, KEMBLE ENTERPRISE PARK, KEMBLE AIRFIELD, CIRENCESTER, GLOUCS (GL7 6BA)

21st JUNE **SO LOW CHOPPERS** BAKERS GARAGE, BURY RD, STANTON, SUFFOLK (IP31 2BZ)

4th JULY **NCC LONDON'S DIAMOND DAY** ACE CAFÉ, ACE CORNER, NORTH CIRCULAR RD, LONDON (NW10 7UD)

24-26th JULY **ROCK & BLUES CUSTOM SHOW** CONEY GREY SHOWGROUND, CHESTERFIELD ROAD, PENTRICH, DERBYS (DE5 3RF)

2nd AUG **VICTORIA BIKERS PUB** WHITWICK ROAD, COALVILLE, LEICS (LE67 3FA)

16th AUG **VETERAN'S GARAGE** THE OLD BOILER HOUSE, ALMA RD, ROTHERHAM (S60 2HZ)

THE JUDGES ARE:

PAUL TIMPSON FROM ZODIAC UK
DUTCH FROM THE BIKE SHED
MURRELLS FROM THE NATIONAL CHOPPER CLUB COMMITTEE
VIC & LIN FROM DESTINY CYCLES
LARRY HOUGHTON FROM LAMB ENGINEERING

AND EACH ROUND WILL HAVE, THIS YEAR, SIX CATEGORIES:

1. **BEST CHOPPER**
2. **BEST CUSTOM**
3. **BEST NEW SKOOL CUSTOM** (CAFE RACER, STREET SCRAMBLER, ETC.)
4. **BEST PAINT**
5. **BEST ENGINEERING**
6. **BEST BUTCHERED CLASSIC** (PRE-1990)

One bike from each of these categories'll be picked as the winner of that class at that round and, just like last year, to ensure that all judging is completely impartial and not just 'who's got the most mates to vote for their bike', we have a hand-picked panel of judges, respected folk from the custom bike world who really know their stuff, who'll choose their favourites from the

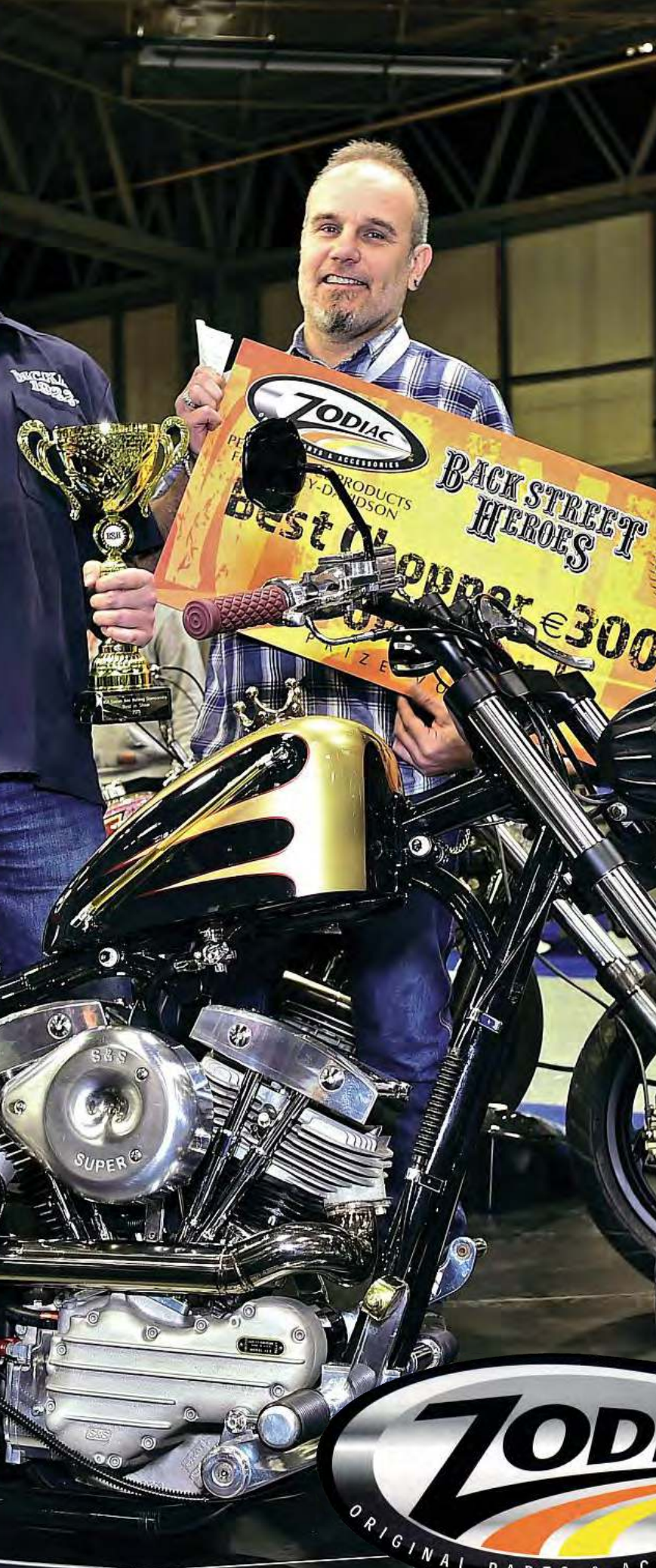
winners of each category, and the one with the most votes from them wins (in the event of a tie, us here at *BSH* will have the deciding vote).

The six winners from that'll go on to be the stars of the **BSH Custom Heroes** stand at Motorcycle Live at the NEC in Birmingham (21st-29th November) where there'll be a presentation with awards and huge amounts of prize money (approx. £500 each category, £750 for Best Overall!) an' that.

To enter your bike, simply come along to one or all of those events and put it in the custom show there – it's as simple as that! You don't have to enter each round, unless you want to of course, because you can only win once. Of course, if you don't win at the first one, you can always go to one of the others to give yourself another chance.

Good luck!





MOTORCYCLELIVE
NEC BIRMINGHAM



A look at the people who live and breathe custom bikes



JOHN O'HARA PITSTOP PAINT

There are many people who offer to custom paint bikes and helmets these days; some are good, and some are that bit better – they're really, really good.

John at Pitstop Paint way out there in the Outer Hebrides is one of them. You may not've heard of him but, even though he lives just about as far away from most folk in the British Isles as it's possible to do and still remain in the British Isles, his work is still in high demand. It's beautiful, exquisitely intricate, and super-realistic, and even though he rarely actually sees his customer (unless they're up for making the long haul to the far north-west of Scotland), and does just about everything via post, he's still one of the most highly regarded painters in the custom world.

WHO ARE YOU AND WHAT DO YOU DO?

I'm a small, antisocial, hermit hobbit on a small isolated Scottish island. I feel the answer 'artist' feels a bit cringe-worthy, a little pretentious, to say when I'm asked what I do for a living. In truth I doodle things for a living, and people tend to like them, which pays me a basic living, and allows me to live remote somewhere I want to be.

TELL ME ABOUT PITSTOP PAINT? WHERE DID THE NAME COME FROM? WHEN WAS IT SET UP? WHO WORKS THERE?

Pitstop Paint was founded in 2007, but not in a 'I'm going to be an artist and be famous' way. No, it was more me and my wife both being made redundant within the space of a couple of weeks. At the time I was working 70-80 hour weeks in manual labour, in fish factories, and other brain-out, physically demanding jobs. We had three

kids, a big house, and an equally large mortgage, and then, suddenly, zero income to support it. I bought a cheap compressor and a £15 Chinese eBay airbrush, thinking I could spray a few bits for friends' bikes in the short term for some income 'til I found proper work. I'd seen some airbrushed helmets online (we had dial-up out here for a long time) at the time, and fancied a go. I sprayed my own helmet, which got a lot of interest from friends, and eventually sold on eBay, and I used the funds from that one to buy a new, plain helmet, and the cycle started from there really.

Backing up a bit, I had a background in art and design throughout high school, attaining straight As, and carried this forward into university doing an Industrial Design & Technology degree (or product design, as it's also known). I also had chronic Asperger's, and spent the majority of my time growing up alone drawing, something that, to put it mildly, had always been a passion.

The business name seemed the logical choice

at that time as we were living on, and near, the Isle of Skye, and our house was kind of a biker hangout and meeting point for our friends in the area. It became loosely known as The Pitstop, and always had a garden/patio full of bikes and people spannering or sitting about eating, drinking and talking bikes.

Over the years the artwork evolved to the point where the work now chases me instead of the other way round, which is nice. People probably think I'm mad scraping a minimum wage existence when qualified for more, but doing what I enjoy is worth more than a huge wage to me these days. I can set my own hours, and it allows me to live somewhere truly special (on the Isle of Harris), and maintain a booked-up commission work list all-year round. It's not easy living here, but it's a stunning location with amazing, always empty roads with zero speed cameras... not that I speed, of course!



THE BIZ

AT WHAT AGE DID YOU GET INTO BIKING? AND THEN CUSTOM BIKING? AND WHY?

I'd like to be one of those people that can say they got into bikes at three years old with the full support of their parents, etc., but the truth is I worked my arse off in the evenings after high school in a local supermarket, and saved up a mighty £350 for my first bike, which was technically a custom – a chopped C50 Honda complete with ape hangers, sissy-bar, coffin tank, and an upside-down crucifix on the seat. I was 15 years old, and in love! Can't say my Roman Catholic high school teachers loved it once I'd saved up for, and obtained, my CBT a few days after my 16th birthday though. I think they were just jealous, and afraid to show it past their frowns.

This first taste of freedom from a very troubled and violent home life was a revelation, shall we say. I went to my first bike rally, and quickly got to know a lot of the local bikers. The passion grew from there really, and has always been a large part of my life and personality. I've always been one of those people who likes to tinker with mechanical things and be creative – I've owned one standard bike in the last 26 years of riding, and that was only for about two months 'til a huge stag decided to jump out from the side of the road and demand a firm hug as I rode past. I can't imagine ever owning something stock or anywhere near, especially these days as I love to build and tinker.

WHERE DO YOU FIND YOUR INSPIRATION? WHO ARE YOUR HEROES (BIKING OR OTHERWISE)?

I get asked a lot about where I get inspiration for my artwork or bike building from, but I don't really

have any mainstream heroes, I tend to just see a bit of junk, and think 'I can make something out of that' and it spirals from there into 'Hmm, my friend has an old supercharger sitting about...' No real set plans, you know? Even with artwork I usually don't have a set idea in my mind, it just evolves as I go, in most cases. I imagine a lot of that feeds from my Asperger's – my thoughts spin and go off on tangents a lot, and I'll be kept awake most nights as my brain just swirls with ideas. I find it really hard to shut off, and become ridiculously obsessive about projects.

Having said that, George Barris, Ed 'Big Daddy' Roth, and similar builders, of course, caught my imagination growing up, due to the influx of Stateside TV, movies and magazines. I mean, such classics as the original Batmobile and Munster Coach caught most kids' imaginations at the time as they were so different and out there. I've been a fan ever since of those wacky '70s showcars that the builders went all-out creative on, instead of trying to fit into a genre or build to win shows. Show bikes of the time too, were just wild.

These days I don't really follow names of builders, I just like what I like, ultimately, whether it's a big name builder, or some random guy building with a budget of nothing in his shed. The internet's really opened up the world, and allowed us petrolheads to share ideas and inspiration.

WHICH IS YOUR FAVOURITE BIKE YOU'VE BUILT? AND WHY?

Favourite bike I've built? I've no idea, to be honest. I still own most of them to this day, as I find it hard emotionally to let go of a machine. I make the mistake of riding them a lot, and becoming attached to memories of good days out, etc. If I

was pushed to decide, I'd have to say my VW trike as I've had it since I was 19 (blew my student grant on it!) so have a lot of memories over the years with my wife and kids, my wedding, etc. I couldn't let go of it, even if times got bad. I guess the build I'm most excited about is the one I'm building now in secret, much to the annoyance of my friends. It's a long-term that I'm doing alongside the 1930s hot rod I'm working on most nights, so it'll be a few years yet. I'm hand-making pretty much everything on this bike from scratch using a lot of junk salvaged out of skips, etc., and I'm harking back to those crazy, outrageous '70s showcars in a lot of ways – building the most ridiculous machine I can think of or imagine, and throwing practicality out the window. 99% of people will hate it, which is fine with me – it'll bring a smile to my face, which is all that matters as I disappear in a cloud of tyre smoke in the opposite direction to trophies and Instagram fame.

WHERE DO YOU SEE CUSTOM BIKE BUILDING/CUSTOM BIKES GOING IN THE FUTURE?

It's hard to imagine where custom bikes are going in the future. On the one hand I can't help but feel that hand skills, and the desire to build and work on stuff in general, is dying off with the younger generation – not many teenagers these days who don't go straight for the stock modern car/bike on finance, instead of keeping something old on the road and doing it up, gaining knowledge and skills along the way. Legally, the governments make it harder each year to run heavily-modified stuff too, and it does feel sometimes that we're being pushed towards a dull-as-feck electric motorcycle/car future with less eccentric characters as everyone's pressurised to conform. We'll have an app to change bodywork colour to be unique...

On the other hand, such inventions as YouTube etc., have given people an amazing platform to gain skills from and learn how to do things from home. There's such a limitless supply of inspiration online now to get the blood pumping, and people on forums etc., are ready to lend advice if you get stuck. eBay makes part sourcing easy nowadays, instead of scouring the local paper once a week, and hunting through junk-yards, and I truly believe there's never been a better time to have a go at building something – so much more knowledge at our fingertips if we can just get off our arses and make use of it and the time we have. 

PITSTOP PAINT IS LOCATED ON THE ISLE OF SCALPAY, JUST OFF HARRIS, IN THE OUTER HEBRIDES OF SCOTLAND, AND YOU CAN CONTACT THEM THROUGH THEIR WEBSITE AT WWW.PITSTOP-PAINT.CO.UK

LONG
TERM
TEST

YAMAHA NIKEN LONG-TERMER



PART
NINE

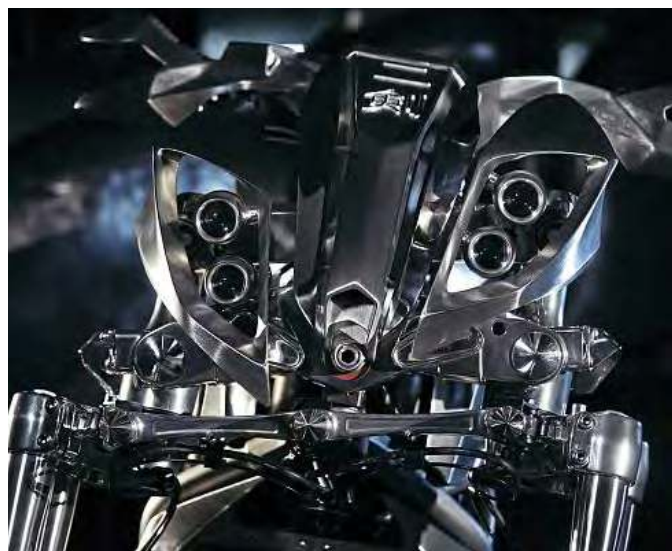
THIS ISSUE I THOUGHT WE'D DO SOMETHING A LITTLE DIFFERENT – INSTEAD OF ME WAFFLING ON ABOUT WHERE I'VE BEEN, AND WHAT I'VE DONE, ON OUR LONG-SUFFERING LONG-TERM NIKEN, I THOUGHT WE'D HAVE A CLOSER LOOK AT THE WORLD'S FIRST CUSTOM ONE.

PICS: MIROSŁAW
MAZURKIEWICZ



Polish manufacturer of custom motorcycles Game Over Cycles (GOC), in cooperation with Yamaha Motor Poland, have unveiled a unique vehicle based on the revolutionary





three-wheeled Niken. They've built a unique custom bike and, on its first public outing late last year, at the respected CustomBike-Show in the German town of Bad Salzuflen, the largest trade fair for modified motorcycles in the world, it won, against some very stiff competition, the 'Craziest Bike' award. GOC were formed in 2012, and've won awards at some of the world's biggest custom bike competitions (22 all told, including 15 international ones), and their previous bike, The Recidivist, the world's first tattooed motorcycle, took a top award at the Rats Hole Custom Bike Show, arguably the most prestigious custom bike competition in the world, at Sturgis.

The Niken debuted on the global market in 2018, and is based on a unique Leaning Multi-Wheel (LMW) technology developed by Yamaha that has two leaning front wheels, four steering heads, and dual-tube upside-down forks. Game Over Cycles is a company known for modifications carried out, mainly on American brand motorcycles, but this time they decided to work on the Japanese model. The head of GOC, Stanisław Myszkowski, commented on the genesis of the company's latest project: "Niken, to many people, is revolutionary, but to others controversial. This is exactly how people also react to our custom bikes - that's why I got interested in it right from the beginning. In terms of technology, we decided that nothing should be changed as Japanese technical solutions at the highest level give the Niken its great riding abilities, but from the first moment I saw one I felt we could modify its appearance, and give it a slightly different character. To achieve this, we changed all of the bike's bodywork - all the plastic elements've been replaced by aluminum, thanks to which the vehicle's shape has become more sharp, even aggressive, without losing its aerodynamic properties. Bearing in mind the Niken's heritage, one can now say that this motorcycle now cuts the air almost like the twin samurai swords it's named after!"





During the work, a special challenge was the matching of functional mechanisms with the appearance. While creating a different aesthetic, the designers had to build, and adjust, all the new body parts in such way that, in every position, both when turning/leaning on both sides, nothing would interfere with anything else. The Niken's front suspension moves in many dimensions, so getting a proper balance between the new visual elements, and the original concept, was the most challenging part of the build.

GOC's custom Niken references the country of its origin not only by the name, but also by the presence of Japanese language on the construction. The crew incorporated Japanese characters denoting the name, Niken, of the model, as well as a thought taken from the Yamaha brand philosophy, which means "have the courage to set higher goals without fear of failure", something that describes the ethos of the bike perfectly.

As I said, GOC hand-made all the aluminum parts, and the work consumed 1,400 man-hours. They made or modified (deep breath) the fairing/steering head cover, the front brake reservoir, the brake and clutch levers, the mirrors, the speedo cover, the front and rear mudguards (all three of them), the Akrapovic exhaust, the rear subframe/seat unit, the seat base, the fuel tank, the air-filters, the radiator and its cover, the battery box, the engine and suspension covers, the headlight covers and lens sleeves, and more, and they removed the lacquer from, and polished until they shone, the wheels (again, all three), the grab-rail, the swingarm, the whole front suspension ensemble, the foot-rests and hangers, the engine covers, and the whole frame, and fitted a one-off WB Line leather seat.

Next issue:

BACK TO REALITY!



On seeing the bike, Magdalena Piskorz, Yamaha Motor Poland General Director, said "Since the beginning of our partnership with GOC I've been extremely impressed with Staszek's talent, his unconventional approach to customisation, and his out-of-this-world ideas that've been appreciated around the world for years. I'm glad that, for their latest project, he chose this model as it's so innovative, and unique, for Yamaha, and working with such professionals is a real pleasure."

To see more of Game Over Cycles' work, go to their website at www.gameovercycles.com

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EVENT

THE DRAGON RALLY

WORDS & PICS: NIK

UNLESS YOU'RE A COMPLETE NEWBIE TO THE BIKE SCENE, THERE'S A GOOD CHANCE YOU'VE HEARD OF THE CONWY MCC'S DRAGON RALLY – THE MOST HARDCORE BRITISH RALLY THERE IS.





Motorcycle Club offering to organise just such a rally.

The first Dragon, as it was christened for... well, kind o' obvious reasons really, was held in 1962 in the grounds of Bryn Bras Castle, a Grade II Listed country house located on the old road between Llanrug and Llanberis in Gwynedd in north Wales, and more than 2,000 riders attended. Since 1963, it's moved around a variety of sites in north Wales, generally on the first Saturday in February, and it has, justifiably, gained the reputation of being the most hardcore bike rally in the British Isles bar none – a worthy British alternative to



starting in 1962, the Dragon is now in its 59th year (it had to be cancelled one year as the weather was just too severe even for the Dragon), and it came about when, back in the early Sixties, the British motorcycle press reported on the Elephant Rally (Elefantentreffen) held each winter in Germany – a rally famed for its snow, and the hardships involved in attending it, and this prompted several bike journalists to ask if a British winter rally could be a success.

The Motor Cycle's November issue in 1961 carried an article by a gentleman by the name of George Wilson who asked, 'Can such a dream be realised in this country? A rally for super enthusiasts only? So organised that, by its very nature, only super enthusiasts would want to join in? Above all, it must be held in the dead of winter when only men who are men would be interested, and softies would stay away.' That piece brought a flood of replies, including one from one Lawrence Irving of the Conwy & District

the Elephant indeed. It's also not a rally you can just rock up to either.

No, tickets are prebook only, usually from the beginning of October, and even then when you've bought one you don't get told where the rally actually is until you ride up to a checkpoint to check in. It's to stop, you see, badge hunters, or those who aren't prepared to deal with the hardship, from just turning up and getting a coveted Dragon Rally badge, and bugging off without earning it. As the original blurb all those years ago in 1961 said '... only men who are men would be interested, and softies would stay away.'

Over the years folk really have earned their badges, too – it's famous for being held in rain, wind, snow, and sub-zero temperatures. It's in the mountains of north Wales in February, remember, and it can get pretty hair-raising



there. I first went in 2006 when it was held on Anglesey and, allegedly, it was minus 12 that night; the inside of my tent definitely froze, and I slept the night fully addressed, except for my boots – with my helmet on an' everything. I went again in 2012 and, comparatively, it was quite clement – around 3-5 degrees overnight, and not that much, if any, rain at all. I did have to ride about 15 miles across the mountains with no glove on my right hand because it'd got cold and curled up, and I couldn't get my glove on, but as soon as I found a café and warmed it around a number of cups of steaming tea it was fine again. It's the Dragon – it's s'posed to be hardcore!

The 2020 event was properly hardcore, too. For more than a week before, the Beeb weather app'd had severe weather alerts for the Betws-y-Coed (where the checkpoint was, at the Swallow Falls Hotel) area, with strong winds and heavy rain forecast as Storm Ciara was due to hit the UK that weekend, and north Wales was right in its path. The ride up Saturday morning wasn't actually bad, a little blustery, but okay, and it wasn't until the evening that Ciara really got going. The site was a couple of fields just off the A55 near Bangor, accessed by a muddy, but stony, so solid track, and as long as you'd put your tent up in the lee of the large surrounding hedges you'd probably be fine. I didn't, and I wasn't...

Actually, my tent survived until about 11pm before Ciara got the better of it, and so I, and a good few others whose tents weren't as sturdy either, spent the night in the marquee after the band, The Cellar Dwellers (who played all the old rock classics and went down a storm – a mosh pit at the Dragon? I never thought I'd see that!), had finished. The wind howled all night long, and



the huge tent shook, but remained intact, but it did feel like a long, long night for those of us unable to get much sleep. In the morning, as soon as it got light enough to see, I went and rescued what I could from my flattened and drowned tent before abandoning it, and what remained of its contents (including my new

Dragon t-shirt and hat!) for the clean-up crew. Meself and the Niken managed to get out of the saturated field early (before it was utterly torn up) without too much trouble (thanks to the three lads who gave us a push), and the three wheels made child's play of the muddy track (and the now sizeable water-splash in the middle of it at the lowest part!), and somehow we managed to miss the worst of the weather on Sunday by some means or other so, although I lost me tent and a few other bits, I reckon I got off quite lightly really. Others, looking at Facebook, weren't so lucky but, hell, it is the Dragon – it's s'posed to be hardcore! 🐉

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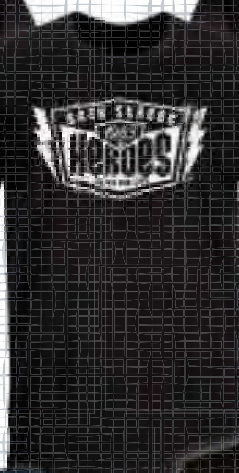
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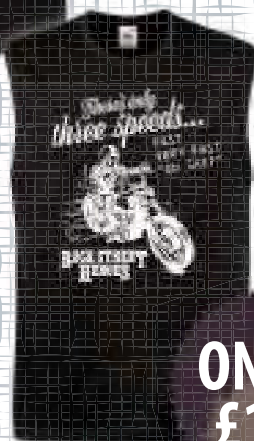
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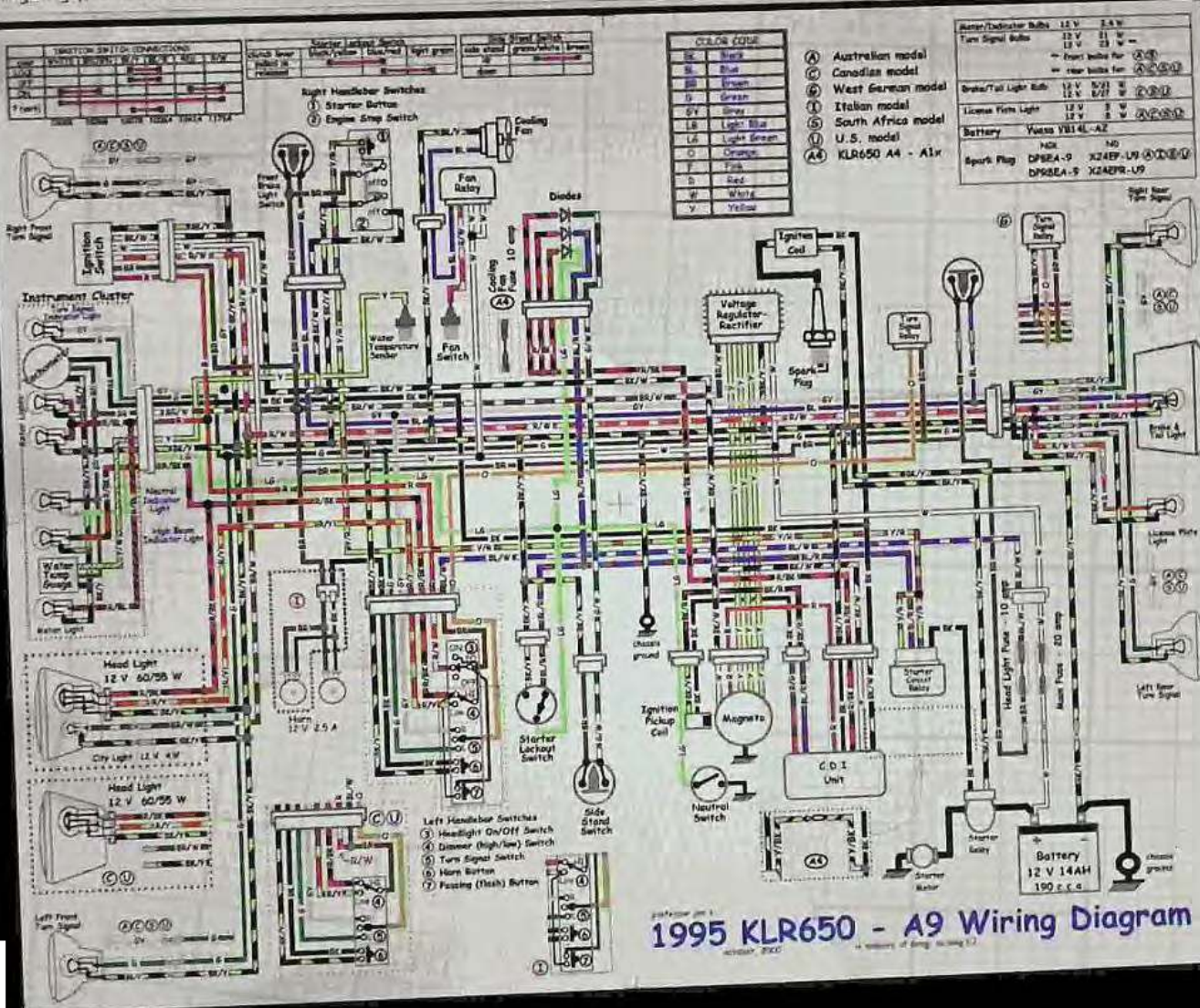
#20 DO I NEED TO DRAW YOU A DIAGRAM?

WHEN I WAS SORTING OUT HOMES FOR THE ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT ON THE KLR, THERE WAS A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF DISCUSSION ABOUT HOW YOU GO ABOUT WIRING A MOTORCYCLE IN THE WORKSHOP, AND I WAS ASKED IF I DREW UP A DIAGRAM.

WORDS & PICS: **MR. BRIDGES**

1995 Kawasaki KLR650 ' X

agramonwiring.blogspot.com/2011/12/1995-kawasaki-klr650-wiring-diagram.html



1995 KLR650 - A9 Wiring Diagram

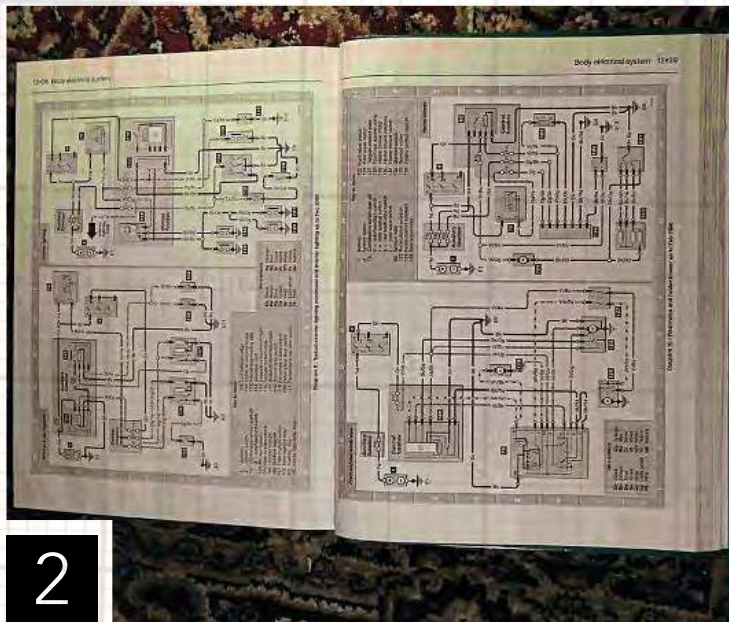
The answer to that is that I don't, but I do refer to the workshop manual one, or look it up on the Interweb (Fig.1). It was a little bit of an odd question because, in my experience, most people are scared of wiring diagrams, and yet they also feel that if they just had a simplified one then their life would be fuller, richer, and no longer knee-deep in unfinished projects that 'just need wiring'. This is probably not true.

The problem with wiring diagrams is that vehicle wiring is composed of separate circuits, each of which has a circuit diagram. All these circuit diagrams get superimposed on each other, and become the wiring diagram, but the

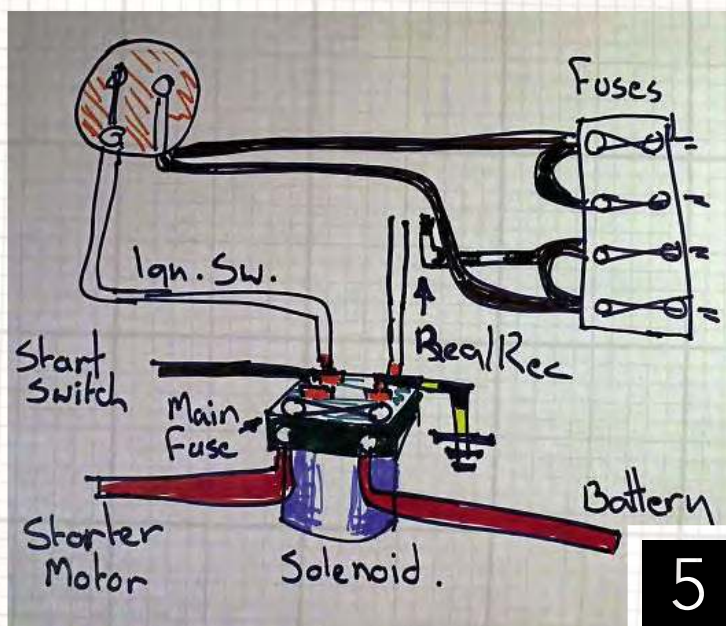
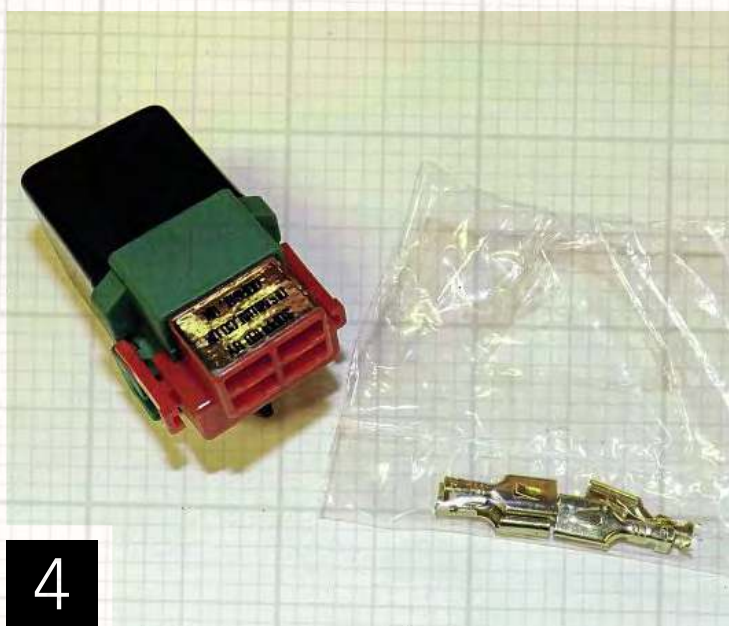
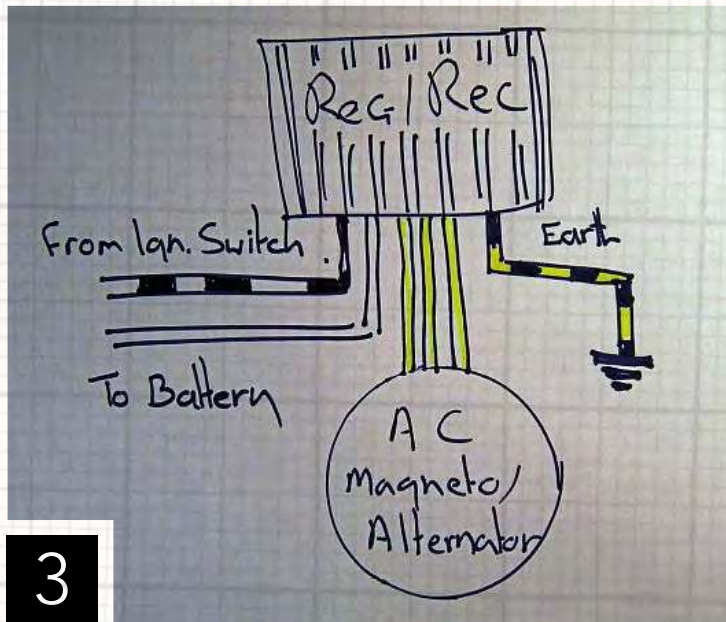
first thing to remember is that it's a collection of circuit diagrams – in fact, the manual for the Fiesta of Doom doesn't even have a wiring diagram, just circuit diagrams for individual systems (Fig.2).

The next thing to remember is that, on the whole, the wire colours aren't randomly chosen... although this needs treating with care because sometimes they run out of colours at the factory or, possibly, are having a bad day and feel like other people ought to suffer too. The KLR is a Kawasaki so the indicator feeds are grey for the right side, and green for the left side, black and yellow is an earth connection, and the lead from the positive terminal of the battery is white so that's a permanent live, and it also

connects to the white wire from the reg/rec so that's what charges the battery when the engine's running. The wires that're coloured brown come from the ignition switch and, if you look at the switch diagram, when the ignition switch is 'ON' the white wire from the battery is connected to that brown wire. So the white wire is a 'permanent live', and the brown wire is a 'switched live'. Armed with that



switch (Fig.3), that brown and white one connects to the brown that comes out of the ignition switch and, since that's the switched live output from the ignition switch, then the brown and white from the reg/rec is the load sensor wire. Basically, the load sensor wire tells the reg/rec when there's more than somewhere around 13 to 14 volts sloshing around in the electrics, and lets the



information you can take a look at the different circuits in the wiring diagram.

I usually start with the charging circuit. The KLR is a bit weird in that the ignition is independent of the battery, and is powered directly by the alternator, or magneto, so it has three yellow wires for the AC current that does everything, apart from the ignition, and a red wire and a white wire that power the ignition. The reg/rec then has six wires coming out of the box – three yellow ones, one white, one black/yellow, and a brown/white, so what do they do? The three yellows are for the AC from the alternator/magneto, the white is the DC positive out and connects to the white wire from the battery that goes to the ignition

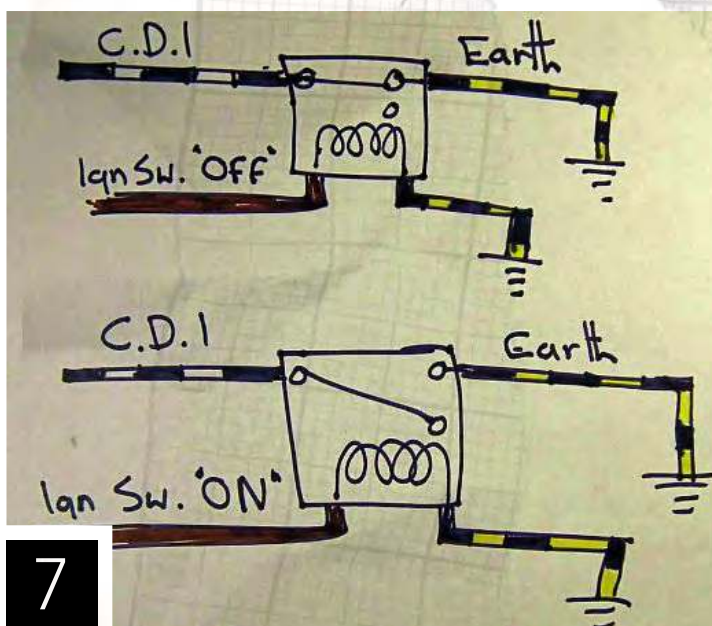
regulator part of the regulator/rectifier start turning excess alternator output into heat.

You might remember I used a Honda starter solenoid (Fig.4) for the KLR? That was purely in the interests of less wiring. The solenoid has two high current terminals, one for the fat lead from the battery, and one for the fat lead to the starter motor. Inside the solenoid there's a metal strip that connects those terminals together, and spins the starter motor when current is applied to a winding in the body of the solenoid, turning it into a magnet that draws a metal rod in and closes the connection between the terminals. As well as the meaty terminals that do the heavy lifting, this particular solenoid

has four lower current terminals. Two of those are for the coil inside that makes it work, and the other two are connected to the battery terminal via a fuse. The two fused terminals are where the white wire from the reg/rec, and the white wire to the ignition switch, go. And



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without a huge amount of fuss we're half way to having a starter motor, and we've almost got a charging circuit too. We have a couple of wires for the ignition switch to connect though – a white one, and a brown/white one. The important point is that the circuits are being wired one at a time – not all at once, like the wiring diagram.

What I'd normally do at this point is run the switched feed from the ignition switch back to the fuse box (Fig.5). Putting the ignition switch under the seat, or the fuse box up the front, makes for less wiring, but for the KLR, the switch's going up front, and the fuses are under the seat. The point of a fuse box is two-fold. Firstly it has fuses so your motorcycle doesn't catch

fire so easily and, secondly, remember those separate circuits? Well, it gives you somewhere to split the switched power up to feed those separate circuits. So the ignition switch has a white wire running to it from the solenoid that takes the power to the switch, so I'd be inclined to run two brown wires back from the ignition switch to the fuse box, which in this case also houses some relays (Fig.6). Each of the brown switched feeds would power two fuses, giving a fuse for the lights, one for the brake light and horn, one for the indicators, and one for the ignition. Yes, the direct ignition that's powered straight from the AC magneto. The problem here is the ignition switch – switches aren't great because they're usually what go wrong. My propensity for relays is mostly because it gives the switches an easier life, and makes them more reliable.

The other major reason for switches failing is unwarranted complexity. The original KLR ignition switch body contains two separate switches – one for the battery-powered stuff, and a separate one that kills the direct ignition by earthing it out when the key is switched to 'OFF'. What I'm doing is using a relay that's normally closed to kill the ignition so, with all the battery-powered stuff off, the relay's closed, and earths the ignition out. Switch the battery stuff 'ON', though, and the relay is activated – the contact moves, and the ignition is no longer 'killed' (Fig.7).

The other thing I should probably mention is that while factories have their own colour codes, I tend to use my own so, when it comes to actually stringing wires, all that talk of white, brown, green, and grey is going to go by the board, but in the event that I have to trace a fault in something I've wired, I'm ahead of the game to start with. It's also worth pointing out that if you're poring over a wiring diagram trying to figure out just what's going on, then those little diagrams that explain how the terminals on the switches connect, and the other ones that have the cable layout for the plugs, contain valuable information a lot of the time. I haven't chased this down to the bitter end, partly because there are space constraints, and partly because the point is more to expand on the thought process involved in dealing with wiring than to actually deal with wiring a relatively obscure and slightly odd motorcycle. ☺

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WORDS & PICS: MR. BRIDGES

TECH

YOU MAY'VE NOTICED THAT THINGS ARE GETTING DONE ON A BIKE LIFT THESE DAYS (FIG.1)? IT'S CERTAINLY MADE LIFE A LOT EASIER, AND MY KNEES A LOT HAPPIER, BUT IT'S ONLY ON LOAN. AS A CONSEQUENCE I'VE BEEN HAVING A LOOK AROUND THE INTERWEB AT VARIOUS HOMEBUILT ONES.



1



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The problem with homebuilt ones is that you can buy one from Machine Mart for £478 and, if you start buying new materials, and building your own, then you fairly rapidly start to approach that sort of money anyway. If you start building one from found material, then what you did isn't a lot of use to anyone who can't find the same material, and the videos I've seen which have titles like 'DIY

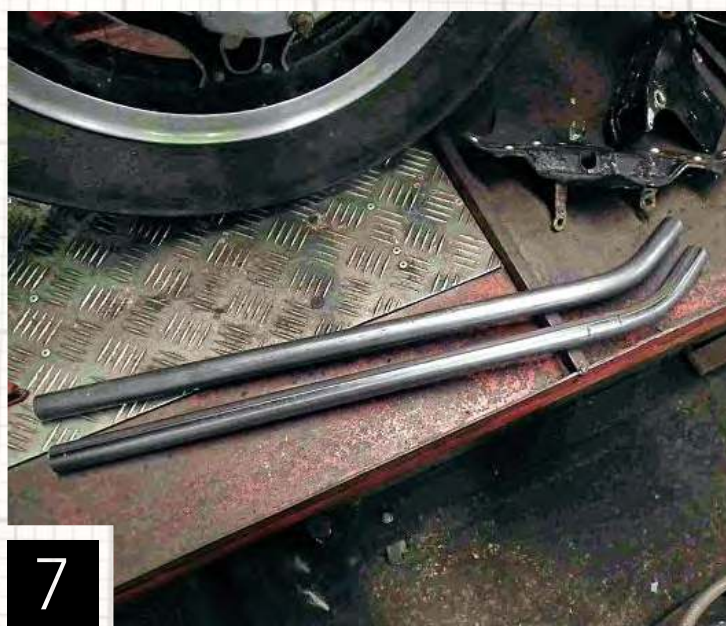
Motorcycle Lift under \$200!!!' didn't inspire me with confidence (although they might've instilled a little fear). I even got as far as buying a hydraulic jack/ram to use to raise a lift (Fig.2) – it's rated at eight tons, is usually used in car engine hoists, and cost under £30 (although they're usually a bit over that), and they're not hard to find on eBay. Easy to find means that, in the event of a problem, it can be replaced, or repaired, without too much trouble or expense.

I'd been looking at designs, checking out material prices, and generally moving in the direction of drawing up some plans and making one, when His Northernness spotted a lift for sale on Facebook Marketplace with an asking price of £200 and, shortly thereafter, it arrived at the workshop in the back of the van. The story was that it'd come out of a motorcycle shop where it was originally bolted to the floor, and the chap had added his own casters to it after he bought it to make it mobile. One of the things that I'd

spotted while thinking about designs was that the height off the floor with the lift lowered is quite important, and the casters under this one aren't doing that any favours as they make the table 13" off the floor (Fig.3), as opposed to the 7" of the other lift. That means you need a longer ramp and, with the ramp

than the new-to-us one, with the loan lift having a table about six foot long with the ramp off (Fig.1), while the new one is eight foot long. You can't get a Harley Softail on the loan lift (unless you put it diagonally on the table), but the new one isn't going to have a problem... although we need to improve our fitness levels if

chock was the tip-over type you just push the wheel into (Fig.6), which I thought was a good idea as, if you're loading a motorcycle on to the lift single-handedly, you don't end up bent over fiddling with a wheel with one hand, while the other hand is up around your ear balancing the motorcycle until you can unwind or wind



in position, the whole thing is 15 feet long, which could be a problem (Fig.4).

The second thing is that it doesn't have a 'scissor' lift mechanism; instead it has a pair of arms, which are pivoted at each end. That means that, as it goes down, the table moves forwards. That isn't a problem if you have the space, but if space is limited then a scissor-type mechanism (something like an ironing board) means that the table can travel straight up and down. The loan lift has a considerably shorter table

we're going to start pushing Harleys the kind of distance it needs to get one up the ramp and on to the table of the lift. Most lifts seem to have tables around seven foot long, or a little over, which would probably accommodate the vast majority of standard motorcycles, but might struggle with a chop with some stretch in the rear, and some rake at the front. For the most part I want a lift to build motorcycles on, rather than to service them, and when the new ramp turned up I noticed the front wheel

in the wheel clamp enough to keep the thing upright.

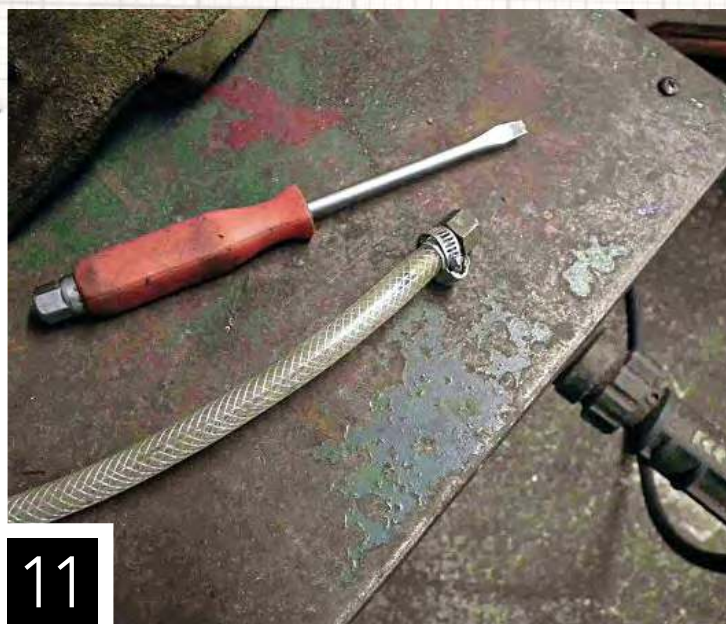
Once the CX500 was up on the lift though, it became obvious that the wheel chock design raises the front wheel and stops the motorcycle from sitting level (see Fig.5), which isn't ideal when you're trying to eye up the seat rails you're building to see if you've got the lines you were looking for. In the not-too-distant future, I think the casters are going to be coming off the bottom of the frame of the lift, which will lower it by three

inches or so, which in turn'll mean that the ramp doesn't need to start in the next county. The front wheel chock bolts to the table, so I think I'll make some more holes to allow for moving it around a bit, and build an L-shaped,

engine there to define the space the box has to fit in.

I also welded the loop that's going to form the seat stays of the rear sub-frame into place, and cut and bent some tube for the seat rails (Fig.7).

welder when I was trying to tack them in place. When Pete turned up so we could cut a paddock-stand up and make it wide enough to fit under his Buell (Fig.10), I was struggling even more. It wasn't like the stand was



screw-in one that uses the same bolt holes at some point.

Getting the new lift in involved quite a lot of shifting things around, and reorganising (some would argue that things weren't that organised in the first place), so it was towards the end of the week when I got back on to the bike. It's acquired an engine now as, at some point, I'm going to be making a battery/electrics box that'll live under the engine where the exhaust balance pipe/silencer was, so I need the

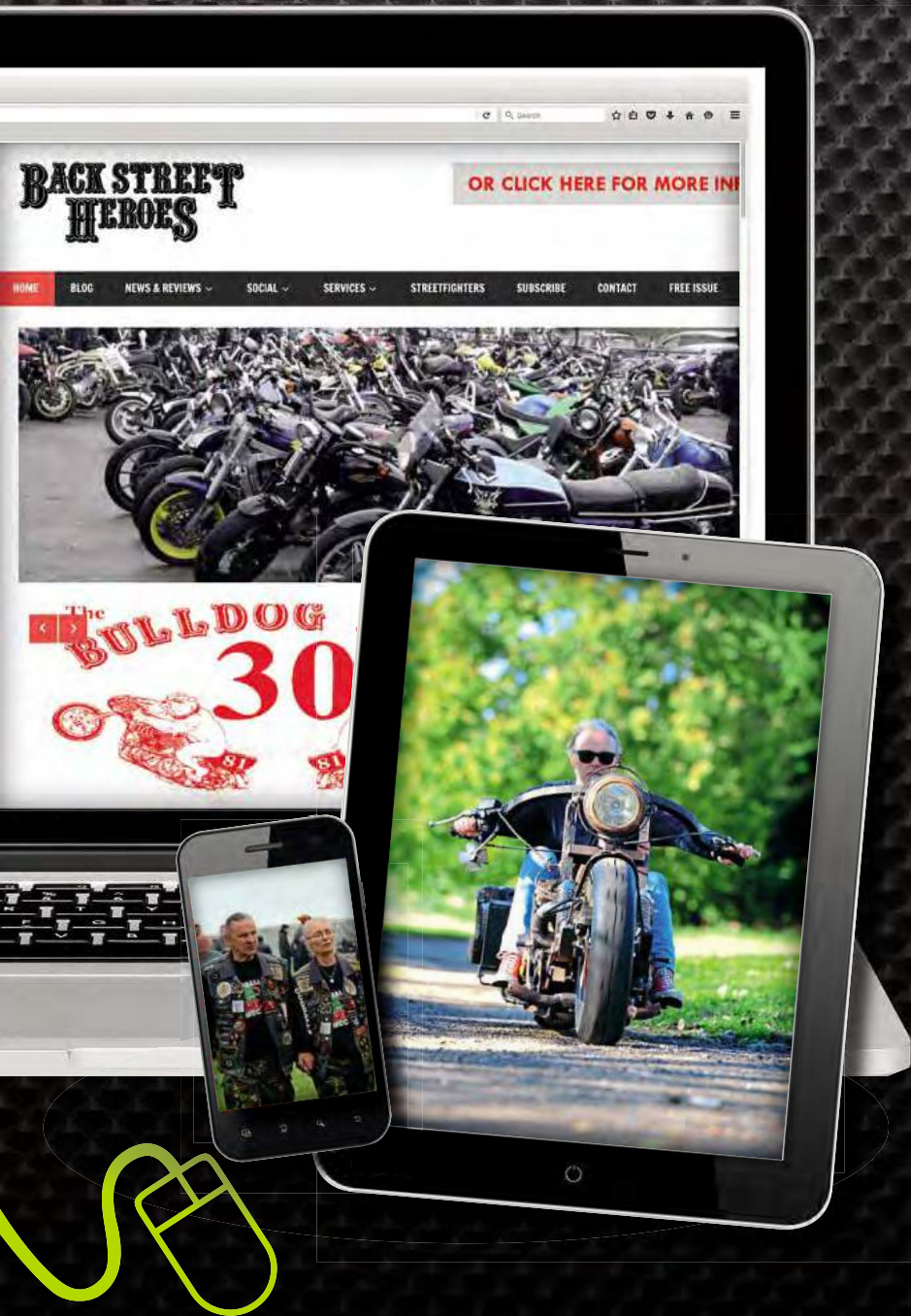
The front ends of the rails were bent to come in and meet the spine of the frame, which made cutting the mitres on them tricky (Fig.8) as I want them to disappear under the tank (Fig.9), and the tank's rubber mounted so the seat rails have to clear the tank by enough that they aren't going to hit them and make horrible rattling noises, but not so far away that it makes the tank look like it doesn't belong there.

After the usual round of trial fits I'd been having a little trouble with the

going to fall apart, but it wasn't pretty, and I had to wind the gas regulator right up. It turned out that the hose from the bottle was leaking shielding gas because the screw-type hose clamp wasn't making a seal (Fig.11).

As that's about the third time I've done a makeshift repair, I decided to leave the welding, and get a proper crimp put on the end of the hose, which should make for more consistent welds, make the gas go further, and keep my temper from fraying. ☹️

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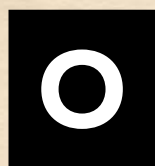
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IN 1962 MY COUSIN ANNE, A TALL, RAVEN-HAIRED BEAUTY IN THOSE DAYS, USED TO GO DANCING AT WEEKENDS AT A PLACE IN MORECAMBE THAT REJOICED IN THE NAME OF THE FLORAL HALL – A FEW YEARS LATER, I REMEMBER, IT WAS A GOOD PLACE TO GO FOR A FIGHT, BUT IT OBVIOUSLY HAD A BETTER CLASS OF CUSTOMER IN HER DAYS.

NOSTALGIA

WORDS: THE LATE JIM FOGG RIP

ILLUSTRATIONS: LOUISE LIMB



One night, after listening to a new band from Liverpool, twisting the night away, and sipping the odd discreet gin-and-orange, she was approached by the lead singer, a leather-jacketed young man with Brylcreemed hair and a ready Scouse wit. He asked if he could see her home, stopping on the way for a few more drinks, and a discussion about the meaning of life on the back seat of the band's beat-up old Ford Consul?

"And what did you say?" I've been known to ask her when I'm feeling malicious.

"I told him to get lost," she answers. "I didn't like Liverpool lads much then, and I didn't fancy him because he was such a scruffy bugger." This, presumably, is why my cousin Anne never became Mrs. John Lennon... it's still a bit of a sensitive topic with her too. I only mention it to prove that I'm not the only idiot in my family.

Everyone who's ever read my stories, and there must be somebody, because Myatt keeps forwarding the abusive letters, will know about my disenchantment with British bikes after owning the now-notorious 750 Bonnie Export. Admittedly it didn't leak much oil by the time I'd finishing rebuilding it, and it was fast, stopped well, and didn't look at all bad, but at my age you begin to worry about brain haemorrhages and imploding kidneys, and I

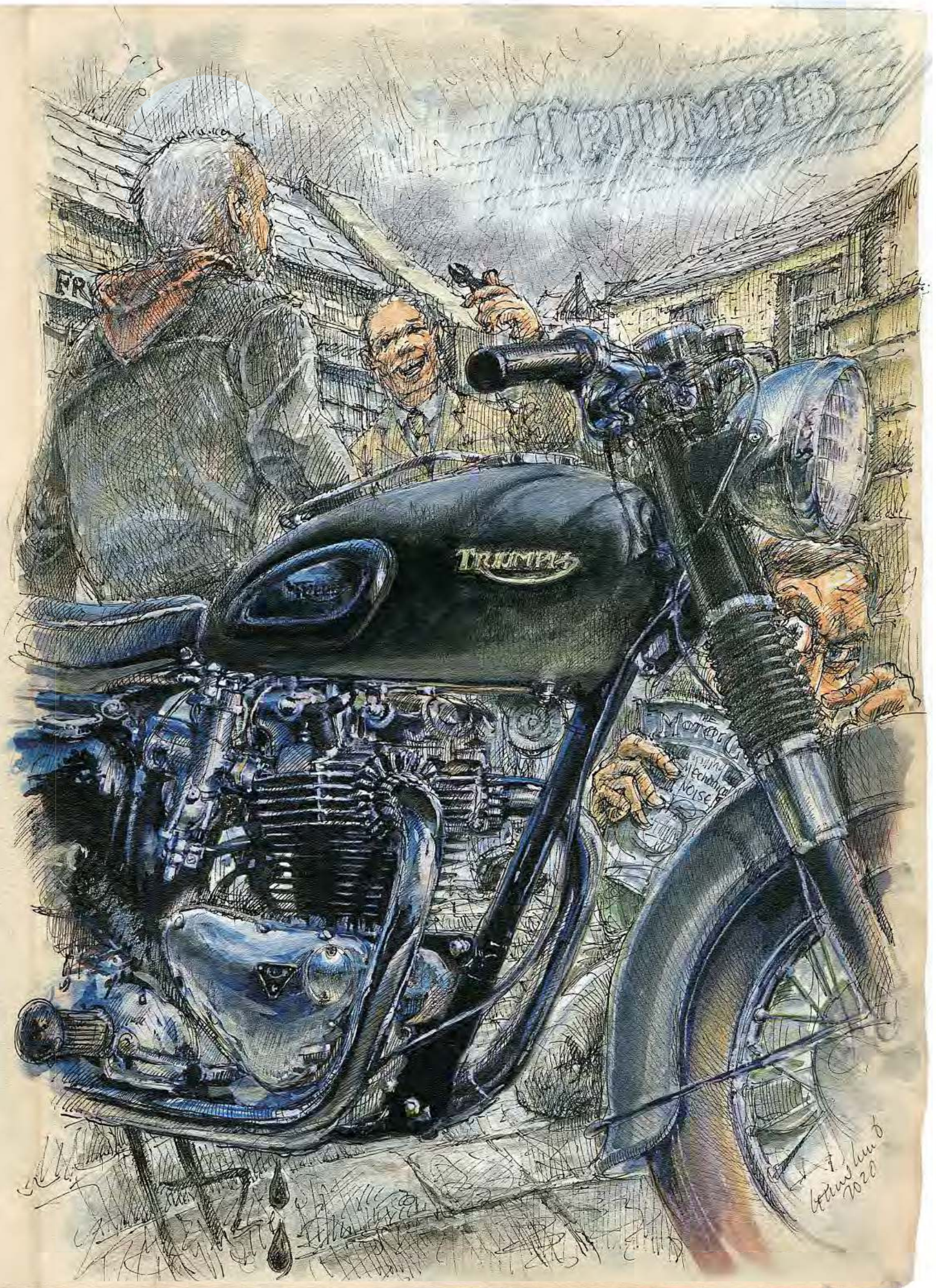
decided that the vibration was getting to be a little obtrusive one day when the wax dropped out of both ears, and I started to see five of everything every time I got off the bike.

And so I started riding Japs, firmly convinced that I could spend my declining years in peace, with the socket-sets and spanners rusting in their boxes, and dust gathering on all my Haynes manuals. And so it proved... for a time anyway. I fitted a new condenser on my Z750 twin, did nothing at all to the XS650 that followed it, and then got a GT750. My opinion of stokers is well known, but I used to own one of the first water-cooled Suzukis, so I thought I'd like another, just for old times' sake. It was a mistake; the one that was eight years younger than the first one didn't handle any better, and they seemed to have lost about 15mph on top speed along the way. When the water in the radiator developed a silvery, oily scum floating on top, and I found out that Suzuki'd put the water-pump in the gearbox (for God's sake!), I decided it was time for a change. Six weeks later it seized, but by that time I was the owner of a BMW, and'd suddenly become acceptable in polite circles.

I thought about making it into a low-rider but, as has also been chronicled, I got a Yamaha vee-twin instead, thus blowing my credibility with everyone. I've got to admit that I've got a sneaking respect for the Yamaharley, born of cruising it down motorways at 90mph in the

pissing rain, and still being able to walk at the end of it which, it strikes me, wouldn't've been the case with the Meriden Marauder - you needed two days in bed after a long trip on that, during which time you had ample opportunity to check the buckles on your spinal corset, wonder why there was an unpleasant reddish hue to your urine, and to ask your girlfriend to be gentle with you, and have lots of patience until the swelling's gone down (and, no, not that sort of swelling either).

Talking about riding down motorways in torrential rain, I've come to a few other conclusions, too. The label on your rain-suit that says '100% Waterproof' means that the bloody label's 100% waterproof - you never see a soggy label, even when the rest of the goddam suit is like something dredged up from the locker-room of the Titanic, weighs eight pounds more than when you started out, and has been designed to deposit three gallons of icy water on to your crotch, and then down into your boots. On the other hand, nothing much seems to pass a big bike on motorways, even in a rainstorm... well, apart from National coaches coming up behind in the fast lane with headlights blazing and horns blaring - you think it's a Porsche, pull over, and a coach goes past at 100mph, and all you can hear is the passengers' fingers clicking on the rosary-beads, and the Last Rites being intoned through tight white lips by the odd priest (and the driver's crazed laughter,



NOSTALGIA

of course). Not that many of you ever get to see this, I guess.

On my last trip down the scenic grandeur of the M6 and M1, here's a list of the bikes I saw: a 550 Honda on its way down to Kent (and to the bedraggled guy riding it, and his girlfriend, both of whom looked as bad as I felt that particular day, all I can say is, yes, there is life after death, but not on any motorway services stations); a 250 Honda single; three Yamaha vees (the entire owners' club must've been out that day, huh?); a Guzzi California that steamed past me (and I mean steamed) at around 110; and, needless to say, 30,000 identical BMW 1000s, all no doubt ridden by middle-aged stockbrokers with gold bullion in their Krausers. I'm prepared to believe that all the Harley owners in Britain were rebuilding their bikes, and that all the Gold Wing owners didn't want to get their chrome splashed, and that all the LC owners were recovering from broken legs in Stoke Mandeville on that particular day, and that all the Laverda owners' electrics'd packed in due to the damp (again), the Ducati owners were at a Mafia grand council, and that the Jawa, CZ, and MZ riders never ride on motorways, but prefer to ride across country through fields, and lakes, and coal-tips. I'll even believe that Triumph, BSA, Norton, and all the other Brit owners were waiting for spare parts and deliveries of 50-gallon drums of oil, but what I want to know is where were all the GPz owners, huh? How come, whenever I see those black engines and those tasteless red fairings, they're always parked?

I may've been unfair to Honda in the past... all right, I admit it, but I can't forgive them for not importing the Shadow and Magna into this country, but I've decided the corporate image that really upsets me most is Kawasaki's; beautiful bulletproof motors, any colour you like as long as you like as long as it's black Teflon, and the paintwork of your choice in arterial blood red (or silver, of course). Thanks a million, Kawasaki, particularly for not making the Z750 Twin Custom, the Z1 and Z900, and the H1 and H2 any more. I like the new vee-twin Vulcan though – in fact, when the XV750 wears out I might even get one... always supposing it actually arrives here, of course.

What this example of spleen proves, needless to say, is what a revisionist and carping old bastard I've become recently, but I can't take to ranges of bikes that all look the same; that, whether they're 50s or 1100s, all look as if they've just been wheeled off the starting-grid for last adjustments, and all come in a choice of two colour schemes – red-white-and-blue (in various combinations), or The Company Colour (whatever it happens to be). And I don't like fairings that don't do anything, I don't like silly little front wheels with fat tyres, and I sure as hell don't like bikes that you've got to take

the tanks, fairings, radiators, and carbs, off just to adjust the tappets (and you know what I mean, Soichiro).

All of this recent disenchantment led me to a momentous and portentous decision – rather like my cousin Anne not going for a naughty with John Lennon, in fact. I decided to get another British bike. I prefer to think of it as an Act of God, but I know I've only really got myself to blame, even so. I had visions (delusions'd probably be a better word) of riding around leafy lanes, and through rolling countryside, on a classic Brit, with the mellow chuffing of the exhaust scarcely disturbing nesting birds and browsing sheep, and rosy-cheeked milkmaids giving me pleasant smiles as their bucolic old farmer fathers touched their caps as I made my stately progress past their picturesque farms, nodding to themselves in approval to see the return of all that had made Britain great in motorcycle engineering in past, more golden and more leisurely years. I think I was probably crazy at the time and, as a lot of my ex-girlfriends'd say, anticipation is usually better than reality...

Anyway, I looked around for a likely classic that was not only cheap, but also fairly quick for its day, and reasonably interesting. Price tended to limit the choice, as it always does where I'm concerned, probably because I'm old enough to remember when a new BSA or Triumph 650 cost £320, a Velocette would set you back the extortionate sum of £399 (pillions rests £1 10s 0d, and a dual-seat £4 extra, not that you could buy them without either, of course), and there was a funny-looking German bike with sticky-out cylinders and shaft-drive that nobody bought because it cost £600. Memory being what it is, and being basically as tight as the proverbial duck's arse, I decided not to spend £1,000 on a 32-year-old S7 Sunbeam, nor indeed £950 on a 30-year-old Velo MSS 500, although I've got to admit that both of them appealed to me. Old Frank told me his honest opinion of a BSA 350 single he had in ('Gutless, I don't think you'd like it'), and I was enthusiastic about a Norton 650 until I had a ride on it, and found it tended to steer to the left all the time, and made odd noises from the motor rather like somebody drilling into their own skull with a Black & Decker. It smelt a bit like that too, come to think of it.

Old, fast bikes tend to be a contradiction in terms, rather like the legendary saying about their riders; there are old riders, and fast riders, but no old, fast riders. The more promising oldies'd already been snapped up by the classic bike racing freaks, quite a lot of whom disprove the maxim by being old and fast themselves, and I was starting to work out exactly what I wanted in the way of an old bike – one that'd been around when I was just starting out as a biker; one of the big ones I'd always fancied,

but had never had enough money to buy when I was sixteen or seventeen. This is a dangerous concept, but it must be a fairly common yearning because I know guys of 20/25 who are actually searching out early big laps; the Z1s, Z900s, 750 Honda Fours... even one hopeful who's bought himself a GT750, and a 1000 Gold Wing (biking's equivalent of Godzilla Meets The Smog Monster, in my opinion). They're rebuilding them to original, and riding them with pride, not to mention a pitying sneer for anyone on a Katana, a GPz, or a Eurostyle CB900. The answer as to why they're doing it is obvious; the aforementioned early Japs (most of which had punchy, lunatically powerful motors allied to frames made of a metal not unlike congealing chewing-gum, and brakes that didn't work if a hamster spat on them) were what impressed the crap out of them when they were being taken to school by their mums, or were suffering from adolescent pangs of self-doubt, acne, worries about blindness, insanity, and how soon a spine would turn to jelly if you didn't stop it in time. And to all those people who write letters to me in which a certain word features heavily, I can only say this... My eyesight is perfect, thanks. Mind you, I don't want to comment about sanity, or this little bit of back trouble I've been getting recently...

I'd just about decided to forget about the whole idea of buying an old Brit when another idea struck me; buy an engine, stick it in a custom frame, and make an old Brit custom bike. This automatically narrowed the choice of engine down to Triumph or Triumph. I might be prejudiced, as well as old and cantankerous, but there are only two motors that ever look really right in a custom bike frame, and the other one is a Harley. There's just something about a Triumph motor that looks fitting somehow – BSAs always seem a bit bulbous and uncouth, it's a pity to take a Norton motor out of a decent frame (the Featherbed, I mean, not the Commando's Isolastic cat's cradle), any sort of single never seems to look right, and there probably aren't any Matchless or AJS twins left without holes in the crankcases, or any Enfields that you can burn the oil off the outside of to make it all worthwhile.

So, when I saw a 1966 650 Bonneville advertised in the paper at what struck me as a very moderate and reasonable price, I decided it was worth buying for the motor alone, and I had thoughts of sticking it in one of Crazy 'Ode's cheap hardtail frames, sticking a cheap peanut tank on it, and a bend-it-yourself custom seat, and having a bit of fun building an economy chop and rediscovering my roots at the same time.

When its owner brought it round for a look-see that idea went out of the window. It was a nicely restored Bonnie with gleaming

black paintwork enlivened by red-and-gold pin-striping on the mudguards and tank (which still had the old chrome grille on it, incidentally), lustrous alloy casings, tidy original chrome, and a certain archaic appearance that made it look slightly older than what it was. It's the black that does it. I didn't argue about the price – in fact, I paid him what he asked, and threw in the well known and generally despised 350 Jawa I'd been keeping as a rat bike, just so he could ride home on something.

There's only room for two bikes in my backyard, and it's always, nice when both of them aren't Jawas, in my opinion. It was missing the two tank badges (the old eyebrow-shaped ones with a grid behind the Triumph name), but I thought I'd rather fit the ones with the plain Triumph lettering instead, and the ignition key (I had to use a small screwdriver to turn the switch on and off down on the left-hand side-panel), but it didn't seem any hardship. And the rear bulb'd blown...

This should've warned me, of course. Hello nostalgia, goodbye renal function and brain cells.

I took the Triumph for a run down the M6, just to see how it'd behave. When I came back, after watching the speedo needle bounce up to 110mph at one point (I might be old, but I'm still mildly insane as well), I had to ask passers-by to help me off the bike because I was convinced that all the discs in my spine'd been destroyed by vibration, and all the vertebrae were grinding against each other without any cushioning. The passers-by couldn't understand me too well, because the vibration'd made my canines stitch my tongue to my lips, and you don't express yourself too well when you've just lost ten million brain cells in any case, but it didn't matter that I couldn't talk too well because, fortunately, I couldn't see their terrified expressions either since my eyeballs seemed to be resting in the bottom of each glass of my goggles, rather like ping-pong balls in a goldfish bowl.

There was also a smell of burning, but

then Triumph's pushrod-tunnel seals, and primary chaincase gaskets, were never their strong points, as the glutinous bubbling oil running over the gleaming alloy casings on to the Tarmac seemed to confirm. It occurs to me that some of you, the... err, younger end of my readership, might not even know what pushrods and primary chains are? Believe me, you're better off not knowing.

I decided to discuss the bike with Old Frank. "Those 650s were much better than the 750s," he told me. "Didn't

the sentence that begins 'Believe me'...

"I must've brazed up hundreds of those in my time," Old Frank commented in with what seemed to me to be an unholy glee lurking at the back of his eyes. "They all did that... oh, and have you checked the spokes in the back wheel?" I tapped the spokes with a screwdriver, to see if they were nice and tight. Plink, plink, thud, plink, plink, ker-chunk, plink, thud, thud, and so on...

"They need a bit of watching," Frank remarked, when I'd gone back to borrow a spoke-key from him (the only one in the world, as far as I know).

"Who was that pop singer who nearly got killed when all the spokes ended up in his chain when he was riding somewhere on his Triumph? He had an odd voice... mind you, he had an odder one when he got out of hospital. Used to go around with that woman who looked like a gypsy, and had a nice voice... Bob Dylan," he ended triumphantly, "that's the one."

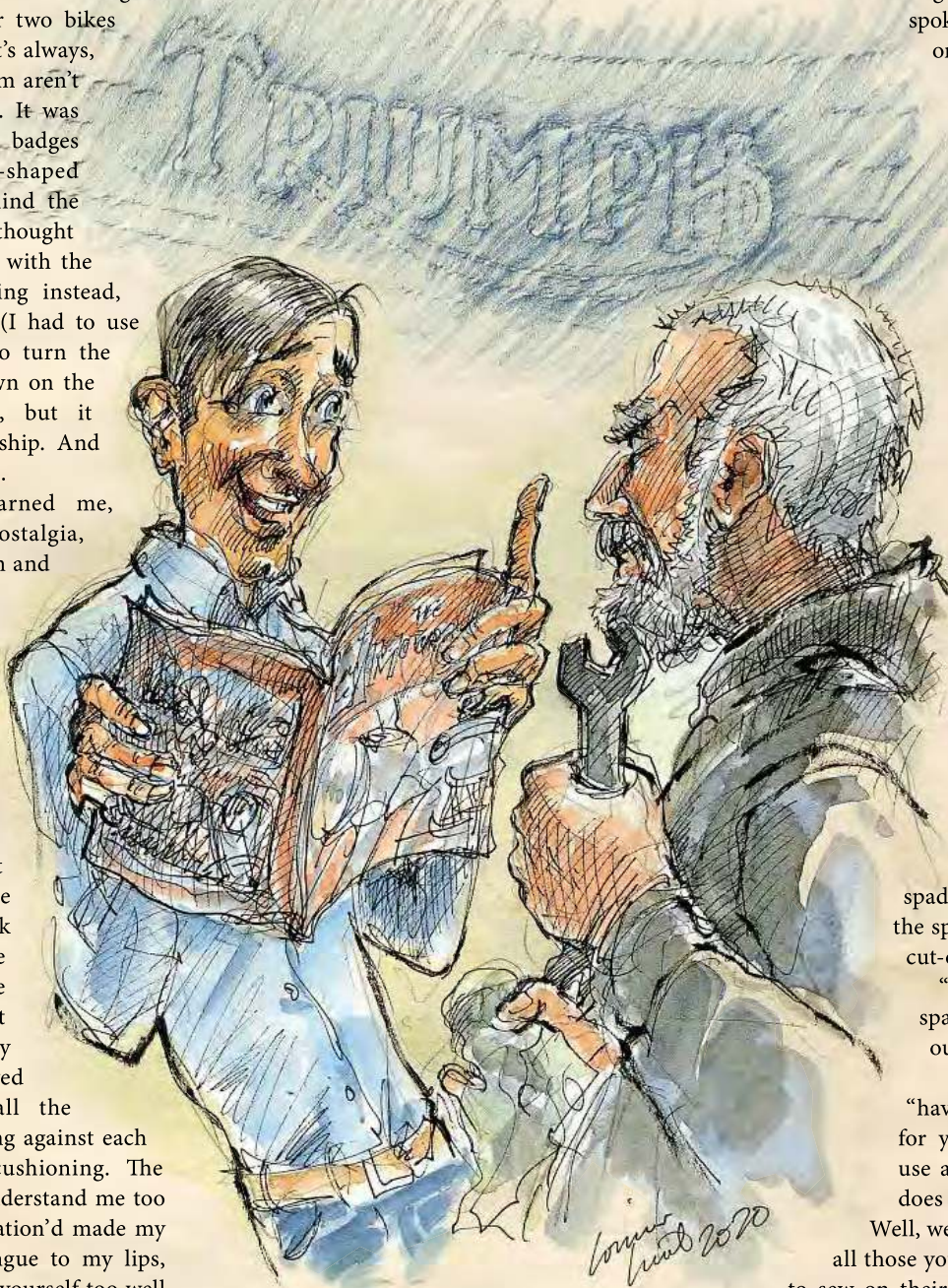
I asked him if he'd got a pair of Triumph badges and an ignition key for my bike. "Is it the one with just the spade end, or the one with the spade end and the little cut-out?" he asked.

"The one with the spade end and the cut-out," I told him.

"No," he answered, "haven't seen any of those for years. Why don't you use a small screwdriver, it does just as well. Badges?

Well, we had a lot in once, but all those young lads bought them to sew on their leather jackets. We've had some on order for months, but they haven't arrived yet."

At least there was no shortage of engine parts, which was some consolation. "I've got boxes full of Bonnie 650 bits, everything you're likely to need, always supposing it isn't before engine number DU24875," Frank told me.



vibrate hardly at all. Mind you, have you checked your oil tank mounting brackets yet?"

I hadn't, but I soon did, and found that the top two brackets had sheared away from the oil tank. It also occurs to me that some of you might not know what an oil tank is, too – just go back up this article a bit, and start reading

NOSTALGIA

I went outside to check the engine number. It was DU 31819. I breathed a sigh of relief, and told Frank what the number was. He just smiled sadly, and patted me on the shoulder, just like people do to mourners at funerals. "Someone had to get one of 'em," he said, and wouldn't tell me any more.

When I got back to the car park, it was with some trepidation that I saw someone I recognised as The World's Greatest Authority On British Bikes crouched down, studying my bike with the same intense and concentrated maniacal glare that Hitler used to keep for his generals while they were explaining what had happened outside Stalingrad. This guy, in fact, is the World's Biggest Pain In The Arse – as far as I can remember, he only ever owned a 250 BSA, and a Greeves two-stroke, but he was blessed (or the rest of us were cursed, more likely) with a photographic memory, and the ability to apply instant recall to anything he'd ever read about any British bike in any British (or English written) magazine from around 1962 to 1980, which is when most British manufacturers called it a day and he lost interest. He's frequently been the bane of my life – either he steers up to me in pubs while I'm talking to pretty young things who think I'm a nice, harmless and sweet old man, or else he collars me when I'm lying under a stripped-down British bike, muttering to myself and trying to remember what the hell the tappet clearance was. In the first case, the conversation goes something like this: "Hello there, nice to see you again. I'll just get myself a half of shandy, and join you and your young lady, if I might. Do you remember that Velocette Thruxton you used to have? Well, I was looking through my old copies of 'The Motor Cycle' a few nights back, and I thought of you, and I thought, well, he'd really like to read this, so why don't you come round one night and we'll have a few shandies and discuss old times, when we were both young lads, and..." By this time the young lady is making her excuses and leaving, convinced that she's coming between a dominant gay leather fetishist and his boyfriend that've had a quarrel, and they'll be making it all up soon.

The other times, I usually look up to come eye-to-toe with a pair of well-polished brown brogues, and a voice drifts down to where I'm lying in a pool of oil: "I thought I heard you say 15 thou for the exhaust tappets, and 10 thou for the inlet? Well, I wouldn't want you to make a mistake, but if you remember they changed this model in 1965, and I think you'll find that, correct me if I'm wrong, but I was reading it in a back number of 'Motor Cycling' only the other day, this model has the K303 cam, and the alloy push-rods, and the manufacturers actually recommended, and this is for high speed

road work, as well as production-racing, that both sets of..." And so on, ad infinitum (not to mention ad nauseam)...

Not that he ever gets his hands oily, of course; if you hand him a spanner he'll look at you like a cardinal being offered a dirty weekend with Joan Collins in Tel Aviv. He hands it back, looks at his hands, sniffs, walks away to cleanse himself of the foul impurities of 20W/50 in the sacred pores, and then bloody returns with the relevant article from the relevant mag. The most annoying thing about him, though, is that he tends to be right most of the time...

Anyway, this particular day, he straightened up, caught sight of me, and started crowing triumphantly. "They never made a black Bonneville, you know," was his opening shot, followed by: "I rather think this one would be, now I might be wrong, but I don't think so, aubergine-and-cream on the tank, with black side panels."

"It said 'green' in the log-book," I told him.

One up to the oily bastards.

"Oh, well, green, yes," he remarked disappointedly, "green-and-white probably, although I could've sworn that was the T110, and not the T120; the Tiger 110 not the Bonneville. Of course, you'll have noticed that the silencers aren't original, they're pattern – they ground the seams off the original ones, and you can see the seams on these. And then," he went on, "I'm sure it didn't have Amal Concentric carbs in 1966, surely they'd've been Monoblocs? And, I hope you don't mind, but I did lift the seat up, and I saw that the battery is a 6-volt Yuasa, I was wondering why..."

"...It didn't have an old-type black hard rubber-cased battery?" I finished his sentence for him. "Because nobody makes them any more, you pillock!"

"Still," he continued unabashed, "I believe, correct me if I'm wrong, the thing to do is get an old dud battery, cut the insides out of it, and put the new one inside."

"Why, for God's sake?" I asked him. "Why bloody bother?"

"Well, it looks more original," he said. "Oh, and by the way, I couldn't help noticing that the front top mudguard stay is missing, the wrap-round one painted black... oh, and are you sure the handlebars are the right ones, they look more like Thunderbird handlebars to me?"

I decided that I'd had enough. I got on the bike, turned on the right-hand petrol tap, tickled the carbs (right or wrong) until petrol spurted out of them, and kicked the Triumph over. Everything started to blur, and the front wheel started to bounce, and I could hear fuel sloshing around in the tank as the bike settled down to warm up in what passed for tick-over.

First gear went in with a hollow clang, and I set off, just catching what the Expert was

saying over the mellow clobber clobber of the exhausts. "...and I rather think those alloy bell-mouths on the carbs aren't standard," he was saying. "Surely it had those round chromed air-filters?"

At the first set of traffic lights I came to, a young lad on a Y-reg Yamaha LC came alongside, and gestured down to the general direction of my feet. "It's leaking oil, mate," he shouted through his full-face helmet.

"I know," I told him. "They always did."

"Aren't you worried?" he asked, and seemed surprised when I shook my head. "What is it, anyway? Is it a 250?"

I couldn't resist it. "That's right," I shouted back, as the lights changed, and blasted off into the distance leaving him still trying to find the right combination of gears.

He caught me up at the next set of lights. "Bloody hell," he shouted across, "it can't half motor, for an old 250. They must've been really good, those old British bikes!"

"You ought to have seen the 650s," I told him, and gave it the gun as the lights changed again.

It began to occur to me that the old 650 Bonnies, the ones before they introduced the tall, pointless frame that carried oil in its rear downtube, were very small bikes by modern standards, and it suddenly struck me too, that something that weighs less than 400lb, produces 47bhp, and has a lot of usable bottom-end power might be a bike to have fun on, particularly in the company of young bikers who were only just being weaned when the Brit bike industry was going firmly down the pan. I wonder if anyone's still doing the 810cc racing conversion?

It's a strange thing, but I used to reckon that the VX750 was a nice light bike, and went round bends well (for a Jap), but it's beginning to feel a bit like an overloaded jelly, and just a bit bulky now I've got used to riding a Triumph again.

Of course, some things have improved in the last 18 years. I'm beginning to think that a set of forks from an XS650 twin, and the two disc brakes they had, might be pretty good on an old Triumph, and maybe a braced swinging-arm too... oh, and some tapered bearings for the steering head, to match those at the back end. Possibly some Marzocchi dampers, as well.

And I'd better sort out the oil leaks... as far as anyone ever can, with something like a Triumph. As the Expert says whenever I see him, it's so non-standard anyway that it won't really matter, and I'm not intending to enter it in Concours d'Elegance competitions, am I? No, I've got other plans entirely for it, I've decided. What the hell's a bit of vibration anyway, huh? Nostalgia ain't what it used to be, but adrenalin is, take it from me. 

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JUNE 21ST – SO LOW CHOPPERS, Bakers Garage, Bury Rd, Stanton, Suffolk (IP31 2BZ)

JULY 4TH – NCC LONDON'S DIAMOND DAY, Ace Café, Ace Corner, North Circular Rd, London (NW10 7UD)

JULY 24-26TH – ROCK & BLUES CUSTOM SHOW, Coney Grey Showground, Chesterfield Road, Pentrich, Derbys (DE5 3RF)

AUG 2ND – VICTORIA BIKERS PUB, Whitwick Road, Coalville, Leics (LE67 3FA)

AUG 16TH – VETERAN'S GARAGE, Terminal Building, Liverpool Rd, Eccles, Manchester (M30 7SA)

MORE INFO FROM THE AD ON PAGE 72-73

MARCH

1st March: Sidecar Sunday at the Ace Café, London. More info from www.london.acecafe.com

1st March: Normous Newark Autojumble at The Showground, Drove Lane, Winthorpe, Newark, Notts. Tickets £10 early bird (before 8am) or £10 (after). More info from www.newarkautojumble.co.uk

7th March: Veteran's Garage's Bikers Car Boot Sale at Veteran's Garage, Terminal Building, Liverpool Rd, Eccles, Manchester. More info from www.veteransgarage.co.uk

7-8th March: Dirt Track Live at the Adrian Flux Arena, Saddlebow Road, Kings Lynn, Norfolk. More info from www.dirttrackshow.com

8th March: Kenley Autojumble at the Portcullis Club, Kenley Airfield, Victor Beamis Avenue, Caterham, Kent (junc 6, M25).

More info from Facebook.

8th March: Classic Bike Day at the Ace Café, London. More info from www.london.acecafe.com

13-15th March: Well Oiled MCC's Saddle N' Sup Rally at the Saddle Inn, Sidgreaves Lane, Preston, Lancs. Tickets £17. More info from Facebook.

14th March: Straightliners Dakota Drag & Drift Day at Smeatharpe Airfield, Upottery, Devon. More info from www.straightliners.events

14th March: NCC Newcastle's Rock Night at the Lord Barrington, Gordon Terrace West, Stakeford, Choppington, Northumberland. Free entry. More info from Facebook.

15th March: Bike Day at the Ace Café, London. More info from www.london.acecafe.com

21st March: Unwanted MCC's St Patrick's Day Party at the Rock Bar, Shobnall Road, Burton-

on-Trent, Staffs. Tickets £5. More info from www.unwantedmcc.co.uk or Facebook.

21st March: North Kent MAG's at the NAGs at the Nag's Head, High Street, Rochester, Kent. Free entry. More info from Facebook.

21st March: Iron Crows MCC's Pre-Season Party at LTAA, Victory Road, Leiston, Suffolk. Tickets £5. More info from 07961 984158.

22nd March: Straightliners bike-only RWYB at Santa Pod Raceway, Podington, Bedfordshire. More info from 01484 718164 or www.StraightlinersOnline.co.uk

22nd March: Overland & Adventure Bike Day at the Ace Café, London. More info from www.london.acecafe.com

22nd March: Spring Bikejumble at the Churchill Arms, Daggon Road, Alderholt, Fordingbridge, Hants. More info from www.churchillpub.co.uk

27th March: BMAD Rock Night with Hells Bells at The Foundry, Torwood Street, Torquay, Devon. More info from www.bmad.co.uk

28th March: HAMC Manchester Party Night at 16-22 Liverpool Road, Cadishead, Manchester. More info from Facebook.

28th March: Black Shuck MCC's Easter Egg Run from the Kingfisher, Hawthorn Drive, Ipswich, Suffolk at 10am. More info from Facebook.

28th March: Easter Egg Run from Kings Oak car park, High

Beach, Essex at noon. More info from 07789 881913 or jbptryke@btinternet.com

28-29th March: MC Pecquencourt's Salon de Moto at Pecquencourt, France. More info from www.mc-pecquencourt.mobi

28-29th March: Manchester Bike Show at Event City, Phoenix Way, Barton Dock Road, Urmston, Manchester. Tickets £18. More info from www.manchesterbikeshow.com

29th March: Scooter Sunday & Raleigh Chopper Meet at the Ace Café, London. More info from www.london.acecafe.com

29th March: South of England Classic Show & Bike Jumble at the South of England Showground, Ardingley, W. Sussex. More info from www.elk-promotions.co.uk

29th March: Roughleys Egg Run from Tesco Extra, Tiviot Way, Stockport at 11am. Donations please. More info from Facebook.

APRIL

3-5th April: Matt Black Rat Spring Meet at the Bruce Arms, Pewsey, Wilts. Tickets £15. More info from www.matblackrat.it or Facebook.

3-5th April: Beermasters MCC's Hand Pulled Rally at Ripon Racecourse, Ripon, Yorks. Tickets £16 prebook only. More info from 01423 529255 or Facebook.

4th April: Kempton Park Auto Jumble at Kempton Park, Staines

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Road East, Sunbury on Thames, Middlesex. Tickets £10 before 9.30am, £7 after. More info from www.kemptonparkautojumble.co.uk

4th April: Airedale Hospital East Egg Run from Ride Motorcycles, Unit 35, Steeton Grove Ind Est, Steeton Grove, Keighley, Yorks at 10.30am. More info from Facebook.

4-5th April: Assembly Chopper Show at the Flatlands Motorama at the Autotron, Rosmalen, Holland. More info from Facebook.

4-5th April: South Wales Sunbeam MCC's Cardiff Classic & Contemporary Motorcycle Show at Llanishen High School, Heol, Hir, Llanishen, Cardiff. Tickets £5. More info from www.southwalesunbeamcc.co.uk or Facebook.

5th April: Kawasaki Sunday at the Ace Café, London. More info from www.london.acecafe.com

5th April: Ink & Iron at the New Bingley Hall, Hockley Circus, Birmingham. Tickets £15 prebook or £20 on door. More info from www.inkandiron.co.uk

5th April: Normous Newark Autojumble at The Showground, Drove Lane, Winthorpe, Newark, Notts. Tickets £10 early bird (before 8am) or £10 (after). More info from www.newarkautojumble.co.uk

5th April: Beaky's Motorcycles Surrey Harley Boot Sale at Pippinbrook car park, opposite Dorking Hall, Reigate Road, Dorking, Surrey. Pitches £25, entry £3. More info from info@beakysmotorcycles.com

9-12th April: Unwanted MCC's Ride-In Weekend at the Rock Bar, Shobnall Road, Burton-on-Trent, Staffs. Free entry. More info from www.unwantedmcc.co.uk or Facebook.

10-12th April: Festival of Power at Santa Pod Raceway, Podington, Bedfordshire. More info from www.SantaPod.com

10-12th April: DDMC's Dancing With The Devil Rally at Radcliffe Cricket Club, Homer Street, Radcliffe, Manchester. Tickets £10. More info from 07784 031596 or Facebook.

12th April: Rocket III Owners Club Meet at the Ace Café, London. More info from www.london.acecafe.com

12th April: Mods & Rockers Day at Revved Up, Walton-on-the-Naze, Essex. More info from 07851 644281 or Facebook.

12th April: Reading MAG's Easter Bike Show at Burghfield Community Sports Assoc, James Lane, Burghfield, Berks. More info from www.readingmag.org.uk

12th April: Museum of Power's Transport Fest at the Museum of Power, Hatfield Road, Langford, Maldon, Essex. Tickets £7. More info from www.museumofpower.org.uk

12th April: WSSW Moorlanders' Moorlanders Egg Run from Davistow Airfield, Nottles Park, Davistow, Cornwall at 10am. Tickets £5. More info from 01208 816554 or www.widowssonssw.co.uk

13th April: Devitt Southend Shakedown at Southend sea front, Essex. More info from Facebook.

13th April: Gosportians Car & Bike Show at Ford Brockhurst, Gunners Way, Gosport, Hants. Tickets £1. More info from 02392 583077 or wecanhelp@gosportians.co.uk

13th April: Ashford Classic Show & Bikejumble at Ashford Market, Orbital Park, Ashford, Kent. More info from www.elk-promotions.co.uk

17-19th April: Krazy Old Gits' Rally at the Brighton Ferry, Brighton, near Selby, Yorks. Tickets £10. More info from Facebook.

17-19th April: Jugsters MCC's Bosted Bladder Rally at Netherseal Sports & Social Club, Main Street, Netherseal, Derbys. Tickets £20 prebook or £22 on gate. More info from 07552 606126 or 07307 889344 or deborahvickers352@gmail.com

17-19th April: Fat Skeleton's Blues & Bikes Weekend at Cabourne Parva, north Lincs. More info from www.fatskeletonbluesandbikes.com

18th April: NOTAS Charity Run & Party in aid of RNLI at

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19th April: English & Proud St George's Day Parade from Stratford Road, Shirley, Solihull, West Mids at 6pm. More info from Facebook.

19th April: British & Classic Bike Day & BSA Special at the Ace Café, London. More info from www.london.acecafe.com

19th April: West Cork MCC's Drag Race at Halfway, Ballinhassig, Co Cork, Eire. More info from viodon@gmail.com

24-26th April: HDRCGB Region

7's Drivers Rally at Llandovery RFC, Church Bank, Llandovery, Carmarthenshire. Tickets £15 members, £20 non. More info from hdrkgregion7@hotmail.co.uk

24-26th April: Ridgeway MCC's George to the Dragon Rally at a site near Oxford. Tickets £20. More info from www.ridgewaymcc.org.uk or Facebook.

24-26th April: Muddy Bum Crew's Bum in the Mud Rally at Essex Outdoors, Rewsalls Lane, East Mersea, Colchester, Essex. Tickets £25 prebook or £30 on gate. More info from www.buminthemud.co.uk

25th April: Straightliners Dakota Drag & Drift Day at Smeatharpe Airfield, Upton, Devon. More info from www.straightliners.events

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25th April: HAMC Manchester Party Night at 16-22 Liverpool Road, Cadishead, Manchester. More info from Facebook.

25-26th April: Carole Nash International Classic MotorCycle Show at Staffordshire County Showground, Weston Rd, Stafford, Staffs. Tickets £13 prebook or £16 on gate. More info from www.classicbikeshows.com

26th April: Vintage & Classic Jap Bike Day at the Ace Café, London. More info from www.london.acecafe.com

26th April: Sarum Spring Show at Laverstock & Ford Sports Club, Church Road, Laverstock, Salisbury, Wilts. More info from Facebook.

30th April-4th May: Stan & Co's On The Edge Rally at a site on the Isle of Wight. More info from Facebook.

MAY

1-3rd May: Yorkshire MAG's Into The Valley Rally at Sledmere, East Riding, Yorks. More info from www.yorkshire.mag-uk.org

2nd May: Avernus MCC's Enchantment Under The Sea Dance at the Red Herring, Coppull, Lancs. More info from Facebook.

2nd May: 363MCC's Crowning Around Bike Show at the Crown, Main Street, Littleport, Cambs. Tickets £3. More info from Facebook.

2-3rd May: Springspeed Nationals at Santa Pod Raceway, Podington, Bedfordshire. More info from www.SantaPod.com

2-3rd May: English Riviera Bike Festival at Paignton Green, Paignton, Devon. More info from Facebook.

3rd May: Poundbury to Poole Prostate Cancer Run from Queen Mother Square, Poundbury, Dorchester, Dorset at 10am. Tickets £5. More info from Facebook.

3rd May: Italian Bike Day at the Ace Café, London. More info from www.london.acecafe.com

3rd May: Greedy Pigs MCC's Charity Bike Show at the Freebird Freehouse, Liverpool Rd, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffs. Tickets £3. More info from 07985 239224 or www.greedypigsmcc.co.uk

3rd May: North Weald Air Ambulance Motorcycle Show at North Weald Air Base, Merlin Way, North Weald Bassett, Epping, Essex. More info from 0345 2417 690 or Facebook.

3rd May: Leominster Classic Motorcycle Club's Ancient & Modern Motorcycle Show at Withington Village Hall, Coppice Close, Hereford. Tickets £2.

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More info from www.lcmcc.uk or Facebook.

3rd May: Bod's Custom Cycles' Open Day & Custom Bike Show at Bod's Custom Cycles, Newton Farm, Ashchurch, Tewkesbury, Gloucs. More info from 01684 437080 or Facebook.

3rd May: Trike, Sidecar & Three-Wheeler Day at Jacks Hill Café, A5, Towcester, Northants. More info from Facebook.

8th May: VE Day Mayday Run at Bike1066, Pelham Place, Hastings, E. Ssssex. More info from Facebook.

8-10th May: Shadow Crew's Out of the Shadows at the St John's Arms, Knotting Road, Melchbourne, Beds. More info from www.shadowcrew.co.uk

8-10th May: NSRA Nostalgia Nationals at Santa Pod Raceway, Podington, Bedfordshire. More info from www.NostalgiaNationals.com

8-10th May: National Association for Bikers with a Disability (NABD)'s You've Been Nabbed Rally at the Cheshire Showground, Clay House Farm, Flitigate Ln, Tabley, Knutsford, Cheshire. More info from www.nabd.org.uk

8-10th May: Race The Waves at the beach, Bridlington, Yorks. More info from www.backfirepromotions.com

10th May: Stonham Motorcycle Show at Stonham Barns Showground, Pettaugh Road, Stonham Aspal, Stowmarket, Suffolk. More info from 01449 711111 or Facebook.

10th May: BMW Bike Day & GS 40th at the Ace Café, London. More info from www.london.acecafe.com

10th May: Stratford Autojumble at Stratford-Upon-Avon Racecourse, Luddington Road, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warks. Tickets £5. More info from www.stratfordautojumble.co.uk

10th May: Ride of the Ruperts. More info from www.rideoftheruperts.co.uk

14-17th May: BMF's Bears & Bikes at Traquair House, Innerleithen, Scottish Borders. Tickets £25 prebook non-BMF members or £20 members. More info from 0116 279 5112 or www.bmf.co.uk

15-17th May: Tyne Cyclones' Reivers Rally at Clennell Hall, Alwinton, Northumbria. Tickets £15 prebook or £20 on gate. More info from 0191 264 3506 or Facebook.

15-17th May: The Doorslammers at Santa Pod Raceway, Podington, Bedfordshire. More info from www.TheDoorslammers.co.uk

15-17th May: Wycombe MAG's Dirty Donkey Rally at Mill Lane, Chalgrove, Oxon. Tickets £10. More info from www.wycombe.mag.co.uk or Facebook.

15-17th May: Sindy & Dom's Double Trouble Rally at Court Farm, County Park, Wolverhill Road, Banwell, Somerset. Tickets £15 prebook or £20 on gate. More info from www.doubletroublerally.com

16th May: Southern Classic Bike Show & Motorcycle Jumble at Kempton Park, Staines Road East, Sunbury on Thames, Middlesex. Tickets £10 before 9.30am, £7 after. More info from www.kemptonparkautojumble.co.uk

16th May: Poacher Bike Meet at The Poacher, High Street, Portishead, Somerset. More info from Facebook.

16-17th May: NCC Lincs Custom Show at the Black Bull, Lincoln Road, Lincoln, Lincs. More info from Facebook.

16-17th May: Bikes & Beer Festival at the Churchill Arms, Daggon Road, Alderholt, Fordingbridge, Hants. More info from www.churchillpub.co.uk

17th May: BSH Custom Show at Down & Out Motorcycles, Unit 2, The Boiler House, Alma Road, Rotherham, Yorks. Free entry! More info from ad in this issue!

17th May: Loughborough Bike & Trike Show at Loughborough, Leics. More info from Facebook.

17th May: Chiltern Hills Vintage Vehicle Rally at Weedon Park, Aylesbury, Bucks. More info from www.chilternhillsrally.org.uk

17th May: Two-Stoke Blue Haze Day at the Ace Café,

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London. More info from www.london.acecafe.com

17th May: Campers, Customs & Rods at Burley Park, Burley, Hants. More info from Facebook.

17th May: The Garland Bike Show at The Garland, Brighton Road, Redhill, Surrey. Tickets £5. More info from Facebook.

17th May: Bad-Landers MCC Ride of Respect from Angels Place, Church Street, Sunderland at 9.30am. Tickets £5. More info from Facebook.

20th May: The Victoria Bikers Pub's John Coghlan's Quo at the Victoria Bikers Pub, Coalville, Leics. More info from www.wegotickets.com/thevictoriabikerpub

21-24th May: Kustom Kulture Forever at Zeche Ewald, Herten, Germany. More info from www.kustom-kulture-forever.com

21-25th May: Biker Fest Italian Bike Week. More info from www.bikerfest.it

22nd May: Warrington Wheels Youth Bike-Building Comp at Chaigley School, Lymm Road, Warrington, Cheshire. More info from 07949 337507 or bobtowler57@hotmail.co.uk

22-24th May: Beerhounds' Slurp & Burp Rally at the Plough Inn, Ploughley Road, Bicester, Oxon. Tickets £16 prebook or £18 on gate. More info from Facebook.

22-24th May: The Bike Shed London Show at Tobacco Dock, Wapping, London. More info from www.thebikeshed.cc

22-25th May: The Main Event at Santa Pod Raceway, Podington, Bedfordshire. More info from www.santapod.com

22-25th May: Trikes R Us' Trikefest at Littleport Leisure Centre, Camel Road, Littleport, Ely, Cambs. Tickets £20 prebook or £25 on gate. More info from www.trikesrus.co.uk

22-25th May: Adventure Before Dementia Rally at Tablers Wood Campsite, Carr Lane, West Cowick, Doncaster, Yorks. Tickets £15 prebook or £20 on gate. More info from Facebook.

23rd May: Bideford Bike Show at Bideford Quay, Bideford, Devon. More info from Facebook.

23rd May: Musos on Bikes' Musos at the Shelley Custom Show at the Shelley Arms, Old Guildford Road, Broadbridge Heath, Horsham, W. Sussex. Tickets £5. More info from Facebook.

23-24th May: Coventry Action Group's Down at Mike's at Coppicewell Farm, Wolvey Road, Bulkington, Coventry. Tickets £5. More info from 07816 445906 or Facebook.

23-25th May: Peterborough Festival of Wheels at Peterborough Lions Rugby Club, Bretton Park, Peterborough, Cambs. Tickets £2. More info from www.pbfov.co.uk

23-25th May: Smoking Dog Rock & Custom Show at Misty Blue Farm, Kirk Merrington, Spennymoor, Co. Durham. Tickets £20. More info from 07931 177448 or Facebook.

23-25th May: No Bull, Just Beer & Bikes Rally at Penmaenau Farm, Builth Wells, Powys. Tickets £20 prebook or £25 on gate. More info from 07500 850663 or www.nobullbeerandbikes.co.uk

23-25th May: Enfield Pageant of Motoring at Enfield Playing Fields, Great Cambridge Road, Enfield, London. Tickets £10. More info from 020 8367 1898 or Facebook.

24th May: Chopper, Bobber & Rat Bike Day at Ryka's Café, Box Hill, Surrey. More info from Facebook.

24th May: RBLRB Day in aid of the Poppy Appeal at the Ace Café, London. More info from www.london.acecafe.com

25th May: Yorkshire Classic Vehicle Show at Ripley Castle,

Ripley, Harrogate, Yorks. Tickets £7.50. More info from www.markwoodwardclassicevents.com

25th May: Margate Meltdown Run at the Ace Café, London. More info from www.london.acecafe.com

25th May: Rushden Classic Motorcycle Meet at Rushden Station, John Clark Way, Rushden, Northants. More info from 0300 300 302 or Facebook.

25th May: Durham City Custom & Classic Show at the Market Place, Durham. More info from 0844 2480173 or rep@nemag.org.uk

29-31st May: Rat & Survival Bike & Trike Show at the Ogr Clubhouse, Kemble Airfield, Kemble, Gloucs. Tickets £20. More info from Facebook.

29-31st May: South West Chopper Fest at a site in Devon. More info from www.southwestchopperfest.co.uk

29-31st May: Perverts in Leather RC's Fetish Fun & Frolics. More info from www.pilrc.org

29-31st May: Bluefest at Glendearg Farm, Galashiels, Scottish Borders. Tickets £10. More info from Facebook.

30th May: HAMC Manchester Party Night at 16-22 Liverpool Road, Cadishead, Manchester. More info from Facebook.

31st May: Kent Modified Mash-Up at Faversham Showground, Faversham, Kent. More info from Facebook.

31st May: Yamaha Day at the Ace Café, London. More info from www.london.acecafe.com

JUNE

4-7th June: Unwanted MCC's Bike & Trike Show at the Rock Bar, Shobnall Road, Burton-on-Trent, Staffs. Tickets £9 prebook or £12 on gate. More info from www.unwantedmcc.co.uk or Facebook.

5-7th June: Leyland Eagles MCC's Tyred & Exhausted Rally at Edgehill Farm, Bolton Road, Withnell,

Chorley, Lancs. Tickets £20 prebook or £25 on gate. More info from 07393 412265 or Facebook.

5-7th June: Naseby Field HDRCGB's Roundheads Revenge Party at Market Harborough Rugby Club, Northampton Rd, Market Harborough, Leics. Tickets £18 members, £20 non. More info from 07926 037867 or Facebook.

5-7th June: NCC Shrops' Shires Show at the Old Cinema, A41, Tern Hill, Market Drayton, Shrops. More info from Facebook.

7th June: BSH Custom Show at the Ogr Clubhouse, Kemble Airfield, near Cirencester, Gloucs. Free entry! More info from the ad in this issue!

7th June: Kenley Autojumble at the Portcullis Club, Kenley Airfield, Victor Beamis Avenue, Caterham, Kent (junc 6, M25). More info from Facebook.

7th June: Dorset VMCC's Giants Run. More info from events@dorsetvmcc.co.uk

7th June: MAD Sunday (Motorcycle Awareness Day) at the Ace Café, London. More info from www.london.acecafe.com



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READERS' Lives

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RIGHT: Amazing Pennywise artwork on James Gilliam's Harley bagger!



WINNER

BELOW: Tim Ramsey's lovely GS café racer – how nice is that?!



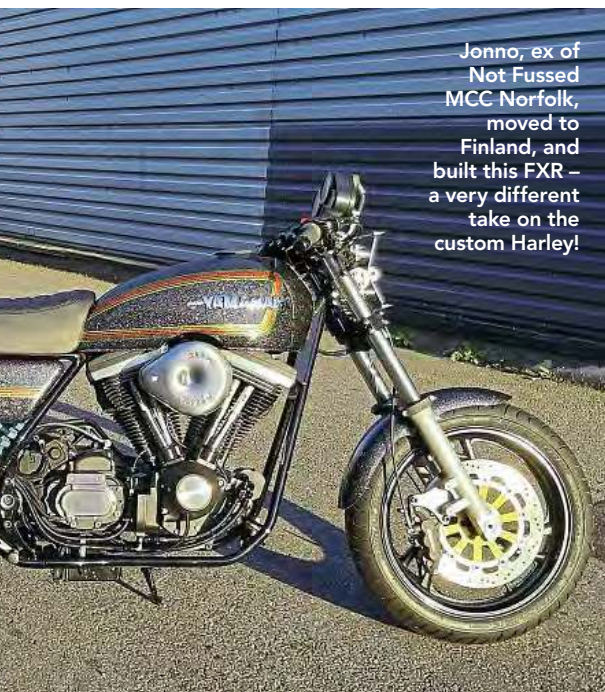
Vikki, still out on her BSH feature bike in the depths of winter!



ABOVE: Chris Ireland, yes, the legendary Chris Ireland, has just built this XJ900 trike!

RIGHT: Josh's 'Arley – bluer than a blue thing that's extremely blue!





Jonno, ex of Not Fussed MCC Norfolk, moved to Finland, and built this FXR – a very different take on the custom Harley!



LEFT: Another of Trevor Dowling's great East Anglian snaps.

ABOVE: Mutchie often has this effect on people when he takes their pic – that man brings joy wherever he goes!

BELOW: 'Dear BSH, thought you might like to see a 21" Smoothie fitted to a 2009 Victory? Cheers! Paul Last.'



As promised last issue, Chris Leek's GT550 Brat!



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MAG: BIKING SANITY IN A CRAZY WORLD

2020 IS IN FULL SWING, AND CLEAN AIR'S STILL HIGH ON THE AGENDA FOR MANY COUNCILS, BREXIT HAS HAPPENED, AND THE WORLD KEEPS ON TURNING. MAG CHAIR, SELINA LAVENDER, LOOKS FORWARD INTO A YEAR WHERE THERE'S A CHANCE THAT THINGS COULD BE A LITTLE BETTER THAN THE YEAR BEFORE...

Let's start with something very positive for biking – 'Ride to Work Day.' It's a day when, internationally, anyone with two wheels, and an engine, is encouraged to ride, and there's big news this year – MAG has taken on UK responsibility for it, and we're really hoping that you'll get involved, too. We want to prove to everyone how strong and supportive the biking community is.

We know it's not always that easy to use the bike and, if you've got stuff, big stuff, to take with you, it can feel a bit like a balancing act to put everything on the bike, but the principle is a sound one – it's a day to highlight riding, and come together as bike-liking individuals to highlight the benefits of riding.

This year, Ride to Work Day is Monday 15th June, and we're asking what can you offer? Whilst it's nice to have high profile companies on board, it's you, the rider, who holds the ability to make the day a success. Whether you ride on the day, or support those who do, together we can make a difference. We want as many people to get involved as possible, bringing the event to as wide an audience as possible, so if you have an idea on how you might draw attention to this special day, please get in touch. Colin Brown, Director of Campaigns & Political Engagement, is co-ordinating things, and can be contacted via cbrown@mag-uk.org – remember to make your subject title 'Ride to Work 2020'. We'll co-ordinate the events and publicise them through social media, our email lists, publications, and website, and we'll remind people that more bikes on the road has a benefit to everyone. For example, it means we'll see decreasing travel times for everyone – one of many evidence-backed claims.

Whilst I'm on evidence-backed claims, as yet DEFRA haven't agreed to sit down with us to analyse the data relating to motorcycles and air pollution. Colin & Lembit (Öpik, Director of Communications & Public Affairs), our Political Unit, are both very knowledgeable about the data being used... and the holes in that data. DEFRA, for instance, point to emissions from bikes abroad, in less wealthy countries, but emissions from older, badly maintained motorcycles running on poor quality fuel in South America bear very little relevance to the emissions from machines used in the UK.

So far, the responses from DEFRA fail to acknowledge any of the points we make. Instead, they refer us back to the very data we're referencing for investigation! MAG doesn't give up lightly though – we'll continue to ask the difficult questions. If we're to be legislated out of urban areas on scientific grounds, then the science needs to be correct. And it isn't.

By the same token, 2020 has brought with it a new rash of councils looking to implement Clean Air Zones (CAZs). We persist in making written submissions to every consultation that opens, but we do need your help to make sure we don't miss any. If you hear of a proposed CAZ or Low Emissions Zone (LEZ), then please contact us to see if we're aware – just email the details to us via MAG central office at central-office@mag-uk.org

DEFRA's model is being used by councils researching the effect of transport on air quality, and this is why it's so important for us to keep up this two-pronged attack. We use the opportunity of personally meeting councils to promote motorcycling in all its forms, and to ask for it to be included in future transport plans, and so we were delighted to see that

Bath Council intends to exclude motorcycles from their charging plans. Bath is the most recent city to announce its plans and, as with Birmingham, Leeds, Derby, Nottingham, Southampton, Greater Manchester and many others, MAG's position that motorcycles should be exempt seems to be gaining widespread acceptance... everywhere, in fact, except London.

We were amused to see that Oxford's proposed Zero Emissions Zone (ZEZ), dubbed the 'Red Zone', is already almost entirely pedestrianised. The only motorcycles entering the proposed zone are delivery riders illegally crossing pedestrianised streets to avoid ANPR camera fines in Oxford's bus lanes. No prizes for guessing our suggested solution there – let us into the bus lanes!

There are later phases proposed in Oxford where motorcycle charges are on the cards, but we are engaging with the councillors and officers, and are hopeful that we can persuade them to ignore London's bad example. There's still much work to be done, and we remain vigilant.

Manchester City Council, for example, have, as I write this, just announced plans contradicting the position of Greater Manchester's Mayor to consider a London-style ULEZ in the city centre. Other places such as York and Brighton are suggesting plans to ban private vehicles altogether. MAG aims to be the voice of sanity in a crazy world.

I'm sure you're aware that Brexit 'happened' on the 31st January, and the process is planned to take another 11 months. Whilst we watch to see what relevance this'll have to riders, particularly those planning riding holidays on the Continent, we're working to make sure riders don't get forgotten elsewhere. We'd like to see a review of the Government's motorcycling policy, and make our inputs to the regular meetings of the All-Party Parliamentary Motorcycling Group. Brexit is just part of that agenda.

One last thing; if you enjoy your rallies, tickets for many of our major events are on sale now for Into The Valley (1-3rd May), Farmyard Party (19-21st June), and the Yorkshire Pudding (31st July-2nd August), and they're all there at www.mapevents.co.uk (click the 'ticket' tab for details).

If rallies aren't your thing, but protecting biking is, and you are not yet a member, then join now to help us make a difference. Your membership is your insurance against the madness the politicians throw at us. We talk, they listen. Be part of that voice.



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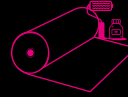


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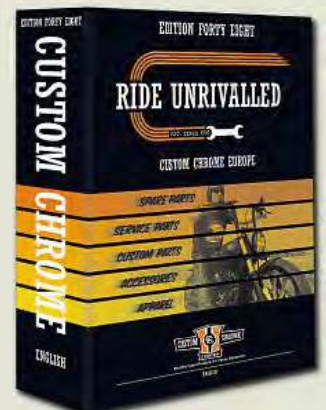
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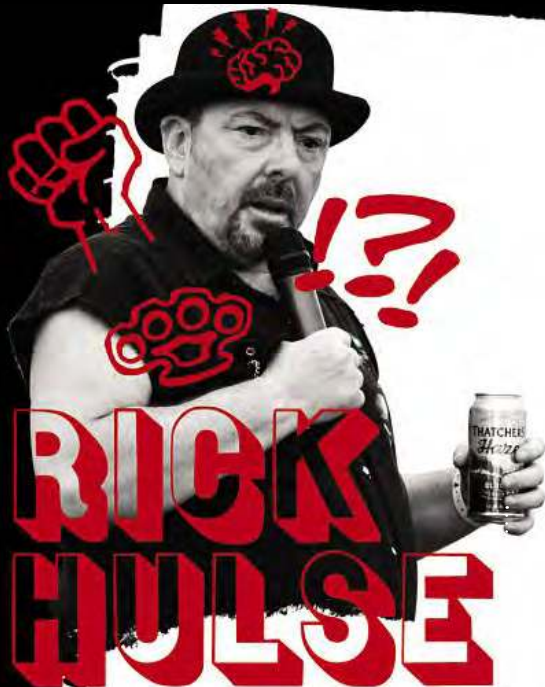
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MY FIRST ROAD-LEGAL MOTORCYCLE WAS A LIME GREEN MZ TS125 THAT I BOUGHT ON TICK IN 1977, FOR WHICH MY DAD HAD TO STAND AS GUARANTOR BECAUSE, AT 17 YEARS OF AGE, I WAS STILL IN MY FIRST YEAR AS AN APPRENTICE ELECTRICAL ENGINEER AT FAIREY ENGINEERING IN HEATON CHAPEL, STOCKPORT.

MOTO LOTTO, WIN OR LOSE?

IN

those days we could ride any motorcycle up to 250cc on L-plates and motorcycle training schools

were simply unheard of. Basically, you had to teach yourself to ride and, if you stayed alive long enough to get the hang of it, you put in for your test and hoped for the best.

The reason for my choice of the MZ was simple – as a first-year apprentice my weekly wage, after tax and insurance, was just £5.05 per week. (Yes, five pounds five pence! You never forget your first real wage!) Many of the other apprentices had Yamaha FS1E mopeds (quite possibly the most annoying motorcycle ever made), but the MZ, being of East German manufacture, was not only a sturdier piece of kit but cheaper, faster, more powerful and more reliable than the FS1E. It was also pig-ugly with a petrol tank designed to look like a polished breeze block, the top of which came up level with my bellybutton...

In retrospect, I now realise that my survival, and that of the MZ, in my first year of riding had a lot more to do with luck than with skill or judgment. I collected the bike from a shop in Hyde after work on a Friday, and the shop owner asked me if I'd ridden before? I said: "Oh yes, I've been riding off-road for years!" In truth my only previous experience of riding was on a Suzuki S50 that was jammed in third gear that I and my mates ran around on in

the woods, running it on a mixture of piss and petrol until it blew up when we tried to run it on a gallon of pure industrial alcohol that I'd managed to purloin from the development laboratory at work. After just two minutes' practice in the alley behind the shop, I was off into rush-hour traffic for the 12-mile ride through Manchester city centre, and up into the quaint little fishing village of Wythenshawe. How I survived that journey I'll never know! I lost count of the near misses, and irate bus drivers, but I do remember that you couldn't have got a Rizla paper between the cheeks of my arse during it.

However, it wasn't long before my confidence grew, and I was belting around the rural lanes of north Cheshire, doing 60mph (there were no speed limiters fitted to 125s in those halcyon days), and feeling like the king of the road – a feeling I've never lost when riding a bike, or a trike, though the level of speed, in all of its glorious forms, has increased somewhat over the years. Of course, before too long, I experienced my first notable accident...

My first crash had little to do with excess speed, and everything to do with excess libido, because, as I cruised round a tight bend on a suburban street, my eye was caught by a tall miniskirt-clad lady bending over the bonnet of an Austin Allegro as she washed it. Unfortunately it was reluctant to leave this glorious vista, right up to the point when I slammed into a stationary milk float... (Younger readers may need to

get somebody to explain the reference to a 'milk float', but don't worry about the Austin Allegro – they were a dreadful piece of shit anyway.)

It was at this point I realised the flaw in the design of the MZ TS125 – as the momentum of the impact catapulted me along the seat, my groin met the back of the big slab-like petrol tank with enough force for my bollocks to leave a peach-shaped dent in the metal. Suffice to say, my overactive libido rapidly took a back seat, as the front seat became increasingly occupied by my badly impacted, and rapidly swelling, testicles. My mind reeled, and my stomach churned, as my unfortunate gonads began to reach high notes that Luciano Pavarotti could only've dreamt of.

The leggy young lady with the miniskirt rushed across the road to see if I was all right, her bra-less breasts bouncing like two well-greased otters wrestling in a damp helmet bag, and as she inquired as to my condition. I mumbled something unintelligible about my squashed bollocks through my tightly gritted teeth. In a bid to better comprehend my response, she helpfully raised the visor on my helmet, at which point I projectile-vomited my lunch of chips, peas and gravy all over her glorious chest!

I never forgot this valuable lesson in not letting my concentration lapse when riding and, if ever I was tempted to forget, I'd remember the peach-shaped dent in the back of the petrol tank that was made by my ever-precious taters!

There've been one or two other riding mishaps since those early days, including one where my beloved pre-unit Triumph Bonneville chop and I wound up in a shit-filled drainage ditch due to me being startled by the sight of a dozen ostriches staring at me over a hedge on a country lane in Derbyshire... tall leggy birds again! What can I say?

However, when I cogitate on the fact that the catastrophic injuries that changed my life irrevocably in 1991 happened when I was a pedestrian, stepping out of a telephone box into the path of a stolen car that was being driven on the pavement, I can only surmise that life truly can be something of a lottery.

But, as they say: "You have to be in it to win it!", and on the whole, in my humble opinion, being a biker for the past 43 years has definitely been 'A Win'! 🍀

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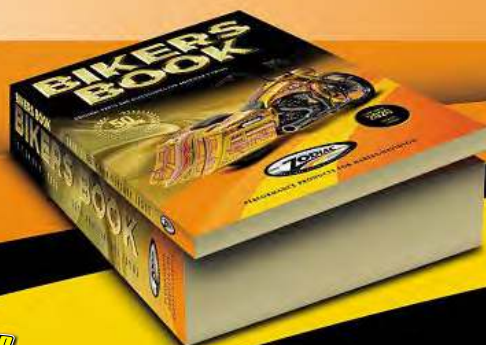
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